

# Seeking Security in the New Age: On Attachment and Emotional Compensation

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*The purpose of the present cross-sectional questionnaire study was to construct a comprehensive and reliable scale to assess new age orientation as a continuous individual difference variable. Given large increases in new age orientation in Sweden in recent years, an additional purpose was to test our emotional compensation hypothesis by studying connections of retrospective parental and adult romantic attachment in relation to new age orientation, emotionally-based religiosity, and socialization-based religiosity, as well as to study links between attachment and several aspects of spiritual change. The study group included 193 participants from upper secondary school classes, Christian youth organizations, and new age establishments in Stockholm, Sweden. The new age orientation scale was shown to be unidimensional according to an exploratory factor analysis, and to possess adequate reliability and construct validity. In line with the emotional compensation predictions, new age orientation was directly linked to attachment insecurity and emotionally-based religiosity and inversely related to socialization-based religiosity. Attachment insecurity was also linked to the experience of spiritual changes, whereas most findings pertaining to characteristics of spiritual change did not support predictions. In general, unlike perceived attachment to parents, adult romantic attachment did not display the predicted pattern of results. It was concluded that attachment theory may make an important contribution by highlighting predisposing factors for new age orientation, as representing one aspect of the emotional compensation profile, but that several methodological improvements are necessary in future studies.*

The purpose of the present study was to establish a comprehensive, yet easily administered and reliable, scale that taps new age orientation as an individual difference variable, and to test whether our emotional compensation hypothesis, as derived from attachment theory, is applicable to new age orientation and spiritual changes.

## OUTLINE OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

Attachment theory, as formulated by Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and extended by Ainsworth (Ainsworth, Waters, Blehar, and Wall 1978) and others has been the topic of several good introductory chapters and books (see, e.g., Bretherton 1985, 1987, 1991; Colin 1996; Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, and Carlson 1999). The theory is an empirically well-corroborated framework for the study of child-parent relations and their socioemotional correlates in subsequent development. It is not an overstatement to claim that attachment theory is the one leading relationship-oriented paradigm within research-oriented developmental psychology, one that has also been given increased attention among personality and social psychologists during the last decade.

Attachment theory can be thought of as a “middle-level” evolutionary theory (see Buss 1995), originally devoted to considerations of the functional significance of the affectional bond within mammalian offspring-caregiver dyads for potentiating offspring protection and survival to reproductive age and, hence, for the propagation of genes through offspring courtship. In doing so, the theory integrates principles from several other paradigms. For instance, drawing from control systems theory, the offspring is said to possess an attachment behavioral system that is sensitive to activation based on environmental cues. From cognitive psychology comes the postulate of

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inner working models (IWMs), or mental representations of self and others, as guiding one's interaction with others. Based on learning theory, IWMs are thought to reflect the actual learning history that has taken place in the context of the offspring-caregiver relationship, particularly from the caregiver's responses when the offspring's attachment behavioral system has been activated. These features are commonly described as the normative aspect of attachment theory.

Besides the normative aspect, the theory describes three organized patterns of infant-caregiver attachment (i.e., insecure/avoidant, secure, and insecure/ambivalent), which are commonly studied in a structured behavioral procedure known as the Strange Situation (Ainsworth et al. 1978). These individual differences in attachment are thought, and found, to result (at least in part) from caregiver sensitivity to offspring signals (e.g., Ainsworth et al. 1978; De Wolf and Van Ijzendoorn 1997). The individual differences have also been used for making generally successful predictions of socioemotional development in childhood and adolescence (e.g., Bohlin, Hagekull, and Rydell 2000; see also Bretherton 1985, 1987, 1991; Colin 1996; Weinfeld et al. 1999).

Besides the study of attachment in infancy and childhood, attachment theory and research have recently been extensively applied to explain and describe attachment processes in adolescence and adulthood (e.g., Allen and Land 1999; Hazan and Shaver 1994; Hazan and Zeifman 1999). The focus of these investigations has largely been on normative and individual difference aspects of relevance for understanding romantic relationship dynamics and functioning. These research efforts were made possible by the construction of relatively simple self-report measures purporting to tap individual differences in reciprocal relationship orientation in conceptually similar terms to the attachment patterns described by Ainsworth et al. (1978) with respect to infant-caregiver attachment. Finally, attachment theory has been proposed as a theoretical framework for integrating previous findings and spurring future research in the psychology of religion.

#### ATTACHMENT AND RELIGION: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The rationale for an attachment theoretical conceptualization of religiosity has been outlined elsewhere (see Kirkpatrick 1992, 1994, 1995, 1999). Suffice it to say here that many believers' relationships with God share some striking similarities with children's attachments to their caregivers, and that they meet important defining criteria of attachment relationships, including seeking closeness to God in prayer and rituals, using God as a safe haven during distress, and as a secure base for exploring the environment. Hence, just as the child's attachments serve the ontogenetic function of obtaining/maintaining a sense of felt security in the offspring (see, e.g., Sroufe and Waters 1977), so too do the attachment aspects of religiosity function for the believer.

A number of empirical studies on individual differences in attachment and religiosity have been performed during the last decade, some of which investigated religiosity in relation to retrospectively assessed childhood attachment to parents (e.g., Granqvist 1998, 2000; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999; Kirkpatrick and Shaver 1990), and some of which studied religiosity in relation to current adolescent or adult romantic attachment (Granqvist 2000; Granqvist and Hagekull 2000; Kirkpatrick 1997, 1998; Kirkpatrick and Shaver 1992). Although the studies on attachment to parents have generally yielded somewhat stronger findings than the romantic attachment studies, the combined results from these two sets of studies have shown that the religiosity of individuals secure in attachment is relatively strongly linked to the religiosity of their parents. For instance, secure individuals have been found to score higher than insecurities on a variety of religiosity indices when their parents' levels of religiosity have been high, whereas the opposite pattern of results has been obtained at low parental religiousness. Security of attachment has also repeatedly been shown to be positively associated with a scale purporting to tap socialization-based religiosity (i.e., the SBRS; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999). The religiousness of secure people is also unlikely to have undergone dramatic fluctuations over time. Insofar as religious changes have been experienced, they are likely to have been relatively gradual and to have occurred during life situations pointing to the importance of socialization of significant others' religious beliefs (labeled "themes of

correspondence”), whereas life situations highlighting the need for emotional support (“themes of compensation”) have been uncharacteristic. Finally, the God-image of such individuals is likely to be one of a loving and caring God, as opposed to a distant or controlling God.

We have previously (Granqvist 2000) formulated a “two-level correspondence hypothesis” stating that social learning of parental religiousness in the context of a secure attachment relationship is the primary mechanism underlying the religiosity of these individuals (the level of socialized correspondence). In addition, based on repeated experiences with sensitive caregivers, there appears to be a secondary effect reflecting mental models correspondence between a positive model of self/others and an image of God as loving and caring (the level of IWM correspondence; see also Kirkpatrick 1992, 1998, 1999). We have (Granqvist 2000; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999) suggested an “emotional compensation hypothesis” for the link between religiosity and insecurity of attachment, which states that the religiousness of insecure individuals stems from affect regulation strategies to obtain/maintain felt security, and that God fills a surrogate attachment function in this regard. Kirkpatrick (1998, 1999) has arrived at a similar line of reasoning in suggesting that the religiosity of insecures is more tied to attachment system dynamics than that of secures.

In line with the emotional compensation hypothesis, the religiosity (including God-image) of individuals insecure in attachment has been shown to be largely independent of their parents’ religiousness (Granqvist 1998; Kirkpatrick and Shaver 1990) and, as compared to the religiosity of secures, to fluctuate more over time, including a disproportionately high rate of sudden religious conversions (Granqvist 2000; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999; Kirkpatrick 1997, 1998; Kirkpatrick and Shaver 1990). The religious changes of these individuals have been shown to be relatively sudden and intense and to be marked by themes of compensation, whereas themes of correspondence have been uncharacteristic (Granqvist 1998, 2000; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999). Furthermore, insecurity has been repeatedly associated with a scale purporting to tap an emotionally-based religiosity (i.e., the EBRS; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999) where God and religion are sought out as sources of affect regulation, thereby potentiating a sense of felt security in the insecure individual (Granqvist 2000; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999).

#### **THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT AS A SECULARIZED RELIGION: CAN ATTACHMENT THEORY MAKE A CONTRIBUTION?**

The studies on attachment and religion reviewed above were conducted either in the United States or in Sweden. As compared with many other Western countries, the development in Sweden during the 20th century was marked by a stronger secularization process, particularly in relation to the traditional Christian institutions (Pettersson 1994). Although generalizability of the attachment findings is strengthened by the consistency in results across Sweden and the United States, the religious climates of these countries differ in that a minority of Swedes are confessing Christians, whereas the vast majority of U.S. inhabitants are (Pettersson 1994). However, the decline of religiosity in Sweden is marked only when religion is approached from a substantial definition; when approaching religion from a broader, more functional perspective (e.g., interest in philosophy of life and in what happens after death), there is no noticeable trend that it has declined (Gustafsson 1997; Pettersson 1988). Therefore, it has been suggested (Granqvist 1998) that in countries as secularized as Sweden (speaking in terms of the decline in substantially defined religiosity), a population that is religious according to a broader, functional definition should be sought out and tested in relation to attachment and the results should be compared with the previous findings on substantially defined religiosity in relation to attachment.

Individuals with an orientation toward the new age may offer a particularly fruitful population in this regard because not only has the interest in new-age-related activities and beliefs increased in Sweden during the last decade (Arlebrand, Hermansson, and Wallin 1998; Frisk 1998; Hammer 1997), but it is also unlikely that many of the individuals who are involved in the new age have been socialized into the movement by their parents (at least in Sweden). Hence, new age orientation

is unlikely to constitute a part of the religious profile of two-level correspondence, where the religiosity has been adopted from parents. For this reason, it may be that new age orientation is a part of the emotional compensation profile, where the spiritual change into endorsement of the new age has occurred in the individual's own lifetime.

Everyone who has tried to arrive at a brief characterization of the new age has probably arrived at immediate difficulties due to the seeming heterogeneity of the movement. Hence, various forms of metaphors can be applied, one of which is a smorgasboard with various blends of ingredients that the individual is free to choose from. Some of these ingredients concern broad systems of thought (e.g., Eastern thinking, astrology, Jungian psychology) and myths (e.g., the "new age" itself, the animate cosmos); others concern more specific beliefs, such as in the occult, in parapsychological phenomena, and in UFOs. Some ingredients refer to activities proposed to be of benefit to human health (e.g., alternative medicine, vegetarianism, various forms of healing), spiritual development (e.g., meditation, yoga, rebirthing), and self-actualization (e.g., outgrowths of humanistic therapy, such as encounter groups and the human potential movement). Finally, some ingredients refer to holy places (e.g., the pyramids of Egypt, Sedona in Arizona), holy animals (dolphins, whales), healing objects (e.g., crystals and amulets), rituals (e.g., affirmations, regressions to previous forms of existence), holy scriptures (e.g., "a course in miracles"), and contemplative music and sounds (e.g., pan flutes, the sound of dolphins). In trying to find common threads, some key words underlying the diversity are emphases on "intuition" (rather than rationality or intellect), holism (as opposed to reductionism), religious syncretism (as opposed to exclusivism and "dogmatism"), immanence (rather than transcendence), and epistemological subjectivism and relativism (as opposed to objectivism and again, presumably, "dogmatism"). Paul Heelas (1996) has moved one step further in suggesting that the one theme underlying the new age movement is the celebration of the self.

It should be obvious from the above characterization that the new age movement bears striking resemblances to religion, regardless of whether a substantial or functional definition is employed. However, the very diversity of its characteristics, as well as the (often expressed) negation of a transcendent God, may imply that when speaking substantially, the new age should be characterized as a "religion-like" movement (cf. Barker 1989, in reference to Wittgenstein 1953). However, from a functional perspective (e.g., Batson, Ventis, and Schoenrade 1993), the new age no doubt qualifies as a movement meeting the most important definitions. In this respect, the new age movement is particularly well suited to an individual-centered, liberal Western society marked by pluralism and the secularization of traditional, institutionalized religion.

Previous research and theorizing on the new age movement has largely been phenomenological (e.g., describing its characteristics), sociological (e.g., focusing on societal explanations as to why the movement emerged and its representation in relation to broad demographic variables such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status), or historical (e.g., parallels in the history of ideas to folklore, ancient gnosticism, the emergence of humanistic psychology, the "green" movement) (e.g., Barker 1989; Beckford 1991; Hammer 1997; Wilson and Cresswell 1999). Psychological research has been much more scant. Among the existent psychological studies, most are social psychological (i.e., sociological social psychology; Pettigrew 1997), some of which have employed qualitative methodology, and most of which have focused on distinct religious groups, such as the new religious movements (e.g., Latkin 1990; Taslimi, Hood, and Watson 1991; Weiss 1987). Some battles have been fought concerning the mental health consequences of movement membership; the combatants in these battles being clinicians working with dropouts from the new religious movements who view these as subjecting their members to intense indoctrination and "brain-washing" (e.g., Langone 1993; Singer 1979, 1995), and other researchers, who have generally painted a much more positive picture of movement membership (e.g., Galanter 1989; Lilliston and Shepherd 1999; Richardson 1985).

Virtually no controlled, quantitative research on the new age has been conducted, in which the individual (as opposed to a given religious movement or sect) has been the unit of analysis and in

which the focus has been on specific, theoretically proposed psychological factors predisposing the individual to his or her new age orientation. One reason for the lack of such psychological studies is probably that new age has solely been construed as a categorical group variable (i.e., member or nonmember of any specific movement), rather than as a continuous individual difference variable. This is a bit remarkable, given that traditional religiosity and spirituality have been extensively and fruitfully studied within the behavioral sciences of religion, both as group and as individual difference variables, and given that new-age-related activities and beliefs are so spread in the general population (at least in Sweden, e.g., Arlebrand, Hermansson, and Wallin 1998; Frisk 1998; Hammer 1997; Sjödin 1995) that people can be thought of as having more or less of a new age orientation to the same extent as in relation to more traditional religious beliefs and behaviors. Hence, unlike the psychological study of religion in general, there are no studies on large samples that investigate the contribution of specific, theoretically postulated psychological factors hypothesized to predispose for involvement in the new age. To potentiate such studies, there is a need for comprehensive instruments assessing new age orientation as a continuous individual difference variable.

### THE PRESENT STUDY

The purpose of the present cross-sectional study was twofold: (1) to establish a comprehensive, yet easily administered and reliable, scale that taps new age orientation as an individual difference variable; and (2) to test whether our emotional compensation hypothesis is applicable to new age orientation and spiritual changes.

Regarding the latter purpose, it was predicted that “new agers” as a group would score higher on attachment insecurity and lower on security than non-new agers. In addition, new age orientation, as an individual difference variable, was predicted to be positively associated with insecurity and negatively with security. Insofar as new age orientation represents an aspect of emotional compensation, it should be linked to emotionally-based religiosity, whereas socialization-based religiosity should be uncharacteristic. Finally, insecurity should be linked to the experience of spiritual changes, especially to sudden/intense changes occurring during stressful life circumstances (themes of compensation), as opposed to changes during which the individual is gradually socialized into the new age movement (themes of correspondence).

### METHOD

#### Participants and Procedure

The total sample consisted of 193 participants in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. One hundred and forty three of these (henceforward referred to as the “adolescent subsample”) were adolescents and young adults from the Christian youth organization of the Lutheran Church of Sweden ( $n = 60$ ) and Swedish upper secondary school classes ( $n = 83$ ). In this subsample, there were 34 percent male respondents and the mean age was 17.7 years ( $SD = 1.5$ , range = 15–26). The adolescent subsample was recruited because adolescence and young adulthood represent life periods characterized by significant religious changes (Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, and Gorsuch 1996). An additional reason was that new-age-related activities and beliefs are endorsed by many Swedish adolescents (Sjödin 1995). The remaining 50 participants were drawn from some of the vegetarian cafés, alternative bookstores, and health/medicine centers assumed to be of interest to individuals exhibiting a significant new age orientation. In this new age subsample, there were 24 percent male participants and the mean age of the sample was 34.9 years ( $SD = 13.1$ , range = 15–66). Combining the subsamples yielded 31 percent male participants for the total sample, with a mean age of 22.2 years ( $SD = 10.2$ , range = 15–66).

All participants were informed of the voluntary and anonymous conditions of participation. For the adolescent subsample, the data collection was a prospective followup of a longitudinal study on attachment and religiosity in adolescence (see Granqvist 2000). Questionnaires, including a prestamped response envelope, were mailed to these participants' homes during the winter of 1999. The participants were offered a cinema check worth approximately US \$6 for their participation. After two reminders, 73 percent of the original sample had mailed in their filled-out questionnaires. Based on data from the first data collection, an attrition analysis revealed no differences between the attrition group and the participants on any of the variables for which analyses will be presented in this article (see Granqvist 2000). The new age participants' questionnaires were filled out during approximately 20 minutes and then handed to the investigator. To potentiate a high response rate, these questionnaires were necessarily briefer than the questionnaires in the adolescent subsample. Ten individuals in the new age sample who were asked to participate elected not to do so, due to lack of time (response rate = 83 percent).

## Measurements

Questionnaire data containing the following variables were utilized (unless otherwise noted, items were couched as statements, where a low value indicates strong disagreement and a high value indicates strong agreement).

### *Attachment Measures*

Retrospective ratings of 13 items were used to assess *Maternal and Paternal Attachment*, respectively. The scales consisted of three subscales: avoidance (e.g., "she was generally distant"), security (e.g., "he knew when to be supportive"), and ambivalence (e.g., "she was noticeably inconsistent in her reactions to me, sometimes warm and sometimes not"). These items were drawn from the three retrospective attachment paragraphs proposed by Hazan and Shaver (1986), but were subjected to splitting into theoretically derived multi-item average scales to subject the measures to homogeneity evaluations, as well as to increase measurement precision (Granqvist 2000).

Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) Relationship Questionnaire (RQ), consisting of four brief paragraphs describing dismissing avoidant, secure, preoccupied/ambivalent, and fearful avoidant attachment, was used to assess *Adult Attachment*. Participants were first asked to indicate the extent to which each of the paragraphs was applicable to them, and then to endorse the one paragraph that was most applicable. Instead of using the attachment categories yielded by the latter approach (which would lower the statistical power and the measurement precision; see Fraley and Waller 1998), the continuous paragraph ratings were used in subsequent analyses.

### *New Age and Religiousness Measures*

The New Age Orientation Scale was constructed to assess individual differences in new age orientation with respect to broad systems of thought, as well as more specific beliefs, interests, and activities. A pool of 32 items was created based on 10 partly overlapping content areas (item numbers in parentheses refer to the Appendix, in which only the final 22-item scale is presented):

1. A conviction that the individual's "intuition" is a reliable source of knowledge (and outperforming science-based knowledge) (item 14);
2. A belief that a new age is approaching, with dramatic implications for science, the evaluation of human nature, etc. (item 4);
3. A belief in the efficacy of "alternative" treatments (potentially outperforming regular medical treatments) (items 9, 14);

4. A belief in parapsychological and occult phenomena (items 1, 3, 7, 8, 13, 19);
5. An emphasis on personal development and spirituality, as well as an interest in the “alternative” literature on these issues (items 2, 10, 20);
6. A favorable evaluation of pseudopsychological and pseudophysical jargon (items 6, 11, 18, 20);
7. An emphasis on nature and cosmos as animate (items 12, 20, 21);
8. An emphasis on Eastern holism (as opposed to “Western reductionism”) activities and beliefs (items 5, 10, 12, 15, 16, 21);
9. A favorable evaluation of religious syncretism and of practices of “forgotten” cultures and traditions, coupled with an unfavorable evaluation of mainstream Western religion (items 5, 17);
10. An emphasis on being an “open seeker” (as opposed to absorbed by the “dogmas” of institutionalized religions) to whom “the new age” is personally valuable (items 17, 22).

Given the seeming heterogeneity of the phenomena subsumed under the new age label, and in order to still establish a “pure” and statistically homogeneous scale, an effort was made to couch each statement so that only the most dedicated “seekers” would agree strongly. For instance, in inquiring about veganism/vegetarianism, which is becoming increasingly common also among individuals who do not in other ways display a new age orientation, participants were asked to agree with the statement only if their motivation for being a vegan/vegetarian was based on some of the unique arguments favored by new agers (see item 21; note that ethical and health reasons were not included). Similar efforts were made to distinguish between people holding a moderate optimism concerning the future and those believing in an entirely new age (item 4); between those who believe that some other strategies (e.g., acupuncture, herb eating, psychotherapy) than the traditional medical treatments may be beneficial and those who think that primal and reincarnation therapies, reiki healing, and so forth are at least as effective as the regular medical treatments (item 9); and between those who believe that there may be some truth to the psychoanalytic notion of projection as a defense mechanism and those who believe that the world around is mainly a projection screen (item 18).

A similar effort was made to avoid tapping more traditional religiousness. Thus, statements representing favorable evaluations of religious syncretism (thereby violating the foundations of all *monotheistic* religions) were included (item 5), and when inquiring into techniques specifically employed to reach “spiritual development,” participants were explicitly asked not to include prayer in their answer (item 10).

The Emotionally Based Religiosity Scale (EBRS; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999) was used to tap the affect regulating functions of turning to and maintaining contact with God and religion to obtain/maintain felt security. This scale was included only in the adolescent subsample.

The Socialization-Based Religiosity Scale (SBRS; Granqvist and Hagekull 1999) was used to tap the degree of participant adoption of parents’ religious standards/nonstandards. This scale was included only in the adolescent subsample.

In the new age subsample, *Spiritual Change* was assessed with the following statement: “I have experienced a change which meant that my spirituality became more important to me during a period of my life.” This measure was originally taken from Kirkpatrick and Shaver’s (1990) religious change item, but the item was rephrased as “spirituality” rather than “religious beliefs” in order to fit the preferred language of new agers. Participants who scored 4 or higher (i.e., who partly agreed) were assigned to a spiritual change group ( $n = 35$ ).

In the new age subsample, characteristics of spiritual change were assessed by having participants in the spiritual change group choose one of the following alternatives to describe the *Suddenness/Intenseness of Change*: (1) “A slow, gradual change over a long period of time,” (2) “A slow, gradual change with one or more relatively intense experiences and changes,” and (3) “An intense and sudden personal experience.” This measure was taken from Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990).

**TABLE 1**  
**MEASUREMENT CHARACTERISTICS, DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS,**  
**AND HOMOGENEITY EVALUATIONS**

Continuous Variables	Number of Items	Scale-Range	New Agers	Adolescents	Homogeneity coefficient
			<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	
NAOS <sup>a</sup>	32	1–6	3.71 (1.06)	2.40 (0.80)	0.95
EBRS <sup>b</sup>	10	1–6	—	2.35 (1.41)	0.96
SBRS <sup>c</sup>	10	1–6	—	4.02 (1.40)	0.91
Spiritual Change	1	1–6	4.26 (1.63)	—	—
Intenseness/Suddenness of Change	1	1–3	2.03 (0.65)	—	—
Themes of Compensation	5	1–6	3.07 (1.40)	—	0.81
Themes of Correspondence	3	1–6	3.30 (1.50)	—	0.79
Maternal Avoidance	6	1–9	3.03 (1.80)	1.83 (1.22)	0.89
Maternal Security	4	1–9	5.81 (1.85)	7.30 (1.38)	0.81
Maternal Ambivalence	3	1–9	4.02 (2.20)	2.67 (1.83)	0.74
Paternal Avoidance	6	1–9	4.00 (1.95)	2.67 (1.80)	0.89
Paternal Security	4	1–9	4.62 (1.84)	6.31 (1.94)	0.86
Paternal Ambivalence	3	1–9	5.21 (2.17)	3.55 (2.34)	0.81
Adult Dismissing Avoidance	1	1–9	4.36 (2.43)	4.57 (2.37)	—
Adult Security	1	1–9	6.12 (2.21)	5.94 (2.19)	—
Adult Preoccupation/Ambivalence	1	1–9	2.64 (2.13)	3.66 (2.41)	—
Adult Fearful Avoidance	1	1–9	3.68 (2.65)	3.78 (2.46)	—

<sup>a</sup>NAOS = New Age Orientation Scale.

<sup>b</sup>EBRS = Emotionally Based Religiosity Scale.

<sup>c</sup>SBRS = Socialization-Based Religiosity Scale.

Other characteristics of spiritual change were assessed by having respondents in the spiritual change group mark Granqvist and Hagekull's (1999) Themes of Compensation Scale and an adapted (to fit spirituality) version of the Themes of Correspondence Scale, describing empirically derived (Granqvist 1998) life factors associated with religious changes. Themes of compensation consists of life factors pointing to religion as filling a supportive role for a person in emotional need: problem in love relationship or divorce, relationship problem within family, relationship problem with others, mental or physical illness, and personal crisis. The adapted themes of

correspondence scale consists of three items concerning life factors pointing to the importance of significant others' spirituality: close friendships with spiritually oriented people, meetings or discussions with spiritually oriented people, and participation in spiritually oriented courses.<sup>1</sup>

Measurement characteristics and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

## RESULTS

### Construction of the New Age Orientation Scale: Structure, Homogeneity, and Construct Validity

To explore the structure of the new age orientation scale, an orthogonal factor analysis, based on the total sample, was run on all the original items. This analysis produced five factors according to a criterion of eigenvalues above 1. These factors accounted for 58 percent of the total variance. However, the solution was deemed unsatisfactory because the first factor accounted for as much as 73 percent of the explained variance (42 percent of the total variance; eigenvalue = 13.29), whereas each of the remaining factors accounted for less than 9 percent of the explained variance (< 5.5 percent of the total variance; eigenvalues < 1.70). In addition, after Varimax rotation, the factor loadings were generally unclear, both conceptually and statistically; 16 of the 32 items loaded >0.30 on two or more factors. In other words, one large factor summarized the new age items reasonably well; hence, a one-factor solution was chosen.

Next, and again for the total sample, the new age items were subjected to homogeneity evaluations, resulting in an alpha coefficient of 0.95 for the total 32-item scale (average interitem correlation = 0.39). To maximize scale homogeneity and avoid repeating similar items, as well as obtain reasonable economy for future distribution, a group of 22 items was chosen for the final New Age Orientation Scale (NAOS), yielding an alpha coefficient of 0.95 (average interitem correlation = 0.46). These items are listed in the Appendix.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, to examine the construct validity of the scale, scores in the new age subsample were compared with scores in the adolescent subsample. The former group was expected to score substantially higher than the latter, which was confirmed,  $t(191) = 9.13$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ . The size of this difference was large ( $d = 1.51$ ; Cohen and Cohen 1983).

In sum, the new age orientation scale consists of one homogeneous factor and the construct validity of the scale has been preliminarily supported.

### Attachment and New Age Orientation

If new age orientation is an aspect of emotional compensation, "new agers" as a group should score higher on attachment insecurity and lower on security than non-new agers. Further, new age orientation, as a continuous individual difference variable, should be directly linked to attachment insecurity and inversely related to security, independently of whether the individual belongs to a new age population.

As a first test of these predictions, scores on the parental and adult attachment dimensions were compared between the new age and adolescent subsamples. Three one-way MANOVAS were run, one each for the maternal, paternal, and adult attachment variables (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations). Results from these analyses showed the multivariate effects on attachment to parents to be significant, Wilk's Lambdas (3,189) < 0.87,  $ps < 0.00001$ . In line with predictions, univariate effects showed the new age subsample to score significantly higher on attachment insecurity (avoidance and ambivalence) to both parents than did the adolescents, whereas the adolescents scored higher on security than the new agers, range of  $F_s = 18.01$ – $35.78$ , all  $ps < 0.00005$ , range of  $d_s = 0.70$  (maternal ambivalence) to 0.99 (maternal security). In contrast with predictions, the multivariate effect on adult attachment failed to reach significance, Wilk's Lambda (4,188) = 0.96,  $p > 0.05$ .

**TABLE 2**  
**CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ATTACHMENT VARIABLES AND THE NEW AGE ORIENTATION SCALE FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE AND FOR THE NEW AGE AND ADOLESCENT SUBSAMPLES**

Attachment Variables	New Age Orientation Scale		
	Total Sample ( <i>n</i> = 193)	“New Agers” ( <i>n</i> =50)	Adolescents ( <i>n</i> =143)
<i>Maternal Attachment</i>			
Avoidance	0.41***	0.25+	0.29***
Security	-0.38***	-0.27+	-0.18*
Ambivalence	0.33***	0.28*	0.17*
<i>Paternal Attachment</i>			
Avoidance	0.26***	0.19	0.08
Security	-0.27***	-0.30*	0.00
Ambivalence	0.31***	0.27+	0.15+
<i>Adult Attachment</i>			
Dismissing avoidance	0.10	0.26+	0.09
Security	0.01	-0.02	-0.00
Preoccupation/ambivalence	-0.04	0.19	0.04
Fearful avoidance	0.10	0.00	0.21*

+*p* < 0.10, \**p* < 0.05, \*\*\**p* < 0.001; two-tailed.

Correlations were then computed between new age orientation and attachment dimensions for the total sample and for the new age and adolescent subsamples separately. Results from these analyses are presented in Table 2. In line with the emotional compensation hypothesis, maternal and paternal insecurity (avoidance and ambivalence) of attachment was directly related to new age orientation, whereas security in both relationships was inversely related to new age orientation (left column). In contrast with predictions, adult romantic attachment was unrelated to new age orientation in the total sample.

Evaluating these relations within the two subsamples (middle and right columns) showed that the pattern of relations was similar in both samples; only one out of a total of 10 possible comparisons between correlations were significant at the 0.05 level of significance according to *Z* tests. However, the correlations in the subsamples were generally somewhat more modest than in the total sample. Several correlations of moderate strength also failed to reach significance at the conventional 0.05 alpha level in the new age sample (due to a low *n* in that group).

### **New Age Orientation: Emotionally-Based and Socialization-Based Religiosity**

Insofar as individuals high in new age orientation represent a part of the emotional compensation profile, as opposed to the two-level correspondence profile, new age orientation should be directly linked to emotionally-based religiosity and inversely linked to socialization-based religiosity. Data pertaining to these two latter phenomena were only available in the adolescent subsample. In this subsample, Pearson correlations were run between NAOS in relation to EBRS and SBRS. In line with predictions, new age orientation was positively related to emotionally-based religiosity,  $r(138) = 0.25, p < 0.005^3$  and negatively related to socialization-based religiosity,  $r(135) = -0.19, p < 0.05$ .

**TABLE 3**  
**CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ATTACHMENT VARIABLES, SPIRITUAL CHANGE,**  
**AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHANGE FOR THE NEW AGE SUBSAMPLE**

Attachment Variables	Characteristics of Change ( <i>n</i> = 35)			
	Spiritual Change ( <i>n</i> = 50)	Suddenness/ Intensity of Change	Themes of Compensation	Themes of Correspondence
<i>Maternal Attachment</i>				
Avoidance	0.34**	-0.07	0.12	0.12
Security	-0.35**	0.17	-0.25+	-0.25 <sup>a</sup>
Ambivalence	0.39***	-0.22	0.34*	0.20
<i>Paternal Attachment</i>				
Avoidance	0.31*	0.00	0.19	0.11
Security	-0.31*	-0.10	-0.16	-0.45* <sup>a</sup>
Ambivalence	0.44****	0.07	0.21	0.10
<i>Adult Attachment</i>				
Dismissing avoidance	0.12	0.14	0.04	0.15
Security	-0.00	-0.16	0.02	-0.24 <sup>a</sup>
Preoccupation/ ambivalence	0.09	0.12	0.42**	0.05
Fearful avoidance	0.08	0.10	0.21	0.23 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Unpredicted relations = two-tailed.

+  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.005$ , \*\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; one-tailed.

### Attachment and Aspects of Spiritual Change

The emotional compensation hypothesis also predicts that insecurity of attachment should be linked to spiritual changes and, among those who have experienced such a change, that the change should be sudden/intense and marked by themes of compensation, but not by themes of correspondence. Insofar as relatively secure people have experienced a spiritual change, the two-level correspondence hypothesis predicts that the change should be relatively gradual and marked by themes of correspondence, but not by themes of compensation. Correlations between these aspects of spiritual change and attachment to parents, in the new age subsample, are presented in Table 3 (corresponding correlations for the adolescent subsample have been reported elsewhere; Granqvist 2000).

With respect to attachment to parents, and in line with the emotional compensation predictions, insecurity of attachment to both parents was linked to spiritual changes. In contrast with predictions, insecurity was generally unrelated to characteristics of spiritual change, except in the case of maternal ambivalence, which was positively linked to themes of compensation.

Supporting the two-level correspondence predictions were the findings showing security of attachment to both parents to be inversely related to spiritual change. In contrast with predictions, security was generally unrelated to characteristics of change and was negatively associated with themes of correspondence.

With respect to adult romantic attachment, only one significant correlation was obtained in relation to the aspects of religious change investigated and thus supporting the emotional compensation hypothesis—preoccupation/ambivalence was positively associated with themes of compensation.

## DISCUSSION

As recently as in 1999, Lilliston and Shepherd concluded, when discussing mental health and personality in relation to new religious movement membership, that: "There has . . . been a trend away from the type of theorising embodied in psychoanalytic theory. . . . such 'deep' theories are largely comprised of unfalsifiable propositions that can never be adequately tested. . . . those psychoanalytic propositions that are . . . falsifiable, have not typically been supported by research . . . [this is] a type of theory . . . that . . . [is] waning in credibility" (p. 126). Although the imprecise nature (e.g., "type of theorising," "such theories") of that accusation hints at the possible existence of a "straw-man," we believe that the authors are essentially correct to the extent that some psychoanalytic propositions are in practice nearly unfalsifiable (see, e.g., Granqvist 1998; Popper 1962) and that others have been less than optimally supported (e.g., Grünbaum 1984, 1986) by controlled empirical research (however, see Fisher and Greenberg 1996; Westen 1998). However, many developments within psychodynamic theorizing and research have occurred during the last century, some of which have taken the philosophical demands of an empirical natural science quite seriously (e.g., Bowlby 1969, 1988). The most notable and empirically well corroborated of these developments is probably attachment theory, especially its claims concerning the socioemotional implications of individual differences in attachment organization, which are certainly not "waning in credibility" within research-oriented psychology.

In line with this corroboration, the results of the present study generally supported the propositions, derived from previous attachment theorizing and research in the psychology of religion, on new age orientation as representing one aspect of the emotional compensation profile. More specifically, and treating new age orientation as a group variable, the new age subsample scored higher than the adolescent subsample on perceived insecurity of attachment to parents. Construing new age orientation as an individual difference variable by means of the New Age Orientation Scale, and subjecting this scale to an exploratory factor analysis, yielded a satisfactory one-factor solution that was highly reliable (in terms of homogeneity) and possessed adequate construct validity in a preliminary analysis. Also, in line with the emotional compensation hypothesis, new age orientation was positively linked to insecurity of parental attachment and negatively linked to security of parental attachment, which generally held for the total sample as well as for the new age and adolescent subsamples separately. Furthermore, new age orientation was positively linked to emotionally-based religiosity (above the influence of theistic beliefs) and negatively linked to socialization-based religiosity. The experience of a spiritual change was linked to insecurity of parental attachment. However, the emotional compensation predictions were generally not supported for the characteristics of spiritual change (i.e., suddenness/intenseness of change, themes of compensation, and themes of correspondence), with the exception of maternal and adult romantic ambivalence, which were directly linked to themes of compensation, whereas paternal security, in opposition to previous findings, was inversely related to themes of correspondence. Finally, in line with previous findings (see Granqvist 2000), perceptions of attachment to parents were more clearly linked to the outcome measures than was adult romantic attachment; in fact, the latter displayed virtually no significant associations with any of the outcome variables in the present study.

The findings on attachment and new age orientation correspond to our previous results on attachment and religiosity. However, there is a potential statistical problem in relation to the connections between attachment and new age orientation (see Table 2) pertaining to the possibility that the correlations for the total sample are inflated due to an extreme group problem when combining the two subsamples (i.e., the adolescents and the new agers) because the groups differed with respect to the means on both of the variables included in the analyses. In line with this potential problem, the correlations for the total sample were somewhat higher than for both subsamples taken separately (although in most cases not significantly so). There were both theoretical and empirical arguments for a combination of the subsamples in the correlation

analyses. First, there were theoretical reasons to expect that the new agers would score higher on the new age orientation scale than the adolescents (a question of construct validity for the scale), and in doing so, the new agers were also expected to score higher on attachment insecurity and lower on security, as based on the emotional compensation hypothesis, which predicted new age orientation to be an aspect of the emotional compensation profile. Hence, what is a general statistical caveat is in this particular case in line with a priori propositions. Second, even if the correlations for the total sample would be somewhat inflated, the pattern of results was similar in both subsamples taken separately.

As expected on the basis of large within-generational increases in new-age-related activities and beliefs in Sweden in recent years (e.g., Arlebrand, Hermansson, and Wallin 1998; Frisk 1998; Hammer 1997), new age orientation appears generally to be one aspect of the emotional compensation profile, rather than the two-level correspondence profile. In other words, new age orientation is linked to perceived insecurity of attachment to parents, emotionally-based religiosity, and significant spiritual changes, rather than security of attachment, socialization-based religiosity, and spiritual stability. However, unlike religiosity in the traditional Judeo-Christian sense of the word, the new age arena does not offer a transcendent attachment(-like) figure to whom the individual may relate, thereby promoting a sense of felt security. This constitutes a theoretical challenge for the attachment conceptualization of new age involvement in that this particular form of religious-like orientation is not in itself attachment oriented. That is to say, new age orientation is one aspect of the emotional compensation profile, and possibly with the same underlying emotional fuel, but its expression differs from the strategy in which a transcendent God is used as a surrogate attachment figure. Besides the propositions derived from attachment theory, there are important ideological, historical, and sociological reasons for why many individuals (presumably including those insecure in attachment) in today's society are more attracted by the new age than by traditional religions (e.g., Barker 1989; Beckford 1991; Heelas 1996).

Besides pointing out the emotional compensation correlates of new age orientation, future attachment research could make an important contribution by studying the mental health and well-being outcomes of new age versus traditional religious involvement for insecurely attached individuals. Many studies have shown that some forms of religious involvement for some people and in some situations are clearly beneficial (see Batson, Scoenrade, and Ventis 1993; Koenig, George, and Pederson 1998), but it remains to be seen whether the same holds for involvement in the new age. Even though some findings on membership in specific new religious movements are in line with such beneficial effects (e.g., Latkin 1990; Richardson 1995; Taslimi, Hood, and Watson 1991; Weiss 1987), the general new age arena is much more diverse or "nebulous" in character than the traditional religions, and new age involvement is less stable and structured than traditional forms of religiosity (e.g., Barker 1989). Hence, it is possible that the insecure new ager, in need of felt security, will switch dishes on the spiritual smorgasboard without reaching a stable point where the ingredients have potentially lasting beneficial effects. Psychologically speaking, it may be that something other than the self generally needs to be celebrated for the maintenance of long-term beneficial effects in the insecurely attached individual. Corrective positive experiences in relation to a sensitive attachment-like figure, such as a therapist, a lover, or God, may be particularly helpful in this regard (see, e.g., Bowlby 1988).

Although new age orientation generally conformed to the emotional compensation predictions (e.g., by being linked to insecurity of parental attachment), the predictions on characteristics of spiritual change in relation to insecurity were generally not supported for the new age subsample, unlike results for the adolescent subsample (Granqvist 2000) where perceived insecurity of attachment to parents prospectively predicted intense religious changes marked by themes of compensation. It is possible that a marked suddenness and intenseness of the change process, which has also been retrospectively associated with insecurity of attachment in another previous study (Granqvist and Hagekull 1999), is most characteristic for troubled individuals within a Protestant religious climate, modeled as the Protestant conversion is after Paul's profound conversion

experience (e.g., Paloutzian, Richardson, and Rambo 1999; Richardson 1985). In addition, unlike previous findings (Granqvist and Hagekull 1999) on traditional Protestant religiosity directly linking security of parental attachment to themes of correspondence, the inverse correlations between these phenomena in the present study were not in line with predictions. It is notable that themes of correspondence refer to life factors pointing to the importance of peers' and significant others' religious beliefs, which may function as re-socialization into religion for secure offspring by building on the primary religious socialization that was undertaken by sensitive and responsive caregivers in childhood. Given large within-generational increases in new age orientation, many new agers have not had primary new age socialization experiences in childhood, which may explain why themes of correspondence were not directly, but inversely, related to attachment security in the present study. Hence, the emotional compensation and two-level correspondence predictions, in relation to characteristics of religious and spiritual changes, may have limited external validity to Protestant Christianity. Two important tasks for future research will be to test the generalizability of the predictions within different Christian confessions and to disentangle the life factors of spiritual change that are associated with attachment security and insecurity in the new age and new religious movements.

Concerning further methodological issues, the present study was advantageous to previous studies in conceptualizing new age orientation with a continuous individual difference variable (i.e., the NAOS), which met the demands posed by reliability and construct validity concerns. Given the seeming heterogeneity of the new age movement, and the pride taken by the new ager in formulating his or her own philosophy of life, it is somewhat ironic that the new age orientation scale, which was constructed to tap these heterogeneities and idiosyncrasies, nevertheless was unidimensional according to a factor analysis, as well as highly homogeneous according to reliability evaluations. One implication is that the typical new ager's philosophy of life will be far less unique than he or she might believe it to be and that it generally conforms neatly to an underlying system of thought and behaviors that is often hidden behind the seeming diversity of the new age movement. In practice, this means that most new age characteristics are assembled within the same individual, including the self-evaluation of being an "open seeker" and the unfavorable evaluation of monotheistic religions as being "dogmatic," which seems a bit paradoxical. However, given that these are initial findings, they clearly need to be replicated in a different sample before it can be concluded that new age orientation is in fact unidimensional and homogeneous in nature. Although females have been found to be more attracted by the new age than males, as is the case with traditional religiosity (Batson et al. 1993; Gustafsson 1997; Hammer 1997), to potentiate generalizability across sexes, future replications should be based on a more even sex distribution than that obtained in the present study.

The present study makes an addition to previous investigations in quantitatively studying a potentially predisposing psychological factor (i.e., individual differences in attachment) in relation to new age orientation. However, despite these methodological advantages, two major limitations preclude a strong confidence in the results. First, the cross-sectional design employed does not allow for causal inferences. Hence, it is possible that the direction of effects is opposite to that proposed by attachment theory. For instance, after having been confronted with the psychological ideas involved in the "personal development" literature within the new age movement, the individual may have come to "realize" that he or she originates from something along the lines of a "toxic" family context. That is, new age orientation may have caused perceptions of insecure attachment, rather than the other way around. Such an explanation would, of course, beg the question of why individuals differ with respect to new age orientation in the first place, but it can be ruled out only after the results of careful prospective longitudinal studies in favor of the attachment propositions have been presented.

Second, self-report measures of attachment are subject to several forms of response biases (e.g., impression management, social desirability), particularly those involving retrospective

ratings (however, see, e.g., Brewin, Andrews, and Gotlib 1993; Crowell, Fraley, and Shaver 1999). In place of attachment self-reports, future studies should use the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George, Kaplan, and Main 1996), which has been extensively validated and shown not to be subject to the pitfalls threatening the validity of many other self-reports and interviews (for a review, see Hesse 1999). Not only does this technique allow a classification of the interviewee's current state of mind with regard to attachment, it also makes possible an independent (i.e., the coder's, not the interviewee's) estimate of probable experiences with parents in childhood. Individuals high in new age orientation may be overrepresented in two of the AAI categories. First, some individuals classified as "preoccupied" are enmeshed with their "toxic" backgrounds and are struggling to make sense of them. In doing so, they often borrow canned phrases from pop psychology and use a jargon that is unconvincingly analytical, conveying unmetabolized information filled with "psychobabble" (Main and Goldwyn 1998). The discourse of individuals classified as "unresolved" is marked by incoherence when discussing death and/or abuse; they may talk about dead people as if they were alive or about being possessed by the spirit of an abusive parent (Main and Goldwyn 1998).

In closing, we would like to caution against placing the present study in either camp of "pro-cult" or "anti-cult" behavioral scientists of religion who have battled so harshly on the issues of mental health and personality in relation to new religious movement membership, not only because evaluations of mental health were absent in the present study (nor was the sample made-up of members or nonmembers of any specific new religious movement), but also because of the methodological limitations invoked by the cross-sectional design and questionnaire assessment of attachment. Future longitudinal AAI-based studies on new age orientation must be performed before anything definitive can be said on the question of attachment as a psychological factor predisposing for involvement in the new age.

#### APPENDIX: THE NEW AGE ORIENTATION SCALE (NAOS)

Instructions: Below are listed a number of statements describing different ideas in relation to issues such as spirituality, philosophy of life, knowledge, and mental capacities. Please mark each statement by indicating the extent to which it corresponds to your opinion. Write *one* number in the space preceding the statements. Use the following response scale:

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = partly disagree 4 = partly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

- 1) I am convinced that thought transference and/or the ability to move things by mere thinking actually do work.
- 2) I've read some of the new, "alternative" books that deal with how to reach spiritual or personal development (e.g., *The Celestine Prophecy*, *A Course in Miracles*, *The Sacred Self*, *Out on a Limb*).
- 3) The position of the stars at birth affects how one will live one's life or how one's personality will develop.
- 4) I think that we are now approaching an entirely new age, that will *radically* change our view of science, spiritual knowledge, or the true nature of man.
- 5) To reach one's personal, spiritual insight, every individual should combine or mix the truths that are hidden within different old traditions (e.g., Shamanism, the religions of native people, astrology, Eastern wisdom, Kabbala).
- 6) There are some objects or places that have a special spiritual meaning, for instance by being surrounded by a certain type of energy.
- 7) I am convinced that at least two of the following phenomena occur: dreams reveal what will happen in the future, one receives premonitions of what is to occur, or there are people who can "see" the future.

- \_\_\_8) With the assistance of a “medium,” it is possible to get in touch with dead people or with life on other planets.
- \_\_\_9) There are many “alternative treatments” (e.g., Reiki healing, Rosen-, Zone-, Aura-, Primal-, Reincarnation-, Crystal-, and Chakra therapy) that are at least as effective as the regular medical treatments for bringing about human well-being and health.
- \_\_\_10) I regularly use some specific technique (e.g., Yoga, rebirthing, meditation, massage) to become a more harmonious human being or to reach spiritual development (do *not* include prayer as a technique).
- \_\_\_11) Everything that happens in an individual’s life has an underlying meaning that it is important to try to comprehend.
- \_\_\_12) The whole cosmos is an unbroken, living whole, that the modern man has lost contact with.
- \_\_\_13) Things that happen (e.g., divorce, death) in a house or room leave a certain “atmosphere” that affect the people who subsequently move in.
- \_\_\_14) A problem with the established health care system is that science has priority over intuition or old wisdom.
- \_\_\_15) I believe that a person’s deeds are stored in his or her “karma.”
- \_\_\_16) People live more than one life, so that when they die they will be reborn after some time in another body (“reincarnation”).
- \_\_\_17) Compared to most religious and nonreligious people, I am probably somewhat of a spiritual seeker with an unusually open mind.
- \_\_\_18) One’s world around is mainly a mirror image of one’s inner world, so that outer processes above all reflect one’s inner processes.
- \_\_\_19) Tarot cards, horoscopes, or fortune telling can be good starting points from which to develop oneself and one’s possibilities.
- \_\_\_20) Spirituality to me is above all about realizing my true nature or becoming one with cosmos.
- \_\_\_21) I am a vegetarian/vegan for one/some of the following reasons: meat eating impedes the functioning of the astral plane, the individual’s karma is impaired by meat eating, or all living creatures have a holy place in the cosmos.
- \_\_\_22) Several phenomena that are usually subsumed under the “new age” label are personally valuable to me.

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#### NOTES

1. Results on attachment and corresponding aspects of religious change in the adolescent subsample have been described elsewhere (Granqvist 2000).
2. Corresponding factor and alpha analyses were run separately for the adolescent subsample. These analyses produced highly similar results as for the total sample. Factor analysis was not performed on the new age subsample due to a too low *n* in this group (e.g., Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black 1995), but an alpha analysis was performed, yielding similar results as for the total sample and as for the adolescent subsample. More detailed information on these analyses may be obtained from the first author upon request.
3. Although one characteristic of the new age movement is considerable skepticism in relation to the “dogmas” of the Western, Judeo-Christian culture (Hammer 1997) and its emphasis on one personal and almighty transcendent God, it might be claimed that the relation between NAOS and EBRS is not surprising, simply due to the fact that high responses to both scales presuppose some form of belief in the supernatural. To control for the effect of belief in God,

a correlation analysis was performed between NAOS and EBRS, while partialling out the influence of theistic beliefs. Theistic beliefs were measured with a single six-step response scale item (cf. Granqvist 1998; Kirkpatrick and Shaver 1990). The association between NAOS and EBRS remained significant, partial  $r(138) = 0.18, p < 0.05$ .

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