



The Relationship Between Holistic Practice and ‘Spiritual but not Religious’ Identity in the UK

BETHAN JULIET OAKE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

]u[ubiquity press

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary UK, holistic practices – concerned with healing an interconnected mind, body, and spirit of the person – appear to be establishing themselves across more popular, or ‘mainstream’ settings. Simultaneously, the UK has seen increasing numbers of individuals identifying as not religious, and within this a significant population identifying specifically as ‘Spiritual But Not Religious’ (hereafter SBNR). This work consists of a survey that explores British holistic practitioners’ understandings and experiences of spirituality in relation to their practices. It identifies and compares answers across three groups of practitioners: the SBNR, the other not religious, and the religious. Findings demonstrate little difference between SBNR and other participants’ understandings and experiences of spirituality through their practice. Regardless of their varying identities, British holistic practitioners largely favoured the incorporation of ‘spirituality’ into their practice yet wished to distance their practice from ‘religion’. For many practitioners, this meant a desire to keep holistic practice separate from notions of ‘dogma’ or ‘institution’ that may restrict themselves or others from engaging with holistic spirituality. Attention is also given to the implication that, for some, this rejection of ‘religion’ may more specifically reflect a rejection of association with Christianity. Findings suggest that SBNR holistic practitioners do not particularly present as a distinct group with unique beliefs. Rather, it would appear that an engagement with ‘spirituality-without-religion’ is embraced within the UK holistic practitioner community as a whole.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Bethan Juliet Oake

MA dissertation for the
University of Leeds, UK

bethjuliet@hotmail.com

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Oake, B.J. 2021. The Relationship Between Holistic Practice and ‘Spiritual but not Religious’ Identity in the UK. *Secularism and Nonreligion*, 10: 9, pp. 1–14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/snr.150>

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary UK, holistic practices – practices concerned with healing the interconnected ‘mind, body, and spirit’ of a person (Oh and Sarkisian, 2012) – appear to be establishing themselves across more ‘mainstream’ settings. The British National Health Service (hereafter NHS) now recommends and provides holistic treatments such as acupuncture or osteopathy within their practices (NHS, 2018). Popular holistic apps have also surfaced, such as *Headspace* which claims millions of users across 190 countries and has now funded numerous research projects into the effectiveness of meditation (Headspace Inc, 2021). It is currently estimated that a quarter of the UK population overall engages in some form of ‘complimentary/alternative’ therapy or practice each year (Sharp et al., 2018b, p 8). At the same time, evidence suggests that more individuals in Britain may now identify as not religious than religious, and within this a notable number of individuals identifying specifically as ‘spiritual but not religious’ (SBNR) (Woodhead, 2017; Lee, 2014). This raises the question of how and why contemporary holistic practices may for some provide a sense of spirituality, and whether understandings and experiences of this differ depending on religious (or not religious) identity.

This project consists of an online survey, open to British adults who engage in any form of holistic practice. It explores holistic practitioners’ understandings and experiences of spirituality-without-religion through their practice, comparing those who identify as SBNR, other not religious, and religious. It will address these three key research questions:

- 1) What is the demographic of British holistic practitioners?
- 2) What are British holistic practitioners’ understandings of spirituality, and how may they explore them through their practice?
- 3) What do holistic practitioners’ experiences and understandings of spirituality suggest regarding the changing nature of belief in Britain?

CONTEXT

HOLISM IN HEALTHCARE

A 2018 survey funded by the National Institute of Health Research found that 16% of the general English population had seen a ‘Complementary and Alternative Medicine’ (hereafter CAM) practitioner in the last 12 months (Sharp et al., 2018a, p 3). This statistic was 5% higher than previous surveys from 2005 (p 8), indicating that interest in these therapies may be on the gradual rise, at least in England. While there is currently no research into whether this growth is occurring on a wider scale, data does demonstrate that around a quarter of the UK

population at large engage with CAM each year (Sharp et al., 2018b, p 8). While these practices are generally defined by their contrast from the mainstream medical sphere, today there are several holistic CAM therapies that are delivered in mainstream NHS practices, such as acupuncture. This includes fully regulated practices such as osteopathy, as they are considered complimentary to ‘conventional’ medicine (NHS, 2018).

Several holistic therapies that are establishing themselves in more ‘secular’ settings are also undeniably religiously inspired. A prominent example would be Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (hereafter MBCT), a self-proclaimed ‘secular’ practice that combines mainstream Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (hereafter CBT) with Buddhist mindfulness (Marx, 2015). Marx, both a practicing Buddhist and MBCT practitioner, argues that MBCT is able to promote a “non-dogmatic” attitude (Marx, 2015, p 1154), that is “the perfect fit for a ... culture sceptical of religion”. (p 1159). The secular marketing of MBCT represents a contemporary trend of remarketing meditation or ‘mindfulness’ as psychological, scientific techniques rather than religious practices (McMahan, 2008, p 185). This, McMahan argues, demonstrates most clearly the ways in which facets of Buddhism in particular have become increasingly hybridized with secular culture, allowing for engagement with its practices without “authority, hierarchy, ritual, and “religious” aspects”(2008, p 244).

THE RISE OF NO RELIGION

Research demonstrates that numbers of individuals identifying as not religious have been steadily growing over the last quarter century, and now most likely hold majority status (Woodhead, 2017, p 249). The *British Social Attitudes* survey of 2019 demonstrated that 52% of individuals in Britain selected ‘no religion’ when it came to their religious identity (Curtice et al., 2019). While it had been commonplace for researchers to consider ‘nonreligion’ synonymous with disaffiliation or non-identification (Lee, 2014, p 466), there has been a recent emergence of academic interest in the empirical study of nonreligion as an identity in itself (Lee, 2012, p 129). Whilst secularity, like disaffiliation or non-identification, explicitly refers to an *absence* of religion, nonreligion instead points to the *presence* of something ‘other’ than religion (Lee, 2015, p 32). ‘Nonreligious’ therefore constitutes more than merely being ‘not religious’, as it is understood primarily by its contradistinction to religion and is thus characterised by its relation to religion, not a mere lack of it (Lee, 2015, p 32). This ultimately means that the rise in ‘no religious’ identity cannot simply be equated with secularisation. Just as nonreligion may be considered positive rather than reflecting absence, engagement with holistic practice is active and participatory rather than passive. Evidently, then, SBNR cannot be considered a *secular* identity as

there is *something* – ‘spirituality’ – that SBNR individuals are choosing to embrace, identify with and engage in, *in place of* ‘religion’.

It is likely this sense of spirituality that appeals to individuals who partake in holistic therapies, as it prevails “even when a secular meditational practice has been “cleaned” of overt references to faith” (Stratton, 2015, p 104). Indeed, as much as holistic practices such as MBCT seek to market themselves as secular, they are still holistic in their approach, in that they remain concerned with notions of mind-body connectiveness (Marx, 2015, p 1158). In this sense, if anything, these practices may in fact be introducing spiritual concepts to new audiences rather than diminishing their significance. While some holistic practices may choose to market themselves as secular in order to emphasise that one does not have to have affinity with religion to partake in them, they are likely to still attract individuals seeking a perhaps more ‘casual’ experience of spirituality. In this sense, holistic practitioners are not necessarily seeking spirituality that has been ‘made secular’, but rather it is specifically the spiritual elements of practice that are being sought after.

SBNR IDENTITY

In many regards, the concept of spirituality does not appear particularly distinct from that of religion. Willard & Norenzayan emphasise the difficulty in understanding the SBNR identity, as it appears to seek to distinguish itself from religion on the one hand, and other not religious populations on the other (2017, p 137). Yet, estimates show that it may be as high as 1 in 3 North Americans and Europeans that currently identify with the SBNR label, a statistic that appears to be growing (Willard & Norenzayan, 2017, pp 137–138). If spirituality is not fundamentally distinct from religion, why, then, does SBNR identity appear to be so immensely popular? Ignoring individuals’ desires to disassociate themselves from religion through a ‘they are religious even if they claim not to be’ approach denies the fact that there must be some objective reality attached to the label of religion that individuals are choosing to reject.

While the SBNR reject an explicit association with religious tradition, they may still encompass a-religious and/or post-religious beliefs (see Lee, 2015). They may therefore be interested in, or engage in, religiously inspired philosophies and practices – such as certain holistic therapies. The intertwining of holism within mainstream healthcare seemingly challenges secularisation arguments that propose strict division between the worlds of science and religion. Yet, simultaneously, it often rejects explicit association with religious tradition in favour of more subjective interpretations of spirituality. In this sense, holistic practice becomes a potential means to continue to explore and experience spirituality at a time where there is increasing cultural disillusion with religious ‘meaning systems’ (see Murphy, 2017). In determining if and

how holistic practices allow individuals to engage with ‘nonreligious spirituality’, we may be more equipped to conclude that

METHODS

It is important to first note that this survey took place over March and April of 2020. During the time of which the survey was open, the UK introduced its first lockdown due to the coronavirus and incidentally individuals would not have been able to continue to attend holistic classes following these restrictions being implemented. Considering how early into the lockdown process this was, I do not believe that it will have impacted the validity of these results. Answers should therefore be taken as representative of individuals’ routines and experiences with holistic practice prior to the pandemic.

This survey was open to any adult in the UK who attends classes/sessions in any form of holistic therapy or practice. British practitioners were chosen as the focus of this paper due to the fact that both ‘no religious’ identity and engagement with holistic practices appear to be on the rise in the UK. Opening this survey to practitioners of any religious identity (or lack of) would be able to determine the extent to and ways in which these two trends may interact. This study group are often considered as comprising part of the ‘new age movement’ (hereafter NAM) milieu. While this term today is certainly not without its flaws (which will be explored later in this paper), references to ‘new age’ practitioners are often used interchangeably to mean holistic practitioners. Løvv notes that there is generally a significant lack of survey data relating to individuals involved in ‘new age’ phenomena, meaning that accurate understanding of the demographic of holistic populations is limited (2016, p 68). A mixed-methods survey thus allows for gathering this quantitative demographic data, as well as the ability to qualitatively compare holistic practitioners “on a wide variety of attributes, attitudes and behaviours” (Navarro-Rivera & Kosmin, 2011, p 396). The participants’ goal was set at 100 respondents, as it resulted in a large enough sample size to allow for a diverse range of responses, whilst also allowing for clarity within its analysis and discussion (simply due to the fact that percentage proportions would also determine number of participants).

An advantage of this work being an online survey was that its answers could be viewed in real time (Navarro-Rivera & Kosmin, 2011, p 407), thus participant responses were reviewed as they came in to ensure that the survey closed once the target sample was reached. Additionally, this allowed for consistent analysis of the diversity of the sample as responses began to accumulate. While noticing the organic popularity differences between different holistic practices did provide some useful insight to this

research, achieving a variety of responses was necessary in order to reduce a result bias and ensure answers were representative of the wider holistic practitioner community. Consistent review of answers allowed the recognition of which responses were at risk of becoming oversaturated, as well as which communities may be being under-represented and require reaching out to. Participants were therefore found through theoretical sampling, based on which categories had achieved theoretical saturation, and which needed more research attention (Bryman, 2008, p 459). An online survey also allows for distribution via websites frequented by the target populations (Navarro-Rivera & Kosmin, 2011, p 407). Participants were found through Facebook, as its a platform that allows individuals to create groups tailored to shared interests and locations.

This survey was conducted as part of an MA dissertation for the University of Leeds. Block ethical approval was granted at the module level, and all University of Leeds ethical procedures have been followed. The survey provided participants with the project information on the first page, requiring them to read through and consent to take part before accessing the full survey. While this project was not social media research per se, in that it was not researching individuals' social media data itself, privacy concerns relating to social media research still applied. Many of the Facebook groups contacted were closed groups, meaning that they could not be accessed without permission from an administrator of the group. In most cases one can simply request access to a closed group and it will be granted by the administrators without much question, as in reality it is unlikely that someone with an open Facebook account would be wanting to access a specific shared interest group for any reason other than sharing that interest themselves. Yet Facebook groups tend to be closed due to users' concerns that their information could be accessed and gathered without their permission if they were to simply make it public (see Beninger, 2017, p 62). Due to this, group administrators were contacted to explain the project prior to attempting to access their Facebook pages.

SURVEY DESIGN

The first survey section measured participants' age, gender and religious identity. Participants were asked to select their religious identity/identities from a list of options, the same list also included options for 'spiritual', 'nonreligious', 'atheist', 'agnostic' and 'other'. Participants were told that they could select more than one option if applicable. SBNR participants were identified on the basis of having selected 'spiritual', either on its own or alongside one of the three available not religious options (or a specified separate nonreligious identity under 'other' – such as humanist). Participants were also asked whether they considered their holistic practice to have religious, spiritual, both or neither significance for them.

The second survey section asked participants to define, what 'spirituality' meant to them. This question was inspired by a survey from Gall et al., in which participants were asked to write the meaning of 'spirituality' and 'religiousness' in their own words (2011, p 162). This question identified whether understandings of spirituality differed between SBNR holistic practitioners and those with other identities. Individuals were then presented with a list of potential motivations for engaging in their practice and were asked to select all options that applied to them. They were then presented again with the same list and asked to select the primary reason for their engagement. The available options were varied, including a range of both 'spiritually-motivated' and 'physically-motivated' reasons for practicing.

The final survey section was comprised of two open questions. The first asked: 'To what extent would you feel comfortable with any elements of religion and/or spirituality being incorporated into a holistic class/session that you attend?' In mentioning both religion and spirituality alongside one another, as well as implying them to be an 'other' that could be 'incorporated into' (rather than implicitly part of) participants' practices, this question was designed to explore the extent to which participants felt affinity and comfort (and conversely aversion or discomfort) with concepts of religion and spirituality, as well as the extent to which they may view them as separate or synonymous. These answers were analysed alongside participants' previous answers relating to their personal identities and definitions of spirituality, in order to attempt to recognise where holistic practitioners appear to draw a line between their experiences and understandings of spirituality and religion. The second open question asked participants their thoughts on the term 'new age' being used to refer to their practice. Participants' attitudes towards this (arguably outdated) terminology help to indicate where, if no longer as part of the countercultural NAM, contemporary holistic practitioners instead see themselves belonging within the religious, spiritual and/or secular landscapes of society today.

Answers to the open questions were coded. For participants' spirituality definitions, Gall et al's categories (which will be listed in my results discussion) were replicated in order to compare holistic practitioners' answers with a general population sample. For the two open questions in my final section, the categories were developed through an inductive approach. Key themes, words and phrases were first identified through a combination of descriptive and values coding, then grouped into the categories listed in the results. A number of individuals' answers combined themes from multiple categories, and in these cases were listed under all that they applied to. For example, with the question of what participants thought of the term 'new age' for their practice, two of the final categories were: 'Rejection of the term as their practices are not 'new'' and 'Rejection of the

term as it has negative/derogatory connotations'. While separate categories, a few participants referenced themes from both within their answer – such as referring both to the word 'ancient' to describe their practice and to 'stigma' around the term 'new age'. A common criticism of coding answers into themes is that it reduces these answers to one key point while the overall narrative is lost (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 in Bryman, 2008, p 553). It was therefore important to present the multifaceted, whole opinions of participants rather than simply reduce them to what was subjectively deemed to be their most 'prominent' point. To emphasise this, direct quotes from participants' answers are included within the results discussion.

METHOD LIMITATIONS

Even when utilising theoretical sampling, there was an evident disparity between different holistic practitioner groups in terms of their overall response-rate and interest in the project. Practitioners of perhaps more 'secularly adapted' therapies of chiropractic, hypnotherapy, Pilates, and dance therapy had a far lower response rate. This could potentially be due to the original title of the survey being 'Holistic practices and religious identity' – something that may deter holistic practitioners who wish to disassociate their practice from discussions related to religion entirely, or even from the term 'holistic'. Though this lack of response is in itself significant and relates to later discussions on practitioners' comfort around the language used to describe their practices, it does represent a potential data gap.

Despite being shared exclusively on groups for UK-based holistic practitioners, and the information page clearly stating the participant specification, the primary limitation of an anonymous online survey is ultimately not being able to confirm whether whomever has taken the survey truly fits the target group. This risk was reduced as much as possible, through avoiding more general large-scale interest groups in favour of smaller, localised pages. For example, it is not unlikely that a large Facebook group for individuals interested in yoga would attract members from around the world even if presenting itself as a UK-based page; there is evidently nothing intrinsically 'UK' about the general discussion of yoga that would exclude members from other countries from being able to join and take part. Conversely, a Facebook group set up for practitioners of a UK-based yoga organisation would potentially be less likely to have members living elsewhere, and less likely to attract individuals not actually attending sessions run by the organisation, and thus would have members more suited for this survey. This method required reaching out to a significantly larger number of groups in order to gain a sample from a range of different practices, and from a range of different groups within these practices yet meant that responses were as reliable as possible. Even then, it was necessary in some cases to reach out to wider

groups, as certain practices simply did not have smaller-scale pages. For example, it was found that local herbal medicine practitioners tended to market their businesses on their personal websites, and thus were not using social media as their main platform for contact, yet a wider scale 'Herbal medicine UK' interest group did exist.

A lack of transparency attached to online research can also be reflected in individuals hiding their identity, or simply adapting or overrepresenting their views to present themselves as more strongly opinionated than they may be in their day-to-day life (Beninger, 2017, p 63). In the context of this work, these limitations may be found in the criteria chosen for selecting SBNR participants. The criteria simply required participants to select either 'spiritual' on its own, or both 'spiritual' and a not religious identity, and therefore did not take into account the possibility for those who *also* chose religious identities alongside them. This will be explored further within my results discussion.

RESULTS WITH DISCUSSION

- 1) What is the demographic of British holistic practitioners?

Participants were asked to select their religious identity (or lack of) from a list of given options, with the ability to select multiple options if applicable. There were two different criteria for identifying SBNR participants: 1) those who selected 'spiritual' as an identity on its own, without simultaneously selecting a religious identity; 2) those who selected 'spiritual' as an identity, alongside one of the given nonreligious options (or a specified nonreligious variant under 'other'). The latter criteria thus also allowed for individuals who selected spiritual, not religious *and* religious options – e.g. identifying simultaneously as spiritual, atheist, and Christian – though only a few did so (3% of all participants). The validity of these individuals being included within the SBNR sample at all will be explored later in this discussion. **Figure 1** below displays responses from across the overall participant sample.

Overall, 41% of participants were identified as SBNR, compared to a further 41% of religious individuals and 18% 'not religious' others. While 41% also identified as religious, this was distributed across various religious groups, whereas 80% of SBNR individuals identified only as 'spiritual'. These findings suggest that SBNR may be the most prominent *single* identity across the British holistic practitioner population, and certainly the most prominent *nonreligious* identity amongst practitioners. This could imply that, for many, 'spiritual' is seen as a whole identity within itself. It could also imply that nonreligious identity labels may be considered too finite or restrictive, in the same way as religious identities may be. This supports work by Lee that suggests that many nonreligious individuals may still interact with religion in a post-religious

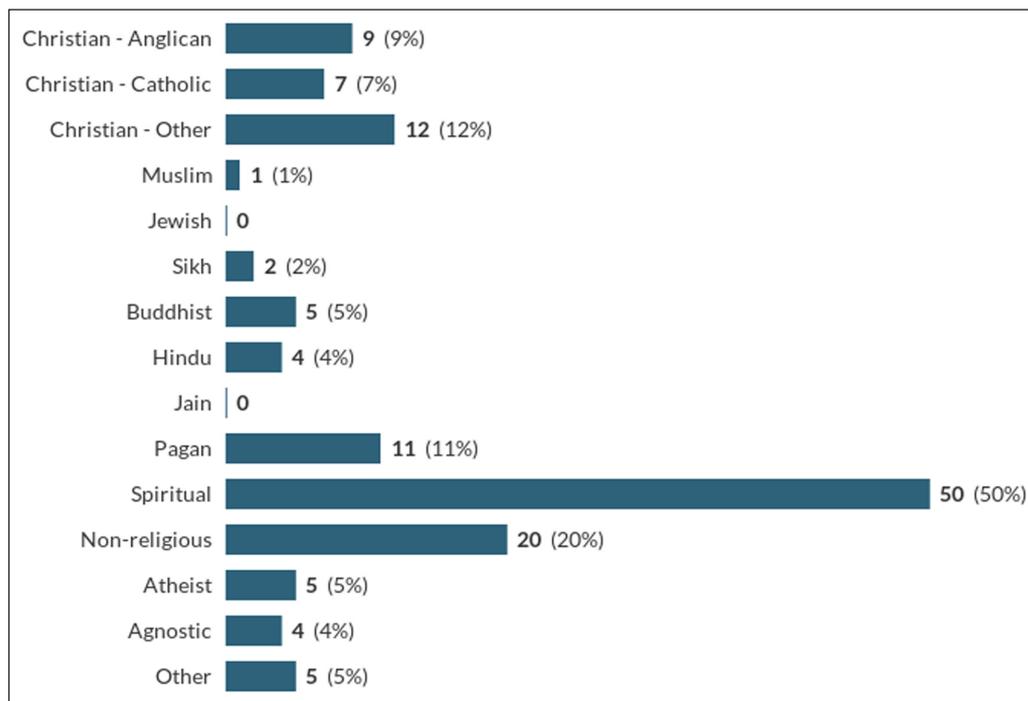


Figure 1 What is your religious identity? You may select multiple options if applicable.

or ‘religiously indifferent’ sense, in which they neither see themselves as entirely aligned with religion nor entirely separate from it (2015, pp 29–30). It is therefore, as predicted, the *presence* of this non-religiously interpreted ‘spirituality’ that is at the core of the SBNR identity, not necessarily the *absence* of religious affiliation or belief.

In addition to the practitioners that identified themselves as SBNR, were many others who identified their *holistic practice* as such. Participants were asked whether they interpreted their practice as having spiritual, religious, both or neither significance. An overwhelming 74% of all participants claimed that they saw their practice as having SBNR significance, despite only 41% having identified as SBNR themselves. This included 83% of other ‘not religious’ individuals, and 63% of religious participants.

This is extremely significant, as it implies that SBNR may be less a prominent *identity* and more an *outlook* present within the holistic practitioner community – a shared understanding or experience of spirituality-without-religion. Depending on specific identity, there are two potential reasons for the majority of practitioners considering their practice to not have religious significance:

- Due to their being neither being neither religious nor from related religious traditions and therefore not viewing their practices as religiously significant for them
- Them in some way identifying with traditions related to their practice, yet not interpreting these traditions as actually being religious

The three most popular practices across all practitioners, regardless of identity, were reiki (91%), meditation

(83%), and yoga (66%). Though evidently branching into a multitude of different contemporary disciplines and practices within themselves, both reiki and meditation take their core inspiration from Buddhist practice, and yoga from the Hindu Vedas. Following these practices in popularity was the more ambiguous practice of ‘crystal healing’ (45%). While generally practiced without association to any particular tradition, the use of crystals for divination, ceremony and healing are popularly incorporated within many branches of contemporary magic. Despite this, the majority (61%) of all religious participants, 28% of the total sample, identified as Christian.

Only 5% of all participants identified as Buddhist. Within those practitioners, only 1 individual identified *only* as Buddhist, while the remaining 4 listed Buddhist alongside at least one other religious identity. All Buddhist-identifying individuals in the sample engaged in both reiki and meditation, yet stated their practice as having SBNR significance for them. McMahan’s exploration into Buddhist modernism in America and Europe asserts that, for some, Buddhism has begun to be interpreted as a practice in which “you don’t really have to believe in anything in particular or follow any strict rules: you simply exercise compassion and maintain a peaceful state of mind” (2008, p 4).

A significant 35% of participants selected multiple options when it came to their (non)religious identities. Day and Lee suggest that, with surveys and censuses, individuals tend to performatively list multiple religious identifiers that may not reflect their reality (2014, p 347). In this sense, individuals who provided a list of identities may have simply been listing every ideology that they hold some affinity with or admiration for,

or notably excluding the ones with which they do not, without considering themselves to be adherents to those selected. To further complicate matters, three SBNR participants also listed multiple religious identities in addition to their nonreligious and spiritual options.

'Participant 14' had specified through the 'other' category that they considered themselves "*spiritual, not religious*" despite having identified as Pagan and Christian as well as atheist, nonreligious and spiritual. Yet not all participants clarified their identity preference in this way. 'Participant 1' had selected that they identified as Pagan, spiritual, atheist, agnostic, Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu.

This implies that it may not only be Buddhist identity being interpreted as nonreligious by holistic practitioners, but other 'Eastern' South Asian traditions of Hinduism and Sikhism as well as the 'Earth-based' religion of Paganism. While the majority (6 out of the 11) of Pagan participants did identify only as Pagan, the remaining 5 others incorporated both other religious and not religious identities alongside it. The spiritualising of pagan, earth-based or indigenous traditions was also demonstrated in the fact that no Shamanic healing (10%) practitioners considered their practice as having religious significance, nor identified as Shaman, nor with any related indigenous faiths such as Ainu or Shinto.

As well as overwhelmingly interpreting their holistic practice as SBNR, practitioners were also similar in terms of their general demographical characteristics.

87% (36/41) of SBNR individuals identified as female, in contrast with only four who identified as male, and one as non-binary. This is consistent with existing research on the SBNR, which has repeatedly identified a larger female population amongst them (e.g. Lindeman et al., 2019). The most common age bracket of SBNR practitioners (40%) was between 46–55. 39% of SBNR individuals met both of these categories. These age and gender statistics were almost identical when analysing holistic practitioners as a whole, regardless of their religious identity or lack of. 86% of the total sample identified as female, 36% (the largest category) aged between 46–55, and an overall 33% matched both. The 'average' British SBNR practitioner thus was, in fact, just that of the 'average' holistic practitioner altogether. Age and gender therefore do not appear to impact the appeal of nonreligious spirituality; however, they potentially do impact the appeal of, and/or the means and ability to engage with, holistic practices overall – at least in the wider 'Western' setting.

These findings in themselves are by no means new, in particular there have been numerous research projects analysing the potential reasons why there appears to be such a prominence of women within the holistic health movement. For the context of this project, I will not repeat these existing discussions in much depth, but they can perhaps be summarised with Sointu & Woodhead's argument that "holistic spiritualities capture and enable women's desire to move away from traditional roles

ascribed to feminine subjects" (2008, p 260). In this sense, holism with its emphasis on freedom and individualism may (like the SBNR outlook) act as a challenge to the seemingly more 'strict' or rigid systems of both religious and secular society, which may for some women carry associations of subjugation or oppression.

There appears to be far less recent research addressing patterns found across ages of holistic practitioners. The average practitioner being between 46–55 demonstrates that the increasing popularity of holistic practices does not necessarily indicate that more young people are engaging in them. At the very least it suggests that young people may not be attending holistic classes/sessions. While this could simply be due to a lack of interest, it is likely that participants' ages may reflect a lack of financial accessibility when it comes to both younger generations' ability to attend sessions/classes in holistic practices. While this does not significantly impact the findings of this project, it is important to note that the vast majority (87%) of responses are from those aged 36 and above. Future research centred on younger holistic practitioners may therefore be beneficial in building more substantial data on the community at large.

Overall, findings demonstrated a lack of difference between SBNR and non-SBNR holistic practitioners based on their identities, age and gender identity. They also suggest that actual engagement with spirituality-without-religion through holistic practice is not limited to SBNR individuals alone but reflect the majority of all practitioners. This infers a shared sense of SBNR ideology across holistic practitioners, uninfluenced by individual religious identity or lack of.

2) What are British holistic practitioners' understandings of spirituality, and how may they explore them through their practice?

Participants were asked to define what spirituality meant for them. Participant answers clearly reflected and thus were categorised into the same categories as in Gall et al.'s (2019) study:

- 'Core self' – spirituality as a process of self-development and reflection.
- 'Life perspective' – spirituality as a guide or moral framework for living life.
- 'Relationship with higher power' – spirituality as belief in some form of higher power beyond the self, which Gall et al. state can be interpreted both inside and outside of a religious framework (2019, p 167).
- 'Connection with mystery' – spirituality as a link to the numinous, the intangible, or 'something greater' without specification.
- 'Connection with the world' – spirituality as a means to connect with 'our world', either through nature or our relationships with others.

CATEGORY	'CORE SELF'	'LIFE PERSPECTIVE'	'RELATIONSHIP WITH HIGHER POWER'	'CONNECTION WITH MYSTERY'	'CONNECTION WITH THE WORLD'
% OF ALL PARTICIPANTS	36%	23%	15%	22%	38%
% OF SBNR PARTICIPANTS	32%	29%	15%	20%	32%
% OF RELIGIOUS PARTICIPANTS	36%	16%	16%	22%	44%
% OF OTHER NOT RELIGIOUS PARTICIPANTS	44%	22%	11%	27%	39%

Gall et al. (2019) also included two further categories – ‘Spirituality defined as meaningless’ and ‘Religion’. Only one participant, who identified as atheist, dismissed the concept of spirituality altogether. Though a small minority (6%) of answers alluded specifically to a connection to ‘God’, these were delegated to the ‘relationship with higher power’ category. As no participants mentioned the word ‘religion’ nor alluded to any specific religious tradition in their definitions, the ‘religion’ category was dismissed. This, combined with the absence of religiously interpreted understandings of spirituality, supports the implication that holistic practitioners overwhelmingly seem to interpret spirituality as being something separate from religious tradition. This is not to say that there may not be a relationship between spirituality and religion for some individuals, but that the spirituality in itself is left open to individual interpretation.

One of the most common themes was a general reference to spirituality as a *process of connection*. Spirituality was seen as a means to connect to oneself, others, a higher power or the natural world – a concept that was predominantly present in 62% of answers. An example of one of these answers would be:

“A connection to one’s deepest truest self, and a connection with God, the Universe, the Higher Self, and to love for others”.

For the remaining answers, spirituality was defined primarily by its beneficial *outcomes for the individual*, such as bringing a sense of personal peace, purpose, or moral guidance to the individual engaging with it. A key example of these answers would be: *“Living my life with openness and kindness”* or *“Being at peace with both myself and the world”*.

A small yet notable difference between SBNR and non-SBNR participant answers emerges when looking at the ‘life perspective’ and ‘connection with the world’ categories. Answers indicate that SBNR holistic practitioners may be more inclined to view spirituality as a form of moral framework for their own lives, while non-SBNR practitioners may consider spirituality a means to connect with the world around them. In this sense, SBNR practitioners may be more likely to define spirituality primarily by its beneficial outcomes for the individual, and non-SBNR as a means or process of connection.

Despite this apparent variance, it is crucial to note that participant answers were extremely similar, with

numerous responses falling into multiple categories. In both cases, there is no significant difference when the percentage of SBNR participants is compared to that of all participants. This occurred even with seemingly conflicting statements, such as spirituality being simultaneously a means of connecting with an intangible beyond yet also to the tangible natural world. If one were to attempt to define spirituality based on the average participants’ answers, it would look something like:

‘A process of connecting the individual to something beyond the physical world, that also brings a sense of completion, peace, and wholeness within the physical self’.

Holistic practitioners’ understandings of spirituality thus evidently reflect a holistic worldview, emphasising of the unification of an intangible mind/spirit with the tangible body. 13% of participants gave one-word answers – e.g. ‘connectedness’, ‘wholeness’, ‘unity’, ‘balance’ or ‘oneness’ – using terms that Heelas & Woodhead refer to as “the pervasive use of ‘holistic’ language” (2005, p 2). Answers seemingly demonstrate that, in many cases, holistic practitioners consider spirituality and holism to be the same thing. The lack of any direct reference to religion from participants in this study as opposed to that of Gall et al. (2011), who used a general population sample, indicates that contemporary holistic practitioners view religion and spirituality as potentially complimentary but ultimately separate concepts. Thus, it would appear that religious practitioners do not see their own traditions as exceptionally relevant to their holistic understandings and experiences of spirituality.

This supports Løøv’s previous work on holistic fair attendees, in which he found Christian participants did “not feel very restricted by the institution to which they formally belong” and rather engaged in “a liberal mixing of Christian beliefs with alternative ideas and practices” (2016, p 75). Holism may then seem to represent a point of spiritual neutrality between religious and nonreligious worldviews alike. There are then several, likely interconnected, reasons as to why individuals in the contemporary holistic milieu tend to emphasise neural notions of spirituality over religion. Holistic individuals may be championing a form of open, balanced spirituality that they do not see religious affiliation as a requirement to experience. Some holistic individuals may simply wish

to be seen as more ‘mainstream’, or have their practices appeal to wider audiences, and thus seeking to promote the idea that the spirituality attached to their practice can be engaged with by anyone. In other cases, holistic individuals may be more explicitly rejecting an association with the more conservative, restrictive or oppressive beliefs and teachings connoted with religious tradition. This was explored further in the open answer section of the survey.

Participants were asked:

To what extent would you feel comfortable with any elements of religion and/or spirituality being incorporated into a holistic class or session that you attend? What would you be comfortable with, and what might deter you?

This question sought to more clearly identify where SBNR holistic practitioners appeared to ‘draw the line’ between the spirituality that they accept and the religion that they reject, and the reasons for doing so.

The most common theme across both SBNR and non-SBNR participants, expressed by both 27% of SBNR participants and 27% of all participants, was somewhat unsurprisingly simply the notion that any form of ‘spirituality’ was acceptable in holistic practice, whereas any form of ‘religion’ was not. However, for the majority of these individuals, what was actually meant by either of these terms in relation to their practice was not elaborated on e.g.

“Religious slant would deter me. Integrating spirituality should be part of the curriculum for any holistic class/session – it wouldn’t be holistic otherwise!”

This was even in the case of individuals that presented stringent dichotomies between the two concepts:

“I hate religion and would run a mile if it were included. I’d get bored and struggle to engage if there was no spiritual element.”

The few participants that did elaborate specifically referenced “mentioning...a certain ‘god’” or “venerating a particular entity” as examples of the aspects of religion that would deter them if incorporated into their holistic practice.

The following theme encompassed participants who were open to engage with religion and spirituality, provided that they perceived it to be nondogmatic and felt that they had personally autonomy in the matter. This category had the highest proportion of SBNR responses in comparison to other identities: 65% of the answers in this category came from SBNR practitioners, and 21% of SBNR participants chose this theme. Quack argues that this attitude comes from secularisation theories’ promotion of the idea of “secular-religious” equating to “liberal-dogmatic” (2014, p 443). These dichotomies may influence contemporary British holistic practitioners’ attitudes towards spirituality

and religion; many holistic practitioners, particularly those identifying as SBNR, may therefore avoid direct associations with typically ‘religious’ language (e.g. reference to ‘God’ or to the names of any specific religious traditions) in their practice as they consider it a challenge to holistic ideals of liberal spiritual freedom. Participants in this category expressed a dislike for “being preached at by a devout religious practitioner”, “proselytising”, “judgement”, or otherwise “having religion imposed upon you”.

Naturally, there were several crossover answers within this theme and the previous one; the most notable difference, however, was that a number of individuals in this category did not take issue with ‘religion’ in itself, but rather feared the idea of feeling subject to some form of organised or oppressive rules that they would not wish to follow. These participants did not see the incorporation of religion into their practice as being inherently problematic provided that they had personally chosen to engage with it. For example, one SBNR practitioner stressed their desire to explore religion through:

“Being given information that I ask for... (without having it) ... pushed onto me that their religion is the correct one to follow”.

This reflects a popular sentiment amongst participants in this section – an openness to engage with religious concepts through holistic practice, yet at a comfortable distance of one’s own choosing.

Holistic openness to religion is emphasised more in the fact that an additional 21% of SBNR individuals stated their comfort with any form of religion or spirituality being incorporated into their holistic sessions. Some interpreted this in a particularly postmodern sense, emphasising the existence of a universal spirituality experienced across any and no religious traditions:

“Spiritual things are always spiritual regardless of the context”; “We are all different and the same”.

Others sought more to emphasise that while they were unphased by the incorporation of religion into their practices, they still did not necessarily value it or align with it. Individuals on several occasions referred to themselves as being “non-judgemental” (towards the) “beliefs of others”. One individual stated that while religion should “certainly not be a barrier” to one’s engagement with holistic practice, this practice “should not be dependent on any religion”. Only a smaller 10% of SBNR participants explicitly referenced their comfort in engaging with specific religious traditions (as opposed to a generalised acceptance of ‘religion’), provided that they related directly to the practice at hand:

“What is most relevant to that discipline is acceptable.”

3% of participants specifically referenced an acceptance of ‘Eastern’ or ‘Earth’ religions – 2% in favour of Buddhism, and 1% of Paganism. Crucially, all were referenced in explicit contrast to the rejection of Christianity. It is likely that some SBNR practitioners in the ‘what is most relevant to that discipline is acceptable’ category, the ‘open as long as nondogmatic’ category, or indeed in the ‘accept spirituality, but not religion’ category, may also share these views. While most practitioners did not specify what they considered to be ‘relevant/nondogmatic/spirituality’ vs ‘irrelevant/dogmatic/’religion’, it is a possibility that (in the UK) the latter may be referring specifically to Christianity.

As McMahan stated, modern Western interpretations of Buddhism tend to inherently view it as “more of a spirituality than a religion” (2008, p 4), therefore it could be that a number of individuals in the categories who rejected religion were still accepting of those outside of Christianity. This is due to the fact that the terms ‘religion’ or ‘God’ and their subsequent associations with ‘dogma’ or ‘irrationality’ may be exclusively grounded in secularisation’s contexts that expanded up on earlier distinctions made between the specifically *Christian* sacred, and the nonreligious profane (see Asad, in Quack, 2014). In Britain, Christianity is also the most prominent religious identity (the 2019 British Social Attitudes Survey identified 38% of the British public as Christian (Curtice et al., 2019)). It is therefore likely that some British holistic practitioners would simply equate religion with Christianity, with their rejection of dogmatic religion reflecting this rejection of conservative Christian teaching.

The final category, ‘not comfortable with anything’ identified participants who rejected both religion and spirituality being incorporated into sessions. Interestingly,

the largest proportion – 58% – of these individuals identified themselves as religious, followed by 25% SBNR and 17% other not religious. Despite here rejecting both spirituality and religion in their practice, 17% of these individuals had previously stated that they personally interpreted their practice as being *both* spiritual and religious, and a further 58% as SBNR. This lack of comfort relating to spirituality or religion being incorporated into a holistic session consequently does not reflect a lack of comfort with *experiencing* spirituality or religion within this session. For these individuals, it therefore appeared that this spirituality and/or religion was interpreted as something private, that should be experienced on a personal level rather than incorporated into a session:

“It belongs in the person learning the therapy, not from the teacher”

Answers thus far demonstrate that the majority of holistic practitioners accept and experience spirituality in their practice, but do not indicate whether participants engage with their practice primarily *for* this spiritual experience. Participants were therefore asked to select their main reason for engaging in their practice. For SBNR practitioners, the most popular option was ‘to become more spiritually fulfilled’ at 32%, followed by 24% who selected ‘to improve/maintain mental health’, and a closely followed 20% selecting ‘to feel closer to a higher power’ – with one individual explicitly specifying under ‘other’ that they wished “to get closer to God”. Popular answers were consistent with those of the general sample (see *Figure 2* below). Largely, therefore, British holistic practitioners did emphasise the spiritual and

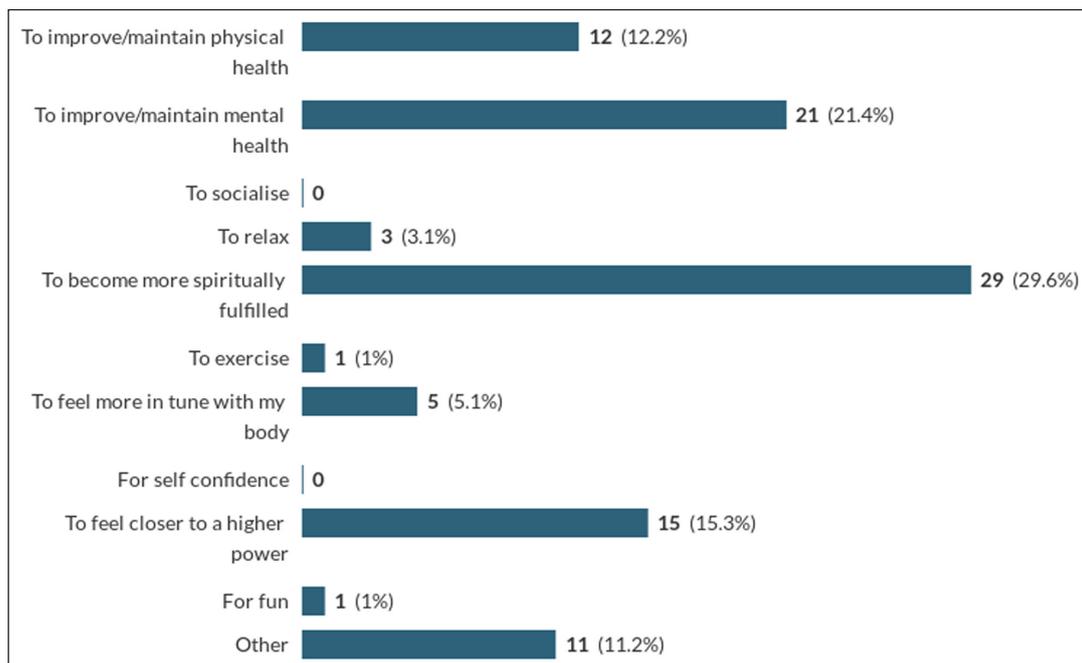


Figure 2 Which of these factors is your primary reason for engaging with your practice?

mental benefits (mind/spirit) of their practice over that of the physical (body).

- 3) What do holistic practitioners' experiences and understandings of spirituality indicate regarding belief in Britain?

Results so far largely indicate British holistic practitioners' shared desire to engage with spirituality through their practice. This raises the question as to whether the increasing popularity of holistic practices in Britain may indicate a wider spiritualisation trend, or even if holistic practice could be considered a form of spiritual movement in itself. Practitioners' emphasis on spirituality-without-religion in many ways echoes the 1960s NAM "right to explore spirituality in total freedom" (Bloom, 1991, xvi cited in Sutcliffe, 2000, p 19). More specifically, it mirrors the values held within the Human Potential branch of the NAM, which originated as a rebellion against both mainstream psychology and organised religion and began the widespread Western interest in holistic practice (Puttick, 2000, p 201). Yet, holism's continued expansion into these mainstream branches of medicine, psychology, health, and wellness, has arguably moved it beyond the 'new age' label. To gain insight from practitioners themselves, participants were asked their thoughts on the term 'new age' being attributed to their practices today.

Predictably, 94% of participants rejected 'new age' as a label for their practices. Like with 'religion', participants were primarily concerned that it stigmatised or misrepresented their values and practices. The first reason individuals gave for rejecting the label was the fact that they did not consider their practices as being 'new'. 33% of the overall sample referenced this – 20 SBNR and 13 non SBNR. Common examples were:

"The practices I engage with were developed by ancient cultures"; "Many of them are centuries old and should be acknowledged as preceding modern western interventions"

Almost all participants in this category used vague historical terms to define both their practices and the traditions and cultures that they originated from. These ambiguously 'old' traditions and practices were often presented in contrast with what they deemed to be the real 'new' practice of Western pharmaceutical medicine. The use of the West as a point of contrast often alluded to Orientalist (see Said, 1978) constructions of an ancient, exoticized 'East' vs advanced, soulless 'West'. Three participants specifically alluded to the modern practice of reiki (established only in the 1920s – see Rousseau & Lardry, 2011) as being "hundreds of years old" and "ancient". Additionally, as McMahan's notes, contemporary Western movements claiming to engage

in "the original, ancient source of Buddhism" through meditation are still doing so in response to and via modern method (2008, see p 244–246).

Despite these flaws, holistic practitioners' desire to belong to something 'old' and long-standing is important, indicating perhaps that practitioners do not wish to *entirely* disassociate their practices from religious discipline. Holistic practitioners thus may seek to separate their practice from *contemporary* religion yet at the same time may find some form of comfort or validity in their practice having some historical origin in religious tradition.

The second reason that participants gave for rejecting the 'new age' label was that they considered it to have negative, often derogatory, connotations. This was the most popular category, with 40% of the total participant sample and 39% of SBNR participants. There were some subtle differences between participants' answers. SBNR practitioners generally referenced their concern of outsiders associating their practice with 'hippy' new age stereotypes:

"It has the stereotype of being about fashion, crystals, and pseudo-intellectualism"; "It makes it easier to dismiss practices with this label as being dreamed up by hippies and not based in anything concrete"

Other not religious practitioners instead often emphasised concerns that the 'new age' label would specifically undermine the status of their practice as "*mainstream*" and "*scientific*" – associating them too much with "*wishy washy pseudoscience*" as opposed to "*academic and practical healthcare*".

Religious practitioners had less concern with not religious outsiders, rather that 'new age' labels would cause other religious individuals to stigmatise them. One Christian participant in particular highlighted this, stating their concern that other Christians would interpret holistic practice as "*a trend or ungodly*".

These answers challenge the notion that British holistic practitioners are a unified spiritual community or movement, as practitioners were evidently apprehensive towards being grouped together, thus risking association with 'the wrong kind' of spirituality. While all individuals seemingly feared stigma from those outsiders of holistic spheres, the exact stigmas feared were often different and sometimes contradicting. While one not religious individual expressed concerns that the new age would associate them with "*gurus wearing sandals*", a Buddhist participant expressed preference for association with those they deemed "*the philosophers of the past*". While a Christian participant expressed a desire to be disassociated from "*sect and brain wash*", a SBNR participant emphasised that "*there is nothing wrong with cults or religion*". Despite this, practitioners' shared rejection of the 'new age' label does demonstrate a

shared desire for their practices – and the spirituality experienced through them – to be considered legitimate in the public eye.

CONCLUSION

This research began with the aim to investigate the beliefs and characteristics of SBNR holistic practitioners in Britain, however due to the overwhelming similarities across participant responses it essentially became an exploration into the general British holistic practitioner community. One of the most considerable findings of this research was the fact that a substantial 74% of all participants interpreted their engagement with their practice as SBNR, even if they did not identify as such themselves. Due to this, the prevalence of SBNR identity appears not as significant as much as the implication that understandings and experiences of spirituality-without-religion are shared within the holistic milieu. This was highlighted further when finding that almost all participants, regardless of religious or nonreligious identity, defined spirituality with the use of holistic language signifiers and without reference to specific religious tradition. These findings suggest, in part, that contemporary British practitioners do not consider religious belief or identity as a barrier nor factor in the experience of spirituality through their practice. For many practitioners, however, the emphasis on spirituality-without-religion also reflects a more explicit rejection of their practices being associated with contemporary ‘Western’ religion.

One of the reasons for this strict dichotomy between spirituality and religion, as well as for the increase in SBNR identity, may be that ‘religion’ in Britain has become associated specifically with Christianity. The holistic milieu’s Orientalising of ‘Eastern’ religions may have resulted in their practices being more separated from any associated religious tradition. In this sense, and in a holistic context, understandings of ‘Eastern’ (and in some cases, ‘Earth-based’) religious teachings have been adapted into more accessible, open ‘spiritual’ practices that are not considered a challenge to one’s separate beliefs or (un)affiliations. While there certainly are holistic practitioners interested in Christian inspired practices, such as ‘Angel therapy’ (see Virtue, 1997), they have yet to have been revised to appeal to mainstream audiences in quite the same way. It is unclear what such a revision could look like, but it does pose the question – could any Christian-derived holistic practices ever become popular on a wider scale in the UK? And, if they did, would holistic practitioners’ perceptions of spirituality as being distinct from religion be challenged?

It appears that both nonreligious and religious holistic practitioners’ welcome concepts of spirituality, provided that they do not refer explicitly to religious tradition, nor require any committed religious affiliation. This work

has demonstrated that rigid attempts to separate the religious from the nonreligious based on ideology are not easily done as, at least within holistic practice, since the same experiences of spirituality appeal and are available to all. In any case, the necessity for research demonstrating the extent to which holistic practitioners’ beliefs regarding spirituality reflect that of the general UK population is crucial to determining whether these trends hold wider significance.

This survey has provided evidence that holistic practitioners in the UK largely interpret and experience spirituality-without-religion within their practices. Future research is needed to demonstrate that participation with holistic practices is increasing across the UK alongside nonreligious identity. One could then conclude that a unified spiritualisation of belief, for both the religious and the nonreligious, is occurring in Britain on a wider scale.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATION

Bethan Juliet Oake

MA dissertation for the University of Leeds, UK

REFERENCES

- Beninger, K.** 2017. Social media users’ views on the ethics of social media research. In: Sloan, L and Quan-Haase, A (eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social media research methods*, 57–73. Los Angeles: SAGE. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473983847.n5>
- Bryman, A.** 2008. *Social Research Methods*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Curtice, J, Clery, E, Perry, J, Phillips, M and Rahim, N.** (eds.) 2019. *British Social Attitudes: The 36th Report*. London: The National Centre for Social Research.
- Day, A and Lee, L.** 2014. Making Sense of Surveys and Censuses: Issues in religious self-identification. *Religion*, 44(3): 345–356. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2014.929833>
- Gall, TL, Malette, J and Guirguis-Younger, M.** 2011. Spirituality & Religiousness: A diversity of definitions. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 13(3): 158–181. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2011.593404>
- Headspace Inc.** 2021. *Headspace: Meditation & Sleep* (version 3.126.0). [Mobile app]. [Accessed 24 June 2021].
- Heelas, P and Woodhead, L.** 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why religion is giving way to spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lee, L.** 2012. Talking about a Revolution: Terminology for the new field of Non-religion Studies. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 27(1): 129–139. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2012.642742>

- Lee, L.** 2014. Secular or nonreligious? Investigating and interpreting generic ‘not religious’ categories and populations. *Religion*, 44(3): 466–482. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2014.904035>
- Lee, L.** 2015. *Recognizing the non-religious: reimagining the secular*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198736844.001.0001>
- Lindeman, M, van Elk, M, Lipsanen, J, Marin, P and Schjødt, U.** 2019. Religious Unbelief in Three Western European Countries: Identifying and characterizing unbeliever types using latent class analysis. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 29(3): 184–203. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508619.2019.1591140>
- Løvv, M.** 2016. Shoppers in the Spiritual Supermarket: A quantitative study of visitors to Scandinavia’s largest alternative fair. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 13(1): 67–84. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2016.1109875>
- Marx, R.** 2015. Accessibility Versus Integrity in Secular Mindfulness: A Buddhist commentary. *Mindfulness*, 6(5): 1153–1160. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-014-0366-3>
- McMahan, D.** 2008. *The making of Buddhist modernism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195183276.001.0001>
- Murphy, J.** 2017. Beyond “Religion” and “Spirituality”. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 39(1): 1–26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15736121-12341335>
- National Health Service (NHS).** 2018. *Complimentary and Alternative Medicine*. [Online]. [Accessed 24 June 2021]. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/complimentary-and-alternative-medicine/>.
- Navarro-Rivera, J and Kosmin, B.** Surveys and Questionnaires. In: Stausberg, M and Engler, S (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of research methods in the study of religion*, 395–420. London: Routledge.
- Oh, S and Sarkisian, N.** 2012. Spiritual individualism of engaged spirituality? Social implications of holistic spirituality among Mind-Body-Spirit practitioners. *Sociology of Religion*, 73(3): 299–322. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srr054>
- Puttick, E.** 2000. Personal Development: The spiritualisation and secularisation of the Human Potential Movement. In: Sutcliffe, S and Bowman, M (eds.), *Beyond New Age: Exploring alternative spirituality*, 201–219. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Quack, J.** 2014. Outline of a relational approach to ‘nonreligion’. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 26(4–5): 439–469. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341327>
- Rousseau, J and Lardry, JM.** 2011. The history of Reiki; L’histoire du Reiki. *Kinesitherapie*, 11(112): 28–31. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1779-0123\(11\)75096-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1779-0123(11)75096-3)
- Said, E.** 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge.
- Sharp, D, Lorenc, A, Little, P, Mercer, S, Hollinghurst, S, Feder, G and MacPherson, H.** 2018b. Complimentary Medicine and the NHS: Experiences of integration with UK primary care. *European Journal of Integrative Medicine*, 24: 8–16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eujim.2018.10.009>
- Sharp, D, Lorenc, A, Morris, R, Feder, G, Little, P, Hollinghurst, S, Mercer, S and MacPherson, H.** 2018a. Complementary Medicine Use, Views and Experiences – a national survey in England. *BJGP Open*, 2(4): 1–19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgpopen18X101614>
- Sointu, E and Woodhead, L.** 2008. Spirituality, gender, and expressive selfhood. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47(2): 259–276. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00406.x>
- Stratton, SP.** 2015. Mindfulness and Contemplation: Secular and religious traditions in Western context. *Counselling and Values*, 60(1): 100–118. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2015.00063.x>
- Sutcliffe, S.** 2000. ‘Wandering Stars’: Seekers and Gurus in the modern world. In: Sutcliffe, S and Bowman, M (eds.), *Beyond New Age: Exploring alternative spirituality*, 17–36. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Virtue, D.** 1997. *Angel Therapy: Healing messages for every area of your life*. California: Hay House.
- Willard, AK and Norenzayan, A.** 2017. “Spiritual but not religious”: Cognition, schizotypy, and conversion in alternative beliefs. *Cognition*, 165: 137–146. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2017.05.018>
- Woodhead, L.** 2017. The Rise of “No Religion”: Towards an Explanation. *Sociology of Religion*, 78(3): 247–262. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx031>

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Oake, BJ. 2021. The Relationship Between Holistic Practice and 'Spiritual but not Religious' Identity in the UK. *Secularism and Nonreligion*, 10: 9, pp. 1–14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/snr.150>

Submitted: 12 March 2021 Accepted: 27 July 2021 Published: 10 August 2021

COPYRIGHT:

© 2021 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Secularism and Nonreligion is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Ubiquity Press.

