The Indigo Children

New Age Experimentation with Self and Science

BETH SINGLER

The Indigo Children

The Indigo Child concept is a contemporary New Age redefinition of self. Indigo Children are described in their primary literature as a spiritually, psychically, and genetically advanced generation. Born from the early 1980s, the Indigo Children are thought to be here to usher in a new golden age by changing the world's current social paradigm. However, as they are "paradigm busters", they also claim to find it difficult to fit into contemporary society. Indigo Children recount difficult childhoods and school years, and the concept has also been used by members of the community to reinterpret conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and autism. Cynics, however, can claim that the Indigo Child concept is an example of "special snowflake" syndrome, and parodies abound.

This book is the fullest introduction to the Indigo Child concept to date. Employing both on- and offline ethnographic methods, Beth Singler objectively considers the place of the Indigo Children in contemporary debates around religious identity, self-creation, online participation, conspiracy theories, race and culture, and definitions of the New Age movement.

Beth Singler is a Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion at the University of Cambridge, where she is using digital and non-digital ethnographic methods to consider contemporary developments in Artificial Intelligence and robotics and their implications for both human identity and for the continuation of religious ideas and narratives. *The Indigo Children: New Age Experimentation with Self and Science* continues her research into twenty-first century New Religious movements, and other areas on which she has been published include Jediism, Scientology, Paganism, and the Pro-Ana movement.

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Self and Science

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I dedicate this book to the memory of my grandfather, Cyril Garwood (1922–1999). He was told by his schoolteachers that he should apply to the University of Cambridge. However, his family could not even afford to send him for the entrance exam. This book is based upon the thesis for my third Cambridge degree, Grandad, and that's more than enough to share this with you.

Rest in Peace.

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Contents

Acknowledgements

With special thanks:

To my lovely husband and son, who have always supported me.

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To all of the many scholars I have met during the course of my graduate studies, who have been encouraging, helpful, and welcoming.

Finally, to all my interviewees. I might not have awoken in the way that you hoped for me, but I feel wiser for having met you.

1 The Indigo Child

"Awakening"

One day in 2005, Jenny McCarthy was walking down a Los Angeles street, hand in hand with her small son, Evan. At that time, she was best known as the vivacious host of the MTV dating show *Singled Out*, and for her relationship with the comedian and actor Jim Carrey, star of box office hits such as *Liar Liar* (1997) and *Bruce Almighty* (2003). McCarthy had written two books on motherhood following the birth of Evan, a child from a previous relationship. *Belly Laughs: The Naked Truth about Pregnancy and Childbirth* (2004) and *Baby Laughs: The Naked Truth about the First Year of Mommyhood* (2005) were an extension of her media persona as a vivacious blonde who could be relied upon to speak plainly about her life and her body.

As they walked down the street, McCarthy and Evan were approached by a woman, who, rather than asking for an autograph as McCarthy expected, suddenly announced: "You're an Indigo, and your son is a Crystal".[1] McCarthy's immediate response was a resounding "Yes!", even though, as she explained later in an article she wrote for the online magazine *Children of the New Earth*, "I stood there for a moment because I had no idea what the heck an Indigo and Crystal was, but I seemed so sure of it when I had blurted out 'Yes!'" (McCarthy 2009).[2] Later, she did some research of her own on the Indigo Children and decided that her initial "Yes!" had been correct:

> From that point on things in my life started to make sense. I always wondered why I was a ball-buster and rule breaker on TV, and at that moment I knew exactly why. I was born to not only think outside the box, but to break that box up into a million pieces. I called this day my 'awakening' but really it was the day I remembered. This was the day life and global mission became so clear. There was nothing I could do that could contain the excitement of what was to come.
>
> (McCarthy 2009)

This book presents an ethnographic study of the Indigo Children, and I have begun with McCarthy's account of her "awakening" because her story introduces what I have found to be the main ways in which the Indigo Children are

characterized. I will now lay out in detail these aspects and how they relate to the structure of this ethnography.

McCarthy's account and the Indigo Child narrative

First, McCarthy's account tells us, as she was told, that there is an object known as the Indigo Child. This chapter will outline the primary characteristics of this object as it has been defined by the Indigo authors most often mentioned to me during this research. These were: Nancy Ann Tappe, Lee Carroll and Jan Tober, James Twyman, Meg Blackburn Losey, and Doreen Virtue, and each author will be introduced below. However, during an Indigo Child discussion group, when I attempted to check a detail in one of Virtue's books I was told that it was important to begin with these books, and then to move beyond them to knowledge based upon my own experiences. Likewise, this book begins with these "official" descriptions of the Indigo Child and then relies more heavily on ethnographic material: knowledge based on my experience of the Indigo Children as individuals and as a community.

Second, McCarthy's article was written and presented for an audience under the title "Insights of an Indigo Mom, a Mother's Awakening", and Chapter 3 explores the parental account of the Indigo Child, a biographical narrative given on behalf of children. Such accounts demonstrate the role of peers in this milieu and in the process of identification. However, these peers are rarely strangers, as in McCarthy's account; they are more often the psychics or therapists that individuals are already visiting, or friends or family members. The next stage in McCarthy's article, "doing some of my own research on the word Indigo", is apparent in accounts from the wider community, and my informants also claimed that they had measured the concept against what they already knew about the world. A moment of "awakening" is frequently described, as the new knowledge they received and researched was described as life-changing but also somehow already known to them at a deeper level of consciousness, a level that they were finally becoming aware of.

Third, there is a medical background to McCarthy's account. Evan was diagnosed with autism in 2005 at the age of two after he had suffered violent seizures, which resulted in several visits to hospital. Although McCarthy was apparently in good health at this point, the role of sickness or physical injuries in Indigo Children's stories about their path to realizing their true role and nature is significant. Their narratives of healing will be considered in more detail in Chapter 4, where I will argue that the "diagnosis" of being an Indigo Child itself is a part of this healing. McCarthy's article also described her desire to change the world, to go on television, and "to preach to the world about the importance of healthy air, healthy food, and empowering our children to be the divine manifestors [sic] they came here to be", which, along with changing our education system for the better, she described as her "global life mission" (McCarthy 2009). The concept of "life missions" and their role in global change is linked in the Indigo Child rhetoric with a wider

world awakening, often known in Indigo Child and New Age literature as the "Ascension", where humanity will emerge into a New Age of higher consciousness. Chapter 5 considers this teleological scheme in more depth.

Finally, I began with this account because McCarthy's initial lack of knowledge is typical of the public's level of awareness when it comes to the Indigo Children. My research into the online community and networks of the Indigo Children has demonstrated that there are thousands of Indigo Children all around the world who regularly interact with each other through social media. However, in the course of this research, and in my discussion of findings from it, I also found that the level of awareness of the Indigo Children among the general public is quite low. Media interest in the Indigo Children appears to have had a peak around 2006, with somewhat sceptical attention given to the subject by mainstream media sources. An example of this attention is a 2006 *Guardian* newspaper article, "The Chosen Ones", by the documentary filmmaker Jon Ronson (2006). This peak media interest is supported by evidence from online analytical resources such as Google Trends, which I will discuss further in Chapter 6. I suggest that this peak is also partially the result of a figure like McCarthy being the Indigo Child's "spokeswoman" in and around 2005.

Returning to her account, we can note that although McCarthy's first response was an immediate "Yes!" this was actually her first encounter with the term "Indigo Child". Likewise, this term requires initial exposition in this ethnography. Exploring and defining what an Indigo Child is, according to key primary Indigo authors, is my focus in the following section.

The Indigo Children according to primary authors

The Indigo Child was first described by therapist Nancy Ann Tappe (1931–2012) in her 1986 book, *Understanding Your Life Thru Color: Metaphysical Concepts in Color and Aura* [sic], where she recounts how she first recognized these children in both America and China in the 1970s. Tappe claimed to be seeing a new phenomenon for the first time, rather than creating something new herself, which parallels how Jenny McCarthy "remembered" that she was Indigo after the woman in the street stopped her. In *Understanding Your Life Thru Color*, Tappe categorized human behaviour into life colour groups, a classification that she claimed she was able to make as she possessed synaesthesia (a neurological condition where people perceive colours in relation to sounds, people, letters, and other objects) and the "Sight" (psychic ability). These two abilities allowed her to see people's ever changing "auras" and their more static "life colours", which she stated have associated "life missions" for these individuals (Tappe 1986).[3]

Tappe claimed that she had first seen these life colours while she was "doing research at San Diego State University, trying to get a comprehensive psychological profile set up that could withstand academic criticism" (Tappe 1999, 7). Through the techniques she developed based on her dual abilities, Tappe created what she termed "Colorology", "the study of the personality through the science of color" (Tappe 2009a). The different colours she saw also

corresponded with the New Age movement's conception of the chakras as seven spiralling energy foci of the human body, as well as with a threefold physical, mental, and spiritual teleological description of the aspects of human evolution. This echoes the tripartite view of the human as consisting of body, mind, and spirit that is often found in modern metaphysical religion.

In the 1970s, Tappe stated that she had become aware of a new static life colour emerging. This was an event she had expected, as two others, the physical dimension colours of fuchsia and magenta, had previously disappeared as mankind had evolved beyond lower, more "purely physical times" (Tappe 2009b). In the 1980s, she started to use the label "Indigo" to describe children of five to seven years old who had this new life colour. However, unlike the other colour groups, she stated that Indigos would not develop a life mission until they were 26 or 27 years old – around the turn of the millennium (Tappe 1999, 6–7). As she had predicted, in 1999 Tappe went on to identify four main types of Indigo, breaking down the label into another set of classifications: the "humanists", "who [are] going to work with the masses"; the "conceptualists", who will become "tomorrow's engineers, architects, designers, astronauts, pilots, and military officers"; the "artists", who will be "tomorrow's teachers and creatives"; and the "interdimensionals", who will "bring new philosophies and new religions into the world" (Tappe 1999, 11–12). She also stated in the same book that 90 per cent of children under ten were now Indigos (Tappe 1999, 9).

However, according to Tappe, the benevolent life missions of the Indigos did not mean that these children would be easy to parent. In subsequent accounts of the Indigo Children's origins, it was claimed that it was behavioural problems that first made the wider metaphysical community aware of these new children. Lee Carroll and Jan Tober, a channeller and a song and colour therapist respectively, were among the first to claim to have identified the real cause of these problems. They explained how, in their work as professional self-help lecturers, counsellors, and authors, they began to notice "emerging patterns of human behaviour" and had identified a new "kind of problem for the parent" (Carroll and Tober 1999, xi–xii). They had assumed that these changes and the attributes of these new children would be noticed and handled by mainstream mental health professionals and researchers, but their lack of response convinced Carroll and Tober to write *The Indigo Children – The New Kids Have Arrived* as a "beginning report" on the situation for the rest of their profession and the world (Carroll and Tober 1999, xv).

Carroll and Tober describe the Indigo Child in general terms as a child "who displays a new and unusual set of psychological attributes and shows a pattern of behaviour generally undocumented before" (Carroll and Tober 1999, 1). They then describe the ten most common traits of Indigo Children, in a bullet point list, presented here:

- They come into the world with a feeling of royalty (and often act like it).
- They have a feeling of "deserving to be here", and are surprised when others don't share that.

- Self worth is not a big issue. They often tell the parents "who they are".
- They have difficulty with absolute authority (authority without explanation or choice).
- They simply will not do certain things, for example, waiting in line is difficult for them.
- They get frustrated with systems that are ritual-orientated and don't require creative thought.
- They often see better ways of doing things, both at home and in school which makes them seem like "system-busters" (nonconforming to any system).
- They seem antisocial unless they are with their own kind. If there are no others of like consciousness around them, they often turn inward, feeling like no other human understands them. School is extremely difficult for them socially.
- They will not respond to "guilt" discipline ("Wait till your father gets home and finds out what you did").
- They are not shy in letting you know what they need.

(Carroll and Tober 1999, 1)

Subsequent psychics, channellers, therapists, and healers have also written on the subject, expounding on the Indigo Child's nature and "paranormal" abilities: phenomena which they consider to be currently beyond Science's ability to explain or measure (e.g. clairvoyance, out of body experiences, and mediumship). These abilities are combined with a sensitivity to the negatively perceived characteristics of modern civilization, such as "pollution", "fast food", "dumbed down television", "rules", "restrictions", and "unfair hierarchies" (Virtue 2001, 13). This sensitivity can result in behavioural issues that are ordinarily defined by biomedicine and the mainstream as autism, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), or simply described as "problematic". Moreover, this sensitivity is often taken as evidence in this milieu that the Indigo Child is a part of special generation of paradigm busters, savants, rebel leaders, or messianic figures. They are described as more advanced, or evolved, beings, often in both spiritual and genetic terms. The coming of the Indigo Children is considered to be a part of an expected evolution of humanity in this primary literature. Doreen Virtue, for example, wrote in 1999 that all humans will gain psychic powers in "a few short years" (Virtue 1999, 51–2).

Doreen Virtue was also a contributor to *The Indigo Children – The New Kids Have Arrived* by Carroll and Tober, for which she provided her own list of Indigo characteristics. Described in her books as a "clairvoyant metaphysician", Doreen Virtue holds degrees in counselling and psychology and is the author of twenty books about "angels, chakras, Crystal Children, Indigo Children, health and diet, and other mind-body-spirit issues, including the best-selling Healing with the Angels and Messages from Your Angels Books/Angel Cards" (*Mandrake Press* 2011). Although technically she is too old to be

of their generation by Tappe's definition, Virtue's biography has similarities with those described by Indigo Children:

> As a child, Doreen was a natural clairvoyant, seeing and conversing with what many people call "invisible friends". But this natural gift and ability was little understood by the young Doreen and her family, and was the cause of teasing by her friends. Consequently, Doreen learned to deny her abilities, effectively shutting them down before she was mature enough to fully appreciate them.
>
> (*New Age Search* 2009)

She is also described as a "frequent talk-show guest" and "columnist", and websites list her appearances on *Oprah*, CNN, and *Good Morning America*, among others. She has written for "McCall's, TV Guide, Woman's Day, First for Women, Vegetarian Times, Lotus, Woman's World, Miracles, Bridal Trends, USA Today, the Los Angeles Times, the New York Daily News, the Boston Globe, Men's Fitness, Shape, and the Denver Post" (*Om Times* 2012). In Virtue's account, the Indigo:

- Has high sensitivity
- Has excessive amounts of energy
- Bores easily – may appear to have a short attention span
- Requires emotionally stable and secure adults around him/her
- Will resist authority if it's not democratically orientated
- Has preferred ways of learning, particularly in reading and math
- May become easily frustrated because they have big ideas but lack the resources or people to assist them in carrying these tasks to fruition
- Learns from an exploratory level, resisting rote memory or just being a listener
- Cannot sit still unless absorbed in something of their own interest
- Is very compassionate: has many fears such as death and the loss of loved ones.
- If they experience failure early, may give up and development permanent learning blocks

(Virtue 1999, 23–4)

Although expected, the arrival of the Indigo Children is also presented as a secret to be revealed, often to frustrated parents who had been looking for an explanation for their child's behaviour in physical rather than metaphysical causes. "Doctor of Metaphysic" and self-described "medical intuitive" Meg Blackburn Losey explains in her book, *The Children of Now: Crystalline Children, Indigo Children, Star Kids, Angels on Earth, and the Phenomenon of Transitional Children* (2007), that it is her "intention to stretch the reader's awareness of reality a little bit further, and to share realities beyond the scope of what we see, feel, hear, touch, smell, or sense" (Losey 2007, 23). For Losey, like McCarthy, the "Indigos are the paradigm busters, the ones who know that there is something

inherently wrong in our world" (Losey 2007, 22). As in the title to her book, she described other types of the "Children of Now", subsequent iterations of the Indigo Child which will be explored more fully in later chapters of this ethnography. Moreover, Losey explained how, amongst these various definitions, there are "overlapping attributes that make it nearly impossible to pigeonhole these amazing beings into neat little boxes" (Losey 2007, 21).

Virtue appeared to pre-empt these multiplying definitions in 1999, saying, "Let's even use caution with the term Indigo Child, and not let the label have us think of our children as special or different" (Virtue 1999, 137). Yet in 2003 she introduced a new label, that of the "Crystal Child", of which Evan McCarthy was an example, according to the woman in the street and McCarthy's own parental account (Virtue 2003). Pamela Atwater, who became a researcher in near-death studies and their transformational aspects after her own personal experiences of them, also said that "To categorize our new children, as is being done in popular missives, with labels like Indigo … and other such names, serves no one … and does more harm than good" (Atwater 2005, 55). However, again, she uses the terms Indigo and Indigo Children in her description of a new era that was expected to arrive in 2012, predicted, she stated, by the Mayan Calendar (Atwater 2005, 5).[4]

While these authors have varying definitions of the characteristics of Indigos and different opinions on the value of such labels and classifications, there seems to be general agreement that these children do not fit into the mainstream, and that "they communicate about subjects that, until recently, seemed to be the stuff born of science fiction" (Losey 2007, 28). We see this characterization particularly in "Peace Troubadour" James Twyman's book, *Emissary of Love: The Psychic Children Speak to the World* (2002).[5] His book, written in almost thriller genre style, introduces the Indigo Children in connection to a conspiracy involving shadowy government agents. Twyman is also the author of *The Moses Code: The Most Powerful Manifestation Tool in the History of the World* (2010), and we can note that the writing style and title of these two works evokes the works of popular thriller writer Dan Brown. Twyman has also made films about the Indigo Children: the family drama *Indigo* (2003) and the documentary *Indigo Evolution* (2006) were made with other New Age authors and are less inspired by the thriller genre, although other inspirations are possible. In *Emissary of Love*, he claimed to have "discovered that the Indigo Children communicate psychically along universal grid lines" (Losey 2007, 66). This echoes conceptualizations of the Internet, sharing in a long heritage of modern technology being used as models for supernatural processes (see Klassen 2011):

> "Do you know why you have this gift," I [Twyman] asked, "or what you are meant to do with it?"
>
> "It's part of the 'Net', part of what all the children are doing. Everyone has different things that they can do. I can see things, and sometimes move things with my mind.

[…]

You can't live it until you know it," he said. "You asked me before if we're aware of one another, all the other Children of Oz. The answer is obviously yes. We are working together to establish a kind of net over the whole world that will help people live this truth."

(Twyman 2002, 12 and 37)

The thriller style of *Emissary of Love* raised questions of the veracity of its account. This was tackled head on by Neale Donald Walsch in his foreword to the book, where he asserted that, "Like the age of a fascinating woman, that is a question one never asks a Master Storyteller. In either instance the question is irrelevant, and the wise one knows it" (Twyman 2002, viii).[6] Other primary authors also recount tales of psychic Indigo Children as evidence for this generation's special nature. Losey explained that "the only reason the children are able to travel and communicate in this way [psychically] is because there is a level of purity within them. They are still innocent and haven't put up defences like most adults" (Losey 2007, 77). The "dis-ease" with which Indigos react to the "impure" mainstream, and the methods that authors such as Losey have suggested to help them, will be explored in Chapter 4, where I will also argue that the very "diagnosis" of being an Indigo Child also operates as a healing.

I have now outlined the origin and characteristics of the Indigo Child concept, as well as some of the key texts and authors that were mentioned to me during my fieldwork for this research. These texts also indicate the breadth and variety of interpretations of the Indigo Children. I now discuss the terms "New Age" and "New Age movement", which are more widely known than Indigo Child, but are similarly problematic for definition and interpretation. This is also done in order to emphasize the place of the Indigo Child concept within the wider New Age movement.

The term "New Age"

The New Age is upon us and we are witnessing the birth pangs of the new culture and the new civilization. That which is old and undesirable must go, and of these undesirable things, hatred and the spirit of separateness must be first to disappear.

(Bailey 1944, 74)

The term "New Age" appears in two hundred and eighty-five passages of the prophetic writings of Theosophist Alice Bailey (1880–1949), according to Steven Sutcliffe (2003b, 49). The term "New Age", which grew in popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, continued to refer to these utopian aspirations for the future, as well as serving as a reminder of the New Age Movement's Theosophical roots. Other influences came from the metaphysical forms of the nineteenth century: Spiritualism, Theosophy, and New Thought. These movements are themselves linked to Transcendentalism, Mesmerism, and

Swedenborgianism, and all of these formations continue to help to provide a theoretical framework for modern expressions, even albeit unconsciously in many cases.

However, by the 1980s it seemed to scholars of the New Age that the movement was focussing less on historical antecedents and more on immediate experience. They noted that the New Age movement "can be defined by its primal experience of transformation. New Agers have either experienced or are diligently seeking a profound personal transformation from an old, unacceptable life to a new exciting future" (Melton *et al.* 1991, 3). It was argued that a history marked by ages was being replaced by a form that was less "public event" and more a "private gnosis" (Sutcliffe 2003a, 107). Recent scholarship also draws on Wouter Hanegraaff's distinction between the New Age "*sensu stricto*" (narrow sense) and "*sensu lato*" (broad sense) (Hanegraaff 1996). The latter, often linked to a broadening "cultic milieu", to use Campbell's earlier term (Campbell 1972), is thought to permeate contemporary spirituality and religion, and has more to do with "the so-called metaphysical and New Thought tradition typical of American alternative culture" (Hanegraaff 1996, 98 –103 and 344–5). Primary material appears in some cases to support this transition to the inner life. For example, the New Age writer William Bloom stated that

> The New Age movement represents several different dynamics, but they thread together to communicate the same message: there is an invisible and inner dimension to all life – cellular, human, and cosmic. The most exciting work in the world is to explore this inner reality.
>
> (Bloom 2001, xv)

Moreover, research into the reception of the term New Age shows that it is no longer a popular term. Lisolette Frisk noted in her quantitative study of a Swedish magazine, a publication which self-defined as "New Age", that the words New Age were peripheral, whereas "healing", "energy", and particular practices such as massage, reiki, and meditation were very much central (Frisk 1997).[7] More recently, she has argued that "Instead of focussing on the constructed New Age category, the concept of 'healing' could be used as the prototype" (Frisk 2013, 63). My own research supports this move away from "New Age": responses to a free-listing survey showed apathy, even negativity, towards the term. The most common response was "Hippy" at my research sites, with "1960s", "wacky", "rubbish", "silly", and "losers" appearing alongside more familiar New Age terms such as "spiritual", "enlightenment", and "chakra" (see Chapter 6 for more detail on these responses). However, my exploration in Chapter 5 of the teleological and prophetic aspects of the Indigo Child will show that while New Age is a contested term both *emically* by members and *etically* by researchers (see Pike 1954 on these two terms), there is still rhetoric of a coming New Age. This chapter will also consider that "it has not been sufficiently questioned what the mutual transfer of values and meanings between emic and etic terms in these cases implies" (Gilhus 2013, 36).

Chapters 6 and 7 will highlight where such phenomena can be found, and where they have been occluded in the past, by our choice of research methods and pre-conceptions of the subject.

Neither this recognition of the problem of fading popularity, nor Frisk's attention to the centrality of healing, provides us with a recognizable term with which to signify the phenomena under consideration. Bender's use of "spiritual practitioners", "metaphysicals" or "mystics" for the current generation in this milieu draws attention to the "ways their practices are centrally engaged with and entangled in specific American religious trajectories" (Bender 2010, 7). However, the global nature of this phenomenon and the rhetoric of a New Age among the Indigo Children themselves inclines me to continue to use the term New Age while bearing in mind these issues, as I now consider etic accounts of the Indigo Child itself.

Current academic research on the Indigo Children

There are currently only six examples of academic research on the Indigo Children that we can discuss. The first, a socio-anthropological paper, presents the Indigo Children as a New Religious movement (Whedon 2009). The second considers the use of metaphors in describing autism, including 'Indigo Children' in this category (Waltz 2009). The third considers ADHD from a social-psychological perspective and asks whether the Indigo Child concept affects parents' interpretations of their child's behaviour (Lench, Levine, and Whalen 2011). The fourth addresses social and personal issues faced by Indigos and works from the perspective that the Indigo Child is an unproblematic objective reality (Bagnol *et al.* 2011). The fifth is a master's thesis in the field of psychology and play-therapy with an evangelical Christian – and negative – approach to the Indigo Child concept (Grobler 2003). The sixth is a chapter in a volume on *Contemporary Esotericism* (Kline 2013).

Before exploring these academic considerations of the Indigo Children, I want to draw attention to this paucity of research. I propose that research has been limited in part because the Indigo Child is so transient in its forms, rather than existing as a single easily located object, and because it is transmitted along fluid and often fragile social networks. While the Indigo Children have gained wider public attention at various times, defining the boundaries of the subject is problematic for academic study. For example, what may be considered as an example of specifically Indigo behaviour may also be seen in more general terms as psychic phenomena or New Age belief. It was an objective of my research to observe and follow these social networks and to highlight the transmission of the idea of the Indigo Child. This required me to recognize, as Albanese says, that "lack of unity in practice means lack of unity in record keeping, values of privacy and intimacy foster less public acknowledgements and demonstration, emphasis on practice and presentism may times tend towards ahistoricism" (Albanese 2007, 8). While Albanese is referring to the metaphysical religions of the United States in general, my research has shown

me that this is true of the networks of the Indigos as well. With this in mind, I now consider what contribution the secondary literature on these particular metaphysicals makes.

"The Wisdom of Indigo Children: An Emphatic Restatement of the Value of American Children" (Whedon 2009) approaches the topic from a socio-anthropological perspective, and Whedon begins with individual examples, which has the effect of creating a subject before her consideration of the less well-bounded concept. She describes two "typical Indigo Children":

> Jesse, the older of the two, was born in 1987. He was a "ruler on another planet", but an accident caused him to fall into the womb of his mother […] Mattea remembers choosing Renee to be her mother so she could teach her "how to be goofy and silly". Mattea, too was probably royalty in a previous life. In this life she speaks with fairies and with gnomes and experiences unusual voices and lights. Jesse and Mattea both are often frustrated by their parents' inability to answer all of their spiritual questions.
>
> (Whedon 2009: 61)

Whedon then quickly moves from the individual to consider what she sees as the social and historical context of the Indigo Child concept. She argues that it is the product of New Age themes such as auras, millennialism, and the need for personal transformation or progression, combined with "great public concern for both violence and excessive prescription of Ritalin among children in the late 1990s" (Whedon 2009, 61). Drawing on Bruce Lincoln's theory that the inversion of symbols, followed by their restoration, can reinforce the social order, she argues that the Indigo Child concept is a re-inscription of value after "good children have turned bad" (Whedon 2009, 61). She describes the Indigo Child as the result of a crisis in American childhood brought about by an increase in diagnoses of ADD and ADHD, together with incidents of youth violence, specifically mass shootings exemplified by the tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado (Whedon 2009, 158, citing Lincoln 1989).

I find much in this argument to be useful for a wider consideration of the Indigo Child: Whedon's recognition of the crisis in the category of the "child" and, in terms of methodology, her recognition that what holds Indigo believers together is a "commonality of ideas that are shared primarily through textual modes of communication" (Whedon 2009, 64). However, her paper does not recognize that this crisis is a historically *repeating* phenomenon, and that the Indigo Child concept appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, prior to the mass murders she cites (Columbine occurred in 1999). Far from being a pedantic point about dates, I will argue that the crisis in the category of the child has much wider roots, and that the concept's interplay with biomedical definitions such as autism, ADD or ADHD is the result of larger historical trends in psychology, therapy, biomedicine, and parenting that encompasses America and beyond.

A second approach to the academic study of the Indigo Children considers the concept solely as an idea: as a discursive element or a metaphorical

model. Autism and disability consultant Mitzi Waltz, of the Autism Centre for Education and Research at Birmingham University, UK, has considered the Indigo Child as a re-mythologizing of the biomedical category of autism – a return to the myth of the "changeling". However, whereas the original changelings were malevolent spirits who replaced good children, the Indigo Child "reconceptualises the autistic traits […] as a part of a positive identity" (Waltz 2009, 124). Waltz's priority is not to give an in-depth examination of the Indigo Children idea and its origins but, instead, to argue that "magical/religious and psychological" explanatory models of autism "that [disagree] strongly with accepted biomedical explanations" may "also transmit belief systems to the child that are self-aggrandizing, confusing or potentially frightening" (Waltz 2009, 124–5, referencing Gray 1995 and Krider 2002). Her focus is on autism, and the Indigo Child is a secondary, occasionally harmful, category put to work by some parents. She very briefly draws attention to the version of Indigos as "walk-ins": souls that have chosen to incarnate into a human body and bring with them a certain level of wisdom. These souls may be "angels, entities from another dimension or 'spirits' from outer space" (Waltz 2009, 124), as in the example of Jesse above from Whedon (2009). To my mind, this interpretation of Indigos highlights the link between the Indigo Child and a larger history of spirit mediumship and channelling, which Waltz does not address, but to which this research pays attention.

The third paper, which appeared in the *Journal of Attention Disorders* in 2011, also considers the Indigo Child as a category in relation to established medical diagnoses, but finds a positive outcome. Focussing on ADHD from a social-psychological perspective, the article "Exasperating or Exceptional? Parents' Interpretations of their Child's ADHD Behaviour" (Lench, Levine and Whalen 2011) explores whether the Indigo Child interpretation of ADHD affects parents' apprehensions of their child's behaviour. The authors compared survey results between parents of children aged between seven and 12 diagnosed with ADHD (41 in total), parents of children diagnosed with ADHD who were described (by their parents) as Indigos (36), and parents of children without an ADHD diagnosis (26). They found that, compared with parents of the first group of children (with ADHD only), the parents of ADHD–Indigo Children "reported less frequent negative experiences with their child and less intense negative emotions during those experiences. They also viewed their children as more self-efficacious and as more likely to have a positive future" (Lench, Levine and Whalen 2011, 141). These children were also less likely to be on medication than the ADHD-only group. While this sampling is relatively small, the authors believe that their investigation is intended to add "to the long history in psychology of studying groups holding unusual beliefs", making references to Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956) and McNally and Clancy (2005), although two examples hardly prove a continuous "long history". This paper is valuable in drawing attention to the suggestion that the Indigo Child concept can be of benefit to parents, something I will explore further in my consideration of parental accounts, in Chapter 3 and elsewhere.

However, Lench *et al.*'s paper also treats the Indigo Child as an "unusual belief", suggesting that, like Waltz, the authors do not consider it to be an objectively real phenomenon. We can compare these views with those expressed in a paper in the March 2011 edition of *Pacific Health Dialog – the Journal of Community Health and Clinical Medicine for the Pacific Region*, which claims to present "A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of Growing Up with Spiritual Intelligence" (Bagnol *et al.* 2011). Taking the Indigo Child as a real object, the authors interviewed ten adult Indigos in Hawai'i in order to find the common experiences they faced during childhood, to identify what factors worked for their assimilation into society, and to offer recommendations for parents, educators, and health professionals on how to work with Indigos. While the language is scientific and the data is presented systematically, the origins and methods of this paper are metaphysical, and they cite parapsychology research papers:

> McCraty et al. supported psychophysiological and electrophysiological evidence of intuition by measuring skin conductance, electroencephalogram (EEG), and electrocardiogram (ECG) and found intuition is first registered through the heart as prestimulus information and then to the brain, working together to unfold future events – drawing attention to the overlaps between these two fields.
>
> (Bagnol *et al.* 2011, 93)

Lench *et al.* used "bioenergy field photographs" of each participant in order to establish whether they did indeed have the Indigo aura Tappe identified, and her four types of Indigo are also presented as legitimate and established classifications. Their paper is really an emic account using etic framing formalities. This interplay is most apparent when the authors' professional credentials are examined: they all belong to the Department of Interdisciplinary Health Sciences, Arizona School of Health Sciences, A. T. Still University. The university's website provides the following description: "Recognized internationally for its integrated approach, ATSU equips students with the knowledge, compassion, and hands on experience needed to address a person's mind, body and spirit" (ATSU 2015). This use of scientific and professional forms for spiritual ends is a theme in the development and the historical genealogies of the metaphysical networks we are considering, and it is worth noting that this university was founded in 1892 as the world's first osteopathic medical school.[8]

Hermanus Grobler's 2003 unpublished master's thesis also treats the Indigo Child concept as a real object, approaching it with a combination of psychotherapeutic methods and a Christian rhetoric, with the title: "Indigo Children – Gestalt Therapeutic Guidelines for Parents and Caretakers, A Christian Perspective". Grobler was a play-therapy graduate at the University of South Africa, and he states that,

> According to [this] researcher, the New Age comes to mankind with the same temptation as in the case of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden,

that is, not to be obedient to God outside oneself, but to become God Himself.

(Grobler 2003, 19)

While dismissive in approach, his thesis covers much of the same primary source material on Indigos that I have outlined above. Also, by recognizing this Christian perspective, there is an opportunity to note that there are in fact links with and overlaps between Christianity and the metaphysical networks, as has been described in the work of Catherine Albanese (2007) and Pamela Klassen (2011) – although this is not a stance taken by Grobler.

Daniel Kline's chapter, "The New Kids: Indigo Children and New Age Discourse", in the volume *Contemporary Esotericism*, claims to "complement and expand upon Whedon's analysis" of the Indigo Child concept (Kline 2013, 351). While it reiterates her view of the Indigo Child concept as a restoration of the value of children, Kline's work makes several new moves that are worth recognizing. Starting with the view that the Indigo Child is just one of the most "recent of esoteric conceptions of childhood" (Kline 2013, 371), Kline is careful to draw out the potential sources for Tappe's ideas about life colours in the work of earlier metaphysicians. He brings our attention to Phineas Pankhurst Quimby (1802–66), founder of the New Thought movement as well as originator of the concept of the aura, and Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854–1934), Theosophist and supporter of the child "world teacher" Krishnamurti, who introduced the idea of a colour scheme for auras. However, Kline concludes that the lack of a focus on the colour indigo in their New Thought and Theosophical works suggests that Tappe's work was an "innovation", rather than derivative (Kline 2013, 356), although, as Chapters 6, 7, and 8 will argue, the remixing of previous ideas into new, transmittable forms is a key characteristic of this concept and community.

Kline's chapter covers a great deal of ground on the Indigo Child concept, including a discussion of the entrenchment of the "spiritual child" trope in modern culture, fictions, and media; the relationship of Indigos to medical conditions; the main figures in the Indigo discourse; the Indigo marketplace; and his key thesis, that the Indigo Child concept is a marker of "a new valuing of children and children's insights" (Kline 2013, 370). However, the weakness of this chapter, and the lacuna that I will attempt to fill in this book, is its reliance on primary texts, media, and authors, without supporting, or contrasting, ethnographic material. This weakness has led to an overemphasis on the Indigo Child as a child. In this research, I recognize that understanding the Indigo Child as self also requires interaction with adult Indigos, primarily through examination of their creative manipulations and reformulations of the original concept, which are often expressed through social networks online to a curious audience of seekers.

In summary, we can note three themes from this survey of academic works on the Indigo Children. First, the Indigo Child concept is commonly

presented as the response to a problem. Whedon argued that the Indigo Child is a classificatory reaction to the problems of behaviour in children. Waltz's work examines the Indigo Child as a re-mythologizing of a medical category, autism – another source of behavioural issues. Lench's team's work on the beneficial effect of the Indigo interpretation of ADHD is also in this frame. Second, the limited number of works on the Indigo Children suggests the difficulty of addressing the Indigo Child as a bounded topic for research. One possible response is to begin with the individual case before moving to wider socio-religious concerns, as in Whedon (2009) and Bagnol *et al.* (2011). This transition underpins the use of ethnographic methods, and the structure, of the approach of this book.

Third, this review of the literature also demonstrates that there has never been an extended research project into the concept. This book is an attempt to fill this lacuna through ethnographic, historical, and sociological investigation – the specific methods of which are discussed in more detail in the following chapter – addressing the breadth and variety of the forms of the Indigo Child concept. In this chapter, I have approached the Indigo Child as a theoretical concept. The following chapters recognize its other forms: as a definition of the child (including of specific children by their parents); as a definition, or diagnosis, of the self; as a healing through that diagnosis; as a prediction of a teleological scheme; as a prophecy and prophesized being in one; as an identity overlapping with other identities and cultures; and as an idea transmitted and recursively remixed, primarily online. The Indigo Child is an amalgamation of ideas, with historical and social antecedents, coalescing into an object being put to particular work at particular times. The final aim of this ethnography is therefore to propose a model for conceptualizing its varieties, drawing on ideas from the very culture it now permeates, the Internet.

Notes

1 A Crystal Child is a newer form of the Indigo Child, and there are some key differences which will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. Other subsequent variations will also be addressed further, but for simplicity's sake, I will primarily use 'Indigo Child' in this thesis, as this was the first term and the most prevalent in the community.

2 This article, "Insights of an Indigo Mom, a Mother's Awakening", and others by Jenny McCarthy were originally available at the Children of the New Earth website at http://children oftheneearth.com/free.php?page=articles_free/mccarthy_jenny/. However, since starting this research on the Indigo Children, this archive has been removed and anyone attempting to access it is greeted with the message: "Do not hack this server. Your IP address has been logged and will be reported to your ISP". A webpage capture of this article is available at https://archive.is/05foZ [accessed 4 November 2015].

3 Auras are often explained in a scientistic way in the milieu Tappe was writing for. Ted Andrews, a prominent New Age author and teacher, explained that, "although defined in many ways, the aura is the energy field that surrounds all matter. Anything that has an atomic structure will have an aura" (Andrews 1995, 2).

4 The Mayan Calendar ends in December 2012, which has been interpreted by some as indicating the apocalyptic end of the world. Among the New Age groups that I encountered the date was seen to signify the end of 'modern civilization' with all its atten-

dant flaws and the beginning of a new era of superior consciousness. It was therefore approached with positivity and celebration (on the wider millennial expectations of this date, see Hoopes and Whitesides 2012). I describe an event I attended based on this expectation in Chapter 2.

5 "in 1994 he put the peace prayers from the 12 major religions to music and began traveling the world as 'The Peace Troubadour', often being invited by world leaders and peace organizations to perform the concert in countries at war" (Twyman 2009).

6 Walsch is the author of the bestselling *Conversations with God* (1995), as well as co-writer and co-producer with Twyman of the film *Indigo* (2003), in which he also played the role of an Indigo Child's grandfather.

7 'Energy' is a prime example of "ambivalent terminology within the New Age milieu and refers to both spiritual and physical effects" (Hanegraaff 1996, 175). Synonyms include 'Light', 'Force', 'Vibration', 'Essence', 'that which flows through each individual's incarnations', and 'spirit', which only add to the diversity of interpretations (see also Rose 1998, 12)

8 "Osteopaths are trained to examine areas of the body using a highly developed sense of touch, known as palpation, to determine conditions and identify the body's points of weakness or excessive strain" (General Osteopathic Council 2015).

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2   Locating the Indigo Children

Introduction

This book is primarily ethnographic in approach; the material I present within it is the result of my prolonged contact with a community. Further, the characteristics of this community, the Indigo Children as well as those who claim to speak on their behalf, have impacted on the methods of this research. First, the community is best described as ideologically, rather than geographically, bounded. The Indigo Child concept is international, but its adherents often find that they are alone in their beliefs and interests within their immediate and surrounding society. Second, the consequence of this isolation is that the community interacts primarily through computer mediated communication (CMC) or social networking. As a result, I have found that the materials produced by this ideological community are themselves unbounded by location, as well as existing in a variety of textual and graphical forms. These forms include books, web pages, forum boards, web logs or diaries ("blogs"), videos, posts, and community groups on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Third, individuals encountering this online material can either interact with it by sharing or commenting on it or they can passively observe as an ambient audience and therefore remain invisible. Fourth, the intensity of interaction can vary: some individuals are active in posting, commenting, and sharing, while others more casually experience the community and its materials. There has been debate among Internet scholars as to the usefulness of the Digital Natives/ Digital Immigrants typology of Marc Prensky (2001), but it is undeniable that contemporary humans participate in online communities to varying degrees.

   All these factors result in a corpus of Indigo Child material that I found to be unbounded, iterative, and occasionally invisible to the researcher. In this chapter, I introduce the methods employed for this research as a result of these characteristics. These methods include both online and offline approaches. In the final section, I reflect on my role as a researcher in relation to the collection and analysis of the material encountered.

The seeker methodology

During my early, passive observation of the Indigo Children community, I recognized the above boundary issues, and I decided that a systematic approach

to capturing material from an online forum board would counter them. Indigosociety.com was the largest forum for Indigo Children and those discussing the concept. At one time it contained 57,262 threads (subjects under discussion) with 897,036 posts (comments on these subjects) and 29,958 members.[1] Initially, two methods were employed in this research. Archive searches were performed around major themes I had already identified from the primary sources, including those in Chapter 1. "Indigo" would bring up too many results to be truly useful, but searches including "God", "Mother", "Father", "Parents", "Science", "DNA", and "Evolution" brought up relevant conversations, which were archived using screengrab programs and then coded for analysis. Further, I decided to read and archive all new posts to the forum every three days, for nine months. My hope was to develop an evolving corpus of communications with no loss of memory, as well as focussed material on specific topics.

However, problems arose that highlighted the weaknesses of this attempt at a scientific sampling. First, whereas websites are relatively static and normally dependent upon one, or only a few, contributors, forums are ever-changing sites with posts from numerous authors. Therefore, the volume of posts on the forum, and the frequency of new posts being added, made comprehensive collection impractical without turning to a quantitative methodology that would lose valuable ethnographic detail. Second, although the forum contained many thousands of posts and a formal membership, it was not universally considered the most significant locale for interactions by Indigo Children.[2] Scepticism about the founder's motivations in running Indigosociety.com meant that many Indigo Children turned instead to self-authored and self-controlled sites such as websites, blogs, and social media platforms. Third, the number of hyperlinks from the forum to these personal blogs as well as other forums, websites, videos, and personal social media accounts highlighted to me the interconnected nature of the community. To focus only on one forum board would be to ignore this aspect. It is also apparent that technology evolves faster than scholarship, and that in some cases material is removed before scholarship can consider it fully (Abidin 2013). Therefore, we need to "be very agile – both conceptually, in our theorizing, and literally, in our fieldwork – to identify or 'catch' extraordinary phenomena when they happen" (Seale-Collazo 2012, 185), both on- and offline.

With reference to fieldwork among online communities in particular, I propose that being "agile" means being responsive to the material rather than prescriptive. Christine Hine also concludes there can be no prescribed ways of doing ethnographic fieldwork online, and that it is actually "strengthened by the lack of recipes for doing it" (Hine 2000, 13). Hine's own "virtual ethnography" involves marking out a field site with temporal boundaries: she examines the Internet's reaction to a particular moment, the Louise Woodward murder trial of 1997, and defines her field as an "Internet Event" (Hine 2000, 49). Likewise, digital ethnographer Sarah Pink advises the creation of an "ethnographic place", a space created by "collections of things that become entwined",

reflecting the messiness and entanglements of the Internet as a whole (Pink 2009). The research for this book in part follows this methodology by bounding the community by the initial term "Indigo Children" and the terms, such as "Crystal Children", that have followed in this first term's wake. This is, however, a heuristic device: conceiving of the Indigo Child community and its materials as a bounded space artificially forces it into a facsimile of a geographical field site, and ignores both the ambient and transient nature of the community, as well as the interplay between the online and the offline materials. I remain cognizant of the limitations of this approach for this ethnography – but an unbounded mode would be untenable.

While prescribed approaches to online ethnographies have been dismissed by some scholars, such as Hine, attempts have been made to define "Digital Anthropology". Heather Horst and Daniel Miller propose six core principles which are relevant to this research, as I shall show. First, that the "the digital itself intensifies the dialectical nature of culture" (Horst and Miller 2012, 3), with the digital defined as everything that can be reduced to the binary of code. They claim that this dialectical view is drawn from the philosophy of Hegel (1770–1831), and that they adopt the view that "the simultaneous growth of the universal and of the particular [are] dependent upon each other rather than in opposition to each other" (2012, 5). Second, they argue that "humanity is not one iota more mediated by the rise of the digital", pointing to the potential weakness of any Digital Anthropology that makes the "non-digital world appear in retrospect as unmediated and unframed", particularly when a "nostalgic lament" for a lost authenticity infuses it (2012, 12–13). Third, they propose that Digital Anthropology should have a commitment to holism, recognizing that "no one lives an entirely digital life and that no digital media or technology exists outside of networks that include analogue and other media technologies" (2012, 16). Fourth, they highlight the importance of cultural relativism and the importance of recognizing that encounters with the digital are diverse: voice and visibility online varies according to personal context, which can vary by country and economic background. Fifth, they recognize the ambiguity of the digital "with regard to its openness and closure", or privacy and publicity, and the fact that contradiction abounds online. Further on this point, they cite John Postill's chapter in the same volume on the effects of digital technology on politics, stating that "Instead of idealized communities, we find cross-cutting affiliations of groups using the Internet to think through new possibilities" (2012, 22). Finally, the sixth principle of their Digital Anthropology acknowledges the threefold materiality of digital worlds through their infrastructure, content, and context (2012, 25).

Of particular relevance to this research are the second, third, and fifth principles, although all are supported. In particular, the fifth point, "cross-cutting affiliations", is a more relevant model for considering the Indigo Children than the more familiar terms "community" or "member". As I have done thus far, "community" will be used as it is employed in "emic", or insider, categories (Pike 1954), but the transient nature of the membership should also be noted.

Among the Indigo community, and the New Age movement more widely, there is a rhetoric that supports the idea of the "spiritual seeker" (for example, as seen in Lash 1991 and used by Bowman 1999, 183, and Sutcliffe 2004, 474). Other ways of defining and bounding this seeking also occur in academic accounts. Wade Clark Roof writes of a wider "Quest Culture" that originated in religious and cultural shifts in America since the 1950s (Roof 1999). He includes the decline of a Protestant establishment, the influence of Vatican Council II Catholicism, the Evangelical and Fundamentalist resurgence, the rise of New Religious movements, and the growth of special-purpose groups (Roof 1999, 48). He argues that, "It seems not just coincidental that the metaphor of a spiritual quest takes on significance just when many of traditional religion's underpinnings of the culture have become more tenuous" (Roof 1999, 8). However, there is uncertainty as to whether seeking is simply an influential metaphor in this post-1950s religious map or a "qualitative shift from unquestioned belief to a more open, questing mood" (Roof 1999, 9). In the case of the Indigo Children, I found that being a seeker is also a declaration of identity, a description of efforts at self-advancement, and a sign of belonging to a community that describes a teleological scheme of advancement for all humanity. Moreover, for this research, "seeker" as a characterization is also apt due to the diversity of levels of engagement by Indigos with these materials, even though we can note that some groups involve technological and/or social mechanisms for membership, such as the "join" buttons on Facebook, discussed below.

Awareness of this seeker-ship both online and offline led me to the development of a "seeker" methodology for this research, including data collection and interactions. Being a seeker means choosing to follow some paths over others. Paths, in the case of the community of Indigo Children, means both the technological hyperlinks between online posts, blogs, forum posts, and websites, as well as thematic links such as references and information provided by interviewees – who were themselves found through following links suggested to me. This approach was strongly subjective in the sense that my choices were dependent on my interest as a researcher in the suggested paths, and there was the strong possibility of missing material considered important by other seekers in the community. This method does, however, replicate the journey of the individual into the community and its materials, both on- and offline, and is therefore more ethnographic than cataloguing or boundary making approaches. This approach also supports Hine's more general suggestion for virtual ethnography, that

> conducting an ethnographic enquiry through the use of computer mediated communication (CMC) opens up the possibility of gaining a reflexive understanding of what it is to be a part of the Internet. This provides a symmetry to the ethnography, as the ethnographer learns through using the same media as the informants.
>
> (Hine 2000, 10)

Below, I will demonstrate this reflexive approach, with a consideration of the place of myself as a researcher and an individual in this process of seeking. The result of this seeker approach was a plurality not only of material gathered, but also of methods employed in their collection. The following section therefore considers these methods in detail, illustrated through examples from fieldwork in various locations, on- and offline.

Terms, methods, and locations

Methods chosen for this research included: non-obtrusive observation, the archiving of online materials through taking pictures or "screengrabs", participant observation both on- and offline, the taking of field notes on interactions, and more structured methods such as interviews, surveys, and free-listing surveys. In the following sections, these fieldwork methods are divided into online and offline approaches, with interviews sitting between these two categories as they took place in both "locations". Again, similarities with the methods of individual seekers in their own research into the Indigo Child concept will be highlighted.

It is important to note once more that the Indigo Children and the material about them regularly traverse this online/offline boundary, and this supports Horst and Miller's third principle of Digital Anthropology: that we should take a holistic view of material. Further, when considering movements that have spread in affluent countries, I argue that this distinction is best understood as a heuristic device that helps the reader conceptualize the digital. In the age of the ubiquitous Internet, in some countries, it is less and less relevant to imagine "going" online as a journey for the individual and the ethnographer, as it might have been in the days of the dial up modem and the large desktop computer. The online world is increasingly present through mobile smartphones, apps, tablet style computers, and the embedded web technologies of the "Internet of Things" (Carretero and Garcia 2014). Moreover, "the Internet" is itself a heuristic device, as are metaphors and terms such as "the web". Miller and Slater's examination the use of the Internet in Trinidad argued that there was "simply no thing as *the Internet* per se. Rather the Internet was that which people engaged in online in some particular place" (Miller and Slater 2000, cited in Miller 2012, 151). In the case of the Indigo Children, even this geographical bounding is flawed, as discussed, but I also argue that the "the relativism of anthropology" is maintained as the Internet is the "aggregate of its particular usages by specific populations" (Miller 2012, 153). In the following discussion of fieldwork methods, this artificial boundary of online and offline has been maintained for clarity's sake, and elsewhere in this book I will refer to the online and the offline as locations, placing the digital in opposition to events that occurred "in real life" (IRL). This is in order to be specific about where these networked materials were found, but I hope to avoid a reductive understanding of that division in my work.

Online fieldwork methods

The initial method for the seeker methodology in online fieldwork was non-obtrusive observation, or "lurking" (Kozinets 2009). I found that it was necessary to observe before participating in order to judge the significance of a website, to learn the etiquette, language, and paralanguage used, and to identify the individuals involved in the material.[3] This replicates the cautious initial approach of the individual seeker. In addition, I also collected digital copies, or screengrabs, of objects such as forum posts, blog entries or tweets for later coding and analysis. Participation was the secondary stage and involved me providing an introduction to my research and to myself as a researcher, making requests for informants, seeking clarifications on information already available, and the posting of a hyperlink to an online survey, which is discussed further below. Seekers participate in a far less formal way than this normally, but their interactions also involve making introductions, asking questions, and sharing information and links. Informants volunteering for further conversations were then e-mailed in order to arrange face to face or online interviews. Moving conversations onto private communication channels is also a means by which seekers increase personal interaction, although it certainly appeared that meeting "in real life" was uncommon.

Personal interaction among Indigos also takes place online through social networking sites, collectively known as social media. The social media encountered through my seeker methodology were blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These platforms, created and maintained by private companies, enable personal sharing and interaction to a much greater degree than static websites, and the advent of social media has been described as indicating a New Age of the Internet, or a "Web 2.0". However, Tim Berners Lee, one of the primary developers of the World Wide Web, argues that it was always meant to have this capability for audience interactivity, creativity, and transmission, and that the term Web 2.0 is simply a marketing device (Berners Lee 2006). Web 2.0 is also arguably yet another metaphor for the Internet, as is the term "the Internet" itself. I will now describe in detail these social media locations in order to understand the methods employed in engaging with the Indigo Children through them.

Online diaries, known as "web logs" or, more commonly, "blogs", are spaces for personal reflection and are considered by scholars of social media as a prime manifestation of the contemporary "networked society" (Castells 2009). The use of blogs as a location for spiritual reflection and community formation has been explored by academics. For example, Deborah Whitehead's consideration of authenticity in blogs, specifically evangelical Christian motherhood blogs charting the severe illness of their own children, describes how blogs can act as "evidence of things unseen", that is, as "a representation of the evidence of authentic religious faith and practice shared by the community" (Whitehead 2015, 120). Moreover, in Whitehead's research, when the authors themselves of these blogs proved inauthentic, fraudulent or misleading, then the effects

generated by the blogs became authentic evidence instead, i.e. the fact that they had incited prayer and faith. Likewise, Chapter 3 considers an online example of how evidence is treated in the Indigo Child community, to demonstrate the role of support in verification. During research for this ethnography, material from blogs was captured and recorded for discourse analysis. However, even before analysis was engaged in, the prevalence of blogs found through the seeker methodology highlighted the relevance of the personal account, or testimony, to the Indigo Community, which is also described in Chapter 3.

These testimonies were also to be found on Facebook posts. The social media platform Facebook has several functions: it enables interactions with "friends" (friends, family members, professional associates, and loosely connected contacts), forum board-like postings, diary or blog-like status updates, the formation of groups around topics, and the promotion of personal businesses, interests, and campaigns. Seekers of any type can make connections with individuals interested in the same topics by joining Facebook groups or by "liking" pages, thus becoming "members" even if they are transient or inactive. The Facebook "tips" page explains the difference between these two social functions:

> Facebook Pages enable public figures, businesses, organizations and other entities to create an authentic and public presence on Facebook […] You, and every person on Facebook, can connect with these Pages by becoming a fan and then receive their updates in your News Feed and interact with them […] Facebook Groups […] allow people to come together around a common cause, issue or activity to organize, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos and share related content.
>
> (Facebook 2010)

During this research, I joined several Indigo Child Facebook groups and "liked" Facebook pages, with both actions resulting in notifications when new posts were made. Posts involved text (introductions, questions, and/or statements), images (pictures of the group members taken by themselves, colloquially known as a "selfie", Internet memes[4] of a spiritual nature, or images of objects or places), requests for personal psychic readings (often with a picture or selfie of the post's author), videos, and links to other sites.

The Facebook groups joined were found by following links posted by members and by searching for key terms. The groups were: *Indigo Adults*, *Indigo Adults and Children on a Mission*, *Indigo and Other Highly Advanced Souls*, *Enlightened Indigo Child*, *Indigo Revolution 2013* (renamed *Indigo Revolution 2014*, in 2014), *Indigo Minds*, *Indigo Wellness Group*, *Indigo European Community for Children & Adults*, *Earth Angels*, *Inspiralonline: Cambridge Holistic and Spiritual Events*, and *Indigo, Crystal, Starseeds, Etc., The People Who Will Change the World*. The Facebook pages "liked" during fieldwork were a combination of profile pages for spiritual entrepreneurs and writers, groups' pages, and pages for New Age magazines or publications. Pages "liked" included those of the Indigo author

Doreen Virtue, her son Charles Virtue, Peroshini Naidoo (a Lightworker[5]), Alex "Angel" Ftoulis (a Lightworker), Marta H. Cotton (a Lightworker who was first met offline through a Crystal Child discussion group in London, UK), *Silent Voices* (a New Age Magazine published in Portsmouth, UK), *The Mother Magazine* (a parenting magazine focussing on holistic approaches), *Parenting a Gifted Child*, *The Angels Through the Eyes of a Child*, *The Krystal Kids*, *Alternatives* (a spiritual centre in Piccadilly, London), *Indigo Children*, *Indigo Children Troupe*, *Indigo Children of the World*, and *the Indigo, Crystal, Rainbows, Starseeds, Lightworker Support Group*.

My calls for informants for this research were posted on these groups and pages. Responses were on the whole positive, with several of these initial contacts resulting in Skype or face to face interviews. Some interviews were also conducted *through* the Facebook messaging programme, which is text-based but can be synchronous if the informant responds immediately.[6] Screengrabs were also taken of significant conversations that took place on Facebook, some of them with hundreds of responses to the original post. Images shared amongst group members and spread online were also archived if relevant; these included images with overlaid text which serve inspirational or therapeutic purposes as a spiritual form of meme.

Online objects, including images and memes, were also transmitted via Twitter, another social media service employed to observe and follow Indigo links during this fieldwork. The main aspects of Twitter's format will need to be introduced for their impact on the form of the material from the Indigo Children I will present in this book. Twitter is a micro-blogging site where blog posts, or "tweets", are limited to 140 characters. A tweet is "a burst of inconsequential information", according to Twitter's creators (Sarno 2009). However, this official definition appears to ignore the aspects of tweets that enable thematic connections to be made with wider conversations. First, all tweets posted in the last seven days are searchable, providing the Twitter user with a corpus of tweets on their chosen subject. Second, "hashtags" can be employed by users: a word or short phrase is preceded by a hash symbol (#) that identifies the topic of the message, aiding search mechanisms and hyperlinks. In doing this, the tweet joins in with a particular conversation. Or, in the case of more pervasive hashtags, with a particular community. Social media linguist Michele Zappavigna argues that the hashtag, as a "kind of discourse tagging is the beginning of *searchable talk*, a change in social relations whereby we mark our discourse so that it can be found by others, in effect so that we can bond around particular values" (Zappavigna 2012, 1, emphasis in original). Finally, tweets are both multimedia and hyperlinked, in that they can contain images, videos, short looping videos known as "GIFs" for their file type ("graphic interchange format"), and sound tracks, either embedded within the tweet itself, or through links to other web pages. These aspects of connectivity make tweets much more complex than the 140-character limitation implies.

During this research, I used a Twitter platform called Tweetdeck to follow multiple searches simultaneously. The terms followed were: "Indigo

Children", "Indigo Child", and "New Age", as well as "Indigoism", after an initial survey of tweets and links led me to this different term. These searches showed who was tweeting about these subjects, and clicking links led me to other relevant material on the Internet. An alternative method would have been to perform Google searches for these terms. This would have resulted in an excessively large volume of results, websites which would also have been prioritized in the search results by Google's algorithms instead of by the Indigo Children themselves. Tweets, therefore, guided my research, as they did for other seekers, to the websites, videos, and images that were presently being discussed and shared. Images linked to in some Indigo Children tweets were hosted on Instagram. Instagram is a social media platform for Internet-enabled mobile phones, which allows instant sharing online of pictures on Instagram. com where an Instagram account's followers can see them. These images can also be given hashtags, enabling the connectivity I discussed above with regards to Twitter. Instagram also allows for aesthetic filters or the layering of text, which can turn the images into new memes. Instagram images were also copied using a screengrab program and archived for coding during this research.

I noticed a trend while performing keyword searches on Twitter, and investigating it led me to further interactions and interviews: tweets regularly appeared that only contained 15 characters out of the possible 140, and containing none of the elements of connectivity described above. Many people were writing just two words: "Indigo Children". I approached these users through Twitter and asked about their motivations for tweeting in this way. Of the 124 contacted, 103 responded, and the short interviews that followed have become a valuable source of data on the Indigo Children and their social media use and backgrounds. Chapter 7 considers the particular demographic and cultural trends highlighted by these interactions and the implications they have for assumptions about Indigo Children, and about New Agers as the wider group that Indigos belong to.

More *proactive* data collection methods were introduced once the seeker methodology had identified significant locations on social media. I created an online survey and disseminated it via the previously discussed Indigo Children Facebook groups. This survey had three aims: to collect preliminary demographic data, to operate as a structured asynchronous interview, and to identify willing informants for longer unstructured synchronous interviews (either face to face or online). Questions one to five were written with the first aim in mind:

1   Gender ("male", "female", "other – please specify")
2   Age (in bands: "Under 20", "20–29", "30–39", "40–49", "50–59", "60 or older", "Other – please specify")
3   What is your main occupational field? (A selection of fields was given)
4   In which city and/or country do you live?
5   How would you describe your religious identity? (Tick boxes provided for all the main faiths, including Paganisms and New Religious movements such as Scientology and Jediism, as well as a write in box for 'other')

   The responses were considered to be indicative rather than conclusive given the sample size (132 responses). More significant to my research were the questions to which an essay answer could be given, which turned the surveys into asynchronous structured interviews:

6   Which, if any, of the following terms best describes you? You can tick more than one box:

   An Indigo Child
   A Crystal Child
   A Rainbow Child
   A Starseed
   A Walk-In
   An Angel on Earth
   A Beautiful Silent One
   A Parent of one or more of the above, please give details in the box below
   Other (please specify in the box below)

7   How long have you known that you and/or your child were Indigos/ Crystals/Rainbows etc.?
8   Where and how did you first find out about this phenomenon?
9   What do you think is the most important thing I should know about Indigos (or whatever you define as)?

The tenth question asked respondents to write in their contact details if they were willing to be interviewed. The following section discusses the methods and issues involved in my interviews with Indigo Children and their parents, peers, and supporters for this research.

On- and offline fieldwork methods: interviews

Interviews were based on the assumption that

> to understand other persons' constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them … and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their terms (rather than those imposed rigidly and a priori by ourselves) and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meanings.
>
> (Jones 1985, 46)

The majority of interviews conducted with Indigo informants took around an hour and a half and were unstructured, in that there was "only a general sense of the questions or topics to be discussed [which] would be kept deliberately open-ended, and there would be no attempt at standardization" (Punch 2005, 175). Questions and themes drawn from initial online research were returned

to when conversation required prompting. The interview process itself may also have served to make responses more formal, and it is important to bear in mind that all interview data is both situated and textual (Silverman 1993). Electronic voice recordings were made and I later transcribed these for coding and reflection. In reproducing such material, I maintain their original grammar and certain slips in meaning, but clarify in square brackets where necessary. Any swear words are also presented uncensored, not for sensationalism but for ethnographic veracity and to recognize the strength of the feelings expressed.

The main issue I found with interviewing Indigo Children was not the social reticence that the interviewees themselves claimed; as "Rachel" warned me, "That's the strange thing about Indigos, we're all quite shy". "Strange", because shyness seems to contradict the Indigo rhetoric around being warriors and paradigm busters. In fact, many of the Indigos I interviewed were outgoing, outspoken, and unconcerned about talking in public spaces, such as cafes, about their nature and destinies as Indigo Children. The main issue for doing interviews was their geographical distance from each other and myself as the researcher. As an ideologically rather than spatially bounded community, the 90 potential interviewees contacted came from all around the world, although primarily from the USA, UK, Canada, Europe, India, and Australia. These locations were not unexpected: contacts were found through social media, access to which is dependent on having both knowledge of current technologies and the financial capacity for purchasing computers or mobile devices. Having this technological expertise and financial capacity did, however, mean that online interviews were possible, adjusting for time differences and schedules. Face to face interviews with UK Indigos took place in Cambridge, London, Liverpool, and Winchester, and these formed the majority of the 25 unstructured long interviews that came from our initial online contact. I also attended events to make face to face contact with potential interviewees. The following section discusses the methods for offline fieldwork.

Offline fieldwork methods

The New Age milieu provides a rich array of courses, events, and groups that could be participated in. However, few are specifically about the Indigo Children concept. Therefore, offline ethnographic fieldwork began by choosing to attend New Age events which were geographically close. This led to contact with other seekers who were interested in my research and who were able to suggest people and events to look into, as well as becoming informants themselves. To illustrate this offline seeker methodology, and how offline participant observation operated for this research, I now provide accounts of how some specific groups, events, and talks were interconnected and what I did when I attended them.

The first example is that of *The New Earth Group* in Cambridge. This was a discussion group led by a homeopathic therapist called Thierry. This group was not directly related to Indigo Children, but it provided new contacts,

information about events, and the opportunity to experience teachings, discussions, and guided meditations on the chakras. The latter involved listening to a recording of Doreen Virtue, an Indigo author introduced in Chapter 1, as she described the chakras. As a participant observer, I visualized the opening of my own chakras, while noting how the other seekers were also engaged in the task. This meditation was used as a starting point for each of the sessions in order to aid our focus during the evening's talk and discussion, and to help the members on their path to awakening, or "Ascension". During discussions after the meditation, I discovered that Thierry knew about the Indigo Children. His group had connections with another group in the East of England, *The Ascension Circle*. The Circle's founders, Elaine and John von Nuding, had written online about Indigo Children in relation to a disabled young woman known as Grandma Chandra; this material will be discussed further in Chapter 4 in relation to diagnosis and healing.

My second example of this seeker methodology and participant observation method is the *12.12.12 One World Celebration*, held in a large conference room in the London Metropole Hotel on Edgeware Road. This was an evening of music, performance poetry, meditation, and inspirational talks; all together, the format was planned around the structure and relationships of the chakras. This was done in order to open the chakras of both the individual and the entire planet. This *Celebration* was based on expectations drawn from the numerical synchronicity of the date and the Mayan Calendar's end in December 2012, and the millennial significance of that (see Hoopes and Whitesides 2012). Publicity for the *Celebration* described it in this way:

> On 12.12.12 we are being called by Source to create a physical Circle of Light and Sound to complete the opening of the portal for the Divine Consciousness that's coming in. […] Allow the pure light of source to emanate from London like a golden orb to enrich all of humanity. This event can never be repeated. You are part of this
>
> (One World 2012)

Again, this was not specifically an Indigo event. However, there were links with the Indigo Child concept and authors. A sales area outside the main hall sold books, crystals, and incense, and in one stall, I found a copy of Diana Cooper's prophetic book, *2012 and Beyond: An Invitation to Meet the Challenges & Opportunities Ahead*. In this, Cooper describes the role played by Indigos, and children in general, in the cosmic changes she predicts, and how we can help them to achieve their missions: "As a planet we will start again to give the children what they need rather than what we want for them" (Cooper 2009). During the evening, Cooper herself led a meditation focussed on archangels and gave a speech about the Ascension and the need to be awake to the new era. As with the *Cambridge New Earth Group*, my fieldwork method involved active participation in the visualizations, meditations, and dancing that took place during this evening, joining in with the 1,200 participants.[7] Information

about the *12.12.12 Celebration* was received through an informant, Julian, and we attended the event together with his friend Kyle.

Julian had also founded a Crystal Child discussion group in London, which provides a third example for this section on my offline fieldwork methods. In terms of participant observation, "embodied enactments" (Wood 2003) took place at this group. For example, I participated as one member took over a casual discussion of auras to show the other members how to see the aura, using the focus of a nearby building. As I first found Julian's group through Meetup.com, it is an example not only of offline fieldwork methods but also of the interactions of the offline with the online, and the holism of the digital we have previously discussed. Meetup.com is a website where online groups can be established around particular interests, themes, and activities. Therefore, online participation and methods were also employed in interactions with this group, and they require describing now, as well as the nature of Meetup.com as a social networking platform.

The primary aim of Meetup.com is explicit in its name: it is intended that the groups hosted on the site eventually meet up "IRL" (in real life), and search results are presented in order of geographical distance from a home address supplied by the user. The marketing for Meetup.com includes the tagline "Meet your people", and the groups are based on shared ideologies, interests, or hobbies. The New Age and Indigo groups joined through Meetup.com included: *The Indigo Collective*; *Starseeds*, *Angels and Ascended Masters* (founded by Marta, who also attended Julian's Meetup.com group); *Huntingdon Holistic Community Group*; and *The Cambridge Holistic and Natural Living Success Group*. The largest and most active group joined was the *London College of Spirituality*, which organized talks and events around many New Age subjects. One such talk was given by Berit Reaver, an AuraTransformation therapist. She spoke specifically on the Indigo Children and how the therapy offered by AuraTransformation could change an individual's aura to the newer Indigo structure.

Berit was interviewed for this research when she returned to England from Norway a few months after her talk; this is another example of how interviews resulted from the discussion groups and events I attended. During talks such as Berit's, direct observation actually occurred more often than participation, and note-taking was left until after the group finished in order not to be distracted, or distracting; as ethnographers George and Louise Spindler explain, "the primary obligation is for the ethnographer to be there when the action takes place, and to change that action as little as possible by his or her presence" (Spindler and Spindler 1992, 64).

This sensitivity to the effect of note taking on the group also raises the methodological question of the larger influence of the researcher on the communities they are considering. Three issues around influence arose during this research. First, when I explained my research and my background, I was occasionally regarded as an "expert" on the Indigo Children, and then members would direct questions towards me. It became necessary to downplay the amount of reading of primary sources I had already done so as not to

steer the group accidentally. Second, group members frequently asked me about my own beliefs. Answering that I believed in the Indigo Child concept might have lent it a credibility that could have been transmitted elsewhere in the field and skewed later contacts' opinions of me. Therefore, an agnostic stance was taken: I stated that I was open-minded to the idea, before joking that if "I was any more open-minded my brain would fall out". Finally, a discussion group that I intentionally started via Meetup.com for this research, *Cambridgeshire Indigo/Crystal/Rainbow Children*, could have potentially made the Indigo Child phenomena more valid and well-known in the offline world than it was online. However, of the 36 people who joined through Meetup. com, only two members turned up for one meeting out of the seven meetings scheduled over the course of a year, even though many more had signed up for the dates. The low turn-out for this discussion group was not entirely a failure: "Amber" and "Mark", who attended on that one occasion, then became a part of a small group interview. Also, the application questions I wrote for potential members as a part of Meetup.com's format also operated as short structured interviews.

It is worth briefly exploring the possible reasons for such low attendance and its implications for the overall methodology for this research. Perhaps because other New Age Meetup.com groups offered education or therapies, and as such were more likely to attract attendees. *Cambridgeshire Indigo/Crystal/ Rainbow Children* only provided a social space in which to meet like-minded people, as offering either therapies or education would have been outside the purview of my research and quite possibly unethical. Julian's Meetup.com discussion group on Crystal Children also lacked therapies or explicit education and also failed to attract regular attendees. He eventually changed it to a Life Coaching group to reflect his new interests and his disillusionment with the Indigo Child concept, a subject we discussed later in an interview, and which will be discussed in Chapter 6. The second possible reason is, as mentioned above, that there is a belief among Indigos that they find social situations difficult. Whether this is case or not – and I certainly saw no evidence for this idea – it did become apparent to me early on in this research that the majority of Indigo interactions take place online, and that meeting up "in real life" is less common. Therefore, as discussed, interacting with online Indigos and creating a digital, virtual, and mobile ethnography was necessary. I did still pursue interactions at general New Age events, such as "Mind Body Spirit Fayres", during this fieldwork, as Indigos or their supporters might attend. In order to make this possible ambient and transient audience of Indigos at fayres visible to this research a proactive method was used: free-listing.

Free-listing is a qualitative survey method that relies on discourse analysis and pattern recognition. The respondent is asked to write out as many words related to an initial prompting word as they can think of. This is done in order to map out the emic "cultural domain": "an organized set of words, concepts, or sentences, all on the same level of contrast, that jointly refer to a single conceptual sphere" (Weller and Romney 1988, 9). For this research, this structure

was altered slightly: the surveys that I handed out provided only four spaces for the respondents' related words and gave them four prompting terms to consider: "New Age", "Spiritual", "Indigo Children", and "Parenting". This was done to hide the specific topic of this research in order to reduce bias, and during introductions, I described my research as being on the New Age movement in general. It was also emphasized to the respondents that they could fill as much, or as little, as they wanted to or could manage. Many respondents admitted, even as they received the forms, that they did not know what Indigo Children were, and that they intended to use their mobile phones to search the Internet for answers. Therefore, I impressed on them that the surveys required their immediate, un-researched responses. Respondents were then given both time and space to fill out the surveys. I decided to approach stall holders at the fayres, as they were relatively static and were more easily returned to at a later point during the fayre.

Fifty-six free-listing surveys were returned at three different fayres I attended during this research: King's Lynn, Peterborough, and Crystal Palace in London. As with the online survey, one of the aims of this method was to elicit contacts with potential interviewees, and later, longer unstructured interviews resulted from this method. The free-listing responses I received were subsequently examined for patterns, the frequency of terms, biases, and ignorance of the prompting words. This material will be discussed in Chapter 6, on the transmission of the Indigo Child concept. The following section discusses the analysis of the data collected by the seeker method, both on- and offline, with reflection on my position as a researcher in that analysis.

Reflecting on the material and the researcher

The majority of material gathered from the Indigo Child community is textual in nature; even photos and graphics are posted online with descriptions, over-laying mottos, or hashtags. Interactions with particular members, in interviews or at events, were also subsequently transcribed into texts to be analyzed. The primary method employed in the consideration of these materials was therefore discourse analysis, whereby we assume that the language of the member aids in the construction of the community. My analysis of the material was also based on the assumption that it could give authentic insight into people's experiences and social constructions (Silverman 1993, 90–98). I made observations on individuals' perceptions of their own nature and that of the wider world and took a grounded theory approach, where "one does not begin with a theory and then prove it, rather one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that is allowed to emerge" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 23). In order to find what was "relevant", I employed coding methods in order to draw themes out from the raw data, primarily "Descriptive codes" and "In Vivo codes" (Saldaña 2009). In presenting this material, I have anonymized many sources in order to balance potential harm with potential social benefit, following guidelines for online researchers (AoIR 2012).

It is also important to discuss how such analytic methods of handling material are not neutral projects. As with the seeker methodology, where paths were chosen or ignored, coding material meant I made decisions on meanings, themes, and the significance of material. Reflexivity was necessarily, therefore, an early aspect of this research, for "a metacognition of method, even in an emergent, inductive-oriented, and socially conscious enterprise such as qualitative inquiry, is vitally important" (Saldaña 2009, 40). Reflection involves considering where the observer stands, both during the process of fieldwork and in the writing up of the ethnography itself. The anthropologist also brings theories with her into the field; this is a part of being human that the observer cannot mask. My initial systematic methodology of cataloguing posts from Indigosociety.com reflects my initial naiveté and artificial scientism, and the subsequent seeker methodology is a self-conscious attempt to mimic the patterns of behaviour of my subjects. Frequently in interviews, Indigo Children told me, "I did my own research", and gave references as to where their research took them online. I could only do likewise to give full value to the material.

There was another, more personal, element that informed my response to the material, and which perhaps made me swap one set of prejudices for another. At 11.35am on 5 February 2012, my son was born. With the highs and lows of motherhood came a reassessment of my approach to this research. My presumptions about the Indigo Children as a non-mother were very different to my understanding of them as a mother. In a society full of advice-givers, naysayers, and scare stories about the things you should and should not do as a mother, I am far more sympathetic to any attempt just to cope with parenthood. As a result of this personal change, the artificial, "scientific" distance I was trying to instil in my methodology has diminished. This is not to say that I am no longer objective, but rather that I am more aware of the formative nature of the material I am reading. Material containing rhetoric of self-assessment and self-diagnosis cannot help but involve the researcher in that process, even if I have not adopted the Indigo Child title and still retain the agnostic position explained above. Likewise, reflecting on my position as a researcher in the field has led me to make biographical testimony as the Indigo Children do: both to informants during fieldwork and in this book at this very point.

Specifically, in approaching the material and the Indigo Child community, I drew upon the following personal experiences. After graduating from university in 2002 with an undergraduate degree in Theology and Religious Studies, I began working at a New Age shop in London while trying to start a particular career. It was there that I explored a variety of therapies and divination systems in hopes that they might give me hope and a direction in life. Through the shop I was also socialized into the New Age milieu by selling crystals based on their spiritual properties (which I had to learn by rote and was tested on by fellow staff members), promoting psychic readers to curious customers, and teaching a course to customers on modern Pagan Witchcraft based on my undergraduate dissertation. While the anthropologist going to the field learns

the local language as a part of his research, I enter my field with not only the same tongue but also some of the same New Age experiences as my subjects. However, I have also had to be very careful not to assume that my understanding of a word or an experience is *exactly* the same as theirs.

My biography likewise influences my methodological approach to the online material and community of the Indigo Children. I am a child of the computer era and have grown up with the methods and paralanguage of computer mediated communication and social media. My parents met at IBM ("International Business Machines" Corporation) in the early 1970s. My mother was a manual programmer who entered hole-punched white cards into a machine for hours on end and my father was a computer salesman. I grew up using the computers he brought home with him: BBCs, Amstrads, and Amigas, which were cutting-edge products then, but which are now only found in museums. At 15, I logged into an online chatroom for the first time. Today, I use e-mail, Facebook, and Twitter every single day, and in a sense "computer-speak" is one of my primary languages. Therefore, when researching groups and social formations online I also had to be careful to check my assumptions about my knowledge of the language, paralanguage, and etiquette of the Internet. What might seem to be sarcasm might in fact not be, and humour might easily be misinterpreted. On the Internet, acronyms proliferate and memes spawn wildly, and I might not fully understand what I am seeing. With my original plan for recording Indigosociety.com posts, keeping up with these changes would have required being online almost incessantly, directly observing a vast volume of material, and that has not been possible.[8] Therefore, I am very aware that there will be lacunae in my research. There are simply no emic boundaries around my subject area of the Indigo Children on the Internet; it is too vast and its content overlaps with too many other metaphysical fields of interest. Thus, there are too many conversations going on and too many people talking. However, as a digital anthropologist, I can join them as a fellow seeker, learn the way that they learn, and slowly come to conclusions as they do. I can meet them in real life, and I can trace trends and themes. Therefore, I present this ethnography, and the research it is based upon, bearing in mind that: "We cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything" (Punch 2005, 187). Thus, the following chapter begins with a specific case in order to illuminate pertinent details of the parental narrative of the Indigo Child, one of the more common accounts I encountered.

Notes

1 As at 12.11.2014.

2 Moreover, the forum was sold at the beginning of 2015, and the new owner changed the programme used to run it, leading to technological issues that have greatly diminished the active membership. This change supports my uncertainty about the continuing significance of the forum within the community.

3 'Paralanguage': the nonverbal cues occurring in face to face speech. Online paralanguage includes acronyms, emoticons, and familiar typographical forms such as ellipses and excla-

mation marks. Studies on the role of paralanguage have long questioned "earlier assumptions that the social context is dramatically reduced or eliminated in this medium" (Lea and Spears 1992, 321).

4 Internet meme: "An image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by Internet users, often with slight variations" (Oxford English Dictionary, www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/meme). I will return to this concept in drawing together my conclusions in Chapter 8.

5 Lightworkers are described as individuals whose souls who have intentionally incarnated on earth at this time to help humanity through healing, therapies, guidance, and teachings. There is overlap with the Indigo Children concept: Lightworkers also have a life mission, a sense of not fitting in, and have endured "harsh life experiences that eroded the knowledge of [their] Divine perfection" (Virtue 1997, xi). However, Lightworkers can be born prior to the "official" arrival dates for Indigo Children, making the term accessible to older seekers. Moreover, some seekers who have become disillusioned with the Indigo Child concept also adopt the term.

6 "Synchronous" – conversation is simultaneous. "Asynchronous" – users are not logged in at the same time and therefore responses and conversation are delayed (see Hines and Pearl 2004).

7 This was the attendance given in publicity for the event and may actually represent the maximum number of attendees rather than tickets sold (especially given the significance of the number "12" for the event). It was also claimed that hundreds of others joined the event virtually via livestreaming online (Joylina 2012).

8 Large scale corpus methodologies do exist, and the current turn to Big Data in digital sociology is based on the assumption that these approaches "see" more. But anthropologists working online note how the loss of finer contextual details can lead to mistaken decisions in sampling (see Gerbaudo 2012).

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3   The parental account of the Indigo Child

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how parents describe their children as "Indigo" and provide a broad mapping of the forms and resources that they bring to bear in doing so. A principal case study, concerning Emma and her daughters, will be examined to offer an initial analysis of the categories being applied to the child in this parental account. This chapter then expands on that analysis by drawing on material encountered through online discussion groups, events, social media posts, and interviews organized for this research. This wider analysis refers to the accounts of Indigos themselves as w well as those of the parents of Indigos.

This wider material is presented for two reasons: first, to address the lack of ethnographic research on the Indigo Children, as highlighted in the literature survey in Chapter 1. The academics who have considered the Indigo Child have inevitably focussed on the more static and bounded "official" accounts from Indigo authors, rather than considering the variety of accounts from Indigo Children and their parents. Moreover, personal experience is a recurring trope in the Indigo community and the wider New Age movement, and "first person" is the voice through which most narratives are presented. Thus, while Indigo authors offer lists of Indigo Child characteristics and abilities, parents like Emma also develop their own lists as a result of their experiences. This chapter will therefore address this lacuna, with specific reference to the form of the narrative constructions of the parent based upon reified experience.

Second, this wider material is considered in order to recognize how a discourse by parents about their "special" children becomes generalized in a community, as that status has been claimed by individuals for themselves. The categories drawn out through the analysis of Emma's account, and those of the Indigo community, will then be placed within wider academic considerations of New Age products, biographical narratives in particular. I will primarily draw on the work of Courtney Bender (2010) regarding such narratives, as her work on New Metaphysicals' self-creation is pertinent here. I begin with the details of Emma's account, given here in full, just as she presented it to me.

Emma and her daughters

I met Emma in April of 2013 after posting a description of myself, my research, and a request for interviewees on a Facebook group for Indigo Children and their parents. Emma responded, communicating with me through the Facebook page for her business: Emma Light Angel Readings and Angelic Reiki Healing. The title of her page was written in a sparkling, medieval-style font, overlaying a Victoriana image of an angelic child with rosy pink cheeks and hands held in prayer.[1] I asked Emma to tell me about her experience of Indigo Children and she told me in length about her daughters:

> I don't like to put titles on children, but from what I understand, Lizzie may resemble a rainbow child and Jane a star child?? I feel so blessed to have these special children in my life. They blow me away every day with their knowledge, maturity and open hearts. Please let me know if you have any questions. I'll try to attach some photos for you too. I will be so interested to hear what you find out from other parents and how this relates to my children. I'm also fascinated to know what prompted you to study this area? Please ignore any spelling/grammatical errors I'm just typing as I think. Thank you Emma
>> Child #1 (Lizzie) D.O.B 12/19/2006

- Highly sensitive.
- Empathetic (has been attuned to my mood since she was a baby. Knows exactly how I am feeling, even when I am outwardly behaving otherwise).
- Aware of other children's feelings and always tries to include others/make peace.
- Generous (As an example, she saw a child walking to school in the pouring rain with no coat and she was so upset, she asked to buy raincoats for the poor children. Due to her idea, we were able to provide the school with 60 raincoats for underprivileged children).
- Spiritual.
- Imaginative.
- Can focus for long periods of time.
- Loves colour, art and crystals.
- Has great relationship with her angels. Her angels actually talk to her. She describes their voices as high-pitched like chipmunks (as opposed to the thought-forms I receive from angels).
- Despite her spirituality, never mentions past-lives.
- Very in-tune with nature. Always hugs trees, rescues insects etc. from the pool etc. (Coincidentally she will pass on messages from the trees, which make absolute sense).
- Has requested to become vegetarian as she is so sensitive to the fact that she is eating animals.
- Can manifest what she wants. For example, always being picked as the child out of the audience at any show.

- Interesting things happen to her. For example, we went to a bakery to pick up cupcakes for her to take to her class. The bakery shared a space with an art studio. She loves art and was watching the class that was taking place. The teacher came over and invited her to join the class. They happened to be making angel art! She loves dolphins. Twice we have been to a dolphin sanctuary where they choose only one child to come and meet/kiss the dolphin and both times she was selected.
- She has been evaluated by a psychologist and diagnosed "gifted", which in our County means she has an IQ above the 98th percentile.
- Excels in all areas at school. She is in a dual language class for Spanish-speakers and is excelling (even though we speak no Spanish at home).
- Wise beyond her years (described as very mature by other adults).
- Always described by her teachers as a pleasure to have in class and always ends up as the teacher's "helper".
- Very little naughty behaviour or tantrums (even as a toddler) and recovers quickly from setbacks.
- Huge brown eyes.
- There are very few challenges to having a child like this. We are lucky to have found an educational program where she is challenged. I think sometimes other children her age have a hard-time relating to her and she gets on much better with older children or adults.

Child #2 (Jane) D.O.B 03/29/2008

- Not sensitive like her sister. She is not insensitive, but she looks at things more objectively than letting them affect her personally.
- Is not afraid of nature (she'll let millipedes crawl all over her arms, but she is studying them rather than loving them.)
- Also very bright (has been referred for a psych eval [sic] for gifted testing like her sister, although we have not completed that yet). Again I'm not too hung up on titles like "gifted" or what have you.
- Is a natural healer. She has seen me giving Reiki, but she made up her own way of healing using crystals and feathers with no direction and it works!!
- Also has a relationship with angels, although does not report hearing their voices.
- Attractive and able to manipulate people into giving in to her, or giving her things "just because".
- Also very well-behaved, although she does not TRY to be a very good girl like her sister.
- Very popular. Other children always want to play with her, but she can take it or leave it.
- Also generous, but in a different way. After her birthday party, she gave her sister half her presents, but I think this was just because she was not really bothered with them (many are still in the boxes and her party was a month ago).

- Both children are naturally drawn to healthy food (their favourites are fruit and vegetables) although Jane also has a sweet tooth and loves sweets and cakes.
- Jane has always been advanced for her age. Probably because she has a big sister, but she was fully walking by nine months old.
- Since she could talk, Jane has told us about her previous life on "her planet" or "alien world". She talks about her "alien father" and the language they spoke. She says remembers the day she was born here and how she was shocked because her skin was different and covered in blood (previously her skin had been cold and very smooth she says). She is fascinated by anything to do with space or aliens.
- Neither child has had any major health issues or problems, although Jane suffers with terrible nightmares (I have to sleep with her it is so bad).

Emma also sent me photos, described by her as: "Lizzie as a baby", "The two of them surrounded by angelic light as usual", "The two of them with an angel orb between them", and "This is Lizzie at the bakery I mentioned, when she was asked to join the art class making angels. Surrounded by angelic light as we came out".

"Lizzie as a baby" showed a serious faced toddler wearing a wide brimmed pink hat, sitting in a buggy, in front of several sun-loungers on a beach. An upside down arc of rainbow light went from the left to the right of the picture, across Lizzie's chest. In the second picture, an older Lizzie stood with her younger sister, both wearing identical pink striped dresses, and both holding the oversized hands of a person in a Dr Seuss "Cat in the Hat" costume. Rays of light radiated out across the image from a point above them, and a white arc was just visible at the bottom of the picture. The third picture showed an "angel orb between the two of them": the two girls were knelt on a blue towel on a wooden bridge, again wearing identical dresses, with matching blue starfish clips in their hair. The "angel orb" was a translucent white circle above Jane's head; it covered some of Lizzie's cheek as they both smiled towards the camera. I sent further details about my research and my time working in a New Age shop, as I described in Chapter 2, and Emma responded:

> Thanks Beth. It's all very interesting, and will be so interesting for you as [your son] grows up! I don't really get to discuss it much as I lead kind of a 'double life' between my corporate work and my spiritual work! I'll let you know if I think of anything else. PS. Terrible night with Jane last night. I really believe its past life issues coming up for her. Nothing we have tried has helped, bless her.

17 days later, she sent another message via Facebook:

> Just wanted to give you an update. We had Jane evaluated and she scored a 136 which is in the very superior intelligence range (the threshold for

'gifted' children here is 130, so she did pretty well). Don't know if that has any significance. I was thinking about some other cases where Lizzie has manifested whatever she wants. We happened to be in Ft. Lauderdale while the Day of the Dead processional was about to start. (It's a huge annual event in Ft. Lauderdale that we had no idea about, over 6000 people). All of the people participating in the event were in full costume and had elaborate banners to carry. Lizzie said that she wanted to be in it and carry a sign. We told her that maybe next year we could find out how to apply and organise costumes etc., and this year we could just watch. With that, somebody came over to us and asked if we would like to LEAD the processional and they gave Lizzie a sign to hold. It said Los Angelitos (little angels in Spanish)!! Incredible!! We were photographed and in all of the newspapers which was kind of embarrassing as we weren't even in costume. Another example is when Lizzie first started Kindergarten she came home and declared she was going to audition for the school chorus. Her school is a performing arts school with over 500 pupils and they only allow 40 into the chorus, so competition is tough. She is an average singer and as we waited to hear whether she had a place, we prepped her for the reality that she might not make the cut this year. Anyway, needless to say, she came home with a huge grin. She had made chorus and one of the songs they were preparing for the school concert was Katy Perry Firework, which has been Lizzie's favourite song since she was a toddler. There is a theatre camp that she badly wanted to go to for the summer (she had been there for Christmas and spring break holidays). I had said no to this summer as it's very expensive and I would have to send both her and her sister. Lo and behold, the school summer camp has been cancelled due to lack of interest and the ONLY camp in town that still has spots for this summer is the theatre camp she wanted to go to. Anyway, I'm rambling, but here are just a few more examples of her ability to manifest Love and light to you. I'm looking for a pic of day of the dead now. We even made the Los Angeles Times! ha ha [laughter]

She then sent me another picture she described as "Lizzie and me leading the day of the dead procession! ha ha". In it, Emma, a dark haired woman wearing large sunglasses, is helping Lizzie hold up a pole. At the top is a wooden, almost cartoon-like angel, praying. The words "Los Angelitos" were written on a wooden banner across the angel's legs, which were positioned as though they were about to make contact with the ground.

The parental account

Here Emma's account, including its context, will be analyzed to show it to be a biographical narrative on behalf of her daughters. Initially this narrative was shaped by its presentation through asynchronous computer mediated communication (CMC), her attitude towards labelling, her scientistic approach, her

emphasis on comparison in her exposition of her daughters' natures, and her preconceptions of what she, as a mother, achieved by providing this account. Further, I will examine the content of the account: the details of her daughters' Indigo characteristics, her stories of specific events, and the images provided.[2] Specific elements and tropes in Emma's account included: signs of telepathy and other psychic gifts, coincidences, giftedness, healing, popularity and influence, previous lives, alien entities, and angelic guardians.

The form of the account

First, by giving Emma the ability to respond at her leisure, the form of this account was determined more by her than by myself as the interviewer. Second, it is significant that she freely chose to provide an account running into hundreds of words to a researcher whom she had only met online. This speaks of a need to communicate her account of her daughters and their abilities. I initially met Emma through a Facebook group for Indigos and their parents, so this may be a need she was already satisfying through social media. Third, Emma spoke on behalf of her daughters. This mode of identification is complementary to that performed by peers, as in Jenny McCarthy's account of the woman on the street, presented in Chapter 1. Moreover, McCarthy also identified her son to the reader as a Crystal Child through recounting the words of the stranger, and in effect produced a parental account like Emma's.

   A fourth aspect of form arising from Emma's account relates to how individuals conceive of this identification process. Identification, either by peer or by parent, can be more colloquially framed as "labelling", and labelling is a concept that I found evoked both positive and negative reactions among the Indigo Children.[3] For example, Emma told me early on in our interactions that she does not like to apply labels to her children, and yet she still did so. Moreover, there was uncertainty in Emma's account over her application of the titles "Rainbow Child" and "Star Child" to Lizzie and Jane. Emma explained that "from what I understand" they "may resemble" these types of Indigo Child. She finished that hesitant statement with two question marks. Emma did not tell me where she got those two labels from, but her Facebook page makes it clear that she received training in Angel Card reading from Doreen Virtue's school; Virtue is one of the primary Indigo authors who has written about Rainbow Children.

   Emma began each bulleted list by referring to her daughters as "Child #1" and "Child #2". She gave their names in brackets and then their date of birth. This echoes scientific or medical models, as though Emma was already presenting the children as case studies to the researcher. This scientistic approach also affected the form of Emma's account: within her list, Emma provided evidence for her claims through details of past events, e.g. the raincoats story, the bakery/art class story, the Day of the Dead parade. Evidence is an integral part of Emma's claims for her daughters in her account. Further, Emma referenced the girls' IQ results and Lizzie's "diagnosis" of being "gifted", which she had

received from a psychiatrist. This also demonstrated sympathy with scientific fields of enquiry and claim. However, Emma's negative attitude towards labelling persisted. She claimed that she was "not too hung up on titles like 'gifted' or what have you", even after telling the reader about Lizzie's diagnosis.

Emma was also an amateur diagnostician for her own daughters, and this role also had an impact on the account. For example, she diagnosed ill health in relation to sensitivity. She described how medical intervention with the two girls has been limited to having a "psych eval", as "neither child has had any major health problems", but that Jane's nightmares were the result of her sensitivity to past life issues: "Terrible night with Jane last night. I really believe its past life issues coming up for her". However, Emma also admitted that "Nothing we have tried has helped, bless her". The diagnosis of being sensitive is significant in the Indigo narrative; in Chapter 4, I will argue that diagnosis and cure are entwined in this narrative.

The content of the account: Lizzie and Jane's abilities

In this section, I discuss the content of Emma's account, specifically the characteristics of her daughters, how they are compared in the narrative, and how they were "proven" by her stories of particular incidents. Emma's account of her own Indigo Children highlighted their sensitivity, intelligence, interactions with other realities and this one, and the means by which those interactions could take place, i.e. psychic abilities. These elements are not entirely discrete and overlap in the narrative that Emma provides, and they will also overlap in my analysis.

The characteristic of "sensitivity" appeared in Emma's descriptions of both Lizzie and Jane. For Lizzie, "highly sensitive" is the first thing Emma said about her, coming immediately after the "case study" style title. The next bullet point is "empathetic". Both "empathy" and "sensitivity" can be either psychic or mundane abilities, and interpretations vary across Indigo Child and New Age discourse. In Lizzie's case, Emma describes how Lizzie "knows exactly how I am feeling, even when I am outwardly behaving otherwise". The Indigo authors mentioned to me during this research on the whole credit Indigo Children with greater than normal, or supernatural, levels of sensitivity and perception. This indicates a hierarchy of abilities from mundane to super human and makes comparison possible.

Jane's sensitivity was likewise introduced through comparison, although with her older sister rather than with non-Indigo contemporaries: "Not sensitive like her sister. She is not insensitive, but looks at things more objectively rather than letting them affect her". This comparative approach could be the normal way a parent accounts for their two, or more, children. Alternatively, as the Indigo Child concept identifies some children as "special", and therefore some as "not", a larger culture of comparison is indicated. However, the two photos that Emma supplied showed the girls wearing matching outfits, as though comparison had been erased. However, I propose that this parental

account still entangles the reader in the process of comparison. First, it engages the reader in this overt comparison of Emma's daughters as we read her epithets for them: we can either accept Emma's description of Lizzie or find ourselves interpreting Jane's nightmare as proof of a greater level of sensitivity than her sister. Second, the account elevates Lizzie and Jane as examples that other children can be measured against.

Emma's account of the girls' intelligence is another quality entangled in this comparison. Emma told me that Lizzie is above the "98th percentile" and that Jane has an IQ score of 136, which is "in the superior intelligence range". Again, we find ourselves comparing the girls to each other and to other children we know. Emma's language about her daughter's intelligence can also be emphatic and colloquial rather than quantitative: "they blow me away everyday with their knowledge", she told me. Lizzie is described as "excelling" in school, described by her teachers as a "pleasure", and is able to "focus for long periods of time", which is in contrast to the characteristics provided by the primary Indigo authors. However, there is still some disjoint with mainstream education, as Lizzie has been placed in an educational program where "she is challenged", another indication that her intelligence is greater in comparison to her contemporaries. Jane's intelligence is similarly feted by Emma, but her social ability is also commented upon: she is able to "manipulate people into giving in to her, or giving her things 'just because'". This could be a mundane form of the "manifestation" ability, in comparison with Lizzie's more supernatural manifestations of her will, e.g. at the parade.

Emma described her daughters interacting with non-mundane realities and entities from those cosmologies. Lizzie has a "great relationship with her angels", suggesting that not only does she communicate with them, but she also has patron or "guardian" angels. Her communications were described as auditory, their voices "high-pitched like chipmunks", whereas Emma receives only thought-forms from angels. Lizzie's communications with angels implies that they exist separate to her as real objects. This external reality is also present in the pictures that Emma sent me, where angel "orbs" and "lights" appear as recordable objects, although we can note the difference in appearance between these photographed "angels" and the traditional conception of angels. The more "traditional" angel figure was represented on the Los Angelitos sign held up by Emma and Lizzie at the Day of the Dead procession. The Los Angelitos ("Little Angels") story and its account of Lizzie's manifestation of her desires provided yet another form of angel in Emma's account: the children *themselves* as angels. Another understanding again of angels is present in Emma's description of herself as an "Angel Card Reader". Angel Cards are a divination system employed within the New Age movement. The significance of the card selected, and the figure represented upon it, is dependent on psychological and supernatural correspondences, and reading Angel Cards requires interpretation and discernment. This is a diagnostic process, just as Emma acts as a diagnostician in identifying her children as Indigo based on specific events, characteristics, and correspondences.

Extra-terrestrials were also a part of the cosmology of this account. Emma described Jane as potentially being a "Star Child": either a reincarnated alien or a multidimensional being, born at this time on earth. Emma claimed to have found the term *after* a very young Jane told her about "her previous life on 'her planet' or 'alien world'". Unlike Lizzie, who conversed with angels, Jane's interactions with aliens were solely through her memories of her past lives, which, Emma explained, can be traumatic. Emma's account also only mentioned Jane's memories of her alien father, not an alien mother, or even an earthly father. In fact, nowhere in Emma's account or the pictures she sent me is there reference to, or an image of, the girls' earthly father. As Jane's ability to recall the past operated from birth ("she says she remembers the day that she was born here"), the absence of other alien or human kin might be intentional on the part of either Jane or Emma. Similarly, Jane's interactions with her sister, the only other "special" child mentioned in the account, were also mostly absent. The one time Emma describes an interaction, when Jane gave Lizzie her unopened birthday presents, Emma clarifies that she thinks "this was just because she was not really bothered with them". This may be intended to demonstrate a lack of concern for material possessions to the reader. This attitude is considered an admirable trait among the Indigo Children and the New Age movement more widely, but it tells us little about the sisters' relationship.

Later, I will note Courtney Bender's argument that familial relationships need to be erased in New Age biographies in order to emphasis the seeker's individual journey (Bender 2010). Here we see this effect at one step removed, as Emma writes on her daughters' behalf. However, Emma *herself* also rarely appeared in her own account. Given that the published Indigo Child characteristics include difficult parent/child interactions, we might have expected to encounter Emma in descriptions of conflict with her daughters. Lizzie is instead described as a child with "very little naughty behaviour or tantrums (even as a toddler)", and Emma claimed that there were "very few challenges to having a child like this". Jane was also described as "well-behaved". Emma was full of praise for her daughters, especially when they innovate based upon what they have seen of her own spiritual practices: "She [Lizzie] has seen me giving Reiki, but she made up her own using crystals and feathers with no direction and it works!!"

With regards to the girls' psychic abilities, Emma described them simply as "working", as in the above example of Lizzie's innovative healing technique. These working abilities included: communications with others (with angels, with the trees), influencing other minds and/or the manipulation of the physical world by mind (Lizzie's ability to manifest her desires), and the instinctive knowledge of the "truth" in a given situation (Lizzie knowing how Emma truly feels "even when I am outwardly behaving otherwise"). These powers were taken to have happened exactly as her children told her. Also, Emma did not use any of the "technical" terms that have been applied to psychic abilities by metaphysicals, science fiction authors, and parapsychologists, e.g. telepathy, telekinesis, and psychometry, although these terms do appear elsewhere

in Indigo literature and biographical accounts. Moreover, there was a lack of information about the methods of these abilities. For example, when Lizzie was chosen from a crowd, it was not clear in Emma's account whether this was a telepathic manipulation of the picker, or Lizzie's alteration of reality. There was a similar skipping over of stages in Emma's description of more "mundane" events, as when Lizzie asked to buy raincoats for poorer children and "due to her idea" they were able to provide 60 of them to the school. There was no explanation of the means of raising the money, where the raincoats came from, or who the "we" Emma refers to included. This diminished gap between the desire and the outcome may be a narrative device to make even the mundane seem supernatural as events occur as desired without apparent effort, much as Bender describes the significance of the erasure of familial ties in biographical narratives.

The following section considers Emma's account in the light of other narratives from the Indigo Child community, including material from fieldwork interviews, accounts posted on social media, and accounts taken from blogs. My intention is to draw out continuities within the Indigo Child community, which is so diverse in ideology and geography that themes require highlighting. Also, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, this ethnographic material is introduced in order to address a lacuna in research on the Indigo Children and to recognize how a discourse about "special" children has been generalized by a larger community of both parents and non-parents.

Accounts from the Indigo Child community

Testimony, identification, and classification schemes

Emma's account was written in response to my request, and she was conscious of her audience, which shaped what she told me. Parental accounts of Indigo Children have not often been written specifically for researchers, but there are similarities, as they are still written with audiences in mind. One such audience for the Indigo community is the seeker: the individual exploring various ideas, coming across the concept of the Indigo Child, and then applying it to their children. Parental accounts therefore often reproduce the introductory material written by established Indigo authors, including the lists of general characteristics, so that the seeker might check off their own characteristics and make a similar identification. A second audience is the established Indigo community, who are already certain of their own diagnosis, but who can in turn provide support, and perhaps a diagnosis, for the seeking parent. A third audience for these accounts is the writer herself, as accounts can also operate as a personal diary.

An example that interacts with all three of these audiences is *Indigo as I am*, a public online blog that was updated with 15 posts between October 2012 and February 2014. April, the creator of the blog, posted her personal thoughts as well as extracts from the spiritual book she was working on. As a parent,

she also explained that she was bearing "witness" to her children's specialness, which we can note as another example of a peer identifying others as Indigo:

> One amazing truth that I am witness to is that although she has not entirely opened up to these ideas in her waking mind, my daughter has spirituality coursing through her subconscious. She fits the profile of a Crystal Child perfectly.

Further, April explained the mission of her journal keeping, both for her online blog and her offline journal: "It has been the general direction of my writing to urge people to challenge 'what is'". Diary keeping can therefore also be witnessing, especially when the journal is made available to the public on a blog.

Another website, Alchemyrealm.com, has a page called "Generation Indigo", which actively seeks out testimony to publish for these online audiences. It provides an e-mail address to which "Indigo's Stories" [sic] can be sent. Twelve such "Indigo's Stories" were available at the time of writing. An indicative example by "Lauren X" began, "Hi, I have an indigo story to share …" Her informal address demonstrated the familiarity that the format creates, as well as her desire for witnessing and self-labelling. None of the accounts on the Generation Indigo page were from parents, but in one account "Victoria" described her six-year-old half-sister as an Indigo, before admitting that that she had doubts "about whether I am [an Indigo] or not". She may have been waiting for identification to occur in response to her testimony through the website. This role of peers in identification was apparent in three of the other "Indigo's Stories" on this website. "Samantha" recounted being identified by a psychic as a type of Star Child, although that specific term was not used. She also testified to the psychic, and her online audience, about a dream:

> When I was 18 me and a friend went to see a psychic just for fun […] She asked if she could talk with me in private (without my friend there). She then asked me if I had ever had dreams of being on another planet or on a space ship. When she asked this the hairs on my neck stood up and a shiver ran down my spine. The week before I had a dream where I was somewhere desolate, like a desert with red rocks all around and there were 3 suns. It was extremely bright and I remember an amazing feeling of peace as I stood there alone in this strange place. I told the psychic about this and she told me that I was an Alien Incarnated on Earth.

In the "Indigo's Stories" provided by "Katherine" and "Amy", they are identified by a virtual peer: the Generation Indigo website itself. This occurred through their autobiographically filtered reading of the website's materials and the other testimonies posted there. Katherine wrote, "From reading the articles on your site I now have a better understanding of my sensitivities as a child". Amy claimed, "After reading some of the personal stories I realize that there are others like me and that feels good to know that I am not so different after all".

As discussed, individuals' accounts entangle the reader in a process of comparison, including self-comparison.

The Indigosociety.com forum provides a significant space for publishing such accounts within the community, although we have noted the ownership and structural changes the site has gone through during the period of research for this ethnography. On an Introductions thread for the forum, individual seekers write accounts of their children, or themselves, for the members. Again, these accounts are shaped by the expectations that seekers have of the medium and of the audience. There are efforts to justify their place within the forum as Indigos, including examples of experiences and abilities. As "Sparkalisha" explained:

> I've always been different, having different ideas and a different view of the world. To this day I still feel like I'm living in a completely different universe than everyone else. Like my universe even has different rules of physics, and my time-experience seems a lot different from those around me … I've always been spiritual and quite empathic, I've never really found a proper use for it. Since I was 15, I started "talking" to people who weren't physically there, but later on they did things or said things that proved to me that they had indeed received what I said to them.

In the Indigo Child community, references to feeling "different" to wider society are often considered an indicator of being Indigo, as much as the adoption of the label itself, although some who found the Indigo Child concept also expressed relief, as Amy did, that they were "not so different after all".

However, I have already noted that among the Indigo Children labelling is rejected, often described as behaviour from a lower energetic level of consciousness, and this rhetoric can affect the form of accounts. For example, the entire Generation Indigo page contains 118 uses of the word "Indigo", while the "Indigo's Stories" section contains only nine uses of the word. Similarly, for the online survey I disseminated among Indigo Child groups, the respondents were asked to select a tick box that best described them, e.g. "Indigo Child", "Crystal Child", and "Rainbow Child", or they could also write in their own choice. Some responses strongly expressed this anti-labelling rhetoric:

> I feel the above are just labels that limit the potential of each soul, as we all grow and change each and everyday
>   To be honest … all the terms above are not correct. There are people who like to create labels. We are all part of the same plan

As with Emma, who claimed not to like labels and yet used them, the last respondent used yet another label, "Gifted Individual", and made this a specific title through capitalization:

> I hate labels. I've always hated labels. I am a Gifted Individual. I have many of the attributes of all of the above (that I have heard of)

I have previously provided examples of peer involvement in identifying Indigos or in the recognition of biographical narratives. Occasionally negative identifications occur, as a distinction between *definition* and *being* is used to mark insiders from outsiders through strategic labelling in online conflicts. Accusing another of not being a "real" Indigo is an excluding measure based on the assumption that "being" brings a superior level of knowledge. We shall see this attitude again in the account of another of my main informants, Gary, who provides a distinction between feeling and knowing, described in the following chapter. A post by "Morgan" on the "Indigo Adults" Facebook group began with an accusation that other members were not "real" Indigos, and indicated her desire to leave the group:

> I think this group has strayed too far for me to benefit or feel like a part of it. First, let's talk about what an indigo is. Indigo's [sic] are highly sensitive, highly evolved, and highly connected young people. Many of you are saying that you are indigos (and it is not my place to affirm or deny that) but I have picked up on several intentionally negative comments and posts in this group that are highly uncharacteristic of indigos.

She further claims that it is not her place to either confirm or deny that someone is Indigo, and yet she turned others into outsiders, a negative identification. Responses to her post provided her with further examples of these "negative comments", and thus supported, in her view, her accusation:

Robert: i dont know if u r [you are] a man or a woman but.... u sound like a total bitch lmfao!!!!! [Acronym – "laughing my fucking arse off"]

Morgan: This is exactly the type of comments [sic] I am referring to. What Ames [sic – "makes"] you think you are an Indigo Robert?

Moreover, Morgan's exclusion of Robert is turned back upon her by another member; her "negativity" is used to question her own Indigo status:

Mari: I can see where u r coming from Morghan [sic] by reading some intentionally negative posts one has to wonder who really is an Indigo sometimes in these groups but on the flip side others can read your post n [and] find it also intentionally negative and wonder about you as well. Just something to think about.

The Indigo authors initiated this anti-labelling rhetoric. For example, in a contribution to Carroll and Tober's 1999 volume on the Indigo Children, psychiatrist Richard Seigle explained how he sees the origins of labelling in a reductionist scientific worldview:

> In scientific terms, we tried to categorize people by the shape of their heads, skin color, IQ, and so on. Anthropologists and psychologists have

spent years evaluating how we think feel, and act. Here are some examples of various categorization systems: Intelligence tests, such as Wechsler (WAIS) and Stanford–Binet Personality. Personality tests such as MMPI, MCMI, Type A, and Type B. Projective personality assessments, such as Rorschach, TAT, and SCT. Memory tests, such as WMS and Bender.

<div align="right">(Seigle 1999, 3)</div>

A personality test that is not included on this list, but which was actually frequently referenced by the online Indigo community during this research, is the Myers–Briggs Types Indicator psychological questionnaire (MBTI). First published in 1962 by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, the MBTI is based upon their interpretation of Carl G. Jung's 1921 book, *Psychological Types*. Indigo Children discuss their MBTI test results on Indigo Child forums and have concluded that some results are more indicative of being Indigo than others. This continuing tendency of Indigo Children towards self-labelling, in contrast to Seigle's dismissal of scientific categorization above, is apparent in the use of these "secular" lists and online quizzes alongside Indigo lists from the authors introduced in Chapter 1.[4] However, when scepticism *is* aimed at the "official" lists of Indigo Child characteristics, it is still primarily expressed through the anti-labelling rhetoric: their scientific credentials are rarely questioned. In fact, the lists of Indigo characteristics, which determine the shape of Emma's account, and the accounts of other Indigo Children are more often considered to be validated by the evidence of personal experience, particularly of psychic abilities, other cosmologies, and supernatural entities.

Accounts of abilities in the Indigo community

Emma's account describes how her daughters exhibit sensitivity to both the natural and supernatural domains: Lizzie is sensitive to the fact that she is eating animals and has become vegetarian, and Jane is sensitive to her past lives, resulting in nightmares. Among Indigo Children, sensitivity to this world includes negative reactions to modern life, the wider social context, and their material products. This sensitivity can have physical or biomedical consequences, and descriptions of physical symptoms resulting from the Indigo's issues, or "disease", with modern life can serve as another check list of Indigo characteristics. Again, these symptoms can appear in both parental and biographical narratives, particularly in requests for help or identification. As one mother wrote on Indigosociety.com:

> [My son] has always struggled with school, and now his struggle has intensified. He feels that any institutional setting is a form of government control. He thinks he can't survive in this society, because getting a job will mean he is earning money which is part of the government system. He can't imagine a job he would enjoy doing, and would prefer to just help

people, and spread love […] We have long suspected learning difficul-
ties […] and he has gone through depression. There is some thought that
he may have ADD […] I would greatly appreciate any perspectives and
advice you kind souls might be willing to offer

Sensitivity to other individuals combines both the mundane and supernatural
aspects of the category because within the Indigo community humans are con-
ceived of as emitting their own energy. Becoming enmeshed in others' energies
prompts a variety of responses and remedies. "Sweetenergy" began a thread
on Indigosociety.com to ask for help on this issue, and "Peacefulpresents"
suggested carrying a black tourmaline crystal every day, believing that it
would "ground" the energy of the individual as well as prevent other energies
from interfering with them. Peacefulpresents also recommended "practicing
ruthlessly saying no, on all levels", again combining the mundane and the
supernatural.

In the above quotes, sensitivity is an indicator of special status. Further,
Indigo accounts of sensitivity are a means by which the seeking reader can
learn about other energies, realities, and entities. First, seekers learn how these
newly revealed aspects of the world are thought to be able to help them,
through assumed physical effects. Second, they learn how these aspects are
understood and treated within the community. In particular, accounts of sen-
sitivity illustrate the pre-diagnosis state of the individual seeker, their "dis-
ease" with modernity, with other people, and with particular energies. If the
reader believes that they share this pre-diagnosis state, then they can learn from
the account that the dis-ease has only one correct diagnosis: that of being an
Indigo Child.

Similarly, details of psychic abilities are provided to make a request to peers
for identification or to prove a prior diagnosis of having, or being, an Indigo
Child. I argue that to focus on the truth of these accounts would be to ignore
the role of psychic abilities in intra-familial bonding and in community crea-
tion. This supportive approach is emphasized by the primary Indigo Child
literature, which prescribes acceptance and trust towards children's claims. As
Robert Gerard explains, "Among themselves, Indigo Children talk openly
about what they see, until discouraged by others. Fortunately, more and more
people are opening up and listening to these emissaries" (Gerard 1999, 38).
The supportive ethos of the parent is a key element to the parental account of
the Indigo Child.

Support is also significant for the formation the wider Indigo Child commu-
nity. Again, the verification of psychic abilities is secondary to the vocalizing of
support. On the Indigo Adult Facebook group, "Nastassia" proposed a remote
viewing game as "something to do". She explained, "I have just placed some-
thing on my living room floor. Try your remote viewing sensing". Eventually
she revealed that the object was her blue striped teddy bear. A selection of
indicative responses demonstrates that the respondents were not accurate in
their remote viewings:

Nick:	I'm seeing a tea pot!!
Hirsch:	a shoe, lol [acronym: laughing out loud]
Brenduhkins:	Oh what the hey … Is it a light purple short vase or candle holder that has scalloped edges & is see through? Possibly a candy dish?: P [emoticon: face with tongue sticking out, suggesting flippancy]
Stephanie:	a book, or something shaped as a book, maybe box

The closest divination was by "Erin", who said that it was a stuffed animal that Nastassia slept with at night. "Gypsee" suggested the colour blue but with a question mark, showing uncertainty. Nastassia gave her support to these divinations, even though the majority were incorrect:

Nastassia:	No one should dought [sic] their talents. Because everyone on this thread has something that was near him [the bear]

Arguably, this attitude makes statements un-falsifiable. However, focussing on the correctness or incorrectness of the responses ignores how this test operated as a social exercise within a bonding community. Membership of any Facebook group can be intentionally passive after making the decision to join, as research shows that individuals who do not engage are the silent majority in online communities, as per Jakob Nielson's "90–9–1" rule: "In most online communities, 90% of users are lurkers who never contribute, 9% of users contribute a little, and 1% of users account for almost all the action" (Nielson 2006). Nastassia's exercise engaged Indigo members of this Facebook group and made them post.

However, online divination can have more serious intentions. On 8 March 2014, Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 went missing on route to Beijing from Kuala Lumpur. It is now known that all 239 crew and passengers died as the plane crash-landed. The crash site has still not been determined, although a wing part washed ashore on Réunion Island, in the Pacific Ocean, on 29 July 2015. On 18 March 2014, "Jo Indigo" asked the Indigo Adult Facebook group if any "remote viewers" knew where the plane was. Responses included conspiricist readings of the event as well as claims of psychic awareness about its location and fate:

Jared:	Try the CIA
Nick:	Underwater. It's in a "sea" not the ocean. Sadly they all died. They won't tell us this week but soon
Kestutis:	I'm not remote viewer but I can detect life in distress or I would feel some one dying a specially two hundred people the panic, fear, pain all like a tug on a spiders web I feel that but with this nothing. I have one thing to say there is nothing just like it never existed or they all died instantaneously No fear, No pain, No panic

The comments quickly moved away from divinations to a discussion of the verifiability of such abilities. First "Franklyn", and then "Roger", took the position of cynic in the rest of the thread:

Franklyn: Megamillions is at 400 million-- I'd say that proves remote viewing doesn't exist-

Christy: Yes it does. It's a proven fact that it exists. I can do it myself

Roger: Can you prove that?

Debate between Roger and the other members of the group continued well into the following day:

Roger: That is not evidence, that is just your word. Proc [sic – "prove"] it now by astral projecting to my home

Christy: Roger I ain't trying to prove a damn thing to you. For what purpose. You're an earthling anyways

Roger: Exactly the type of answer I expected to get. In case you didn't know, you are also an Earthling. I was not rude at any point, I just want proof of what you claimed, no need to be hostile towards me

Michael: Remote viewing is something the US government funds on a yearly basis since the cold war

Roger: And yet another claim that requires proof

Michael: this is an indigo group dude. It's okay if you're a normal. But don't troll indigo discussions[5]

Roger: Not trolling, merely asking questions.

Michael: in an indigo group we need to allow a certain suspension of disbelief to exist for certain conversations to take place that are common to the indigo experience. If you wish to explore each concept according to scientific method, I would suggest starting another group for this noble pursuit

Roger was later removed from the Indigo Adults Facebook group "in order to promote a safe sharing environment" for "those who experience things that are hard to talk about with people who don't experience them", according to Michael.

Roger's insistence on verification and the response of the group to him highlights several aspects of the Indigo account of psychic abilities, which are also expressed in parental accounts of children. First, when Roger does not show the accepted supportive approach towards remote viewing and the claims of other members, he is described as an "earthling" or a "normal". These labels are a diagnosis of him as being not-Indigo and of operating at a lower level of knowledge, a negative identification also made of Morgan, as above. Second, Michael's suggestion that if Roger wants to embark on a scientific methodology rather than a sharing, supportive approach he should start another group seems to contradict the scientism in parental accounts of children's psychic abilities. Despite this, "Science" is cited when its results appear to support metaphysical claims, and it is dismissed as a product of corporate interests, a limiting world view, or potentially harmful when it does not. However, elements of scientistic rhetoric and style in accounts of psychic

abilities demonstrate a continuing desire for a scientific, experimentalist approach, including presenting evidence. Roger's unwillingness to support accounts of divinations as this type of evidence marked him as an outsider, and he was removed from the group.

Regardless of their veracity, psychic abilities in both parental and biographical accounts also bring the reader into touch with the experiential reality of the speaker, and they become an object to which the listener can react. Emma both responds positively to her daughters' accounts of their abilities and presents them to the reader to respond to, and this presentation includes the claim that these children exist in a larger cosmos, alongside non-ordinary entities. In particular, Emma's account represented the angel as an object (literal angels, angel orbs and lights), the Indigo Child as an angel, and the angel as metaphorical object employed in diagnostic tools (Angel Oracle Cards). In accounts from the wider Indigo Child community, this slippage in the understanding of angel also occurs. Examples include a picture of an angel a member drew for me during a meeting of the Crystal Child Meetup group founded by Julian. She claimed that she had seen it one day near Camden Lock, North London. It looked like a curtain of light and rather different to the traditional angel sign that Lizzie and Emma held up during the Day of the Dead procession. At the Cambridge New Earth group, members described angels helping with mundane tasks, such as finding parking spaces so that they would not be late for the meeting. It was primarily among the Indigo Children, however, that individuals described themselves as angels; as one survey respondent wrote, "I used to say that I wasn't really a human when I was a little girl. That I was an angel".

Likewise, alien origins are described by Indigo Children, and we have discussed Emma's uncertain labelling of Jane as a Star Child. Other informants spoke with more confidence, as another respondent on the survey claimed:

> I am a Star Child, son of the King of Saturn, Zezon Telaion Tel. My name is Zeon Teon Sheson Tel, and my title is Prince of Saturn and future Master of the Universe […] to answer your question, I guess the closest you have to what I am in your list is "Starseed" so I'll go with that, and as a parent I was to give details in this box – I have a 2-year-old daughter whom is also of my lineage, in fact, she's just like me in every way – almost like her mother's DNA didn't even have any effect on the genes she expressed

Even through this short biographical narrative, Zeon was forming an understanding of his child in relation to himself, another parental account. We have discussed how Whedon's work on the Indigo Children considered it to be a mass reconciliation of society with the "child" after events and societal changes had monstered this object in public discourse. I will now explore scholarship that has considered these two elements – biographical and parental accounts, like Zeon's and Emma's – within the wider New Age movement, and the parental attempt at reconciliation with the child as other.

Academic considerations of New Age accounts

In this section, I consider three key aspects emerging from Emma's account of her daughters. First, I will address the role of biographical narrative in this milieu in identity and community formation through the recounting of experiences and the sharing of deductions. As there is a paucity of in-depth research on the Indigo Children, it is necessary to look at academic considerations of the wider New Age movement for models to apply here. Second, I consider the aspects of Emma's account in the light of wider academic responses to New Age biographical claims. Finally, I will respond directly to Whedon's analysis of the Indigo Child concept as a reaction to increasingly problematic, and othered, children. Her analysis relates these changes to specific social and historical changes in contemporary America. I propose that the "child" has never been an unproblematic category, for parents and wider society alike, and I will consider in this final section how such changes have been described by particular scholars.

Biographical narratives in identity and community formation

With regard to biographical narratives in the New Age, Courtney Bender's ethnographic work on the "New Metaphysicals" of Cambridge, Massachusetts is relevant here. Among Bender's arguments is the proposal, drawing on Susan Friend Harding's work, that if "'speaking is believing' for Christian fundamentalists, then speaking is experiencing for contemporary mystics" (Bender 2007, 207, citing Harding 2001). In the parental account of the child, exemplified in this research on the Indigo Children by Emma's description of her daughters, this experiencing operates on three levels. First, Emma "experiences" her daughters' abilities by receiving *their* accounts of them (e.g. Lizzie's angel messages). Second, she experiences them directly when they occurred (e.g. the Day of the Dead procession). Finally, Emma experiences them again as "speaking brings the event back to life" (Bender 2010, 73).

Further, according to Bender, the audience is "entangled" with the account. Drawing on John Dewey's argument on the entanglements of mind and the rest of nature through communication technologies (1925), Bender discusses how hearing or receiving the account brings the listener (or the researcher) into a relational experience with these events and claims (Bender 2010, 70). Reading Emma's mediated account, the same question is raised in the reader's mind as in hers: are the children special in the way that she describes? The audience's diagnostic response is important. As we noted in the two remote viewing examples above, in this community a failure to support either the process of discernment or the final diagnosis can mark the reader as an outsider. Likewise, Emma's support of her daughters located her within the believing Indigo community.

There is also a third possible position on experience: during this research, I presented an open-minded or agnostic attitude and was on the whole accepted

as someone who had not quite yet experienced the truth, but who would also inevitably "awaken" due to contact with this material. The Indigo Children I met were attempting to enfold me as a researcher into their accounts of their identity and their world. Perhaps this was only fair, as they would also be enfolded into this ethnographic account. Furthermore, as I stated in Chapter 2, the initial method of this research was a "scientific" approach before the adoption of the "seeker's journey" method of data gathering. These two modes, the "scientist" and the "seeker", replicate those of accounts within the Indigo Child community.

Following Bender, we can also see that biographical narratives within the wider New Age movement seek recognition for a variety of claims, including the elements we noted in Emma's account such as psychic abilities and cosmologies. Bender explains that

> while the claims that develop in these narratives frequently require that people appear as quite individualistic within their own stories, we can understand these representations as staking out claims and possibilities for a certain kind of authentic and authoritative experience.
>
> (Bender 2010, 59)

An example of this strategic individualism is the anti-labelling rhetoric, which we have seen expressed in Emma's account, which refutes simple classifications. Emma's account is also a public claim for the agency and individualism of her children. The wider Indigo community similarly makes these claims for the reality of their own personal experiences. However, this Indigo anti-labelling rhetoric falters in the face of the requirement for a name to sum up these claimed experiences and characteristics: "Indigo Child". Therefore, a self-made, named, and therefore bounded community has arisen, through which to make biographical claims and to receive essential support. Both claim-making and support further legitimate such experiences.

It would be valuable here to consider the formative aspects of labelling itself. "Labelling Theory" fell out of favour in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as a positivistic interpretation of its interactionist intentions made even its original proponents deny and abandon the label "Label Theory" itself (Petrunik 1980). However, the basic proposal of this theoretical approach is that we can distinguish between "Primary" and "Secondary Deviance", the latter being "the behaviour and experience […] which follow the real or imagined response of others (awareness, labelling and the application of social sanctions) to the [original] deviation and the individual's own interpretation of its significance" (Petrunik 1980, 217). Usually applied to "deviations" such as mental illness, alcoholism, or drug taking, this feedback loop effect might also be applied to positive labels given to behaviour considered to be non-ordinary. The Indigo Child as a label could be seen to reinforce, through biographical narratives, the very behaviours that generate the label. A similar argument is also made by Waltz about "aggrandizing" interpretive systems being applied to autism, such

as the Indigo Child concept (2009), as we discussed in the literature survey in Chapter 1. I will return to this idea with regards to diagnosis and healing in the Chapter 4.

Moreover, claims to legitimacy in the accounts of the Indigo Children commonly make references to the "newness" of the concept: both as a new evolution of human consciousness and as a new diagnosis for their specific child. Discussing New Age practices of reflexivity, such as methods of experiencing, writing, reading, and speaking, Bender suggests that these "religious practices complicate the importance of traditions, theologies, hierarchies, and institutions, given that they simultaneously reproduce and hide their genealogies" (Bender 2010, 2). We have noted that the Indigo Child concept has historical continuities with Spiritualism, Theosophy, Transcendentalists, and New Thought. By occluding such genealogies and social ties, the accounts of Indigo Children are making "self-representations as religious individuals", as Bender says of the New Metaphysicals (Bender 2010, 58).

Emma's account, and other parental accounts of Indigo Children, similarly shape and occlude social ties, play with modes of temporal unfolding, and emphasize embodied or emotional experiences over cognitive knowledge, while still also using a scientist presentation. Bender described how her informants prioritized more ephemeral social ties over familial ones, for example citing the role of "unnamed strangers as oracles" (Bender 2010, 65). This we have seen in the role of peers in the Indigo Child diagnosis, our prime example being the woman in the street in McCarthy's account whom she trusted over the medical professionals treating Evan. In Bender's analysis of Metaphysicals' accounts, she finds that family members in particular are either dismissed in order to emphasis the individuality of the seeker, or are "strategic voices through which mystics can make claims to their own sanity" (Bender 2010, 66). In parental accounts of Indigo Children such as Emma's, the parent voluntarily takes this "strategic voice" role on behalf of their children's claims.

The assertion frequently seen in Indigo Children's biographical narratives that their claims and experiences are new can be easily interrogated, and Chapter 6 will highlight specific historical and fictional continuities. Likewise, Mikael Rothstein argues that there is a disjoint between contemporary academic assumptions that the New Age is a new modern or postmodern product, and the modes of labelling actually employed within the New Age movement. He discusses the biographical claims of his informants from a Body, Mind, Spirit fayre in Copenhagen, specifically one woman's claims of being a "dolphin". Rothstein refers to the Indigo Children briefly as another example of "stories of this kind", but he does so in order to "soften the idea that something very peculiar or special is taking place" when people label themselves in this way (Rothstein 2013, 129). Like Rothstein, the above analysis of Emma's account demonstrated how both individuals' "small auto-hagiographies", and the "mini-hagiographies" (Rothstein 2013, 122) provided by parents of their own children, support a diagnosis of difference.

However, Rothstein does not address whether or not the lady who described herself as a dolphin applies a similar label or rhetoric of difference to her son. Rothstein's focus is the relation of her claim to those of other cultures "where concepts of modernity and postmodernity are unknown", in order to show a lack of novelty in this milieu (Rothstein 2013, 117). He cites Latour (1991) to claim once more that we have never been modern, and thus the contemporary use of such allegedly "primitive" claims should not be remarkable. Likewise, Ruth Prince and David Riches' anthropological account of the New Age movement in Glastonbury also noted affinities with tribal culture and intentional moves towards a replication of the idealized, primitive state (Prince and Riches 2000).

In terms of biographical narratives among the New Agers, Rothstein compares them with the Bororo tribe of the Brazilian Amazon, who describe themselves as related to red macaw parrots. The latter are referred to in "I am a Parrot (Red)" by J. Z. Smith (1972), who asks "How should the historian of religion interpret a religious statement which is apparently contrary to face?" (Smith 1972, 393). To answer Smith's question, Rothstein suggests that such claims could be taken symbolically or metaphorically, as "semantics does not necessarily refer to a biological or physical reality, and the human mind is capable of distinguishing between various levels, especially in religious contexts where imagined or metaphorical realities are crucial" (Rothstein 2013, 126).

Against this claim, Emma appeared certain that it was an objective reality she was referring to, not a symbolic or metaphorical truth, even if she was uncertain of the correct label to use. Rothstein recognizes the claims to scientific validity in such accounts,

> In keeping with the scientistic inclination of most New Age-ideologies (Hammer 2001, 201–02), the human–dolphin correlation is presented as a scientific fact: a biochemical DNA-level unknown to "surface-science" is revealed, and an entirely new biological reality exposed.
>
> (Rothstein 2013, 123)

Similar claims about DNA appear in Indigo Child accounts, based on the supposition that "Science" is either intellectually backwards compared to holistic, or spiritual, accounts of the world, or that the corporate machinations of Science as "Big Pharma" are conspiratorially ignoring such findings. These discourses on Science as a negative community and as an object in opposition to the spiritual will be considered further in Chapter 4.

"Spiritual", however, is not a neutral label within these biographical accounts, and it is often employed in "moral boundary work", as in the expression "Spiritual but not religious" (Ammerman 2013, and see Fuller 2001), which was also used by Indigos during their interviews with me. As Ingvild Gilhus explains of this stance, "When for instance, the believers use 'spirituality' as a preferred term in relation to religion, it includes a criticism of religion being on a lower level than spirituality" (Gilhus, 36). Emma does not place

Spiritual in this oppositional scheme with religion in her account, although she does label two distinct realms of her "work": "corporate" and "spiritual". Likewise, we have explained how the terms "normal" or "earthling" can be pejorative, as well as how the mundane world is seen to have an antagonistic relationship with the "natural" Indigo Child. There has long been an explicit rejection of the corporate and the commercial in the New Age discourse; they are held up against spiritual pursuits and found lacking in value and morality.

Therefore, the official Indigo Child lists of characteristics hold a tenuous position, even when they are referred to in the accounts of parents seeking a diagnosis for their special children. They are commercial products, appearing in published accounts by Indigo authors, and therefore can be dismissed as "materialistic". Further, these lists could become almost doctrinal: during my fieldwork, I saw them to be widely shared and quoted. However, academic accounts generally agree that in the New Age movement, "valid understanding is not arrived at by accepting doctrines formulated by others but rather by a highly individual quest, that should be based primarily on personal experience" (Hammer 2013, 217). Even the longer accounts by these Indigo authors, based upon their experiences, could be rejected by the posited radical individualism of the New Age movement.

Are we then left with a situation of multiplying authorities, including authors, experts, parents, individuals, and even the children themselves? Matthew Wood argues in his consideration of the wider New Age movement that authority is in fact "strengthened by clients' experiences of other mediums and spiritualists" (Wood 2007, 138–9). Alternatively, ongoing conversations about concepts, like the Indigo Child, as identifiable objects can also provide a "snowballing of legitimacy", as also seen in other online new religious formations (Singler 2014). Biographical accounts such as Emma's not only provide examples, they provide formats for others to adopt, forming a sharing community, even if the established rhetoric is one of individual experience. The following section considers the specific aspects of Emma's account, aspects that repeat and are shared in the wider community and through social networks receptive to these mutable ideas and concepts.

The elements of parental accounts in a wider context

I have shown that Emma's account contains four elements. These were: sensitivity, intelligence, interactions with other realities and this one, and psychic abilities. The dualism of "spiritual" and "mundane" in such materials is also applicable to each of these elements. This dualistic reading of the world, however, is in opposition to the rhetoric of the New Age movement as a holistic worldview as it is described by both practitioners and by academics. Hall argues that Hanegraaff's description of the "the retreat from Christian dualism to holism" as one of the main foundations for the New Age has *not* been questioned by subsequent researchers (Hall 2013, 151, citing Hanegraaff 1996). However, I instead propose that Emma's account, and those of Indigo

Children more widely, partake in a dualism of "Indigo and not" that reflects the wider New Age movement's distinctions between awakened and not, insider and not, and natural and not.

The first element identified in Emma's account, *sensitivity*, also places the Indigo Child in an oppositional relationship with an outer world, but in a closer relationship with a presumed metaphysical level of reality. This dualistic differentiation also has historical precedents; long before there were Indigo Children, there were "sensitives", a term applied to mediums, according to Peter Washington's history of Theosophy, and the groups that emerged from it (Washington 1996, 16). How might we categorize contemporary forms of this characteristic of sensitivity? Catherine Albanese considers them to turn "on an individual's experience of mind", and that this privileging of the mind leads to an emphasis on its mechanisms, such as reason, intuition, clairvoyance, and 'revelation' and 'higher guidance'" (Albanese 2007, 6). However, Lizzie's powers include manifestation: the ability to actualize her desires. This initially seems to contradict Albanese's distinction between the material magic of the occultist and the mental magic of the metaphysical (Albanese 2007, 7). Albanese, however, states that, for the New Ager, "the mental powers of imagination and will can affect and change the material order, abolishing apparent flaws by realizing its unity with a cosmic source" (Albanese 2007, 7). This New Age rhetoric of unity and holism is contradicted to my mind by the apparent dualism of Indigo/spiritual/sensitive, and not. Further, this dualism is continued through the ongoing creation of new Indigo labels or iterations, i.e. Crystal Child and not, Rainbow Child and not, and so forth. An insider/outsider dualism is also apparent in the exiling of certain individuals when they are not deemed to be supportive, as in the case of Roger and flight MH370.

Returning to Albanese's description of the "mental powers of imagination" and how they "abolish apparent flaws", we have to ask, which flaws are being abolished by Lizzie and Jane in Emma's account? I deduce that Emma understands Lizzie's ability to manifest her will as a restitution of an incorrect, or flawed, reality. In the case of the summer camp, Emma accepted that the reality in which Lizzie is allowed to go is the *true* world, a world which Lizzie is sensitive to in a way that she is not. True intelligence in these accounts is therefore more than just the scientifically quantifiable "IQ" that Emma also referred to; it is discernment through superior awareness. Again, we find a historical antecedent in the example of Phineas Pankhurst Quimby (1802–1866), a mesmerist, healer, and inventor, who was influential on the burgeoning Spiritualist movement that is linked with both the New Age movement and the Indigo Child concept. He stated that, "Two kinds of humans inhabited the earth – the 'natural man', caught in the error of a materialist mind and its attendant phenomena, and the 'scientific man' who saw past the performance into the space of wisdom" (cited in Albanese 2007, 288). I propose that for the parent, the Indigo Child expresses a contemporary form of this "Scientific Man", and parents like Emma will support the Indigo's assertions and their greater access to the "truth".

Science in Quimby's terminology stands not only for the field of study, but also for the correct mode of apprehending the world and its aspects. The Indigo conception of Science draws on this view but is complicated by having more than one Science to interact with. Thus, we have noted a strategic scientism in parental accounts of Indigo Children, the use of scientific qualifications by authors, as well as the Indigo view of mainstream Science as either intellectually slow, or even conspiring against humanity. Loring Danforth highlights this complexity of views, saying that, "Paradoxically then although much New Age thinking is characterized by a lack of faith in science, it would not be an exaggeration to say that in the New Age science has become a sacred symbol" (Danforth 1989, 254). Chapter 4 will explore this complex relationship further with regards to the Indigo Children and healing, but what is key is how the scientific project, as apprehended by its non-expert, or folk, observers enables spaces for meaning making, or as Timothy Jenkins describes it, "thinking with science" (T. Jenkins 2009).

Moreover, we can note, as David Hess does in *Science in the New Age*, that there is an "opposing syncretic tendency that welcomes a variety of alternative spiritual, medical, and even scientific systems back into the New Age movement" (Hess 1993, 40). In Emma's account of the girls' intelligence, the second aspect of her account that I am considering in this section, we still see her drawing on scientific models such as IQ. We also see this reinvigoration in the Indigo Child's interaction with other spiritual realms and entities, especially when that interaction is supported by the parent. The Indigo Child in the parental account counters Wood's Bourdieusien description of religion as "a field of conflict over the capital of relations to personified supernatural entities" (Wood 2007, 163). In the case of Indigos and their parents, it is better termed a field of *support*, not conflict. The capital of relations in this community is in fact shared with the parent, providing that they accept the child as a supernatural entity with their own means with which to contact angels, spirts, aliens, and so forth – the third aspect I have drawn attention to in Emma's account.

I have already outlined the different apprehensions of the angelic in Emma's account: the metaphorical (Los Angelitos), the literal (angel communications, orbs, lights), and the divinatory (Angel Oracle Cards). Historically, angels have varied between a passive celestial audience to a tool to be utilized in a world of correspondences and associations. Cabbalistic magic is an example of the latter, which had a "preoccupation with correctly addressing angels within their hierarchies so as to be able to summon them" (Barrow 1986, 54). These historical transitions suggest that

> angel practices are sensitive to the socially and epistemologically shifting contexts of modernity that sometimes allow religious presences and at other times strictly forbid and expel them and leave space only for spiritualized aesthetic images – or even just quotation marks.
>
> (Utriainen 2013, 252–3)

The angel is a discursively useful object within Emma's account due to this multivalence, as is the Indigo Child concept and its subtypes. The overlap between these objects, as in the description of some iterations of Indigo Children as "Angels on Earth" (e.g. Losey 2007), highlights that they are not mutually exclusive discursive objects in this milieu.

Likewise, aliens serve as metaphors, objects, and as sources of "magical" agency described in a scientific register. The overlap between the Indigo Child concept and the alien is readily apparent in Emma's description of Jane's past life memories as an extra-terrestrial. Whedon's academic consideration of the Indigo Child concept states that when Doreen Virtue writes that Indigo Children "came to Earth" or that "they were sent here from heaven" that she means that they are extra-terrestrial (Virtue 2001, 21, 64, cited in Whedon 2009, 68). It is curious, though, that Whedon does not give attention to the angel narratives among Indigos and their parents given this mention of "heaven". Whedon, in fact, concludes that for the Indigos' supporters, "understanding who the Indigo children are and what to do about them now that they are here is far more important than filling in a coherent history and ontology" (Whedon 2009, 69).

In the Indigo biographical narratives, there is perhaps a greater paradox than their contested origins: the question of why New Agers, "the people who would be 'as gods'", continue to make references to outside authorities (Albanese 2007, 502). Albanese gives the example of New Age author and actress, Shirley Maclaine, who claimed she was told to write the "Big Truth" by a girl calling herself the Mayan, who was channelled through MacLaine's friend, David. The Big Truth was that "to know yourself is to know God" (Albanese 2007, 502). I propose that the Indigo Child concept as presented in accounts is both an authority *and* a child (literally and metaphorically), and therefore they are still in need of guidance by these higher authorities during their maturation. Moreover, the Indigo Child as a literal child also allows for the authority of the parent, provided that they take the supportive role already outlined and demonstrated by Emma.

Past lives are another example of the Indigo Child's interactions with other realities, the third theme in Emma's account we have identified. Bender argues that in the New Age movement past lives infect all social relationships, include kin relationships, with "karmic meaning" (Bender 2010, 142). However, Emma's account did not answer the implicit question posed by her daughter's reincarnations: "what does this have to do with your [or in this case, your child's] life now?" (Bender 2010, 126). Emma only noted that Jane's sensitivity to unspecified past life issues caused her nightmares. Emma's uncertain labelling of Lizzie as a Rainbow Child, an advanced soul without prior incarnations, did imply a teleological direction for the development of all souls, and in Chapter 5 I shall explore other Indigo biographical accounts where this teleological view is more explicit. However, a diversity of perspectives on the significance of reincarnation does not prevent shared discourse among Indigos. Accepting reincarnation in the Indigo Child context involves sharing what Klassen refers to as "semiotic ideologies": a "set of historically particular

convictions about what counts as a sign and what effects such signs can have in the world" (Klassen 2011, 32, citing Keane 2007).

Psychic abilities, the final theme I have drawn from Emma's account, are also understood as signs with effects by the Indigo community. The academic response to claims of psychic abilities or paranormal phenomena in such accounts has recently taken an "ontological turn" towards acceptance of the multiplicity of worlds of experience in anthropological accounts. On this basis, we can argue that rather than taking such accounts as symbolical or semiotic responses to the world, as Rothstein suggests above, that there is something actually experienced by the claimant. Bender's argument that "speaking is experiencing" implies that these are not just interpretive cultures (see Geertz 1973), but also cultures of experience. Emma's account represents not only her narrative but is to her a demonstration of paranormal phenomena that *proves* something to the reader. Another approach, proposed by Kripal in his 2010 work, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred*, emphasizes that "humans inhabit worlds of enchanted meaning". In this, we can see that he joins "[a] lineage [that] includes Rudolf Otto, Carl Jung and Mircea Eliade" (Tremlett 2012, 396).

I argue that if we note the role of psychic abilities in the formation of a sharing and supportive community, as seen in Emma's account and in the examples from online fieldwork, we can support both the semiotic and experiential interpretations. The community shares and supports semiotic ideologies, while the experiential element of the account indicates a world of enchanted meaning, which is real for the speaker. This is a potential world that I can only acknowledge in this research, although other academics have claimed to have had direct experience of it in their own fields of research. Arguably, these claims come as the ontological turn leads to a more supportive Academy for descriptions of first hand experiences of paranormal phenomena while in the field (see Turner 2006 and Escolar 2012).

This consideration of frameworks for understanding the parental account has only truly handled the "Indigo" half of the Indigo Child concept: the half relating directly to supernatural phenomena, and how these abilities are formative of, and supported by, the parental and biographical account. A consideration of the "child" half of this sum raises the question of the extent to which the concept, and the parental construction of it, is a product of wider social changes and trends. The final section of this chapter therefore considers how academics have viewed the child as a "cultural construct, which differs according to particular 'historical, social, cultural, or economic contexts'" (Newton 2012, 11, citing Müller 2006, 3), and considers this approach in relation to the Indigo Child.

Centring the child

Whedon's 2009 paper on the Indigo Children argues that the concept appeared at a time when the child had become an "abomination" after the US High

School shootings of the 1990s and the dramatic increase in medical diagnoses of ADD and ADHD. Drawing on Bruce Lincoln (1989), she says:

> The emergence of Indigo Children can be seen as a restoration of the value of special children through a proactive inversion of meaning. It is a reinscription of value, in which historically good children turned bad are turned good again, and in the process expands their value by bringing redemption to the larger community.
>
> (Whedon 2009, 61)

However, I argue that Whedon's linking of the birth of the Indigo Child concept to the monstering of the child in America, and subsequently the rest of the world, does not recognize that the "child" has never been a stable category. In this section, I argue that the Indigo Child, as we have seen it presented in parental accounts, is just one attempt to understand the "child". It is also the product of previous attempts, such as the positive public reaction in the nineteenth century to young mediums and sensitives, and even the description of holy children in the historical Christian context.

The idea that the "child" is a socially and historically contingent construction arguably began in the twentieth-century analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European artworks and diaries, where it appeared that the child was treated as an adult writ small (Ariès 1962). This treatment changed in the UK as the 1802 Factory Act limited the working hours of women and children, and the 1880 Elementary Education Act made school attendance compulsory up to ten years old. These removed children from the hazardous factories and mines of the Industrial Age and made them distinct from their working parents, and from adults in general. Advances in hygiene and immunization also diminished childhood mortality; thus, having a large family to ameliorate the effects of death became less important. John Caldwell calls the subsequent decline in family size the "Great Fertility Transition" of the West (1982). Further, David Lancey has compared anthropological research in both first- and third-world contexts to argue that the post-Fertility Transition West has moved from defining children as "chattel" to "cherubs" (Lancey 2008). Further, the popular model of the hyper-parent, seen in the contemporary "Tiger Mother" and "Helicopter Parent", could be seen as the result of this parenting shift.

While Lancey uses the metaphor "cherubs" to highlight changes in attitudes, Emma literally describes her two daughters in angelic terms. This positive interpretation of their otherness is a strong characteristic of Indigo Child parental accounts. However, I propose that the "child" has always been in flux as social contexts and pressures have changed. Jenks provides a dualistic typology for these varying interpretations, classifying some as "Apollonian" rather than "Dionysian" (1996). Apollo, the Sun God, is a god of logic and laws, and the parental account of these children presents

> such infants [as] angelic, innocent and untainted by the world which they have recently entered. They have a natural goodness and a clarity of vision

that we might 'idolize' or even worship as the source of all that is best in human nature.

(Jenks 1996, 73)

Conversely, the Dionysian child refers to the view that children have an inherent tendency towards chaos or even evil. For example, in the seventeenth-century evangelical Christianity context in England educating children required discipline and strictness: evangelical Hannah More (1745–1833), founder of the Sunday School Movement in 1789, considered children to be "beings who bring into the world a corrupt nature and evil dispositions" (More, quoted in Robertson 1976, 421).

More's view of children as born to evil is still present in contemporary discourse around children from one parent families or those growing up on council run estates.[6] Likewise, the Apollonian view of the angelic child is not solely a modern invention, or found solely in Indigo Children. It is also present in early modern English interpretations of sick children as "good", "holy", or "prophetic". In 1581, a pious writer of pamphlets, John Phillip, described one Suffolk child as "an instrument given to us by the providence of God, if it may be to waken us out of the perilous slumber of our sinne" (quoted in Walsham 1994, 291).[7] These pamphlet accounts were primarily created by the Puritan and early modern adults and parents on behalf of children. This is another historical parallel with Emma's account and highlights again the role of peers and parents in identification and testimony that we have already explored.

In the primary Indigo literature, the "evil", or what we might consider as the "Dionysian" definition, is transferred "from the children themselves to the world in which they find themselves", according to Whedon (2009, 64). For example, Carroll and Tober state that high school shooters "are Indigos – wise humanity in small bodies, being forced into a paradigm that is absolutely devastating to some of them. If they're full of rage, you can blame the restrictive situations they were put in" (Carroll and Tober 1999, 233). These restrictive situations are addressed and alternatives are proposed; for example, primary literature presents promotional material from schools with a holistic emphasis on education, such as the Montessori and Waldorf (Steiner) Schools,[8] where

> the holistic curriculum, under the direction of a specially prepared teacher, allows the child to experience the joy of learning, time to enjoy the process and ensure the development of self-esteem, and provides the experiences from which children create their knowledge.
>
> (American Montessori School material, quoted in Tober and Carroll 1998, 98)

The pedagogical approach of these schools can be traced historically and thematically to the child-centred approach of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–78). Rousseau's model education aimed to bring children "into closer harmony with their true nature" and to rescue "the child from the alienation that the

processes of civilization" (Baker 1998, 155 and 159). For Indigos, the long-standing hierarchical structures of civilization are considered restrictive, even *corrupting*, to their natural abilities. Claims that violence from Indigos is actually the result of this corrupting influence indicates civilization as an antagonist, to take the space left by the inversion of the monster that Whedon describes. The Indigos' abilities remain as indicators of their Apollonian, or angelic, nature, while civilization is cast in Dionysian imagery. This inversion is not just specific to a certain time, as Whedon argues, but is a part of a repeating pattern in the face of uncertainty about the "child".

   This chapter has considered a parental account of Indigo Children, before widening in scope to include parental and autobiographical accounts from the locations online that Indigo Children interact. Through a deeper reading of the biographical narrative, we have begun to draw out frameworks for understanding the parental expression of the Indigo Child. First, it can be seen as a product of New Age community models of experience, claim, and recognition. Second, it can be viewed as a project of historical and social trends and influences. The Indigo Child concept presents a malleable and transmittable model that allows parents to create labels and identities through which to reconcile with children who are always other to them. As Albanese explains of the New Age movement more broadly, the need for reconciliation is a yearning for salvation, and metaphysical representations of the world are commonly expressed in terms of "solace, comfort, therapy and healing" (Albanese 2007, 15). How the Indigo Child concept provides these, particularly healing, will be my focus in Chapter 4.

Notes

1 As of February 2015, this page was followed by 563 people.
2 It is important to note that this analysis focusses on the account as presented, both what is mentioned and what appears forgotten or occluded. Direct questioning may have provided clarification, but Emma wrote down what she considered as immediately key to the reader's knowledge and understanding of her daughters.
3 The formative aspect of labelling, as proposed by Labelling Theory, will be noted in "Biographical narratives in identity and community formation". The anti-labelling rhetoric of this milieu may be a response to popular conceptions of this theory, even if the theory has been criticized academically and its impact on public policy reduced (see Petrunik 1980).
4 Given this anti-classification rhetoric from Seigle, we should also note the irony that Nancy Ann Tappe claimed to have been working on developing a "psychological profile", or psychological type, at San Diego State University when she discovered the Indigo Children (Tappe 1999, 7).
5 "To troll", "to be a troll": to post incendiary comments with the intent of provoking others into conflict, as described by Hardaker (2010, 224), using definitions from Baker (2001), Cox (2006), and Brandel (2007, 32).
6 For a typical story on dangerous, "feral" youth, see *Daily Mail* 2009.
7 In Chapter 4, we will note similar "awakening" rhetoric and sleeping metaphors in the Indigo Child community.
8 Founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany. Steiner also developed his own "Anthroposophy", meaning "the knowledge of the nature of man", from Theosophy's tenets after splitting from the Society in 1907.

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4   Diagnosis and healing

Introduction

The previous chapter included discussion of how the Indigo Child concept has been approached by academics as a symptom of changes in society, particularly in our conception of the "child". We noted that Whedon (2009) links the concept to increasing ADD and ADHD diagnoses and high school shootings in the USA, both of which she claims led to a *monstering* of the child by the public. She describes the Indigo Child concept as a "re-inscription of meaning" that restores the child's status in society (Whedon 2009, 61). Whedon's explanation highlights the restorative element of the Indigo Child concept: the "child" as an object in discourse is metaphorically healed of its monstrous characterization. However, Whedon did not look in-depth at particular expressions of becoming, or identifying as, Indigo, nor does she consider how Indigo Children understand illness, disease, and healing as a part of this transformation.

In this chapter, I argue that identifying, or being identified, as an Indigo operates as a diagnosis for the sum of the symptoms of the individual. These symptoms can be medical issues, such as illnesses and diseases, or, as Whedon highlights, medically recognized psychological and behavioural conditions such as ADD, ADHD, and autism. Symptoms may also include a feeling of "disease" with the world, an environmentally derived stress that can in turn result in physical or medical symptoms. Moreover, this chapter will argue that the diagnosis of being an Indigo Child also *heals* the individual. Through examples from the Indigo Children community, I will show how this healing occurs in two ways: first, for the Indigo, the diagnosis or realization of their true nature may involve an *awakening* that is understood to cure the problem *physically*. Second, the diagnosis may involve retrospective reassessment: prior medical problems are recast *positively* as signs of being an Indigo Child, and the "disease" with society is seen as logical when the Indigo Child's purpose on this planet is to overturn this restrictive system.

In order to explore these two modes of healing, this chapter will focus primarily on biographical narratives presented by Indigos, first through an interview with "Gary" and then through other testimonies. Material is presented from the wider on- and offline community, and from interviews and

interactions with informants. Finally, I briefly survey academic models of New Age healing to find frameworks for understanding the Indigo Child concept. Material from the sociological study of autism, which has a conceptual overlap with the Indigo Child concept in this milieu, will be used to argue that the Indigo Child is not simply a social construction, but has healing effects through redefinition and identity formation. The Indigo Child diagnosis operates as not only a change of self-identity, but also as a conversion experience with retrospectively associated physical aspects.

Gary

My interview with Gary is framed in this account of it by an event that happened after it was finished, an event which gave me insight into the Indigo Children's understanding of diagnosis and healing. When our interview was finished, I re-joined the academic conference in the same building that I was speaking at. Gary sought me out again to pass me a small crystal, explaining, "I just knew that I had to give you that, I hope you know why". I smiled and thanked him, we said our goodbyes, and I did not hear from him for a couple of days. Then he sent me this e-mail:

> I bought that piece about 2 months ago. I had no idea why until today. It took me about 20 minutes to find the right piece. I love triangles, and that piece is also a little like a heart. I have a piece of moldavite very similarly shaped but smaller....I've never used that rose [quartz] for anything, and I've been wondering why I bought it....then just as I was leaving today, I was putting my other crystals away and was guided to bring you that piece.......Welcome to my life! Lol [acronym: laughing out loud]

The relevance of this gift will only become apparent after a consideration of Gary's interview, and therefore I shall return to this crystal later in this chapter.

Gary is in his thirties, married with children, and was a bricklayer and a part-time singer and songwriter until very recently. Although we met in Liverpool, he has the softer Lancastrian accent of the wider region beyond that city. I made contact with Gary after members of Indigosociety.com told me that he was someone I should definitely speak with, and when I contacted him he was happy to be interviewed in person. Gary began by telling me how only six months ago he had been "just a normal bloke": he had enjoyed going out, drinking with friends, and playing sports. Then he had an "awakening". "Just like that", he told me, snapping his fingers. He admitted that the experience was not completely out of the blue, as he had already been researching "all sorts of things. Conspiracy theories, Ascension, stuff like that". The moment of "awakening", as he continued to call it, actually happened while he was watching a David Icke video, "of all people", he told me in a mocking tone.[1] This specific moment of awakening was dramatic for Gary, and he described how he had a physical response: "I started completely crying my

eyes out, felt a rush of energy through my system … since then it's been crazy. Really crazy".

   Soon after his awakening, Gary went for a session with a professional crani-osacral therapist, Linda.[2] He had been seeing her regularly

> because I'd been having back problems and I was at my wit's end and I needed to fix it. I was the biggest sceptic of anyone about spiritual healing or anything like that. So I went to see Linda again and told her what had happened. She explained a few more things to me. She mentioned Indigo and Crystal Children, but not about me.

After this session, he refocussed his research onto the Indigo Children:

> And I was just like a crazy person looking for information while I was at work, on my phone, just reading. I was just sneaking and hiding around corners just … I had this urge to know everything … and I still do to some extent. I came across online the description of traits of an Indigo person. And each one that I came across was just like somebody had written down my personality and my traits, my life. And I burst out crying again.

His online research brought him to Indigosociety.com, a journey that he described as "Just the evolution of searching for things". On that forum, he

> spoke with a few people, and got some great information at the time. But it's a strange website, there's a lot of strange people, strange energies, strange motives … and half the people on there aren't even Indigos or know what they are. "I feel like I'm an Indigo" [they say online]. No, you're not, because if you were, you'd know.

He now spends most of his time on a Starseeds forum.[3] Gary explained that this forum has more gatekeepers than Indigosociety.com: you have to provide them with an account of your background and they then read your energy before you can join.[4] His approach to accepting information from the members of this forum remains the same; he explained, "your intuition kind of grows as you upgrade and you just know the truth". He corrected himself slightly, "Although there is no absolute truth. But you know what to take in. You can read a para-graph, you can read a person's post online, and you can know them straight away and you can feel connected, or disconnected, or what they're all about".

   Gary's awakening was an intense physical moment for him. His continu-ing realizations, or "upgrades", were also described in terms of physical sensa-tions, although the precise nature of this change appears is hard to define or to develop consensus on. Gary explained his perspective, that an upgrade involves

> Extra strands [of DNA] literally transforming. But then it depends how you believe reality is structured, whether you believe that your DNA is

changing, or that your consciousness is actually shifting into another body where that DNA is already activated. Physical reality is no less interesting or spiritual than anything else.

He also had a physical problem, which he related directly to his abilities and to his awakening.

> It was kind of my back problem. With my back I'd be in bed for like literally a month at a time, which … all pain is due to stress, pushed down emotions in your system which now that I know why, now that I know what I am … I have this empathic ability and over the years that I've soaked up and pushed right down because I didn't have a clue what I was doing. And these were all the things that were coming out, and why it was so powerful.

His awakening changed him physically, not only in terms of what he described to me as his newly "activated" DNA. It also cured him of his back problem: "Before I went for my next craniosacral session, literally the day after this powerful awakening had happened, me back was fine [sic]. Just like that. Completely fine". He explained that now he doesn't really need any more sessions with Linda, because after his awakening his system operates in complete balance. However, he was still seeing her, because he was in the middle of a particularly "crazy upgrade" at the time. He described these upgrades as "realizations": a change to yet another higher level of understanding. Like his awakening, these upgrades have a physical effect on Gary's body, as well as spiritual and emotional effects:

> when you are in an upgrade you feel universal love, unconditional love for the first time. It's like a ball, it's more than butterflies, it's like a ball of energy. It just starts in your stomach and then moves straight into your heart and explodes throughout your body. The best way I've described it to someone was as a "full body etheric orgasm".

He laughed then, before smiling and saying, "you can use that, you can have that one", referring to my research, but perhaps also to my own understanding of the change.

He told me that his wife is now seeing Linda, "even though she's sceptical about the whole thing". This led me to ask him how he balances his family life with his spiritual progress, and he admitted that his path means that he is often online until two am in the morning, "replying to e-mails and stuff". "It's hard", he told me, "it takes a lot of energy, but I love it, it's what I am here to do". However, he said that he still spends time with his children and wife doing normal activities, including finding the time to listen to his wife's "rantings", as he described them. According to Gary, she's been increasingly negative because

> this is her journey she's going on at the moment. And because she's having craniosacral therapy all these things are starting to come up. It's making

her more moody and more narky [irritable]. It's obviously the release that needs to come before you let in more light and positivity … the messages I keep getting through [from his spirit guides] are "be patient with her" … "patience, patience, patience".

His understanding of his own children has changed after his own awakening and the new information he now has access to. He told me: "They've seen, ghosts, whatever you want to call them, in my home, talked to them since an early age … And I've always known they were special." He paused and then tried to clarify, "perhaps 'special' is the wrong word. Different. Because everyone is special. I'm still searching for the word and I don't think there's even a word for what it is". His response to problems was not always so spiritual in nature. He told me, "I'm teaching our lad [his son] guitar now. He's got ADHD and mild autism. But when he plays guitar, he's fine. When he sings, he's fine". His mention of these conditions led me to ask him about the connection made in the primary Indigo literature between autism, ADD, or ADHD and the Indigo Children. Gary explained,

> These kids that are coming through with ADHD or autism, or even more intense disabilities. They're not disabilities. It's just a different form of consciousness. It's there for a reason. They don't need medication. They don't need Ritalin or all this other stuff. They need to do what they love … the people with ADHD, or what we call ADHD, they've literally got so much energy going through them that they just can't handle it, until they are doing something that they like. So let them do what they like. All the time.

Gary used the term "signature vibration" to refer to what these children are meant to be doing in this life, an example being how his son is "fine" when he is playing music or singing.

This raised the issue of schooling: in the contemporary education system children are, on the whole, not allowed to do what they want all the time, and several Indigo authors have recommended private, child-centred organizations such as Montessori or Waldorf (Steiner) schools. Gary told me, "[Schools are] improving. But there shouldn't be a structure, it's no good for anybody". I wondered about his own childhood and whether he had been as rebellious as the Indigo Children are described in the primary literature. But he explained that he

> wasn't rebellious in the sense of a naughty child or anything like that because I was always quite quiet, quite intelligent. And I was more rebellious in the fact that I just wouldn't do things I didn't want to do. Like homework, *schoolwork* … I wouldn't do coursework at all because that I didn't need to. I could just do an exam without revising, so why revise?

Likewise, he told me how his piano teacher refused to teach him when he was 12 because he just would not practise. "But then I would just go [and be able

to] do what he wanted me to do anyway … and that's kind of what happens [with his spiritual abilities]. Well, now it's just accelerating and accelerating even more". Although he denied the label "rebellious", Gary described himself as "system busting" even now, "That's one of the main things I've always done and still do. Even in the spiritual society [the Starseeds forum] I am in now. Because even a lot of them say 'You must meditate this certain way' and comments like that. It's all bullshit".

He related this aspect of his personality to the specifically "Arcturian", or Starseed, origins of his soul.[5] The Arcturians' "way of healing is to let people find their own way by giving them clues and ideas about themselves rather than giving them the answers", he claimed, although this sounded less "system busting" than distant mentorship, and I have already noted the role of peers in Indigo Child identity formation.

Since his awakening, Gary has quit his job as a bricklayer and now works full-time as a singer/songwriter, with plans to become a "spiritual consultant, healer … everything incorporated into one". He sounded excited about this idea, explaining that, "It's something I should have done a long time ago". He currently does what he called "ocularmancy": psychic readings based on pictures of peoples' eyes, which they send him through the Internet. "I've never actually done it in person. I tend to do it through photographs. And it's the same again, either writing or photographs. There's still that connection. I learnt to do it off a Youtube video, and Youtube is amazing for things like this". Gary explained that when he does the readings, he sees their eyes "change to past lives. I see relatives. I see people they haven't met yet. I see their eyes change colour. I get messages through. Feelings and all sorts of stuff".

He then looked deep into my eyes in order to read me. Looking intently still, he told me, "you've got a lot of energy. Your aura's fine. You're a bit stressed though". I admitted this might be possible, given that I was presenting at the conference and was deep into my research at the time. Later, he paused while making a point about a reading he had done for someone else to look into my eyes again, and told me, "your eyes are quite interesting actually. Because they are very similar to mine". He laughed when I pointed out that my eyes are a different colour to his, telling me, "But you have the protective ring around the inside which is nice. Yeah. Very interesting. I might take a picture [of them] before I go. There's a golden sun, around the inside. Hmmm. Where was I?" He returned to the subject of the other readings he has done and told me that when he provides messages for others, "It comes through strange sometimes. Sometimes it's not for us to work out, it's for them to work out. Which is what I tend to do. Give them the information, see if they have any more questions".

He went into more detail about an American woman he had given an ocularmancy reading to; he did not name her, but I will call her "Annette". She also gave him a spirit guide reading, giving him information about which spirits were looking after him. Gary explained that Annette also helped him to discover that he was an "avatar": that he was

a part of another being that is actually alive at the same time right now. So my soul is actually a part of this other Arcturian's soul. I am him and he is me … which really goes to show I have been feeling … I didn't feel like I had been one [an Arcturian, in a previous life], I felt like I was one.

Gary told me that the Arcturian of whom he was an "avatar" was very important in their culture. We might use the term "prince", but he explained that their race is not hierarchical in that way. Annette is also the "princess" of a race known as the "Sirians". Gary feels connected to her on this planet because the two civilizations are currently merging as a part of the universe's Ascension. "The first time I did my ocularmancy reading on her, I just felt so much love, straight away. I just looked into her eyes, and it just went 'whoomph', it hit me … I haven't got all the information yet," he told me, "but it all makes sense. It's not that I think that it's right, it's that I feel that it's right". Likewise, we should note that Gary *felt* that it was right to give me the rose quartz after we had finished our interview, even though at the time he did not entirely *know* why.

Gary's account contains elements also seen in Emma's description of her Indigo daughters, discussed in the previous chapter, such as: psychic abilities, alien origins, and reincarnation. However, his account presents his realization of being an Indigo Child as a moment of healing. It also contains several tensions and conflicts in description, and in order to analyze these further, I first draw out what I see as the key elements of his account. These were: Gary's description of himself as a "normal bloke" prior to his awakening, even though he was already doing research into these subjects. Second, the role of research in his awakening. Third, the nature of the awakening: both the immediate physical quality of it and the re-evaluation of Gary's life it led to. Fourth, his reassessment of his physical and medical problems in the light of his spiritual awakening, and his view of how they were healed after it. Fifth, the healing of Gary's other "problems", such as his open, empathic nature, through redefinition after his awakening. Sixth, Gary's diagnosis of his own wife and children, including his new understanding of ADHD and autism. Seventh, his retrospective diagnosis of his own childhood and his true nature as an Arcturian Starseed. Eighth, his move into a new profession, including doing readings for others, including myself as his interviewer. And, finally, the rose quartz crystal that Gary gave me, and its role not only in our interaction, but also in my wider understanding of the Indigo Children.

I will now analyze these aspects of Gary's interview, beginning with the particular tensions within it. This will demonstrate how, after awakening or diagnosis, the individual retrospectively alters their understanding of their own nature and redefines their medical conditions as symptoms of being Indigo. This then frees these symptoms from any negativity, and presents a biographical narrative of reconciliation and healing for others to experience, as the Indigo Child concept is transmitted along social networks such as the forums where Gary was a member, and where I had been initially been told to get in contact with him.

"Normal bloke" or "awakened"

In this interview, Gary gave an account of his transition from who he was prior to his awakening to who he is now. In doing so, he presented two versions of himself that initially appear to be contradictory. In the first version, he was a just a "normal bloke", interested in what he describes as normal bloke things, such as playing sport and drinking. He explained that he was the "biggest sceptic" about spiritual healing "and all that stuff". He was a bricklayer, a very physical occupation, as well as a father and a husband, tasks that are typically understood to be mundane rather than spiritual. Although "normal" in his terms, he did also describe having problems prior to his awakening, in particular a medical issue with his back that had driven him to his "wit's end". In the second version of himself, he explained that he was already interested in spiritual topics and had researched David Icke, conspiracy theories, and what he called "Ascension". In this second version of Gary, his back problem was actually the result of an empathic nature that he had repressed for a very long time, leading to a physical reaction. These two versions of Gary appear to be in tension.

I propose that Gary's two versions of himself prior to his awakening are influenced by his present understanding of himself as an Indigo Child, or Starseed. In describing himself as a "normal bloke", Gary was giving me a starting point for his biographical narrative. "Normal bloke" Gary is contrasted with "awakened" Gary in terms of knowledge and awareness of the truth. In his current worldview, the term 'normal' takes on a pejorative undertone, as we also saw in Chapter 3 in online discussions of remote viewing on Facebook. Similarly, Gary indicated a hierarchical view of epistemic authorities, as when he dismissed David Icke "of all people" as the source of his "awakening", even though Icke has written on the topic of Indigo Children and is a popular author with some in the same circles as Gary.

The second aspect of tension lies between the awakening, described as an immediate event and as a gradual and ongoing process through research. Gary's awakening was presented as an immediate flooding of knowledge and awareness, which he demonstrated physically through the snapping of his fingers. It was also emotionally dramatic: he cried when it happened. Gary described crying later when he encountered a list of Indigo traits that resonated with him, during his thorough online research. Throughout Gary's account of his awakening, he referred to research and to authorities that he had picked up, evaluated, and either retained or dismissed. There was also an ongoing process of seeking, self-education, and discernment, partially based on ideas he found, and partially on ideas that he came into contact with through social networks.

Gary's response to his awakening also highlights how the physical, the spiritual, and the emotional are all bound together in his new worldview. Sometimes he summarized these states with the term "energy", which we have noted has many roles and synonyms in this milieu. His description of the energies involved in an "upgrade" located them within his organs: "It just starts in

your stomach and then moves straight into your heart and explodes throughout your body". Moreover, energies are also an indicator of spiritual stability and 'goodness'. Or conversely, energies can be signs of illness, or "wrongness", when out of balance. When Gary spoke of the online forum Indigosociety. com, he referred to "strange people, strange energies, strange motives", and he explained that the online gatekeepers at his new social space, the Starseed forum, could refuse admittance to those whose energies are wrong. Gary, and others, can take the role of diagnostician to make this judgement on energies, an idea we will return to below.

There is a further tension in Gary's account of his awakening, between the general and the particular. Gary told me that he had researched the "Ascension" prior to his own awakening. The term Ascension, as presented in Icke's books, and originating in the work of channeller David Wilcock, is an awakening for the entire planet, when humans will become fully interdimensional beings of superior consciousness (Wilcock 2000). There are many Ascension scenarios, but they parallel the millennial expectations of the term New Age, which was used before Ascension in this literature. Moreover, there is debate among New Agers as to whether humanity needs to work towards this change of consciousness through intentional research, growth, and change, or whether it is an inevitable change that will happen to a passive human race as it evolves. We might think of these two views in terms of post- and pre-millennialism, as the former relies on human action. In the Indigo community, there are some versions of this post-millennial awakening that cite the apocryphal Hundredth Monkey Effect, claiming that if sufficient individuals awaken, their presence will push the rest of humanity into Ascension.[6] Indigo Children sometimes claim to be these first agents of Ascension, and I will discuss millennialist inter-pretations among the Indigo Children further in Chapter 5. To summarize, Gary's awakening can be considered as an account of Ascension in the par-ticular, and the relationship between his research into the larger concept of Ascension and his own personal awakening should be noted.

The two ways in which Gary described his back problem also demonstrate similar tensions and retrospective reassessment. In the case of "normal bloke" Gary, his back is a medical issue that has driven him to try anything to cure it. After his awakening, his back is the result of his empathic powers having been repressed for years, and his physical pain is a direct reaction to this repres-sion. In his account, his awakening *heals* him of this physical problem, and subsequent research provided him with the correct terminology with which to explain that healing, including subsequent changes such as his "upgrades". Although in our contemporary Western society, there is a technological con-text to the term "upgrade", Gary related his upgrades to biological, organic processes. The upgrade for Gary involved changing strands of DNA to "acti-vate" particular powerful genes as a part of a teleological evolutionary move. Similarly, he described his research method as an organic process as an "evolu-tion". Evolution is also a key term in the Indigo Children's teleological view of history. However, we should note that the complexity of an organism does not

always directly correlate with the size of its genome, and thus Gary's account illustrates a folk understanding of scientific discoveries, in this case DNA, which is common among the Indigo Children.

Gary was, however, unclear as to whether there were actual changes to DNA during these upgrades, or whether the upgrades involved shifting consciousness to another body that already contained DNA with these sequences activated. The latter, more metaphysical idea seems to deny a physical process of change within the individual. Gary was keen to impress upon me that "physical reality is no less interesting or spiritual than anything else": the physical and the spiritual are not divisible in his new worldview, even if his account appeared to imply otherwise. His account also presupposes that all people have DNA that is not currently active, and that each individual has the potential for this spiritual awakening. This approach reflects an egalitarian ethos common within the wider New Age movement. The Indigo Children have been accused of neglecting this approach with their rhetoric of being special or different, criticisms to which I shall return to in Chapter 5.

There is a tension in Gary's account between his approaches to knowledge: a difference is highlighted between thinking that something is the case and knowledge of a matter gained through intuition or feelings. Gary was dismissive of newer members of Indigosociety.com who say that they *feel* that they might be an Indigo Child and need confirmation, and even legitimation, from others. He believed that they should just *know*, prioritizing intuition over gradual consideration. However, when he discussed his Arcturian identity he said, "It's not that I think that it's right, it's that I feel that it's right", this time emphasizing feelings. Moreover, Gary's social interactions are influenced by his feelings and intuitions; in particular, his online friendship with Annette began with their intuitions about their spirit guides and their own Starseed natures. Gary also intuitively understood those he interacts with offline, whom he diagnosed in particular ways.

This includes his family: Gary described his wife as a sceptic, even if she had begun visiting Linda for craniosacral therapy, and he judges her spiritual journey to be less advanced than his. His wife's treatment is also bringing up buried issues as it reveals her repressed true nature. Gary's representation of his wife therefore parallels his own starting point as a "normal bloke" before his awakening, a description which served to highlight how far he had come. This representation is also an intuited reassessment of her in the light of both his awakening and his contact with Annette. Although his wife is described as being near the beginning of her journey from scepticism to awakening, his children are described in terms of their abilities and characteristics. Like Emma, he was reticent about labels, although he described the paranormal interactions that his children have had. Further, Gary's son's diagnosis of ADHD and mild autism came from the medical profession, but Gary's diagnosis of his son's *needs* came from his own intuitions, contrasting *feeling* and *knowing* again.

Gary extended this intuitive understanding of his son's condition to other children around the world being medically diagnosed as having ADHD or as

autistic. He explained that when his son is doing what he wants to do, acting according to his "signature vibration", then he is "fine". We have noted previously that "vibration" can be a synonym for energy among New Age believers and Indigo Children. In Gary's post-awakened perspective, children around the world with these conditions are not disabled but have a different form of consciousness, or a larger amount of energy flowing through them, that needs to be correctly aligned with their "signature vibration". In this account, he moves from the particular to the general, and "demedicalizes" ADHD and autism. Further, he referred to "what we call ADHD", presenting his view of these conditions as socially constructed, and asserted that these children do not need medications such as Ritalin. The "correct" treatment, or healing, is for them to reconcile to their true natures – natures which can, in this account, be diagnosed by others outside of the medical profession, i.e. intuitives such as Gary. Gary also demedicalizes his own conditions: his back problems are diagnosed as the result of repressed empathic abilities. This empathy is also reassessed; he no longer sees it as an emotional response to his changes. It is the tool he needs as a "spiritual consultant, healer … everything incorporated into one".

"Rebelliousness" is also reassessed in Gary's account. It is present in the lists of Indigo Child characteristics as we saw in Chapter 1, but Gary rejected it as a label for himself. Nancy Ann Tappe linked the Indigo Child with extreme forms of rebellion, including high school shootings, as she believed restrictive contemporary society would drive these children to lash out violently (Tappe 1999, 9). Moreover, rebellion against society in Indigo rhetoric also includes surpassing its limitations, and Indigos are often described in the primary literature as having achievements beyond the standards set for them in school and elsewhere. Gary rejected rebelliousness, but did admit, however, that as a child he was unwilling to do coursework, or to practise his piano, because he had already mastered them through his own abilities and intuition. Gary's account was a retrospective understanding of his achievements as an indication of his Indigo nature. He also expressed this rebellious attitude towards external authorities in the New Age milieu, such as David Icke, who, like his other early teachers, he dismissed. Further, Gary claimed that he is "system busting" on the Starseed forum. He said that he does not blindly accept others' views but again applies his own intuitions to call them out on their dogmatic statements. When his intuitions align with their conclusions he is far more accepting, for example in the case of Annette, who diagnosed his Arcturian nature.

Gary's method for healing others, which he describes as the "Arcturian way of healing", is also predicated on only accepting information if it aligns with his post-awakened intuitions. He told me that, when healing, the Arcturians "let people find their own way by giving them clues and ideas about themselves rather than giving them the answers". Healing is described in terms of correct, intuited knowledge, and I argue that this approach is not solely Arcturian but the foundation of the Indigo Child understanding of healing as a process of correct diagnosis, redefinition, and reconciliation. Further, Gary's decision to become a professional reader and "spiritual consultant" supports his view of

himself as an intuitive diagnostician, while also recasting him as an external authority for others. In this role, Gary gave me two readings during our interview: the first was an assessment of my aura, and the second was a reading of my eyes. From the first reading, he deduced that I had a lot of energy and that I was stressed, symptoms that he had noted previously when discussing himself, his wife, and the children who "suffer" from "what we call ADHD" and autism, who need to correctly identify their own "signature vibrations". In the second reading, he noted the similarity of my eyes to his. When I pointed out that they were a different colour, he drew attention a similar "protective ring" around the inside.

Later, I searched for this characteristic online and found nothing specific to eyes or to psychic readings. Further, there were no references to "ocularmancy", and my search was redirected by Google to "occlumency", which is a magical technique in the *Harry Potter* series of books by J. K. Rowling. It is defined as "the art of magically defending the mind against external penetration, sealing it against magical intrusion and influence", in order to hide both secrets and truths (*Harry Potter Lexicon* 2007). This is an example of the interplay between the Indigo Children and fiction, which I will address in later chapters. However, Gary's readings in fact provide the opposite to Rowling's occlumency. He attempts to correctly diagnose other people's true natures: their "secret". By reading me, Gary was also seeking to diagnose me as being similar to him as he had been, as "normal bloke" Gary, and thus on the same path – although some might suggest he was also being flirtatious. In either case, in fieldwork there can be an entanglement of the researcher with the subject (Bender 2010, 89). In this instance, my online research of the ideas Gary introduced me to replicates Gary's own seeking online after he was diagnosed by Linda. The Indigo Child concept continues its transmission along social networks, even intentional networks like the interviewee/interviewer relationship.

Gary is presented as an example of the interplay of claim, or diagnosis, and subsequent recognition, or rejection. Knowledge in this process is presented as the result of an ongoing discernment of the "truth", even though Gary claimed that there was no such thing as truth, only subjectivities. Moreover, Gary's attempt to diagnose me, and his previous diagnosis of himself, were attempts to understand the "other" to which he was in relation. I reciprocated in this process of claim/diagnosis and recognition/rejection. As explained in my methods chapter, I worked in a New Age shop after my undergraduate degree and was trained there in the healing properties of crystals, as understood in primary New Age literature. Gary told me that he did not know why he had been drawn to that stone, but perhaps I understood why and could tell him? The crystal Gary gave me was a rose quartz, a stone that I knew from my training was associated with the healing of emotional and romantic issues. This is a final example of healing through clues and information: he diagnosed that I required it and, in time, my knowledge of crystals led me to a self-diagnosis that answered his question. I formally recognized his diagnosis via e-mail later,

writing that, yes, there may well have been a reason why I needed it at that time. In doing so, I retrospectively reassessed my own biography, my own symptoms, and I became entangled in the same approach to diagnosis and healing as Gary.

My argument is that the Indigo Child concept is a diagnosis that also heals existing problems by demedicalizing them or by redefining them as positive attributes. I now draw on wider ethnographic fieldwork among the Indigo Children, both on- and offline, to open up the context of the core aspects of Gary's account: "awakening", the role of knowledge in retrospective diagnosis and in healing, reactions to epistemic authorities, and becoming an authority himself.

Indigo accounts of awakening, diagnosis, and healing

Gary's account exhibits aspects also found in biographical narratives in the wider community of Indigo Children. The motifs of "waking up" and awakening are common, as is the association of "sleeping" with ignorance. For example, during another interview, Brandon, a 25-year-old marketing manager from the Netherlands, outlined what he saw as the three stages of awakening for the general populace:

Stage 1: By far most people are in this stage. They are the sheep. These people live in an illusion and follow as they're told. They believe the media, religions, teachers, authorities without questioning. They are asleep.

Stage 2: More people start to get to stage 2 which means waking up. This is the most difficult stage because people start to see all the lies, the problems and the injustice in the world. They become aware. This also is the stage most people who commit suicide are in because they can't handle all the negative impulses anymore. They think in and focus on problems

Stage 3: In this stage people are aware of all the negativity, but have accepted it's [sic] existence and the fact that they can't solve everything. They search and find their own way to contribute to positively change this world into a better and more positive place.

    I believe indigo's [sic] and all New Age children are destined to get in stage 3 while most other people stay a lifetime in stage 1 [layout as in original].

Unlike Gary, Brandon did not claim to have been a "normal bloke", or "asleep", prior to his Indigo Child diagnosis. Instead, he explained that he had been interested in spiritual subjects from when he was 10 years old. Also, Brandon did not describe his realization as a dramatic awakening, but rather a process of gradual discernment, just as Gary's account was in part based upon personal intuitions about epistemic authorities. Brandon told me that he had started an anonymous Twitter account to spread "positive energy", and

then a Dutch celebrity contacted him through it to tell him about the Indigo Children: "I dug into it and was shocked to find that all characteristics were a perfect match". Likewise, Ryan, a 23-year-old student from Trinidad and Tobago who now lives in Canada, told me through Facebook that received knowledge was always measured against his personal experience: "I've read so many things and seen so many documentaries, it's hard to recall where I get all the information. But I don't believe anything unless I experience it or feel the truth for myself".

Acquired knowledge then transforms the definitions of problems, in effect healing them. In Gary's account, he redefined his back problems in two distinct ways. First, they were the *catalyst* for trying craniosacral therapy after being driven to his "wit's end". Second, they were a reactive ailment, the *product* of the repression of his empathic abilities. Likewise, in the light of awakening, physical adversity, illness, disease, and even a more general sense of "dis-ease" with society are re-defined positively by Indigos in two ways: as catalysts or as products. The most dramatic example of a catalyst for spiritual awakening is the near death experience (commonly referred to as an "NDE"), and New Age author Pamela Atwater has focussed her research on children who have had NDEs and their similarities with Indigo Children (Atwater 2005). Atwater herself claims to have had three different NDEs, all in 1977. On the Internet, I encountered several psychics who claimed that their abilities and Indigo life-missions had awoken after an NDE. For example, the online bio for Robyn Chance, a model, dancer, psychic, and Indigo Child, makes claims about her own NDE and her mission in life in a biography written on her personal webpages:

> Robyn is part of the second wave of Indigo Children born in the 1980's. Since her near-death experience and multiple awakenings since, she has reactivated her personal commitment to a conscious life and following her true joy. During this critical time in human evolution, she promotes Earth over country, Human Rights, Animal Rights, Women's Empowerment, Alternative Education, Environmental Protection and Spiritual Awakening.
> (Chance 2015)

The line between catalyst and product often blurs. Sophie Gubb, a self-proclaimed therapist for Indigo Children, explains on her blog that "Indigos tend to go through rough awakening experiences in the form of sickness, accidents, disabilities, etc." (Gubb 2015), not explaining if the experience is the awakening or if the awakening is the result of experience. Several New Agers and Indigo Children encountered during this research presented physical problems in relation to the awakening moment, problems that had led them to re-prioritize their lives. For example, at the 12.12.12 One World Celebration in London that I attended with Julian and Kyle, Chris Paradox spoke and performed poems about giving up his £70,000 a year salary to live under a tree in Battersea Park with just a collection of metaphysical books and some clothes, before losing a leg in a diving accident in Mexico. In an interview with the

Huffington Post, Chris characterized those life changes as "paradoxical", hence his chosen surname:

> Everything in my life has been paradoxical. Moving into Battersea Park [to live under a tree] was the dumbest and smartest thing I've ever done, while losing my leg was the worst and best thing that ever happened to me […] After everything I've been through in my life, I've made it my mission to help others.
>
> (Driscoll 2014)

Chris's reassessment of these events as the "smartest thing" and the "best thing" demonstrates that the second perspective on illness, disability, and dis-ease that we are discussing: the re-evaluation of them as products of an awakened mind, even one operating at a subconscious level on behalf of the individual. Thus, it is not surprising that so many Indigos claim to have gone through a "rough awakening", when negative events are retrospectively recast as significant. Some Indigos cited the Greek myth, and Jungian archetype, of Chiron the Wounded Healer, of whom Jung explained, "it is his own hurt that gives a measure of his power to heal" (Jung 1969). Further, some pointed to the discovery by astronomers of the minor planet/asteroid named "2060 Chiron" in 1977, around the same time as the Indigo Children were first identified by Tappe. On the website of a "Business Coach for Healing Professionals", Dawn Del Vecchio, she states that, "[Chiron's] timely arrival into our awareness coincides exactly with the birth of Alternative & Energy Healing. Yep [sic], it was right around this time that energy healing powers stopped being reserved for spiritual masters, and started moving through "ordinary" Joes & Janes – folks like you and me" (Del Vecchio 2012).

In another example of positive reassessment, Indigo author Meg Blackburn Losey provides a name for a whole subset of the Indigo Children who have extreme physical disabilities but who are also talented psychics: "the Beautiful Silent Ones" (Losey 2007). She explains, "Often, because of certain stimuli or changes within the relationships of energetic functioning, a child of the new evolution may look different or even overtly dysfunctional […] Some of the children experience all manner of apparent disabilities, from minor to substantial" (Losey 2007, 48).

In her account, physical disability is another sign to be correctly diagnosed. Elsewhere, for example, on a website called 2012-spiritual-growth-prophecies.com, disability is described as the enabling, but not causal, factor for Indigo Children's psychic abilities: "special psychic gifts reveal themselves in physically or mentally challenged indigo children. […] For some indigo children it's much more highly developed, because it's in these out-of-body states they find their peace, their worth, their freedom, and their expression without limitations" (Weaver 2012).

During the Cambridge New Earth Group meetings I attended, members told me about "Grandma Chandra", a severely disabled young woman who

transmits spiritual messages telepathically through her mother.[7] She is described on her website as a

> unique multi-dimensional being, a living miracle in a severely physically challenged body who provides a safe place to go for answers. She is an experienced, creative and trusted advisor and works telepathically to remove obstacles to Ascension. She provides vital information, guidance through her services, as well as homework in the form of her products to support clients with their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.
>
> (Chandra 2015)

They also explained to me that Grandma Chandra works with energies and the "'light body" at a level that is imperceptible to observers, such that it can seem that she is not actually "doing" anything. This diagnosis of her disability and her silence recasts her physical problems as signs of her different energy and life-mission on earth, and therefore "heals" them of any negative connotations. Gary's reassessment, or demedicalization, of "what we call ADHD" and autism in his account similarly recast them through his new lexicon as being the result of the individual operating at a superior energetic level.

This demedicalization has its origins in primary Indigo texts, but different perspectives on the reality of these conditions have developed in this community. The first, like that espoused by Gary, is that "what we call ADHD", and "what we think of as autism" (Losey 2007, 52), are terms that society uses incorrectly to diagnose and medicate these energetically advanced children. In the second perspective, some Indigo Children take a conspiricist view of such conditions and argue that they were in fact *created* by immoral pharmaceutical companies, "Big Pharma", in order to sell zombifying treatments, such as the amphetamine-derived drug Ritalin for ADHD. For example, on Indigosociety.com one post claims:

> ADHD IS A FARCE........GET OVER IT
> does not exist....
> Fake....
> it is brainwashing that enslaves us.....
> Do not believe....
> Do not give your kids meth [methamphetamine – refers to Ritalin].....
> please, please, please, please, nothing is wrong with
> your children [layout and ellipses as in original]

This conspiricist reading of ADHD among the Indigo Children derives in part from an interview in *Der Spiegel* with child psychologist Leon Eisenberg (1922–2009). He is described in the article as the "scientific father of ADHD" and is reported as saying that "ADHD is a prime example of a fictitious disease" (Von Blech 2012). According to the debunking website Snopes.com, his comments were mistranslated. Instead, he was explaining

that ADHD was an over-diagnosed and over-prescribed disorder, and that non–pharmaceutical treatments should be tried. For context, by 2014 5.9 million American children between the ages of three and 17 had been diagnosed with ADHD (CDC 2014). In 2010, approximately two-thirds of those diagnosed were prescribed Ritalin (methylphenidate) and amphetamine as treatments (CDC 2010). Prescriptions are also increasing in the United Kingdom, from 420,000 prescriptions in 2007 to 657,000 by 2012 (Cooper 2013).

On 28 December 2014, a link to an article describing the "Eisenberg Confession" from *Der Spiegel*, as it has been named, was posted on the Indigo Adults Facebook page. The responses clearly indicated that the members did not accept ADHD as a legitimate medical condition. "Terri" gave the conspiricist reading of the story, saying that she "bet that they [pharmaceutical companies] came up with the disease name after they invented a drug". "Donna" gave an account that located teachers within the conspiracy:

> When my son was in second grade, his teacher said he was ADHD and needs to be medicated. At that time it was 1999. I had no idea what she was telling me. I did know an elementary teacher was pushing drugs. Medicate the child, and their brains with those wheels that are spinning faster than we can imagine, if they don't sit still and shut up. Thank heaven we didn't/don't all think that way.

Demonstrating the anti-labelling rhetoric of the Indigos, Julie said that ADHD was "Just another way to compartmentalize humanity". However, in contrast with Emma, she showed less reflexivity about the Indigo Child concept itself as a method of compartmentalization.

Another Indigo perspective on these conditions is that they *do* exist, but that the Indigo Children are so similar in behaviour that they can be misdiagnosed with them. Doreen Virtue has given this account of ADHD: "Adults who resist change and who value conformity may misunderstand the Indigos. They are often mislabelled with psychiatric diagnoses of Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) […] Sadly, when they are medicated, the Indigos often lose their beautiful sensitivity, spiritual gifts and warrior energy" (Virtue 2003, 2). During our interview, Brandon's views on the independent existence of the medical conditions were similar: "being an indigo can be very difficult. Indigos have a very active brain. That's why they are often diagnosed with ADHD. But when you learn to use this increased brain activity in your advantage the world becomes your playground". Without denying the existence of ADHD, Brandon has learnt to see it as a gift, in effect reclaiming it from the medical domain. Likewise, Virtue demedicalized the condition by redefining the acronym itself; thus, ADHD becomes "Attention Dialled into a Higher Dimension" (Virtue 2001, 2). And when describing autistic children, whom she specifically links to the Crystal Children, Virtue says that they "aren't autistic, they're awe-tistic!" (2003, 9).

There is *some* consensus among the Indigo Children regarding these conditions: no matter the truth about their origins, the correct treatment for them is *not* medication. Elaine von Nuding of *The Ascension Circle* explains on their website, "The worst case scenario is that they [children] may be given medication. This sadly reduces their sensory systems to react in a conventional linear way without using their special intuitive conceptual abilities leaving them feeling frozen in a body system which just is not their true selves" (Von Nuding 2015). Elaine's explanation of the children's "true selves" is similar to Gary's argument that children should follow their unique "signature vibration". In the treatments suggested for the Indigo Children, we see a similar reification of the individual's "true self". These therapies include energy healing forms, spiritual therapies, homeopathic remedies, dietary restrictions, and/or nutritional supplements. Intrinsic to these holistic "sciences" is an antagonistic rhetoric of "natural versus unnatural" or "good science versus bad science".

Further examples exist of this antagonistic rhetoric around "bad science", treating the field as an object. First, there is the Indigo discourse concerning genetically modified organisms (GMOs), especially those produced by large pharmaceutical companies or "Big Pharma", which have entered the food-chain. Indigos claim that eating GMOs makes them "aggressive, anxious, tired and withdrawn" (Weaver 2014). GMOs are considered to be detrimental to Indigo Children because they contain unnatural man-made chemicals and energies. Vaccines, seen as another dubious product of "Big Pharma", have also been cast as unnatural in this way. Jenny McCarthy in particular connected her son's autism to the vaccinations he was required to have at a young age and supported the findings of a 1998 *Lancet* article by Dr Andrew Wakefield and colleagues. This article drew a causal link between the mercury-derived preservatives in vaccines, intestinal disorders, and subsequent autism diagnoses. It was retracted 12 years later (*Lancet* 2010), but McCarthy continued publishing and speaking on behalf of the anti-vaccination movement that had grown up around Wakefield's research, although she closed down her own Indigo Child website, Indigomoms.com, in July 2007. Her articles on the subject published by the Children of the New Earth Magazine website were also removed during the period of my research for this ethnography, as well as the magazine's entire online archive of holistic parenting articles.

This link between vaccinations and the Indigo Child concept highlights again the conflict between the natural and the unnatural in Indigo Child discourse. Medicines, GMO crops, vaccinations, and the diagnoses of ADHD and autism are presented as examples of man-made attempts to control and limit the Indigos' natural abilities, as well as their destinies. The claimed superior authenticity, or naturalness, of the Indigo Child heightens the fear of contamination from man-made medicines and vaccinations, especially as they are provided by corporations which are also viewed as corrupted by materialism. However, not all Indigo Children agree with this conspiricist worldview: for example, Brandon told me that there is no conspiracy and that Indigos are

Not specifically being attacked by anyone. It's just that they are more aware of how the authorities and the powerful people in the world are corrupt and how they are brainwashing people through means as religions, money, time, media, schools etc. Because they are real rebels in behaviour they should find the most effective way to change what they don't like before sounding the alarms [about conspiracies].

This self-determined change can begin with personal healing through alternative therapeutic techniques, as Gary believed.

I have argued in this chapter that the Indigo Child concept is a diagnosis that heals. Therefore, it might appear contradictory that those who self-diagnose as Indigo still claim to require therapies and treatments. There are two reasons given by the Indigo Children as to why they continue to need help. First, that the conflict between the natural and the unnatural remains even after the Indigo Child has been diagnosed and their problems have been demedicalized. Until a wider societal change, or Ascension, occurs, they will still be surrounded by the harmful civilization that they claim catalyzed their initial awakening. They can also be driven to proselytize about this need for change, as Jenny McCarthy was after her own awakening:

I was so eager to go on every talk show and preach to the world about the importance of healthy air, healthy food, and empowering our children to be the divine manifestors they came here to be [...] I want to open schools across the country that apply this philosophy so that our children can be taught in an environment that feeds their soul and has them in continual balance with their authentic self.

(McCarthy 2009)

In the Indigo Child rhetoric, this "authentic self" that McCarthy mentions is constructed in direct opposition to the "inauthentic self" that is forced onto children through medication and other harmful environmental factors. Treating the stress caused by the tension between these two selves is thought by Indigo Children to require an alternative approach outside of mainstream medicine, which is also defined as inauthentic. Second, the Indigo Child continues to require therapeutic help when his awakening continues to further levels, and even secondary diagnoses. In Gary's case, this meant his subsequent upgrades, as well as the diagnosis of his Arcturian nature through a reading by Annette.

Many of the Indigo Children I met were not only clients but also readers and therapists themselves. This was not seen as incompatible with being treated by other practitioners and with recognizing other authorities. On one occasion, however, conflict did arise when individuals posted their "selfies" on a Facebook group's pages, requesting psychic readings for free from the other members. These requests were against the internal rules of these Facebook groups, which prevented members from advertising services or products. Moderators intervened, deleting the original messages and removing

the "transgressors" from the group. Some members disliked the selfies for other reasons. In one dispute, "Anthony" claimed that the people making the requests were not truly Indigo because they based their identities on others' opinions: "Please stop posting selfies and asking other people what they see. All I see is someone who is overly concerned with other people's opinions, who maybe needs to spend more time seeing themselves. These are not Indigo traits". Other members were upset about the enforcement of the Facebook group's rules. "Kane" stated, "There are NO RULES to being Indigo. Get over it".[8] A number of members read the "selfie" trend as an attempt to avoid paying for professional psychic readers, and therefore as abuse of good will:

> Yeah tired of this got a pic and you read me STOP IT ITS OFFENSIVE AND RUDE TO EXPECT US TO READ YOU GO PAY FOR A PSYCHIC AND STOP USING US YOU'RE TAKING US OFF THE INTENDED PATH I gotta delete myself from this group if non indigos start running this stupid picture read crap CRAP [Capitals in original]

However, the members' antagonism towards free readings in this Facebook group ignores the role of peers in recognizing and diagnosing Indigos – whether they are financially compensated or not. Gary's relationship with his therapist, Linda, and the reciprocal relationship he has with Annette, are formative for his identity. Gary's gift to me, the rose quartz crystal, might not immediately speak of reciprocity as I did not exchange gifts with him. However, Gary's diagnosis of me was not only to make sense of me in the context of his post-awakening worldview but was also intended to help me to come to my own awakening. That I gave him my interpretation of the gift in return meant that in his eyes I reciprocated. My self-diagnosis was my gift to him.

Academic considerations of New Age healing

I have considered the above expressions of diagnosis and healing in the wider community in order to demonstrate how these two processes are interrelated for the Indigo Children, and that healing must be comprehended in the light of claims that it reconciles the individual with their most authentic self. In the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly assess relevant academic works on the subject of heal-ing in the wider New Age movement. Gary's account will then be assessed in relation to these naturalistic, positivistic, or typological academic models of New Age healing, as well as the social constructivism of Whedon. Finally, in their place I will propose a new model: that the Indigo Child is a conversion narrative that heals through tropes of reconciliation that spread socially, on- and offline.

New Age healing as a failed project

I begin with Gordon Melton's reading of the New Age as a failed project. This is based upon his argument that there was a past falsification of the "scientific",

or healing, effects of crystals.[9] Melton outlines the origins of the New Age movement's uses of crystals, detailing the works of Edgar Cayce (1877–1945) and Frank Alper (1930–2007). Alper's *Exploring Atlantis* trilogy of books (1981–986) described the role of large, perfect, man-made crystals of specific colours in the technology of the Atlanteans.[10] Melton claims that as these "scientific uses" were disproven in the late 1980s, the market for crystals crashed, and they moved out to the "margins of esoteric consideration" (Melton 2014, 209). For Melton, this shift was concurrent with a crisis in the wider New Age movement, where, "unable to deny the lack of any clear signs of the expected changes, belief in the upcoming New Age had been lost and within a very short period a coterie of New Age spokespersons voiced their loss of faith. Shortly, thereafter the movement collapsed" (Melton 2014, 205). He also points to the diminishing use of the terms New Age and New Age movement as proof of this collapse.

This naturalistic account of healing crystals, and its conclusions about their contemporary relevance, is contrary to my own findings during the research for this ethnography. First, crystals were still prominent at the New Age or Mind, Body, Spirit Fayres I attended, and where I collected free-listing surveys. They were also visible online, either for sale, or brought up in conversations about healing. For example, on Indigosociety.com one member wrote of their combined physical and energetic effects:

> Had a crystal treatment while on my course and I had my thymus centre cleared as haven't before. I'm totally buzzing like an excited child! I have tried to ground myself but just feel I'm floating. My centres [energy centres, or possibly chakras] showed to be mostly open so I think I'm functioning well! Best time to get healing while I'm feeling this much energy through me! Totally recommend this if anyone has a flat aura and depression etc.

Second, Melton argues that, after their scientific abilities were falsified, healing crystals were put to uses that "accommodated and blocked further criticism from those knowledgeable of current science" (Melton 2014, 210). These non-measurable effects included the raising of consciousness and the reduction of stress (Melton 2014, 209). However, Melton's conclusion that these and other falsifications weakened the New Age is flawed. This reduction of healing to a falsified object in a larger scheme of presumably verifiable effects ignores the clear and ongoing New Age rhetoric of "Science" as intellectually backwards in comparison to their own scientific advances and those of specific scientists and experiments. Apparently non-measurable effects *are* considered scientifically verifiable in their worldview, but only by a more advanced Science, which they see themselves as taking a small part in developing. Moreover, accounts such as in the above quote directly relate the use of crystals to *physical* changes in specific organs. Third, Melton's analysis ignores the power and significance that crystals are perceived to have by their users, and how they continue to be

employed visibly in this milieu. Gary was "drawn to" the rose quartz crystal, and to giving it to me. It was his attempt to diagnose and heal me – it had semiotic power. Finally, Melton's analysis ignores how diagnosis and healing can be involved in identity formation. Gary's gift of the rose quartz was an attempt at diagnosis, a discernment of true identity involving both parties, leading to him forming a stable classification of me in his worldview.

Taxonomies of New Age healing

This classification of New Age healing as a failed project within a naturalistic framework by Melton has parallels with academic approaches that create taxonomies of healing methods and forms. This tendency to classification is addressed by Catherine Albanese, who argues that Baconian Science led to "an identification of all science with taxonomy, so that systematically naming and classifying were elevated to new authority as essentially scientific acts" (Albanese 2000, 39). In such classification systems, New Age healing can be found grouped together with "professional groups, layperson-initiated popular health reform movements, […] alternative psychological therapies, and non-normative scientific enterprises" (Kaptchuk and Eisenberg 2001, 196). This grouping is often collectively termed "complementary alternative medicine" (CAM). Under "New Age healing" in the taxonomy presented by scientists Ted Katpchuk and David Eisenberg, we also find a diverse but simplified and bounded list of techniques, some in unexplained pairings: "Esoteric energies", "Crystals and magnets", "Spirits and mediums", and "Reiki and qigong" (Kaptchuk and Eisenberg 2001, 196). This reduction to types may replicate the labelling tendencies of the Indigo Children themselves, but it does not give weight to the interplay of healing forms, nor to the role of healing itself, as I seek to do in this chapter.

   This typological approach is not limited to scientific taxonomies: in Olav Hammer's *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*, he proposes that "Healing rituals come in many versions" before proceeding to describe the aspects of Reiki healing as one such version (2001, 1). He does, however, recognize how third person narratives, particularly those displaying the wounded healer trope, support and inform healing pre-suppositions: "Healing narratives subtly reinforce specific notions of personhood, of the character and development of illness, and provide a structuring script through which the relevant parts of the reader's life can be interpreted" (Hammer 2001, 356). The Indigo Children we have considered in this chapter have given first person accounts, and even Emma's account of her daughter provides a similar narrative. Further, Hammer notes, healing need not be complete to be efficacious in this manner, and I have shown how in the case of the Indigo Children the ongoing diagnosis, and reassessment of symptoms, is also a healing.

   This characteristic of healing narratives is disregarded in some academic accounts, such as Melton's, which see healing in the New Age movement as now being limited to inward focussed, non-falsifiable effects in the face of

scientific interrogation. Other negative labels and classifications for this presumed inward focus include "psychobabble" (Rosen 1977), "self-absorption" (Schur 1976), "subjective expressivism" (Taylor 1989), or "narcissism" (Lasch 1979). Anthony Giddens took the latter concept to task, denying that a concern with one's own mental or physical well-being was intrinsically narcissistic, and he drew particular attention to the "reflexive project" that is the construction of the self in the late modern era (Giddens 1991, 32). Construction of self is not the same as selfishness in his view. I have already noted the formative aspects of the account form for the Indigo community, both in the case of the individual, and – as the account spreads through social networks and is encountered again and again – for a larger community.

Healing as reconciliation with the self and the world

Hammer argues in his consideration of New Age narratives that healing is a part of this self-construction in this age, and I propose that the Indigo redefinition of illness works in this same mode (Hammer 2001). Further, according to Hanegraaff (1996), healing in the "general interpretative context" of the New Age milieu is "concerned with more than just 'fixing' isolated problems, healing is regarded as promoting harmony in the world and therefore carries at least implicit salvational overtones" (Hanegraaff 1996, 44–5). Hanegraaff identifies personal growth as the form salvation takes in the New Age movement, which he links to the growing popularity of psychotherapy in the 1970s. I propose that his argument also supports the Indigo Child account of healing as reconciliation, as when he refers to the New Age view of "modern society", saying that such as society "produces lonely and alienated individuals who have lost touch with their inner selves and are at a loss to find deeper meaning on their lives" (Hanegraaff 1996: 48). This alienation requires an active response from the individual, just as the Indigo Children claim in rhetoric around their negative view of modern society, and in their predicted role to change it.

It is important to draw attention to this salvational New Age aim of creating "harmony in the world", presented by Hanegraaff, which we can contrast with more "narcissistic" readings of this milieu. Ellie Hedges and James A. Beckford similarly criticize the characterization of alternative healing as an "excessively individualistic activity" (Hedges and Beckford 2000, 169). Their chapter on "Holism, Healing and the New Age" uses the example of a small group of nurses who were training in aromatherapy and holistic massage. These were people who have "chosen to try and heal *other people's bodies*" (Hedges and Beckford 2000, 169, emphasis in original). Expanding their purview, they argue that New Age healing therapies depend on forms of "sociality and ideas which were collective and holistic" ibid., 170).

This category of "holism", integration beyond the self, is also present in Albanese's work on New Age healing. She claims that healing should be understood as a "work of reconciliation […] it emphasizes a forgiveness that dissolves physical disease, emotional hurt, and the collective distress of society

and nature. To experience healing may or may not be the same as effecting a physiological change" (Albanese 1992, 78). With particular regards to processes and cosmologies, Albanese uses the case study of a contemporary spiritual healer, Barbara Ann Brennan (1939–) in order to present what she describes as "*the* dominant model in the healing repertoire of the New Age. That model concerns spiritual healing, and it concerns what many have come to call subtle energy" (Albanese 2000, 30, emphasis in the original).

Thus, in Brennan's own words, "Modern science tells us that the human organism is not just a physical structure made of molecules, but that, like everything else, we are also composed of energy fields" (Brennan, quoted in Albanese 2000, 33). This "modern science" is the intellectually advanced Science supported and described by the New Age movement, which seeks to heal all aspects of the human organism and the wider world. Further, Albanese identifies the primary influences on this conception of healing: the effect of pluralism (particularly the influence of Asian energy systems on the West), a new professionalism in healing, the role of media in conventionalizing the odd and unexpected, the effect of new technologies on the development of our "spiritual yearning", and the changes in the locus of power from "magic" to "mind" (Albanese 2000, 45–8). She concludes that "spiritual healing came with a past that joined inseparably with significant strands of American vernacular culture" (Albanese 2000, 50).

This "past" is pertinent, and due to the historical connections and affinities of the Indigo Child concept with forms of channelling and spiritual mediumship, we can widen the scope of this brief survey of academic considerations of New Age healing to include Spiritualist healing. For example, Vieda Skultans's 1974 work on Spiritualist meetings in South Wales also addresses the idea of reconciliation, as we saw in Albanese's later work on New Age healing. Skultans describes Spiritualist healing as a "ritual of reconciliation to a situation which does not permit any radical alternative to itself" (Skultans 1974, 4–5), including forms of illness, but also, the dis-ease with society that has been noted among the Indigo Children who have contributed to this research. Further, these techniques of healing in Spiritualism allow an "assumption of roles which in the ordinary way lie beyond the social repertoire of the possessed person, but whose assumption during possession is mystically sanctioned" (Skultans 1974, 5). Skultans recognizes a compensatory aspect in Spiritualist healings, especially when the illness is more sociosomatic than biomedical, and subsequently draws on Talcott Parson's Sick Role theory (1951), which has also been connected with the Labelling Theory of Deviance (see also "Biographical narratives in identity and community formation"). Courtney Bender's account of the New Metaphysicals in Cambridge, Massachusetts, also explores this idea of reconciliation through healing. She links healing to the New Metaphysicals' conception of the "material" and the "energetic" and claims that their bodily practices are a process of reconciliation through rituals that enable New Metaphysicals to learn appropriate ways to see, feel, or sense these invisible bodies and forces, and become connected

with themselves and the wider world. Again, this refutes the self-centred interpretation of healing, above.

Meredith McGuire also presents a relational understanding of healing. Her study, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, might initially appear reductionist in its labelling of broad healing types based on their techniques: "Christian healing groups", "traditional metaphysical movements", "Eastern meditation and human potential groups", and "psychic and occult healing". However, she indicates the importance of diagnosis in healing and its role in identity formation, an aspect that few of the previous authors have fully considered, but which I emphasis in this book. McGuire argues that healing is not just the "relief of physical symptoms but […] the search for why the illness occurred in the first place" (McGuire 1988, 139). McGuire examines the idea of "pain as a prerequisite to growth" among the healing communities she describes, and how it can be regarded as a message, either from God, or a god, or from the inner self, becoming a "necessary cleansing or purification" (ibid., 138–9).

We can consider the Indigo Child in the light of these relational interpretations of healing. We have seen how Gary concluded that his back pain was the result of his repressed empathic abilities, and that he argues that children with "what we call ADHD" or autism are being prevented from following their "signature vibration". Further, Chris Paradox's account of the best and worst thing that ever happened to him, losing his leg, also fits McGuire's account of the role of pain in change and healing. However, McGuire's description of healing does not provide a complete model for the Indigo Child's understanding, and use, of diagnosis and healing. In the psychic or occult healing groups she observed, she claims "they preferred technical images for describing the process which they saw as essentially an acquired skill – nothing extraordinary" (McGuire 1988, 154). It is true that guide texts, technical lexicons, and physical instruments are utilized by Indigo Child therapists (including healing crystals, in opposition to Melton's "crisis" argument). However, scientific terminology for this awakening can also be subsumed by visceral description, as in Gary's "etheric orgasm". Further, in McGuire's study the failure of a healing might be explained by the individual's continuing need for the illness in order to progress spiritually (McGuire 1988, 158). But among the Indigo Children, continuing illness, pain, or dis–ease can also be reconsidered as a positive sign of being Indigo in the very unsuitable civilization that they are here to change.

To summarize, this brief review of secondary literature on healing in the New Age has considered dismissive, reductionist characterizations as well as works that highlight the role of narrative, reconciliation, holism, and diagnosis – the latter elements are present in Gary's account and in narratives from the wider Indigo community. With regards to "holism", it is perhaps possible that the latter scholars of this section have adopted the term and its claims uncritically from the rhetoric of their subjects, and are blind to any individualism or self-centredness. However, that suggestion ignores the fact that communities *are* formed through diagnosis, healing interactions and shared worldviews, and the Indigo Children are an example of this sociality. In terms of reconciliation,

the Indigo Child concept is presented as a fully authentic, integrated self in contrast to the artificiality of the pre-awakened human and the world they are enmeshed in. Finally, we can highlight "diagnosis": the argument of this chapter is that the realization of being an Indigo Child operates as a diagnosis and healing in one through retrospective reassessment and identity adoption. The interpretations of healing given above by McGuire, Albanese, Bender, Hanegraaff, Hedges and Beckford, and Skultans provide theoretical models that recognize the agency of the individuals involved without resorting to claims of narcissism. I now attempt to identify frameworks that recognize the aspects of social construction taking place while leaving space for individual agency. As the Indigo Child has not been studied in depth before, I propose that we need to look at other fields of study that overlap within it, as I have already done by introducing Skultans's work on Spiritualist healing.

Approaches from other fields of study

I have previously noted the overlap of ADD, ADHD, and autism diagnoses with the Indigo Child concept, and I will now consider academic models of these conditions. This is done in order to demonstrate that the Indigo Child concept allows for a continued acceptance of symptoms of ADD, ADHD, and autism, but with a positive understanding of them, as in Gary's account of his son's need to reconcile with true nature, his "signature vibration". As discussed in my review of secondary literature on the Indigo Child in Chapter 1, this approach is employed by the study by Lench, Levine, and Whalen (2011), which concluded that the Indigo Child interpretation of ADHD ameliorated the ongoing impact of the condition on parents by reformulating the condition. Further, the study of these conditions from a sociological perspective has included consideration of the Indigo Child concept. Waltz's assessment of the Indigo Child concept as a "magical/religious" re-interpretation of autism frames it as a positive recasting of the condition, which might be beneficial to parents, as in Lench *et al*. However, Waltz also urged caution with respect to interpretive systems that could be "self-aggrandizing, confusing or potentially frightening" for these children, who still have symptoms to live with (Waltz 2009, 124–5, including citations of Gray 1995 and Krider 2002).

Autism, ADD, and ADHD can also be approached as socially constructed "interpretive systems". This conclusion is present in the conspiricist narratives of the Indigo Child community, which agree with Gary that "what we call ADHD" can be a constructed category. We can also note that social construction occurs within the subculture or community that forms around an initial construction, as ideas are shared and then change over time. I will now address academic works which have also approached autism as a constructed condition. These examples lay out a particular history that provides further models for understanding the healing process that the Indigo Child concept enacts. An analysis of works on ADD/ADHD would also be possible (for example, see Timimi and Taylor 2004) with similar parallels, but autism has received greater attention.

In his consideration of "Autism as Culture", Joseph Straus proposes that, due to its lack of "secure biological basis" (Straus 2013, 465), autism might come to be seen as a "transient mental illness", quoting philosopher of science Ian Hacking (2002). Hacking uses this term to describe a condition that

> appears at a time, in a place and later fades away. It may spread from place to place and reappear from time to time. It may be selective for social class or gender, preferring poor women or rich men […] this type of madness exists only at certain times in certain places. The most famous candidate for a transient mental illness is hysteria.
>
> (Hacking 2002, 1)

However, Hacking also criticizes the "banal" debates around whether conditions are real or socially constructed, preferring to examine the frameworks supporting these complexes. Likewise, Majia Nadesan argues that autism is a "bodily symptom", and they are "always/already interpreted within symbolic systems of meanings, social practices, and historically and culturally variable expert authorities" (Nadesan 2008, 81). It is important to note that hysteria is also given as an example in Labelling Theory (see Szasz 1961), introduced previously, and an interactionist perspective on these topics is also valuable. It is perhaps too simple to proffer "social construction" for conditions such as ADD, ADHD, and autism, just as it is too simple to conceive of the Indigo Child concept as "just" a construction. It is a complex collection of transmittable ideas, coalescing into objects at particular moments within a larger framework, or symbolic social system, a form and process I will return to later in my consideration of the Indigo Child as a meme.

A part of this larger framework is the Indigo Child concept's interaction with authorized or mainstream diagnostic bodies, and how they are interpreted within yet more systems. The role of the "culturally variable expert authorities" identified by Nadesan, and indicated by Labelling Theory as a key part of the feedback loop of deviance control, is particularly pertinent, not least because the Indigo Child operates as both amateur diagnostician and self-made expert, as in the case of Gary. Expert authorities are relevant in academic historiographies of autism, particularly the pivotal role of child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim (1903–90), who requires brief introduction because of his wider influence on contemporary conceptions of parenting.

Although the condition was first labelled in 1943 when John Hopkins psychiatrist Leo Kanner wrote about "infant autism", autism fully entered public awareness with the publication of Bettelheim's popular 1967 work, *The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self*. This text blamed the uncaring, "refrigerator mother" for the child's development of autism, a negative caricature that perhaps contributed to the rise of the hyper-attentive mother in reaction, in the setting of a post-Fertility Transition West. Katherine DeMaria Severson, James Arnt Aune, and Denuse Jodlowski argue that Bettelheim came to exemplify the expert "Good Doctor" figure (Severson, Aune, and Jodlowski

2008, 76). Such "Good Doctors" played a salvific role in the quest against the "toxic parents" who were responsible for autism, including Bettelheim's political object, the "refrigerator mother", according to James T. Fisher (2008, 53). Further, these "visionary therapists" were "conjoined as saviours for the whole culture" in autism discourse (Fisher 2008, 59). In the case of the Indigo Children, we can recognize the role of the "Good Doctor", or "visionary therapist", in the Indigo authors, including Tappe, Tober and Carroll, and Virtue, and the many Indigo authors who emphasis their medical qualifications on the covers of their publications.

It is also important to note the emphasis on the 'self' in the title of Bettelheim's book. Autism was initially comprehended as a "disorder of self" in a society becoming "obsessed with the search for the self" (Fisher 2008, 52). Likewise, the diagnosis and adoption of the Indigo Child concept in Gary's view reunifies his previously unwell, fractured self and reconciles him with what he considers to be his true nature. Further, Gary's true nature requires that he should be a spiritual consultant, healer, psychic reader, or "everything in one". The expert within the New Age movement often incorporates all these identities, making the distinction between them unclear. There is also a blurring of the line between the New Age professional and the client, with professionals continuing to receive readings or therapies, while clients can simultaneously be amateur experts. In the context of the Indigo Children, this blurring also occurs as the Indigo Children as an objectified other is considered to be an authority: they are described in the concept's rhetoric as leaders, wise ones, or old souls, messengers of the New Age, healers, and paradigm changers.

Finally, personal accounts are conversion narratives that can be inspirational for others. We have noted how personal accounts of non-ordinary experiences or realizations of being Indigo are frequently shared through social media. There they are presented for diagnosis and recognition, but they can also be posted as displays of expertise and mastery. With regards healing specifically, the personal account of illness, disease, or dis-ease is pivotal to the interaction between the expert and their client or audience. In her study of healing forms, McGuire notes how "the healer shares with the 'patient' not only the interpretative framework but also some of the same experiential world" (McGuire 1988, 180). Chris Paradox's public performances of his experiences replicate other such narratives, but they also provide his audience with the route into the experiential world that he is embedded in. In the case of autism, Fisher's work proposes links between Christian conversion narratives, such as the oral testimonies of potential new church members in the seventeenth century, and contemporary self-help literature. The latter he describes as multiplying after the post-Christian "Triumph of the Therapeutic", drawing on Philip Rieff (1966). Fisher sees both types of conversion narratives as "a record of the quest for a transformed or redeemed self" (Fisher 2008, 51). I argue that Gary's conversion to the Indigo Child concept involves this questing or seeking for a true self. He provides an example for others, particularly for those on IndigoSociety.com who recommended that I speak with him.

I have briefly considered academic works on both New Age healing and autism narratives in order discuss how the Indigo Child concept presents a personal narrative of diagnosis and healing. Rather than a social construct reacting to change, as Whedon argues, the Indigo Child involves healing through redefinition, a positive reworking of the feedback loop of deviance labelling. Or, in the emic perspective, healing for the Indigo Child occurs through reconciliation with the true self. Whedon's interpretation of the Indigo Children did not examine the particularity of the realization and healing that the Indigo Children go through. Gary's account presents a conversion, which subsequently expands to attempt to diagnose the problems of the world at large. Among the Indigo Children, as with the ritual healing groups that McGuire identified, utopian hopes for the world begin with the self, with a belief that, "The best way to heal the world is to heal ourselves" (McGuire 1988, 140). Further, there are salvific motifs within these world healing narratives. The primary Indigo authors and experts can be seen as soothsayer figures bringing word about the future; for example, Diana Cooper has made statements about the Indigo Children and related them to the fate of the world (Cooper 2009, 2013). The Indigo Children are presented as healers for the world, embodying millennial expectations. These prophetic desires will be the subject of Chapter 5.

Notes

1 David Icke is best known for arguing that a conspiratorial group of reptilian extra-terrestrials are directing world events and keeping the population ignorant. David Robertson provides context for Icke's material, arguing that it is a "particularly sophisticated example of the combination of UFO and Illuminati narratives, yet Icke's ideas developed from a background in Theosophical literature, and retains a firmly millennial position today" (Robertson 2016). Robertson also notes that the conspiricist narrative of the Illuminati, an organization seen to be covertly running world events, originates in a 1797 book, *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free-Masons, Illuminati and Reading Societies, etc., collected from good authorities*, written by a professor of Natural Philosophy, John Robison, of Edinburgh University.

2 Craniosacral therapy is a method of therapeutic touch claiming to regulate the flow of cerebral spinal fluid. Developed by John Upledger, a doctor of osteopathy, in the 1970s, it has been dismissively characterized as pseudoscience by registered osteopaths and in medical journals (e.g. Hartman 2006).

3 Starseeds are individuals who claim that their souls originate from another planet. The possible extra-terrestrial or interdimensional origins of the Indigo Children were described in Chapter 1, and Starseeds are subsumed in this thesis under the same title for simplicity's sake.

4 We have noted previously how multivalent the term "energy" is in this milieu.

5 The description of the Arcturian race of extra-terrestrials comes from Edgar Cayce (1877–1945). Cayce was a trance medium who provided over 14,000 readings on topics such as healing, reincarnation, and future events (see Schorey 2012). His predictions about the coming of the Arcturians, a race that he described as one of the most advanced civilizations in our galaxy, have been adapted by some Starseeds, who claim their souls are Arcturian rather than human in origin. Starseeds may also claim origins in the Pleiades or Sirius systems, or in the Ashtar Command, a federation of beings from several stellar locations.

6 The "Hundredth Monkey Effect" comes from ethologist Lyall Watson (1979). He recounts the work done by Japanese primatologists in the 1960s on Koshima island macaque monkeys, and the story that he claims they were afraid to publish. Allegedly, once a critical mass (imagined as a hundred) of macaques had learnt to wash their sweet potatoes in the sea the idea was picked up remotely by groups on the other side of the island. This effect is often presented in New Age circles as evidence of Holism, and although the story is widely debunked (see Amundson 1985), it retains influence in the milieu.

7 "Grandma" is an honorific given to her by a Native American Chief called Golden Light Eagle. She is currently in her thirties.

8 When writing online, using capitals normally indicates shouting.

9 We might note that falsifiability has also been criticized, notably by Kuhn, who argued that Science actually progresses through heterodox claims, in opposition to what he saw as the *ad hoc* addition of hypotheses to favoured scientific theories in the face of falsification (Kuhn 1962). Further, physicists Jean Bricmont and Alan Sokal claimed that falsifiability cannot help to differentiate between the scientific and the pseudoscientific, a pertinent example being astronomy and astrology, as they both make technical predictions that can be falsified (1999).

10 Edgar Cayce was introduced in "Gary".

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5   An Indigo prophecy of the
New Age

Introduction

This chapter has two aims. First, through a consideration of the Indigo Child, prediction, and prophecy it will continue to question the "crisis" model of the New Age movement as presented by Melton. Second, it will argue that prediction is actually secondary to prophecy among the Indigo Children, as temporal schemes reflect on their understanding of society, to the extent that I argue the Indigo Children themselves are best understood as a community of prophets, and even living prophecies, in a millenarian mode.

In the previous chapter, the key element of the "crisis" model of the New Age movement was Gordon Melton's description of a decline in popularity of crystals in this milieu during the 1980s, and the claim he made for a crisis of falsification. Melton states that after this crisis, the New Ager fell "back into older occult metaphysical systems that utilized more spatial metaphors rather than evolutionary historical ones" (Melton 2007, 91). This change is also described as a move towards an internalized or spiritualized millennialism, and a step away from the temporal view of a New Age yet to come.

This chapter challenges his "crisis" model through ethnographic examples that demonstrate a teleological scheme. The primary example I employ will be a spiritual technology used by some Indigo Children known as "AuraTransformation". This is described as "a treatment method which powerfully activates the influx of the New Time Energy. In short, an AuraTransformation provides a permanent and radical expansion of consciousness which anchors a synergy between your charisma, drive and intuition, together with physical action" (AuraTransformation 2015). This case study will show that the allegedly internalized millennialism of the Indigo Children – as a part of this New Age milieu Melton describes – is in fact entwined with a schematic, teleological view of history that re-asserts a future New Age or Ascension and expresses a collective moral imperative. As the Indigo Child concept precedes the dating of this "crisis from falsification", I dispute the idea that the millennialism of the New Age ever became entirely internalized. Further, I will argue that the Indigo Children are a continuation of older millenarian and mystical ideas that focussed on the prophet as the mouthpiece

of god, with the proviso that both the prophet and the prophecy are jointly embodied in the Indigo Child, as both object and self.

This chapter begins with a description of a lecture on AuraTransformation, given by Berit Reaver, which I attended at the London College of Spirituality. Some months later, Berit returned to London from her home in Lillehammer, Norway, and we met for an interview in a coffee shop on the Fulham Road. This talk and interview will be discussed in detail in the section "The New Time Energy", while "Prediction in the Indigo community" relates this material to wider predictive and prophetic accounts within the Indigo Community.

Berit and AuraTransformation at the London College of Spirituality

I first encountered AuraTransformation and the work of its creator, Anni Sennov, through the London College of Spirituality (LCS). Although a "college", there is no syllabus at the LCS, no permanent building, and no student accommodation. Formed in 2007, the LCS's talks, lectures, healing groups, and events are primarily organized through Meetup.com, with a virtual membership of 11,000 that can choose to sign up through the site to attend particular events held at rooms hired across London. On the Meetup.com webpage, the LCS claims that it represents "the move into a new world where everything is possible, where you are empowered, you have love, peace, happiness, joy in your life. All through self and group empowerment. We also represent the move from guru to Group, where everyone recognizes their divine importance in this world".

"Crystal Children, Indigo Children & the New Time Energy"

Berit Reaver's talk was called "Crystal Children, Indigo Children & the New Time Energy". This was the only event at the LCS specifically about the Indigo Children during the research for this ethnography, although there were many other events on the holistic themes and techniques that Indigos also discuss. Berit is described as an "aura mediator", a practitioner of the AuraTransformation technique first outlined by Anni Sennov, who also personally trained her. Sennov's bio on her website describes her as a "clairvoyant advisor, international lecturer and author of more than 20 books about energy and consciousness as well as relationships and New Time children" (Sennov 2015a).

While hurrying through the evening rain, looking for the University College London lecture room hired by the LCS for the event, I ran into Julian, one of my research informants and the founder of a Crystal Child discussion group. Together we found the venue and joined the rest of the attendees in a large underground room. Although 164 people had signed up for the talk through Meetup.com, the LCS had limited seats to the first 80 people due to no-shows at previous talks, and this smaller number was closer to my estimate of attendees. The people already sitting down were a mix of

ages, mostly Caucasian in origin, and I estimated that women outnumbered men by roughly two to one. I tried to confirm this later by counting the listed attendees on the Meetup.com site, but many of the 164 who had signed up did not attend, and many members who had signed up had also done so on behalf of anonymous guests. On the online list, 71 were identifiably female and 33 were male, which supported my rough estimate of the gender split in the room during the evening.

At the door to the lecture room, Julian and I were greeted by Vaz, one of the organizers of this particular talk and a founder of the LCS. I had already introduced myself as a researcher to the attendees through a post I made on the Meetup.com page, and, as I made a financial donation towards attending the evening, Vaz and I discussed my research and Anni Sennov's work. On the LCS Meetup.com page, it had been suggested that attendees read Sennov's 2012 book, *Balance on All Levels with the Indigo and Crystal Energies*. This was an amalgamation of Sennov's 2002 book, *Balance on All Levels*, and her 2004 book, *Crystal Children, Indigo Children and Adults of the Future*, both originally written in her native Danish. In describing the event, the LCS Meetup.com page had a post that explained that:

> Today a new energy is unfolding on planet Earth that was not available for humanity until recently. This new energy is now becoming known as "The New Time Energy". This is a dynamic and love intelligent energy that is helping the planet and its population to create a more love intelligent and balanced environment. This paradigm shift will of course involve new life values and ways of living for all of the people living on earth.
>
> The Crystal and Indigo energies are vibrating in a higher frequency than what we were used to previously and the children of today are therefore born with a higher frequency aura and bodily system.

During the talk, PowerPoint slides were projected onto a plain white wall behind Berit as she stood on a stage, holding a large microphone. These slides illustrated the changes in the structure of energy that Sennov claimed had taken place in the human aura over the past 30 years, during the course of overlapping human generations. The slides also explained how the AuraTransformation technology could initiate these energy shifts for those born into older generations. AuraTransformation claims to open up the individual's aura to the universe's current level of energy, and to restructure their chakras. Titles for the slides included: "The New Time Energy and Its Development" and "Dimensions, Elements and Chakras of the Energy Tower". The overall impression was very professional, almost corporate, although Berit was also a charming and warm speaker.

Immediately after the talk, I went to the front, where a crowd of interested people had quickly formed around Berit to ask further questions, and introduced myself to her. We arranged an interview for the next time Berit was in London. I wanted to ask her more about AuraTransformation and her work as

an aura mediator and trainer, but also to find out more about her own experiences, or journey.

Berit

When we met for our interview in a coffee shop in London, Berit began by telling me that as a teenager she'd had problems completing her education, but that she came to see that school was just "not my road". Instead, she explained that she began working with children with special needs, using song therapy in particular. In 2001, she had what she described to me as a "special experience": in the space of a "second", she became extremely sensitive. "That was very hard. It was very beautiful, very lovely. It felt so good. But then being around other people I could suddenly feel everything and I could hear their thoughts and I could feel if something was hurting in the body".

   For Berit, this sudden unleashed empathy affected her well-being. She explained that being this open to others was like being "attacked", and that she often needed time alone to recover after interacting with other people. It was very difficult for her to be a "normal human being in society" and she felt like hiding away in a mountain retreat. However, she was prevented from doing this by "a part of myself that knew what I am here to do, and by the people were waiting on me so that they could get on with their own stuff". Then she heard about AuraTransformation and felt, "Such a strong pull. But it was so right. It was not just the pull, like 'Oooh! This is interesting.' It was so right". She explained that after having her own AuraTransformation session she felt as though she had finally been returned to her body, that she was more "grounded". She explained that she was still "sensitive", but could now choose when to be open to these feelings. The original experience she had had in 2001 changed her, as did her AuraTransformation, but "If I could have gone without these very extreme experiences, I would. It's also fun to have extreme experiences, but I could have gone without, no problem".

   Berit described AuraTransformation as the technique needed to bring about a new, more stable aura structure in the individual. I asked what a session involved, and she explained how the client lies on a "chaise longue or a couch" for two and a half to three hours. They are provided with a cup of tea, and grapes or nuts, as she told me that working with energy for so long can make the blood sugar low, and that this kind of energy work couldn't be done in "three quarters of an hour". The aura mediator holds the subject's feet, either through their socks or through a blanket or towel, as flesh to flesh contact is not necessary in order to work with the energies. Berit was also clear that this energy working was not a form of therapy, but that it could work with issues that arose during the session, "including past lives, childhoods, right now". These issues could be holding the subject's development back, and she claimed that she could see these issues in their energy during the session. One AuraTransformation session was enough to transform the client's aura,

although a "balancing", an examination of the aura, could be done some time after that session to see if everything had "settled" correctly.

In 2002, after her own AuraTransformation, Berit met Anni Sennov, who was looking to share the information about this technique through talks and online web seminars. Like Berit, Sennov's own awakening also began with illness. Berit told me that Sennov had been sick with a skin disease and other issues and had been trying various treatments for them, and "somehow the combination brought through the new aura structure". After this change, according to Berit, Sennov began to feel more "visible" and no longer felt the need to yell to be noticed. In 1996, Sennov began drawing this new aura structure, images of which were presented during Berit's talk. However, Sennov was initially resistant to telling others about this new information. Berit told me that Sennov had actually wanted her to take on the AuraTransformation project when they met in 2002, but that running it was actually Sennov's "life purpose".

During the LCS talk, Berit had explained how the new aura structure arrived in stages, and during our conversation in the busy coffee shop she expanded on this scheme before we were forced to move somewhere quieter. The "children", as Berit referred to the newer generations,

> have different abilities, but they all have the same structure when they are born in this specific year … And when you get the Indigo Children who are born with the full Indigo aura structure, they're very strong. And they are like small supermen. They're not scared of anything and they kind of go into everything like [she made an energetic hand gesture] and then they do it again.

Children who are born from the mid-1980s to 1995 have some remnant of the old aura structure and some of the new, "and then of course the closer you come to '95 the more Indigo structure you see. The more present that is". Those born between 1987 and 1992,

> they are a little weak. Sensitive in a way. But they still have these values, but they have some difficulties finding out who they are. When you look at children from '92 to '95 then they are a little bit more like "bombastic". I like to use that word! And they have more to do … they have more you could say, they have more tools that they can use.

I asked about those born before the mid-1980s, including myself, who Berit termed "grown-ups"; was it possible for them to be Indigo Children? Was I too old? Berit answered at length, also describing in more detail the differences between the generations:

> Yes, yes, definitely ["you are too old"]. But you still have some of the spark. You know. But you don't have the structure […] the people who

are born at that point they have a little bit different energy, and different way of being Indigos. And then it becomes stronger and stronger manifested into the world that we live in, as younger they become. Because the energy in '95 was full on. So the children born then had the new structure, they didn't have anything of the old. They didn't have seven chakras. They didn't have all this that you know, we were born with, and we can upgrade from. But the children who are born with a mixture they often have some difficulties, because they feel this new impulse which is a part of them. But they also feel the old [energy] and they're kind of like "where am I?" Whereas the older ones they have the old structure so they're settled there […] they are still born in an older frequency which then is the old energy or the old aura structure … The grown-ups they don't have so much break through power … But they still know the values. They still know what it is about [the new energy], it's just that they cannot do it.

AuraTransformation is about "preparing the energies for the newcomers", but Berit was also clear that its role is facilitation, not creation. It is needed to help those who have been born in the earlier stages of this energy evolution to reconcile them to their true natures and to express this nature:

> I see AuraTransformation as a very, very good tool to do what you like to do. To do what your passion is. Sometimes people do not know what their passion is. But if they look deep enough it's there. And it's been there when they were born. It really helps people be more creative and be more themselves and figuring out what they contain and what they can do instead of looking at their neighbour and thinking "oh! I wish I had the same hair" or you know! [she laughed].

Berit described how for the individual, AuraTransformation is an "upgrade", the same term Gary used.

Helping others is an important part of being on earth as a "light", she told me, using a term for those who are here to help others – perhaps a shortened version of the word 'Lightworker', introduced in Chapter 2. For example, Berit arrived at our interview with two men who had collected her from the airport. One of them had already had an AuraTransformation, while the other, according to Berit, still required one. I asked if she had suggested it to him, and she said,

> I'm not telling him what to do or what not to do. But I kind of just lead the conversation into it and then he can … "ah!" Get some "ah ha!" experiences and then he can make his own choice. So this is the most important thing, to make people do their own choices. But also making them aware of what there is.

The talks and web seminars are not only to make people aware of AuraTransformation, but to also help people who have gone through the

transformation and are having problems understanding the changes. Berit used two technological metaphors to explain these problems. She told me,

> In [an old Volvo] '66 you have a big gear stick versus a sporty car and it works differently. But the change is more alike to being able to fly now. It's a much bigger change […] It's like having a new computer but you don't know how to turn it on!"

Wider social effects are believed to occur when more and more people adjust to these new energies. Berit gave an example:

> I've been going to different areas like Norway, and in one town, a very little town, like 60 people got AT [Aura Transformation] in a very short period of time and the whole town changed. And in other small towns maybe it was just 10 people and not much happened but just a little bit.

She outlined her view of AuraTransformation's role in this change and in a greater temporal scheme:

> This kind of work couldn't have been done 20 years ago, so it's very much of its time. If we go, for example, 50 years back then people could feel kind of content and whole and they were in that level. But when that level starts to break open to something else, oh, there's so much more! New things start to show and then it shakes up the whole reality a little bit. Now it's about actually being on earth and having all your own light, or all your own energy around you, and then shining out from the body. And then in that way you can start to help others, but it's in a more physical way.

"This is evolution", Berit explained, and that as an evolution this change needs to be forward looking. I asked her if anything from the previous eras and the "old energy" could still be useful. She told me that AuraTransformation could help with memories of previous lives and times, as "people are remembering more of what they came from. Getting more of themselves back". However, the problem is that people are "so excited about it [their memories of older civilizations such as Atlantis] that they feel that they need to bring it here again. And bring it in again in the same way. And it's important to remember, but it's also stone age!"

We're "not supposed to be doing the same things again, we're supposed to remember and then do something new", and we need to learn from past mistakes.

Similarly, Berit told me that the information received from channelling, either from alien or multidimensional beings, can be limiting. The "New Time Energy" is a very specific change to Earth itself, and "other things are happening in other places". She claimed that some "nosey" beings are trying to help,

but "they don't know how it is to be a human on earth!" Previously, with the old aura structure,

> you had to channel [spirits, extra-terrestrial or extra-dimensional beings] to get information. Indigos are like a bridge into the new world, and they still channel a bit. Crystals … [they] cannot channel anymore, it's not possible. But you can ask the Source which is within you – it's like a copy of the universe you could say. The children will grow up and you cannot do AuraTransformation on them. There will be other work then, more physical in nature.

I will now analyze Berit's account of AuraTransformation and the New Time Energy in order to draw out particular motifs and elements. My argument will be that these demonstrate that the Indigo Children are an expression of a continuing prophetic narrative within a wider New Age movement still looking forward to a New Age.

The New Time Energy

Berit's account makes statements about both personal and collective transformation and the related role and nature of "energy". In doing so, her account parallels other New Age and Indigo biographical narratives, including Gary's, presented in Chapter 4. The principle elements of Berit's account of AuraTransformation included: a teleological scheme, the multivalent term "energy", a particular conception of evolution, alien intelligences, healing, and the aura. In both Gary and Berit's accounts there are claims of not fitting into the education system, a significant role for illness, and a sudden "awakening" moment. Berit's method of helping people was also similar to Gary's "Arcturian way of healing": providing information and allowing the subject to discern its significance and what to do with it. There were, however, differences in their attitude towards the involvement of alien or extra-dimensional entities, like the Pleiadians, in humanity's spiritual journey – although the Pleiadians and the Sirians do have a place in Berit's cosmology, even if she characterized them as "nosey" beings, whereas Gary enthusiastically described sharing a soul with such a being.

Further, there is a strong thread of individualism in Berit's LCS talk and our interview. Berit's described AuraTransformation as a process of "coming home to yourself", reminiscent of the LCS's use of journey imagery in its promotional materials. Also, AuraTransformation can help you "to do what you like to do", paralleling Gary's account of his path to his true nature as a therapist. Moreover, this parallel extends to Gary's deduction that children diagnosed with "what we call ADHD" should be doing whatever their own life purpose is in order to healthy and happy, and Berit's account of Anni Sennov's awakening, which described her as having a "life purpose". Like Gary, Berit's awakening moment was described as an individual "special experience": a sudden internal change involving knowledge of her own transformation. Her intuition

that AuraTransformation was "so right" replicates Gary's distinction between intuitive knowledge and knowledge that they are grasping towards.

Berit's account of AuraTransformation also placed it within a larger teleological scheme: the individual's journey is also a part of a journey for all humanity. The New Time Energy that she describes is a part of a continuous evolutionary process, one we might characterize as an "orthogenesis", rather than a Darwinian evolution. Orthogenesis is "evolution that is held to a regular course by forces internal to the organism", an idea that found support in the late nineteenth century and was once synonymous with evolution prior to the public adoption of Darwin's survival of the fittest hypothesis (Bowler 1989, 268, and Bowler 1983). Orthogenesis survives in New Age accounts, especially those predicting the emergence of more advanced beings. In the AuraTransformation and Indigo accounts, this law-governed rise of mankind is punctuated by the arrival of gifted individuals, who are grouped into labelled collectives. There is even a label for those born earlier, during the old time energies, according to Berit – they are the "grown-ups", although I also heard them being called "First" or "Second Wave" Indigos, "Alpha Indigos", or "Elder Indigos" (see Cannon 2011). This rise of mankind also reaches forward into an idealized future where such advanced forms will be in the majority. Berit did not describe subsequent forms during our interview, but Indigo authors working outside of Sennov's AuraTransformation have labelled the following generations as "Rainbow Children", "Platinum Children", or "Diamond Children", among others, making further predictions.[1]

What links the individualism of the awakening moment, as described by my informants, and this prediction that outlines humanity's evolution towards a higher state and utopian ideals? Berit's talk and interview gave a model for this transition. She claimed that her work in some towns led to mass changes as the presence of a few "transformed" individuals affected the larger community. Specifically, in one town, 60 individuals received AuraTransformation and the entire town changed, whereas another town with only ten recipients did not change. In this teleological scheme, there is a hypothesized tipping point where the influence of this new structure goes beyond just the minority who have already changed. This is a further example of Ascension in terms of a "critical mass" or "tipping point", as per the One Hundredth Monkey narrative as described in Chapter 4. Moreover, this model of change treats the history of the individual as a blueprint for the history of the species, and this teleological account also operates as an apologetic for the Indigo Children's views on the cosmos and their collective role. These accounts provide a narrative of election, linking the individual's sense of calling to a calling to be a part of a group facing a coming resolution, which we might frame as a "millennium". Therefore, I will argue in the section "New time, New Age" that the Indigo Child is an expression of millenarian prophecy.

Further to these elements of election and responsibility in the teleological scheme, we also should note that technologies such as AuraTransformation

provide a method for *intentionally* bringing about this change. The opportunity to opt-in to change broadens the impact of the moral responsibility: all can be involved in these global changes, even if they were not originally born to do so. This collective responsibility is in contrast with claim of a spiritualized, internalized millennialism in the New Age. However, self-election is not uncommon in religious formations: it is often present in initiatory groups, or in those with training hierarchies and schemes, such as the Church of Scientology. It is, I propose, a significant development for the Indigo Child concept, which began with specialness as a generational birthright in the early primary literature. Further, AuraTransformation as a form of conversion narrative differs to the awakening moment, which is more often described in sudden and personal terms in Indigo accounts. Instead, AuraTransformation's process is modelled around the "upgrade": a gradual progress for the individual through research and continuing change. AuraTransformation is not a universally adopted technique among the Indigo community, although the idea that sudden awakening and gradual awakening through research and using technologies such as this one can coincide appeared in many of the accounts shared with me, such as Gary's as in Chapter 4.

Finally, what does Berit's account tell us about the Indigo Children's vision of the future? AuraTransformation makes claims about personal improvements, and describes further changes in energy structures still to come, both of which will lead to undefined "changes" in society. However, if there are specific utopian hopes within this prophetic frame, they are being subsumed under the single word, "change". During fieldwork, other informants were clearer about the shape of the utopian ideal the Indigo Children were working towards, and I will discuss examples from the wider Indigo Child community in the following section. Even so, it often seemed that *change* was itself the primary concern, and mass awakening was described in terms of difference to the un-awakened status quo rather than specific structures or designs for a utopia. It is also important to note that the personal changes brought about by AuraTransformation are described by Berit as physical as well as spiritual or energetic: "There will be other work then [in the future], more physical in nature". The continuing need for "work" implies, again, the open-endedness of this teleological scheme. Both aspects, the physical and the open-endedness, support Berit's description of it as "evolution". Again, this is an intentional orthogenetic evolution, not Tennyson's nature "red in tooth and claw", and it leads to a utopia described in terms of a superior human consciousness and civility, rather than the structures, organizations, or behaviours that have been presented in speculative fictions historically.

The following section presents examples from the wider Indigo community of this intentional millennialism expressing utopian hopes. I argue that this material supports the two arguments presented in the section "New time, New Age": that the "crisis" model is inaccurate, and that the Indigo Child is a prophecy expressed by a multi-vocal community of prophets, demonstrating utopian New Age desires.

Prediction in the Indigo community

The main themes of Berit's talk and interview are present in the wider Indigo Community: individualism, a teleological scheme, moral imperatives to act, intentional choice, and the utopian emphasis placed on "change". These will be examined primarily in terms of what these themes mean for the community's conception of "being" Indigo, but also with discussion of the texts by Indigo authors which tell us about these topics. Ultimately, I argue that these themes illuminate how the prediction of a New Age continues to have impact on Indigo Child narratives.

Individualism, uniqueness, and being "special"

I have suggested that aspects of individualism found in Berit's account are also present in Gary's awakening narrative. These were: the personal nature of his awakening and the subsequent "upgrades"; his emphasis on "doing what you like to do", which paralleled Berit's mention of "life missions" for Indigos; and finally Gary's prioritization of knowledge that has been acquired through individual discernment. However, at the heart of debates around the uniqueness of the Indigo Children in the wider community is the question of their election as a special people or generation, an idea which some embraced more than others. When Gary spoke about his own children, he told me, "I've always known they were special. Perhaps 'special's' the wrong word. Different. Because everyone is special. I'm still searching for the word and I don't think there's even a word for what it is". This uncertainty was also present in Emma's account of her daughters, where she debated labelling them, even though she also used the word special. I explained in Chapter 1 that Indigo authors such as Doreen Virtue have cautioned against labelling children as special (Virtue 1999, 137). However, these authors also disseminate new labels that do positively differentiate specific children from their peers. "Special" is also present in etic descriptions of the Indigo Children: "The emergence of Indigo Children can be seen as a restoration of the value of *special* children through a proactive inversion of meaning" (emphasis added, Whedon 2009).

I found the issue of specialness present in the long form answers to two of the questions on the online survey I shared on Indigo forums: "Which, if any, of the following terms best describes you?" (this question gave a tick list of other Indigo Children iterations to choose from) and "What do you think is the most important thing I should know about Indigos (or whatever you define as)?". In a reply to the second question, a self-proclaimed Starseed explained that they did not know what one thing they wanted to share with me about Indigos, as "I'm just beginning my journey so I don't know much yet. My Starseed type is very rare so there is not much literature on my origins". "Rareness" implies this special nature, and there is also discussion as to how rare the Indigo Children are as a group. One Indigo blogger claimed that they make up only 0.1% of the population (Gubb 2015), whereas

in 2011 Tappe had claimed that "the Indigo label describes the energy pattern of human behaviour that now exists in over 95% of the children born in the last twenty years" (Tappe and Altaras 2011, 127). In response to the online survey, some Indigos went beyond *implying* specialness to stating their election as a special group more overtly. One wrote bluntly, "We're special", as the most important thing I should know. Another wrote forcefully, "no we are not equal, you just have to accept it".

However, some of the anonymous voices answering the same questions emphasized the humanity of the Indigo Children:

> That we are human beings who are gifted. Human first, gifted second
> I think it's about spreading love, knowledge and peace. Some think we think we're better than everyone, but I mean, when it comes down to it, we are all human

Others answered by reproducing the anti-labelling rhetoric in order to emphasize that they are the *same* but *more* aware, rather than being "special":

> That everyone has the same ability's [sic] as all of the labels people put on us...or that some claim to have. No one is greater than another. Some are just better connected and practiced.
> We are hear [sic] to help, angel translates as messenger/teacher/guide nothing more. We are not special, just different....more aware.
> I'm still not entirely sure there's any significant difference between Indigo Children and "normal" children. It seems we're [sic] just a bit more perspective

Those that described the Indigo Children as equal but more aware unconsciously replicated the dualism of Gary's "normal bloke" and "awakened man", as well as Quimby's greater division of mankind into the "Natural Man" and the "Scientific Man", outlined in Chapter 3, as in this response:

> We are not special, just different. We have different way of thinking, more advanced if I may say that […] The difference is that indigos, crystals and rainbows know that they are divine and connected to The All, the "regular" human does not and that is why we are here, to help awaken, to introduce new way of life and thinking

I argue that the claimed role of the Indigo Children in the worldwide awakening known as the "Ascension" is a rhetoric that unites these varying types of "special" people into an elected social collective with a purpose. In the following section, I address the implications of the Indigo Child teleological scheme for the Indigos, while retaining awareness of the many variations in interpretation among the community as ideas are shared and reformed through their social networks.

The teleological scheme

I have so far subsumed the various iterations of the Indigo Child concept under that one label for simplicity's sake. However, as Berit's account of AuraTransformation highlights, these iterations form a temporal scheme that not only identifies the arrival of previous generations, but also implies future children and changes yet to come. The prevalence of such schemes supports my argument that the Indigo Child concept is a prophecy, linked to actual years and dates, that demonstrates that the New Age movement has not abandoned its hopes for a materially real New Age.

First, AuraTransformation's scheme of waves of "New Time Energy" has similarities to Doreen Virtue's own timeline, and Virtue's 2003 book *The Crystal Children* has been highly influential on this iteration in the Indigo community: entire passages from it are even copied onto websites about Crystals. For Virtue, the difference between the Indigos and the Crystals is in their temperament: the Indigos have a "warrior spirit, because their collective purpose is to mash down old systems that no longer serve us" (Virtue 2003, 2). Virtue causally links the arrival of the Crystal Children to increases in autism diagnoses around 1995 (Virtue 2003, 7–8). This misdiagnosis has occurred because Crystals are "incredibly telepathic", according to Virtue (2003, 7), and often begin to speak later than other children; delayed speech is one of the characteristics of autism, according to official and commercial medical check lists. These check lists are also highly reminiscent of the bullet point lists for Indigo characteristics, and they may well have influenced their development.

During research for this ethnography, a few informants credited channel Steve Rother and "The Group" (a collective of nine "energetic entities") with sharing the message of the Crystal Children with the world, rather than Doreen Virtue. Rother claimed in *Re-member: A Handbook of Human Evolution* (2000) that in May 1997 he had received messages from The Group about a coming generation, the "Children of Crystal Vibration", who were still expected. However, when informants spoke to me about the Crystal Children, the 1995 date was more often mentioned without any reference to a source for the concept. For example, Ryan, whom I introduced in Chapter 4, told me about the differences between the Indigos and the Crystals, claiming that this information was based on his own experiences of them:

> My cousin is a crystal so I know this all too well. Indigos can be more abrasive in their approach to things and forget sometimes that people can't perceive things in the same light as they do. Crystals on the other hand are a bit more compassionate and psychic, but a little less interested in spirituality which is an odd contradiction I find … we all have our missions to do here, indigos and crystals have different jobs. I'm not too clear on what the crystals are here for though. But it's all about evolution of the consciousness.

Therefore, these concepts can have a life beyond their origins, especially when they are shared through social networks online. Another example of this online transmission, remixing, and loss of origins is the "Rainbow Child", also described by Virtue. She had claimed that they would be born from 2000 onwards, and linked them to the calendar millennium and associated cosmological changes. However, I found that Virtue's role in this iteration is also often occluded. For example, a website, starchildren.info, quoted Virtue's date, her description of their lack of past life or karmic obligations as an entirely new soul, and her claim that their parents will be Crystal Children, all without reference to Virtue herself. We can also note that in Chapter 3 Emma called her daughter a Rainbow Child and is a trained "Doreen Virtue Angel Card Reader" and, again, she did not mention Virtue's role in describing that particular iteration of the Indigo Child.

There was no mention of the Indigo, Crystal, or Rainbow Children in the talks at the 12.12.12 One World Celebration I attended with Julian. However, a connection was often made by Indigos between this particular date and wider planetary concordances. These included the alignment of planets or ley lines, and the historical importance of December 2012 in the aeon-based Mayan Calendar. The 12.12.12 event in London was a conscious attempt to invoke the potential for change perceived as being represented by this date. Moreover, change was presented in promotional material as an imperative, or as a "calling": "On 12.12.12 we are being called by Source to create a physical Circle of Light and Sound to create a gateway for the Divine Consciousness that's coming in" (Celebrate 12.12.12 2012). The Indigo Children also describe this feeling of being "called". As one survey respondent told me, "We feel a calling to help. To break through the 'norm' to bring life back to our true selves. To see beyond the structure we were given and to make it sweeter". This teleological scheme of successive elected peoples, and the moral imperative that calls "grown-ups", as in Berit's account, to help these coming generations, is a reaction to a new but present state of affairs. I argue that this call is a prophecy, and it is necessary to consider how prophecy is treated in the Indigo community, and how they relate it to the call to action.

Prophecy as genre

During my interview with Justin, he told me how he had first heard about the Indigo Children "through a book by James Twyman called 'Emissary of Love' and also reading up on Doreen Virtue, or ancient Native American prophesies [sic]. My parents are spiritual, so I've been exposed to a lot of information on mystical subjects". Twyman's book *Emissary of Love* contains both prediction and a call to action. At the hidden Bulgarian monastery which protects the "Children of Oz",[2] Brother Matthias tells Twyman, "I predict that, within a few years, they will be very familiar to all of us. Your book will prepare people for their arrival" (Twyman 2002, 113). Twyman was given the responsibility to write the very book this quotation is in, much as the parents,

or "grown-ups", are called upon to prepare the world for the coming children in Berit's account. In Chapter 6, I will recount how Julian told me that I was meant to write about the Indigo Children seriously so that people would know that this "isn't a load of rubbish, so people can look back and see it". Other Indigos claimed that I was one of them: astrologer Mary English told me, after reading my astrological chart, that I was "an Indigo 2nd wave and here to help [my] generation find their spirituality!" Like Gary, they diagnosed me in relation to their conception of the world, but also gave me an imperative, or life mission, of my own: to write this book.

Returning to Justin's reference to Native American prophecies, this detail surprised me, as I had not encountered this connection at this time, although I knew that New Agers make sympathetic links with cultures that they presume to have greater spiritual authenticity. Commonly, these are Native American tribal cultures, which are believed to have maintained a connection with the natural world that "civilized" man has not. This is an example of the "noble savage" myth of Romantic Naturalism, a stereotype with links to Rousseau whose attitude towards pernicious civilization we have already noted (see also Ellingson 2000). These sympathetic links with indigenous cultures have also led to the New Age movement to be accused of commercial, or ideological, cultural appropriation (see Donaldson 1999).

Justin couldn't "remember the prophesy [sic] word for word so forgive me if I mislead you, but it goes along the lines of 'beings will come from the stars to bring about a great change in a time of technological advancements'". I investigated this "Native American Prophecy" to discover its details, but also to see how it was employed by the Indigo Children. I found two separate prophecies that could have been the one that Justin encountered. They had questionable origins, but both were referred to by Indigo Children. The first was described as the Cree tribe's prophecy of the "Rainbow Warriors":

> There will come a time when the Earth would be ravaged of its resources, the seas blackened, the streams poisoned, the deer dropping dead in their tracks. Just before it was too late, the Indian would regain his spirit and teach the white man reverence for the Earth, banding together with him to become Warriors of the Rainbow.
>
> (Sacco-Belli 2011, 44)

The Cree prophecy has also been employed by notable "environmental millennialists" (Lee 1997). For example, Greenpeace called their campaign ship *Rainbow Warrior*. Robert Hunter, one of Greenpeace's founding figures, gave a suitably mysterious account of receiving a copy of *Warriors of the Rainbow: Strange and Prophetic Dreams of the Indians* by William Willoya and Vinson Brown (1962) from a "vagabond dulcimer maker" who passed through his farm in Western Canada in 1969 (McFadden 2005, 29, see also Brown and May 1989, 9). Hunter took it on board the *Phyllis Cormack*, a precursor to the first *Rainbow Warrior* ship, and it was read by the crew. However, for all the inspiration it

gave Hunter, he was disappointed: "The Cree legend says nothing about how difficult the passage to the new time will be. It does not tell what the voyage from a world bent on destroying itself to a world committed to saving itself will be like. It just says it will happen" (Hunter, quoted in McFadden 2005, 30). The Rainbow Warrior prophecy is also employed by the Indigo Children as proof that their coming was foretold and, moreover, foretold by an older and more authentically "spiritual" people, the Native American Cree tribe.

Further research uncovered another Native American prophecy that more completely fits with Justin's description. The "Hopi Star Children" prophecy contains similar elements: the coming of a specific collective or race and environmental millennialism or apocalypticism. A blog post written on the Indigo Children gave more details:

> Our native American friends the Hopi believe in the Star Children. Modern-day hippies call them the Indigo Children – a new strain of paranormally-inclined humans which are believed to have emerged during this Age of Aquarius to try to bring us back from the brink of total destruction – but I'm pretty sure the hippies got their ideas from the Hopis. [...] The Hopi contend it is the Star Children who will ultimately repair the Koyaanisqatsi – their word for "life of corruption and turmoil, life out of balance". [...] Anyhoo [sic], the Hopi believe when the "Blue Star" makes its appearance in the heavens, the Fifth World will emerge. Some "helpers" will shake the earth a couple times, and if they shake it the right way, the Fifth World can come without disaster. Some believe the earth-shaking times were WWI and WWII. [...] Ultimately, the Blue Star's arrival will herald a day of purification. The white man calls this day of purification the Apocalypse.
>
> (Burkes 2007)

A few Indigo authors employ this coming "Fifth World" motif, which also appeared in earlier works by both Cayce and Theosophy founder Blavatsky, where it was signified by a coming "Fifth Root Race". According to Pamela Atwater, the Fifth Root Race are the Indigo Children. In her 2005 book, *Beyond the Indigo Children*, she quotes Cayce to support her description of the technologically adept Indigo Children: "Great numbers of children will be born who understand electronics and atomic power as well as other forms of energy. They will grow into scientists and engineers of a New Age which has the power to destroy civilisation unless we learnt to live by spiritual laws" (Cayce 1933, cited in Atwater 2005, 10).

Atwater also indicates the importance of the Mayan Calendar:

> On December 21, 2012, the ecliptic (the apparent path travelled by the sun, moon and planets) crosses over the Milky Way...cosmic cross... the very center of this cross is where the solstice sun will be located on that date, completing a 25,920-year rotation of the ecliptic's great wheel

around the universe's great central sun – a super huge black hole that holds a mass of about 5 billion suns.

(Atwater 2005, 185)

The emergence of the Indigo Children, and the successive waves of Crystals, Rainbows, and so forth, is concurrent with this teleological model of Root Races, or Worlds, as well as with prophecies adopted from other cultures: there is a multiplication, or layering over, of temporal schemes in the Indigo community. Instead of prediction, prophecy, and millennialism disappearing in the New Age milieu, there has been a proliferation of new predictions. The Indigo Children and their subsequent iterations are just one of a number of schemes. This multiplication of schemes might be said to reflect a growing individualism in this context, whether we still call it the "New Age" movement or not.

However, I propose that the collective imperative to act, even without specific instructions – as in Robert Hunter's disillusionment with prophecy's vagueness, above – enables these overlapping schemes to co-exist. The important point for the Indigo Children is not which is the correct prophecy, but that they all contain a call to act, in order to bring about a better age. Further, prophecy is about reacting to a changed epistemological state, for underlying these claims is a changing understanding of the world and of their place in it. This place is not simply a state of mind, as the calls to action in these prophetic forms remind them.

Intentional choice and action

The emphasis in the Indigo literature on intentionally making the choice to answer this call to election involves an entangling of choice with inevitable or fated events. For example, in *The Emissary of Love*, the book that Justin cited as a first source for his information on the Indigo Children, Twyman is told by one of the children that "The activation of the grid […] necessitated that either the positive or negative *choice* be made by every person on the planet, whether consciously or unconsciously, there would no longer be a possibility of staying in the middle ground of non-choice [inevitability]" (Twyman 2002, 27, emphasis added). Spiritual technologies like AuraTransformation enable this choice to be manifested in action. I asked Justin during our interview what he thought about the idea of individuals intentionally transitioning through the Indigo and Crystal energies, as in AuraTransformation. He said he thought it was possible, but he stated again that the different types of Indigo Children had different tasks on earth. Other informants answering my online survey were more positive about transformations and upgrades, although they did not refer to AuraTransformation specifically:

they [the different iterations of Indigo Child] are phases in evolution, not set things that you can be. I have moved through all of these in various phases

> I have also transitioned into Crystal aka Octarine[3]
> I was an indigo child/adult but I have now transcended to crystal energy

When questioned about how these transitions began, some informants described having reached the correct level of consciousness at the "soul level", and that their true self had then initiated the change. This could mean that the conscious mind was unaware of why things felt "wrong" as the change occurred. For example, "Phoenix Warrior" on IndigoSociety.com explained:

> It starts with a vague feeling of something not quite being 'right'. Sounds are harsher on the ears, you find yourself avoiding your once-beloved candle shop because the scents are so overpowering. […] Your 'been-there, done-that' passport is completely filled, and nothing really thrills you anymore. Its mindless kiddie stuff no. […] you are transitioning from your Indigo stage into your Octarine/Crystal stage. You've undergone the trials and tribulations of life, had your hard knocks and educational experiences, built your inner self-confidence and learned about your capabilities. Now it is time to get down to your real mission in life :)

Choice was a central element to this teleological scheme, to the extent that being born, or reincarnated as a human, at this time, with this Indigo nature, with these specific parents, was described as a choice in primary literature (see Day and Gale 2004).

Change and utopianism

However, "change", either of the self or of the wider world, often lacked detail, as did the future New Age itself. Change was sometimes presented as an objective in itself, a utopian ideal simply known to be positive, better, or helpful, as we see in these responses to the online survey:

> We are here to make a difference in the world
>   Indigos deeply want to help this world
>   That we are here to help change the global consciousness to bring about positive changes to the world
>   It's a tough one... :) I think the most common thing is we are here in this world to start changes, to make a better place to live. Maybe it's cheesy but for me it's the most important

For some survey respondents it seemed the coming ideal age could best be described in a series of abstract nouns:

> "We believe in the New Age of peace, love, compassion and unity, and strive to manifest this into reality".

"Peace" was an abstraction often attached to this coming age, sometimes along with recognition of why humanity needed it. In the following response, it was also linked to an environmental millennialism:

> I personally want world peace and a return of the human race to the stars, the Earth won't hold up forever.

When they were described, the ideals of this utopia were broadly liberal, environmental, feminist, and anti-racist. A respondent to the survey said,

> When I first discovered this "identity", I felt a connection to its ideals and those who associated themselves with it. Ideals such as: anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalism, holistic view of the world, the mix of intuition and reason, science and spirituality, a long term view and the future of humanity.

In another response, a mother described how her daughter's activism related to some of these ideals, linking them again to the Indigo Child concept. She

> has strong feelings for Mother Earth and loves activism … [She] has appeared in the paper the first gathering she attended at 18 months old, she was holding a sign I made for her - 'Love One Another'. It was an anti-racism rally. She wants to eradicate the use of oil and rescues local marine species from oil/gas puddles at low tide, moving them to deep water.

Moreover, a tweet at the beginning of 2014 by "Sarah Mary" had a document attached that outlined tenets for the "Indigo's world". This list began with a reiteration of the role of the Indigo Children, what they "WILL" be called to do, a necessity I have also noted in Twyman's *Emissary of Love*:

> So what would an ideal Indigo's world look like? Indigos have a job to do on this planet, and they WILL do it. It's their job to help eliminate the values of the world age that just passed in 2012, and replace them with the values of the new world age. They take their job very seriously, even if they are not aware of it. They are preparing the world for the new values of "love, brotherhood, unity and integrity". Indigo prophecies talk about how these special children are the forerunners to dramatically changing the world for the next Great Cycle change in the area of 2012. Forgiveness towards others is a key element to help heal the earth. An indigo's world would be:
>
> 1 Free from harsh chemicals.
> 2 Food would be organically grown, locally grown, fresh with minimal processing and refining.
> 3 Education would be for all and children would have a much greater say in their educational future and curriculum.

4 Family would mean whom you are with at that time, and be inclusive to a greater circle of people.
5 Our political system would be truly for the greater good of all, much more democratic, even socialist.
6 All countries and all people would work together to better the lives on the entire planet.
7 Nature and her needs would come first including clean air and soil.
8 Children would be treated with respect and consulted on any decisions that would affect them.
9 All people would be equal no matter what their race, color, sex, or creed.

My research revealed that this call and list was previously posted on a website called 2012-spiritual-growth-prophecies.com. The references to both 2012 and "Indigo prophecies" illustrate again the multiplication, or layering, of temporal schemes, which I highlighted with regards to the adoption of Native American prophesies, amongst others. Again, the bullet point list structure is employed by this community. In points numbered one, two and seven above, there is also the anti-Big Pharma rhetoric and the dualism of "natural" and "unnatural" that were discussed in Chapter 4. Moreover, the emphasis on children and their agency in points three and eight emphasizes the child-centred approach described in Chapter 3.

Another list of Indigo utopian ideals encountered during this research repeated many of these points and is worth discussing for its adoption of both channelled prophecy and more apparently "secular" social scientific research. In Day and Gale's book, *Edgar Cayce and the Indigo Children*, the authors draw on the academic work of Riane Eisler (1931–), a sociologist, feminist, and social activist. Day and Gale make use of her description of the "Partnership Society": a form of society that emphasizes egalitarianism, develops peaceful technologies that eradicate famine and war, stresses interconnectedness, cooperation, trust and caring, and reveres nature (Eisler, 1989, cited in Day and Gale 2004, 61). This "Pragmatopia", as Eisler also calls it, replicates how, she believes, society looked around 9,000 years ago. It is in direct opposition to the current "dominator culture" that destroyed it, a culture that has male gods, male dominance over the female, violence as a means to power, and hierarchical and authoritarian social structures (Eisler, cited in Day and Gale 2004, 138). Further, Day and Gale claim that Eisler's "cultural transformation theory", based in "sociological action research" (2004, 138), enables humans to participate in their own social evolution by breaking free of the patterns that have been formalized by dogmatic, mainstream, spiritual education. Day and Gale propose that we teach ourselves, and our children, new stories, rituals, and images. This will lead to an upwards transformation in consciousness and a return to this ideal "Partnership Society".

Day and Gale's interpretation of Eisler's theories, however, is still described in the language of that very spiritual education. They refer to "the long-prophesied 'heaven on earth'" as the end result of these changes (Day and Gale

2004, 140). We can also note that Eisler currently teaches at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), a private university in San Francisco which has roots in the works of Bengali yoga guru Sri Aurobindo and has a focus on "integral education". The university's website explains this term: "In exploring the interplay of mind, body, and spirit, integral education connects the spiritual and practical dimensions of intellectual life" (CIIS 2015). Day and Gale's use of Eisler as an example of how social science supports their evolutionary model is therefore representative of the appeal to science for legitimacy in this kind of material, but it is ultimately reliant on a sympathetic academic voice from within their own milieu.

We can contrast Day and Gale's call for a return to the Partnership Society of 9,000 years ago with Berit's description of previous societies such as Atlantis and Mu as "stone age", indicating that they are of the previous "old time" energy and no longer useful to humanity. Although, in the wider Indigo community nostalgia for these lost societies and ages, as described by mediums including Edgar Cayce, remains strong and influential, especially as they are often described in New Age literature as technologically and spiritually advanced. These romanticized, mythologized, previous ages, races, or worlds, are used to lend legitimacy to the Indigo teleological scheme as it prophesizes a continuing physical and spiritual evolution that also involves worldwide leaps in consciousness at particular times, brought about by the "critical number" (Day and Gale 2004, 140) of awakened individuals.

This teleological scheme describes material, rather than spiritualized or internalized, changes happening at specific times. From a positivistic scientific frame, like the one that deduced the "crisis" in the New Age, some issues around falsification appear still to remain. The claim that these changes might be simply too advanced for our current level of scientific advancement to observe could be seen as a move to an unfalsifiable hinterlands as Melton suggests. Yet, Indigo accounts point towards what they see as Good Science, valuable scientific progress, and empirical evidence: they cite experimentation on psychic children in Russia and China by their own governments as evidence that scientific proof *can* verify these changes and abilities (on Russia see Ostrander and Schroeder 1997, and on China see Dong and Raffill 1997). The references to experiments in Russia and China might also be an example of a contemporary orientalism in this spiritual milieu, or perhaps is a mode of conspiracism that uses Cold War antagonists as a symbol for all that is secret and yet to be fully revealed to Western science.

More important, I argue, than the question of reliable evidence for the Indigo Child concept's claims is that the account of the arrival of new children with new abilities indicates a continuing belief in a coming new era. In Anni Sennov and Berit's words, this is the "New Time Energy", a prophesied "New Age", a term which no longer has resonance in this milieu, according to Melton (2014). In the following section, I explore further how the Indigo Child concept provides an example of a prophetic temporal scheme that contradicts a "crisis" description of the New Age movement.

New time, New Age

This chapter has used Berit's account and the AuraTransformation technique as a way into a discussion of the temporal scheme of the Indigo Children, and a consideration of the wider debate about the terminology used by academics to describe such spiritual communities. This section looks at this debate further, examining first the claimed "crisis" in the New Age movement, before arguing that models of prophecy and millenarian hopes are still applicable to the Indigo Children. First, we must explore the terms we will employ in this argument. In the "crisis" model for the New Age movement, we are told that prediction has failed and that they have turned to an internalized millennialism (Melton 2014). According to John Harrison's history of millennialism between the years 1780 and 1850, the "millennium" can be defined as a product of literature "handed down" through history, and refers specifically to the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ in Christian theology (Harrison 1979, 4). Such interpretations include pre- and post-millennialism; in the former, the millennium is the result of divine, often cataclysmic action, while in post-millennialism "Christian human instrumentalities bring about the millennium" (Harrison 1979, 4). In this second view, there is an intentional effort by a people who feel called to act to bring about God's kingdom, an entangling of fate and choice. Harrison marks a difference between a scholarly millennialism and a more folk understanding, a millenarianism that often contained antinomian, mystical and enthusiastic elements, as seen in the Shakers, the Southcottians, and the Millerites.

Moreover,

> underlying these differences were more fundamental questions of the social functions of prophecy at a particular time and for a particular people. The millennium provided a common language and set of images and concepts in which people could express both individual and collective needs (and in which at times the two might even be merged), but it remained a mode of expression, a means of communication, rather than an end with an agreed meaning and programme.
>
> (Harrison 1979, 6)

Matching expectations to particular times has led to an assumption that millennial desires became secularized into social utopias, in parallel to still popular academic theories of secularization, and that there are contemporary "secular millennialists" who believe that the apocalypse will be caused by man (Robbins and Palmer 1997, 9).

Harrison also notes the perennial salvation offered by millenarian hopes: "Men will seek to be healed, to be recognised as important, to protect themselves from adversity, to change the social order. What they have in common is the hope that through the millennium these things will be revealed" (Harrison 1979, 8). Likewise, Catherine Wessinger describes the "audacious human

belief that suffering and death, i.e. evil, will be eliminated, so that collective (not simply individual) salvation is accomplished on earth. The audacity of this expectation lies in the conviction that finitude can be overcome in the here and now rather than in an undisprovable afterlife" (Wessinger 1997, 47–8).

Seeking this salvation on earth leads people to utopian models, with which the contemporary world is contrasted, particularly in moments of apparent change.

This change is central to an understanding of prophecy. Ardener (2007) argued that prophecy emerges during upheavals in categories that were previously assumed to be stable, resulting in narratives that attempt to make new sense of them. Further, prophecy provides the vocabulary with which to talk about such changes. The emphasis in sociological accounts on the falsification of predictive dates in the New Age ignores such differences between prediction and prophecy. Drawing on Ardener's work, Jenkins proposes that the key aspect is the difference of measurement to definition (Jenkins 2013, 15, citing Ardener 2007, 149). Prophecy educates the community on acceptable responses to this scheme, adding a collective responsibility that prediction does not have. I argue that this is the same sense of *calling* that I have discussed in relation to the Indigo Children.

The crisis of the New Age

Following this definition of terms, I now ask whether the alleged "crisis" in the New Age movement is an actual change in this spiritual milieu or simply a crisis in the terminology being applied to it. I have shown that there is evidence against Melton's claims that both crystals and prophetic claims have been relegated to unfalsifiable hinterlands in this milieu, but I argue that there is more going on with this sociological account than simply missed evidence. I propose that the sociological description of the "crisis" in the New Age movement is a narrative response to a perceived change in a category. Gilhus and Sutcliffe describe how "in recent years – especially from the 1980s – use and meaning of the term 'New Age' has become more subjective and idiosyncratic" (Gilhus and Sutcliffe 2014, 4). The "crisis" view of the New Age presented by Melton is itself therefore a prophetic response to a collapse in a sociological category once presumed to be stable, and the crisis model also includes predictions of the end of the New Age movement linked to a specific temporal moment, or date range: the 1980s. The change in the use of the term "New Age" is not solely an emic response but also an etic response.

Further, this sociologically defined "crisis" in the New Age repeats the material as it is presented by the milieu without critique. Sutcliffe notes that the subjectivity and idiosyncrasy of New Age material has been perceived as a significant problem for any research on the movement, specifically the "continuing challenge of agreeing its basic coordinates" (Sutcliffe 2014, 27). To "coordinates", I would also add *boundaries*, and this is a particular problem with researching the Indigo Children, as Chapter 2 addressed. I propose that such

boundary, terminology, and location issues have affected this academic inter-
pretation of the established categories of New Age material as being in crisis.

Referring to prior survey work on New Age material and their lexicons,
Sutcliffe identifies a second issue for academics, the "relative paucity of self-
identified 'New Agers and […] practitioners' disavowals of labels and identities
of all kinds" (2014, 27). I have noted the anti-labelling rhetoric among the
Indigo Children and with regards to the term "New Age movement", and
survey work will be discussed in Chapter 6 that supports this view of a con-
temporary ambivalence about the term "New Age". Further, in the same vol-
ume Sutcliffe cites a prominent figure in the New Age, David Spangler, who
said, "I have personal doubts that there really is something called the 'New
Age movement'. The New Age idea *yes*, but a *movement*, no" (Spangler and
Thompson 1991, 64). Let us then look at the New Age "idea" before the social
aspects that make this a movement, or perhaps more accurately, a community.

How has the New Age idea been defined by academics? The majority have
looked to the millennial and astrological narratives that have given it a spe-
cifically temporal aspect, such as New Age works that tied the term to the
earth's shift into the influence of the constellation of Aquarius. As mentioned
in Chapter 1, Alice Bailey's 1930s publications have been identified as devel-
oping the New Age trope around global events, with "upheaval preparatory to
a golden age of abundance" (Gilhus and Sutcliffe 2014, 3). According to the
academic account of the New Age movement, during the 1950s and 1960s
cataclysmic elements were added to this upheaval framework, including the
growing potential for global conflict between major players such as the USA
and the then USSR, the UFO mythos, and the rapidly growing environmental
millennialism. The New Age was by this point an "imminent historical phe-
nomenon, poised to unfold through the agency of supernatural beings" (Gilhus
and Sutcliffe 2014, 3).

I argue that this trope remains in force and is expressed in particular through
the Indigo Children, who have not been considered in-depth previously. In
their narratives, they are described, or self-describe, as supernatural beings. The
coming time that they are discussing is still historically imminent. We there-
fore have to question therefore whether Hanegraaff's commonly adopted 1996
description of a shift between a New Age in the narrow and the broad sense
really holds true, particularly as the former term refers to an "imminent new
era inaugurated by 'other-worldly' beings", according to Gilhus and Sutcliffe
(2014, 4). We have seen how Indigo Children place themselves in this other-
worldly position on behalf of the world. Further, the New Age in the broad
sense is described as "strongly immanenistic and focussed on life in the 'here
and now', and retains only weak traces of the original millennialistic goal, in
the form of the transformative expectations attached by users to the many avail-
able beliefs and practices" (Gilhus and Sutcliffe 2014, 4). I propose that these
transformative expectations could be techniques such as AuraTransformation,
whereby the individual can initiate their own awakening through choice. Such
therapies are more often interpreted by academics in the light of a presumed

"triumph of the therapeutic" (Rieff 1966) and a radical individualism (Bellah 1985). However, I highlight the self-description of the Indigo Children as a collective: a self-elected awakened people working together to bring about a mass Ascension for the entire world. Further, for the Indigo Children, this scheme looks both backwards and forwards, involving the recent past of Indigo iterations, the further past of earlier civilizations, and the temporal unfolding of indigenous prophecies. Beyond the rhetoric of a New Age, the formation of a community of shared intention to my mind refutes radical individualism.

However, could the Indigo Children be conceived of as just one particular brief eruption of millennialist New Age thinking in this context? I propose that three key aspects counter any such claims. First, there is the longevity of the term "Indigo Children" itself, first emerging in the 1970s and surviving the alleged "crisis" of the New Age movement in the late 1980s. Second, the prophetic collective continues onwards into the future, as each Indigo Child has an ongoing life defined in energetic and millennial terms. Third, this ongoing form of intentional millennialism is not limited to the Indigo Children, and during fieldwork, I encountered predictive and apocalyptic posts from other New Age websites and blogs re-posted onto Indigo forums. The Indigo Child concept shares millennialist interests with a wider, persisting, New Age movement, and there is a layering over of prophetic narratives, those with a common "mission" rhetoric.

Melton's sociological "crisis" model of the New Age movement is a response to a collapse in self-ascribed categories in a movement that increasingly becomes resilient to labelling and boundary making, not only by academics but also by its own members. However, in the case of the Indigo Children, their anti-labelling rhetoric does not prevent either group – insiders or academics – from performing this action. The Indigos' use of the label "Indigo Children" allows us to identify this ideologically bounded community that self-defines its existence. We also still find instances of the term "New Age" appearing in Indigo discourse (as in the quote by Cayce re-employed by Atwater, above). This community still self-defines as New Age. Further, even when this specific combination of words is not employed, there are synonyms that the embedded researcher can identify. The example of AuraTransformation and the description of the "New Time Energy" presented in this chapter draws attention to the continuation of millennial temporal schemes in this field. Moreover, academics continue to create terminology, such as "internal millennialism", to make new boundaries for the object of study, and this is a term that presents a response to a perceived change in a category, which I have described as a precursor to prophecy. In this case, the perceived end of a movement.

To summarize, I have continued to use the term New Age for the following reasons. First, the teleological scheme of the Indigo Children is still indicative of a New Age, new time, or new world – however it is termed. Second, the Indigo Children put themselves in the position of the other-worldly supernatural beings here to bring about this New Age, an act that both confirms and draws upon Theosophical and other cosmologies that have long been considered to

have influenced the later New Age movement. Third, this role for the Indigo Children does not diminish or negate other predictive schemes or supernatural cosmologies but lays over them, strengthening them. Finally, the term "New Age" still appears in contemporary Indigo and wider material. Returning to Spangler's point, I will now consider whether the Indigo Children represent a continuation of the New Age *movement* or simply another New Age *idea*. I will argue that the Indigo Children form a community of prophets and of prophecies with intention to cause changes and can therefore be considered a 'movement', with social networks and inspirational shared ideas.

A community of prophets and prophecies

In the above section, I drew on the work of Wessinger, Ardener, and Jenkins to consider the nature of prophecy. In this section, I return to these terms to demonstrate how the Indigo Children can be understood as a community of prophets who are also the entities whose coming they prophesy. Further, I will show how those prophecies work to unify their utopian project into a substantial form, developing a community that, although primarily online, joins a longer tradition of intentional communities in the "real world".

Ardener's description of prophecy as providing the language with which to speak about a collapsed category raises the question of which category is collapsing in the case of the Indigo Children. Their denouncement of the current social paradigm, the unnatural directions of scientific progress, and the problems of accepted structures such as capitalism might initially suggest these events are the catalyst, as within their rhetoric this social commentary explains the world's need for the Indigo Child. However, etic considerations of the Indigo Child concept have commonly linked its emergence to specific social and historical events, such as in Whedon's argument that the Indigo Child is a restatement of the value of children. I have instead argued that the "child" has always been a contested category, and thus always generative of specific characterizations, e.g. Apollonian or Dionysian as in Jenks (1996). Therefore, we might argue that categories are only apparently stable, and shifts between understandings that might seem cataclysmic are in fact regularly occurring.

The categories employed by the Indigo Children in their discourse are scientific in tone. Perhaps, then, at the heart of the Indigo Child as prophet and prophecy is their response to a quantification of the human self: the medicalization that they then demedicalize. This would support Whedon's characterization of the Indigo Child as a response to a monstering of the child after school shootings and escalating medical diagnoses. Therefore, the pejorative rhetoric around "earthlings" and "normals" is a reaction to a feeling of being just one of a number of human beings on the world defined by numerical values such as income, present chronological age, scientific diagnoses and measured prescriptions, and scales and measurements. Instead, a qualitative understanding of a unique self, where self-definition is emphasized, is introduced: "I am an Indigo

Child". That this self-definition then also serves to make them only one of a number, an elected community, is certainly less reflected upon.

I argue that this self-definition is a part of a historical trend of revivalist, or millenarian, movements placing themselves in opposition to the "masses". The "spiritual but not religious" type of antinomianism and the mysticism of the Indigo Children support this characterization, and we might even see "enthusiastic agitations" (Harrison 1979, 25) in their channelling, trance work, and dancing. Their self-definition also conforms to the ideal type of the Prophet: "Through his role and his message the prophet is committed to break with established order; to this extent he stands apart in society, he is abnormal, alienated and is a potential agent of change" (Harrison 1979, 12). The Indigo Child is also the prophesied being, making the Indigo Children both prophets and prophecies in one.

As prophets, they describe salvation, expressed not only in personal self-perfections or technologies that others can adopt (e.g. AuraTransformation) but also in terms of a calling to perfect the world, and their millennialism is also an example of utopianism. I propose therefore that we employ Fredric Jameson's consideration of the utopian impulse seen in science fiction to examine the Indigo utopia (Jameson 2005), not only for the depth of his analysis, but also because the concepts of the Indigo Children will be shown to interplay with popular speculative fictions.

Jameson employs Ernst Bloch's 1960 work, *The Principle of Hope*, to distinguish between the more diffuse utopian impulse and the bounded, practical utopian community. Jameson's theories are also influenced by a Marxian approach, which might initially be seen as excluding the religious considerations displayed by a spiritual group like the Indigo Children, considering them as distractions from practical utopia building. Certainly, Jameson ignores the intentional, or revivalist, spiritual communities, which have repeated throughout history, and which have sought to embody the transformations they believe to have been prophesied and which will ensure their survival. These can include wearing different clothes, adopting different diets, and expressing the ideals of free love, anti-slavery, and feminism. Historical examples would include the Oneida Community in the USA (Foster 1991) or Findhorn in Scotland (Sutcliffe 2000).

Rather than being an example of diffuse utopian hope or simple idealism, the practical nature of the Indigo Children is demonstrable in four ways. First, if we accept the materiality of digital worlds in their infrastructure, content, and context (as in Horst and Miller 2012, 25), then the online intentional community of the Indigo Children should not be dismissed as lacking in institutional form. The gatekeepers at Gary's new social location, the Starseeds forum, are an example of this institutional shaping. Second, the therapies and techniques employed by Indigos are material technologies. Even healing with crystals still commonly involves practical, repeatable actions such as the energetic clearing of the crystals afterwards by the means of physical materials such as sage smoke or salt water. AuraTransformation sessions also happen in very

specific ways, and they engage the body. Third, the coming iteration identified by AuraTransformation, the "Crystal–Golden Child", is described as "crystal-line" in both body and individual cells. Descriptions of shifts and changes in DNA, through upgrades and transitions from one form of energy to another, are claims to a corporeal evolution: described in *both* spiritual and physical terms. Finally, the Indigo utopian ideal can be expressed abstractly, but also in terms of material outcomes such as organic food production and clean air and soil (although establishing the relationship of these online claims with actual projects is sometimes difficult).

The mention of intentional communities such as the Oneida should serve to remind us that these utopian desires and communities are *repeating* historical projects. William McLoughlin argues that the history of America, the initial context for the Indigo Children, is a story of waves of revivalism (McLoughlin 1978). New Age groups claim the perennialism and the universalism of their beliefs (Bender 2010, 3), but this claim is itself shaped by a history of "new" groups presenting the same rhetoric of novelty. The Indigo Children describe the phenomenon as beginning in the early 1980s, but I will draw out similar models of the empowered or psychic child that have appeared previously, par-ticularly in speculative fiction, in Chapter 6. Further, Bender notes the tempo-ral unfolding in biographical narratives, particularly in reincarnation accounts where social ties, and ties with the wider world, are erased or highlighted for particular ends (2010). Likewise, ties with previous intentional utopian patterns are erased or emphasized by the Indigo Children. Emphasis occurs when the figureheads of such patterns or groups, such as Edgar Cayce, can be used to support their prophetic narratives. The appropriation of indigenous narratives and prophecies serves a similar purpose among the Indigo Children.

Bender's consideration of diary keeping among New Agers led her to the realization that the observation, interpretation, and analysis of daily events ena-bled them to find meaningful coincidences, that they were "paying attention to self-evident events" (Bender 2010, 84). In the case of the Indigo Children, this paying attention can go beyond the individual's own diary keeping, to a worldwide diary where signs can be found in historical events. For exam-ple, Virtue notes an increase of autism diagnoses in 1995 and deduces that it is indicative of the arrival of the Crystal Children (Virtue 2003). Further, prophecy, in this case the Indigo Child temporal scheme, can be consid-ered an attempt at writing a forward-looking diary where current events are granted significance in advance of expected changes. For the Indigo Children, these current events include the birth of new types of children, and we might say that utopian desires are in general about watching out for the "first signs of the citizens of the future" (Jenkins, personal communication 2015). We could imagine "Citizens of the future" being adopted as another evocative label by the Indigo Children community, to sit alongside Twyman's "Children of Oz", Losey's "Children of Now", and so forth. The folding of time that this retrospective and prophetic narrative involves is a "temporal play with the best of the past and the best of the future" (Jenkins 2015), hence the adoption

by some of prior narratives, including Native American prophecies, Atlantis, and Mu.

The assumption that the Indigo Child is something novel, both by the academic community and the Indigo community itself, is a compartmentalization of the phenomena. In the case of the Academy, we might draw on Bender's argument that

> The secularization and restriction of religion into the sphere of the religious – a central narrative in the story of sociology – suggests that any religious activity, action, or purpose that is located "outside" of the religious institutional field is the work of "individuals" rather than produced within the discourse, practices, or structures of nonreligious fields.
>
> (Bender 2010, 45)

An emphasis on individualism misses what is being shared, and this is in part why the term "New Age movement", with its link to prior intentional movements and communities, fell from favour among academics.

Therefore, I conclude that the crisis of the "New Age" was not an event in terms of falsification but in conceptualization; it was too difficult to describe the perceived morass of individuals, and this uncommon shape dissuaded academics from considering it as a "truly" religious form. However, Sutcliffe argues that its diffuse nature is actually more common than thought, and he uses Martin Stringer's work on Christian animists to argue that the folk level of religion with its unsystematic theologies and diverse spiritual interests from overlapping fields, such as Spiritualism or astrology, is not the aberration. The dominant institutions that most strongly influence the discourse on what religion *should* be are, in fact, the exceptions to the rule (Stringer 2008, cited in Gilhus and Sutcliffe 2014).

The Indigo Children concept and community lie somewhere between these two extremes of religious form: its teleological program, intentional millennialism, cosmologies, and online institutionalization do indicate *some* systematization. Enough, I propose, to resurrect the term "New Age movement" for the work of describing it, rather than to subsume it into the category of millenarian desires that are limited to the realm of individual ideas. This is not to deny the overall decline in the emic use of the term, and Chapter 6 will note fieldwork findings on this point, as well as returning to the Indigo Child as *concept* to consider how it is used, received, transmitted, and even rejected, by those who have encountered it, through their social networks, further noting how the concept generates an Indigo community, or movement.

Notes

1 After my 2013 meetings with Berit, new material was released by Anni Sennov describing the "Crystal-Golden Children" who were born as a result of the 12.12.12 date synchronicity and the end of the Mayan Calendar (Sennov 2015b).

2 Twyman uses this term without reference to Edgar Cayce, who first described a prehistorical South American tribe of "Oz", named for their founder. Their descendants, and

later reincarnations, were known in Cayce's publications as the "Children of Oz" (see Cayce 1933).

3 ¨Octarine" appeared occasionally as a synonym for Crystal in my informants' accounts. However, the word originated in the fantasy novels of author Terry Pratchett (1948–2015) and was used to describe the eighth colour of his "Discworld" setting: the "colour of magic" only visible to wizards. As with Gary's "ocularmancy", this use of a fictional term highlights the transmission of ideas through the supposed boundary between the real world and speculative fictions. We will consider this transmission further in Chapter 6.

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6 Reception, transmission, and parody

Introduction

I now intend to explore how the Indigo Child is transmitted as an object in discourse, in both positive and negative conversations. I will draw attention to how the Indigo Child concept is received, reformed into the shapes seen in previous chapters, and transmitted, in order to make two arguments in this chapter and Chapter 7. First, that the Indigo Child trope coalesces, at particular temporal moments, into specific objects, processes, and narratives about expectations, although these never exhaust the concept's potential for new forms. Second, argued in Chapter 7, that there is interplay between the Indigo Child concept, the New Age movement, and a wider society of ideas and, further, that previous research into these areas so far has largely missed valuable locations and material, including those involving ethnic minorities and classes not previously recognized in demographic surveys of the New Age movement. Here, I will present three primary examples to explore this collapse of the idea at particular moments, before expanding focus to consider the wider implications of my research on the Indigo Children. These three examples are: Tilly, an Indigo Child; Julian, the founder of the Crystal Child discussion group I attended on the King's Road, London; and The School for Indigo Children.

Tilly, Julian, and The School for Indigo Children

Tilly

Tilly is an Indigo Child. She has a youthful, open face, but she is probably in her late thirties or early forties. She has clear, blue eyes, and when she talks about being an Indigo she is animated and enthusiastic. When she was admitted to hospital for an operation on a pre-existing heart problem, she reassured her doctors that the rareness of this condition was understandable given her own unusual nature. She then told them all about being an Indigo Child, explaining how people like her are "the next step on the mental and spiritual spectrum of human evolution". Her younger sister, Charlotte, a sensibly dressed lawyer, explained to the doctors later that their parents had always treated Tilly as the special one because of her heart problem and because they believed she was an

Indigo Child. Their parents gave Tilly a lot of attention, and "she could do no wrong. Even bad behaviour was seen as a rejection of conventional authority". Charlotte's attitude towards the Indigo Children is very different to Tilly's. She tells the doctors, "Auras and evolutionary superiority? It's total garbage!"

Tilly and Charlotte were two characters that appeared in an episode of the British hospital drama *Holby City*, broadcast on 11th February 2014. This episode was called "Eat Your Heart Out", a reference both to Tilly's heart condition and the theme of jealousy played out in the story of the sisters, as well as in the storylines involving the regular and established characters in the drama. I first became aware of the episode through Twitter, where several people posted tweets about the episode along with the hashtag "#indigochildren". I discussed the episode with one of them, "Paul", who was convinced that Tilly's story would continue to unfold in the next episode, as her sub-plot hadn't reached a conclusion beyond her operation being a success. He told me that *Holby City* "does good research", and therefore could be relied on to deal with the Indigo Children phenomena completely and fairly.

However, in the following episode Tilly was not present or even mentioned. Checking the International Movie Database webpage for the actress playing Tilly, it showed that she had played previous roles in *Holby City* as minor characters, but that there were no further episodes listed for the character "Tilly". Unlike Paul, I thought that Tilly's storyline *had* concluded during her one episode, the end marked by a conversation between her two surgeons on a park bench after her operation. The older male surgeon told the younger female one that Tilly had reported having seen angels while she was being operated on, and that they had told her that she was chosen. "For what?" asked the female surgeon, bemused. "They didn't say", he answered wryly, "just she was 'chosen'".

What are we to make of this particular manifestation of the Indigo Child concept, and the context within which it developed? Given the contrast between Tilly and her sensible sister, the latter's mocking tone, and the cynicism of the two surgeons, this storyline can be interpreted as a less than sympathetic mainstream account of the Indigo Child concept. To confirm this, I contacted the writer of this episode, Nick Fisher, by e-mail. I also asked him how he had originally gotten the idea of writing an Indigo Child patient for *Holby City*. He told me that he had heard about Indigos from his wife: "She has a dance instructor who has an indigo child. I'd never heard of them before and was just seduced by the hippy-dippy, self-believing nuttiness of what she said (to my wife) about her son. And about indigo children in general". Specifically, I asked Nick Fisher if he intended Tilly to be sympathetic, or not, and he told me that he had

> played two sisters – one who believed and one who didn't, as a way of setting the notion up and knocking it down at the same time. In truth I always wanted the audience to sympathize most with the sister who wasn't special and feel mocking towards the one who was – but without being

too cruel. I loved the notion of something so nebulous and unscientific encapsulated and investigated in a world (the hospital) that is by its nature so rigidly scientific.

I was curious what he personally felt about the idea of the Indigo Children. "I love the idea", he replied. "It seems like such a brilliant justification of so many things children do. It has that fabulous self-aggrandizing, self-perpetuating, egotistic, shaped thinking that makes so many of these invisible gifts seem so delicious".

Nick Fisher's expression of the Indigo Child concept illustrates how Indigo Children are often perceived to behave and talk by the mainstream, in particular the media. This example also demonstrates that coming into contact with the idea does not necessarily lead to its adoption. This is in contrast to previous examples of individuals who were told about the Indigo Child concept and reacted very enthusiastically. Jenny McCarthy's account of her immediate shout of "Yes!" is one of the more emphatic examples, but intense positivity is also present in the accounts of my interviewees. For example, Gary hid on his worksite in order to use his phone to do further research on the Indigo Children online. Nick Fisher, rather than being convinced or excited by the concept, used Tilly to develop themes of sibling jealousy in the drama and to caricature styles of parenting and "pseudoscience" that he disagreed with. In his account two sisters, who were treated very differently by parents who believed in the Indigo Child concept, are shown to have developed into two very different adults. Given the secular setting, the "rigidly scientific" world of *Holby City* hospital, according to Nick Fisher, we are most likely meant to understand the more sensible, career-minded woman to be the ideal of an independent adult, in contrast with Tilly. Likewise, the regular characters of *Holby City* are presented as scientific rationalists who discuss Tilly's angelic encounter while on the operating table in amused and bemused tones. There is a clear hierarchy of rationalities being expressed in this episode.

However, although Nick Fisher's individual reception and transmission of the Indigo Child concept may be construed as negative, Tilly's character was widely received by the Indigo Children I observed online as a positive step forward in public awareness. It was seen as the truth of the Indigo Children successfully reaching a mainstream, and therefore un-awakened, audience. This particular episode was watched by 4.78 million viewers, with that season's viewing figures ranging between 2.3 million and 5.13 million per episode (Broadcasters Alliance Research Board 2015). Among the Indigos discussing it online, any disappointment that the producers of *Holby City* did not continue Tilly's story was overridden by excitement that the Indigo Children were receiving attention and that the idea was being transmitted to new audiences.

Although only a vignette placed into an ongoing storyline, Tilly was definitely intended to represent an Indigo Child. During my fieldwork, I also found that Indigo Children retrospectively label non-Indigo Child characters, and entire TV programmes, films, and books, as Indigo when they presented

similar themes to the concept. Indigos claimed that such media could be pre-
senting the truth about the Indigo Children even if the term itself was never
used. These works were believed to show that the "truth" was struggling to
break through their writers' un-awakened minds, in order to raise the con-
sciousness of a similarly ignorant audience. In "The Indigo Child and fiction",
I discuss the interplay of the Indigo Child concept with fictions: this retrospec-
tive divining of the influence of the Indigo Child concept on the development
of particular fictional works, and further, the influence of science fiction and
fantasy works on the concept itself.

The following interview with Julian provides another example of recep-
tion and transmission. However, unlike the example of Tilly, where the con-
cept was instantly rejected but still used as an inspiration for fiction, Julian's
account shows how initial acceptance and transmission can also sometimes lead
to rejection and growing cynicism instead.

Julian

Julian, the founder of a Crystal Child discussion group in London, was in his
mid-twenties and from an upper class background. He was an aspiring art-
ist, primarily sculpting dragons and creatures inspired by fairy realms. Julian
lived with his lawyer father in Fulham, close to the café on the King's Road
in London where I attended his discussion group. As with the other Indigos
interviewed during this research, Julian's account involved a turning point of
illness, a sense of dis-ease, and problems during his childhood with both his
school and parents. At eight he was sent to private boarding school, which he
described as "stifling him". He explained further that not receiving parental
love, that "natural love that he really needed", had hurt him both emotionally
and spiritually. In his early twenties he suffered from a "massive depression",
and even though he doesn't "believe in 'medical depression'", he was pre-
scribed anti-depressants by his doctors.

Then, at 22, Julian decided that he wanted to go travelling with his best
friend. They had planned to go scuba diving, but his friend suggested they
should instead go to South Africa to meet with the friend's estranged father,
who turned out to be a spirit healer. Julian was there for moral support, under-
standing fully, he told me, his friend's need for paternal love. But when Julian
met his friend's father, "he was this incredibly powerful man. Very kind, but
with this raw power that just coursed off of him". Julian described him as sav-
ing his life: "he's like my father. He healed me. Just having that real, power-
ful, unconditional love", and Julian has been "spiritual ever since". He spent
a week with his friend's father and the man's wife, learning about the healer's
life and abilities. Then, just as Julian was leaving, the healer's wife asked him
if he had heard about the Indigo and Crystal Children. "And I thought Indigo
Children were these Buddhists, swaying and wearing a red robe, you know
what I mean" he told me, laughing. "It's only now that I appreciate it [what
she meant], at the time I was recovering from this depression I was in". He

looked into the Indigo Children as soon as he got back, doing his research on the Internet, as so many others have done.

However, he couldn't immediately relate to these special children and adults; he told me that the stories he discovered online recounted sudden healings involving the appearance of angels, and he had not experienced those. Later, when he met a Pagan witch in the UK, she told him he was not only a Crystal Child, but also a Starseed. He told me that he was "really into that" as he had "always felt like an alien dropped onto this planet". He started to see some "crazy stuff", such as people's thoughts, which looked like "electromagnetic pulses passing between people", and sometimes he could see signals arriving at his phone before it rang. He ended up in rehabilitation, as he "lost touch with reality … I actually became evil and self-obsessed. Which is the core of a lot of evil. Being self-obsessed, thinking that you are better than other people". The spirit healer from South Africa then came back into his life; he appeared in Julian's room one night, and just "picked me back up and healed me", Julian told me, saying also that his training with this spirit healer was improving his spiritual and psychic abilities.

After recounting his past, we turned to the topic of his discussion group and how his interest in the Indigo and Crystal children was changing. The group had petered out by the time we met for a second interview. He had changed the name of the group to "Life Coaching", which he was learning about at the time, and people stopped attending. I asked him whether this meant he had moved away from the idea of Indigos and Crystals. He nodded and said,

> I've very much moved away from the idea of Crystals. I was very convinced at one stage that I was, and I was convinced that it was something to do with your perception, and that you perceived the world in a certain way, act in a certain way. Now I don't believe it's like that. I would say it is more of a metaphor. The only thing I believe when it comes to Indigos and Crystals is this idea of young people with a certain energy that's different to the energy that was there before, who want to change the world and who want to infuse it with their energy and care about the world. And put it out in a new way.

I asked about the idea of the "life missions" for Indigos, introduced by Nancy Ann Tappe. He replied, "I wonder how much of that is genuine, and how much of that is that they have read that Indigos have a mission and they've taken it on". He did, however, describe himself as being "in service" to spirit, which he explained means that he is meant to help people to progress spiritually: to empower them. He also claimed that my research was my life mission, even if he had dismissed the concept in our interview. According to Julian, I was meant to write about the Indigo Children seriously so that people would know that this "isn't a load of rubbish, so people can look back and see it". This statement appeared to contradict his change of heart about Indigos and Crystals, and I will return to this tension in Julian's account below. His purpose in life is this "spiritual service", while he described his job very dismissively, as

being just whatever makes him a living. His apprenticeship to his spirit healer is a part of this service and not at all financially motivated, he asserted. Likewise, the healer's wife supports Julian's mentor while he focuses on his spiritual vocation. The spirit healer is 75 now, and used to own a construction business, but a "fling with Scientology took all his money", according to Julian.

Julian was also cynical about the combination of money and spirituality that he saw at the 12.12.12 One World Celebration that we attended together, and which he left early.

> It was wrong. It was a load of crap! "Let's go through the chakras … let's pretend the archangel is here" … don't take the piss! That's a fucking sacred thing. And you're making fun of it. And it was all watered down, and all mixed together: "And this one's Shakti, and this one's Shiva". Hinduism all just mixed in. What the fuck are you even going on about? They were worshipping the people on stage … I couldn't bear it!

On another occasion I brought up an event held at London's Olympia National conference hall, the London Wellbeing Festival, once known as the Mind Body Spirit Festival but now rebranded. "It's the same!" he told me.

> They all want money! They want to give you something sweet … it's not all bad. It's the lesser evil. The greater evil is corporations, that mentality and hierarchy in business. Don't get me wrong, [Mind Body Spirit material and events] are not all bad. But don't think its real spirituality! It's an entry point, just a sweet little thing that leads you in, so you think "oh, this is nice", "wow!" But don't think its real spirituality!

In summary, I saw that Julian displayed anger about specific expressions of the Indigo Child concept, as well as aspects of the wider New Age movement, and positioned himself at a distance from both of these, and closer to what he saw as genuine, fundamental spirituality.

This distancing involved Julian redefining the Crystal Child as a metaphor rather than as an objectively real being, as it is described in the primary Indigo texts and in many personal and parental accounts. However, he still employed the Indigo trope of the life-mission with regards to his own purpose in life, and even to my research on the Indigo Children. His negative evaluation is reserved for other people, while he appeared to consider his own adoption of a mission in life to be a legitimate response to his experiences with his mentor. I have noted, in accounts previously presented in this ethnography, the high importance placed on testing claims against personal experience. Further, Julian's suggestion that my life mission is to write a "serious" book on the Indigos when he has moved towards a metaphorical interpretation may indicate that he still believes there is a "true" Indigo Child, underlying all the false labels and representations, which can still be revealed. Moreover, the sudden supernatural manifestation of his spirit healer friend in his room also provided

the evidence that Julian had found lacking in his own biography when he first explored the Indigo Child concept. He had finally received his "angelic" healing during his time of distress, aligning his experience with those of the other Indigos that he had read about online.

Julian is an example of how a positive reception of the Indigo Child concept, and even its successful transmission – in this case through the group he started – do not guarantee that the individual will remain within the ideological community. In Julian's case, there is anger towards behaviours he dislikes, as well as cynicism about the authenticity of other events he has heard about. Extreme forms of cynicism towards the Indigo Children can also lead to parody, as in the next example, The School for Indigo Children.

The School for Indigo Children

"Tilly" demonstrated how the Indigo Child concept was represented on a mainstream UK television programme. Although it was not entirely sympathetic, this representation was not hostile enough to upset the Indigos who were discussing the episode on Twitter. Other representations encountered during fieldwork were far less sympathetic. The School for Indigo Children is a series of YouTube comedy videos, or sketches, the longest of which is around five and half minutes long. The description for the videos reads "Are YOU an INDIGO CHILD? Classy Lauren Brenner & Katie Manzella explain the traits of Indigo Children as well as the philosophy and curriculum at their School for Indigo Children. Brought to you by Wild West as Fuck [the production company]".

The first sketch begins with sitar music and the distinctive name of the production company over the image of two unicorns mating while standing on a rainbow. The presenters, Lauren and Katie, lie on sun-loungers under a palm tree on a beach, smoking marijuana. The two, apparently stereotypical, Californian girls then discuss their school while doing yoga in bikinis. Or while holding crystals to their heads as they drink red wine in a bath. Or while smoking more marijuana from a unicorn shaped bong (a device for inhaling drugs). Typical quotes from The School for Indigo Children sketches include:

> I hate authority. Um. Which is why I am the authority at this school
> The reason I feel like an alien amongst my peers is probably because I am one, you know
> Don't even try you know, just go with the flow you know. Because whenever I try I fail. And whenever I get high [take drugs] I win, you know
> I used to smoke meth [an illegal drug] in a van outside a day-care. Now I am in a bubble bath drinking the blood of Christ. So, you know, miracles do happen

Lauren Brenner and Katie Manzella are two comedians who make low budget sketches in this style about subjects including sexting (sexual text messaging) and taking drugs. The School for Indigo Children is their longest running

series, and currently there are 14 videos on YouTube. The most popular of these videos has had 6,763 views, and their channel has 199 subscribers in total.[1] We should note that popular videos on YouTube have views numbering in the millions.

While Julian's cynicism came from his perception of the commodification of the spiritual subjects he was genuinely interested in, these Indigo School sketches initially appear to be cynical responses to a lifestyle and attitude. They apparently see the Indigo Children as encapsulating a combination of recreational drug use and self-entitlement that is ripe for parody. Their videos include: "Indigo Children Do the Ascension", "Pleiadian Aliens", and "Indigo Children: Magic Mushrooms and a Brothel". The later videos are no longer presented as coming from the parodic School for Indigo Children but instead follow Brenner and Manzella as they do their stand-up comedy shows on New Age subjects, take hallucinogenic drugs, or go to renowned spiritual locations in California.

However, this is not the simple antagonistic parody it initially appears to be. Katie Manzella is also a self-described Lightworker, Reiki practitioner, Pleiadian (Starseed), and crystal healer who works at the Cedarhouse in Los Angeles, a "holistic detox day spa", according to its Twitter profile. In an interview with Ryan Singer for the online podcast Me & Paranormal You, she described the important crystals in her life, her contact with other realms and beings, and her healing work at Cedarhouse. She talked about her past with drug addiction (including Adderall, a medication for ADHD) before she was healed through crystal therapies (Singer 2015). She also explained that she could no longer perform live comedy or be involved in the "lower vibration" party lifestyle around it. However, before this decision she was parodying the New Age while also a part of it. Moreover, in an earlier 2014 interview with Ryan Singer, both Manzella and Brenner discussed the "inner anger" of the Indigo Children that results from not "being impressed with the current system", and how that can lead to drug addiction. That energy helps them to challenge society's norms and to discover healing methods (Singer 2014).

Therefore, parody can be one of the forms the Indigo Child concept takes at particular times. Manzella and Brenner's sense of humour and anger, aimed towards forms of the Indigo Child concept, still represent the concept through videos that transmit the idea onwards to other seekers. The following section will consider further examples of reception, transmission, and parody from both within and outside of the Indigo community. These examples parallel the themes from the three cases of Tilly, Julian, and The School for Indigo Children, while demonstrating how the concept is expressed in individual forms while still being a part of a wider discourse, even when that discourse denies its own labels and similarities with other expressions.

Formations of the Indigo Child in response to disillusionment

In the case of Julian, we saw the linking of the Indigo Child concept with disillusionment. A similarly disillusioned respondent gave a long response to

my survey question, "What do you think is the most important thing I should know about Indigos?" in which they distinguished between the "Indigo Child" as a term and the Indigo Child as a state of being. This form of disillusionment is also a continuation of rhetoric against labelling, which I had previously explored in Indigo Child accounts:

> To be defined as an "Indigo" is a mere word. To BE an "Indigo" means a whole lot more. I believe that people of a certain level of consciousness have started to classify themselves as "indigos" as it makes them feel like they belong to a group or community instead of separate from the majority of the population who are not at the same level of consciousness as them. Like defined colours on a wavelength band or spectrum, people have just started to correlate their position on that spectrum to a group of people. We are not different from others, other than being at a different position along the consciousness-spectrum that EVERYONE is on. Every soul will reach the same position as so-called "indigos" in some lifetime or other. In a way, you could say that the whole "indigo phenomenon" is a farce that (un)intentionally separates humans and gives a sense of 'specialness' to the individual concerned

Other respondents went beyond this disillusionment with labelling and were in fact aggressive in their depiction of the Indigo Child in their responses to the survey. If they were so hostile to the concept, I had to ask myself, how had they had encountered a survey posted solely on Indigo forums? Most likely, their cynicism had led to their watching and trolling these forums and then my survey.[2] In answer to the same question, one respondent wrote:

> That there isn't [sic] enough lunatic asylums to hold them all
> Be careful of cults

In response to the question "How long have you known?", another respondent replied graphically:

> Since the day I learned to put a mirror under my anus and look directly down at it

As these "trolls" encountered the survey through Indigo forums and groups, it is possible that they are disillusioned Indigo Children who have still remained members. On other websites, negative comments were posted from those who never found the concept convincing. On Yahoo!Answers, a question and answer forum, parody and cynicism combined in responses to a question posted by "Sukhman" with the title "Indigo and Crystal Children?":

Sukhman: Here are these Indigos, with special powers and they're apparently very spiritual and nice, and they're revered as gods. And then there's

me, a common person with no powers and I struggle with trying to be spiritual (I just don't know how to do it.) […] All of it just makes me sad because I'm not special at all. Can you become a crystal or indigo?

Ivan: Indigo and Crystal children are one of the stupidest things ever conceived

Fox: Indigo & Crystal kids are SOOOO 20th century.... meh... duh

Star: Yes you can become an indigo or crystal person. All you have to do is put on a different hat and BINGO! you suddenly know the 'soul cycle' and 'universe knowledge' that before was only mysteries!!!! what a joke, dude. Seriously I hope you are young and impressionable because indigo and crystal people do not exist and if someone is telling you they know the secrets of reality they are lying to your face.

Similar conversations occurred on Twitter, where cynical or trolling tweets appeared in search results because of their use of the words "Indigo Children". "Megan", asking a question publically like Sukhman, received a negative response from "Chagall":

Megan: Somebody just told me I'm an Indigo. What does that mean?

Chagall: Look up indigo children. Its [sic] supposedly a new type of aura colour and personality. I think it's bunk

"Noel" and "$auce McGraw" independently and separately posted their opinions on Twitter about the Indigo Child concept without provocation, displaying an urge to post immediate thoughts that we will consider further in the section "Twitter finding":

Noel: Here is me thinking they are indigo children when in actual fact the correct term is sociopathic parasites! What a waste of my precious time

$auce McGraw: Y'all are not indigo children. Stahp [emphatic slang for "stop"]

A tweet by "Cloete" appeared to have been inspired by a real life interaction with a particularly difficult child. Another user, "Henriel", using the Twitter handle, "@UrielCorinthian", a name seemingly drawing on angelic or biblical sources, replied to Cloete's tweet. He supplied his version of the Indigo Child in a "#sarc", sarcastic, tone. His handle and his sarcasm suggests that he might have been interested in similar topics, but was disillusioned, either solely with the Indigo Child concept or with the wider New Age movement:

Cloete: About to slap this brat. Your kid is not energetic and cute, he is rude, has no manners and is seriously pissing me off

Henriel: No no: those are what we call "Indigo Children". They're not little assholes, they're actually little angels in disguise #sarc

"James" made a request on Twitter for information and received several responses from other users:

James: Anyone wanna [sic] give me a quick primer on how bullshit "indigo children" are or aren't?
"Symbols":   Total Bullshit
"Benjamin": Like a messianic version of Otherkin,[3] only your parents decide it for you. Dysfunctional, maladaptive and manipulative
"Ben":   Don't forget the psychic powers. Tomorrow people, but shitter[4]
Benjamin: Oh, and massive amounts of anti-autism stuff in there too. Total New Age clusterfuck

However, in some cases trolling or parody tweets were misinterpreted and actually received positively by the Indigos, and the wider New Age community. The parody Twitter account "alt_medicine.txt" tweets alternative or pseudoscientific material that they find amusing, providing: "100% real quotes from alternative medicine, natural living, and New Age blogs and forums. Recommended by 4 out of 5 scienticians [sic].[5] WARNING: May contain placenta". These tweets were often retweeted or "favourited" by users sympathetic to such metaphysical sources. The Indigo Child presented by this account was a copy made from primary texts, while the cynicism of the account was a filter through which it was changed. The success or failure of alt_medicine.txt's intentions were dependent on the *existing* interests of its audience, as was whether or not the tweets were transmitted onwards to new audiences.

    In another example of transmission, a French cartoonist, Samantha Leriche-Gionet (also known as "Boum") tweeted a link to a cartoon on 14 March 2014, illustrating an encounter she had with a stranger on the Paris subway. The woman suddenly told her that her baby was "such an Indigo baby" and that "Indigo babies have very special gifts. Do you know her blood type? If she's A+ you shouldn't feed her milk and tomatoes". The woman then got off at her stop, leaving the cartoon version of Boum thinking to herself: "That was way too much New Age for only one conversation" (Boum 2014). I include this example of negative reception as it contrasts with Jenny McCarthy's account. Also, this example again implies that prior interest or sympathy is relevant to how the representation of the concept is received. Boum did not respond with the same emphatic "Yes!" as McCarthy, although we should note that her cartoon transmitted the concept onwards through Twitter, just as McCarthy's original website and articles on being an "Indigo Mom" did before they were removed from the Internet.

    During my online interview with Ryan, the student introduced in Chapter 4, I asked him what he would say to those who describe the Indigo Children in a parodying, or cynical, manner. I gave him the example of a tweet I had seen earlier the same day which said, "I was tweeting earlier about the concept of

'indigo children' and how it's a mystical way of justifying being a c★★★" [aster-isks as in original]. Ryan laughed in his written response:

> Haha someone else said that exact same thing a while ago. I would ask the people who say that what are they afraid of? Some of them can fathom that we are what we are, so the idea instils fear or even jealousy in them. However, they should just stop for a moment and listen to what we have to say because we are here to help everyone, and show them how to live from the heart instead of the brain

This belief that the public should listen to the Indigo Children's message for the world was common among the Indigo Children. It also meant that there was an aspect of proselytization to their publications, online posts, and even their discussions with me during interviews and events. However, the overall success of these efforts to spread knowledge of the Indigo Child and of their role in the Ascension is debatable. In the following section, I will consider the results from two offline research, together with a social media research finding – which will provide the introduction to the wider material on "Indigoism" and race, which I will present in Chapter 7. This research demonstrates the wider awareness of the Indigo Child concept and the interplay of the idea with other communities and contexts.

Transmission of the Indigo Child concept

In this section, I will first discuss the results from free-listing surveys handed out at three New Age "fayres" held in Peterborough, Kings Lynn, and Crystal Palace, all in the UK. Following that, I will consider the results of Google Trends searches for the key terms "New Age", "Indigo Child", "Crystal Child", and "Rainbow Child". Finally, I will explore a finding on Twitter: that a number of users tweet just the two words "Indigo Children", and thus do not make full use of a tweet's potential space for 140 characters. In questioning and exploring the motivations behind these short tweets, I was led to a particular "location" where the Indigo Child concept has been successful, Hip Hop culture, emphasizing that the concept can have affinities with other milieus. The full relationship between the Indigo Child concept and Hip Hop culture will be explored in Chapter 7. Before moving to this relationship, the final section of this chapter will demonstrate two things. First, that the Indigo Child concept interplays with other milieus, including speculative fiction – often in a variety of ways. And second, and perhaps more fundamentally, that social media research methods are important in recognizing material that might otherwise be invisible, or apparently "absent", to the researcher considering the New Age movement.

Free-listing at fayres

The fayres were chosen for their geographical locations, as there was no explicit mention of the Indigo Children in any of the descriptions for UK fayres held

during the period of this research. The three events were also described differently in their publicity: as either "fayres" or "fairs", and I will refer to all as "fayres" for the sake of simplicity. They were also labelled differently, as "Mind Body Spirit Fayres", "Mind Body Soul Fayres", or as "Psychic Fayres". It was therefore assumed that they all promoted New Age themes and categories from their descriptions and from the images in their advertising.

The Peterborough fayre was held in a low concrete building at the Peterborough Arena, a commercial conference location outside of town. Next to the entrance to the main room were a coffee shop run by the venue and a stall where you could be bathed in the sounds of metal Tibetan gongs, in order to "realign" your energy field. The main room contained around 50 stalls set up in five rows. In the furthest right hand corner, there was a small bookshop area. In the near-left corner of the room, Indian print cloth had been hung to create a private space for psychic readings. This combined use of space by both practitioners and sellers was repeated throughout the room, and the split between these two occupations was roughly equal, although the majority of practitioners carried out therapies openly at their stalls. The items being sold included crystals, statues, artworks and cards, and perfumed oils. The attendees at the Peterborough fayre were a mix of ages and genders, and there was no obvious disparity. There were, however, far more white attendees than those from ethnic minorities. Two Asian men looked after a stall for the Brahma Kumaris, and a woman of East Asian appearance was in charge of a stall offering Reiki healing, a technique which originated in Japan. A few black families and individuals were attending, but on the whole, the members of the public were Caucasian in appearance.

The Kings Lynn fayre also contained around 50 stalls ("over sixty" according to flyers and posters) selling similar items. Unlike Peterborough, which was outside of town, the Kings Lynn fayre was held in the centrally located town hall. This meant more attendees walking in off the street, many of whom might have had only a casual interest in New Age topics or none at all. Attendees ranged in age from small children to retirees, and the majority were female. At Kings Lynn, I only saw two black attendees, a father and his female toddler, and none from other ethnic minorities. Conversely, the Crystal Palace fayre was held at the Phoenix community centre in a predominantly black neighbourhood of London where Afro-Caribbean restaurants sat beside salons specializing in black hair. On route to the venue, I also walked past a repurposed cinema with posters for the "Kingsway International Christian Centre", as well as the low building for the "Celestial Church of Christ", both of which are African independent churches. Finding a New Age fayre in this setting was unexpected, given the white middle class characterization of the New Age given by academics, the limitations of which I will discuss further in Chapter 7. Moreover, the Phoenix community centre was next to a Sainsbury's supermarket and other local shops and, as with Kings Lynn, the Crystal Palace fayre attendees could walk in off of the street, increasing the likelihood of more casual attendees than Peterborough, where a specific journey was needed to get to the venue.

I attended the Kings Lynn fayre with my son, who was at that time a small tod-dler, which presented both issues and opportunities. First, I had to work around his lunch, naps, and nappy changes. Second, his need to burn off excess energy after his naps then meant spending time running around the halls with him rather than doing survey work. As I ran circuits of the hall with him, I did, however, manage to smile at those I had left free-listing surveys with, and to bond a little with the other attendees who had small children with them. There were a few children at the fayres, but most were older than my son, including one teenager who seemed to spend all of his time on his mobile phone as his mother ran her stall. At Kings Lynn, two young girls were handing out business cards for their mother's crystal business. Inspired by this, I tried to get my son to hand out my free-listing forms to the stall keepers, but he ran off with the plastic envelope they were in. However, attending as a parent rather than just as a researcher behind a clipboard was a useful ice breaker with potential survey respondents and interviewees at this fayre.

Looking at the free-listing responses I received, certain trends are apparent. Across all three fayres, more responses were given for the term "New Age" than for "Indigo Children". The most frequent term associated with New Age at the fayres was "hippy". It is difficult to judge whether this was intended pejoratively, but other terms were more obviously negative, including: "airy-fairy", "fluffy", "smells", "losers", "no substance", "slackers" (Peterborough); "false", "lies", "needy", "silly", "rubbish" (Kings Lynn); "bandwagon", "wacky" (surprisingly, this came after "tolerant" from the same respondent), and "treehuggers" (Crystal Palace). Positive words included: "wonderful", "free" (Peterborough); "new beginning", "peace", "truth" (Kings Lynn); "blessing", "fantastic", "interest-ing", and "honesty" (Crystal Palace.) There were also terms that implied knowl-edge of New Age concepts and materials, including: "crystals", "evolution", "Aquarius", "Age of Science", "1960s" (Peterborough); "spiritual", "chakra", "Glastonbury" (Kings Lynn); "complementary therapies", "healing", and "energy" (Crystal Palace). The only terms that appeared across all three sites were: "spiritual", "free", "Aquarius", and "crystals"; the latter two are significant in that they are still connected to the New Age. Also, crystals were physically present at each of these three fayres, both for sale and used in healing techniques at stalls, contradicting the "crisis" model that we have already discussed.

With regards to the Indigo Children, I impressed on my respondents that they shouldn't use their Internet-accessing mobile phones to look up what an Indigo Child was if they didn't already know. Some of the responses to the free-listing survey are therefore perhaps impressionistic guesses based on the name "Indigo Child", and across the three fayres "blue" appeared, or sometimes "purple". Unfamiliarity seemed present in responses from Crystal Palace such as: "small", "flowerchild" (perhaps assuming a connection with the 1960s New Age and hippies), and "foreign" (perhaps either uncertainty, or a knowledge of the alleged Chinese and Russian experiments on psychic chil-dren). Likewise, there was the response "moon" (Kings Lynn), which I could not link to any particular idea about the Indigo Children in the literature or online. Occasionally there was a very particular view of Indigo Children, as in

the response "mixed colour/creed/race" (Kings Lynn). Responses to "Indigo Children" that suggested knowledge of the term included: "special", "gifted", "disabled", "autism" (Peterborough); "crystal", "healing", "enlightened", "different" (Kings Lynn); "angels", "Ascension", "evolution", "starchild" (Crystal Palace). Negative terms included: "made-up!" (contrasting with, at the same field site, "true"), "depression", "difficulties" (Peterborough); and "pseudoscience" (Crystal Palace). There were fewer negative terms applied to "Indigo Children" than to "New Age", perhaps because of unfamiliarity, as well as any pre-existing bias against the New Age movement.

The free-listing technique was primarily employed as a means of identifying potential informants for longer interviews, but the array of terms in the returned surveys provided insight into the level of general awareness of the Indigo Child concept, and how they are characterized. In particular, there were terms that supported the arguments in Chapters 4 and 5: that the Indigo Child concept demonstrates the continuing relevance of crystals and of a teleological scheme for the "New Age". However, since many of the free-listing respondents told me that they were unfamiliar with the term, my initial impression was supported: that the Indigo Child phenomena is more widespread online than offline, and that it is so geographically disparate that it had not as yet made a large impression on the wider New Age movement. Interacting solely with Indigos can give the researcher the impression that it is an overwhelming, revolutionary idea that is held by many. To consider this disparity further, I also explored online metadata resources, in particular, Google Trends, in order to see if interest in the concept could be quantified.

Google Trends

Google Trends is a website which allows public access to data on Google searches made from 2004 onwards. Inputting the desired term creates a graph that shows peaks of interest over time, but not the actual number of searches. Thus, results for "Indigo Children" searches worldwide returns the greatest number in November 2005, which Google Trends gives the value of 100. The other volumes of searches are given by Google Trends in relation to this peak value, so, for example, the second largest number of searches, occurring in January 2006, is given the value of 90. Google Trends also notes "regional interest", creating a map of the world with areas of higher interest appearing in a darker colour. For "Indigo Children", Canada has the largest number of searches, again given the maximum value 100, followed by South Africa with 77 and USA with 76. Searches in the UK were fewer, and given a value of 35.

If we add another search term, we can overlap graphs and compare results. Thus, "Crystal Children" over the same period had approximately one third of the volume of searches as "Indigo Children". It also has fewer dramatic peaks of interest in comparison to "Indigo Children", and its highest peak was in August 2006. The regional interest for Crystal Children has Australia and Canada at 100, USA at 91, and UK lower again at 71. A search for "Rainbow Children" gives

a graph of a similar volume of searches as Crystal Children, although the highest peak was earlier, in March 2004. We should note that this strong interest from Canada for Indigo and Crystal Children was not evident in my interactions with informants, and that this method therefore highlights how locations can be hidden from the researcher's gaze by choices made about methods, such as using snowball sampling: gaining new informants on the recommendation of prior ones.

If we examine the term "New Age" in relation to "Indigo Children", we then see quantitative evidence of different levels of interest: since 2004 there were on average 20 times more Google searches for "New Age" than for "Indigo Children". The graph also showed a decline in searches for "New Age", which supported the arguments that this term is declining in popularity and use. In 2011, there was a large jump from a search value of 58 in July to 97 in September, which suggests a sudden surge of interest. It was not clear what might have caused this surge, whereas with "Indigo Children" the two highest peaks, in 2005 and 2006, might have been due to Jenny McCarthy's support of the concept at this time and mainstream media interest such as Jon Ronson's 2006 *Guardian* newspaper article on the Indigo Children (Ronson 2006). Further, regional interest for "New Age" was highest in Bangladesh, 100, followed by New Zealand at 99. At the lower end was the USA at 48 and the UK at 35. We should note that while "Indigo Children" is a quite specific search term, the words "New Age" are applicable to other topics. For example, Google Trends lists the top related searches, and number three for "New Age" is "Radioactive – song by Imagine Dragons", a song which includes a repeating lyric welcoming the listener to the New Age and which has apocalyptic imagery. Further, the large number of results for "New Age" from Bangladesh will be the result of there being a daily English newspaper there called *New Age*.

In summary, these results from Google Trends show how interest in the Indigo Children, and other iterations, is situational and changes over time. They also demonstrate the importance of context: the words "Indigo Children" on their own tell us little about the reason for the Google searches. Likewise, I have previously described how I noticed Twitter users who were tweeting only the two words "Indigo Children", rather than making full use of the 140 characters available. I approached these users and held 103 mini-interviews through Twitter in order to discover their motivations. The following section considers their responses, some of which highlight the interplay of the Indigo Child concept with the other interests of these users, in particular, musical and cultural forms such as Hip Hop. The blend of the Indigo Child concept and Hip Hop employs the term "Indigoism", which I shall also use to refer to this specific finding, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Twitter finding

In this section, I will consider the primary reasons given to me for tweeting just the words "Indigo Children" by the 103 users that responded to me online. Their descriptions of their motivations also highlight the role of social

media in this community, and I argue that two concurrent influences appear to be at play in these tweets. First, the conjunction of the growth of Internet-enabled mobile phones and Twitter apps, as well as an easy learning curve for Twitter itself, has shortened the distance between the mind thinking and the text broadcasting; in effect, people are thinking louder as their thoughts are transmitted through more immediate social media forms. Second, such shouting takes place in an "Attention Economy" of ideas competing for recognition or social capital (Bergquist and Ljungberg 2001), and users are broadcasting outwards towards the peripherally aware "ambient audience", hoping to incite interaction (Zappavigna 2012). Certainly, when I contacted these tweeters some specifically said that our interaction was the outcome they had hoped for, in order to start a conversation. Moreover, in terms of "thinking aloud", many of the users I contacted through Twitter did not know why they had tweeted just these two words, or told me that it was just "on their mind":

> It's just an expression of my thoughts on twitter. Maybe someone reads it and learns that they're an indigo child! �✿❦ [angel, alien, and heart emoticons]
> I was thinking about it
> I just tweet random thoughts from time to time...lol!!!! [laugh out loud]
> Hi Lovely! I've been researching the topic lately, it's something intriguing & a belief of mine. Sharing what was on my mind

Other users claimed they were tweeting the words in order to "shout out" or "to represent" on behalf of the Indigo Children. "Representing" can be defined as: "constructing self-definitions to elevate their social status and align themselves with desirable persons, places, or things (e.g., friends, neighbourhoods, clubs, clothing brands. etc.)" (Stokes 2007). In this case, it is the Indigo Child "brand" that is desirable, as in this Twitter conversation between "iiindigo" and "Fred Fredburger" (@killvminatti):[6]

iiindigo:	indigo hue
Fred Fredburger:	indigo children
iiindigo:	indigo who?
Fred Fredburger:	look em up
iiindigo:	I know what it is. I was just bumping something [bumping: to "bump" to the top of a thread, to gain attention for a topic. Another form of "shouting out" online]
Fred Fredburger:	swag my friend ["swag": a contemporary alternative for the expression "cool", can be akin to "swagger", to represent yourself]

Some interviewees claimed that they intended their 15 character tweets to "share knowledge", even if tweeting was still a spontaneous act, even unconscious, act:

> sharing my beliefs lol I tweet whatever comes to mind

Other users told me that they had tweeted "Indigo Children" in order to connect with others who shared their interest in the concept, or who could provide them with more information, again demonstrating their awareness of the ambient audience that observed them on Twitter:

> at least help sum [sic] be aware. Spark curiosity rather than stand on a soap box about it. I'd rather just tweet the words
>   my mind is random. I was watching a Spirit Science video[7] at the time. I wanted someone to ask what It [the Indigo Child concept] was.

Some informants sought to inspire others to research the topic, and understood my interaction with them as evidence of their success:

> awareness of these wonderful beings of light, i figure it would raise curiousity [sic] for others to research as you are :)
>   You can't teach with just 140 characters, BUT it'll get people to wonder and research which is progress

References were made to what the users were listening to, which brought the relationship of the Indigo Child concept with particular musicians and genres of music to my attention:

> I wasn't hoping anything [as a result of tweeting 'Indigo Children'], I just felt like sharing what I was listening at the moment
>   hello :) it's a name of a song by a band called 'Puscifer'. And 'Indigo Children' happens to be one of my favorite tracks

Puscifer is an experimental rock group with only one permanent member, Maynard James Keenan, who describes it as a project of his "creative subconscious" (*Factmag* 2012). Other users referenced this particular band:

Damn: Hello! Because of a song, girl [addressing me] Puscifer – Indigo children. Hear! [pay attention to what he's "shouting out" about]

I asked "Damn'"whether he just enjoyed the song, and wanted others to listen to it, or whether he was interested in the Indigo Child concept:

Damn: I believe it. And they should also believe. Beautiful site [sic]! I'll see more calmly

Other informants mentioned specific genres or musicians, in particular Rap and Hip Hop, for example:

> I tweeted that because I was listening to Monto's latest EP 'Indigo Children'. I wasn't hoping anything, I just felt like sharing what I was listening at the moment

> Phrase used by The Underachievers rap group. I don't believe in the religious aspect of it though, just the message of it
>
> it's the name of my cousin's rap group haha they just liked the name as far as I know.

In Chapter 7, I will look closer at this specific overlap between Rap, Hip Hop, and the Indigo Child concept in relation to questions of race and the New Age, but even simply noting the interplay between other media and the expression of the concept brings us to consider other examples of intertextuality, inter-play, and of the wider transmission of the Indigo Child concept. In particular, during my conversations with Indigo Children I became aware of the importance of speculative fictions on their worldviews, including novels, multimedia forms such as animated cartoons, children's programmes, and feature films.

The Indigo Child and fiction

Drawing on my fieldwork among the Indigo Children, I argue that these fictions are employed in four ways. First, specific speculative fictions were presented as containing Indigo Child tropes or similar spiritual ideas. The Indigos I discussed this with stated that these tropes were *consciously* placed in fictions in order to "seed" these ideas into the general populace. This was a positive conspiracism we might compare to Marilyn Ferguson's description of the New Age movement as a benign "Aquarian Conspiracy" working for others: "One by one, we can re-choose—to awaken. To leave the prison of our condition-ing, to love, to turn homeward. To conspire with and for each other. You are a seed, a silent promise. You are the conspiracy" (Ferguson 1980, 417). Second, Indigos drew on a vast range of fictional resources that were not intentionally Indigo, reframed them as such, and claimed that they were proof that these beneficial concepts were also *unconsciously* placed by their creators: appearing naturally in humanity's stories and narratives as humanity evolves. Third, the Indigo Children retrospectively identified fictional characters from a variety of sources as Indigo. This also demonstrated the Indigo Children's understanding of the key characteristics of the concept itself. Finally, the very real presence of fictional Indigo Children characters in more recent speculative fiction showed how, as with Tilly in *Holby City*, the Indigo concept can be transmitted back into public consciousness in a two-way interaction. To support my description of the four different uses of fiction by Indigo Children, I will now present specific examples from fieldwork.

The first interpretation of fiction, that Indigo ideas are intentionally "seeded" into popular media for an awakening generation, was employed by Twitter user "Honor".[8] I encountered Honor when he spontaneously tweeted that: "The Indigo Children grew up on shows, cartoons, films, etc. with lots of symbolism and metaphysics behind them". I asked him for examples of such shows, and he replied "Captain Planet, Ferngully, Mighty Morphin Power Rangers including the films and many others out there. Look carefully". I

asked if this insertion of "symbolism and metaphysics" was intentional by their producers and artists. Honor told me, "Since I know that they [the producers] know who the Indigo Children and the Third Wave (90's babies) are it was bound to resonate with us during that time and even later to those of us who are decoding and interpreting them for ourselves and everyone else".[9] Both *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* (1990) and the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*[10] involved a team of teenagers being selected for a world-saving mission. The 1992 film *FernGully: The Last Rainforest* is the animated tale of a young logger who is accidentally shrunk by a fairy, and helps her and her animal friends to save the rainforest from a pollution monster, Hexxus. *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* also devised polluting corporations and toxic monsters as antagonists for its chosen team, such as "Hoggish Greedly", "Verminous Skumm", "Dr Blight", and "Looten Plunder". Likewise, the many seasons, and many versions, of the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* honoured their Japanese monster movie origins by having men in costumes playing skyscraper-tall monsters with pun based names like "Mocktor Doom", "Gassous Clay", and "Goldyflox".

Of these three examples, *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* has the greatest affinity with the Indigo Child concept, and if we consider its content and origins further we can comprehend Honor's interpretation of it as a seeding of beneficial concepts into the public subconscious. In the first of its 113 episodes, "A Hero for Earth", Gaia, the spirit of the Earth,[11] voiced by Whoopi Goldberg, gifts five magical rings to five teenagers. These rings can summon and control the five elements, in this case including the elemental power of "heart", which enabled Ma-Ti from the Brazilian rainforest to talk to animals and to make people compassionate through telepathy. When this team got into trouble, they combined the powers of their rings to summon Captain Planet himself: a blue-skinned, green-haired superhero. However, Captain Planet always told the audience that "The Power is yours!": we could all be Planeteers and help to save the world. Therefore, the show presented a message of environmental millennialism combined with rhetoric on personal agency, both being given a magical twist through the rings given to the children. The Indigo Children do not claim to owe their abilities to material artefacts like rings, but it is important to note that the teenage Planeteers were also presented as special among all of the world's children, and thus chosen by Gaia. The Indigo Children see themselves as being on Earth, at this time, for a reason: to save it.

Beyond their affinity with environmental millennialism and Indigo Child tropes, it is difficult to prove an undercover agenda for the dissemination of New Age ideas and attitudes through these programmes. However, we can outline the interests and sympathies of those involved in their production. Ted Turner, who created and broadcasted *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* on his channel, Turner Broadcasting Services (TBS), had publically expressed environmentalist sentiments. He had connections with well-known New Age entrepreneurs such as Maurice Strong, founder of a holistic community in Crestone, Colorado. Strong introduced Turner at a "World Millennium Peace Summit" in 2000, a summit that was partly funded by Turner and TBS. In

his keynote speech, Turner presented universalist themes: "We are all one race, and there is only one God that manifests himself in different ways". This received a standing ovation, according to Lee Penn in his book against universalism, *False Dawn: The United Religions Initiative, Globalism and the Quest for a One-World Religion* (2005).

The second interaction with fiction employed by the Indigo Children is the intertextual adoption of material that is not originally, or intentionally, New Age or Indigo. For example, on 27 August 2014, "Yvette" uploaded a short video clip from the American animated television series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* to the Enlightened Indigo Child Facebook group. She posted it with the comment: "Animated version of how to open your 7 chakras. You will love this :)" This ten-minute video showed Aang, the eponymous avatar and last of the air "bending" (controlling) tribe, learning from a much older sage how to master the "avatar state", for by opening all of his chakras he would be able to control all of the elements. *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (Nickelodeon, 2005–2008) has similarities with the programmes discussed above in that the children in it are on a quest to save the world using their abilities to control the elements. In this case, Yvette's use of this series as a resource for spiritual development demonstrates the intertextuality of the Indigo Children's "facts".

Further, *Avatar: The Last Airbender* provides an example of how this interplay of fiction with the real world operates in both directions, as in the fourth use of fiction that I introduced above. The 2006 Jon Ronson *Guardian* article, "The Chosen Ones", referred to interviews with Indigo Children published in a *Dallas Observer* article earlier in the same year. Ronson described how, in the article, "One eight-year-old was asked if he was Indigo. The boy replied: 'I'm an avatar. I can recognise the four elements of earth, wind, water and fire.' The journalist was impressed" (Ronson 2006). After the article was published, several readers wrote in to inform the newspaper of the Nickelodeon show *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. The *Dallas Observer* later admitted it felt embarrassed about the mistake. Popular fictions like *Avatar: The Last Airbender* can therefore feed ideas into the Indigo Child concept, ideas which may or may not be attributed back to their fictional source, as we also saw with the ahistorical use of Terry Pratchett's imaginary colour of magic, octarine, by Indigos in Chapter 5.

The list of speculative fictions that Indigo Children cite as presenting Indigo ideas is broad, as the psychic or supernatural child trope has long been popular in the wider media, giving many possible examples to draw upon. Individual characters are also retrospectively identified as Indigo Children, even if that was not the author's original intention. During fieldwork, Indigo Children made references to the characters and plots of particular TV shows, films, and books, including: the *Harry Potter* book series,[12] Marvel's *X-Men* comic book and film franchise, and its unofficial derivatives such as the television programmes *Alphas* (2011–12), *Heroes* (2006–10) and *Heroes Reborn* (2015–), *Mutant X* (2001–04), and *The Tomorrow People* (1973–9, 1992–[5, 2013–[14). Also mentioned were the books of John Wyndham, including *The Chrysalids* (1955). In *The Chrysalids*, there is an antagonistic relationship between the

special children and their wider society which mirrors the Indigos' claimed experiences of society: the leader of a mutant group states that "In loyalty to their kind they cannot tolerate our rise; in loyalty to our kind, we cannot tolerate their obstruction" (Wyndham 1955, 196). This tension with the exist-ing hierarchies of power we can see regularly echoed in the words of Indigo Children, such as in the musician Raury's comments about the establishment in his 2014 *Dazed* interview, which will be discussed further in Chapter 7. Indigo Children also cited fictions that represented autistic children as having extraordinary savant skills, such as the feature films *Rain Man* (1988), *Cube* (1997), and *Mercury Rising* (1998). Again, there was an assumption among some of the Indigo Children that these savants were incorrectly diagnosed Indigos, particularly if these abilities were instrumental to the heroes' victory.[13]

Some of these re-interpretations of existing fictions were negatively framed, as in this tweet by "Irradiated Rabbit": "Watching CW's [television network] rehash/revival of The Tomorrow People … Ugh I hate indigo children mashed up with the CW drama formula". We have seen *The Tomorrow People* men-tioned in a tweet already in this chapter, by Ben, who made a move in the opposite direction to castigate the Indigo Child concept as "Tomorrow People, but shitter". Irradiated Rabbit instead holds up the Indigo Children as the origi-nal source material, which he sees as having inspired the fictional *Tomorrow People*. *The Tomorrow People* was originally a UK television series first broadcast in 1973. It has had two further iterations, the first in 1992, and the most recent in 2013. The latter is the American version, which Irradiated Rabbit considers to be abusing the Indigo Child concept. Like the Indigo Children, the teenage lead characters in *The Tomorrow People* have psychic abilities and a mission in life. Arguably, rather than abusing the Indigo Child concept as the tweet claimed, *The Tomorrow People* programmes owe a debt to earlier psychic children narra-tives, and we should recognize that elements of these earlier tropes are entwined in the Indigo Child concept. For example, in 1963, prior to *The Tomorrow People*, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's comics for Marvel about young superheroes, *The X-Men*, presented puberty as the time when special abilities could manifest, due to genetic mutations caused by the Atomic Age. A few Indigo Children have revised Nancy Ann Tappe's claim that they arrived around 1982 and instead emphasized a connection with the birth of the Atomic Age:

> After the Nuclear bomb hit Japan it got the attention of the Masters of Light […] The council held a meeting and agreed that they could not interfere from the outside in, as they did during the days of Ra [ancient Egypt], they decided to intervene from the inside out, they put a call out to all the older evolved souls to volunteer to reincarnate on this planet for the sake of this planet and the direction it was going towards.
>
> (Bellini 2014)

Dolores Cannon's writings also make this connection and describe how Indigo Children are a 'Third Wave' of helpers, arriving in the 1990s, a term also

mentioned by Honor above. They came at the behest of the 'Masters of Light', to whom Bellini also referred to in the quote above. Cannon explains:

> THIRD WAVE: Born in the 1990's to the present, these are the "New Children" who are coming into the world with their DNA already altered before they even arrive so they are able to function in a different reality. The vibrations coming into the planet are pushing Earth into a whole new dimension and they are already prepared. Some call this Third Wave of souls the Indigo children, or the Crystal children. They are also known as the gift to the world. They are the hope of the world and they come in knowing so much more than either the First or Second Wave.
>
> (Cannon 2011)

Tying the arrival of the Indigo Children into worldwide events also includes ascribing matters to the concept that are beyond human control, such as geological changes. The website 2012-spiritual growth-prophecies.com explained "as our world's magnetic field changes, people of any age will show tendencies towards increased psychic abilities. Indigos come by these abilities innately". Earlier, we noted the relationship of such predictions to the collapse of categories once presumed to be stable, including changes in our conceptions of invisible forces, such as atoms and magnetic fields. Such changes may require new forms of language, including prophecy; likewise, the changes in the understanding of the "child" can also inspire concepts like the Indigo Child, and fictions about magical, psychic, or special children. Further, these concepts and fictions may inspire mainstream materials, as we saw with *Holby City*'s presentation of an Indigo Child, Tilly. For example, the Indigo Children inspired a fashion collection for the Italian brand Diesel. Nicola Formichetti, the lead designer, explained what had drawn him to the Indigo Children, "You saw all of those different coloured skins and hair colours; tall, short, curvy – and it was great because when you go outside that's how everyone is, there's no difference between the digital and physical world for these kids. They're a new species, indigo children" (*Pulp* 2014).

We should also note that Formichetti is not referring the stereotypical white, middle-class, middle-aged New Ager in his description of the Indigo Children, and that Formichetti is himself Italian-Japanese. The relationship of race to the Indigo Child concept is the concern of the following chapter.

During the research for this ethnography, a film was released called *The Bling Ring* (Coppola 2013), based on the real life breaking and entering crimes of a gang of Hollywood teenagers who were obsessed with celebrity. This story was recounted first in a *Vanity Fair* article and then in a non-fiction book (Sales 2010 and 2013). The 2013 film again presented a version of an Indigo Child to mainstream audiences: "Nicki", based on Alexis Neiers from the real-life gang of teenage criminals. The film and the book explained her behaviour in terms of her sense of entitlement. In the film, Nicki spoke over her New Ager mother during interviews and claimed that

> I'm a firm believer in karma and I think this situation [her crimes and being arrested] was attracted into my life as a huge learning lesson for me to grow and expand as a spiritual human being. I don't think the universe chose a better person than me because from this it's not just affecting me, it's affecting the media and everyone and I think I'm meant to bring truth to all this … I believe that I am an old soul.
>
> (Coppola 2013)

In her book, Sales also recounts Alexis's interrupting of her mother, but also her claim that: "'I'm an indigo child,' [she] said in her squeaky baby voice, after she'd settled into a chair. 'Which means I have a special energy, a spiritual energy'" (Sales 2013, 51). The specific label "Indigo Child'" was not used in the film, perhaps because of an assumption about the audience's lack of familiarity with the concept. Even without using the label, Nicki is a representation of a fictionalized Indigo Child created in the light of the author's argument that in contemporary society, "it was as if everybody had become their own fan. Everybody was broadcasting themselves on social media. Everybody was their own paparazzi" (Sales 2013, 17).

The use of real life Indigo Children as inspiration for fiction is also apparent in Jordan Dane's *Indigo Awakening*, the first in the young adult novel series, *The Hunted*. This follows 15-year-old Lucas Darby when he "becomes the prime target of a fanatical church that hunts psychic kids on the streets of LA, […] his sister Rayne finds her only ally is a mysterious runaway boy with unimaginable powers that could doom them all" (Dane 2013). Dane explains that she took liberties with the Indigo Child concept, but drew on primary accounts:

> The major inspiration behind the Hunted series came from my research of Indigo children. Query "Indigo Child" on the Internet and you'll get over 8 million hits. Real life and headlines often inspire my books and this time is no exception. Conspiracy theorists have linked the CIA, the UN, and the Pentagon to the phenomenon known as Indigo and Crystal children. For the purposes of fiction, I took liberties in my portrayal of this phenomenon, but Indigo kids are generally described as highly intelligent, gifted teen psychics with a bright "indigo" aura and a mission to save the world. They have high IQs, have been known to see angels and commune with the dead. Because they are frequently misunderstood, they are diagnosed by therapists and doctors as having attention deficit or behavioral disorders and are often medicated. I portray Crystal kids as the next evolution beyond Indigos. Mankind's future, if they survive us.
>
> (Dane 2013)

Dane's fictional Indigo and Crystal Children were based on Internet research. In another young adult novel, *Through Indigo's Eyes* (Schultz Nicholson and Taylor 2012), one of the authors is herself a self-proclaimed Indigo Child, as the authors explained in an interview with the *Huffington Post* in 2012:

> Lorna [Schultz Nicholson]: I started with a small seed, which in this case was the fictional vision Indie sees in the first chapter. Magically, (okay, Tara [Taylor] would say I was being guided by my divine team), all the real stories Tara had fed me became fuel for the fictional plot. I had many Aha moments where I would think, "OMG, I can use that story here!"
>
> (*Huffington Post* 2012)

In short, the Indigo Children can be influenced by fiction: they can see Indigo ideas as seeded in fiction, claim fiction as Indigo retrospectively, or even inspire further fictions. This interplay of fiction and Indigo fact is enabled by two factors. First, the Indigo Child concept is malleable, for while the primary texts are cited, the rhetoric against dogma and in favour of personal experience means that material such as the lists of characteristics are both copied and reformulated by the Indigo Children. This occurs to the extent that I encountered newer iterations of the term being devised and publicized on personal blogs. For example, a "Diamond Child" is labelled and described on the website of "writer, blogger, dreamer, painter, musician" Inelia Benz (Benz 2010). She states that her knowledge of this newer form of the Indigo Child and "Most of the information on this site […] comes via direct tapping into source. Which I will then go out into the world, real life as well as book and internet research, and 'validate'". In the comments below this description, an anonymous guest writes, "wow. thought i coined the name diamond child. i am a rainbow crystal adult. my child is a diamond i started calling her a diamond after she began speaking to me mind to mind". This comment demonstrates both innovation ("Diamond Child") and the remixing of concepts taken from the primary literature ("Rainbow Crystal adult"), a combination of two forms discussed in other chapters.

I argue that the second enabling factor for this generative aspect to the Indigo Child concept is that the prime location for its expression as an ideologically bound community is the Internet. Without overly objectifying the evolving metaphor that is the Internet, or ascribing to technological determinism, I still want to note that it is a potential space for creation, but also an "ostensibly chaotic world [that] may in fact follow more organized cultural trajectories than meets the eye" (Shifman 2013, 372), and that certain rules of online behaviour enhance creativity. In the final chapter of this book, I will therefore consider the meme as a model for conceptualizing the Indigo Child – and its numerous manifestations, as other, self, healing, prophecy, fiction, and fact – in the light of these generative and iterative tendencies and the Indigo Child concept's affinity with the creative modes and methods of the Internet. However, before summarizing my model for understanding the Indigo Child concept, I want to explore further manifestations that demonstrate the interplay of the idea in locations that have not previously been given due academic attention, that is, how the New Age and race are related. In Chapter 7, I will do this through a consideration of the Indigo Child and its relationship with Rap and Hip Hop culture, as was indicated to me by the people and ideas I encountered during

fieldwork, and which I was led to through the seeker methodology, much as my informants were also.

Notes

1 As of 8 July 2015.
2 Trolling is defined in Chapter 3's "Testimony, identification, and classification schemes" with reference to Hardaker (2010).
3 Otherkin can be defined as "persons who identify as fantastic beings such as angels, fairies, and elves" (V. Robertson, 2013). See also Laycock (2012) and Kirby (2013).
4 I return to *The Tomorrow People* in "The Indigo Child and fiction".
5 Scientician, slang: "An authoritative individual of questionable medical, scientific and/or scholastic merit" (*Urban Dictionary* 2015).
6 We should note the three letter i's in "iiindigo", the third eye chakra being the seat of psychic ability in Indigo and New Age discourse. Fred Fredburger's handle also resembled the word "Illuminati", a term and group linked to conspiracy theories, which also have resonance in this milieu. "Killuminati" is also the name of an album by deceased Hip Hop artist Tupac Shakur. The Illuminati and Tupac will be discussed further in Chapter 7 with reference to "conspirituality".
7 The videos mentioned most often by interviewees were these *Spirit Science* cartoons, created by Jordan David Pierce. An animated blue figure known as "Patchman" explains topics including the chakras, crystals, human history, male and female energy, and, of course, the Indigo Children. The YouTube description explains their part in an ongoing, online conversation: The times are changing. Every day, new information is revealing itself that further connects the ancient prophecies and understandings of our ancient past with modern physics understanding of the universe. The world is waking up to the bright realities that we can all experience, and moving into a new light. The Spirit Science is about that, a healthy discussion about all of these new insights. We are not here to say "this is the way things are", because we DON'T know. We are here to discuss it openly, and allow anyone who wants to openly discuss it as well" (*Spirit Science* 2015).
8 Honor's Twitter user name and handle included both the Egyptian ankh, a symbol for life, as well as the Egyptian title for royalty, "Pharaoh", indicating his interest in, and utilization of, the ancient Egyptian mythos.
9 Dolores Cannon's description of 3rd Wave Indigos is in the section "The Indigo Child and fiction".
10 The American remake was broadcast from 1993 onwards, with various further iterations. *Super Sentai*, the Japanese inspiration, began in 1975.
11 Most likely inspired by James Lovelock and Sidney Epton's *Gaia Hypothesis* (1975).
12 *Harry Potter* author J. K. Rowling is also identified as an older Indigo by astrologer Mary English, who claims to have found the significant clusters of planets in Indigos' birth charts, as an article in *Kindred Spirit Magazine* explained: "Tom's mother Barbara is a secondary school teacher, resourceful in devising creative ways to focus 30 teenagers' attention on Shakespeare in a mixed ability class where rap is their first language. Her chart is shaped like a sailing boat-a cluster with a mast-very similar to *Harry Potter* author JK Rowling, whose tales of magical wizards fighting right and wrong in a world of Muggles (Normal People) spoke to a whole generation of children and young people. Mary English calls this the Indigo Lightworker's chart shape" (English 2015). As mentioned, Mary also identified me as an "Indigo 2nd Wave" from my chart, fitting in with the "wave" scheme of Dolores Cannon noted in the section "The Indigo Child and fiction". Just like Julian, Mary described me as having a mission to spread the truth of the Indigo Children. I could neither confirm nor deny this.
13 See Murray (2009) and Baker (2009) for more on the "autism as superpower" trope in television and film.

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7 The Indigo race

Introduction

> Ladies and Gentlemen,
> I'd like to welcome you here this evening,
> To a little place,
> I like to call, the Fourth Dimension.
> You know my many names, as I've been here many times before,
> Some call me Ju`not
> But in this form, you can call me the Indigo Child.

These words are sung, or rapped, by the musician Ju`not Joyner at the beginning of his track, "Supernatural", from the album *The Indigo Child*. On the YouTube video for this track (Joyner 2016), the main image is of Ju`not himself, a black man wearing a military style cream shirt with a row of medals on its front pocket. Diamond earrings sit in each earlobe, and he has a smartly shaped goatee. However, the most striking thing about this picture of him is his glowing white/blue eyes, obviously made through the digital manipulation of his image. This is perhaps meant to be a representation of his true self – "in this form, you can call me the Indigo Child" he tells us at the beginning of 'Supernatural'.

I first encountered Ju`not through Twitter, where he was retweeted by either Indigo Children I was following, or by those who had added in the keywords "Indigo Child" or "Indigo Children", which I was following through Tweetdeck. The more I looked into these tweeted references to musicians like Ju`not and others, the more I was made aware of the role of black, mixed race, and other ethnic minority voices in shaping the contemporary understanding of the Indigo Child. In this chapter, I will describe and consider interview material from Ju`not Joyner and other members of the Indigo Child community, as well as public posts and tweets. Unlike earlier chapters, I will not analyze his discourse to identify themes and issues, as it is readily apparent that there are overlaps with what Ju`not spoke about and the accounts presented in earlier chapters in this ethnography. Instead, I will highlight this material before providing a consideration of existing academic conceptions of New Age

products – those that have primarily viewed them as being white in origin and demographics, and which have drawn primarily on surveys rather than fieldwork. By making this juxtaposition, I am arguing that there is not only an overlap between the New Age concept of the Indigo Child, black and Hip Hop culture, and conspiracism, but that it is an area that has been under researched. I am also opening up an ethnographic place where we can see the Indigo Child concept transmitting a rhetoric of self-empowerment and self-making, for those of a minority ethnic origin or otherwise. Ju`not Joyner's case study is, therefore, a way into this discussion and a starting point for this chapter.

Ju`not Joyner: the Indigo Child and *American Idol*

The contemporary musical scene has been strongly shaped by the greater connectivity with potential fans offered by the Internet, as well as by the emergence and popularity of televised talent shows. I first encountered Ju`not through his tweets, his social media outreach on behalf of both his musical career and his spiritual career as a self-proclaimed Indigo Child. However, had I been more of a fan myself of televised talent shows, I would have perhaps seen him in two separate seasons, in 2008 and 2009, of *American Idol*, a show which ran for 15 seasons in total between 2002 and 2016. This programme was based on the original British *Pop Idol*, in which the best new musical act was found through both the decisions of judges from the music industry and the votes of the public on the other side of the screen. In season 7, Ju`not made it to the "Hollywood Week" of further auditions in Los Angeles, the first cut after the initial televised regional audition in front of the celebrity judges, but he made it no further. In the following season, in 2009, Ju`not made it to the semi-finals, but failed to make it to the final 13 contestants.

It was in the summer after the 2009 show that Ju`not began to speak publicly about his experiences on *American Idol*, and specifically about how he felt the show was rigged: "It's fixed. It's manipulated," Joyner told ABCNews. com afterward, saying that *Idol* spotlights certain contestants producers feel will resonate with the audience and, literally, keeps others in the shadows. "It's scripted; it's not a talent competition. They show you who they want to show, and that's just what it is. They have some people, when they get on stage, lights come out that you didn't even know existed.'" (ABC News 2009) Later, Ju`not and nine other black contestants sued the show for alleged racial discrimination. In 2013, it was reported that the case was "crumbling", as each of the plaintiffs demanded "a ridiculous amount of money", $25 million each, more than Mariah Carey was paid to judge the show (Atlanta Blackstar 2013). The defence argued that Ju`not was removed from the show for questioning the contract that contestants were required to sign, and further that there was not "enough history of other contestants questioning the contract to prove that he was let go for his race and not simply because producers didn't want the questionable terms of the contract to become a public display" (Atlanta Blackstar 2013).

I was interested in this intersection of the Indigo Child concept with other cultural products such as music and the specific public phenomenon of *American Idol*, as well as the issue of racism (whether proven or not), and proceeded to introduce myself and my research to Ju`not through Twitter, asking him to be involved in an online interview. I began by asking him about how he defines himself as an Indigo Child before moving on to broader questions about his time on *American Idol*, racism, and how his music and his identity are informed by his Indigo nature. On the first question, he explained that he would prob- ably describe himself as a "free spirit", but that he still used some of the key aspects of the Indigo Child concept. He found that the term itself was useful, even if he saw that the recognition of it was potentially a trick his mind was playing on him:

> I guess I would describe myself as a free spirit. I hate the feeling of being anchored, although I hate the feeling of financial instability. Not because I desire things, but because it prevents freedom of movement. As an Indigo, I hate conforming to societal norms. It's in my DNA to rebel, however there is a need to be accepted that is always in competition with that rebellion.
>
> 'Indigo Child' is an acceptable term to me. I once read an article that discussed the traits of Indigos and I felt like I fit them all. Was this some psychological trick I played on myself in order to validate my need to feel different? I don't know … and I don't worry about it.

I asked how long he had known about his Indigo Child nature, and how he had found out about it. His answer contained the trend we have already noted several times: that Indigos often claim to have been recognized by others as Indigo before they knew what that actually meant; a moment of awakening and sudden familiarity:

> My original introduction to the idea of Indigos was a girl I met in California. She told me I was one and to look up the traits. This was a few years ago. Then I just embraced it.

I asked for more details, and he explained that:

> It was in 2011. I was in LA recording my album and my friend brought her over to the house I was renting in West Hollywood. We all had arrived at the house at the same time and began talking in the living room. We got on the subject because I said I "felt" like a television was on somewhere in the house.

He gave me an account of an extrasensory interaction with a technological entity: that he had sensed the energy of something that was not a person.

This ability was something that I had experienced at one step removed at the Crystal Child discussion group run by Julian, where one member had encouraged us to see the energy of a nearby building in order to teach us to see auras. Unlike Ju`not, I saw nothing. In his case, his interaction and sense of this energy was cited as an indication of his true Indigo Child nature by the girl he met:

> No one heard anything but I insisted that a TV was on. Sure enough, there was a TV on in the upstairs bedroom. Everyone was kind of freaked out that I knew this TV was on, despite not hearing it because no one else felt what I felt. Apparently, I felt the electro magnetism/static emanating from the TV. The girl said I was an Indigo Child because of it. I looked it up, liked what I read and just embraced it.

I asked him whether he had any other abilities as a result of his Indigo nature:

> I see in "colors", meaning people's auras jump out at me. Those auras have a color that my mind assigns to them. I do believe though with mastery, meditation and the like, it is possible to physically see those colors radiate off of people.

Again, the attempt to see the "energy" of the building in the Crystal Child discussion group had been framed by the "teacher", through a discussion of auras, with the attempt as a form of self-training or self-mastery. Asking if he was still in contact with her or others who call themselves Indigos, I tried to find out how Ju`not stayed in contact with other Indigos, and whether there was a purpose in interacting with them for him. His answer suggested that not only was his music a part of his Indigo identity, but that it was a way for him to express himself without needing direct personal interaction, which he described as difficult for Indigos, much as my informant Rachel had during our interview – "That's the strange thing about Indigos, we're all quite shy":

> I've met a few other Indigos in my travels but I don't really know a lot. I interact with some folks online but it's limited. I believe we are outgoing in expression (arts, music, etc.) but reclusive in personal interaction. My dream would be to create a sanctuary for Indigos, free from the politics and conflicts in this system as it is presently constructed that drive us crazy. A utopia if you will.

Even though he spoke about actively creating a community or sanctuary for Indigos, he also explained how he saw the future for Indigos: a future that required eventual, inevitable evolution no matter what the active changes Indigos might try to make. The key, he thought, was to work on self-mastery and not mastery of the world, which contradicted some of the prophetic

rhetoric we have explored in Chapter 5. However, this inevitability fits with prophecy, given an upwards teleology for mankind. Or we might note again that diversity of opinion is also a characteristic of this very loosely affiliated community. Ju`not told me that:

> As Indigos, we have a tendency to worry about the state of the world and the lack of consciousness (knowledge of self and our divine origin). Our empathy is our strength and the source of our greatest weakness. We want to affect the world, thus we can become heavy when we feel powerless to do so. We cannot worry about what we cannot control.
>
> The world will continue to spin, as it did before us and it will continue to do so after we are gone. All we are required to do is master ourselves and that is change enough. I need not worry about where the world is headed, as long as I know where I'm headed.
>
> This world is slowly trying to eradicate (or exploit) Indigos. We are not so easily controlled or pacified. There is an attack on creativity and freedom, the life blood of Indigos. Embrace your nature, seek each other, pool our resources and form our own communities.

When I asked him how his Indigo nature had affected his own life, he told me that he'd "become more Awake", employing the awake/asleep analogy that we have seen elsewhere in Indigo discourse. He also explained that he was "more empathetic and able to see through ruses those in power perpetrate". For me this raised the question of how he apprehended the structure of society, and I followed up on this answer by asking about *American Idol*; his statements about the program suggested to me that he saw the owners of the show as being these kinds of people "in power" who are perpetuating "ruses". I wondered if he saw his Indigo nature as key to his reaction to what he saw going on behind the scenes. He told me that his "rebellious nature to things that are wrong probably had a hand in my *Idol* experience. The producers were tyrants and a lot of shady (and illegal) stuff was going on that upset my Indigo spirit". However, his criticisms of *American Idol* were not solely about the unfairness of the contract he was asked to sign; he and the other plaintiffs had alleged racial discrimination. Therefore, I asked him specifically about how being an Indigo Child related to being from an African-American background. He stated that "Race has nothing to do with Indigos' nature. We exist in spirit and recognize one another in that realm". Moreover, he explained to me that:

> All that race bullshit is exactly that - bullshit. Race is a man-made construct that does not really exist, same as religion. It is a tool to divide and control. Unfortunately, because of societal factors and history, we are forced to acknowledge it and fight injustices as a result of those whose interest it is in to perpetuate the construct of race.
>
> Africa is the birthplace of humanity. That is no debate, science has proven that. We are all one race. We are all Africans, whether we choose

to accept it or not. We have many breeds of dog but do not all dogs derive from a common ancestor? Our common ancestor is the African. We are all "black" with varying concentrations of melanin. Those of us with little melanin are a result of breeding (albino mutations and certain environment factors after migration), nothing more. That does not change their origin, however.

However, I argue that claiming that race is a social construct – that it is a tool used by the hegemony for particular ends, a hegemony that determines which characteristics are "racial" (American Association of Anthropology 1998, Spickard 1992) – does not mean denying that race has social impact and particular cultural manifestations. This chapter has begun with Ju`not Joyner as an example of the intersection of the Indigo Child concept, conceptions and expressions of race, and cultural products such as music. Further, we are reminded of the tweets highlighted in the last chapter, tweets that explained the motivation of Twitter users for tweeting just the two words, "Indigo Children", in terms of musical influences and interests. Exploring this intersection will demonstrate that the New Age contains locations and individuals that have previously been ignored or overlooked, and that the Indigo Child concept can operate as a vehicle of transmission for both new and existing identities, rhetoric around self-mastery and entrepreneurship, conspiracism, and cultural innovation.

Indigoism: the New Age and Hip Hop culture

The tweets in Chapter 6 which made reference to groups or particular tracks, as well as the details on each of the user's profile pages, led me the Indigo Child concept as it occurs in musical culture, and Hip Hop in particular. Ju`not Joyner's album The Indigo Child is a prime example. Other examples included the similarly named album *Indigo Child* by the then 18-year-old musician Raury. After being introduced to him through a tweet, I found an interview that Raury gave *Dazed Magazine* in 2014, in which he stated that, "They [adults] had their time to rule but now they're being trumped by something bigger […] We're entering into an era where the better demographic of mankind is going to increase" (*Dazed* 2014). Activism, optimism, and anti-establishment rhetoric were very much a part of Indigo discourse, and a part of a larger musical history artists like Raury were drawing on, reframed as Indigo.

A particular word, "Indigoism", appeared in these conversations. I found it also in the musical works of The Underachievers. They were another inspiration mentioned in a user's tweeted response to my question about their tweeting motivations. A Hip Hop group from Flatbush, New York, The Underachievers, are fronted by AK and Issa Gold. Their album, *Indigoism*, contains lyrics about psychedelic drugs, the third eye, and spirituality. From the same area of New York are The Flatbush Zombies, featuring Erick "Arc" Elliot, Zombie Juice, and Meechy Darko, and Indigo imagery also appears

in their work. In an interview, Darko said that "'zombie life", their ethos, is about "The death of the old consciousness, we trying to start some new shit, the indigo children, there's some new shit going on now in case you don't know. So we're just trying to open niggas[1] minds (*Mass Appeal* 2012). In October 2014, The Underachievers and The Flatbush Zombies combined to form the group Clockwork Indigo: a reference to both the Indigo Child concept and *A Clockwork Orange*, Anthony Burgess's 1962 dystopian novella about violent youth subcultures in conflict with a dictatorial, brainwashing State.

I argue that focussing on this specific form of the Indigo Child concept, Indigoism, highlights the involvement of ethnic and class groups that previous statistical and survey work on the New Age movement appears to have missed. A discussion of this academic work is necessary here, with a brief survey enough to give an idea of their results and limitations. Examples of these surveys include Lillie Wilson's finding that 91 per cent of subscribers to the *New Age Journal* are college-educated with an average household income of approximately £42,000 a year. She also states that "New Agers in this country [the United States] are largely upper-middle-class to middle class Anglo baby-boomers with a college education" (Wilson 1988, 34). Likewise, David Bromley proposed that New Agers are "younger […] Caucasian[s] with lower to midlevel careers in public or corporate businesses" (Bromley 1997, 127). Sutcliffe has characterized the New Age that existed in the 1980s as "marked by a largely white, middle class, middle aged (30–50 year olds), superiorly educated, post-industrial socio-demography made up of professional, managerial, arts, and entrepreneurial occupations … it was also well represented by women, typically 2:1 over men" (Sutcliffe 2003b, 7). Stuart Rose's survey of 900 subscribers to the UK New Age magazine, *Kindred Spirit*, found that there are "few distinguishing features which might clearly separate New Age participants from a larger proportion of the general UK population", indicating a majority would still be white, in proportion with that specific population (Rose 1998, 6). However, Daniel Mears and Christopher Ellison's 2000 Phone Poll surveyed 911 people in Texas and found that, in that American state at least, "In contrast to popular conceptions, Hispanics and African Americans are more likely than Non-Hispanic Whites to purchase New Age material" (Mears and Ellison 2000, 302). However, they concluded that "Systematic empirical or theoretical investigation of the social distribution of participation [in the New Age movement] remains limited" (Mears and Ellison 2000, 290).

These surveys may well be limited but, based on findings of this sort, the New Age movement is still primarily described by academics as a white, female, middle class, or "Baby Boomer" endeavour. Diana Cooper is used as an illustration of the typical New Ager by Charlotte Ward and David Voas (2011), and we have noted her role in the Indigo Child concept along with other demographically similar authors, such as Nancy Ann Tappe, Doreen Virtue, P. M. H. Atwater, Meg Blackburn Losey, and Jenny McCarthy. This characterization of the New Ager has led Steve Bruce to describe ethnicity as "trebly absent" in representations of the New Age (Bruce 2002, 89). First, it is absent in the

demographics as the above data suggests, "especially given the extent to which practitioners draw from non-white, 'indigenous' traditions'" (Bruce 2002, cited in Sutcliffe 2003b, 22). Second, race is a subject ignored in the discourse of practitioners. Third, and finally, it is ignored in the discourse of academics.

This brief survey of literature on the demographics of the New Age appears to initially support the first absence described by Bruce. However, noting the interplay of the Indigo Child concept with ethnic minority and Hip Hop cultures addresses the second absence Bruce proposes. Race is not absent from the discourse, nor are those involved always identical to the New Ager represented by Diana Cooper. A short overview of the cultural elements to this interplay, Hip Hop and its remixed forms, is necessary before addressing this interplay and the specific material from the Indigo Children that contradicts the absences described by Bruce.

Hip Hop's cultural history

In the early 2000s, National Geographic recognized Hip Hop as "the world's favourite youth culture" in which "just about every country on the planet seems to have developed its own local rap scene" (Pryor, cited in Speers 2017, 1). Hip Hop is a musical genre that emerged in the late 1970s in the Bronx and Harlem, New York. "Hip" came from its perceived coolness and "hop" from the hopping dance movements that the music inspired. Historians of Hip Hop have highlighted the influence of the folk poetry of West Africa as well as Jamaican musical traditions of "toasting": boastful poetry and speech (see Chang 2005). According to founding figure, DJ Afrika Bambaataa, there are basic "elements" of Hip Hop:

> Hip Hop culture is defined as a movement which is expressed through various artistic mediums which we call "elements". The main elements are known as MC'ing (Rapping), DJ'ing, WRITING (Aerosol Art), SEVERAL DANCE FORMS (which include Breaking, Up-Rocking, Popping, and Locking) and the element which holds the rest together: KNOWLEDGE. There are also other elements such as Vocal Percussion/ Beat Boxing, Fashion, etc. Within the past 20 years, Hip-Hop culture has greatly influenced the entertainment world with its creative contributions in music, dance, art, poetry, and fashion.
>
> (Bambaataa 2016)

All these four elements exhibit a positive ethos towards sampling and remixing, including of material from outside of the Hip Hop culture. During the 1980s, Hip Hop became increasingly politicized, making statements about racism, unemployment, and poverty. For example, the lyrics of "It's Like That" by Run-D.M.C, released in 1983, describe people's efforts to make enough money, warn against prejudice, and point out that, no matter how rich or poor we are, everyone will die one day.

However, by the 1990s, the commercial success of the Hip Hop artists led to a shift towards an emphasis on the financial and material rewards of the music industry, as well as fame. The concept of fame led the *The Village Voice* to describe Hip Hop as "custom-made to combat the anomie that preys on adolescents wherever nobody knows their name" (*Village Voice* 2002). This self-making and entrepreneurial rhetoric, however, still combines with social activism, as seen in a 2006 interview with the rapper Nas: "We are our own politicians, our own government, we have something to say. We're warriors. Soldiers" (quoted in Miller 2012, 46). Moreover, such entrepreneurial figures in Hip Hop have played with religious imagery to produce material artefacts, as in rapper 50 Cent's book, *The 50th Law*, which intentionally resembles a King James Bible. Monica Miller notes that "As such it might be reasonably assumed to have something "spiritual" or "religious" in mind; but on the contrary, the main theme of this text is *Fear Nothing* and maintain trust in, not a higher power, but the self" (2012, 47).

This "troping of mysticism, religion, philosophy, and celebration and power of the 'thug' experience" (Mille 2012, 46) by Hip Hop links it to other black self-actualizing New Religious movements, specifically, the Five Percenter Nation, also known as the Nation of Gods and Earths, originating in Harlem in 1964. This group was an offshoot of the Nation of Islam, and was founded by Clarence 13X (formerly Clarence Smith), a student of Malcolm X himself. In the Five Percenter Nation, it is not only W. Fard Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam, who is God, or Allah, personified, but also every single man. Every woman is therefore known as an Earth: this is the planet on which God brought forth life, and women can do likewise. Further, the name of this New Religious movement refers to the membership being the five per cent of the world's population who are believed to be awake, aware, and uncontrolled, and able, as "scientists", to pursue the search for knowledge and proof.

According to *Vice Magazine*, the Five Percenter Nation is

> a movement that's been affiliated with hip-hop from the very begin-
> ning, coining lexicon from 'ciphers' [the number zero in the 'Supreme
> Mathematics' of the Five Percenters], to 'dropping science' [educating the
> audience] and influencing everyone: Big Daddy Kane, Rakim, Wu-Tang
> Clan, Brand Nubian and Nas. With these artists, and any others associated
> with the Five Percenters, music was more than just a message.
>
> (*Vice Magazine* 2013)

Likewise, Jay Z's use of an acrostic for Allah (arm, leg, leg, arm, head) in a track called "Heaven" in 2013 was seen to imply Five Percenter influences on his work, as well as conspiracist accusations of Illuminati connections, as images such as pyramids and watching eyes appeared in his artwork.

This brief overview of Hip Hop culture has indicated four trends. First, the initial social commentary of the genre, which was later entangled with an entrepreneurial and commercial focus. Second, the use of religious and spiritual

imagery, seen in both lyrics and media representations such as music videos. Third, the understanding of the individual as a warrior, a social activist, or even as a god or a superior, awakened being. Fourth, interplay with conspiracy theories and their motifs. I argue, based on material from my fieldwork among the Indigo Children already presented in this ethnography, that these trends are already expressed in the Indigo Child concept, but are even more evident in its "Indigoism" variation: the Hip Hop expression of the Indigo Child concept which I encountered primarily through fieldwork on social media. Therefore, I will now present examples of this "Indigoism".

Examples of Indigoism

In this section, I will describe particular incidents of Indigoism, including images, texts, and conversations. There are many more moments that could be referenced, but these examples highlight patterns, connections, and contestations that will be explored further in the following sections of this chapter. Beginning with images, I encountered two through Twitter that are prime examples of Indigoism, of both its primary tropes and its associated ideas. The first, an image linked to on Twitter but originally posted on Instagram, showed just two baseball caps sitting on top of each other, one black and one blue. Embroidered on the front of the caps was simply the word "Indigo". These caps were items of merchandise for The Underachievers, and the caption for this post by "NAOYA-backyard" was simply a list of hashtags: "#Underachievers #indigoism #growaround". As discussed in Chapter 2, hashtags link posts to an ambient audience through the increased searchability of social media. In this case, this ambient audience includes those aware of The Underachievers, Indigoism, and a particular Japanese store, Growaround, in Shibuya, Tokyo, which sells these caps.

Another photograph posted on Instagram showed three young black or mixed-race men posing for the camera, one with thumbs up, one with dreadlocks over his face, and another with his hoodie pulled up. The caption with the image read simply, "Indigo Children", and was followed by a longer series of hashtags: "#crew #wildin #gotdamn #dreadhead #mixedkids #biracial #wesexy #coolkids #ragers #dopness #fam #ninjas #gods #selfie". Specifically, we can note the hashtag "gods", while others of interest are "fam" (family) and "crew", also indicating a sense of non-related kinship. Likewise, this image had an ambient and following audience, and had been "liked" 21 times.

Further, in terms of texts, a tweet I saw by the Twitter user "Hanifah" linked conspiracism, Hip Hop music, and the Indigo Children:

Tupac is alive[2]
The Illuminati is real
New World Order[3] is real
You all need to open your eyes

>Indigo Children are the key
>PERIOD [formatting and capitals in original]

There were also spaces where this overlap was contested and where self-claimed Indigo Children pushed back against the association of their beliefs with Hip Hop, in particular in its commercialized "industry" form, although not against the connection of the Indigos with specific genres of music. On 21st December 2016, "Haywood" posted a message on the Indigo Adults Facebook page, presenting the group's members with the claim, without citing a source for the story, that Kanye West[4] believes himself to be a Starseed[5]:

>Kanye claims to be a starseed and is here to help the planet. I hate to swear but I have never heard soo [sic] much shit before. If he is a starseed he is from somewhere evil. Makes me so mad. He has already done his part in spreading madness and materialism.
>   Sometimes I wander [sic], will the music industry ever change?

His post had received 76 comments by the time I became aware of it and of its negativity to this specific Hip Hop artist's interaction with the Indigo Child concept. Other members of the Facebook group tried to find something more positive in Kanye's claim:

"Sarah":   On the other hand many People will now Google starseed and perhaps start their awakening.

Sarah's comment received eight likes, but others were more sceptical:

"Jon: And then in turn start actually following Kanye as well?....sounds like a bs [bullshit] consciousness trap thing to me.

In defence of Kanye and his assumed fame-centric approach, "Huara" referred to "swag", a concept in Hip Hop I defined in Chapter 6 as an alternative for the older expression "cool", and which can also mean to "swagger", or to represent yourself:

Huara: whats [sic] wrong with some swag ;D everyBODY loves some swaag666 [capitals in original]

Huara may have been being sarcastic, with his emphasis on the "BODY", presumed to be of a lower vibrational energy by Indigo Children, and in his ending of "swaag" with 666, the number of the Beast in the Book of Revelation in the Bible, and therefore demonic. However, Haywood picked up on this idea and responded by presenting alternative musicians, those who he considered to have *true* swag. This moment was similar to other internal community discussions I had observed around the difficult subject of who *is* and who is *not* a

"real" Indigo, as in the debate over free readings that I presented in Chapter 3. Haywood stated that there was:

> Nothing wrong with a bit of swag but when it's the same Jay-Z, Drake, Kanye crap its soo boring. Swag in your own way I say. You ever listened to Fliptrix ect? [sic] That's true swag.

Fliptrix's albums include *The Road to the Interdimensional Piff Highway* (2012),[6] *Third Eye of the Storm* (2012), and *Mind Travelling* (2012), and his songs, such as "Star Beings", contain psychedelic imagery and accounts of his mind opening experiences. Other Hip Hop artists recommended in the thread of responses were Vinnie Paz and Gang Starr, and other musical genres were present in the suggestions of listening to Lunatic Calm (Electronica), W.A.S.T.E. (Industrial), The Kilimanjaro Dark Jazz Ensemble (Dark Jazz), or a member of the group's own music (Heavy Metal). With regards to Kanye West and his specific brand of entrepreneurial Hip Hop, there were both Indigo Children who defended him, such as "Dias" below, and those who saw Kanye as a "pawn", including "Daniel", a pseudonym of Kane, whose emphatic approach to online discussions we saw earlier in the conversation on free-readings, which I described in the section "Indigo accounts of awakening, diagnosis, and healing" in Chapter 4:

Dias: Who's to judge another's journey? Another's path! Being Indigo, star seed, awakened is really difficult, I never heard that about Kanye before but you know what I likes his music regardless and as awakened all I can do is relate cause the struggle does get real, we all go mad and make mistakes the difference is there's no camera in our face when we do it!!! Meanwhile ppl [people] criticise, Kanye's sitting on his money and probably in a position to help a lot of ppl … [there was a "thinking" emoji here] (my opinion)

Daniel: Kanye is a pawn of mainstream media and y'all are falling for that shit too.

The discussion then fell into a mess of antagonistic comments by Daniel/Kane, primarily through the medium of memes, and responses by frustrated members of the group, and the discussion of Kanye ended. In summary, this particular Internet event demonstrates that the overlap between the milieus of Hip Hop and the Indigo Children exists, as Indigoism as we saw in the image and text examples, but that this is also a contested space with contested ideas about appropriate and inappropriate self-representation, or "swag". However, I will also argue that both milieus share aims, consist of discursive objects that are permeable into other cultures, and that they are influenced by, and influential in, the creation of contemporary societal narratives. As in the discussion over Kanye West, there are aspects that initially appear to imply differences in these milieus, specifically in their attitudes to commercialism, gender, and race. However, in the next section I will demonstrate more affinities than differences.

Affinities and differences

If we take the rhetoric of the New Age, and by extension that of the Indigo Children, at face value, its liberal, feminist, anti-racism stance initially appears to be at odds with Hip Hop as the genre has been described by academics. For example, Carla Stokes explains that: "While some aspects of Hip Hop are not misogynistic, commercialised Hip Hop has been extensively criticised for per-petuating hypersexual and deviant representations of Black Women and girls" (Stokes 2007, 171). However, the New Age movement has also been accused of misogyny and, indeed, racism. For example, Monica Sjöö, a self-described participant in the eco-feminist Goddess movement, was also involved with the New Age movement until she was disillusioned by its "very reactionary, hierarchical, racist and misogynist agenda" (Sjöö 1994, 22). She argued that reliance on a corruption of the Eastern concept of karma, and a strong emphasis on how we create our own worlds through our intentions, led to a "blame the victim" mentality in the New Age. This mentality insinuates in particular, in Sjöö's view, that "a black person creates a whole oppressive racist society in her or his own mind!" (Sjöö 1994, 24). Looking into the history of the New Age movement, she describes Theosophists as "thoroughly racist and anti-Semitic", describing how they believed that "earlier races [were] supposed to make way for the white Aryan race to dominate the globe. The Aryan race is in turn sup-posed to give way to the 'sixth super-race', which is of course what the Nazis were about" (Sjöö 1994, 27). She also notes that David Spangler, who Sutcliffe quoted on the "crisis" in the New Age movement, said that "the Aryan race is the first race in the evolutionary progress of man to come to full grips with the power of the mind" (Spangler 1977, cited in Sjöö 1994).

With reference to the Indigo Children, there are certainly Indigo texts that link the coming of these special children with this Theosophist super-race, appar-ently without any awareness of the Society's alleged description of indigenous people as "degenerate, decadent 'survivors' of earlier races" (Sjöö 1994, 27). As described previously, the Theosophical Society had an emphasis on a tele-ological scheme of successive and increasingly superior "Root Races". This scheme can be understood as a Victorian era discourse around primitivism and white supremacy that still lingers in the New Age movement. Likewise, we have noted the successive teleological scheme of the Indigo Children in Chapter 5. Indigo Children are also a new "race" in some accounts from the community, an idea which I will return to below in "Black, White, or Indigo?"

This successive teleology of races, and its Theosophical origins aside, the Indigo Children commonly express a vehemently anti-racist rhetoric. As in these comments from the Indigo Adult Facebook group in response to ques-tion posed by "Melissa":

Melissa: I hope this doesn't offend anyone, but I was talking to some friends about Indigos and they think it's some "Caucasian" way of thinking. I'm interested in knowing if other races mainly African American

	relate to being Indigo too and what your friends think when you talk to them about it
Tina:	I'm fairly certain the vibration isn't exclusionary
Sharelle:	I am an Indigo true and through and as you can see I am black [from profile picture]. A lot of blacks think this way but because of fear of being bashed by others they don't and won't talk about it
Fee:	It's not about skin color. We are bigger than these bodies! ☺ [smiley emoticon]
Selena:	Yes. Indigos incarnate as all races. It's about the Light within, not the color of the skin. With all due respect, it's a shame that in 2014, this even needs to be explained. Skin color is 3 dimensional. Please look past it.
Kevin:	I didn't know that there was a different way of thinking just because your spacesuit is a different colour.
Josh:	I'm a "person of color" and I can't speak for everyone. From my own experience, I know a few ['people of colour'] who are or are becoming spiritually aware thus I talk about my Indigoisms. Others ["people of colour"] are not receptive to the ideas so I mainly keep my stuff to you guys ☺ and a choice few

However, we can still note some "absences", as Bruce described, in the wider Indigo Child community and its products. The cultural appropriation of indigenous cultures that the Indigo Children engage in is rarely African in origin, even given their use of the Rainbow People prophecy which described the coming together of people of many races, as we saw in Chapter 5. Julian's relationship with a South African healer was more of an exception than a rule, as spirit guides (alive, interdimensional, or deceased) were more often described as transcending race, but still generally depicted in artworks as Caucasian. Images of children of black origin were only occasionally used in Indigo materials. For example, the cover image for *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Indigo Children* is the silhouette of a young black boy with Afro-Caribbean hair (Flynn and Chapman 2005). I sought out the original photograph online; it comes from Getty Images, who gave it a fairly unspecific title: "A Young Boy Silhouetted against a Tropical Sun". Also, I came across the image of a black toddler with butterfly wings and a butterfly perched on its forehead that was posted on the Facebook page of "Smooches Radio", with the message, "Smooches [kisses] to the Indigo Children and their contribution to the greater life".

However, these were the only two examples of images of black individuals I encountered during this research, and although Asian children also appeared in Indigo accounts of international psychic children, this may have been a form of orientalism, or exoticism, as suggested previously. In Chapter 6, we noted the enthusiasm of Nicola Formichetti, the Italian-Japanese lead designer with the Italian brand Diesel, for the Indigo Children as a racially diverse group. He even described them as a totally different species, existing and creating their identities primarily online. However, I also noted in Chapter 6 the

small numbers of non-white ethnicity attendees at the very much offline mind, body, and soul fayres I visited during my fieldwork.

Another difference between the Indigo Child and Hip Hop culture would seem to be that the anti-materialistic stance of the New Age, and the Indigo Children by extension, is in opposition to the "mass prestige" and "consumptive ethos" that Holmes Smith (2003) describes as a part of the Hip Hop entrepreneur or mogul's paradigm. However, Indigo Children can also be entrepreneurs: there are many examples of Indigo authors who have produced courses, tapes, seminars, and products, Doreen Virtue perhaps being one of the most successful in this commercial genre. Holmes Smith further argues that the Hip Hop mogul "may 'stand in for' the desires and values of those individuals who are not eligible to occupy similar positions of mass mediation and discursive credibility" (Smith 2003). Likewise, the Indigo Children as an object can be understood as an emblematic other, symbolically manifesting the collective desires for Ascension and perfected abilities. This idealized Indigo Child is apparent particularly in published accounts written *about* Indigo Children rather than written *by* Indigo Children, as we see in Twyman's description of psychic children training diligently in a secret monastery in Bulgaria in preparation for their messianic, idealized role in *Emissary of Love*.

There is an affinity in how both milieus have "emphasised economic, social and cultural transformation", as Mears and Ellison say of the New Age (2000, 291). Expressions of the Indigo Child concept have millennialist ideals, with the Indigo Children themselves seen as harbingers of an awakened age. Likewise, Holmes Smith argues that "narratives of utopian impulse found within many forms of black expressive culture, and particularly hip-hop culture, have helped supply the specifically American discourse of empire with the necessary mana of 'performativity'" (Smith 2003, 73). Whedon also argued that the Indigo Child expressed a specifically American pioneer spirit, although we should note that a teleological view of history as a progressive and directed orthogenetic evolution is not a solely American product. In the case of the Indigo Children, when they discuss change they place their Indigo compatriots at the centre of these world shifts. For example, "MekkaF$N" told me that he had tweeted just the words "Indigo Children" because "there will be a great change to are [our] world. indigo children are gonna [sic] play that part we are the key to change". Similarly, a user calling himself 'it'sLUI' told me that he tweeted just "Indigo Children" "because i want everybody to be aware! i want them to be ready for the revolution". He continued, "You don't see everyone holding hands singing but there is a sense of change in our generation. We crave CHANGE". Again, however, the question remains as the out-workings of these utopian and activist declarations on social media in the real world. In Chapter 3, we discussed Emma's children and their acts of charity, and large-scale projects of aid and help are also discussed by Indigo Children. Perhaps evidence could be found for such projects becoming manifestations of social and cultural transformation, although the actual revolution is still perennially at hand. Ju`not's own attitude, as I have shown, was more fatalistic, if positive.

A further affinity between the Indigo Child concept and Hip Hop is in their responses to criticism. In Hip Hop the success of the entrepreneur is thought to bring the attention of "Haters" or jealous critics, but "to be the object of such 'hatred' merely serves to crystallize his essential charisma and mark him as one of God's chosen few" (Smith 2003). Likewise, in the case of the Indigo Children, examples of being misunderstood or criticized are held up as proof of their nature as paradigm busters that do not fit into contemporary society. With regards to Hip Hop, Scott Crossley proposes that "young members of the hip-hop generation find themselves essentially in an antagonistic relationship with the institutions that attempt to structure and control their lives" (Crossley 2005, 504). We saw in Nancy Ann Tappe's list of Indigo characteristics the idea that Indigo Children find social structures, including school and family, restrictive and difficult. In the case of Indigos, this antagonism is perhaps a matter of perception rather than reality, with schools and families in fact attempting to resolve such issues through the methods that they are familiar with, such as medical diagnosis or emotional support. That, however, does not prevent the rhetoric of antagonism, expressed in some cases through conspiracy narratives, as we saw in Chapter 4.

This brings us to the final affinity between the Indigo Children and Hip Hop: a shared recourse to conspiracy narratives in the Hip Hop and New Age milieus led to the use of an amalgam word "conspirituality" by Ward and Voas (2011). This term originates in the name of a Canadian Hip Hop group, who self-describe as "spiritually conscious, politically charged" (Ward and Voas 2011, 117). The basic tenets of this conspiritualist perspective are that a secret group covertly controls, or is trying to control, the political and social order (as in the "New World Order", in the above tweet by Hanifah), and that humanity is undergoing a "paradigm shift" in consciousness. Among the Hip Hop and Indigo subcultures, there is a shared suspicion of the current world order, and both infer conspiracies; we have discussed the Indigo fears of Big Pharma. Among the Hip Hop culture, there is a linked fear of a "white world supremacy" (Smith 2003) that is absent from some Indigo accounts, but present when the Indigo Child concept is expressed by black and minority groups through the lens of Hip Hop as Indigoism.

In summary, I propose that the Indigo Child, the wider New Age movement, and Hip Hop culture are permeable to each other, with discursive objects successfully traversing all three milieus, leading to Indigoism. This transmission highlights the weakness of the artificial segregation along lines of race, a segregation that is not made by the practitioners themselves. Academics who have described race as absent in the New Age movement are looking in the wrong places. For example, Matthew Wood argues that it is "generally the middle and upper classes who have the time and resources to write the books, deliver the lectures, and formulate organisations' official literature from which academics draw their material" (Wood 2003, 166).

However, it was only through social media that I made this connection between Hip Hop and the Indigo Children. Paying attention to these newer potential spaces for self-publication (including tweets, webinars, and blogs) and

self-description, we can counter the assumption that the New Age is ethnically monolithic, or that Hip Hop is spiritually bankrupt because of its emphasis on financial accomplishment. The bleed through of ideas from one to the other emphasizes their affinities and gives space to new cultural products.

Black, white, or Indigo?

Returning to Ju`not's assertion of the idea of race being a social construct, which of course has historical and theoretical precedents in academic literature, I want to now consider the possibility that being Indigo is itself another socially constructed racial identity, again employed by particular hegemonic groups to particular ends. Specifically, that adopting this "minority" identity might itself be a claim for an identity not necessarily transcending usual groupings, such as "black" or "white", but one that presents an alternative for those who feel disenfranchised by racial groupings tied into earthly concerns and discriminations. The claim that Ju`not makes, that "All that race bullshit is exactly that – bullshit", speaks to an attempt to transcend the discriminations fostered onto different groups through biological definitions of identity. And yet he, and others – as we have seen in Chapter 4 and elsewhere – continue to make scientific claims based on biology and DNA specifically for their Indigo nature. Of course, this DNA can itself be described in transcendent terms, as we saw in Chapter 4, but there is a scientism in the Indigo Child discourse that insists on the objectivity and verifiability of their differences and their origin.

   In this case, the hegemony that determines which characteristics are Indigo or "racial" in this situation is an epistemic hierarchy of Indigo and New Age writers and influencers that reside outside the majority "mainstream". This outsider status is partially intentional, as the mainstream is also a grouping determined by that same hegemony, as I mentioned in Chapter 3 in relation to the concept of "spiritual but not religious" and the moral boundary work at play in that determination by Indigo Children and New Agers. This hegemony includes not only the "official" Indigo authors but also the individuals I encountered through fieldwork whose ideas and identity descriptions have gained traction in the wider Indigo Child community and have therefore influenced how the Indigo Child is conceived. This identity shaping takes place through cultural products, such as Ju`not's album and the other examples I have given in this chapter.

   The transmission of this concept of being Indigo as an alternative racial identity is difficult to trace when the rhetoric, as we have seen, is of transcending race, as in the Facebook post on "spacesuits" above. I argue that the best evidence for it is actually in the digital manipulation of images to demonstrate an alternative look for the Indigo Children. This apparently contradicts the social constructivist perspective on race that Ju`not and others have presented, and instead emphasizes the physical, presumably biological, aspects of the Indigo "race". However, we should not ignore the diversity of characteristics represented through such digital manipulations. Glowing eyes, such as

in Ju`not's image, or, alternatively, piercing blue eyes, sometimes created by contact lenses or digitally painted onto an image, are not uncommon. These images are also laid over with blue or Indigo filters to make the entire picture this hue. Representations of the third eye are also created, some as literal eyes between the other two, some as spiralling galaxies. Energy is illustrated flowing from the individual in a variety of shapes and colours. The chakras are similarly represented in diverse ways, both digitally and materially through paint.

Among the more personal expressions of Indigo identity that I found linked to the search term "Hip Hop", there are those that also involve modifications, representing either the way these individuals understand their actual physical presence, or more metaphorically. For example, a drawn illustration of a black man with dreadlocks titled "Indigo Child" depicts him with a cosmic tattoo on his forehead, a beard made of flowers, and a head that is coming away from his neck as the stitches holding it on there are coming apart – his head is beginning to drift away, perhaps as his mind or consciousness is also being "raised". In another picture, a photo, young woman stares off-camera, her naturally afro hair dyed in rainbow colours, grey dots in a line on her cheek and above her eyebrow – the hashtags for the image including "Indigo Child". In another photo a woman, Tinashe, lies in a bath where goldfish swim, again with dots above her brows and between her eyes – perhaps indicating multiple "third" eyes or a general extra-sensory awareness. This is a publicity image for Tinashe's track called "Indigo Child [Interlude]", from the album *Aquarius*, which was named for her star sign but which also evokes Age of Aquarius influences. This track contains lyrics that make clear her sensitivities to others, to their bodies and to their futures. The song is then directed to an Indigo Child, but perhaps all the Indigo Children who might listen, with the singer warning them not to be distracted by the chaos of the un-awakened world.

Being Indigo is a curated identity in these examples: changes are made to self-representations that are in line with a grouping that they feel born to, the Indigo Race. As we see in this post online, which reiterates this view of a "transcendental race":

> I am a member of the Indigo race.
>
> It's not about the colour of one's skin, you know. It's about the "content of one's character."
>
> We don't come from some continent full of people who look a lot like us. We are part of the Web, even when we don't have an Internet connection. The other races are continental races. We are a global race.
>
> […]
>
> This New Man [the Indigo Child in this case – but also reminiscent of Quimby's "Scientific Man"] is not a citizen of some place he was accidentally born to, the citizen of some place he moved to, or the citizen of some planetary community he feels connected with, but a master, governor, or steersman of his citizenry or entourage.
>
> (Tallini 2016)

This self-making or "steering" of citizenship is believed to occur in the moments between several lives, through reincarnation, as we have already seen in Ju`not's claim in his song "Supernatural":

> You know my many names, as I've been here many times before,
> Some call me Ju`not
> But in this form, you can call me the Indigo Child.

However, within the individual's current life, this manufacturing of cultural products and identity is transmitted along social networks and creates this "Web" within and without the web/Internet. Indigo identity, therefore, becomes a socially constructed and socially mediated racial identity, as it is a representation of this shared network, as it is shown as having particular traits – either real or digitally added – and as it involves a rhetoric of defiance against the "ruling" majority establishment.

I argue that the adoption of this "Indigo Race" when already a member of an ethnic minority can be described as a move from a position of imposed inferiority and restriction to another grouping where the mainstream is also considered to be opposition to your aims and freedoms. The difference, per-haps, lies in the fact that some interpretations of the Indigo Children have them as a rapidly growing cohort – Nancy Ann Tappe claimed in 2011 that 95 per cent of children born in the previous 20 years were Indigo (Tappe and Altaras 2011, 127). As some interpretations of the Indigo Child empha-size the powers of the Indigo Children and their role in changing the future, perhaps this provides the Indigo Race with the opportunity to move from a prior position or feeling of helplessness to an identity where they can and will be world-changers. Arguably, Hip Hop culture presents opportunities for this self-empowerment, but perhaps on its own does not prove satisfying to those with inclinations towards Indigo interpretations of the world and themselves, and thus Indigoism evolves from it.

For those already born into the presumed dominant mainstream as Caucasians, adopting the "Indigo Race" might be instead a method of releas-ing themselves from that grouping and of adopting a minority identity – the Indigo Child is cast as rare in other literature – where their rarity is an indica-tion of "specialness", as we saw in Tilly's descriptions of herself and her heart condition in Chapter 6. Tilly was a fictional white woman; nevertheless, her character's writing was drawn from the same rhetoric of uniqueness that Nick Fisher encountered through his wife's yoga instructor, a rhetoric we also saw in Emma's description of her daughters. Alternatively, the adoption of the Indigo Child concept might be due to other appealing factors, such as its combination of identity and cultural productions with a pleasing aesthetic and empowering teleological direction.

Through the ethnographic material presented in this first in-depth con-sideration of the Indigo Children, I have tried to demonstrate how "seekers" come into contact with transmitted ideas that coalesce at various moments

into objects that may be attractive to them as they operate within an Attention Economy – one that appears to exist predominantly online. Moving from the question of race in relation to the Indigo Children, Chapter 8 focuses further on understanding how this sharing culture operates for the transmission of ideas, the Indigo Child concept in particular. This is done in order to find a way to speak about a concept that is more than just a concept, but also an identity, an object, and other things besides. By interrogating the concept of the meme, the final chapter of this book will try to apply a model that may be illuminating for future discussions on the Indigo Children that may follow this initial ethnographic contribution.

Notes

1 "Nigga" is a word that needs to be used with some care, especially when employed etically. Mark Anthony Neal draws our attention to the strong distinction between the pejorative "Nigger" used often by racists, and "Nigga" as the fluid, postmodern, and urban embodiment of the labour of contemporary masculine black culture, expressed most strongly through Hip Hop culture (Neal 2013).
2 Tupac Shakur or "2Pac" (1971–96) was an American Hip Hop musician fatally shot by an unknown assailant in Las Vegas, Nevada. His murder remains unsolved, but conspiracy theories note his "Killuminati" album and suggest the involvement of the Illuminati, introduced in Chapter 4, n. 1.
3 "New World Order" refers to the rise of a totalitarian world government, sometimes thought to involve population decrease or control.
4 Kanye West (1977–) is an immensely successful and famous American rapper, songwriter, record producer, fashion designer, and entrepreneur.
5 Kanye West was hospitalized on 21st November 2016 after what seems to have been a "psychiatric emergency", coming just after he had cancelled his tour, according to the *New York Times* (2016). It was reported in the magazine *Life & Style Weekly* on 14th December that "When he first went to the psych ward, he was hearing voices" and that "he started telling people he's a 'starseed,' an alien on a mission to help the Earth" (*Life & Style Weekly* 2016).
6 "Piff" is likely to be a reference to a potent strain of marijuana (*Urban Dictionary* 2016).

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8   Conclusions

Introduction

At an early stage in the research for this book, I posted a request on a Facebook group asking for Indigo Children to volunteer to be interviewed. I received a response from "Nox", in which he told me that "If you go looking for the Indigo Children, you won't find them. Not the real Indigo Children". During my fieldwork, the issues that arose around studying a loosely bound ideologically linked group reminded me of this claim by Nox. I went looking for the Indigo Children and found them in the primary literature as objects in discourse. I found them as objects in parental accounts of children. I found those who had claimed the label for themselves, making it a definition of self, not an object, but a subjective experience. I also found the Indigo Child concept in unexpected and evolving locations: in speculative fictions; in mainstream representations; in musical genres; among previously unconsidered races and classes; and in conspiracy theories. Which of these incarnations was the "real" Indigo Child, as Nox had claimed existed somewhere "out there", just beyond discovery? This final chapter draws upon my findings, described in the preceding chapters, to consider how we might understand the "real" Indigo Child.

The Indigo Child in this book

In Chapter 1, we considered the primary literature that had given the initial description of the Indigo Child to the world and to adherents. The Indigo Child in accounts by authors such as Tappe, Carroll and Tober, Virtue, Losey, and Twyman is a mystical being: a messenger of a New Age, whose abilities operated outside the descriptions of the world from "Science" and "Society" – as the Indigo Children perceive them. Moreover, these authors' encounters with the others known as the Indigo Children have entangled them in the Indigos' life missions and prophecies, and, in the particular case of Twyman's book *Emissary of Love*, in a larger and often dramatic conspiracy. The Indigo Child in this literature was created as an object that could be pointed towards: a "special" child needing special treatment, demanding a new approach, and a change in our conception of the world around us.

In Chapter 2, I explored the issues around studying something that is primarily expressed online, and used Pink's concept of the "ethnographic place" to define boundaries for the object of this research and the aims of the research itself (Pink 2009). In doing so, I created another Indigo Child, one that could be studied through these methods, and which was present in forums, blogs, on Twitter and so forth. The similarity of this ethnographic object to any "real" Indigo Child is debatable, and an Indigo community response to this book will no doubt be that I have still left certain aspects or topics untouched. However, any claim that there is a "real" Indigo Child left unrepresented by this ethnography generates yet another of an ever-multiplying number of interpretations expressed by this loosely bound community. The "real" Indigo Child is therefore also a discursive object, happening both on- and offline, generated in part between researcher and research participants.

In Chapter 3, I considered the parental account, with Emma's discussion of her two daughters as an example of the Indigo Child as a biographical narrative presented on behalf of a child. Again, Emma was pointing to objects that are distinct from her: her daughters. Her account was just one of many parental accounts within the Indigo community, with variations again highlighting the multiplicity of interpretations. The Indigo Child as "child" also gave insight into the ever-changing understanding of the relationship of parent, and society, to this being that comes through us but is not us (to paraphrase the poet Kahlil Gibran on children, Gibran 1923). I also argued in this chapter that academic considerations of the Indigo Child – which in turn provide yet more "real" Indigo Children to consider – have focussed on just a few historical or societal events or changes in definition and therefore do not recognize the longstanding nature of such attempts to understand the "child" as a category and personally.

In Chapter 4, Gary's biographical narrative of his own discovery of the Indigo Child concept and its role in his healing and awakening presented the Indigo Child as a description of self, articulating an identity that transforms with its diagnosis and adoption. The Indigo Child as self is the "real" Indigo Child many of my adult informants encountered as they discovered the concept and identified as Indigo. Moreover, their use of technologies – or perhaps "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1988) – such as spiritual intuitions, healing techniques, and cosmologies placed the Indigo Child as self into a wider universe populated by angels, aliens, and so forth. This illustrated the flaws in the description of a "crisis" in the New Age movement, a crisis thought by Melton to be due to the falsification of techniques and prophecies by modern positivistic science.

My anti-crisis argument continued in Chapter 5, where I considered the Indigo Child as another kind of object again: as the herald of the New Age, a piece in a larger teleological and evolutionary scheme that continues to make claims for prophetic, moral, and social obligations even after this supposed "crisis" in the 1980s. The Indigo Child as prophecy returns us to the Indigo Child as presented in the primary literature discussed in Chapter 1: a separate, and oftentimes special, object. However, the Indigo Child also lends itself to other

genres, and this demonstrates that the object is subject to changes through its reception and transmission.

These changes result in a diversity of products and interpretations, and in Chapters 6 and 7, I presented yet more versions of the concept: the Indigo Child in media, as a rejected idea or failed transmission, as a parody, as a motif and inspiration in musical genres such as Hip Hop, as an expression of identity in relation to race, and as a trope in speculative fictions. How, then, can we describe a concept that has so many personal, public, and creative manifestations at different times and in different contexts? How can we bring together a collection of related ideas that coalesce into forms in specific moments of reaction to wider society, in particular, I have suggested, during collapses in categories once assumed to be stable? Should we accept Nox's claim that they are beings that resist discovery, definition, and boundaries? I argue instead that we can consider it as a chameleon object travelling across discourses: as a meme.

The Indigo Child as a meme

The immediate response to such a suggestion will be marked by an understanding of the meme, either as a failed biological metaphor, as a negative commentary on the viral nature of religious ideas, or, more recently, as an object of Internet humour. This is because the term itself has meme-like qualities; our understanding of the "meme" has shifted according to the different genres in which it has been put to work. Academics studying the meme and meme-culture, such as Wiggins and Bowers, argue that meme is a term "that has mutated and been appropriated and repurposed from its beginning" (Wiggins and Bowers 2014, 3). Therefore, before expanding on my final argument that the Indigo Child can be comprehended as a meme without pejorative undertones, I begin with an overview of the history and uses of the term, drawing on work by those studying memes, rhetorical transmission, and the Internet.

The memetic history of the meme

The term "meme" was introduced by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene*. "Dawkins's initial definition was quite ambiguous", according to Limor Shifman (2013, 37), although Dawkins expounded on the etymology he used for the term: "meme" comes from *mimeme*, from the Greek word meaning "imitated thing". The similarity to the word gene was intentional, although the subsequent shift in the public understanding of the meme, from evolutionary metaphor to biologically reproducing object, was not. Jeremy Burman claims that "The idea [the meme] was not introduced purposefully as an 'idea virus'. It was a metaphor". He claims that Dawkins "hoped to catalyse a shift in understanding; he hoped to redirect the focus of biology away from genes and towards a more general engine for evolution" (Burman 2012, 77). However, according to Shifman, the examples of memes given by Dawkins were concrete objects as well as more complicated ideas, including "melodies,

catchphrases, and clothing fashions as well as abstract beliefs (for instance the concept of God)" (Shifman 2013, 363). Further, Dawkins' examples did ascribe a viral, or even intentional, nature to the meme, whether or not he meant for this to be understood in a metaphorical sense: if a scientist hears, or reads about a good idea, he passes it on to his colleagues and students. He mentions it in his articles and lectures. If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain" (Dawkins 1976, 192).

According to Burman, the implied agency of the meme, and its epidemiological characterization as an "idea virus", interacted with a wider rhetoric of selfishness and self-promotion during the 1980s (Burman 2012). Dawkins' own book title appeared to promote this selfishness, even if he later emphasized, in a 1986 episode of the BBC science program *Horizon* titled "Nice Guys Finish First", that there was still the possibility for human choice and cooperation in human evolution (*Horizon* 1986). However, the self-promoting epidemiological model, supported, for example, by cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter in his 1983 article "Virus-Like Sentences and Self-Replicating Structures", became the dominant understanding, with memes viewed as competitive organisms rather than as a "rhetorical flourish intended to clarify a larger argument" (Burman 2012, 77).

This biological understanding, or iteration, of the meme drew criticism. First, it was seen as an analogy between nature and culture that was prone to ambiguity of meaning, reductionism, and denying human agency. Second, the shift towards an epidemiological understanding of the meme also opened it up to criticism in terms of its "merits as a scientific claim", following Burman (2012, 77), who refers to negative responses to the meme by Atran (2001), Aunger (2000), and Distin (2005). Third, the epidemiological model has also been used ideologically, framing specific ideas as pathological or parasitic. For example, as journalist Michael Schrage stated, "A meme for, say, astrology, could parasitize a mind just as surely as a hookworm could infest someone's bowels" (1995).

Whatever the biological and social criticisms, this epidemiological model appeared to be supported by the arrival of the "Internet meme" in the 1990s. The Internet meme was used to describe particular online creations: image macros, videos, and other two-dimensional online objects that could be pointed towards, whereas the original meme as "unit of analysis" was more "abstract and controversial" (Shifman 2013, 364).[1] Internet memes are usually sorted into "absurdist humour" or "social commentary", according to digital technology scholars Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear (2007, 199–227). However, the attention given to the former has made the Internet meme synonymous with parody and shared jokes. More significantly, their rapid transmission online has been seen to support the epidemiological model, with "viral" being applied to memes in both academic and popular discourse. This fecundity only fulfils one of Dawkins' criteria for successful memes, which are "fidelity, fecundity, and longevity" (Dawkins 1976, 194).

Due to their use of humour or parody, and apparent lack of fidelity and longevity, Internet memes are often dismissed as a fad. However, academics have

reconsidered this Internet phenomenon, recognized the flaws in a too literal epidemiological model, and proposed a greater cultural role for memes. For example, Shifman emphasizes the place of Internet memes as "(post)modern folklore, in which shared norms and values are constructed through cultural artefacts such as Photoshopped images or urban legends" (Shifman 2013, 15). Further, these creations exhibit fidelity through rules of form, as well as longevity through continuation as a general type. Thus, Wiggins and Bowers propose that we recognize that "the memetic social system is reconstituted when members of a participatory digital culture use rules and resources of meme creation in the reproduction of further iterations of a given meme" (Wiggins and Bowers 2014, 6). Likewise, Shifman argues that "memes serve as the building blocks of complex cultures" and that "we need to focus not only on the texts but also on the cultural practices surrounding them" (Shifman 2013, 34).

For some academics, these cultural practices indicate a larger "participatory culture": Henry Jenkins defines this as "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices" (H. Jenkins 2009, 3). To Shifman, we are now in a participatory culture driven by "a *hyper-memetic* logic" (Shifman 2013, 365, emphasis in original), or, as Jenkins phrased it, in a form itself resembling an epigrammatic meme: "if you don't spread, you are dead" (H. Jenkins 2009). To this characterization of a hyper-memetic culture, we might also add Bergquist and Ljungberg's 2001 indication of an "Attention Economy". In this, being "seen" has social capital, and this is a concept raised in Chapter 6 in relation to the users on Twitter who only tweeted "Indigo Children", often without consideration for their motivation as they thought out loud online.

In the light of this academic reassessment of the Internet meme, some have tried to devise a wider definition that returns the meme to its metaphorical, rather than biological, roots. For example, Knobel and Lankshear suggest the meme as a "particular idea presented as a written text, image, language move, or some other unity of cultural 'stuff'" (Knobel and Lankshear 2007, 202). This may be too wide to be useful. The issue with defining diffuse cultural objects like memes is that such kinds of objects "refuse to hold still" (Shifman 2013, citing Katz 1999, 145). Instead of pursuing definitions, perhaps focussing on the social aspects around and within the meme might be more fruitful. If we consider why people share material and remix it for their own versions, both for identification and for parody, then their understanding of the original text (or idea, practice, or object) may be revealed.

In summary, the history of meme shows it to be a multi-valent device. Originally intended to be helpful for thinking about how ideas are transmitted, it was then seen as an "idea virus" that preyed on susceptible brains, leaping from one to another, as the "public understanding" of the meme "[inflected] scientific meaning" (Burman 2012, 98). It was then transferred and treated as a shorthand for a collection of Internet phenomena that were apparently shared

"virally", the Internet being seen as "a meme factory; a laboratory of good and bad infections" (Mulligan 1996, 11). Bearing this history in mind, we might, as Shifman does, consider that, "While enthusiastic advocates argue that the meme explains everything and their opponents assert it explains and changes absolutely nothing, it might be worth asking whether the meme concept may be useful for *something*" (Shifman 2013, 362). In the following section, I argue that the meme concept is useful for describing the Indigo Child: not only as concept, but also as object, as child, as self, and as numerous iterations that individuals have created in their own projects of self-making and mastery after encountering the Indigo Child for the first time, and which they have used to draw together communities of meaning making.

The "memetic" qualities of the Indigo Child

How well does the Indigo Child fulfil Dawkin's three qualities for a successful meme: "fidelity, fecundity, and longevity" (Dawkins 1976, 194)? The reproduction of the lists of characteristics, normally through the copying and pasting of them to online platforms such as blogs or webpages, speaks to fidelity. However, the meme's fecundity relies on how they are remixed by individual agents, and remixing only "works" in the eyes of the recipients when particular rules are maintained. In the case of Internet memes, they have a specific visual grammar and lexicon attached to them. For example, it would be against expectations for a remixed "Archaic Rap" meme to not involve reinterpretations of rap lyrics in archaic speech overlaying the unorthodox self portrait of eighteenth-century artist Joseph Ducreux (KnowYourMeme 2009). The Indigo Child iterations conform to certain expectations in their remixing of aspects of the original term. In the case of material artefacts, such as the list of characteristics, this framework is itself an obvious repeating format. Further, subsequent iterations of the Indigo must meet certain expectations about their advanced nature and role in a larger teleological scheme for humanity.

Internet memes have been commonly characterized as absurdist humour, and parodic memes can provide insight into individual's interpretations of an original text (Shifman 2013, 368). Among the Indigo Children themselves, Internet memes with positive spiritual images are more commonly shared than parodies. These include inspirational or aphoristic quotes, often from popular figures in the New Age movement, set over attractive images including landscapes, fairies, meditating individuals, and so forth. Their motivations in producing remixes (the same backgrounds with different quotes from different New Age figures, or the same quotes over different images) are frequently benevolent. However, we have also noted the parodying of the concept in the videos of The School for Indigo Children, created by a self-proclaimed Indigo Child. Responses to the Indigo Child concept from outside the ideological community more commonly use meme cultural forms (including videos) to negatively mock the idea. For example, in the "College Liberal" meme, an image of a young, white woman with long, dreadlocked hair and a colourful

knitted hat was remixed to read, "Hates society for categorising people. Claims her child is an Indigo Child" (Memegenerator 2015).

I conclude the sharing of inspirational spiritual memes among the Indigo Children includes the concept itself, which can, like Internet memes, be reformed, appearing in different contexts and formats, and is transmitted most successfully by the Internet. Thus, in Chapter 7, we noted its remixes in Hip Hop Culture, including Indigoism, and in speculative fictions. Hip Hop is a milieu that particularly encourages remixing and sampling in its expressions, as Monica Miller explains: "In and through these mediums, youth re-appropriate, mediate, reproduce, construct, contest, recast, and create worldviews and social scripts through cultural practices" (Miller 2012, 13). Fiction also has repeating tropes and "borrowings", and underlying the Indigo Child concept is perhaps the meme of the psychic child as we saw in fictions such as *The Tomorrow People*. Utilizing these fictional and cultural materials in the Indigo Child concept, as well as their understanding of scientific methods and diagnoses, the Indigo Child meme is within a "spectrum that includes in its modern forms both science fiction and fantasy literature, a spectrum that uses the products of science to think with, in order to explore human dilemmas" (Jenkins 2009, 269).

However, there is a distinct difference between the expression of the Indigo Child meme as an individual's identity and "being" a meme. Individuals who have found themselves the subjects of memes do not often consider the identity as positive.[2] The Indigo Child *as* meme also includes the subjective experience of individuals applying the identity to themselves: as we have seen in the accounts of Emma, Gary, Berit, and others from within this community.

The application of the form of a meme to a lived experience is not, however, unique to the Indigo Child community. In Chapter 3, we noted Richard Seigle's criticism of labelling tendencies, and the implication that they originate in reductionist, scientific worldviews (Seigle 1999, 3), which contrasted ironically with Nancy Ann Tappe's biographical claims that she was developing psychological profiles when she first discovered the Indigo Children. The application of the Myers-Briggs psychological profile types by Indigo Children, and the adoption of the Indigo Child identity, is a part of a wider contemporary trend towards the adoption of genres, memes, labels, identities, and types: a trend which takes not only from psychology, but also from speculative fictions.[3] We see this in the adoption of particular Hogwarts School houses, from the *Harry Potter* series, by the generation that grew up with these books. At Hogwarts, the new students are sorted into one of four houses by a magical hat, and in the real world individuals can be assigned a house by an online "Sorting Hat", a questionnaire at the Pottermore website similar to those used to answer the question, "Are you an Indigo Child?" (see Pottermore 2014 and YouThink 2008).[4] Further, the Hogwarts houses are remixed into new iterations by individuals when the houses fail to satisfy their own self-definitions fully. This results in hybrids such as "Slytherclaw", "Ravenpuff", and so forth, just as in the remixed "Rainbow Crystal adult" seen at the end of Chapter 6.

Thus, we can also find Indigos on social media who describe both their Myers-Briggs characterization and their Hogwarts house. For example, "Nola's" profile stated, "I relate to being an indigo child as well as having taking the Myers Briggs and have been deemed an INFJ. According to Pottermore, I'm a Gryffindor". Again, as with the Indigo Child concept and its iterations, we can note that this adoption of types is not truly new, and older types, such as astrological signs, also still appear on these lists. This was another typology considered a meme in the history of the term I provided above, although astrology was described as a pathological meme by Schrage.

Further, we can note that there is awareness of this label culture (and perhaps underneath it, the feedback loop of deviance control as described by 1960s Labelling Theory) among Indigo authors, as we see in the description for Tappe and Altaras's 2011 book, *Indigos: The Quiet Storm*:

> Geek, Sagittarius, liberal or conservative, dyslexic, jock—these are labels which define and identify us. They give us a place to belong and a way to relate to those who like the same things we do. In the 1970's Nancy Tappe identified a new group of children being born as Indigo, a term which has rapidly spread around the world ever since.
>
> (Tappe and Altaras 2011)

The Indigo Child is a shape full of potential, endlessly reformed to express mastery and identity in the contemporary memetic culture, used again and again to make another "place" to belong, and another way to connect with others "like us". That this adopted label shapes the labelled might appear in the anti-labelling rhetoric of the Indigo Children, but more often, the meme is adopted and adapted without recognition of its influence on the seeker.

The Indigo Child and the "life mission" of this book

Does describing the Indigo Child as a meme grant us any greater understanding of the Indigo Child than Whedon's description of it as a re-inscription of meaning after the monstering of the child in the USA? I think that it does, for three reasons. First, Whedon's characterization does not consider the numerous variations of the idea that have evolved in response to the conditions she describes. Identifying the Indigo Child as a meme heuristically (if not epidemiologically) reminds us of its transmission, reception, remixes, iterations, and multiplying forms. Second, being cognizant of these elements also highlights the fact that the Indigo Child is itself a remix of older tropes, and thus critiques Whedon's limited temporal setting for the concept and its expressions. The rhetoric of the Indigo Children might assert the novelty of the idea – as a diagnosis for this child, or for this adult, at this time, and in this place as a part of a larger teleological scheme – but we have noted antecedents and similar identities in Theosophy, Spiritualism, and speculative literature. Finally, this conception of the multiplicities of the Indigo Child as a meme recognizes how they transverse milieus,

being reformulated as they do so, and that the discourses within which they are expressed in are also ever-changing. This approach also highlights how both the academic and the emic characterizations of the New Age movement have changed over time, while retaining internal cultural rules, as memes do, including the millennial and prophetic elements highlighted by Sutcliffe, among others.

Meme theory tends to be underplayed in current academic literature, for an emphasis on the variations of the parodic form and its pop culture references have led to a single dimensional reading of the meme's societal influence: images of cats saying funny things seem to have little to do with "serious" topics. By explaining the "real" Indigo Child with this approach, I am still addressing Julian's proposed life mission for me: to write "seriously" about the Indigo Children. Further, in this book I have not, as one of my first interviewees asked of me, with concern in his voice, simply reduced the Indigo Children to a "bunch of wackos". Instead, this book has sought to recognize the complexities of this ideologically bound community, to explore the Indigo Children's experimentation with self-identities and conceptions of scientific discourses, to locate them both within larger contexts, histories, and on- and offline locations, and to consider the models we might use to understand these numerous manifestations. This has been done with the recognition that the Indigo Child is a valid expression of the search for meaning in our fluid and increasingly networked contemporary society.

Notes

1 With the arrival of three-dimensional printing technology, some websites are now selling "3D printed memes/figurines" such as Chupacabra statues (a cryptozoological, or in some views, an "invented", beast) and popular images such as "Grumpy Cat" and "Sad Keanu", highlighting the materiality and craftedness of memes (see *Shapeways* 2015)

2 For example, the "Ehrmagerd Girl", whose photo of her at 11 years old has been repeatedly re-captioned with her interior monologue in rhotacized speech (involving excessive use of the letter "r"), has found that, "Three years after first becoming an unwitting meme star [she] still occasionally experiences the surreal, stupefying jolt of being ambushed by her own face online" (*Vanity Fair* 2015). Like the term Indigo Child, which can be cited without reference to the primary authors who created the label, the rhotacized language of "ermahgerd" has transcended its origins and become an embedded vernacular of the Internet and beyond.

3 We might also indicate the claiming of labels from sociological typologies, such as "Baby Boomer" "Generation X", and especially pertinent for the Indigo Children: "Millennial".

4 The Hogwarts houses are also associated with characteristics, or psychological types. Gryffindor embodies bravery and daring; Ravenclaw, intelligence and wit; Slytherin, ambition and cunning; and Hufflepuff, hard work and loyalty.

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Index

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