

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

---

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Theses

Institute for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality  
Studies

---

12-13-2023

## Sisters of Conspiracy: A Feminist Analysis of Evangelical, New Age, and Qanon Movements in Contemporary American Politics.

Rachael Rollings  
*Georgia State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/wsi\\_theses](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/wsi_theses)

---

### Recommended Citation

Rollings, Rachael, "Sisters of Conspiracy: A Feminist Analysis of Evangelical, New Age, and Qanon Movements in Contemporary American Politics.." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2023.  
doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/36397862>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gsu.edu).

Sisters of Conspiracy: A Feminist Analysis of Evangelical, New Age, and Qanon  
Movements in Contemporary American Politics.

by

Rachael Rollings

Under the Direction of Megan Jane Sinnott, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2023

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the link between New Age ideology, Evangelical Christianity, Qanon and the weaponization of women's body autonomy. It delves into how these factors have brought women into the Qanon conspiracy, leading them to engage in COVID denial, anti-vax movements, spreading medical misinformation, Qanon propaganda, and right-wing beliefs. Employing qualitative data analysis, cyberethnography, and feminist analysis, the research identifies online behavior, shared values, and beliefs in wellness, spiritual, and alt-right spaces through specific hashtags. This thesis focuses on a small set of social media hashtags on Facebook and Instagram between 2016 to 2020, revealing connections and shared agendas between New Age and Conservative religious communities. Remarkably, it uncovers a partnership between the male-dominated alt-right and the female-led New Age community, united by a specific feminized metaphysical language. By highlighting this connection, the research exposes the white supremacist origins of Qanon, discouraging well-intentioned women from joining the movement.

INDEX WORDS: New Age, Evangelical Christianity, Qanon, COVID-19, Gender, Conspiratorality

Copyright by  
Rachael Rollings  
2023

Sisters of Conspiracy: A Feminist Analysis of Evangelical, New Age, and Qanon  
Movements in Contemporary American Politics.

by

Rachael Rollings

Committee Chair: Megan Jane Sinnott

Committee: Juliana M Kubala  
David Bell

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Services

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

December 2023

### **DEDICATION**

To all the magical, inspiring, other-worldly women in my life. To my mom, the strongest most luminous woman I've ever met. You are my wisest teacher, my loudest supporter and bravest defender. I love you to the moon and back. To Sidney, my beloved stardust. I could not have done this without you. You are my rock. Thank you for always taking such amazing care of me. I love you... beyond his place. To Jo-e, my bad-ass mentor, fiercest friend, and biggest cheerleader. I am so deeply grateful for you and the many times you showed me grace, care, and kindness. To my chosen family and friends, thank you for feeding me when I was tired and hungry and broke, telling me how proud you were of me when I was near tears, sending me goofy memes to keep my spirits high, for making me all the potato dishes you could think of and keeping my belly full of whiskey and wine. It takes a village.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Dr. Sinnott, Dr. Kubala, Dr. Bell, Dr. Evans, Dr. Burnet, and Dr. Bloom. Thank you all for your guidance in this beast of a project. You each gave me the opportunity to really see what I could do and produce if I just kept plugging forward. I think of myself as extremely privileged to be a part of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality dept here at Georgia State university. This dept and each one of you changed the way I see the world. This project, this department, and you all have made me a more empathic human, a more useful participant in my community and a better, more informed citizen in this world. Thank you for all your support and encouragement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Historical Background.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>1.1.1 Qanon.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>1.1.2 The New Age Movement .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>1.1.3 Conspirituality .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>1.1.4 New Age Nazis .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>1.1.5 Evangelical Christianity.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>1.1.6 Summary.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<b>1.2 Literature Review.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<i>1.2.1 Origins of Millenarianism: Religion and Politics.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>1.2.2 Horseshoe Theory and History .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>1.2.3 Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>1.2.4 Alt-Health Influencers: How Wellness Culture and Web Culture have been Weaponized to Promote Conspiracy Theories and Far-Right Extremism During the COVID-19 Pandemic .....</i>	<i>22</i>
<b>1.3 Methodologies.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2 CHAPTER TWO:.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.1 Areas of Political, Moral and Community Overlap.....</b>	<b>27</b>

**Commented [SGJ1]:** Do not delete the table of contents. This table of contents is already formatted. This is a linking Table of Contents, meaning it will automatically generate a TOC for you after you have properly formatted all of the headings in your document. If you right click on this table of contents and select "update field" followed by "entire table," this TOC will update itself to reflect the headings in your document.



2.1.1	<i>Save the Children &amp; The Great Awakening</i> .....	28
2.1.2	<i>Institutional Distrust and COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy</i> .....	34
2.1.3	<i>Body Autonomy, Sovereignty and Freedom</i> .....	44
3	<b>CHAPTER 2</b> .....	51
3.1	<b>Dr. Christian Northrup</b> .....	51
3.1.1	<i>Rise to Fame</i> .....	54
3.1.2	<i>Matriarchal Medical Messiah</i> .....	56
3.1.3	<i>Disinformation Dozen</i> .....	62
3.1.4	<i>Fall from Grace</i> .....	63
3.1.5	<i>Cruel Optimism</i> .....	64
4	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	67
	<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	69

## 1 INTRODUCTION

On the 17th of September 2021, at the Mid America Center in Council Bluffs, Iowa, now disgraced former National Security Advisor to the Trump Administration, Michael Flynn gave a political prayer at an event called the “Open to the Heavens” conference. Unbeknownst to the attendees at the time, Flynn would have them repeat word for word a prayer female doomsday cult leader Elizabeth Claire Prophet originally recited back in 1994 (Conspirituality podcast, Ep.81). Prophet was the leader of a New Age Religious organization called Church Universal and Triumphant founded in 1975. Prophet prophesized that a nuclear Armageddon was imminent and that her followers should “prepare.” The Church Universal and Triumphant bought over 32,000 acres just outside Yellowstone National Park in Montana to house their state-of-the-art \$25 million underground nuclear bunker facility (The New York Times). Observing Michael Flynn recite the words of the New Age cult leader Elizabeth Prophet, verbatim, was a surprising revelation. The unexpected alignment between Flynn and the New Age spiritual teachings of Prophet, was notably unexpected given Flynn's political background and his affiliation with Christian Nationalism (Smith). I add this widely circulated 2021 televised event as simply one of the current examples of what we are seeing in a larger context since the election of Trump; the slow merger between Evangelicals, New Age, and wellness communities that began to coalesce under QAnon’s growing membership.

In 2016, the U.S. witnessed an uptick in the uncomfortable confluence of Christian scriptures and variously defined occult<sup>1</sup> teachings using New Age jargon reinforced by

---

<sup>1</sup> For clarification purposes, we need to separate the words “occult” and “cult”. The word “occult” refers to supernatural beliefs, practices, and phenomena, while the term “cult” is more complex and lacks a clear definition. The word “cult” is an imperfect term that is highly criticized in religious, spiritual, and academic circles. Generally, a cult involves a group of people who place their trust, decision-making abilities, world view, financial support,

patriarchal Alt-right narratives. American political theorist and socialist feminist Iris Marion Young defines this type of patriarchal Alt-right language as the “logic of masculinist protection” (Young). Mobilizing and crafting a language of fear through the misinformation of alt-health propaganda campaigns during the pandemic alluded to a growing imminent threat to individual freedoms. Thus, creating the illusion of looming collective instability by promoting an “us vs them” consciousness. This “call to arms” the mobilization of religious and spiritual communities to prepare for an ideological war was espoused by a growing number of female wellness influencers turned QAnon followers soon after the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. Unfortunately, social and political movements that rely on apocalyptic discourse and blind faith rather than facts and science, have shown that politically motivated violence in its many shapes and iterations tends to follow.

In this project, I seek to explore how a particular type of New Age feminized “metaphysical” language becomes the instrumental vehicle through which a moral commitment<sup>2</sup> may become perverted and used as a psycholinguistic weapon to indoctrinate women across the religious and political spectrum into the world of QAnon conspiracies. The goal here is not to have a myopic focus on exactly why women came to be the dominant gender in New Age and Spiritual/Wellness movements and later QAnon. Rather, the goal is to acknowledge how gender has played a role through which well-respected female physicians, popular spiritual and wellness influencers, and evangelical Christian suburban women alike have been subsumed into the world of alt-right conspiracy theories. My research further investigates why women have recently become increasingly more active in the COVID-19 denial and anti-vax movements (a movement

---

devotion, and self-governing control under the influence of a self-appointed charismatic leader for an unspecified period.

<sup>2</sup> A moral commitment expressed by women and mothers that stems from a “well intentioned”, “good” place of non-violence, the protection of children and the vulnerable.

based on debunked claims correlating vaccines to autism), QAnon conspiracies, and right-wing ideologies. For example, in Chapter two, I will exemplify the ideological convergence between New Age/wellness communities and the conservative alt-right, focusing on themes like the "Save the Children" and "The Great Awakening" hashtag and the cross pollination of institutional distrust, vaccine hesitancy, and concepts of body autonomy, sovereignty, and freedom. I will then dedicate the entirety of Chapter three to Dr. Christiane Northrup, a respected celebrity obstetrician-gynecologist, to showcase how a New Age framework and language can lead empathic women into the world of "Conspirituality" (conspiracy theories + spirituality). By researching the uncommon commonalities between two seemingly paradoxical communities, the New Agers and the Conservative Alt-right, I look at the physical, living embodiment of both sides seen in Dr. Northrup. Dr. Northrup's apocalyptic language cleverly veils its antisemitic and white supremacist origins through her clout as a leading New Age matriarchal medical messiah.

Two things became clear through my work. Both communities emphasize hyper-individualism. Progressive spiritual groups on the left prioritize self-diagnosis and healing, self-actualization, and optimal health through autonomous decision-making or "manifesting." Conversely, conservative religious groups on the right oppose mask and vaccine mandates, protesting perceived state overreach and asserting the right to self-governance. Additionally, they unite in critiquing a common adversary—the U.S. government. Progressives contend that corporations influence government affairs, emphasizing capitalism's control over entities like "Big Pharma." Conversely, conservatives argue for reduced government regulation, particularly concerning health mandates from governmental health agencies that they perceive as blatant steps towards stripping constitutional rights away.

## 1.1 Historical Background

The election of Donald J. Trump in 2016, coupled with the declining influence of organized religion and the liberal push for a more secular, progressive United States, created fertile ground for the QAnon ideological umbrella to incorporate longstanding but less mainstream conspiracy theories. This burgeoning fertile ground welcomed white, evangelical Christians and New Age influencers like Dr. Christiane Northrup and Dr. Kelly Brogan for example to spread white nationalist propaganda and COVID-19 conspiracy theories (U.S. Church Membership). QAnon, in particular, has not only seen national but transnational longevity because of its adaptability to move its doomsday goalpost further and further into the future; a tactic common in apocalyptic movements. Moreover, this flexibility allows for the rescheduling dates of the "Great Awakening" and ominous biblical and political reckoning.

### 1.1.1 Qanon

Over the span of the last five-plus years, QAnon has undergone a noteworthy transformation, evolving from a diverse array of American conspiracy theories into a substantial and influential political movement. The enigmatic figure or group behind "Q" initiated their discourse in October 2017 on the anonymous platform 4Chan, catalyzing QAnon's budding evolution into future mainstream discourse. As the movement gained momentum, "Q" and its resolute followers, commonly referred to as "anons," transcended the confines of the alt-right, a predominantly male-dominated sphere within the dark web, to emerge as a widespread and influential pop culture phenomenon.

Central to the QAnon narrative is the commitment to unveiling what they allege as the malevolent actions of global elites, identified as "the Cabal." This conspiracy alleges the Cabal's involvement in practices such as blood libel and a pedophilia cult, all with the overarching

objective of orchestrating a singular global government, eradicating American freedom, and undermining democracy as it is conventionally understood. A significant turning point in QAnon's trajectory occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic when the movement experienced an extraordinary surge in popularity. This surge is quantified by The Wall Street Journal's report, indicating that the membership in the ten largest public QAnon Facebook groups burgeoned by more than 600% from March to July 2020. This notable growth was propelled by the circumstances of the pandemic, including widespread restrictions and quarantine measures that confined many individuals to their homes, subsequently fostering increased online engagement.

In the early stages of the pandemic, mixed messaging and confusion from the CDC and the Trump-appointed White House Covid Task Force with its inability to determine the origins of this deadly virus, and the access to unlimited misinformation while under a nationwide lockdown created a space for religious, anti-science, and conspiratorial political influencers to saturate our social media platforms. Without a sense of community found inside the routine of gathering within spaces of worship, without a pastor or a resemblance of any kind of leadership from the White House, many turned to the internet for answers. More succinctly, the COVID-19 pandemic birthed a fundamental shift towards political and social unrest. A quest for medical guidance with concrete answers swirled around the country in this time of instability and panic. The idea that an evil cabal or something of a dark sinister nature was pulling the strings behind the pandemic and, later, the COVID-19 vaccines moved from the corners of the dark web of 4chan, 8chan, and Reddit, into mainstream media talking points.

At the same time, in a seemingly antithetical community, New Age and wellness spaces also offered their own flavor of spiritual propaganda. New Age spirituality offers the idea that

"everything is connected" and "everything happens for a reason."<sup>3</sup> Energies and events are interconnected in ways not always seen or understood in the physical realm, especially to those who are "not awake" consciously. Within this context, the notion of the "Great Awakening," a prominent aspect of New Age discourse, emerges. The need to look outside the material world when our corporeal world seems to be falling apart is an anticipated human reaction. We chase after answers to relieve the source of our tensions and feelings of anxiety. It feels only natural to look to mythology, the spirit world, or religious scriptures for their hidden truths, decodable wisdom, and prophecies.

One does not need to look much further than Dr. Christiane Northrup as just the mystic darling to help ease your pandemic fears. Best-selling New Age author and matriarchal medical guru Dr. Northrup's pedaling of the "Great Awakening" propaganda, QAnon-based conspiracy theories, and a pro-tribalism message are not original nor groundbreaking. Dr. Northrup was a repeated guest on the Oprah Winfrey Show, The Dr. Oz Show, and numerous national morning talk shows. Northrup was a leader in women's health, gaining celebrity status after the release of her 1994 book "Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom" (Northrup). Northrup's female-centered, anti-patriarchal New Age predecessors have laid the groundwork for a cultish quasi-feminist narrative, offering the secrets of spiritual transcendence, self-enlightenment, personal power, and body-mind-sovereignty. Dr. Northrup wielded a great deal of power through her social media platforms with over half a million followers on Facebook alone before being banned from social media for spreading COVID-19 related medical misinformation. She would later come to be

---

<sup>3</sup> Some examples and commonalities found in New Age spiritualism are the disbelief in a heaven or hell, the belief that you choose your life circumstance before you reincarnate- meaning- you "sign up" for all the hardships and joy, all the "lessons" you'll learn in this "earth school". You manifest your life with your thoughts. "Thoughts Become Things". You are god. WE are all gods. There is no devil. Physical and mental ailments can be the result of negative thinking and or past trauma and abuse presenting itself through the body. E.g. Cancer, AIDS, HIV, chronic pain etc.

labeled as one of the "disinformation dozen" by The Center for Countering Digital Hate in 2021. Before being de-platformed, Dr. Northrup spread COVID-19 conspiracy theories that preyed on women's anxieties, targeting a woman's maternal instinct to protect her children, her family, and her community. This type of gendered targeting was accomplished by infiltrating online mom groups and spiritual/yoga/health communities calling attention to QAnon's "Save the Children" campaign and the corruption of "Big Pharma." This newly co-opted "Save the Children" campaign aims to expose a global pedophile ring offering "alternative facts" and has joined forces to promote the anti-vax movement.

### ***1.1.2 The New Age Movement***

The New Age movement gained traction in the '60s and '70s zeitgeist with free love and the burgeoning of Second-wave feminism. This movement is an eclectic amalgamation of colonized religious, occult practices, and spiritual beliefs that gained more acceptance and visibility in the 1970s and 80s through the secular and metaphysical communities promoted by well-known influencers and authors such as Marianne Williamson, Deepak Chopra, and Louise Hay. New Age draws heavily from occult and esoteric teachings of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Theosophy, and New Thought. Metaphysics is a branch of Philosophy whose principal beliefs are based on transcendental ideas and realities that live beyond the limits of the corporeal plane, detectable through the five senses. A belief in psychics, reincarnation, prosperity manifesting and astrology are all examples via the New Age grab bag. The Pew Research Center determined that "roughly six-in-ten American adults accept at least one of these New Age beliefs" (Pew Research Center). A "New Age" of love and light "offered a foretaste of the coming era through personal transformation and healing" (Britannica). To locate its precise doctrine and tenants proves difficult when the "individual" is centered and the overarching focus relies on a mind,



body, and spirit connection to the Universe as compared to a singular established leader or spokesperson. In full disclosure, I, myself, was raised by a single mother who wholeheartedly committed herself to the pursuit of freedom against any religious dogma and was smitten by the pro-spiritual/ non-structured teachings and philosophy of the New Age movement. It became undeniable to me as I grew through adolescence into adulthood that my mother and I stood in stark contrast to our family's more conservative Jewish heritage.

I was taught a mind-body-spirit connection to the Universe with its mystical secrets and wisdom that could be shared through one's own personal spirit guides. These other dimensional beings choose to walk with you through this "earth school" and would communicate to you through a group of highly gifted and trained clairvoyant humans called "channelers" or "mediums" who could relay your guide's messages and answers to questions like "why I am here and what should I do next." Past life regression, Reiki, Alternative medicine, and spiritual healing through optimal health by virtue of crystals, essential oils, and positive thinking were common themes in my childhood.

When the image of a current New Ager influencer comes to mind, it is easy to envision a woman surrounded by large crystals, a typically thin under 30, yogi-esque feminine woman cross-legged in a sage-filled room, or perhaps the modern witchy Instagram type with large, black-brimmed hats in a beautiful moonlit field or sun-bleached modern abode set in the scenic beguiling backdrop of Joshua Tree National Forest. You can just smell the burning of Palo Santo breaking the fourth wall of your tiny iPhone screen, cleansing your aura. Alternatively, if you are over 45, you might recall the women coming out of the 70's free love era who choose to commit to a life more deeply in tune with "mother earth", worshiping the path of the Goddess.

In Stuart Rose's article *New Age Women: Spearheading the Movement?* Rose shares his findings through a study by the Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University. Stuart found that over 70% of people participating in the New Age movement were women (Rose, 330). Rose found that the general age range for the women active in the New Age Movement was born in the 40s and 50s and would have been present for the decade of the 60's hippie era. This time frame would make sense, as the New Age Movement began to gain recognition in the 1960s and 70s when many men and women were protesting the Vietnam war, and "Second wave" feminism was in full swing. Women were reclaiming their power from the traditional, patriarchal gender expectations of the '50s. A particular area of Rose's findings stands out to me. The overwhelming majority of these New Age women claim to be "spiritual beings" who involve "spirituality" in their daily lives. (Rose, 335). When these women were asked what that involvement entailed the majority of women described it as "transpersonal and steeped with a mystico-transcendent or sacred content". Mystico-transcendence is the supernatural power to use the abilities of mythical beings, individuals who believe they have the "power to possess the traits, attributes, and abilities of, transform into, or be/is a Transcendent Being" (Fandom). Transcendence, or transcending in the religious context, is to inhabit and move beyond the material world.

I bring this to attention because of the language co-opted inside New Age that can lure in women offering that they may exist in a state un beholden to patriarchal science-based reason and the expectations of men in the temporal world. Positive affirmations effortlessly slipped into causal conversation can be a form of "*manifesting*"- the process of bringing your desires and intentions into reality through the power of your thoughts, beliefs, and energy, "*everything happens for a reason*" - the idea that there is a purpose behind every event, even if it's not

immediately clear, "*follow your intuition*" - the belief that one's inner guidance system can lead them to make the right decisions, "*raise your vibration*" - the idea of increasing one's frequency, optimal health, or energy level to attract positive experiences and outcomes, "*live in alignment with your true self*" - the concept of living in a way that aligns with one's values, beliefs, and purpose. Women were becoming attracted to this idea of transcendence by the "dissatisfaction with traditional answers whether from church, law, or medicine." (Rose, 336) This transcendence embodiment joined with the dissatisfaction with tradition and traditional institutions plays a crucial role in opening the door and opening the mind to conspiracy theories peddled by celebrity influencers and New Age medical gurus.

Throughout this thesis, I will periodically expose how patriarchy, white supremacy, and antisemitism undergird current QAnon conspiracy theories across spiritual and political Conservative communities. While Anti-vax and online female influencers saturate social media accounts daily, many feature "spiritually embodied" white, middle to upper-class women posting medical misinformation under the premise of "just asking questions" and dishing out anecdotal advice for the treatment of COVID-19. The language of "sovereignty" and mind-body autonomy is deeply rooted in New Age beliefs and Alt-right narratives alike. During the pandemic, I became more cognizant of a specific kind of female-centered "soft" QAnon-type discourse and feminized iconography now described as "Pastel Q." Pastel Q rhetoric is situated inside an anti-science narrative and has been slowly creeping into sacred spaces online well before the COVID-19 pandemic (Vox.com). QAnon followers claim to have secret knowledge of an "evil cabal" funded and run by Jews who protect the global ring of pedophilia. Pastel Q is no different, it is simply curated with a more feminine, gendered aesthetic. To be clear, conspiracy theories' internal construction and scaffolding fall directly in line with Christianity's faith-based systems

and theoretical structures (Lantian). One's ability and willingness to believe in unseen forces willfully at work, created through intentional, divine design by an omnipotent, righteous, godly power, further concretize the dualistic nature of the fight for good vs. evil, light against darkness (Bloom, Rollings).

### ***1.1.3 Conspirituality***

For what appears to be an unlikely pairing, that of the male-dominated conspiracy theory community and the female lead New Age "love and light" communities, there has been a kind of complementary effect of the two sectors over time. Both communities have celebrities, tv and radio personalities, and bestselling authors now thriving under the Conspirituality umbrella. Charlotte Ward and David Voas begin to correlate these communities in their article titled *The Emergence of Conspirituality*. Ward and Voas explain the crossover between these two communities claiming their shared reactions for the best strategy to deal with the "threat of a totalitarian 'new world order' is to act in accordance with an awakened 'new paradigm' worldview." (Ward Voas). Three foundational tenants in "Conspirituality" are "a) nothing happens by accident, b) nothing is as it seems, c) everything is connected." (Ward Voas, 104) The appeal here for both communities is that it gives the individual a sense of control about the world and events happening around them and less uncertainty that reality is not a random series of events but something more of a divine plan in the works.

David Icke, an English self-published author, and conspiracy theorist, began speaking about the melding of these two communities into what we called Conspirituality in 1996:

When I meet people who are investigating the conspiracy but are not into the spiritual, I find people full of paranoia, full of fear ... because they can't see the spiritual solutions... When I meet so many people in the New Age area ... I often find people who, so often, think that if you address the negative, then that's really bad. You must only address the positive... But if you don't address the negative, either the negative gets more negative or stays as it is. What you don't do is change it (Ward, C., & Voas, D).

I found the article's main ideas, reinforcing conspiracies and New Age ideology, are that of change and transformation, an "awakening" and a new awareness of the institutions wielding power over the people. Ward and Voas explain that "ideas that others are becoming 'awake and aware', or shift in consciousness, lend encouragement. Humanity is shifting into a new paradigm. People are 'awakening to the truth' (we are all connected); 'remembering who we really are' (infinitely powerful spiritual beings); 'seeing the illusion' (our projections); 'saying no to tyranny' (assuming personal responsibility)" (Ward, Voas).

A reoccurring theme throughout the article and the history of Conspirituality lies in the flexibility of the movement. Conspiracy theories and the New Age Movement have a dominant feature in common. Both have an innate ability to morph, to ebb and flow in popularity and their future predictions of this "great awakening" to come. Ward and Voas illuminate that there are no restrictions on who can participate. There is no required amount of participation for both communities since both are self-governed in their teachings. Even though Ward and Voas claim that Conspirituality can be said to be a "web movement" (Ward Voas, 116), I would agree that, yes, the internet has had an enormous impact on the psyche of society via the amount of unverified, unsubstantiated information that is spread with such ease and access and lack of real-time fact-checking. However, the two worlds of conspiracies theories and the New Age have been alive and growing well before Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Their shared distrust in our institutions has steadily been germinating over time and creeping into our spaces of worship and political localities.

The role that faith plays in both Christianity and conspiracy theories exhibits a clear connection. Those who anchor their "truths" in disputed biblical scriptures through unwavering blind faith tend to reject facts, reason, and science. This parallel extends to mystical teachings in

various religions, hinting at exclusive wisdom granted to a select few who are tasked with evangelizing to the masses. This sense of privilege, akin to a rush of adrenaline and purpose, is comparable to the allure of conspiracy theories, where the confirmation of false beliefs triggers the release of dopamine, fostering pleasure, validation, and approval. This potentially addictive sensation is amplified within echo chambers of like-minded individuals. Moreover, “conspiracy theories help provide a sense of meaning or explanation for occurrences that may not make sense and fosters a sense of belonging among supporters” (Extremist Manifestation). In this context, followers of both Christ and QAnon may perceive themselves as initiated into a hidden "truth," equipped with secret knowledge, and compelled to evangelize in a mission of salvation for themselves, their loved ones, and the nation.

This phenomenon draws historical parallels, such as the convergence of Nazi ideologies with occult practices and the contemporary amalgamation of New Age principles with various belief systems, sometimes manifesting in antisemitic sentiments. The utilization of mystical and esoteric elements in New Age practices may inadvertently contribute to the propagation of harmful stereotypes, underscoring the potential dangers associated with the intersection of spirituality, conspiracy theories, and historical antisemitic prejudices.

#### *1.1.4 New Age Nazis*

As much as people might assume that Alt-right conspiracy theories and New Age philosophy had their crossover success during the age of the internet and more specifically the Covid pandemic, you would be mistaken. The far right was deeply interested in the occult, alternative healing, organic gardening, and astrology way before QAnon moved from the dark web to the mainstream. In 2020, Jules Evans wrote an op-ed for Gen, an online magazine and offshoot of the online publication Medium, detailing the less talked about connection between

New Age activities and Nazi Germany. The article titled *Nazi Hippies: When the New Age and Far Right Overlap* examines the early relationship with the Alt-right and all the modalities one can explore while participating in the spiritual marketplace. Evans highlights the Nazi's decision to back an organization called "The Society for Scientific Pendulum Research" (Evans). This activity called "dosing a pendulum," uses the participant's intentions and energy focused on the pendulum. The pendulum answers a proposed question and acts as your higher knowing, responding with a yes or no by swinging itself right to left or up and down. Hitler himself, in 1934, "hired Germany's most famous dowser, von Pohl, to police the Reich Chancellery for harmful death rays." It may be a shock to our New Age Instagram influencers who promote their perfectly curated spiritual posts of love and light that "Hitler, Hess, Himmler, and many other leading Nazis were into alternative medicine, organic and vegetarian diets, homeopathy, anti-vaxxing, and natural healing" (Evans).

The Nazis were deeply committed to notions of wholeness and "purity," intertwining white supremacy and eugenics with a profound affinity for organic farming, mystical practices, and a connection to the land. Reflecting a gardener's perspective, the Nazis advocated for the elimination of weak and sick individuals, paralleling a belief in protecting superior breeds, such as the Aryan race, against perceived invasive species, notably Jews. This historical context sheds light on contemporary white supremacist language, evident in terms like "clean eating" and "clean body," as well as anti-vaccination and anti-Big Pharma propaganda pervasive in New Age media platforms. These subtle dog whistles serve to beckon conspiracy theorists into the realm of the esoteric, creating an alarming overlap that underscores the dangers of ideological syncretism and its potential impact on public health.

Dog whistles are heavily woven throughout Qanon propaganda. These whistles allude to evil cabals of blood-drinking pedophiles are grounded in historical antisemitism. For centuries there have been unsubstantiated accounts of children being snatched up and harvested for their blood in a ritualistic manner orchestrated by the Jews. This is blood libel. Writer Tal Lavin adds, “the Jews of England taking part in these ritual mutilations of children’s bodies, the secret meeting of rabbis, a shadowy group of elders. The blood was distributed among Jews; it was eaten in bread; it was drunk in a demonic inversion of the sacrament. The children—found in wells, in fields—were victims and, postmortem, were given the crown of sainthood, as the Jews were given the stain of devilry” (Lavin). These old myths have been used for over 900 years to depict Jewish people as murders relegating them to a sub-human status.

Still, these fabricated dangerous myths can elicit an affectual emotional response, prompting good, "God-fearing Christian Americans" to stamp out this evil cabal that has permeated institutions of power. This type of Christo-fascism, rooted in antediluvian traditionalism, is firmly situated in a Manichean-type ideology. The Manichean religion gained popularity in the 3<sup>rd</sup> through the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. This religion taught an "elaborate dualistic cosmology describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness" (Encyclopedia Branica). Consequently, the human body becomes the physical embodiment and battlefield through which the forces of good and evil contend for supremacy. This dualistic worldview can significantly influence perceptions of societal and political conflicts, shaping believers' responses to perceived threats.

Much of my focus lies in how religious and spiritual cult-like dynamics combined with New Age-y pro-feminist language, may help us more aptly comprehend how the average Conservative Christian woman or "Woo Woo " New Age yoga mom, both with good intentions



and solid moral compass become manipulated by a conspiritualist like a Christiane Northrup; spiraling into QAnon and leading to extremism and violence.

The rise of Christo-fascism and its cross-pollination with conspiracy theories are an amalgamation of "dominionist millenarian elements [that are] intermixed with New Age-y ideas and delivered with an evangelical fervour. Those who are drawn into the movement can interface with it like one would with a Rorschach test. They can see what they want to see while ignoring the rest of the picture" (Monacelli). It is easy to denounce singular conspiratorial claims or "Pastel Q" theories made by its devout followers because the tent that houses a myriad of Q conspiracy is ever-diversifying and evolving.

I often hear the question "How in the world did we get here?" Through my research, I have noticed that when a political regime begins to shift, threats of a global pandemic or war are on the horizon, we start to witness the resurgence of sacred mystical and religious scriptures. These scriptures and their sacrosanct language are used to reignite passionate Conservative social and political agendas. Much of QAnon's militaristic, religious language provides a familiar auditory environment that resides deep within the heart of Evangelicals helping to deliver enthusiastic sermons when spreading their fear-based gospels to non-believers. Such war-saturated rhetoric of "patriots", "call to arms," and a "holy war" have historically been the domain of men. However, there is a gendered shift occurring inside QAnon. It is fascinating to witness how (mostly) white women have recently gained momentum inside the QAnon movement, advertising medical misinformation, anti-vax rhetoric, and right-wing ideologies (Mothers for QAnon). The extent to which white privilege is exercised by these Christian women and female spiritual/wellness influencers is egregious and terrifying. Most interesting are the

women who have pushed the dangerous spiritual bypassing slogan of "love and light" for decades and are now selling tribalistic, white Christian nationalism.

### ***1.1.5 Evangelical Christianity***

Evangelicalism is tied to the Protestant sect of the Christian religion. Defining Evangelicalism is as elusive as nailing down one dominant philosophy found in New Age ideology. As I researched the origins of Evangelicals, I asked Christians and non-Christians alike to define what the word "evangelical" meant to them. I received a myriad of answers: a mega church, a type of Christian follower charged with spreading the gospel, a fundamental religious movement to "Billy Graham, right?" Not unlike the search for a definitive central figure or simplistic definition when pinpointing the anthology of New Age beliefs, comparatively, Evangelicalism also lacks a modern principle representative leader and universal synopsis most people can agree on. "Because they span a range of denominations, churches, and organizations, there is no single membership statement to delineate identity. As a result, individual observers are left to decide how to define what makes someone or something *evangelical*. 'To the pollster, it is a sociological term. To the pastor, it is a denominational or doctrinal term. And to the politician, it is a synonym for a white Christian Republican'" (The Atlantic). In 2018, Bruce Hindmarsh a contributing writer for Christianity Today summarized Evangelicals as those who have

"...been centrally concerned with what it means to discover a personally meaningful relationship with Christ through conversion. The Bible has been central to their lives as not only a Supreme authority belief and practice but also the object of their affections and instrument of their devotion. Christ's cross has had an exalted place in evangelical worship, central to preaching of a Christ who suffered and died 'for me' as the means of conversion and source of gratitude. Finally, assurance of sins forgiven has produced confidence and energy for Christian mission that has propelled evangelicals to the farthest reaches and darkest corners of the world in service of Christ."

Just as New Age beliefs lack a central figure or simple definition, Evangelicalism spans denominations, churches, and organizations, making it difficult to pinpoint a concise identity. The diversity of interpretations, from a mega church to a fervent Christian spreading the gospel, underscores the complexity. Reflecting this diversity, the description above sees Evangelicals as centrally concerned with a personally meaningful relationship with Christ through conversion, emphasizing the Bible's supreme authority, Christ's sacrificial role, and assurance of sins forgiven as driving forces for Christian mission.

#### ***1.1.6 Summary***

Giving a historical background may provide a way to connect the dots between The New Age movement, Evangelicalism, and QAnon and their very incestuous relationship. The gendered difference represented in two of the three communities (Qanon+Evangelical Christianity) is historically a male-dominated one. In contrast, The New Age movement leans to a more historically female participation. However, the co-opted militaristic speak of men e.g. “warriors” or “patriots” and has been camouflaged through female-targeted propaganda e.g. “mamma bears” and “divine spiritual warriors” has succeeded in appealing to a growing number of women throughout all three of these camps. This calculated semantic weapon is used to produce a maternal, emotional response in women to disregard facts, science, and modern medicine.

## **1.2 Literature Review**

In an effort to theorize these movements, I look to the anthropological and historical texts on Millenarianism and the Horseshoe theory as a place to begin. I aim to locate the common ground between politically opposing camps to further unpack how the spiritual, wellness, and

political overlap into the world of Conspirituality during the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of Trump as our anointed savior from the global cabal.

### ***1.2.1 Origins of Millenarianism: Religion and Politics***

Veiled messages of a coming ideological war were heard by the Evangelicals and I would argue, the social media charismatic spiritual influencers alike, namely those who were paying attention to the “signs” (“Q” drops) and were preparing to “level up” when the “Great Awakening” approached. As the 2020 Presidential election progressed more self-proclaimed Conservative Christian “patriots” promoted the re-election of their messianic savior President Trump. Trump offered a kind of pseudo-salvation in physical form, one that would save the United States from “the swamp,” the dirty elites, and “woke” fake news media outlets. The time for global salvation was percolating to a tipping point and I would argue here that the theory of millenarian movements assisted in explaining how this gearing up for holy religious and political battle became newly weaponized for our current political times.

In simplistic definition of the word “millennium” translates from Latin to mean “a period of a thousand years.” A “millenarian movement” used in its current form departs from the stricter historical context to that of a typological one, “to designate religious movements that expect imminent, total, ultimate, this-worldly collective salvation” (Millenarian Movements). Israeli sociologist and author Yonina Talmon states that “all millenarian movements are preoccupied with the search for means of establishing that the final resolution is approaching, and for discovering the timetable of the impending decisive events. Calculation by means of exegesis of ancient texts, and employment of esoteric formulas, mystical signs and symbolic numbers are very prevalent” (Talmon). This is of importance when relating the mystic with the religious; a nod to the relationship that was brewing between the alt-right Evangelicals and the New Age

followers as medical disinformation, and the whispers of a political and holy Armageddon (“The Storm”) language came into the national conversation. Salvation, an idea firmly grounded in a millenarian philosophy would be understood by those who were the most steadfast in their faith, those who were the “chosen people.”

### ***1.2.2 Horseshoe Theory and History***

Horseshoe Theory helps us see the larger picture when we examine how the far-left with its New Age followers juxtaposed with the far-right Conservatives cross-pollinate under a similar ideological QAnon umbrella. This Horseshoe theory can be explained as a curved arch where two philosophical extremes situate themselves at either end; the far-right and the far left of the political spectrum do not necessarily publicly join in solidarity with each other, yet, come quite close to overlapping in current politics beliefs. The Centrist view stands at the middle point and is the furthest in proximity to either extreme.

Jean-Pierre Faye, credited with the Horseshoe theory posits the idea that both extremes share in authoritarian propaganda. Commenting further, reformist Muslim Maajid Nawaz adds “if we travel far-left enough, we find the very same sneering, nasty and reckless bully-boy tactics used by the far-right. The two extremes of the political spectrum end up meeting like a horseshoe, at the top, which to my mind symbolizes totalitarian control from above. In their quest for ideological purity, Stalin and Hitler had more in common than modern neo-Nazis and far-left agitators would care to admit” (The Daily Beast).

Criticizing the U.S. government's handling and late reactionary response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the early back-and-forth contradictory support of mask efficacy and the fumbling rollout of the COVID vaccine produced a narrative that constructed itself around a *perceived* coordinated attack to personal freedoms. This narrative was shared by spiritual and wellness

communities *and* the hyper-patriotic Conservative Religious Right. “Recent research indicates that the dominant variables that characterize far-right- and left-wing extremist groups are often adopted due to certain social circumstances, grievances, and beliefs. Although at times its relation or link to a conspiracy may be apparent, such groups often try not to overtly associate or adopt positions directly related to the conspiracy, primarily because this increases the likelihood of their missions and objectives becoming discredited” (Extremist Manifestation). Optimizing and exploiting the country’s vulnerabilities and insecurities through mix messages around the pandemic and touting non-peer-reviewed medical misinformation on social media provided the opportunity to sow social discord and simultaneously capture new followers into QAnon conspiracies.

### ***1.2.3 Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America***

“Born again” Christians who lean to the right of America’s political system have a history in this country for leading the charge against secular humanism. Famous faces of the Evangelical movement, such as the fundamentalist pastor Jerry Falwell, televangelist Pat Robertson, or scandal tainted Jim and Tammy Bakker came in and out of our memories yet had a visible and “dominant influence on American culture, morals, and politics” (The Evangelicals). The phrase “The Great Awakening” finds its historical roots in a significant period of American history characterized by religious revivals. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Evangelical preachers played a pivotal role in disseminating the teachings of the gospel, aiming to reignite a fervent spiritual commitment among believers. These preachers sought to inspire a profound and deeply personal dedication to Christ, fostering a spiritual awakening that would transcend mere religious observance. The objective was not only to fortify the faith of existing believers but also to attract and engage potential new members, encouraging them to join the church community.

"The Great Awakening" thus served as a rallying cry for a transformative spiritual movement that sought to reshape the religious landscape, instilling a renewed passion for faith, and inviting individuals to embark on a profound journey of spiritual exploration and commitment.

***1.2.4 Alt-Health Influencers: How Wellness Culture and Web Culture have been Weaponized to Promote Conspiracy Theories and Far-Right Extremism During the COVID-19 Pandemic***

Looking directly at the correlation between alt-health and wellness influencers carefully curated social media platforms and the tactics these influencers employ to garner loyal New Age/spiritual followers, Stephanie Alice Bakers thoroughly investigates how far-right extremism has been emboldened, spreading under the banner of virtuous, elitist individualism, censorship martyrdom, preying on the insecurities of a nation gripped by a global pandemic. The speed through which personalized anecdotal advice, unsubstantiated natural remedies cures, and the lure of "positive thinking your way to optimal health" expedite itself through the wildly unregulated world wide web, makes debunking conspiracy theories that much more difficult to locate and censor. Using a qualitative case study of four mini-celebrity online wellness influencers, Bakers investigates how the tactics of self-presentation were weaponized to establish influence and status during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the examples is Dr. Kelly Brogan, a "holistic psychiatrist." Brogan has well over 130,000 followers on Instagram alone. Bakers writes "The pursuit of wellness is also conceived in terms of health optimization ('peak wellness') and human potentiality (Dunn), which resonates with the New Age movement's emphasis on self-actualization and spiritual awakening. Both purport to provide personal solutions to the hidden agendas and nefarious politics presented by conspiratorial worldviews" (Baker).

Brogan, amongst other female mini- celebrity influencers, positions themselves as an authoritative figure, yet portrays themselves as intimately accessible by the illusion that *they* are really *one of us*. It's important to point out here that those who embody a level of distrust in the pharmaceutical industry, vaccines = autism and the COVID-19 vaccine (tracking device) or those who are weary of our GMO "poisoned" foods are already an audience that shares a belief system based on the pursuit of *the truth*. Baker elaborates further:

"Nutritional and spiritual guidance is shared in conjunction with personalized messages to their followers, whom they address as friends and equals. There are references to their followers as "friends," "family," "folks," "us" and "we," the use of inclusive pronouns and the first-person plural bringing their audience into being as a united group bound by their pursuit of Truth. In addition to purporting to reveal the "Truth," alt. health influencers discuss "love" and "energy," encouraging their followers to embark on a journey of self-actualization as though they were a supportive friend."

The gendered language Brogan uses when she describes the "mommy medical system" and "daddy government system" creates a familiarity as if it's just women talking to women casually. Again, she creates a space of trust and accessibility for her female followers. Instead of presenting peer-reviewed medical advice during the pandemic, Brogan weaponized the New Age slogans of "trusting your body," your intuition, and your second brain, the gut, discounting sound medical advice to stop the spread of a deadly virus. By aligning yourself to the camp of "pure" food and a "clean" diet, one can imply a moral superiority, an enlightened state of awareness, of a purity of the mind, body, and spirit. Bakers acknowledge that "corporal purification is easily weaponized by alt. health influencers to spread beliefs about spiritual and ethnic superiority. Just as wellness devotees share their conversion stories about eschewing 'nasty chemicals,' toxins, and unhealthy diets in favor of clean eating and a healthy lifestyle, alt. health influencers speak of "waking up" and being red-pilled into a state of enlightenment."



### 1.3 Methodologies

Historically, self-care, mind-body-spirit, and holistic doctrines have been associated in the liberal and progressive wellness arena. Influencers like Dr. Kelly Brogan, Guru Jagat, and Stephanie Birch, who initially promoted a "love and light" image on social media, have shifted towards advocating a "pastel Q" narrative. As I mentioned earlier, "Pastel Q" is a "collection of techniques and strategies that use 'soft' feminine aesthetics" ("Instagram Aesthetic"). This feminine aesthetic involves pastel colors and a feminine-centered language targeting the "maternal instincts" many women embody. Consequently, some of these same women now feel charged with "waking us up" to the "Great Awakening"<sup>3</sup>, the government's secret child trafficking ring or the anti-science agenda by standing up against a political attack designed to abolish their constitutional freedom (Bloom and Moskalenko).

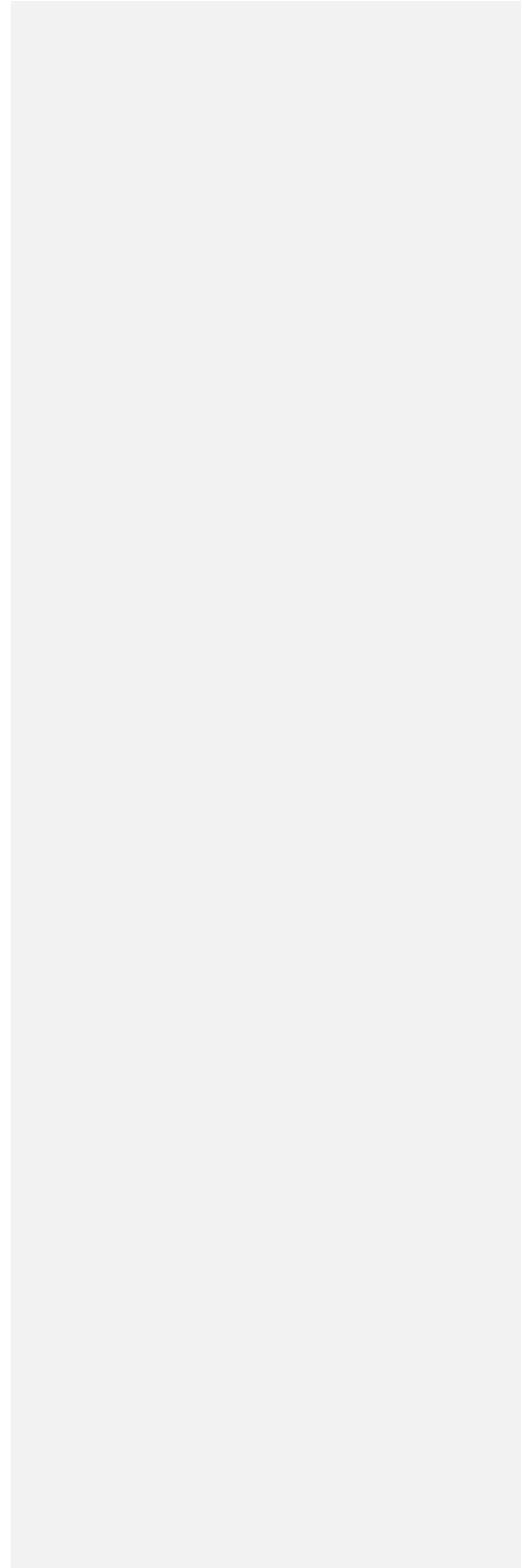
Because Women's, Gender, and Sexuality studies are multi-disciplinary, I intend to use two methods to approach a woman's participation in Conspirituality. I aim to provide a feminist analysis to explore the intersections of gender (women), race (White), and class (upper to middle class) as I argue how this demographic may be prone to support the denial of science, reason, and reality under the right circumstances. This thesis proposal allows me to examine social media conversations, the emotionally charged language utilized, and conspiracy theory narratives currently rampant in wellness and online spiritual and religious communities. Discourse and linguistic analysis will be the research methods I choose to implement. Using these research methods, I examine how middle to upper-class, educated, liberal, female social media yoga and spiritual gurus in virtual health and wellness spaces build community by pushing conspiracy theory narratives that overlap with the Conservative Alt-right narrative. My theoretical framework consists of multiple methods for examining online conspiracy theories: analyzing

how language acts as the bridge between the alt-right and New Age communities and how scholars more accurately predict future conspiratorial trends developing between these communities online.

One of the methods I focus on for this thesis includes cyberethnography. I will focus on two specific social media platforms between 2016 and 2022. These two platforms are Instagram and Facebook. Cyber-ethnography is a complementary approach to discourse analysis for observing online human behavior, shared values, and beliefs using a particular type of language within the wellness and online spiritual spaces (Garcia et al.). This analysis works by concentrating and tracking key phrases born out of alternative wellness spaces that have now become key talking points on the Conservative Right, e.g., "big pharma", 5G and secret tracking devices, anti-vaxxers, or the Covid "hoax".

The second method utilized is Psycholinguistic analysis. A psycholinguistic analysis is a branch pulled from linguistics and psychology, used to explore how language, words, and phrases evoke an emotional affect response to hearing emotionally charged phrases repeated over time (Jodai). The Facebook and Instagram accounts of Dr. Christiane Northrup and Dr. Kelly Brogan will all allow me to examine and unpack medical disinformation repeated in alternative health and wellness spaces. I argue that the spiritual and wellness communities are not only majority woman-centered but vulnerable to "Conspirituality" (conspiracy+spirituality) through gender-targeted propaganda. Ultimately, my goal will be to articulate appropriate and valuable methods, including elements of Cyber-Ethnography and Psycholinguistic analysis, for studying the targeting of female spiritual and wellness followers by alt-right-infused conspiracy theories. This research is essential for understanding the mechanisms driving the intersection of alternative spiritual practices and extremist ideologies, providing insights into the vulnerabilities

and persuasive strategies used in the hopes of safeguarding against the potential radicalization of these communities.



## 2 CHAPTER TWO:

### 2.1 Areas of Political, Moral and Community Overlap

In this chapter, I will explore the structural commonalities, political ideals, and shared moral obligational links between New Age female influencers and Evangelical Christian women. I will offer QAnon's recently co-opted hashtags "Save the Children" and "The Great Awakening" as two recent examples. The "Save the Children" slogan was originally created by a 100-year-old non-partisan, humanitarian organization dedicated to the wellbeing of children around the globe. The current use of these two slogans are utilized in conversation around the general growing distrust in our institutions, vaccine hesitancy, and the language of sovereignty as it pertains to self-governance and body autonomy. I use these examples to show the ways in which two seemingly paradoxical ideological communities have found common ground inside QAnon's propaganda. I argue that once these socially constructed gendered roles and commonalities are explored from the alt-right and the alt-left more comprehensively it might help us better untangle the convergence we perhaps have witnessed with our family members, friends, and co-workers who cross the religious and political spectrum into the world of conspiracies.

I fear if I lead with lizard people, 5G, and the activation of Big Pharma's microchipped COVID vaccines or young children being bought and sold using secret codes by secret circles of Hollywood's blood-drinking pedophilic elites (Jews) via armoires sold on Wayfair, you, the reader will perhaps roll your eyes in disbelief and compartmentalize these types of conspiracies to the fringe people with tin foil hats. However, the dismissiveness of the reality and very real political consequences of these conspiracy theories is a dangerous position from which to argue where truth resides and critical thinking ends. The dismissive stance toward the tangible

consequences of conspiracy theories undermines a collective understanding of reality and blurs the line between truth and fiction. This can lead to a society where critical thinking is compromised, creating fertile ground for the unchecked spread of misinformation, erosion of democratic values, and potential harm to individuals and communities who may be adversely affected by misguided actions stemming from these unfounded beliefs.

### ***2.1.1 Save the Children & The Great Awakening***

A well-documented and sensationalized disinformation crusade during the height of QAnon's permeation into women's social media circles was the use of the "Save the Children" hashtag. In 2020, when Save the Children became a co-opted slogan inside QAnon's big tent of conspiracy theories, Conservative religious women and spiritual wellness followers banded together under the auspice of protecting our vulnerable babies from being trafficked by the evil cabal for carnal pleasure and blood libel.<sup>4</sup> This QAnon slogan was co-opted from the global non-governmental organization founded in the UK in 1919 by Eglantyne Jebb, a social reformer, and her sister Dorothy Buxton. The sisters set out to better the lives of children and mitigate starvation in children during WW1. Currently, Save the Children's website lists its ambition for 2030: "to create a world in which 'no child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday, all children learn from a quality basic education, and violence against children is no longer tolerated'" (Save the Children).

As the Save the Children hashtag began to gain traction on social media in 2020, many yoga followers, progressive moms groups, and spiritual influencers began using the hashtag as a battle cry to other moms and women in similar online circles in efforts to raise awareness to the

---

<sup>4</sup> All claims of such deplorable acts have been debunked numerous times.

human trafficking epidemic sweeping the nation (Cheetham). That same year, in October 2020, Amanda Seitz, writer for the Associated Press spoke about how “QAnon and “Save the Children” have become such a force in the online yoga community that influencers including yoga teacher Seane Corn posted letters on Instagram last month warning followers not to ‘be fooled’ by slickly crafted posts spreading misinformation about human trafficking” (Seitz). Seane Corn, a well-known “internationally-acclaimed yoga teacher, author, and public speaker who has been at the forefront of yoga, activism, and community service for 30+ years and established yoga instructor” was one of the first big names in the yoga and wellness world to call out false narratives and QAnon misinformation ([seanecorn.com](http://seanecorn.com)). The pushback online from the yoga community was swift. “The vitriol was intense. The messages that I received privately were definitely violent” said Corn (Sy and Nagy).

What felt like overnight, the surge in the "pastel Q" aesthetic took over platforms like Instagram and Facebook. It was frequently associated with the hashtag "Save the Children." This combination of feminine imagery and language aimed to raise awareness about child trafficking was presented as a pervasive issue, particularly in the United States, despite being repeatedly debunked by credible sources.

QAnon’s usage of “Save the Children”, “has created significant problems for legitimate anti-trafficking organizations, strained law enforcement with false “tips” about trafficked children and undermined the fundraising efforts of legitimate charities dedicated to child protection” (Seitz). What decent, moral human being would stand in opposition to these ideas? It is important to remember that for any real conspiracy theory to hold traction, it must have a shred of truth at its core. Do children starve every day in the world, yes, are children trafficked for sex in across the globe, yes. However, taking a minuscule component of truth and employing fear-

based affectual language to pull in an ever-expanding audience of women is where the conspiracy starts and truth and statistics become less and less essential.

In October of 2020, a spokesperson for Facebook did announce that they were taking the initiative to limit the distribution of the “Save the Children” hashtag given “we’ve found that content tied to it is now associated with QAnon. When people search for it, they will now see the credible child safety resources” (Hatmaker). In my personal and current observation online, I still see the “Save the Children” slogan in use for both the humanitarian organization and Qanon propaganda. Being that this hashtag can still direct the user to a legitimate organization or a conspiracy theory, it is not easy to determine who really owns this slogan currently.

The use of "Save the Children" and similar hashtags served to alert women with similar interests and concerns about the perceived crisis of child trafficking. Countless women influencers and social media figures took it upon themselves to become the champions of this cause, driven by a sense of white saviorism. White saviorism is a term used to represent individuals from privileged backgrounds, often white women with a savior complex, who felt compelled to save or rescue less privileged communities or individuals. Influencers who adopted this cause considered themselves the bearers of truth and righteousness, and they were not shy about it. They often declared that those who disagreed or questioned their beliefs should unfollow and block their accounts, further emphasizing their unwavering commitment to their cause and their intolerance for differing perspectives.

As mentioned in my introduction, I am drawn to unpacking how this type of affectual language like *Save the Children* can be used as the “instrumental vehicle through which a moral commitment may be perverted and used as a psycholinguistic weapon” to tug at the maternal heartstrings of women. In doing so, I only need to take a brief look back in history to 2009 for an

applicable example, The Tea Party. When we investigate this deeply conservative populist party, we see how Conservative women created a language and role for themselves next to their male counterparts (Sparks). In the Economist's 2010 article, "The Mama-Bear Movement", a quote claimed that if anything was noteworthy about the Tea Party, is that "it's full of skirts" (Austin).

The article goes on to mention:

"If the Tea Party has any legitimate national leadership, it is dominated by women. Of the eight board members of the Tea Party Patriots who serve as national coordinators for the movement, six are women. Fifteen of the 25 state coordinators are women. One of the three main sponsors of the Tax Day Tea Party that launched the movement is a group called Smart Girl Politics....Despite its explosive growth over the last year, it is still operated like a feminist cooperative, with three stay-at-home moms taking turns raising babies and answering e-mails and phone calls. Spokeswoman Rebecca Wales describes it as a group made up of 'a lot of mama bears worried about their families.' The Tea Party, she says, is a natural home for women because 'for a long-time people have seen the parties as good-ole'-boy', male-run institutions. In the Tea Party, women have finally found their voice."

A feminized language was promoted by the "mama grizzly" archetype and the "protection of her cubs" narrative that helped solidify a woman's role within the Tea Party, thus, providing a historical road map for the current conservative populist movement, QAnon. "Christians and more specifically evangelical Christians have a long-recorded history of defending and protecting the sanctity of 'family values,' e.g., the nuclear god-fearing family and the binary gender roles to be exercised in and outside the home" (Bloom, Rollings, 2022).

In 2022, I wrote in more depth about QAnon, Evangelical Christian women, and family values for The Journal of Religion and Violence coauthored by Dr. Mia Bloom, Communications professor at Georgia State University. Bloom is an author and expert in Islamic and Middle East studies whose area of main expertise focuses on "ethnic conflict, rape in war, child soldiers, female terrorists, and terrorist communications" (Goldman). For this article I offered how "most successful mass movements need mass mobilization to establish political and ideological ground; QAnon is no exception. To sideline women's participation in QAnon's conspiracy theory's



growing mainstream appeal and its rapid political influence would be a tactical misstep” (Bloom, Rollings). Understanding and addressing the active participation of women in QAnon is crucial for comprehending the movement's broader impact on society and politics. Dismissing the significance of women's involvement may undermine efforts to counteract the movement's sway and the potential dangers it poses. I argued further “*how* women participate in QAnon has been one that calls for a “patriotic femineity” reinforcing the religious right’s conservative family values. Moreover, “antifeminist rhetoric cloaked in paternal evangelism is used to call in more conservative Christian women to the front lines of the QAnon movement.

The titles of mother, child bearer, caretaker, and defender of the innocent and the vulnerable make a woman’s worth inextricably tied to upholding and recreating future patriots. Consequently, the female body becomes the physical location on which to control and regulate the reproduction of the nation’s future good citizens via social control” (Bloom, Rollings). The maternal pull to save the vulnerable, the weak and the innocent initially pulled women into QAnon like a giant morality magnet. Women historically placated by the sexist tropes that claimed they were “too hysterical, too emotional, and better left at home with the children, white evangelical women found proximity to power next to their white evangelical male counterparts.” Women had found new opportunity and positions of power, a place to be of force in the realm of men. “The ‘mama grizzlies’ and gun-toting Christian women were welcomed to the QAnon table using their talents of organizing and recruitment” (Bloom, Rollings).

Paradoxically, in this same timeframe online, the discourse rapidly circulating inside the New Age wellness/spiritual communities was rife with anti-mask, anti-vaccine, and a visceral distrust of Western medicine more generally and “Big Pharma” more specifically. A movement like New Age or present-day Spiritualism is constructed and ruled by the “alternative” e.g.

alternative medicine, alternative thinking, alternatively curated ways of living, and an epistemology centering on the individual. Encompassing these examples are all the ways in which the alternative embodiment of knowing and decoding hidden wisdom may help one feel more spiritually evolved, connected to the *truth*, and a feeling of solace when actively procuring more control over one's own life, especially when we're in a deep state of panic and desperately trying to make some sense of this new deadly virus. This individualistic approach extends a feeling of personal empowerment and the connection to a perceived truth. The desire for control over one's environment, particularly in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is underscored by this same individualistic epistemology embedded in the New Age and spiritualist ideologies.

A particular word or phrase that I began to witness as a dangerous red flag (as a recovering New Ager) is the word "awakening" or "The Great Awakening." The Great Awakening to New Agers signals an undeniable spiritual shift in the collective consciousness, a leveling up, metaphorically speaking. In March of 2021, the Public Religion Research Institute conducted a study showing "28 percent of white evangelical Republicans agreed that "God always rewards those who have faith with good health and will protect them from being infected with COVID-19" adding further that "Sixty-nine percent of white evangelical Republicans who said they refused to get vaccinated agreed that the end times were near" (Jackson). The concept of the second coming of Christ is a well-known recurring theme in Christian theology, representing the belief that Jesus Christ will return to Earth in the future to fulfill various prophecies and bring about a new era. Similarly, the New Age idea of a "Great Awakening" signifies a collective awakening or enlightenment, for those who are paying attention, will gain new insights and understanding about the world and their spiritual ascension. The notion of

waiting for a significant event to occur, particularly one of spiritual or cosmic significance, highlights the enduring nature of religious and spiritual beliefs across time and generations. And as the years drudge on and as each generation passes, how long do we lay in wait?

The Great Awakening is also a commonly repeated phrase Dr. Northrup uses on her Facebook page and will be examined more deeply in the chapter to come. That regurgitated word “awakening” in its proximity to QAnon moves like a verb, a charge to alert others of something malevolent stirring on the horizon, a rebirthing of the Self, or the “downloading” of new knowledge breaking through the unconscious version of themselves. Dr. Northrup uses the phrase as a reminder warning us of the global shift we all must be preparing for in the near future. For context, it is important to keep in mind that within the marrow of New Age beliefs is the idea that we are here to “wake up.” New Age offers the idea that we are all here in “earth school” a place to “remember our true or higher selves” by uncovering the secrets of the universe actualized by a deep connection to our higher selves (Rosetree).

### ***2.1.2 Institutional Distrust and COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy***

Another supplementary cross-pollination observed in the more liberal, spiritual camps vs the Conservative ecclesiastical wing is a general and overall growing institutional distrust and a nod to the deep state’s shadowy authority by virtue of the nefariously controlled U.S. medical and governmental institutions. The connection between this holistic worldview and skepticism about vaccines is noteworthy. Within certain conspiratorial circles, vaccines, particularly when it comes to children’s health and safety, have been met with suspicion and apprehension. This association is rooted in concerns about the perceived risks associated with vaccinations, most of which are unfounded or debunked by scientific research. The belief that vaccines might pose potential harm, often related to issues like autism or other adverse effects, has contributed to a

narrative where the protection of children is framed in opposition to conventional vaccination practices. The intertwining of these narratives reflects a broader cultural phenomenon where the desire to safeguard the well-being of children can lead individuals to adopt alternative and sometimes unsubstantiated approaches, even in the face of scientific consensus.

The hashtag “Big Pharma” and vaccine skepticism ran rampant in Conservative christian circles online. In 2021, the NIH published an article looking specifically at religious conservatism and its correlation to anti-vaxx attitudes and COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. The article “Christian Nationalism and COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy and Uptake” looked at the similarity between Evangelical Christians and Christian nationalists. The article concluded that both share a deep skepticism of Big Pharma and the COVID-19 vaccines. Christian nationalists believe that “the nation is on the brink of moral decay” and that “God requires the faithful to wage wars for good.” Further, it has a “cultural framework that is connected to patriarchy, nativism, racial intolerance, and support for political conservatism, heterosexual marriage, and the U.S. military” (BD). Understanding these connections is crucial for policymakers, public health officials, and researchers as they work to address vaccine hesitancy and promote widespread vaccination for the ever-present COVID-19 virus. It emphasizes the intricate web of influences shaping attitudes toward vaccines, encompassing not only religious and moral beliefs but also wider cultural and political ideologies.

Science and biblical scriptures based on faith rarely locate areas of mutuality, especially when Christian conservatives claim moral authority on ethical matters and will swiftly denounce ideas contrary to scripture. The same article above used a study from 2019 determining “Christian nationalism had the second largest association with anti-vaccination attitudes after race and was the strongest predictor of believing that “vaccines cause autism”, “children are

given too many vaccines”, and vaccines do not “help protect children.” It is not surprising then, that white Christian nationalists did not respond favorably to scientific recommendations regarding how to reduce the spread of COVID-19” (Whitehead and Perry). Recognizing the pervasive skepticism of "Big Pharma" and vaccines within Conservative christian circles, particularly among those aligned with Christian nationalism, highlights the need for a nuanced approach by policymakers and public health officials. Understanding the interconnected influences of moral, cultural, and political factors is essential for effectively addressing vaccine hesitancy and fostering widespread COVID-19 vaccination.

In times of crisis or social upheaval, a recurring theme often emerges, where political and health-related narratives tend to center around the protection of children. This inclination is not exclusive to mainstream discourse; it also finds its way into the spiritual and wellness communities. These communities have a well-established history of favoring holistic and alternative approaches over pharmaceutical solutions for addressing physical, mental, and spiritual health concerns. This preference is evident in their adoption of practices like acupuncture, adherence to strict organic diets, energy healing techniques such as Reiki, meditation, and the practice of manifesting desires. These methods are readily accessible through the myriad of offerings of the spiritual marketplace, catering to individuals seeking alternative paths to well-being.

Two decades ago, a physician-researcher named Andrew Wakefield published a study that gained significant attention and ultimately discreditation. In his study, Wakefield examined an exceedingly small sample of only 12 children, and he made the alarming claim that the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine was linked to the development of autism in children. Even though it was subsequently revealed that Wakefield's study was deeply flawed,

and its findings and claims were debunked by extensive scientific research, the fear generated by his initial charge continued to spread at a breakneck speed inside progressive mommy circles and liberal leaning parenting groups. This fear and misinformation, unfortunately, persist and can be found in the social media feeds of women and parents worldwide, perpetuating unfounded doubts about the safety of vaccines and contributing to vaccine hesitancy. “Vaccine refusal has become such a problem that some countries in Europe are now cracking down, making vaccines mandatory for children and fining parents who reject them. In 2019, the World Health Organization called vaccine hesitancy one of the top threats to global health” (Belluz). The foundation of distrust baked into the collective psyche had already been established by the time the debate of efficacy and long-term side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine propagated online. The Andrew Wakefield case serves as a stark example of the enduring power of misinformation and how it can shape public perception and influence decision-making, even when it has been thoroughly discredited by the scientific community.

I’d like to interject an additional viewpoint here, some of which comes from personal experience being raised in and curating the better part of the last 40+ years of my life around the use of New Age language, spiritual modalities, and communities. Women, for what feels like a millennia have had issues, ailments, and symptoms that modern medicine has not been able to explain or alleviate. Repeated trips to allopathic doctors for answers have left many women, me included, walking away feeling unheard, unbelieving, with their symptoms dismissed as “that’s just the way it is.” I also know from personal experience women searching for alternative solutions to ongoing symptoms for “fill in the blank”, is not at all uncommon when you have come to the end of your rope with the patriarchal medical industrial complex that appears wildly

out of touch and grossly under educated around women's bodies, to search for answers in alternative health spaces.

During one of the most turbulent periods in recent history, New Age wellness brands have seized an opportune moment to present an alternative narrative. Armed with New Age philosophies that heavily emphasize intuition, they promote the idea that "listening to your gut" is a more trustworthy guide than the medical advice of Western doctors. The wellness industry, which rakes in billions of dollars annually, as a whole capitalizes on this philosophy by providing anecdotal responses to health queries, unverified quick fixes, and a heavy reliance on personal intuition for self-diagnosis. Central to this movement is the notion that the individual holds the key to their health and well-being, guided by their inner intuition.

In addition to looking within, what's particularly crucial in times of turbulence, is the sense of belonging to a community. During the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of a sense of belonging to your chosen community becomes even more pronounced. The spiritual and wellness communities play a multifaceted role in individuals' lives, offering not only shared beliefs but also a platform for emotional support, comfort, and empowerment. Particularly during times of uncertainty, such as a global health crisis, individuals may turn to these communities seeking a sense of connection, solace, and understanding that goes beyond conventional measures.

Within spiritual and wellness circles, the confirmation bias loop can be especially influential. Members of these communities often share similar perspectives on holistic health, alternative healing methods, and spiritual well-being. In this supportive environment, individuals are likely to encounter validation for their beliefs and experiences, further solidifying a shared worldview. This reinforcement can create a powerful sense of unity and mutual understanding,

fostering a community that not only shares health-related information but also interprets it through a collective lens.

This convergence of factors becomes particularly problematic when set against the backdrop of a global pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis compelled those who could afford to do so, to isolate themselves in their homes, separated from friends and family. During this time, there was widespread confusion due to the changing health guidelines issued by organizations such as the CDC and WHO. With ample free time and the phrase "do your own research" echoing through the internet, individuals had the opportunity to immerse themselves in online information and discussions, which sometimes reinforced unsubstantiated or pseudoscientific beliefs.

In the context of the beliefs held by many in the New Age movement, conventional facts, mainstream science, and the pharmaceutical industry are often perceived as adversaries or part of the land of the enemy. New Age spirituality tends to emphasize a distinct, often feminized, metaphysical language that revolves around concepts like *nature*, *natural*, *ancient*, *energy*, and *awakening*. These terms harken back to a mythic era, a nostalgic past, where healing was thought to be accessible through a priestess, goddess, or shaman. This nostalgia often idealizes a time when people had a closer connection to the "old ways" and indigenous customs, as well as higher spiritual planes.

The language and symbolism used in the New Age evoke a romanticized view of a bygone era when individuals were believed to be more in tune with the rhythms of nature and the cosmos. This era is imagined as a time when esoteric wisdom was readily accessible, and ancient practices held the key to healing, personal growth, and spiritual enlightenment. The appeal of these ideas lies in the desire to return to a simpler, more holistic way of life that is seen as more



attuned to the natural world. However, it's important to note that while these New Age ideas may provide a sense of empowerment and connection for some, they are often not grounded in any specific historical time period or scientific evidence and can sometimes lead individuals away from well-established medical and scientific practices. This can have real-world consequences when it comes to health and well-being, underscoring the importance of a balanced and evidence-based approach to health and spirituality (Rutjens and Veckalov). As mentioned earlier, the clumsy roll out of vaccine information, the state's disagreements over mask mandates, and continuous revisions and updates on COVID guidelines coming from the COVID-19 Task Force early on in the pandemic created a landscape of confusion and panic.

Spiritual health and wellness influencers on social media not only took this moment of instability as a marketing opportunity, but they also used the chaos of the times to promote alternative healing modalities as an alternative to conventional vaccines. In doing so, they not only seized this opportunity for financial gain but also experienced a surge in profits. They marketed and sold self-promoted immune-boosting supplements, mystical elixirs, positive thinking mantras, and debunked over-the-counter remedies, often touting them as the ultimate solutions for health and well-being. For example, Erin Elizabeth a well-known alternative health and wellness advocate and current romantic partner of Joseph Mercola, both firmly situated on the Disinformation Dozen list, is known for her anti-vax, anti-science rhetoric. Elizabeth is the creator and owner of Health Nut News, a website dedicated to alternative health, politics, and non-GMO recipes. She even has her own products page where you can buy non-FDA approved tinctures, elixirs and the debunked ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine alternative treatments for COVID-19. Elizabeth has been called out for her antisemitic conspiracy theories, yet still

receives affiliate marketing income for promoting disinformation videos (Gilbert). Elizabeth has been totally deplatformed from Instagram and Facebook since September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Beyond the alarming presence of anti-science propaganda, an additional cause for concern lies in the appropriation of a concept often found in the New Age movement—that individuals can "think themselves well." This perspective implies that through positive thinking, affirmations, and perhaps alternative therapies like essential oils, individuals can manifest physical well-being. While promoting a positive mindset and holistic health practices can be beneficial, applying this belief to a life-threatening virus like COVID-19 is problematic. The implication here is that those who contracted and succumbed to the virus somehow failed to manifest wellness in their lives. This assertion, borrowed from the New Age playbook, can be deeply hurtful and insulting. It creates a narrative that places the blame on individuals for their own illness, suggesting that their inability to "think themselves well" led to their tragic outcomes. This not only oversimplifies the complex nature of infectious diseases but also adds an unnecessary layer of guilt or shame, especially for the loved ones of those who lost their lives to COVID-19.

Multiple pro-female/anti-establishment wellness leaders took a vocal stance against medical authority, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to their anti-science perspective within their insular echo-chamber. A prime example is Dr. Brogan. Goop darling and panel expert Dr. Kelly Brogan, a New York based, previously licensed psychiatrist, or "holistic psychiatrist" as she calls herself, has been associated with medical conspiracy theories for years. Depression can be cured by coffee enemas, not pharmaceuticals, HIV treatments cause patients to die from AIDS, not HIV, and diseases are caused not by infectious agents but by psychological imbalances. These are a few examples of Brogan's past claims (Rothkopf).

Brogan shares the illustrious title alongside Dr. Christian Northrup as 1 of the 12 “Disinformation Dozen”. This group of twelve ppl, according to the Center for Countering Digital Hate, are “tied to up to 65 percent of anti-vaccine content circulating on major social media networking sites” (Srikanth). Brogan, a beautiful, highly educated, thin, able-bodied, wealthy white woman invites “the lone wolves, free thinkers, spirited seekers, dot-connectors and open-hearted compassionate caregivers” to join in monthly subscription plans for “changing insights into *sovereignty, empowered* relationships, health & wellbeing, and *awakened* consumerism. Designed to help you achieve full-spectrum vitality as you step into your most audacious life – *body, mind, and soul*” (Brogan).

With over 26,000 followers on YouTube and 140,000 followers on Instagram, Brogan appeals to the wellness devotee and a growing demographic of unfulfilled women who are disillusioned with their feeling of disconnection to their bodies, women with an undercurrent of resentment that we’re growing further and further away from our connection to the earth, our inherent wildness, and our connection to the feminine. Brogan’s appeal to such a community gained her followers as the pandemic raged forward. Again, the language of war with a feminine twist becomes a linguistic tool to mobilize women into the battle for body sovereignty and personal freedom from vaccine and mask mandates. This new declaration of war of “us vs. them” became a crossover message from the right and the left. Kelly Brogan doubles down by adding, “We are, now, in a spiritual war, and your body is the battlefield” (Baker). In 2022. Brogan released a post on Instagram explaining why it’s not only beneficial but self-empowering for women to trust her, her medical degree, and her cynicism toward the ongoing mainstream COVID-19 narrative. The post reads as follows:

“You may trust me because I have an M.D. That may mean, to you, that I have information that you don’t have. I know things about your body – about bodies – that you are not privy to by virtue of your non-expert station in life.

You may trust me because I am a woman, inspiring the trust of a mother.

What is it, then, for a woman to become a Western physician? Is it perhaps possible that egalitarian feminism has given us an opportunity to feel the difference between a man in a patriarchal role and a woman assuming that same position? Is a woman misusing her power more dangerous than a man? It feels easier to trust a female physician, but what is it to trust a woman who believes the body needs to be managed? Who likely has not cultivated any intimacy with her own body and its interplay with the mind and emotions, let alone the body, mind and emotions of her patient. Perhaps only a woman divested of her own relationship to her body’s innate wisdom could become a Western physician. Fear is in place as an emotional caution tape between our defensive survival strategies of childhood and the *emancipated sovereignty of individuated adulthood*.<sup>5</sup> This is operative for so many right now who feel the irrepressible tension between what we are being told is happening and the sense that we are capable of something more for ourselves. But so many minimize, dismiss, or otherwise defend the mainstream narrative because to do otherwise would require truly cutting the umbilical cord connecting them to *mommy medical system and daddy government*. It would require stepping into their adult authority which is their own, *individual truth and sovereign power*...a terrifying initiation to self that can feel like the world as you know it must end in order to accommodate this new *truth and perceived reality*” (Brogan)

By framing the medical system and government as parental figures, it creates an atmosphere of suspicion and implies that trusting these institutions is akin to remaining in a childlike, submissive state. Additionally, Brogan’s narrative appeals to a sense of individualism and personal truth at the expense of widely accepted scientific and medical knowledge. While individual empowerment and critical thinking are essential, promoting a narrative that suggests a rejection of mainstream medical advice can lead to risky behavior, especially in the context of a global pandemic.

I’d like to bring attention to the power and reach mini celebrity/influencers wield online. There is a framework through which these female New Age-y influencers create efficacious content breaking the fourth wall, and it works. In Madelin Burt-D’Agnillo’s article “Pro-

---

<sup>5</sup> Key words in italics are authors emphasis only. \*

Metabolic Brownies and Anti-Vaccine Rhetoric: COVID-19 Conspiracy Theories, Wellness Influencers, and Misinformation on Instagram (2022), Burt-D'Agnillo references S. A. Baker's work (2022) describing three ways in which online influencers gain followers and establish trust: "First, influencers use their status as micro-celebrities to foster trust and intimacy, promoting values of accessibility, authenticity, ordinariness, and nonhierarchical democratic participation in online discourse. Second, the influencers often evoke the imagery of being a "persecuted hero" for sharing information about COVID-19 and facing censorship from mainstream media and institutional authorities. They turn to social media as an alternative to, and rejection of, mainstream media. Third, the influencers promote a "call to action" to mobilize their followers through "a ludic journey of self-discovery to give the illusion of agency and collaboration in the fight against evil" (Baker, 31).

The online influence of these micro-celebrities is rooted in their ability to establish trust and intimacy by presenting themselves as accessible, authentic, and ordinary; those on the right side of the good vs evil binary. By portraying themselves as persecuted heroes facing censorship, they position social media as an alternative to mainstream sources. It is nothing less than astonishing to watch them engage their followers in a ludic journey of self-discovery, fostering an illusion of agency and collaboration against perceived threats. Recognizing the power and strategies employed by these wellness influencers is crucial for developing countermeasures that promote accurate information and scientific literacy with a discerning approach to social media content consumption.

### ***2.1.3 Body Autonomy, Sovereignty and Freedom***

"My body, My Choice" is an internationally recognized slogan that is deeply rooted in feminist history and global feminist struggles. Since 1969, My Body, My Choice has been used

in feminist activist spaces calling for women's right to body autonomy and the fight for reproductive rights. Heard around the world at pro-feminist rallies and demonstrations in defense of a woman's right to self-determination, self-ownership, freedom of choice, and body integrity, this slogan is based deeply on the idea of consent. Distilled down, it's the right to self-govern. For the last 50 years, anyone who needed an abortion had the right in the United States to have a safe and legal abortion. In a 6-3 ruling by the Supreme Court in June of 2022, with three new anti-abortion Trump appointed judges, the majority Conservative court would vote to overturn Roe Vs Wade and enviably strip women of their body autonomy and the right to have an abortion in the United States. A good deal of American women thought this right to determine when and if we wanted to start a family was one of the proud examples of progressiveness in the United States. So many of us incorrectly assumed the right to a safe abortion would be something future generations would have access to forever. In short, for so many women in our nation, this was unimaginably devastating to witness a human rights ruling rescinded after 50 years of precedent.

With the rise of Trumpism through the support of Evangelical church leaders and well-known pillars in the church going community, religious Conservatives and self-touted sovereign citizens intentionally hijacked the My Body, My Choice slogan co-opting it as their own. The use of the original feminist slogan was now co-opted in protest of the state's mandating of mask wearing, vaccines, and social distancing. Opinion writer for the New York Times and priest in the Anglican Church in North America Tish Harrison Warren argues that "theoretically, religious communities are places that train us toward ends other than individual autonomy. They point us to something bigger and higher than ourselves, calling us to love God and our neighbors. However, this is unfortunately not always the case. Many religious communities have lost their

ability to articulate an alternative to the sovereignty of personal choice and individual autonomy” (Warren).

In theory, as Warren points out, these communities serve as moral compasses, encouraging a focus on higher values and communal well-being, epitomized by the call to love God and neighbors. So, it was alarming to watch many Christian church leaders, those who vocally supported then President Trump, warn parishioners to avoid the first and even second round of COVID-19 vaccinations (Coren). This cognitive dissonance in the religious community becomes particularly poignant during the COVID-19 pandemic, where collective well-being hinges on a shared commitment to public health measures. Addressing this shortfall within religious communities becomes crucial, not only for their own vitality but for their ability to contribute meaningfully to broader societal challenges. To navigate the complexities of the pandemic, it would behoove religious communities to renew their focus on fostering a sense of collective responsibility, compassion, and a commitment to the common good. This recalibration is not only integral to the resilience of these communities but also vital for the broader social fabric during an ongoing pandemic.

In 2021, at the Conservative CPAC convention, low vaccination numbers by attendees were not only praised but loudly applauded. There is no debate that this nation was conceived on the idea and arguably the most deeply held American value, freedom. The freedom and rights we all have in the quest for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. However, “there’s a big difference between deciding to get an abortion and deciding not to get vaccinated against COVID-19: A person who refuses vaccinations can more easily contract the virus and spread it to others. A woman getting an abortion doesn’t affect anyone else” (LA Times). Having access to safe and legal abortion and wearing a cloth over your mouth or receiving a lifesaving vaccine

to help keep individuals out of the hospital that was already on the brink of collapse is not the same argument.

Just like Save the Children, My Body, My Choice became the meme to signify one's protest of the government's overreach written in Sharpie on a handmade poster waved at anti-vax rallies across the country. I was personally shocked at the sheer amount of women holding these signs of false equivalency. It was confusing, to say the least. Confusion turned to anger as the hypocrisy hit me in the face that these female-led protests I witnessed in the South were also pushing MAGA (Make America Great Again) slogans with religious overtones thrown in for good measure. "[T]hese people weren't protesting a government that was regulating uterus, a government that was telling women when they could end a pregnancy that was going on in their bodies. They were instead protesting a simple and painless public health measure. They were mad at the idea of having to wear a piece of fabric on their faces. For this particular group, government regulation was fine unless it was regulating them—at which point it became a horrible infringement on their constitutional rights" (Jong-Fast). Jong-Fast also makes a clear correlation that the less access women have to safe and legal abortions will lead to more health complications and death for those who are pregnant. Just as the less people getting vaccinated can lead to more deaths, and health complications for individuals at risk and those around you and potentially place more strain on an already strained healthcare system. Or as Marcie Bianco argues, "a deeply considered decision to have a medical procedure is not a virus. Simply put, I cannot "catch" an abortion because a friend of mine has one. And guess what? Neither can you" (Bianco).

True "patriots," those who are paying attention, and those spiritual soldiers who are "awake" know what's *really* going on. The government is being run by a small group of



mysterious, immoral elites who collude in the shadows to undermine society, whose plan is to control the population and morally bankrupt the country... right? Actual conspiracy theories like this have substantial consequences that lead to “conflict, polarization in elections, distrust in government, and racial and political divisions” (Merlan). The United States never seems to be short on the idea that we proletariats are being played for a fool in one way or another and if we’re not careful and diligent and “do our research”, we will lose what we know of our Constitutional freedoms and evil will prevail. The moon landing was fake, Big Pharma not only has the cure for AIDS and Cancer, it withholds treatment for profit, JFK is still alive, experimental mind control weapons are in Alaska via the High-Frequency Active Auroral Research Program, the Illuminati, chemtrails, the list goes on. I was going to include documentation of UFOs, but as of 2023, hell... that might be true. At the time of this writing, after a global pandemic, lockdown, a contested Presidential election, and an attack on the nation’s Capital, the mainstream media’s coverage of confirmed “UAP” or unidentified aerial phenomena got a 2-week run on national news and most people were more interested in what’s for dinner than the declaration of flying objects. But I digress.

2016 was the year for voices like Alex Jones, an alt-right pundit who claimed the Sandy Hook massacre of 20 children and 6 adults was staged as a covert effort to take away your guns, for anti-immigration and anti-Muslim extremists and white supremacist neo nazis to be welcomed into the new era of Trumpism’s cult of personality. Fear-based language ramped up and circulated through Conservative media outlets warning of the non-white, non-heteronormative, non-Christian, non-American is coming for your land, your job, your guns, your religion, and your children. It wouldn’t be the trend of conspiracy theories without anti-Semitic tropes and never-ending paranoia and suspicion of the Jews to be the undercurrent

running through these storylines (Wong). The conspiracy that “they,” and the shadow government are coming to take your “freedom and sovereignty” is a predictable next step in the evolution of the country’s moral deterioration.

Anna Merlan, writer for *The Guardian*, determined that the uptick in this new wave of conspiracy theories in 2016 may be attributed to a “rigid class structure, one that leaves many people feeling locked into their circumstances and desperate to find someone to blame. I found it in rising disenfranchisement, a feeling many people have that they are shut out of systems of power, pounding furiously at iron doors that will never open to admit them. I found it in the frustratingly opaque US healthcare system, a vanishing social safety net, a political environment that seizes cynically on a renewed distrust of the news media” (Merlan). This increase in conspiracy theories appears rooted in a rigid class structure that fosters a sense of entrapment, compelling folks to seek scapegoats for their predicaments. I would not only agree with Merlan’s assessment but argue that understanding these underlying social dynamics is essential for addressing the root causes of conspiracy theory resilience. In doing so, we can perhaps devise strategies to foster a more informed, inclusive, and resilient society.

The convergence of conservative religious sects and New Age wellness enthusiasts into QAnon’s conspiracy theater is characterized by a shared inclination to believe in the unseen and the perception that the reality we perceive is merely an illusion. A core tenet that holds a principal place in this amalgamation of beliefs is the idea that the truth is hidden beneath the surface, waiting to be exposed. The mantra “Nothing is what it seems” comfortably occupies a prominent position within this ideological spectrum, forming the upper arc of what I referred to in my earlier chapters as the Horseshoe theory.

In New Age spirituality, individuals are often taught that they are spiritual beings undergoing a temporary earthly experience. From this perspective, medical and governmental mandates related to the care of the physical body are viewed as stemming from a lack of understanding about the underlying workings of the Universe. Consequently, followers of these beliefs feel compelled to remind like-minded individuals, especially women, to trust their intuition over the perceived overreach of government-mandated health policies. More clearly, personal intuition is revered as a superior guide to individual well-being and decision-making.

On the other side of the spectrum, evangelical Christians, particularly white Republican evangelicals, who often see themselves as moral stewards for the nation, maintain a belief that only God has the authority to determine who lives and who dies. This perspective is held as an absolute, non-negotiable belief. It underscores the strong religious convictions and adherence to a divine plan that these groups hold, guiding their views on issues such as life, death, and morality. It highlights the intersections and contradictions that can occur when diverse groups come together under a shared narrative, often fueled by distrust in mainstream institutions and a quest for deeper truths. It also underscores the importance of understanding the role of belief systems in shaping individual and collective behavior, particularly in the context of healthcare and governance.

### 3 CHAPTER 2

#### 3.1 Dr. Christian Northrup

I must have been in my teens when I bought my first copy of “Women’s Bodies, Women’s Wisdom” (1994) by Dr. Christiane Northrup. Since then, I have given this profeminine manual to my dearest friends more times than I can count. I remember the library of books my mom had in our house when I was growing up, it was extensive, to say the least. We had every New Age author in the alphabet. Next to Northrup’s bible sat a series of writings by Deepak Chopra, Louise Hay, Caroline Myss, Byron Katie, Marianne Williamson, and Shirley MacLaine to name a few. I still have the majority of the books. They stay with me as resources into the world of a majority white-centered, globally co-opted teachings of indigenous healing modalities that center individualism, most riddled with spiritual bypassing slogans of love and light that rarely ever focus on the most marginalized communities from which most of these meditation techniques, Indigenous, religious, and ancient rituals directly stem from.

This chapter primarily centers on the chronological transformation of Dr. Christiane Northrup, a prominent figure initially known for her role as a leading expert in women's health and wellness, into a figure who has embraced and promoted QAnon and alt-right conspiracy theories. The central aim of this chapter is to highlight how a single individual, Dr. Northrup, has come to embody elements of both the alt-right and conservative conspiracy theory movements, as well as the New Age wellness communities. The focus here is to illustrate the convergence of two seemingly paradoxical communities, ideologies, and belief systems within one person. Dr. Northrup's evolution from a respected celebrity figure in women's health to a proponent of alt-right and conspiracy theories is emblematic of the ideological shifts and polarizations taking place in our world currently.

There will be personal stories added in this chapter as a way to bring a lifetime of firsthand experience I have with the New Age community. New Age speak was my first language, hearing it in alt-right, science-denying spaces is what initially brought me to this research. In full transparency, this thesis was birthed by a deep sense of personal betrayal and utter disappointment as I watched the women who shared my worldviews fall down the rabbit hole of conspiracy theories and QAnon-adjacent rhetoric. This thesis gives me the opportunity to try and wrap my head around what happened to the feminist pillars I knew growing up and how this New Age crossover can happen to other women whose deeply held moral compass has been used as a weapon to promote anti-science and political violence.

My mother, Sherry, was a New Age believer and a Neuromuscular massage therapist for 30 years. My mother would explain that therapeutic massage was a form of energy healing that was more socially acceptable. Being an only child to a single mother, we went everywhere together. The shopkeepers would watch over me while my mom studied Reiki and past life regression upstairs and I would be captivated by all the colorful beautiful books on display, staring at the playing cards (tarot cards) and holding different crystals to see which one “spoke to me.” If I was well behaved while the adults attended the workshops upstairs, I would be lucky enough to take home my new favorite crystal. The idea that certain places, with the right people, can be where you learn and embrace real magic fascinated the child in me. I'd argue that during both my adolescent years and now in my adult life when things get tough, there's a certain comfort in believing in "magic" or unseen truths. As I scroll through my social media, it appears that I am not alone in this.

I looked up to my mom. She was magic and my gateway into New Age philosophy. I felt privileged to be brought up by this mystic woman who seemed to understand the secrets of the

human body and the spirit world. She was plugged in, a Jewish feminist, an energy healer who looked to the natural world, the animals, and the ancestors to guide us through challenging times, sickness, and uncertainty. She gave me my moral compass not through the indoctrination of religion, but through the kindness we show other sentient beings around us. I share my personal story to be clear on certain things. Not all “woo woos” (as my mom lovingly used to refer to us) are unhinged or conspiracy theorists. In my life, I’ve known them to be other women who were looking for answers through unorthodox, non-mainstream modalities for health and well-being.

Looking back at my life as a follower of New Age, embracing spiritual practices can feel incredibly empowering. New Age beliefs often espouse the idea that your thoughts have the power to shape your reality and that you possess the ability to heal yourself through various metaphysical practices. I would submit that Dr. Northrup's appeal, the combination of her whitecoat credentials, pro-woman stance on optimal health, and her focus on spiritual growth and resistance to patriarchal norms can be quite appealing to her growing audience. Her status as a highly trained allopathic medical doctor lends credibility to her claims. Simultaneously, she centered on women's specific well-being, which resonates with women from the right and the left who seek holistic health solutions and are skeptical of the conventional medical establishment.

Further, Dr. Northrup presents herself as an approachable, chatty, nurturing figure, likely contributing to her trustworthiness and popularity regardless of political or religious affiliation. Her demeanor can make followers feel at ease and secure as if they are seeking guidance from a trusted, familiar source, akin to a supportive "aunt-ish" figure. The appeal of embracing New Age ideologies and figures like Dr. Northrup lies in the sense of empowerment, control, and access to unique knowledge, as well as the comfort of finding a relatable and trustworthy source of guidance in a complex and ever-changing Covid world.

### ***3.1.1 Rise to Fame***

Dr. Northrup is known for advocating lower intervention childbirth, ending the practice of circumcision, and has been a vocal proponent of following one's feminine divine intuition (Northrup). Northrup asserts herself as a "visionary pioneer and a leading authority in the field of women's health and wellness, which includes the unity of mind, body, emotions, and spirit" (Northrup). Graduating from Dartmouth Medical School in 1975 and completing her residency at Tufts New England Medical Center in Boston, Northrup would teach at the Maine Medical Center and continue to build her practice for the next 20 years. Northrup claims "When we find the connection between our thoughts, beliefs, physical health, and life circumstances, we find that we are in the driver's seat of our lives and can make profound changes. Nothing is more exhilarating or empowering" (Northrup).

Dr. Northrup's reputation and influence have extended to some of the most prominent television talk shows and news outlets, where she has made numerous appearances over the last two decades. Readers Digest would name her "The 100 Most Trusted People in America" (Digest). On Dr. Northrup's website, she lists as one of her great achievements that she was 1 of 6 women to receive the "Zelenko Foundation Rosa Parks Award and honored for standing up for truth, God, and light against all odds, smears, obstacles, and censorship" (Northrup). The Zelenko Foundation is a non-profit organization started by Ukrainian born "simple country doctor" Vladimir Zelenko whose name few knew until his rise in recognition for promoting the "100% effective", "three-drug cocktail of the antimalarial drug hydroxychloroquine, the antibiotic azithromycin and zinc sulfate" as the cure for the Corona Virus" (Risen). Dr. Northrup's reception of the Zelenko Foundation Rosa Parks Award represents her alignment with Zelenko's stance on the COVID-19 pandemic and the controversial treatment protocol he

advocated. Northrup's association raises questions about the scientific validity of such treatments and the potential consequences of endorsing unproven remedies, especially during a public health crisis.

Although Northrup has been an anti-vaxer<sup>6</sup> for decades. Her journey into the realm of QAnon and other conspiracy theories appears to have gained momentum in April 2020. During this period, she adopted a more vocal and public approach, regularly sharing 10 to 15-minute videos aimed at her devoted followers, whom she affectionately referred to as her "warriors" on her Facebook page. One of the notable aspects of Dr. Northrup's shift during this time was her open defiance of public health recommendations issued by the CDC, particularly those related to social distancing, which was crucial during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. She not only disregarded these guidelines but also took pride in hosting group gatherings at her house, dubbing them as "peaceful protests." She portrayed these gatherings as acts of resistance against what she perceived as government encroachments on civil liberties and personal freedoms during the pandemic.

Dr. Northrup's involvement with groups like "Make America Free Again" and "Millions Against Medical Mandates" further exemplifies her alignment with anti-government, anti-vaccine, and anti-public health mandate movements (Jarry). These affiliations indicate her active participation in groups and causes that reject measures aimed at safeguarding public health and instead promote a neo-liberalist approach to individual choice and autonomy, even in the face of a global health crisis. Dr. Northrup's public stance raises concerns about the potential influence she wields and the impact of her messaging on her followers. I would implore readers to consider the consequences of QAnon adjacent medical authoritative figures who promote beliefs and

---

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Northrup does not use the term "anti-vaxer" since it was coined by Big Pharma. She also claims to read medical literature for "comedy".



actions that run counter to established scientific consensus and public health guidelines and how this archetypal figure can be used to spread misinformation.

“Make America Free Again,” created in 2020, seeks to create a parallel society that respects the rule of law but where the “ruling powers become an insignificant part of our everyday lives.” Further, these parallel fractions include “education, science, scholarship, information networks, healthcare, and free parallel markets that form a parallel economy” ([makeamericafreeagain.com](http://makeamericafreeagain.com)). Their campaign platform states the right to “accept or reject any and all medical treatments, including vaccinations, for myself and my minor children. The state and federal government, employers, merchants, groups, schools, institutions, and other entities should not be able to force me or my minor children to receive any medical intervention, including vaccinations, without my express permission.” In 2019, Millions Against Mandates was formed to “reveal the truth, connect the dots and equip you with the facts” ([millionsagainstmmandates.org](http://millionsagainstmmandates.org)). The website offers t-shirts that say, “Stop Complying with: forced injections, masks, lockdowns, censorship,” etc.

### ***3.1.2 Matriarchal Medical Messiah***

On April 4th, Dr. Northrup issued a call to action, urging her followers, whom she affectionately referred to as "truthers," "star seeds," and "empaths," to take part in a global meditation event scheduled for 10:45 AM Eastern Standard Time. This meditation event was organized by The Global Coherence Initiative and was promoted by Dr. Northrup as a significant ascension portal opening on a date she considered spiritually significant – April 4th, 2020, which could be reduced to "444" (since  $2 + 2 = 4$ ). The Global Coherence Initiative, in partnership with the HeartMath Institute, focuses on the concept of coherence, as described on their website. Coherence, in this context, refers to a state in which the mind and emotions are aligned and in

harmony with the heart's intuitive guidance. Practicing coherence is believed to trigger a series of biochemical reactions that have positive effects on the entire body, particularly enhancing mental and emotional stability. The initiative's perspective underscores the idea that individuals collectively contribute to a shared vibrational field, with each person's thoughts, emotions, and interactions either adding positive or negative vibrations to this collective field.

Dr. Northrup's promotion of this meditation event demonstrates her commitment to New Age and spiritual beliefs that emphasize the significance of certain dates and the power of collective consciousness. While meditation and practices aimed at achieving inner peace and balance can have personal benefits, claims about global meditation events opening spirit portals or altering collective consciousness should be approached critically and evaluated with a healthy amount of skepticism, especially if these practices are done with the intention of eradicating a global pandemic in opposition to any medical interventions. “We are not only all swimming in a common vibrational field, each of us are contributing our own positive or negative vibrations to the field based on our thoughts, feelings, and interactions” ([heartmath.org](http://heartmath.org)). Vibrations are heavily centered in New Age speak. Raising one's vibrations is the key. Low vibrations are associated with those individuals who are not evolved spiritually and who act from a place of emotions, trauma, shame, or negativity.

The Global Coherence Initiative goes on to state that the mission of such a worldwide event is to “combine our collective consciousness and facilitate a positive shift of energy on the planet. The intention is to put an immediate end to COVID-19 (coronavirus) and to usher in a new light frequency of love, abundance, and healing for the ascension of our planet and awakening of the masses.” Adding, a “powerful Astrological Ascension Portal that will open April 4th/5th, 2020 when an unprecedented wave of light (5D gamma waves) will flood our

planet. There are Legions of Light Beings that have entered our galaxy at this time to assist us in our ascension and help direct this high dimensional light our way on that momentous day.”

Moreover, “we are using the opportunity of the massive astrological configuration of Jupiter Pluto conjunction on April 4th/5th to create a portal through which we will unify our consciousness and trigger the process that will solidify the optimal Ascension timeline for the planet and help the humanity unite to overcome the current global health crisis” (heartmath.org)

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2020, Dr. Northrup shared her evening thoughts on Facebook again, this time promoting her good friend Dr. Kelly Brogan’s article “Why the Current Moment is an Opportunity”. On the article’s front page is a large quote that reads “When we can individually and collectively acknowledge that medicine is a personal belief system, we will finally be free to practice embodiment according to our own truth” (Brogan). Later the same month, Dr. Northrup alerted her followers to her participation in the Hay House “You Can Heal Your Life” summit happening on May 14h that same year. Hay House is an internationally known self-help publisher. It was founded in 1984 by Northrup’s longtime friend, ideological colleague, and New Age guru Louise Hay. The publishing company was created to market Louise Hay’s book “You Can Heal Your Life.” This book was a holy manuscript in my house.

“You Can Heal Your Life” was an international success selling over 30 million copies worldwide (Hay). The book focuses on the mind-body connection, specifically looking at the root problem of “dis-ease” as an emotional, spiritual, and metaphysical one. Disease in the body, Hay argued, had an emotional component that needed to be healed and would manifest itself as an illness if not looked at and healed. In the late 1970’s, Hay was informed she had cervical cancer. In her self-diagnoses, Louise would claim that the cervical cancer was a result of her “unwillingness to let go of resentment over her childhood abuse and rape.” Refusing medical

treatment, Hay instead relied on a “regimen of forgiveness, therapy, nutrition, reflexology, and occasional enemas, she claims she rid herself of cancer” (Oppenheimer). Her story of self-healing and overcoming cancer is not able to be corroborated by any doctor.

Hay, a previous Religious Science practitioner, and later a Transcendental Meditation follower, received backlash over her claims that HIV was not caused by a virus but by the inability of gay men to love themselves wholly. “Some of Hay’s disciples, believing they had failed to follow her dicta well enough, died ashamed, disempowered, and betrayed. Many AIDS survivors and caregivers have testified to the tragic personal cost of Hay’s philosophy, and what some have called her brutal dismissal of actual people with AIDS, including the poor and people of color, as well as her willingness to profit personally through the pain of the sick, the psychically unsettled, and the terminally ill” (Groff). Northrup and Hay share a core belief that the body can remain healthy if the mental and emotional commitment to healing prevails.

As Northrup’s Facebook posts progressed throughout 2020, the posts became darker in tone and the use of militaristic language became increasingly more prominent. Peppered in between her harp playing, showing off her new Siberian kitten, and stories of neighbors disobeying the stay-at-home orders to swing by to drop off their favorite seasonal baked goods, Northrup would calmly remind us that political and medical authoritarianism was growing and that we needed to wake up! “We are, indeed, at war. It is good versus evil. Dark versus light” (Kestenbaum). The juxtaposition between sweet potato recipes and impending political doom was jarring. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Northrup shared and uploaded a clip of “Plandemic” to her 500,000 Facebook followers. “Her status as a celebrity doctor made her endorsement of “Plandemic” powerful. After Dr. Northrup shared the video, more than 1,000 people also shared it, the majority of them to groups that oppose mandatory vaccinations” (Frenkel et al.).

*Plandemic: The Hidden Agenda Behind Covid-19*, *Plandemic 2: Indoctrination*, *Plandemic 3: The Great Awakening* would become a trilogy of highly contested conspiracy theory documentaries that claim Covid-19 is a hoax and "a money-making enterprise that causes medical harm", exploring themes of the loss of free speech and free choice, also promoting parental autonomy against the pharmaceutical industry" (31 et al.). *Plandemic* was immediately shared on exclusive QAnon social media sites with the title of "Exclusive Content, Must Watch." On Facebook alone, "*Plandemic*" was liked, commented on, or shared nearly 2.5 million times" (Frenkel et al.) before being flagged and removed from the platform for Covid medical falsification. This documentary would soon be removed from almost all social media sites due to it being flagged for misinformation after extensive fact-checking by independent agencies.

Shortly after promoting *Plandemic*, Northrup implored her followers to watch another Covid conspiracy documentary "Out of the Shadows." *Out of the Shadows*, released in 2020, claims to "lift the mask on how the mainstream media and Hollywood manipulate and control the masses by spreading propaganda throughout their content. The goal is to wake up the general public by attempting to shed light on how we all may have been lied to and potentially brainwashed by a "hidden" enemy with an apparently sinister agenda" (outoftheshadows.org). The film's message is rooted in the belief that there is a clandestine enemy with nefarious intentions, operating in the shadows and working to manipulate society through various means. It alleges a deliberate effort to conceal the truth from the public, raising questions about the veracity of widely accepted science-based information. This type of content contributes to the escalation of misinformation and conspiracy theories spreading so rapidly on social media, further eroding trust in established institutions and experts, particularly at a time when the nation is in a state of anxiety and grief. Northrup's endorsement of "Out of the Shadows" indicates her

continued involvement in the promotion of unverified and controversial narratives surrounding the pandemic, which can have significant repercussions in terms of public health, misinformation, and societal discord. Social media and its battle to be consistently fact-checked in real time presents an opportunity to bypass the critical thinking skills needed to evaluate such materials and seek reliable sources of information when addressing complex and important topics like global public health events.

On June 7<sup>th</sup> 2020, Northrup shared another stream of consciousness on Facebook as part of a series she labeled The Great Awakening. She began by recounting an event where she attended a bonfire near her house, suggesting that it might have been shared with extraterrestrials in the woods. Notably, she distinguished between what she deemed as "the bad ones," those E.T.s she claims are allegedly created by the deep state, created to instill fear and anxiety among the public. Dr. Northrup further explained that she became most radicalized, or deeply impassioned when she spoke at the capital in her home state of Maine about the perceived harm of vaccinations. She discussed the idea of taking the "red pill" and waking up from the metaphorical "Matrix," drawing a parallel to anti-vaccine mandates. Most of us are familiar with this terminology often associated with the 1999 movie "The Matrix," where taking the red pill symbolizes choosing to see the truth, even if it is unsettling, over living in a false reality. In the context of anti-vax mandates, it suggests a rejection of established medical advice and a belief in alternative, often unfounded, viewpoints about vaccines. She finally urges her followers to consider where their power lies, emphasizing that it is rooted in their intuition. This call for reliance on intuition rather than established science and medical expertise is a common theme in New Age and pseudoscientific circles. Dr. Northrup's Facebook post continually provides us insight into her beliefs, which include unproven claims about extraterrestrials, deep-state

conspiracies, and a skeptical view of vaccinations. I would argue it is essential to critically assess, think through, and fact-check such claims, as they can readily contribute to the spread of misinformation and potentially lead to harmful consequences, particularly in the context of public health.

### ***3.1.3 Disinformation Dozen***

By April 1, 2021, Dr. Christiane Northrup publicly acknowledged her affiliation with a group known as the "disinformation dozen." She appeared comfortable with this label and with her newfound connections within this group, indicating a level of alignment with their beliefs and goals. Subsequently, she used her platform to encourage her followers to attend an event organized by her friend Sasha Stone, known as the Arise USA tour. This tour focused on various themes, including family, freedom, election integrity, and medical choice, among other topics. Sasha Stone, who organized the Arise USA tour, is described as a New Age influencer and a proponent of various conspiracy theories. Notably, he promotes and sells a product known as the "5GBioShield," which has been widely criticized as a deceptive gift. The 5GBioShield claims to protect users from the harmful effects of 5G radiation emanating from mobile networks. However, it has been widely debunked as a pseudoscientific product with no credible scientific backing.

Dr. Northrup's association with the "disinformation dozen" and her endorsement of Sasha Stone's tour shed light on her alignment with individuals who promote conspiracy theories and pseudoscientific beliefs. This affiliation raises questions about the credibility and reliability of her views and the potential impact of her influence on her social media "warriors." It also highlights the intersection between New Age and conspiracy theories, where individuals like Sasha Stone bridge these seemingly distinct worlds and promote unverified or misleading claims.

Northrup's friend Stone has claimed humanity as a whole is secretly ruled by elite "hidden masters", which he refers to as "the Illuminati", "the Babylonian blood cult", "Luciferians", and the "Sabbateans", adding further antisemitic remarks that the current state of the world's miseries is the fault of "Sabbatian Zionist Lurian Kabbalists behind the veil," a formulation referring to followers of the 16th century Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria and the 17th century mystic Shabtai Tzvi" (Algemeiner). One might wonder whether Dr. Northrup's engagement with a disinformation cohort stems from a lack of thorough research into the backgrounds and beliefs of her new associates or is indicative of her tacit acceptance of connections with individuals who hold controversial views, notably those aligned with antisemitism and white supremacy. Both possibilities warrant consideration.

#### ***3.1.4 Fall from Grace***

On January 6th, an unprecedented event unfolded when a group of individuals, referring to themselves as "true patriots" and "lightworkers," stormed the United States Capitol with the intent of "Stopping the Steal." During this critical moment, Dr. Northrup posted another stream-of-consciousness short video on Facebook. In her post, she expressed uncertainty about the situation in Washington, D.C., citing difficulties with her internet connection. However, she did share firsthand experiences from her day, including attending a dance class and engaging in a conversation that emphasized the importance of tuning into the way truth feels within one's body. It's significant to point out Dr. Northrup's suggestion that her Facebook community should discern the truth by relying on bodily sensations. She cautioned against trusting mainstream media and, instead, encouraged her followers to rely on their visceral responses when evaluating information. Shortly after, she offered an example to support her perspective, referencing the words of Lin Wood, an attorney who chose to surrender his law license rather than face



disbarment due to the controversy surrounding his unfounded conspiracy theories related to the election In Georgia.

Lin Wood had been vocal about various conspiracy theories, including his belief in a global cabal and the child trafficking epidemic. Dr. Northrup endorsed Wood as a credible source of truth, asserting that she had always felt this particular claim to be true based on how it resonated with her physically. The promotion of Wood as a reliable and trustworthy voice is baffling, given his association with fringe beliefs such as the idea that the Earth is flat, that the 9/11 attacks involved CGI and not real planes, and his insistence that Donald Trump won the 2020 election. Furthermore, Wood had used the "WWG1WGA" hashtag associated with the QAnon conspiracy movement and had made calls for then-Vice President Pence to be executed via firing squad.

It is noteworthy to point out here the impact of Dr. Northrup's statements on her audience, as she suggests an unconventional method of evaluating information and endorses individuals with controversial beliefs as purveyors of truth. Her actions highlight the intersection of fringe ideologies, conspiracy theories, and the influence of influential figures, which can have far-reaching consequences, particularly in a digital age where such views can spread rapidly. She reminds her audience that “we can no longer turn a blind eye. The darkness does not like the truth.” Halfway through her video, Northrup humbly compares herself to a witch, prosecuted for leaning into the feminine abilities of yore, then bounces over to “the bank and universities are run by psychopaths.” She will call January 6<sup>th</sup> “The Day of Epiphanies” (Northrup).

### ***3.1.5 Cruel Optimism***

The notion of a small group of malevolent individuals in positions of power, who allegedly orchestrate a global child trafficking ring, has never been substantiated by credible

evidence. Similarly, the existence of shape-shifting reptilian beings known as 'lizard people,' or the existence of a secret society known as the 'Illuminati' that manipulates world events, have consistently lacked concrete verification, as has the claim that microchips were surreptitiously implanted within the COVID-19 vaccines by “Big Pharma” and Bill Gates, purportedly to track individuals and negating sovereignty, freedom, and body autonomy. This theory has been widely debunked by experts and health authorities, with no scientific basis supporting such a claim.

Moreover, the 'Great Awakening' concept, often linked to the QAnon conspiracy movement overlapping with New Age ideology, was associated with the belief that a momentous revelation or uprising would occur, culminating in the overturning of the 2020 Presidential election results. However, the predicted events, particularly the notion of an overturn on January 6th, 2021, and the reinstatement of former President Trump did not materialize as forecast, and the election results remained unchanged. Despite the absence of verifiable evidence or the failure of these conspiracy theories to manifest, the frequent rescheduling of the apocalyptic goalpost for such events continues to persist in U.S. political discourse and circulate on social media platforms. These ideas, often characterized as QAnon-adjacent, New Age, or Alt-right conspiracy theories, maintain a significant presence in public dialogue. Even in the absence of regular 'Q' drops that are used to disseminate QAnon-related content and narratives, a considerable portion of the general public clings to these unsupported claims as if they were absolute truths.

I found Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* as a useful framework to help make sense of the relentless openness and attraction to not only engage in such conspiracy theories but double down when confronted with science, facts, and statistical evidence contrary to the current belief in alternate realities. Berlant describes cruel optimism as that which exists when “something you

desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing.” She further explains that whether it be a new political project or “a fantasy of the good life,” these things only become *cruel* when “the object that draws your attachment activity impedes the aim that brought you to it initially” (Berlant 1-22). For instance, consider a woman who is deeply committed to the moral obligation of exposing child exploitation or safeguarding her children from perceived vaccine-related dangers. Such noble intentions and concerns may lead her down the path of connecting with online platforms and communities that seem to share her convictions. Initially, she may join these online spaces in search of information or support, drawn by seemingly harmless content such as yoga routines or oatmeal cookie recipes. These innocuous interests can serve as a gateway to the consumption of content that perpetuates conspiracy theories and unfounded narratives.

We’ve heard the stories of women having total emotional and physical breakdowns in Target, ripping masks off display cases, and confronting employees who wore face coverings while working at Starbucks or Walmart in violent protest against health and safety measures. We’ve heard of folks losing their jobs and connections with friends and family members all because the belief in alternative narratives evoked a deep affectual and visceral response to their convictions about the moral disintegration of the country. The intensity of these reactions goes beyond mere disagreement; it often leads to confrontations with store employees who are diligently adhering to safety guidelines. It has been difficult to witness how “misinformation exploits personal beliefs to trigger emotional and psychological responses that encourage individuals to resist competing claims” (Young).

The paradox lies in the fact that what started as an earnest quest for truth or protection evolves into a cruel form of optimism. As a woman immerses herself in these communities, she becomes exposed to content from influential figures who claim to act in her best interests. This

content often includes conspiracy theories that align with her initial concerns, creating a sense of validation. Over time, confirmation bias takes hold, causing her to seek out and absorb information that reinforces her existing beliefs while disregarding contrary evidence. In this echo chamber, fear-based propaganda and paranoia become the norm, fostering a distorted sense of reality.

In the article “Disinformation as the weaponization of cruel optimism: A critical intervention in misinformation studies” Jason Young points out that Berlant argues “cruel optimism operationalizes fantasy as a “cluster of promises we want someone or something to make us and make possible for us” (Berlant). By framing the good life within a cluster of promises, cruel optimism enables us to accept dissonance, incoherence, and unmet promises in our lives” (Young). Young suggests that even though dis/misinformation is so prevalent in today’s media landscape, the “affective desire for belonging is so strong that false promises – in the form of misinformation – perversely reaffirm our commitment to the community that is lying to us.” Adding, “It is better to receive a lie that confirms your desires, than a truth that reminds you of the crisis in which you live your life” (Young).

#### 4 CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have delved into the intricate interplay of New Age metaphysical language, the rise of conspiratorial ideologies like QAnon, and the active involvement of women, including respected figures in healthcare, Conservative religious, spirituality, and wellness spaces online. The convergence of seemingly disparate communities—the New Agers and the Conservative Alt-right—becomes a focal point to understand the overlapping ideological dynamics at play. Iris Marion Young's concept of the "logic of masculinist protection" becomes a

crucial lens through which we perceive the mobilization of fear and misinformation during the pandemic, fostering a perceived threat to individual freedoms and a divisive "us vs them" consciousness. This narrative, propagated by female wellness influencers turned QAnon followers, unveils a complex interplay of gender, ideology, and the instrumental use of New Age metaphysical language as a psycholinguistic weapon to appeal to a woman's compassion and moral compass.

The goal of this research is not simply to focus on the gender dynamics within New Age and Spiritual/Wellness movements and QAnon but to understand how gender serves as a conduit for well-respected figures, including physicians, influencers, and evangelical Christian women, into the realm of alt-right conspiracy theories. Dr. Christiane Northrup serves as an illustrative example, embodying the convergence of New Age slogans and right-wing ideologies. New Age and wellness spaces, seemingly antithetical to the Alt-right, offer their own form of spiritual propaganda in these uncertain times. The notion that "everything is connected" and "everything happens for a reason" provides solace in a world seemingly falling apart. The quest for answers and hidden truths outside the material world is a human reaction to alleviate tension and anxiety, leading many women to mythology, the spirit world, or religious scriptures for guidance. Ultimately, my research aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex forces driving these phenomena and the gendered mechanisms through which influential female figures become conduits for the spread of conspiratorial ideologies.

**WORKS CITED**

- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.
- Algemeiner, The. "British Anti-Racism Group Issues Report Detailing Spread of Antisemitic Covid-19 Conspiracy Theories." Algemeiner.Com - The Fastest Growing Jewish Newspaper in America. Your One Stop Source for All News and Commentary from Israel and the Jewish World, Jewish Art, Jewish Culture, Jewish Music, Analysis, Opinion, Blogs and More..., 22 Mar. 2021, [www.algemeiner.com/2021/03/22/british-anti-racism-group-issues-report-detailing-spread-of-antisemitic-covid-19-conspiracy-theories/](http://www.algemeiner.com/2021/03/22/british-anti-racism-group-issues-report-detailing-spread-of-antisemitic-covid-19-conspiracy-theories/).
- Austin, E.G. "The Mama-Bear Movement." *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, 2010, [www.economist.com/democracy-in-america/2010/05/18/the-mama-bear-movement](http://www.economist.com/democracy-in-america/2010/05/18/the-mama-bear-movement).
- Baker, Stephanie Alice. "Alt. Health Influencers: How Wellness Culture and Web Culture Have Been Weaponised to Promote Covid-19 Conspiracy Theories and Far-Right Extremism." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2021, doi:10.31235/osf.io/jt2ha. cult
- Belluz, Julia. "Research Fraud Catalyzed the Anti-Vaccination Movement. Let's Not Repeat History." *Vox*, 27 Feb. 2018, [www.vox.com/2018/2/27/17057990/andrew-wakefield-vaccines-autism-study](http://www.vox.com/2018/2/27/17057990/andrew-wakefield-vaccines-autism-study).
- BD; Corcoran KE; Scheitle CP; DiGregorio. "Christian Nationalism and COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy and Uptake." Elsevier, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2021, [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34629205/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34629205/).
- Berlant, Lauren Gail. *Cruel Optimism*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2012, pp. 1–22.
- Bianco, Marcie. "Covid-19 Mask Mandates in Wisconsin and Elsewhere Spark 'my Body, My Choice' Hypocrisy." *NBCNews.Com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 3 Aug. 2020,

**Commented [SGJ2]:** At least two works cited page entries are required before you can receive formatting approval. Depending on your needs, you may also opt to use a bibliography, but keep in mind that a bibliography consists of all consulted texts rather than cited texts.

[www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/covid-19-mask-mandates-wisconsin-elsewhere-spark-my-body-my-ncna1235535](https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/covid-19-mask-mandates-wisconsin-elsewhere-spark-my-body-my-ncna1235535).

Bloom, Mia, and Sophia Moskalenko. *Pastels and Pedophiles inside the Mind of QAnon*.

Redwood Press, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2021.

Bloom, Mia, and Rachael Rollings. "Introduction to the Special Issue: Losing My Religion: Evangelicalism and the Gospel of Q." *Journal of Religion and Violence*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2022, pp. 1–15., <https://doi.org/10.5840/jrv20221011>.

Bouvier, Gwen, and David Machin. "Critical Discourse Analysis and the Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Review of Communication*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2018, pp. 178–192., <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2018.1479881>.

Brogan. "Why the Current Moment Is an Opportunity." Kelly Brogan MD, 2020, [www.kellybroganmd.com/blog/why-the-current-moment-is-an-opportunity](http://www.kellybroganmd.com/blog/why-the-current-moment-is-an-opportunity).

Brogan, Dr. Kelly. "Kelly Brogan MD on Instagram: "you May Trust Me Because I Have an M.D." Instagram, 30 June 2022, [www.instagram.com/p/CfcM9SGOwjg/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/CfcM9SGOwjg/?img_index=1).

Brogan. "Vital Life Project: Kelly Brogan, MD: Holistic Health Project." *Kelly Brogan MD*, 2023, [www.kellybroganmd.com/vital-life-project](http://www.kellybroganmd.com/vital-life-project).

Byline Times. "The Christofascism of QAnon." *Byline Times*, 9 June 2021, <https://bylinetimes.com/2021/06/09/the-christofascism-of-QAnon/>.

Cheetham, Joshua. "Does Yoga Have a Conspiracy Theory Problem?" BBC News, BBC, 19 Feb. 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-55957298](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-55957298).

Chia, A., J. C. Ong, H. Davies, and M. Hagood. "'Everything is Connected': Networked Conspiracy in New Age media." *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*, vol. 2021, Sept. 2021, doi:10.5210/spir.v2021i0.12093.

- Coren, Michael. "How the Christian Right Is Driving the Anti-Vax Movement." *New Statesman*, New Statesman, 4 Apr. 2022, [www.newstatesman.com/international-politics/society-international-politics/2021/12/how-the-christian-right-is-driving-the-anti-vaxx-movement](http://www.newstatesman.com/international-politics/society-international-politics/2021/12/how-the-christian-right-is-driving-the-anti-vaxx-movement).
- Gilbert, David. "Facebook Is Finally Doing Something about the Biggest Spreaders of Anti-Vax Lies." *VICE*, 14 May 2021, [www.vice.com/en/article/m7evpn/bill-gates-anti-vax-covid-lies-facebook-banned](http://www.vice.com/en/article/m7evpn/bill-gates-anti-vax-covid-lies-facebook-banned). Digest, Reader's. "Reader's Digest Announces, '100 Most Trusted People in America.'" PR Newswire: Press Release Distribution, Targeting, Monitoring and Marketing, 29 June 2018, [www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/readers-digest-announces-100-most-trusted-people-in-america-206435821.html](http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/readers-digest-announces-100-most-trusted-people-in-america-206435821.html).
- Douglas, Karen M., et al. "Understanding Conspiracy Theories." *Political Psychology*, vol. 40, no. S1, Mar. 2019, pp. 3–35., <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12568>.
- Dunn, Halbert L. "High-Level Wellness for Man and Society." *American Journal of Public Health and the Nations Health*, vol. 49, no. 6, 1959, pp. 786–792., [doi:10.2105/ajph.49.6.786](https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.49.6.786).
- Egan, Timothy. "Thousands Plan Life below, after Doomsday." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 15 Mar. 1990, [www.nytimes.com/1990/03/15/us/thousands-plan-life-below-after-doomsday.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/15/us/thousands-plan-life-below-after-doomsday.html).
- Ennaji, Moha. "Language and Ideology: Evidence from Media Discourse in Morocco." *Social Dynamics*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1999, pp. 150–161., <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533959908458666>.



- Evans, J. (2020, November 29). *Nazi hippies: When the new age and far-right overlap*. Medium. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://gen.medium.com/nazi-hippies-when-the-new-age-and-far-right-overlap-d1a6ddcd7be4>
- FitzGerald, Frances. *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2018.
- Foundation, Encyclopaedia Iranica. "Welcome to Encyclopaedia Iranica." *RSS*, 2011, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/cosmogony-iii>.
- Frenkel, Sheera, et al. "How the 'plandemic' Movie and Its Falsehoods Spread Widely Online." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 20 May 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/technology/plandemic-movie-youtube-facebook-coronavirus.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/technology/plandemic-movie-youtube-facebook-coronavirus.html).
- Garcia, Angela Cora, et al. "Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2009, pp. 52–84., <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241607310839>.
- Gecewicz, Claire. "'New Age' Beliefs Common among Both Religious and Nonreligious Americans." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 27 Aug. 2020, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/01/new-age-beliefs-common-among-both-religious-and-nonreligious-americans/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/01/new-age-beliefs-common-among-both-religious-and-nonreligious-americans/).
- Gilbert, David. "Facebook Is Finally Doing Something about the Biggest Spreaders of Anti-Vax Lies." *VICE*, 14 May 2021, [www.vice.com/en/article/m7evpn/bill-gates-anti-vax-covid-lies-facebook-banned](http://www.vice.com/en/article/m7evpn/bill-gates-anti-vax-covid-lies-facebook-banned).

- Groff, David. "How New Age Guru Louise Hay Harmed a Generation of Gay Men." *Slate Magazine*, Slate, 20 Sept. 2017, [slate.com/human-interest/2017/09/new-age-guru-louise-hays-pseudoscience-harmed-the-aids-generation-of-gay-men.html](https://www.slate.com/human-interest/2017/09/new-age-guru-louise-hays-pseudoscience-harmed-the-aids-generation-of-gay-men.html).
- "Global." HeartMath Institute, 2023, [www.heartmath.org/heart-coherence/global/](https://www.heartmath.org/heart-coherence/global/).
- Hatmaker, Brian Heater and Taylor. "Facebook Is Limiting Distribution of 'save Our Children' Hashtag over QAnon Ties." *TechCrunch*, 3 Nov. 2020, [techcrunch.com/2020/10/30/facebook-is-limiting-distribution-of-save-our-children-hashtag-over-QAnon-ties/](https://techcrunch.com/2020/10/30/facebook-is-limiting-distribution-of-save-our-children-hashtag-over-QAnon-ties/).
- Hay. "You Can Heal Your Life." Hay House Publishing, 2023, [www.hayhouse.com/you-can-heal-your-life-paperback](https://www.hayhouse.com/you-can-heal-your-life-paperback).
- Hindmarsh, Bruce. "What Is Evangelicalism?" *ChristianityToday.com*, Christianity Today, 14 Mar. 2018, [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/march-web-only/what-is-evangelicalism.html](https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/march-web-only/what-is-evangelicalism.html).
- "Home." Millions Against Medical Mandates, 1 Aug. 2023, [millionsagainstandates.org/](https://millionsagainstandates.org/).
- Hübscher Monika, and Von Sabine Mering. *Antisemitism on Social Media*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2022.
- Jackson, Natalie. "Why Some White Evangelical Republicans Are so Opposed to the COVID-19 Vaccine." *FiveThirtyEight*, FiveThirtyEight, 26 Aug. 2021, [fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-some-white-evangelical-republicans-are-so-opposed-to-the-covid-19-vaccine/](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-some-white-evangelical-republicans-are-so-opposed-to-the-covid-19-vaccine/).
- Jarry. "The Doctor Carl Sagan Warned Us About." Office for Science and Society, 9 Jan. 2021, [www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/covid-19-critical-thinking/doctor-carl-sagan-warned-us-about](https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/covid-19-critical-thinking/doctor-carl-sagan-warned-us-about).

- Jodai. "Introduction: What Is Psycholinguistics?" *Psycholinguistics 101*, 21 Jan. 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826115621.0001>.
- Jong-Fast, Molly. "My Body, My Choice? The Paradox of Republican Anti-Vaxxers." *Vogue*, Vogue, 14 July 2021, [www.vogue.com/article/my-body-my-choice-the-paradox-of-republican-anti-vaxxers](http://www.vogue.com/article/my-body-my-choice-the-paradox-of-republican-anti-vaxxers).
- Keeley-Browne, Elizabeth. "Cyber-Ethnography." *Handbook of Research on Transformative Online Education and Liberation*, Jan. 20120, pp. 330–238., <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60960-046-4.ch017>.
- Kelly, Annie. "Mothers for QAnon." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 10 Sept. 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/09/10/opinion/QAnon-women-conspiracy.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/10/opinion/QAnon-women-conspiracy.html).
- Kestenbaum, Sam. "Christiane Northrup, Once a New Age Health Guru, Now Spreads Covid Disinformation." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 9 May 2022, [www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2022/05/03/covid-christiane-northrup/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2022/05/03/covid-christiane-northrup/).
- Kozinets, Robert V. "Click to Connect: Netnography and Tribal Advertising." *Journal of Advertising Research*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2006, pp. 279–288., <https://doi.org/10.2501/s0021849906060338>.
- Kozinets. "Netnography: Robert Kozinets." *YouTube*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8axfYomJn4>.
- Lantian, Anthony, et al. "Maybe a Free Thinker but Not a Critical One: High Conspiracy Belief Is Associated with Low Critical Thinking Ability." *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2021, pp. 674–684., <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.3790>.
- "Letters to the Editor: Hey Anti-Vaxxers, 'my Body, My Choice' Doesn't Apply to Infectious Disease." *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 10 July 2022,

[www.latimes.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/story/2022-07-10/my-body-my-choice-doesnt-apply-to-infectious-disease](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/story/2022-07-10/my-body-my-choice-doesnt-apply-to-infectious-disease).

MacArthur, Amanda. "Where Hashtags Really Came from and What They Do." *Lifewire*, Lifewire, 10 Mar. 2021, <https://www.lifewire.com/history-of-hashtags-3288940>.

Marcellino, et al. "Detecting Conspiracy Theories on Social Media: Improving Machine Learning to Detect and Understand Online Conspiracy Theories." *Detecting Conspiracy Theories on Social Media Improving Machine Learning to Detect and Understand Online Conspiracy Theories*, 2021, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7249/RR-A676-1>.

Merlan, Anna. "Why We Are Addicted to Conspiracy Theories." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 2 May 2019, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/02/why-we-are-addicted-to-conspiracy-theories](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/02/why-we-are-addicted-to-conspiracy-theories).

Merritt, Jonathan. "What Is an 'Evangelical'?" *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 7 July 2021, [www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/evangelical-christian/418236/](http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/evangelical-christian/418236/).

Mohammed, Aya. "[PDF] Extremist Manifestation: Translation of Conspiracy Theories: Semantic Scholar." *[PDF] Extremist Manifestation: Translation of Conspiracy Theories / Semantic Scholar*, 2020, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Extremist-Manifestation%3A-Translation-of-Conspiracy-Mohammed/6ff87bc05a27fb28e8d73a98d389b30649da0571>.

Nguyen, Terry. "The Wellness World's Conspiracy Problem Is Linked to Orientalism." *Vox*, Vox, 16 July 2021, <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22577558/wellness-world-QAnon-conspiracy-orientalism>.

Nordquist, Richard. "Psycholinguistics Definition and Examples." *ThoughtCo*, ThoughtCo, 6 Sept. 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/psycholinguistics-1691700>.

- Northrup. "About Dr. Northrup." Christiane Northrup, M.D., 24 Jan. 2023, [www.drnorthrup.com/about/](http://www.drnorthrup.com/about/).
- Northrup. "The Great Awakening. Jan 6, 2021, Hold the Vibration of What You Want. Many Things Will Be Revealed Now.: By Dr. Christiane Northrup." Facebook, 2021, [www.facebook.com/watch/?v=443317960023643](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=443317960023643).
- Oliver, J. E., & Wood, T. J. (2014). Conspiracy theories and the paranoid style(s) of mass opinion. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(4), 952–966. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12084>
- Oppenheimer, Mark. "The Queen of the New Age." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 4 May 2008, [www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/magazine/04Hay-t.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/magazine/04Hay-t.html).
- "Out of Shadows." *Out of Shadows*, 2020, [www.outofshadows.org/](http://www.outofshadows.org/).
- Pew Research Center. "Across Most Christian Groups, Approval of Trump down since April." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 30 June 2020, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/01/white-evangelical-approval-of-trump-slips-but-eight-in-ten-say-they-would-vote-for-him/ft\\_20-07-01-2020\\_religioustrumpapproval/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/01/white-evangelical-approval-of-trump-slips-but-eight-in-ten-say-they-would-vote-for-him/ft_20-07-01-2020_religioustrumpapproval/).
- Posted by Christiane Northrup, M.D. "Rethinking Circumcision." Christiane Northrup, M.D., 27 Apr. 2015, [www.drnorthrup.com/rethinking-circumcision/](http://www.drnorthrup.com/rethinking-circumcision/).
- "Psycholinguistics." *All about Linguistics*, <https://all-about-linguistics.group.shef.ac.uk/branches-of-linguistics/psycholinguistics/>.
- Riedner, Rachel. "Reviewed Work: The Cultural Politics of Emotion by Sara Ahmed." *JSTOR*, 2006, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/20866759>.

- Risen, Clay. "Vladimir Zelenko, 48, Dies; Promoted an Unfounded Covid Treatment." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 1 July 2022, [www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/us/vladimir-zelenko-dead.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/us/vladimir-zelenko-dead.html).
- Rosetree, Rose. "Earth School. Back to School!" Rose Rosetree, 13 July 2021, [www.rose-rosetree.com/blog/2019/09/02/earth-school-learning-planet-enlightenment-coach/](http://www.rose-rosetree.com/blog/2019/09/02/earth-school-learning-planet-enlightenment-coach/).
- Rose, S. (2001). New Age Women: Spearheading the movement? *Women's Studies*, 30(3), 329–350. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2001.9979381> Jan 30, 2012
- Rothkopf, Joanna. "Anti-Medication Goop Summit Expert Claims Aids Treatment Kills and Gmos Cause Depression." *Jezebel*, 2 Dec. 2017, [jezebel.com/anti-medication-goop-summit-expert-claims-aids-treatmen-1820919802](http://jezebel.com/anti-medication-goop-summit-expert-claims-aids-treatmen-1820919802).
- Rutjens, and Veckalov. "Conspiracy Beliefs and Science Rejection." *Current Opinion in Psychology*, Elsevier, 14 June 2022, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352250X22001117](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352250X22001117).
- Samantha, Goldman. "Leading Terrorism Expert Discusses Mobilization of Women into Terrorist Networks." *Leading Terrorism Expert Discusses Mobilization of Women into Terrorist Networks/ START.Umd. Edu*, 30 Jan. 2012, [www.start.umd.edu/news/leading-terrorism-expert-discusses-mobilization-women-terrorist-networks](http://www.start.umd.edu/news/leading-terrorism-expert-discusses-mobilization-women-terrorist-networks).
- Sardarizadeh, Shayan. "What's behind the Rise of QAnon in the U.K.?" *BBC News*, BBC, 12 Oct. 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-54065470>.
- Save the Children*, Save The Children Inc., 2022, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us>.
- Seetharaman, Deepa. "QAnon Booms on Facebook as Conspiracy Group Gains Mainstream Traction." *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 14 Aug. 2020,

[www.wsj.com/articles/QAnon-booms-on-facebook-as-conspiracy-group-gains-mainstream-traction-11597367457](https://www.wsj.com/articles/QAnon-booms-on-facebook-as-conspiracy-group-gains-mainstream-traction-11597367457).

Seitz, Amanda. "QAnon's 'save the Children' Morphs into Popular Slogan." AP News, AP News, 1 May 2021, apnews.com/article/election-2020-donald-trump-child-trafficking-illinois-morris-aab978bb7e9b89cd2cea151ca13421a0.

Smith, Michelle R. "How Michael Flynn Goes Local to Spread Christian Nationalism." AP News, AP News, 14 Aug. 2023, apnews.com/article/michael-flynn-sarasota-christian-nationalism-578e9142bc41b46e90048a01f317bd96.

Sparks, Holloway. "Mama Grizzlies and Guardians of the Republic: The Democratic and Intersectional Politics of Anger in the Tea Party Movement." *Taylor & Francis*, 2014, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07393148.2014.945252>.

Srikanth, Anagha. "12 Prominent People Opposed to Vaccines Are Responsible for Two-Thirds of Anti-Vaccine Content Online: Report." *The Hill*, The Hill, 24 Mar. 2021, thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/544712-twelve-anti-vaxxers-are-responsible-for-two/.

Sy, Stephanie, and Leah Nagy. "Disinformation Abounds in the Wellness Community. How One Anti-Vax Influencer Broke Free." PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 17 Feb. 2022, [www.pbs.org/newshour/show/conspiracy-theories-run-rampant-in-the-online-personal-wellness-community](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/conspiracy-theories-run-rampant-in-the-online-personal-wellness-community).

Talmon, Yonina. "Millenarian Movements." *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1966, pp. 159–200., doi:10.1017/s0003975600001405.

The Daily Beast. "The Left's Witch Hunt against Muslims." *The Daily Beast*, The Daily Beast Company, 26 June 2017, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-lefts-witch-hunt-against-muslims>.

"The Great Awakening June 7, 2020: By Dr. Christiane Northrup." Facebook, 2020, [www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/videos/3356880071013593](http://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/videos/3356880071013593).

"The New Normal: Citizens in Charge." Make Americans Free Again, 14 July 2023, [makeamericansfreeagain.com/](http://makeamericansfreeagain.com/).

31, Facebook post stated on March, et al. "Politifact - Fact-Checking 'Plandemic': A Documentary Full of False Conspiracy Theories about the Coronavirus." @politifact, 2020, [www.politifact.com/article/2020/may/08/fact-checking-plandemic-documentary-full-false-con/](http://www.politifact.com/article/2020/may/08/fact-checking-plandemic-documentary-full-false-con/).

"Transcendent Physiology." *Superpower Wiki*, [powerlisting.fandom.com/wiki/Transcendent Physiology](http://powerlisting.fandom.com/wiki/Transcendent_Physiology).

Valerian, Val. "Interview with David Icke." *Leading Edge Magazine* (Brigham Young) 1996. Available at: [http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/biggestsecret/esp\\_icke03.htm](http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/biggestsecret/esp_icke03.htm), access date: 30 March 2009.

voxdotcom. "The Instagram Aesthetic That Made QAnon Mainstream." *YouTube*, Uploaded by VOX, YouTube, 28 Oct. 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_7FWr2Nvf9I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7FWr2Nvf9I).

Ward, C., & Voas, D. (2011). The emergence of conspiratoriality. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 26(1), 103–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2011.539846>

Warren, Tish Harrison. "The Limits of 'My Body, My Choice.'" *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 26 Sept. 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/09/26/opinion/choice-liberty-freedom.html?login=smartlock&auth=login-smartlock](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/26/opinion/choice-liberty-freedom.html?login=smartlock&auth=login-smartlock).



“What Is the Global Coherence Initiative?” YouTube, YouTube, 27 May 2020,

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFqsY-DT6rg&t=5s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFqsY-DT6rg&t=5s).

Whitehead, and Perry. “How Culture Wars Delay Herd Immunity: Christian ... - Sage Journals.”

*Sage Journals*, 2020, [journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2378023120977727](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2378023120977727).

Wong. “QAnon Explained: The Antisemitic Conspiracy Theory Gaining Traction around the World.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 25 Aug. 2020,

[www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/aug/25/QAnon-conspiracy-theory-explained-trump-what-is](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/aug/25/QAnon-conspiracy-theory-explained-trump-what-is).

Woodard, C. (2021, May 5). *Meet Christiane Northrup, doctor of disinformation*. Press Herald.

Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.pressherald.com/2021/05/02/meet-christiane-northrup-doctor-of-disinformation/>

“Yoga Teacher, Public Speaker, Activist.” Seane Corn, 11 Aug. 2023, [seanecorn.com/](http://seanecorn.com/).

Young, Jason C. “Disinformation as the weaponization of cruel optimism: A critical intervention in misinformation studies.” *Emotion, Space and Society*, vol. 38, 2021, p. 100757,

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2020.100757>.

Young, Iris Marion. “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State.” *Women and Citizenship*, 2005, pp. 15–34.,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/0195175344.003.0002>.