



RELIGIONS

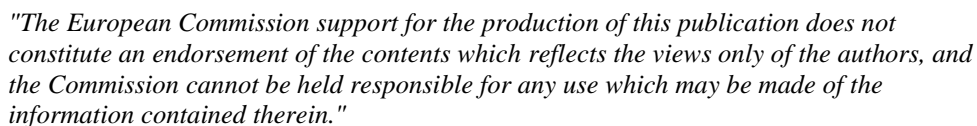
Modern paganism

Development of new inter-religious tools



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Prepared by: Nongovernmental organization "IUVENTA"



The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the cultural context of the research. It highlights the need for researchers to be sensitive to the values and beliefs of the communities they are studying. This is particularly important in the field of education, where cultural differences can significantly impact learning outcomes.

The second part of the paper focuses on the methodology used in the study. It describes the qualitative approach adopted, which involves in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The researchers aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of the participants, rather than testing a specific hypothesis.

The third part of the paper presents the findings of the study. It discusses the themes that emerged from the data, such as the role of family in education and the influence of community norms. The researchers found that there were significant differences in the way that different cultural groups viewed education and the role of the teacher.

The fourth part of the paper discusses the implications of the findings for practice. It suggests that educators should be aware of the cultural context of their students and tailor their teaching accordingly. This might involve using different teaching methods or incorporating cultural knowledge into the curriculum.

The final part of the paper concludes the study and offers some thoughts for future research. It suggests that further research is needed to explore the relationship between culture and education in different contexts.

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MODERN PAGANISM

Modern Paganism, also known as Contemporary Paganism and Neopaganism, is a collective term for new religious movements influenced by or claiming to be derived from the various historical pagan beliefs of pre-modern Europe, North Africa and the Near East. Although they do share similarities, contemporary Pagan religious movements are diverse, and no single set of beliefs, practices or texts are shared by them all.

Polytheism, animism and pantheism are common features in Pagan theology. Rituals take place in both public and in private domestic settings.

For some Pagan groups, ethnicity is central to their religion, and they often restrict membership to those who are of the same ethnic group as themselves.

Alternately, other Pagan groups allow individuals of any ethnicity to join them, expressing the view that the gods and goddesses of a particular region can call anyone to their worship. Sometimes such individuals express the view that they feel a particular affinity for the pre-Christian belief systems of a particular region with which they have no ethnic link because they themselves are the reincarnation of an individual from that society. There is a greater focus on ethnicity within the Pagan movements of continental Europe in contrast to those in North America and the British Isles. Such ethnic Paganisms have varyingly been seen as responses to concerns regarding foreign colonizing ideologies, globalization, cosmopolitanism, and anxieties about cultural erosion. Ethnically restricted groups will face challenges to their attitudes as Eastern and Northern Europe become increasingly ethnically diverse through migration and inter-marriage.

Another division within modern Paganism rests on differing attitudes to the source material surrounding pre-Christian belief systems.

Some Pagans distinguish their beliefs and practices as a form of religious naturalism, embracing a naturalistic worldview. This grouping includes Humanistic Pagans and Atheopagans. Many of these naturalistic Pagans aim for an explicitly nature-centered or ecocentric practice.

Beliefs and practices vary widely among different Pagan groups; however, there are a series of core principles common to most, if not all, forms of modern paganism.

One principle of the Pagan movement is polytheism, the belief in and veneration of multiple gods and/or goddesses. Within the Pagan movement, there can be found many deities, both male and female, who have various associations and embody forces of nature, aspects of culture, and facets of human psychology. These deities are typically depicted in human form, and are viewed as having human faults. They are therefore not seen as perfect, but rather are venerated as being wise and powerful. Pagans feel that this understanding of the gods reflected the dynamics of life on Earth, allowing for the expression of humor.

A key part of most Pagan worldviews is the holistic concept of a universe that is interconnected. This is connected with a belief in either pantheism or panentheism. In both beliefs divinity and the material and/or spiritual universe are one. For pagans, pantheism means that "divinity is inseparable from nature and that deity is immanent in nature".

Another pivotal belief in the contemporary Pagan movement is that of animism.

Pagan ritual can take place in both a public and private setting. Contemporary Pagan ritual is typically geared towards "facilitating altered states of awareness or shifting mind-sets". In order to induce such altered states of consciousness, pagans utilize such elements

as drumming, visualization, chanting, singing, dancing, and meditation.

Domestic worship typically takes place in the home and is carried out by either an individual or family group. It typically involves offerings – including bread, cake, flowers, fruit, milk, beer, or wine – being given to images of deities, often accompanied with prayers and songs and the lighting of candles and incense.

Although animal sacrifice was a common part of pre-Christian ritual in Europe, it is rarely practiced in contemporary Paganism.

The belief in magical rituals and spells is held by a "significant number" of contemporary Pagans. Among those who believe in magic, there are a variety of different views as to what magic is.

Among those who practice magic are Wiccans, those who identify as Neopagan Witches, and practitioners of some forms of revivalist Neo-druidism, the rituals of whom are at least partially based upon those of ceremonial magic and freemasonry.

Pagans have no founding father or holy book, but derive their teachings from a variety of sources, including ancient mythology and a study of nature. Therefore Pagan groups tend to see all morality as being relative to the situation. It is the individual's responsibility to make ethical choices for themselves, whilst trying to live compassionate lives.

There are many Pagans around, but because of misunderstanding about their beliefs they sometimes choose to be anonymous. For example, Pagans do not believe in a devil.

There are many different branches within Paganism, such as Heathenry, Druidism, Wicca and Shamanism. Pagans have no churches, but a network of small inter-related traditions. Some also make use of the large national contact groups, such as the Pagan Federation. Some Pagans will want to give you the name of their spiritual adviser, who can give you guidance about their needs.

CHILDREN AND CONVERSION

Since Pagans stress the importance of personal freedom, they think people should choose their own spiritual path. Therefore the children of Pagans are allowed to decide for themselves. Proselytising (by Pagans and non-Pagans alike) is regarded as inappropriate and ill-mannered.

DEATH

Many Pagans allow the corpse to "rest" for three nights before the funeral, to allow the soul to depart. The corpse is normally kept at home for the wake. Pagans usually have no objections to autopsies, if they are considered necessary. Allowing the body to rest inviolate for three nights will obviously render organs useless for donation. However, the choice to donate body parts is an individual one and each Pagan should make their wishes known on this subject well in advance.

In cases of terminal illness, Pagans prefer a natural death with dignity to being kept alive indefinitely by drugs. Such a death is preferred to take place at home, with friends and loved ones. Doctors should not try to extend the life of a Pagan patient who would prefer to die at home.

Most Pagans believe in reincarnation.

DIET

Many Pagans are vegetarian, but this is an individual choice and hospital authorities would be automatically informed upon admission. As a central element of many Pagan celebrations is drinking ale or wine and eating bread, attention must be given to "nil by mouth" advice. Those pagans who eat meat would be concerned that the animals had been reared kindly and killed humanely.

FESTIVALS

Pagans celebrate a variety of festivals, depending upon their tradition. Usually these are based around agricultural, solar or lunar tides. In hospital, their main requirement will be privacy, and advice on arranging a time free of ward rounds to observe the festival. The different Pagan traditions celebrate different festivals, but some, particularly Wiccans, celebrate these: Imbolc (Feb 2), Eostre at the Spring Equinox (Mar 21), Beltane (May 1), the Midsummer Solstice (Jun 21/2), Lammas at the Harvest Season (Aug 2), the Autumn Equinox (Sep 21), Samhain (Oct 31), Yule at the Winter Solstice (Dec 21/2). Festivals are often observed on the night leading up to the day concerned (e.g., for Beltane, sunset on 30 April to sunrise on May 1).

GREETING

There are no formal styles of greeting, though Pagans generally tend to be physically demonstrative with each other.

IN A PAGAN HOME

One might expect to see statuary of various gods, connected back to those cultures to which the individual Pagan is drawn (Ancient Egypt, Greece, the Heathen Tribelands, Ancient Britain etc.) Pictures and iconography are very common too, and various shrines or altars to different deities might be seen around the house. Sometimes the icons and statues may have a strongly erotic element, which could surprise some visitors. For a visitor to handle religious items would be inappropriate, but the householder will probably be happy to answer any questions as to the nature of items. Pets are a common feature of Pagan homes.

MARRIAGE

The Pagan marriage ceremony is called a hand-fasting. The usual form is this: initially Pagans marry for a year and a day, at the end of which time they can renew their vows. Paganism is fully accepting of same-sex marriages. Though such marriages are not recognised in law (except in Scotland), the rights of the marital partner to be with their spouse should be acknowledged.

MEDICINE

Homeopathic and other such remedies are commonly used by Pagans. Patients will make doctors aware of any such remedies that they are taking and these should be integrated with mainstream treatments, not denigrated or rejected. Some Pagan patients may wish to be attended by a spiritual healer while in hospital. Such healings could take place within a quiet room, or more simply by drawing the curtains round the bed to give privacy both to the Pagan and to other patients who might consider such behavior bizarre.

Pagans believe in a spirit-world, and often feel that some psychoactive drugs can disturb their interactions with that world. Except in the case of emergencies, doctors should always make clear to the patient any psychoactive side effects of medication before drugs are administered. The patient must then be allowed the right to refuse medication if the side-effects are considered undesirable. A Pagan patient who reports seeing spirits (perhaps the soul of a dead relative, or some form of nature spirit) is not necessarily exhibiting signs of mental disturbance or distress, nor having a bad drug-reaction. Within Paganism such spiritual visions are considered quite normal, and even desirable.

SYMBOLS

Many Pagans use ritual weapons, such as a knife (known as an athame) in their personal worship. Such are kept for purely symbolic purposes but may cause some concern over security. In hospital this can be got round by the provision of a secure bedside locker.

There may be talismans and objects of reverence which Pagan patients wish to wear. The pentagram is a well-known Pagan symbol, representing the five elements of earth, air, fire, water and spirit. Please behave sensitively when requesting a Pagan to remove jewellery.

WORSHIP

Pagans prefer to worship out of doors, communing with nature in a peaceful outdoor setting. Where hospitals have a garden area, the patient should be made aware of its existence and allowed visits, where illness permits.

Pagan worship seeks to honour the divine powers and to bring the participants in harmony with them, to celebrate the turning of the seasons, and to mark the transitions of human life with appropriate rites of passage. Rituals usually begin with the marking of sacred space. They may involve meditation, chanting, music, prayer, dance, poetry, drama and the sharing of food and drink.

Part of some Pagan traditions is the performance of monthly ceremonies based round the lunar cycle. These rituals are performed during the hours of darkness, which may cause some conflict with hospital desires for regimented curfews. With tactful negotiations, both parties can come to a mutual agreement.

➤ **SYNCRETIC**

✓ **ADONISM**

Adonism was an early neopagan religion. It was created in 1925 by a German occultist named Franz Sattler, but (setting a precedent Gerald Gardner and many others would follow) Sattler claimed it to be an ancient religion. Adonism was polytheistic, but mostly centered around the worship of Adonis. The other four Adonist deities included Belus, Bilitis, Molchos and Dido.

The primary way in which Adonis and Dido are celebrated in Adonistic religious practice is by the sensual enjoyment of sexual intercourse, both of the heterosexual and homosexual varieties. Adonism also holds to a great belief in tolerance for other human beings, with Sättler stating that "The most important virtue of the Adonist is tolerance and the area in which he can practice it is boundless", and also holding to a personal maxim: "To understand everything means to pardon everything."

✓ **CHURCH OF ALL WORLDS**



Church of All Worlds - Dearinth – The official sigil

The Church of All Worlds (CAW) is an American Neopagan religious group whose stated mission is to evolve a network of information, mythology, and experience that provides a context and stimulus for reawakening Gaia and reuniting her children through tribal community dedicated to responsible stewardship and evolving consciousness. It is based in Cotati, California.

The key founder of CAW is Oberon Zell-Ravenheart, who serves the Church as "Primate", later along with his wife, Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart (d. 2014), designated High Priestess. CAW was formed in 1962, evolving from a group of friends and lovers who were in part inspired by a fictional religion of the same name in the science fiction novel *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) by Robert A. Heinlein; the church's mythology includes science fiction to this day.

CAW's members, called Waterkin, espouse Paganism, but the Church is not a belief-based religion. Members experience Divinity and honor these experiences while also respecting the views of others. They recognize "Gaea," the Earth Mother Goddess and the Father God, as well as the realm of Faeries and the deities of many other pantheons. Many of their ritual celebrations are centered on the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece.

✓ CHURCH OF APHRODITE

The Church of Aphrodite is a Neopagan religious group founded in 1938 by Gleb Botkin (1900–1969), a Russian émigré to the United States.

Monotheistic in structure, the Church believes in a singular female Goddess, who is named after the ancient Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite.

As it espouses a monotheistic, syncretic faith, its beliefs were not consistent with the modern reconstructionist Hellenic religion of Hellenism but closer to that of (Dianic) Wicca.

✓ FERAFERIA

Feraferia is a Neopagan religion with a community that began in Southern California and now spans the United States and parts of Europe. Members of this community practice Hellenic-inspired Goddess worship.

The founder of the group, Fredrick McLaren Charles Adams II, experienced an ecstatic religious conversion in 1956 when he became viscerally certain of the primacy of the Goddess. Adams was a visionary, an artist, and a scholar.

Feraferia was established in 1967 as a nonprofit corporation in the State of California, and as such, is one of the oldest organizations of Neopaganism in the United States. The name Feraferia is a combination of the Latin root words fera, denoting “wild” or “feral,” and feria, or “festival.” The religion is based on the celebration of wild nature with a focus on the maiden Goddess Kore.

✓ KOSHINTO

Ko-Shintō refers to the original animism of Jōmon period Japan which is the alleged basis of modern Shinto. The search for traces of Koshintō began with Restoration Shinto in the Edo period. Some movements which claim to have discovered this primeval way of thought are Oomoto, Izumo-taishakyo, and Shinrikyō.

The Sino-Japanese word ko means "ancient or old"; shin from Chinese shen, means "spiritual force" or simply "spirit", often translated as "deity" or "god"; and tō from Chinese Tao, means "The Way". Thus Koshintō literally means the "Ancient Way of the Gods". The term Shinto itself originated in the 6th century (to distinguish it from continental ideas such as Buddhism and Taoism then being introduced), so paradoxically, the reconstructed Koshintō predates any use of the word Shinto.

✓ NEO-DRUIDISM

Neo-Druidism or Neo-Druidry, commonly referred to as Druidry by many adherents, is a form of modern spirituality or religion that generally promotes harmony and worship of nature, and respect for all beings, including the environment. Many forms of modern Druidry are neopagan religions, whereas some are instead seen as philosophies that are not necessarily religious in nature. Originating in Britain during the 18th century, Druidry was originally a cultural movement, only gaining religious or spiritual connotations in the 19th century.

The core principle of Druidry is respect and veneration of nature. Another prominent belief among modern Druids is the veneration of ancestors, particularly those who belonged to prehistoric societies.

Neo-Druidic beliefs vary widely, and there is no set dogma or belief system followed by all adherents. Indeed, it is a key component of many Druidic groups that there should not be strict dogmas.

There is no central authority over the entire movement, nor any central religious text or religious leader.

Core ideas shared by many Druids, according to Emma Restall Orr, the founder of The Druid Network, include "honouring of the ancestors and honouring of the land".

Druidry largely revolves around the veneration of nature. Many Druids are animists. Most Druids see the aspects of nature as imbued with spirit or soul, whether literally or metaphorically. Some Druids consider animals and plants to be members, like the deities of the Celts, of a *túath*, or tribe and therefore honored.

The theology of the modern Druidic movement is inherently nature-based, equating divinity with the natural world. However, the specifics of Druidry have changed over the centuries, from a God-centred monotheistic tradition to a Goddess-centred polytheistic tradition. Since Druidry is very diverse, each of these strands still coexist side by side in the Druid milieu.

Pagan Druids today worship a number of different gods and goddesses.

CEREMONIES

The practices of modern Druids typically take place outside, in the daylight, in what is described as "the eye of the sun". In some cases, they instead perform their rites indoors, or during the night. Most Druids perform ceremonies within a circle around an altar or central fire. Neo-druids often meet and practice in groups called variously "groves" or "henges." Sometimes they meet at pre-Celtic stone circles and other megaliths, which since the romantic revival have been associated in the popular imagination with the ancient druids. At the Summer solstice, a Neo-druidic ritual is notably held at Stonehenge in England. Another particularly sacred place is Glastonbury in southern England. In parts of the world beyond the range of the original Celtic tribes in Europe and the pre-Celtic megalithic cultures, modern Druids seek an understanding of the sacred qualities of landscape and place.

When performing rituals, some modern Druids wear ceremonial cloaks and robes, which in some cases imitate the Iron Age style of the Celts. In some orders, robes or tabards of different colors are used to indicate the grade of the druid within the order. In the case of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, the colors blue, green, and white are respectively assigned to these grades. Some modern Druids also use ritual staves, a symbolic magical instrument long associated with both Druids and wizards generally. Many modern Druids

do not adopt any ceremonial garb.

FESTIVALS

Most adherents of Neo-druidism observe eight spiritual festivals a year, which are collectively known as the Wheel of the Year. In some cases groups attempt to revive folkloric European festivals and their accompanying traditions. In other cases the rites are modern inventions, inspired by "the spirit of what they believe was the religious practice of pre-Roman Britain."

Four of these are solar festivals, being positioned at the solstices and equinoxes; these are largely inspired by Germanic paganism. The other four are the "Celtic" festivals, the crossquarter days inspired by modern interpretations of ancient Celtic polytheism.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsR7rSiLgSc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Nfe6-aiQRA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4BAarLfcpe>

■ Ár nDraíocht Féin



Logo of A Druid Fellowship, Inc. (ADF)

Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc. (otherwise known simply as ADF) is a non-profit religious organization dedicated to the study and further development of modern Neodruidism.

ADF is a neodruidic organization practicing a unique tradition of Neopagan Druidry and is mostly U.S.-based, with members and groups in most states and in several other countries as well. During the years 2000 through 2010 to the present, ADF's membership has remained well over 1000 persons, making it the largest public form of definitively Neopagan Druidism in the USA.

Despite the Gaelic name, ADF Druidry actually encompasses all Indo-European religions, which means that while most of the organization is focused on Celtic practices, there are also Germanic, Hellenic, Roman, Slavic and Vedic religious practices in ADF. In that sense, ADF uses the term Druid as "a member of the Indo-European intelligentsia, especially of the clergy" or even more broadly as "a worshipper of Indo-European gods and goddesses". Strictly speaking, members of ADF are not only "druids", but are also members of related Indo-European religions which may have other terms for people in such clergy roles (e.g., godhi for clergy of ancient Norse religions).

ADF promotes a neo-druidism in which worshipers perform rituals honoring three kinds of entities: gods and goddesses, ancestors (honored dead), and nature spirits. Examples of gods and goddesses worshipped include Lugh, Cernunnos, the Morrigan, Thor, Freya, Apollo, Athena, Vesta, Ceres, and many other ancient, pre-Christian, Indo-European deities. Although various pantheons or "hearth cultures" are allowed, "mixing and matching" unrelated deities within a single rite is discouraged. Ancestors usually refers to

the direct blood ancestors of the worshiper, but can include other honored dead (friends, mythological heroes, etc.), too. Nature spirits includes general animal (totem) spirits as well as whatever spirits are present in the place of worship, such as a local river spirit. Most ADF rituals occur outdoors.

ADF practice straddles the difficult middle ground between pure reconstructionism (attempting to recreate ancient practices as exactly as possible) and a less exclusive form of Neopaganism (an umbrella term for the loose agglomeration of pagan-based religions which arose in the early to middle 20th century, the most popular of which is Wicca).

ADF forbids any form of blood sacrifice in its official rituals, because even if it were appropriate in relation to one's ancestors (who may have lived in agrarian societies that regularly killed their own food), it is not considered appropriate in modern society.

■ Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids



The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids (OBOD) logo

The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids or OBOD is a Neo-Druidic organisation based in England, but based in part on the Welsh Gorsedd of Bards. It has grown to become a dynamic druid organisation, with members in all parts of the world.

OBOD was founded in 1964 as a split from the Ancient Druid Order with Ross Nichols as its leader.

The teachings of the Order could be seen as typical of Neo-druidism today, in that it teaches its followers the belief of the sanctity of nature and a belief in the Otherworld. Although its teaching draws upon Celtic sources, it also incorporates ideas from modern psychology and the Human Potential movement, and membership is open to followers of any religion.

Individual Druids and the groups that they practice with are allowed to decide their own pantheons. Many members follow Celtic pantheons, usually relating to the four pre-Christian Celtic nations of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, as well as related beliefs and practices, such as ancestral worship, naturism, polytheism and Spiritualism. The Order's official teachings, however, are presented ecumenically as a spiritual philosophy compatible with many religious beliefs, and other members hold monotheistic, pantheistic, atheistic, and other views. Many OBOD Druids identify as Pagan, but others identify as Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, or many other religions, while some follow Druidry as their primary or only spiritual path.

■ Reformed Druids of North America



Reformed Druids of North America – symbol

The Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA) is an American Neo-Druidic organization. It was formed in 1963 at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota as a humorous protest against the college's required attendance of religious services.

This original congregation is called the Carleton Grove, sometimes the Mother Grove.

There are over 40 groves and proto-groves of the RDNA throughout the United States and Canada. As of 2005 there were approximately 400 grove members, between 2500 and 4000 Druids, and about 100 priests and priestesses.

In accord with the Basic Tenets, Reformed Druid worship is directed toward Nature. Services involve gathering in a wooded place periodically (the original group met weekly during warm weather) and on the festival days of Northern European Pagan tradition. Services typically include:

- ✓ The ritual consumption of "spirits" (Scotch whisky blended with water), called "the Waters-of-Life".
- ✓ The singing of religious songs.
- ✓ The performance of ceremonial chanting.
- ✓ Prayers and meditations.

The written liturgy calls for a "sacrifice of life". An early disagreement, recounted in The Druid Chronicles, was resolved by limiting the sacrifice to plant life, whence the term "Reformed" was adopted as part of the group's name.

According to ancient Druid custom, the officiating Druids, and others who so wish, traditionally wear long white robes, the robe of the Arch-Druid having a distinctive decoration or color. The Waters-of-Life are usually passed to all present as a symbol of the link man has with Nature. Incantation recalling ancient Celtic mythology is also used. In order to focus attention on Nature, various aspects of it retain the names of corresponding Celtic gods and goddesses.

✓ NEOSHAMANISM

Neoshamanism refers to "new" forms of shamanism, or methods of seeking visions or healing. Neoshamanism comprises an eclectic range of beliefs and practices that involve attempts to attain altered states and communicate with a spirit world. Neoshamanic systems may not resemble traditional forms of shamanism. Some have been invented by individual practitioners, though many borrow or gain inspiration from a variety of different indigenous cultures. In particular, indigenous cultures of the Americas have been influential.

Neoshamanism is not a single, cohesive belief system, but a collective term for many philosophies and activities. However, certain generalities may be drawn between adherents. Most believe in spirits and pursue contact with the "spirit-world" in altered states of consciousness which they achieve through drumming, dance, or the use of entheogens. Most systems might be described as existing somewhere on the animism/pantheism spectrum. Some neoshamans were not trained by any traditional shaman or member of any American indigenous culture, but rather learn independently from books and experimentation. Many attend New Age workshops and retreats, where they study a wide variety of ideas and techniques, both new and old.

According to York (2001) one difference between neoshamanism and traditional shamanism is the role of fear. Neoshamanism and its New Age relations tend to dismiss the existence of evil, fear, and failure. "In traditional shamanism, the shaman's initiation is an ordeal involving pain, hardship and terror. New Age, by contrast is a religious perspective that denies the ultimately [sic] reality of the negative, and this would devalue the role of fear as well."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYQWkgWIYYg>

✓ NEO-VÖLKISCH MOVEMENT

✓ TECHNOPAGANISM

Technopaganism is an umbrella term that characterizes several different beliefs and practices in Neopaganism (which includes faiths such as Neo-druidry) in reference to the place of technology in Neopagan practice.

When used to describe belief systems, technopaganism focuses on the spiritual side of technology. This can include the belief that technological items and artifacts of modern living - such as buildings, roads, parks, cars, and other such items - have pseudo-spirits, or totem spirits, of their own. This also extends to cities.

One belief that faces substantial objections is that the Internet itself is attaining a unique spirit. Indeed, it is the stated objective of the creator of VRML to bring about the merging of the spiritual world with the physical world.

✓ WICCA



Wicca, also termed Pagan Witchcraft, is a contemporary Pagan new religious movement. It was developed in England during the first half of the 20th century by Gerald Gardner, a retired British civil servant. Wicca draws upon a diverse set of ancient pagan and 20th-century hermetic motifs for its theological structure and ritual practices.

Wicca has no central authority. Its traditional core beliefs, principles and practices were originally outlined in the 1940s and 1950s by Gardner and Doreen Valiente, both in published books as well as in secret written and oral teachings passed along to their initiates. There are many variations on the core structure, and the religion grows and evolves over time. It is divided into a number of diverse lineages, sects and denominations, referred to as traditions, each with its own organisational structure and level of centralisation. Due to its decentralized nature, there is some disagreement over what actually constitutes Wicca. Some traditions, collectively referred to as British Traditional Wicca, strictly follow the initiatory lineage of Gardner and consider the term Wicca to apply only to similar traditions, but not to newer, eclectic traditions.

BELIEFS

There are many different traditions of Wicca, yet many are common beliefs that are shared by all Wiccans, such as the afterlife, magic, and morality.

Wicca is typically duotheistic, worshipping a Goddess and a God. These are traditionally viewed as the Moon Goddess and the Horned God, respectively. These deities may be regarded in a henotheistic way, as having many different divine aspects which can in turn be identified with many diverse pagan deities from different historical pantheons. For this reason, they are sometimes referred to as the "Great Goddess" and the "Great Horned God", with the adjective "great" connoting a deity that contains many other deities within their own nature. These two deities are sometimes viewed as facets of a greater pantheistic divinity, which is regarded as an impersonal force or process rather than a personal deity. While duotheism or bitheism is traditional in Wicca, broader Wiccan beliefs range from polytheism to pantheism or monism, even to Goddess monotheism.

AFTERLIFE

Belief in the afterlife varies among Wiccans, and does not occupy a central place within the religion. Although there are practitioners who do not believe in any form of afterlife, it is nevertheless a common belief among Wiccans that human beings have a spirit or soul that survives bodily death.

Although not accepted by all Wiccans, a belief in reincarnation is the dominant afterlife belief within Wicca, having been originally espoused by Gardner. Understandings of how the cycle of reincarnation operates differ among practitioners; the prominent Wiccan Raymond Buckland for instance insisted that the souls of humans would only ever incarnate into human bodies, whereas other Wiccans believe that the soul of a human can incarnate into any other life form. There is also a common Wiccan belief that any Witches will come to be reincarnated as future Witches, an idea originally expressed by Gardner.

MAGIC

Many Wiccans believe in magic, a manipulative force exercised through the practice of witchcraft or sorcery. Many Wiccans believe magic to be a law of nature, as yet misunderstood or disregarded by contemporary science, and as such they do not view it as being supernatural, but a part of what Leo Martello calls the "super powers that reside in the natural". Some Wiccans believe that magic is simply making full use of the five senses in order to achieve surprising results, whilst other Wiccans do not claim to know how magic works, merely believing that it does because they have observed it to be so.

During ritual practices, which are often staged in a sacred circle, Wiccans cast spells or "workings" intended to bring about real changes in the physical world. Common Wiccan spells include those used for healing, for protection, fertility, or to banish negative influences. Many early Wiccans, such as Alex Sanders, Sybil Leek and Alex Winfield, referred to their own magic as "white magic", which contrasted with "black magic", which they associated with evil and Satanism. Some modern Wiccans however have stopped using the white-black magic and left-right hand path dichotomies, arguing for instance that the colour black should not necessarily have any associations with evil.

MORALITY

The Wiccan Rede

The main Wiccan moral teaching is called the Wiccan Rede. The word rede means "advice" or "council" in Old German. "An harm ye none, do what ye will" is the very basic Wiccan Rede, which means, "Do what you want to do, but do not harm anything in the process." This means that you must think about how your actions will affect other beings and yourself.

The Rule of Threefold Return

There is a rule in Wicca that is called "the rule of threefold return" or "the threefold rule" or "the rule of three", or called equivalent names that use the word "law" instead of "rule". The rule of threefold return is a rule of conduct, which states that a person must return three times the benefit or harm that other individuals do to them, though returning three times harm contradicts the wiccan rede. The rule of threefold return is revealed to second-degree initiates (though they are usually already familiar with it) during the second-degree initiation ritual, in which the initiator scourges the initiate, and then the initiate returns three times the number of scourgings to the initiator. That second-degree initiation ritual, along with the threefold rule within it, were made public by Gerald Gardner's 1949 book *High Magic's Aid*, in chapter 17.

In 1986, a wiccan named Raymond Buckland, through his popular wiccan book *Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft*, created a new definition for the rule of threefold return. In Buckland's definition, the rule of threefold return is not a rule of conduct, but a law of karma, which states that every beneficial action or harmful action that a person does returns to them three times as powerful. Buckland's definition of the threefold rule became more well-known than the original definition of the threefold rule.

FIVE ELEMENTS

Many traditions hold a belief in the five classical elements, although they are seen as symbolic as representations of the phases of matter. These five elements are invoked during many magical rituals, notably when consecrating a magic circle. The five elements are air, fire, water, earth, and aether (or spirit).

The five elements are symbolised by the five points of the pentagram, the most prominently used symbol of Wicca.

RITUAL PRACTICES

The practice of Wicca often involves the ritual practice of magic, ranging from the "low magic" or "folk magic" of shamanism and witchcraft to more elaborate and complex rites influenced by the ceremonial magic of the Western Hermetic Tradition.

There are many rituals within Wicca that are used when celebrating the Sabbats, worshipping the deities and working magic. Often these take place on a full moon, or in some cases a new moon, which is known as an Esbat. In typical rites, the coven or solitary assembles inside a ritually cast and purified magic circle. Casting the circle may involve the invocation of the "Guardians" of the cardinal points, alongside their respective classical elements; air, fire, water and earth. Once the circle is cast, a seasonal ritual may be performed, prayers to the God and Goddess are said, and spells are sometimes worked; these may include various forms of 'raising energy', including raising a cone of power for the purposes of sending healing or other magic to persons outside of the sacred space.

The classical ritual scheme in British Traditional Wicca traditions is:

- Purification of the sacred space and the participants

- Casting the circle

- Calling of the elemental quarters

- Cone of power

- Drawing down the Gods

- Spellcasting

- Great Rite

- Wine, cakes, chanting, dancing, games

- Farewell to the quarters and participants

These rites often include a special set of magical tools. These usually include a knife called an athame, a wand, a pentacle and a chalice, but other tools include a broomstick known as a besom, a cauldron, candles, incense and a curved blade known as a boline. An altar is usually present in the circle, on which ritual tools are placed and representations of the God and the Goddess may be displayed. Before entering the circle, some traditions fast for the day, and/or ritually bathe. After a ritual has finished, the God, Goddess and Guardians are thanked, the directions are dismissed and the circle is closed.

ALTARS

Many Wiccans have special places at home where they perform rituals, magic, and worship. These places are called altars. Originally, there was only one altar that was used by the coven, when the coven was gathered. But as solitary wiccan practice became more popular, wiccans started to use personal altars.

Wiccans put holy and special objects on their altars, such as the following items:

- ✓ A pentacle. A wiccan pentacle is a rigid disk, the size of a small saucer, that has a pentagram on it which spans across the disk. A wiccan pentacle may be made of any of a variety of materials, such as wood, ceramics, or metal. In wiccan rituals, the face of the pentacle is shown to the four cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west), so as to show the pentacle to the "lords of the watchtowers", which are believed to be in those directions.
- ✓ An athame (pronounced ah-thah-may). This is a magical knife that is used in rituals. An athame traditionally has a black handle, but not every one does. It is never used to cut anything physical, but is used to make a circular 'cut' through the air, to cast the magic circle. In the 'cakes and wine' ritual and the symbolic 'great rite' ritual, the athame is used to symbolize the male penis.
- ✓ A wand. This is normally wooden, but can also be glass, metal, or clay. It might

also have decorations such as crystals, paint, ribbons, or wire. It is traditional for it to be the length from your elbow to your wrist. It is used to direct magical energy.

- ✓ A chalice. This is a cup that is used in two rituals. People drink from it during the 'cakes and wine' ritual. In the 'cakes and wine' ritual and the symbolic 'great rite' ritual, the chalice is used to symbolize the female vagina.

Some Wiccans put other objects on their altars, such as statues of gods or goddesses, a bell, candles, incense, and/or a besom (an old-fashioned broom that is made of all-natural materials). A besom is often used to "sweep" away negative energy or spirits.

Those objects that are common on solitary altars are derived from the various objects that are used in the wiccan group rituals. Those ritual objects include a sword (also called a 'magic sword'), a black-handled knife (called an athame), a bowl containing water, a bowl containing salt, an asperger (an object that sprinkles water), candles, a bell, a white-handled knife (which is now usually called a 'boline', due to being confused with a different object), a wand, a cup (also called a chalice), a pentacle, a censer (a container that burns incense), a scourge (a short whip with several whipping cords), and binding cords.

LITURGICAL TEXTS

One of Wicca's best known liturgical texts is "The Charge of the Goddess". The most commonly used version used by Wiccans today is the rescension of Doreen Valiente, who developed it from Gardner's version.

WICCAN HOLIDAYS

Wiccans have two types of holidays. Wiccan celebrations encompass both the cycles of the Moon, known as Esbats and commonly associated with the Goddess (female deity), and the cycles of the Sun, seasonally based festivals known as Sabbats and commonly associated with the Horned God (male deity).

There are eight sabbat holidays throughout the year. As the name suggests, full moon esbats take place during a full moon, so there are twelve or thirteen of them per year. Many post-Gardnerian wiccans use the neo-druidic term 'wheel of the year' to refer to the cycle of eight sabbats.

RITE OF PASSAGE

Various rites of passage can be found within Wicca. Perhaps the most significant of these is an initiation ritual, through which somebody joins the Craft and becomes a Wiccan.

In BTW, initiation only accepts someone into the first degree. To proceed to the second degree, an initiate has to go through another ceremony, in which they name and describe the uses of the ritual tools and implements. It is also at this ceremony that they are given their craft name. By holding the rank of second degree, a BTW is considered capable of initiating others into the Craft, or founding their own semi-autonomous covens. The third degree is the highest in BTW, and it involves the participation of the Great Rite, either actual or symbolically, and in some cases ritual flagellation, which is a rite often dispensed with due to its sado-masochistic overtones. By holding this rank, an initiate is considered capable of forming covens that are entirely autonomous of their parent coven.

Handfasting

Handfasting is another celebration held by Wiccans, and is the commonly used term for their weddings. Some Wiccans observe the practice of a trial marriage for a year and a day, which some traditions hold should be contracted on the Sabbat of Lughnasadh, as this was the traditional time for trial, "Telltown marriages" among the Irish. A common

marriage vow in Wicca is "for as long as love lasts" instead of the traditional Christian "till death do us part". The first known Wiccan wedding ceremony took part in 1960 amongst the Bricket Wood coven, between Frederic Lamond and his first wife, Gillian.

Blessingway-a Wiccan Baby Shower

Most baby showers are focused on the baby, but Blessingways are about showering the Mother with love and support and giving happy blessings to the baby.

Wiccaning

Infants in Wiccan families may be involved in a ritual called a Wiccaning, which is analogous to a Christening. The purpose of this is to present the infant to the God and Goddess for protection.

Parents are advised to "give [their] children the gift of Wicca" in a manner suitable to their age. In accordance with the importance put on free will in Wicca, the child is not expected or required to adhere to Wicca or other forms of paganism should they not wish to do so when they reach adulthood.

Hailing/Heralding

When a girl has her first period or when a boy is about 13 they are celebrated as becoming adults. (Hailing=girls, Heralding=boys).

THE GREAT RITE

In Wicca, the Great Rite is either ritual sexual intercourse, or else a ritual symbolic representation of sexual intercourse. In the symbolic version the High Priest plunges the athame, or ritual knife, (the male symbol) into a cup or chalice (the female symbol) which is filled with wine and is held by the High Priestess. The Great Rite symbolizes creation in the union of the Maiden Goddess with the Lover God, and thus is also known as a fertility rite.

A variety of ritual occasions call for the Great Rite to be performed, such as during the festival of Beltane on or about May 1 in the northern hemisphere and November 1 in the southern hemisphere. Most often, it is performed by the High Priest and High Priestess, but other members can be elected to perform the Rite.

SACERD TEXT

In Wicca, there is no set sacred text.

DIET

Most Wiccans and pagans choose to be vegetarians/vegans. This is because they believe that the act of killing an animal for consumption is harming them thus breaking the Wiccan Rede 'harm none.' However, there are others that oppose this belief claiming that the spirit within a plant is not less important than that within an animal simply because an animal exhibits pain and suffering while being slaughtered. That said, it should be noted that the Wiccan religion has no set diet or foods. What it seeks to achieve is promoting a healthy lifestyle about food and nutrition, but the choice of your diet is personal and can also be determined by the belief of your coven.

■ **British Traditional Wicca**

British Traditional Wicca (abbreviated BTW) is the term used to group a set of Wiccan traditions originating in the New Forest region of England. The term British Traditional Wicca is used to define the originator traditions and practices (usually with traceable

lineage) apart from other subsequent forms of Wicca.

The most prominent of these traditions are Gardnerian Wicca and Alexandrian Wicca but also other traditions claiming a shared New Forest history. These reach as far abroad as America with traditions such as Central Valley Wicca.

• **Gardnerian Wicca**

Gardnerian Wicca, or Gardnerian witchcraft, is a tradition in the neopagan religion of Wicca, whose members can trace initiatory descent from Gerald Gardner. The tradition is itself named after Gardner (1884–1964), a British civil servant and amateur scholar of magic.

Gardnerian Wiccans organise into covens, that traditionally, though not always, are limited to thirteen members. Covens are led by a High Priestess and the High Priest of her choice, and celebrate both a Goddess and a God.

Gardnerian Wicca and other forms of British Traditional Wicca operate as an initiatory mystery cult; membership is gained only through initiation by a Wiccan High Priestess or High Priest. Any valid line of initiatory descent can be traced all the way back to Gerald Gardner, and through him back to the New Forest coven.

Rituals and coven practices are kept secret from non-initiates, and many Wiccans maintain secrecy regarding their membership in the Religion. Whether any individual Wiccan chooses secrecy or openness often depends on their location, career, and life circumstances. In all cases, Gardnerian Wicca absolutely forbids any member to share the name, personal information, fact of membership, and so on without advanced individual consent of that member for that specific instance of sharing.

In Gardnerian Wicca, there are three grades of initiation.

In Gardnerian Wicca, the two principal deities are the Horned God and the Mother Goddess. Gardnerians use specific names for the God and the Goddess in their rituals.

• **Alexandrian Wicca**

Alexandrian Wicca or Alexandrian Witchcraft is a tradition of the Neopagan religion of Wicca, founded by Alex Sanders (also known as "King of the Witches") who, with his wife Maxine Sanders, established the tradition in the United Kingdom in the 1960s. Alexandrian Wicca is similar in many ways to Gardnerian Wicca, and receives regular mention in books on Wicca as one of the religion's most widely recognized traditions.

Alexandrian Wicca, in similarity with other traditional Wiccan practices, emphasizes gender polarity. This emphasis can be seen in the Sabbat rituals, which focus on the relationship between the Wiccan Goddess and God.

As compared to Gardnerian Wicca, Alexandrian Wicca is "somewhat more eclectic", according to The Encyclopedia of Modern Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism. Tool use and deity and elemental names also differ from the Gardnerian tradition. Skyclad practice, or ritual nudity, is optional within the tradition, training is emphasized, and ceremonial magic practices, such as those derived from Hermetic Qabalah and Enochian magic may be part of ritual.

Alexandrian covens meet on new moons, full moons and during Sabbat festivals.

Alexandrian Wicca shares with other traditional Wicca systems the belief that "only a witch can make another witch". The process through which an individual is made a witch is called "initiation". As in Gardnerian Wicca, there are three levels, or "degrees", of initiation, commonly referred to as "first", "second", and "third" degree. Only a second or third degree witch can initiate another into witchcraft, and only a third degree witch can initiate another to third degree. A third degree initiate is referred to as a "High Priestess" or "High Priest".

Some Alexandrians have instituted a preliminary rank called "neophyte" or "dedicant." In these Alexandrian covens, a neophyte is not bound by the oaths taken by initiates, and thus has an opportunity to examine the tradition before committing to it. Neophytes are not, however, considered to have actually joined the tradition until they do take first degree. As such they would not experience certain aspects of rituals that were considered oathbound.

• **Central Valley Wicca**

Central Valley Wicca, sometimes abbreviated as CVW, refers to a particular group of traditions within the Neopagan religion of Wicca which trace their roots to a group of Wiccan practitioners who brought their practice from England to the Central Valley of California at some point in the early 1960s. It is one branch of British Traditional Wicca, alongside Gardnerian, Alexandrian Wicca and Mohsian, as defined by New Wiccan Church in California.

There are several theories about the origins of Central Valley Wicca, leading to a degree of debate among researchers. According to their original custom, an initiate of Central Valley Wicca was not told who their initiator's initiator was; therefore, the identity of the person who first brought Wicca to the Central Valley remains a mystery. What is known is that she had ties to England and had most likely lived there; she was either British or had close connection to a British subject prior to settling in California.

Central Valley Wicca shares basic beliefs with, and has similar ritual structures and practices to, other forms of British Traditional Wicca as they are practiced in England. However, their interpretation of some of the material is unique, and their lore is similar but not identical.

• **Algard Wicca**

Algard Wicca is a tradition, or denomination, in the Neo-Pagan religion of Wicca. It was founded in the United States in 1972 by Mary Nesnick, an initiate of both Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca, in an attempt to fuse the two traditions. Because of this fusion, it is categorised under the heading of British Traditional Wicca, with its initiates being able to trace their lineage back to Gerald Gardner, the founder of modern-day Wicca.

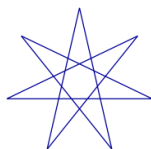
• Chthonioi Alexandrian Wicca

Chthonioi Alexandrian Wicca is a Boston-area family of Alexandrian Wicca-derived covens directly downline from Coven Chthonioi. Coven Chthonioi grew out of the Alexandrian practice of its founders in the 1970s, has an unbroken lineage back to Alex Sanders and Maxine Sanders, and has been in continuous operation since 1974. This coven is the originator of the cycle of rituals that has become known as the Book of the Provider. Other differences between Alexandrian Wicca and Chthonioi Alexandrian Wicca include the worship of the Gods and Goddesses of Greece (Greco-Roman Pantheon and Isian worship) as opposed to the traditional Alexandrian Wicca worship of the Gods and Goddesses of Britain, and changes in rituals to suit this change in mythology.

As in Traditional Wicca, the standard initiation practice is cross-sex initiation (female to male; male to female) but Chthonioi Alexandrian Wicca also accepts as valid same-sex initiations. As quoted from their statement of identity: "Some branches of the Chthonioi-Alexandrian have incorporated Same-Sex Initiations (SSI) as a way of acknowledging the importance and validity of inner contacts and true connection to the divine regardless of physical sex. Although not universally practiced by all within our Tradition, we nonetheless acknowledge SSIs as equally valid, lineaged, proper Initiations and part of our Tradition."

Because of the acceptance of same-sex initiations, some elders of Alexandrian Wicca do not recognize Chthonioi-Alexandrian tradition as "Alexandrian".

• Blue Star Wicca



A blue septagram is used as the symbol of the Blue Star tradition

Blue Star Wicca is one of a number of Wiccan traditions, and was created in the United States in the 1970s based loosely on the Gardnerian and Alexandrian traditions. It continues to be practiced today in areas of the United States (including Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, Washington, New Jersey, New Orleans, and others), as well as having members in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Ireland and Canada.

Blue Star remains a predominantly initiatory coven-based tradition in the model of the Gardnerian or Alexandrian traditions, but a number of "solitary" practitioners exist, typically with a form of long-distance relationship with an established group. There is no self-initiation in Blue Star.

Blue Star practitioners are known primarily for their emphasis on community service as a means to celebrate the gods and protect the interests of the contemporary Pagan community. Other hallmarks include the use of music in their ritual and liturgy (arguably unusual amongst traditional Wiccans), the importance placed upon a ritual feast, the use of a septagram as a symbol rather than a pentagram, and initiatory tattooing. Blue Star

and the Feri tradition are the only two large traditions of witchcraft to feature a septegram prominently in their symbolism.

Blue Star rituals typically have a round altar in the centre of the circle of participants. The positioning and handling of the ritual tools on the altar is given special attention within the tradition.

The Blue Star tradition's theology allows for enough flexibility to allow polytheists, pantheists and monotheists to participate in the tradition, and rituals can involve prayer or invocation to Wiccan deities, the gods and goddesses of Pagan peoples, or deified abstractions.

Many parts of the standard Blue Star liturgy, such as quarter calls, may be sung instead of spoken.

Blue Star is unusual for having a five-part rank system, as opposed to the three-degree system of most initiatory Wiccan traditions.

Dedication is the first rite of passage within the Blue Star tradition, and indicates a commitment to a Pagan spirituality generally and a loose commitment to the tradition specifically. Those who have been through this ceremony are referred to as "Dedicants."

Neophyte marks an intermediary step between dedication and initiation, and indicates both a level of facility with Blue Star practice and theory, and a willingness to take on increased responsibility within the tradition. Neophyte differs from the other ranks in being seen as a preparation for priesthood, as opposed to an end in and of itself. After this rite of passage, the person is referred to as a "Neophyte."

First Degree Initiation is the ritual through which someone enters the clergy within Blue Star.

Someone who has attained their first degree is referred to as a priest, priestess, or simply "initiate."

Second Degree recognizes further training and commitment within Blue Star beyond that of the first degree. It is usually, although not always, the time when one takes a leadership role in a coven, preparatory to "hiving" or establishing an independent coven.

Third Degree is given to those people who are judged by their teachers to be capable of leaving the coven that they were trained in and taking full responsibility for creating a new coven of their own.

■ Seax-Wicca

Seax-Wica is a tradition, or denomination, of the neopagan religion of Wicca which is largely inspired by the iconography of the historical Anglo-Saxon paganism, though, unlike Theodism, it is not a reconstruction of the early mediaeval religion itself.

The tradition was founded in 1973 by Raymond Buckland, an English-born high priest of Gardnerian Wicca who moved to the United States in the 1970s. His book, *The Tree*, was written with the intent for it to be a definitive guide to Seax-Wicca, and was published in 1974 by Samuel Weiser, and subsequently republished in 2005 as *Buckland's Book of Saxon Witchcraft*.

The tradition primarily honours four principal deities: Woden, Thunor, Frig or Freya and Tiw. These are seen as representations of the Wiccan deities of the Horned God and the Mother Goddess. The tradition uses a minimal set of ceremonial tools, including a spear.

Runes are also significant.

Seax-Wicca allows self-dedication as entry into its tradition. In the Seax tradition, covens work by a form of democracy, electing, un-electing, and re-electing coven officers, the high priest and priestess. Within ritual settings, there are the thegn, a type of sergeant-at-arms/guard/watchman, who can also be responsible for the covenstead (the meeting place of the coven), or guarding a ceremony being performed; there is also a scribe/secretary, who keeps most, if not all, of the coven's records.

■ Universal Eclectic Wicca



A floral Pentagram is a commonly used symbol in Universal Eclectic Wicca

Universal Eclectic Wicca (UEW) is one of a number of distinctly American Wiccan traditions which developed following the introduction of Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca to the United States in the early 1960s. Its corporate body is the Church of Universal Eclectic Wicca (CUEW) which is incorporated and based in Great Falls, Virginia.

It is particularly noted for its early Internet teaching coven – the Coven of the Far Flung Net (CFFN), and for its inclusive approach to solitary as well as coven based practitioners.

UEW allows for diverse interpretations of Wiccan practice and belief; provided that a core set of ethical values are observed. These are commonly referred to as the Five Points of Wiccan Belief and the Affirmation of Acknowledgement.

The Five Points of Wiccan belief are the Wiccan Rede, the Law of Return, the Ethic of Self-Responsibility, the Ethic of Constant Improvement and the Ethic of Attunement.

There are five types of membership recognized in UEW:

- Pre-First Circle - those who have only basic knowledge of UEW or Wicca and who will be typically registered for an introductory course in UEW
- First Circle - in which a knowledge of The Five Points of Wiccan Belief must be demonstrated;
- Second Circle - in which a higher degree of knowledge and signing of the oath of practice are required;
- Third Circle - in which an independent project has determined a "higher level" of Devotion to a "Path" of UEW; and
- Clergy - ordained ministers.

The executive body of CUEW is the three-person Triad. The Triad is solely responsible for extending or withholding membership of CUEW to both individuals and groups. Each member of the Triad is responsible for the selection and training of their successor.

The Triad is advised and assisted by a Council of Elders. Any Third Circle member may nominate themselves for membership of the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders annually elects one of their number as Chief Elder.

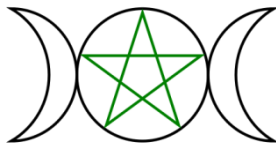
The Association of Universal Eclectic Wicca Clergy (AUEWC), is responsible for the ratification of Ordained Clergy. CUEW covens with eight or more.

■ Celtic Wicca

Celtic Wicca is a modern tradition of Wicca that incorporates some elements of Celtic mythology. It employs the same basic theology, rituals and beliefs as most other forms of Wicca.

Celtic Wiccans use the names of Celtic deities, mythological figures, and seasonal festivals within a Wiccan ritual structure and belief system, rather than a traditional or historically Celtic one.

■ Dianic Wicca



Symbol of the Goddess with the Pentacle

Dianic Wicca, also known as Dianic Witchcraft, is a neopagan religion of female-centered goddess ritual and tradition. While some adherents identify as Wiccan, it differs from most traditions of Wicca in that only goddesses are honored (whereas most Wiccan traditions honor both female and male deities).

While there is more than one tradition that calls itself Dianic, the best known is the female-only variety, founded by Zsuzsanna Budapest in the United States in the 1970s. It is notable for its worship of a single Goddess and focus on egalitarian, matriarchal feminism. It is named after the Roman goddess Diana, but Dianics worship goddesses from many cultures, seeing them as "aspects" of a monotheistic goddess. Dianic Wicca is an eclectic combination of elements from British Traditional Wicca, Italian folk-magic as recorded by Charles Leland in *Aradia*, feminist values, folk magic and healing practices from a variety of different cultures.

Dianic Wiccans of the Budapest lineage worship the Goddess, who they see as containing all goddesses, from all cultures; she is seen as the source of all living things and containing all that is within her.

Dianic covens practice magic in the form of mediation and visualization in addition to spell work. They focus especially on healing themselves from the wounds of the patriarchy while affirming their own womanhood.

Rituals can include reenacting religious and spiritual lore from a feminist standpoint, celebrating the female body, and mourning society's abuses of women. The practice of magic is rooted in the belief that energy or 'life force' can be directed to enact change. However it is important to note that rituals are often improvised to suit individual or group needs and vary from coven to coven.

Some Dianic Wiccans eschew manipulative spellwork and hexing because it goes against the Wiccan Rede. However, many other Dianic witches (notably Budapest) do not consider hexing or binding of those who attack women to be wrong, and actively encourage the binding of rapists.

Like other Wiccans, Dianics may form covens, attend festivals, celebrate the eight major Wiccan holidays, and gather on Esbats. They use many of the same altar tools, rituals, and vocabulary as other Wiccans. Dianics may also gather in less formal Circles. The most noticeable difference between the two are that Dianic covens of Budapest lineage are composed entirely of women.

Dianics also pride themselves on the inclusion of lesbian and bisexual members.

■ **Faery Wicca**

Faery Wicca, or Fairy Wicca, is any tradition of modern Wicca that places an emphasis on the Fey (goblins, elves, faeries, sprites, etc.), their lore, and their relation to the natural world.

"Faery Wicca" may also refer to a specific tradition of Wicca, recently founded by author Kisma Stepanich. Adherents of Stepanich's Faery Wicca claim that it recovers the traditions of the Tuatha De Danaan, the mythological precursors to the Celtic people; however, this is disputed by those familiar with ancient Celtic polytheism and mythology. Stepanich's Faery Wicca draws liberally on some degree of Irish mythology, from the author's interpretation of Celtic history, legend, pseudohistory, imagination, and a variety of non-Celtic sources.

Faery Wicca is not related to the late Victor Anderson's Feri Tradition of witchcraft, which is sometimes also spelled Faery or Fairy, nor is it directly related to the gay men's group, the Radical Faeries. Though Faery Wicca may draw inspiration from some of the customs practiced among the ancient and modern Celts, it shares more with other modern Wiccan traditions than with the "Fairy Faith" as it is known in traditional Gaelic cultures.

■ **Feri tradition**

The Feri Tradition is an initiatory tradition of modern Pagan Witchcraft. It was founded in California in the 1960s by the Americans Victor Henry Anderson and his wife Cora Anderson.

Practitioners have described it as an ecstatic tradition rather than a fertility tradition. Strong emphasis is placed on sensual experience and awareness, including sexual mysticism, which is not limited to heterosexual expression.

The Feri Tradition has very diverse influences, such as Huna, Vodou, Faery lore, Kabbalah, Hoodoo, Tantra, and Gnosticism.

■ Georgian Wicca

Georgian Wicca is a tradition, or denomination, in the neopagan religion of Wicca. In its organisation, it is very similar to British Traditional Wicca groups such as Gardnerian Wicca, however, it does not trace its initiatory line to one of the old English covens.

The name "Georgian" refers to its founder, George Patterson, who founded the tradition in 1970 in the United States.

■ Odyssean Wicca

Odyssean Wicca is a Wiccan tradition created in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in the late 1970s. Its principal founders were Tamarra and Richard James. Most of its practitioners today live in Ontario, but it also has members in the United States.

The tradition differs from other initiatory Wiccan traditions in its emphasis on preparation of its members for public priesthood.

The Odyssean tradition is strongly connected with the Wiccan Church of Canada, a public Wiccan church also founded by the Jameses.

Beyond the emphasis on public ministry, the Odyssean tradition is characterized by the following: it is an Eclectic tradition in its origins that has a strong British Traditional Wicca style to its forms of organization and initiation; although it emulates British Traditional the tradition's approach to ritual is more flexible and may often be less structured than many British Traditional Wiccans would be comfortable with; the tradition rejects the concepts of Neopagan monism and Neopagan monotheism; the tradition does accept the base-line Wiccan concept of Neopagan duotheism but does encourage students and seekers alike to choose to affiliate with a particular Pagan pantheon and encourages the devotion to a deity (or group of deities).

The Odyssean training system is remarked upon as being notably rigorous, which can be observed in the Wiccan Church of Canada weekly classes. These classes comprise the basic body of knowledge considered necessary by Odysseans, and can span upwards of 150 hours of class time or more. Completion of these classes (which includes the student completing the homework exercises assigned) is often considered a minimum requirement by Initiates before they accept a person as a new student.

Dedication is a ceremony performed by Odysseans for those individuals who wish to confirm themselves to a Neopagan path, and to worship of the Old Gods.

Neophyting is a "pre-degree" marking the candidate's commitment to a study of the tradition. Although not an Initiate of the tradition, a Neophyte student is oathbound. It is typically awarded after one to two years of study with a private teacher, which in turn takes place after completion of a year-long cycle of public classes.

First Degree Initiation is the rite of ordination within the Odyssean tradition. A first degree initiate is a priest or priestess and a member of the tradition. Among Odysseans, this is only awarded with the consent of a council composed of members of the tradition's active priesthood. It typically takes three to five years of study after Neophyting. It indicates competency in the demands of public priesthood, including "leading ritual, teaching, counselling (and) handling crises."

Second Degree Initiation represents an elevation to "High Priesthood". It is given to those who, in addition to work assigned, have been running a coven or student group successfully for at least a year and trained at least one student through to the first degree level. The time required for elevation to this degree is variable, and many first degree initiates do not actively pursue further training, but for those who do it generally takes five to ten years after initiation.

Third Degree Initiation is rarely awarded, as it is only given to those people who have made a major contribution to the Neopagan community.

■ Wiccan church

Wiccan churches are a type of organization found within some groups of Wicca, particularly in North America. While in Europe Wicca is most often organized into independent covens, in the United States some covens choose to combine to form a "church". Churches are often formed from hive covens.

• Covenant of the Goddess



Covenant of the Goddess logo

The Covenant of the Goddess (CoG) is a cross-traditional Wiccan group of solitary Wiccan practitioners and over one hundred affiliated covens (or congregations). It was founded in 1975 in order to increase co-operation among witches and to secure for witches and covens the legal protection enjoyed by members of other religions. Member covens generally focus theology and ritual around the worship of the Goddess and the Old Gods (or the Goddess alone), which is general practice within Wicca. The Covenant of the Goddess operates largely by consensus and maintains strict autonomy for all members.

Membership in the Covenant is open to covens and solitary practitioners (solitaires) that meet the requirements. Requirements include: subscribing to the Covenant's code of ethics, worship of the Goddess and the Old Gods, pledging to abide by the charter, bylaws and policy of the Council, and agreeing to "hold harmless" any committee or committee member of the Covenant. The Covenant is a confederation of member covens and solitaires. An annual Grand Council is held to make decisions for the whole organization, and members also cooperate in local councils which have at least three covens. Decisions at all levels are made by a formal consensus process.

The Covenant recognizes two levels of clergy: priest or priestess and high priest or high priestess. In addition, the Covenant solemnizes the lifelong relationships of members in "handfasting" ceremonies. Handfasting is not limited to traditional marriages, as any number of people regardless of gender may commit themselves to a lifelong relationship.

➤ ETHNIC

✓ ARMENIAN NEOPAGANISM



The arevakhach is a symbol used by the Arordiners

The Armenian Native Faith, also termed Armenian Neopaganism or Hetanism, is a modern Pagan new religious movement that harkens back to the historical, pre-Christian belief systems and ethnic religions of the Armenians. The followers of the movement call themselves "Hetans" or Arordi, meaning the "Children of Ari", also rendered as "Arordiners" in some scholarly publications.

The first organisation of Armenian Native Faith, the "Order of the Children of Ari" was established in 1991 by the armenologist Slak (Eduard, or Edik) Kakosyan (1936–2005). He belonged to a generation of Armenian dissidents and was exiled in the 1970s from Soviet Armenia; in 1979 he fled to the United States where he became familiar with the ideas of Garegin Nzhdeh.

The Armenian Native Faith is polytheistic in practice. The gods of the Arordiners include: Hayk, the mythical founder of the Armenian nation, Aray the god of war, Barsamin the god of sky and weather, Aralez the god of the dead, Anahit the goddess of fertility and war, Mihr the solar god, Astghik the goddess of love and beauty, Nuneh the goddess of wisdom, Tir the god of art and inspiration, Tsovinar the goddess of waters, Amanor the god of hospitality, Spandaramet the goddess of death, and Gissaneh the mother goddess of nature.

AFTERLIFE

The Arordiners have a cyclical view of reality, and they believe in the reincarnation of individual souls through the genetic lineage. That is to say, men are believed to come back to life in the following generations of their own descendants, in the kin which they begot while living.

HOLY BOOK

Ukhtagirk, the holy book of the Armenian Native Faith, may be translated as "Book of Vows". It was the life work of Slak Kakosyan, who finished the manuscript just before his death in 2005. The book was officially proclaimed the holy text of the Order of the Children of Ari in 2000, a couple of years before its completion, when the religious organisation was officially registered by the Armenian state.

The book is divided into seven parts: 1. Astvatsashoonch ("Dictionary"), which explains the Armenian language as a mystical system of symbols related to the root Ar; 2. Tsagumnaran ("Genesis"), which explains in mythical terms the origin of the world, the gods and mankind; 3. Avetaran ("Book of Testaments") and 4. Dzonaran ("Book of Odes"), which deal with philosophical and ontological categories to explain reality and values; 5. Veharan ("Book of Greatness") and 6. Patgamaran ("Book of Commandments"), which present mythologised descriptions of Garegin Nzhdeh's life and ideas, respectively; and the seventh and last chapter, 7. Hymnergaran ("Book of Hymns"),

which is a collection of poems written by Kakosyan and his followers, as well as by authors of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The mythological parts about creation rely upon Armenian medieval sources and folk knowledge.

PILGRIMAGE

Mountains are revered as holy, so, besides Khustup, other mountains, including Mount Ararat and Mount Aragats, function as pilgrimage destination for Arordiners.

RITUALS AND RITE OF PASSAGE

Armenian Native Faith rituals include the yearly ceremonies performed on Armenian traditional holidays, and three rites of passage: The knunk, a complex ritual of initiation; the psak, that is wedding; and death rituals. The death rituals require the cremation of the body, and its return to the four elements. Fire is symbolised by the cremation itself; then the ashes are divided into three parts, of which one is buried in the earth, one is scattered in the air of the Garni Gorge, and the third one is poured in the water of the Garni River. Afterwards, the deceased is memorialised by the collective lighting of a torch. (The first Arordiner to be cremated was Kakosyan himself, at a time when cremation was illegal in Armenia. Later, Arordiners obtained by the state the right to cremate their dead.)

TEMPLES

Arordiner public ceremonies and rituals are held at ancient sacred places, which are often in ruins. The re-appropriation of churches that were built on native sacred sites is also common. The most important of these sites is the first-century Temple of Garni, a temple which was rebuilt in 1975, which has become the main ceremonial center for the Armenian Native Faith movement.

HOLIDAYS

The Arordiners celebrate a number of holidays: Terendez, Zatik, Hambardzum, Vardavar and Khaghghorhnek. To these holy days they add a holy day for the remembrance of ancestors (20 September), the Birth of Vahagn (21 March), the Birth of Mihr (22 December) and the Navasard, the New Year celebrated in August

✓ BALTIC NEOPAGANISM

Baltic Neopaganism is a category of autochthonous religious movements which have revitalised within the Baltic people (primarily Lithuanians and Latvians). These movements trace their origins back to the 19th century and they were suppressed under the Soviet Union; after its fall they have witnessed a blossoming alongside the national and cultural identity reawakening of the Baltic peoples, both in their homelands and among expatriate Baltic communities. One of the first ideologues of the revival was the Prussian Lithuanian poet and philosopher Vydūnas.

DIEVTURI

Dievturi is a Latvian Pagan revival, also present among Latvian Canadian and Latvian American expatriate communities. It is characterised by a monistic theological approach[8] to Baltic paganism viewing all the gods and all nature as expression of the Dievs. A common view is that the Dievs is at the same time the transcendent fountain of reality, the matter-energy substrate, and the law ordaining the universe.

The movement was started in 1925 by Ernests Brastiņš with the publication of the book entitled Revival of Latvian Dievturity. After the annexation of Latvia to the Soviet Union the Dievturis were repressed, but the movement continued to operate among exiles. Since the 1990s, Dievturi was re-introduced to Latvia and began to grow again; in 2011 there were about 663 official members.

DRUWI

Druwi is a Baltic Neopagan revival religion claiming Old Prussian origins, and mostly present in Lithuania. Adherents uphold that it is distinct from Romuva, and that more carefully speaking Romuva could be considered as a specific form of Druwi.

The religion is primarily represented institutionally by the "Kuro Academy of Baltic Priesthood" founded in 1995. It trains morally mature men and women from the age of 18, into the Darna, as priests of the Baltic people. Like the Romuvans, they recognise Vydūnas as their founding father. The Druwi theory is monistic.

ROMUVA

Romuva is a modern revival of the traditional ethnic religion of the Baltic peoples, reviving the religious practices of the Lithuanians before their Christianization. Romuva claims to continue living Baltic pagan traditions which survived in folklore and customs.

Romuva primarily exists in Lithuania but there are also congregations of adherents in Australia, Canada, the United States, and England. There are also Romuvans in Norway. Practising the Romuva faith is seen by many adherents as a form of cultural pride, along with celebrating traditional forms of art, retelling Baltic folklore, practising traditional holidays, playing traditional Baltic music, singing traditional dainas or hymns and songs as well as ecological activism and stewarding sacred places.

✓ **MARI NATIVE RELIGION**



Symbol of Mari native religion

The Mari native religion, or Mari Paganism, is the ethnic religion of the Mari people, a Volga Finnic ethnic group based in the republic of Mari El, in Russia. The religion has undergone changes over time, particularly under the influence of neighbouring monotheisms. In the last few decades, while keeping its traditional features in the countryside, an organised Neopagan-kind revival has taken place.

The Mari religion is based on the worship of the forces of nature, which man must honour and respect. Before the spread of monotheistic teachings amongst the Mari, they worshipped many gods (the jumo, a word cognate to the Finnish Jumala), while recognising the primacy of a "Great God", Kugu Jumo. In the 19th century, influenced by monotheism, the Pagan beliefs altered and the image of a Osh Kugu Jumo, literally "Great God of Light", was strengthened.

Subject to persecution in the Soviet Union, the faith has been granted official status since the 1990s by the government of Mari El, where it is recognized as one of the three traditional faiths along with Orthodox Christianity and Islam. Some activists claim that the Mari native religion believers are subject to pressure by Russian authorities as part of a wider campaign to Russify Mari culture. Vitaly Tanakov, an adherent of the faith, was charged with inciting religious, national, social and linguistic hatred after publishing the book *The Priest Speaks*.

Followers of the Mari native religion perform public rituals and mass prayers and conduct charitable, cultural and educational activities. They train and educate the younger generation and publish and distribute religious literature. Prayer meetings and mass prayers are held in accordance with the traditional calendar; it always takes into account the position of the Moon and Sun.

Public prayers are held, usually in the sacred groves (küsoṭo). Ceremonies are held by a rank of priests. There is a significant discrepancy between the pantheons of the Lowlands Mari, who worship roughly 140 gods, and Highlands Mari, who worship about 70 gods. However most of these deities are different forms of other gods. Nine deities are the most important ones, and these are often said to be hypostases of the high god Osh Kugu Jumo. The Mari native religion includes tree worship and animal sacrifices.

✓ CELTIC NEOPAGANISM

Celtic Neopaganism refers to Contemporary Pagan or contemporary polytheist movements based on Celtic polytheism.

Types of Celtic Neopaganism

- Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism (CR) — Celtic polytheistic reconstructionism.
- Celtic Neoshamanism — a kind of neoshamanism based on Michael Harner's "Core Shamanism"; proponents include John and Caitlin Matthews.
- Celtic Wicca — a loose syncretism of Wicca and Celtic mythology.
- Faerie faith — a kind that focuses on the existence of fairies
- Neo-Druidism — which grew out of the Celtic revival in 18th century Romanticism.
 - Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF), formed in 1983
 - Church of the Universal Bond
 - Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD), formed in 1964
 - Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA), formed in 1963
 - The Druid Network, the first contemporary pagan organization to be recognized as a charity in the United Kingdom
 - The Druid Order, formed c. 1910 but claiming origins as early as 1717

Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism

Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism (CR) is an umbrella term for Polytheistic Reconstructionist traditions which are based in one of the specific cultures of the Celtic-speaking peoples (such as Gaelic Polytheists or Welsh or Gaulish Reconstructionists).

Celtic Reconstructionists strive to practice a historically accurate and authentic tradition, based on the folklore and living traditions in the Celtic Nations and the diaspora as well as primary sources in the Celtic languages. They reject the eclecticism and cultural appropriation of the broader Neopagan community.

Celtic Neoshamanism

Celtic Neoshamanism is a modern spiritual tradition that combines elements from Celtic myth and legend with Michael Harner's core shamanism. Proponents of Celtic Shamanism believe that its practices allow a deeper spiritual connection to those with a northern European heritage. Authors such as Jenny Blain have argued that "Celtic Shamanism" is a "construction" and an "ahistoric concept."

Celtic Wicca

Celtic Wicca is a modern tradition of Wicca that incorporates some elements of Celtic mythology. It employs the same basic theology, rituals and beliefs as most other forms of Wicca. Celtic Wiccans use the names of Celtic deities, mythological figures, and seasonal festivals within a Wiccan ritual structure and belief system, rather than a historically Celtic one.

Neo-Druidism

Neo-Druidism is a form of modern spirituality or religion that generally promotes harmony and worship of nature. Many forms of modern Druidism are Neopagan religions, whereas others are instead seen as philosophies that are not necessarily religious in nature. Arising from the 18th century Romanticist movement in England, which glorified the ancient "Celtic" peoples of the Iron Age, the early Neo-druids aimed to imitate the Iron Age Celtic priests who were also known as druids. At the time, little accurate information was known about these ancient priests, and the modern druidic movement has no actual connection to them, despite some claims to the contrary made by modern druids.

✓ DIEVTURĪBA

Dievturība is a Neopagan religious movement which claims to be a modern revival of the folk religion of the Latvians before Christianization in the 13th century. Adherents call themselves Dievturi (singular: Dievturis), literally "Dievs' keepers", "people who live in harmony with Dievs".

The Dievturi movement was founded in 1925 by Ernests Brastiņš. It was forcibly suppressed by Russian Communists in 1940, but later was revived. Approximately 650 persons are officially active members of Dievturi movement.

Dievturība is essentially a pantheistic religion. Other deities are either aspects of Dievs (the universe itself, the ultimate reality), or other types of non-deified spirits. In Dievturi theology, several triumvirates of deities and concepts are recognized.

- Gods of fate, the primary triumvirate
 - Dievs – the primary god who emanates the others gods as aspects of himself
 - Laima

- Māra
- Goddesses of water
 - Jūras māte
 - Ūdens māte
 - Upes māte

✓ ESTONIAN NEOPAGANISM



Estonian neopaganism - Maavalla Koda - symbol of Taaraism and Maausk used as the official logo of Maavalla Koda

Estonian Neopaganism, or the Estonian native faith is the name, in English, for a grouping of contemporary revivals (often called "Neopagan", although adherents of Estonian native religion generally don't use the term) of the indigenous Pagan religion of the Estonian people.

It encompasses Taaraism a monistic religion centered on god Tharapita founded in 1928 by intellectuals as a national religion; and Maausk as a much broader definition of "Native Faith", encompassing grassroots movements of local gods worship, nature worship and earth worship. Both the kinds of the movement are administered by the Maavalla Koda organization. According to Ahto Kaasik, an unspecified 2002 survey revealed that 11% of the population of Estonia claimed that "out of all the religions they have the warmest feelings towards Taaraism and Maausk".

Taaraism

Taaraism was founded in 1928 by members of the intelligentsia with the aim of reaffirming traditional Estonian culture and identity. Viewing Christianity as a universal and foreign religion brought by the Germans, they turned to indigenous religion with its many deities.

Taaraists hold a monistic or monotheistic worldview in which all the gods are aspects of one only pantheistic reality, which they identify with the god Tharapita or Taara (a deity connected to Indo-European deities such as the Germanic Thor or Thunor, the Gallic Taranis and the Hittite Tarhunt).

They re-established the hiis, sacred groves, and coined the term hiislar to denote their clergy. The first hiis was founded in 1933, it was Tallinna Hiis (Sacred Grove of Tallinn). There were several thousand members by 1940, but later the movement was banned under the Soviet Union, and many members were killed. Nowadays the foremost center of the Taaraists is in the city of Tartu.

Maausk

Maausk ("Native Religion") is an activist movement of nature worship, local gods worship, and hiis unrelated to the Taaraist movement. It stresses the claimedly non-

Christian and non-European roots and tradition of Estonian culture. The Maausk movement emerged in the 1980s. It's mostly a polytheistic-pantheistic faith identifying the divine with nature itself.

In their annual cyclic calendar the most important holy days are the Jõulud (winter solstice festival) and the Jõulukuu (new year festival) on 25 December, the summer solstice (Jaanipäev), the Munadepühad, the Leedopäev, and the Kasupäev.

Their shrines are hiis or any other natural place. A shrine is a location which may have ancient trees, glacial boulders, bodies of water or unique plants. There may be a swing, fireplace, sauna and a log storage shed at the shrine. People go to various shrines during important festivals or other important occasions, to establish harmony with nature, experience peace and gather strength. Before going to the shrine, body and mind must be purified. Their ethics emphasises mõnu or mõnus, "enjoyment" or more accurately "harmonious life" or "balance".

✓ FINNISH NEOPAGANISM

Finnish Neopaganism, or the Finnish native faith is the contemporary Neopagan revival of Finnish paganism, the pre-Christian polytheistic ethnic religion of the Finns. A precursor movement was the Ukonusko ("Ukko's Faith", revolving around the god Ukko) of the early 20th century. The main problem in the revival of Finnish paganism is the nature of pre-Christian Finnish culture, which relied on oral tradition and of which very little is left.

There are two main organisations of the religion, the "Association of Finnish Native Religion" (Suomalaisen kansanuskon yhdistys ry) based in Helsinki and officially registered since 2002, and the "Pole Star Association" (Taivaannaula ry) headquartered in Turku with branches in many cities, founded and officially registered in 2007. The Association of Finnish Native Religion also caters to Karelians and is a member of the Uralic Communion.

Nature worship, respect for traditions, and equality are typical features of the Neopagan movement. The Finnish native religion can be defined as "ethno-pagan", as it is related to national consciousness and identity. Finnish native religion followers do not necessarily consider themselves "Neopagans" or identify with new religions such as Wicca.

They emphasise love for the motherland as a key content of a balanced relationship of humans with nature, old and new generations, as well as individual and community. The Finnish native faith believers hold sacred many unspoiled natural places, woods, springs and rocks. They consider the numinous presence of the gods, the ancestors and the spirits, as pervading the natural sites and environments (hiisi).

The Finnish native religion is polytheistic, with a pantheon of many deities worshipped: Ukko the sky god, and chief deity in the Finnish pantheon, Akka the goddess of fertility, and wife of Ukko, Ahti, Tapio, Pekko, Nyyrikki, Mielikki, Ilmarinen (the god of sky and weather who some consider to be the same as Ukko), Louhi, Turisas, Haltijas (elven spirits), Lemminkäinen (mythical hero), Väinämöinen (mythical hero, creator god and god of poetry and music and magic), Hiisi (spirit of the holy place, genius loci), Jumi

(fertility god or statue that gives fertility).

The religion also includes an element of ancestor worship. For Finnish native religion adherents, the afterlife is a place called Tuonela, and it is a place where several different deities live, including Tuoni.

Various traditional festivals are followed, including Hela, a festival celebrating the coming of spring and the new growing season, Juhannus or Ukon juhla, the midsummer festival, Kekri, a celebration of harvest and the ancestors, and Joululu, the midwinter festival.

Some Finnish Neopagans visit sacred forests, where wooden god-images or sacred stones can sometimes be found. Some celebrate the circling of the year at certain dates, for example by burning bonfires, dancing, sacrificing, or making other kinds of rituals. One ritual, which is also an authentic practice of the ancestors, is to drink a toast for the thunder god Ukko at the midsummer festival.

✓ GERMANIC NEOPAGANISM

Heathenry, also termed Heathenism or Germanic Neopaganism, is a modern Pagan religion.

Scholars of religious studies classify Heathenry as a new religious movement. Its practitioners model their faith on the pre-Christian belief systems adhered to by the Germanic peoples of Iron Age and Early Medieval Europe.

Heathenry does not have a unified theology and is typically polytheistic, centering on a pantheon of deities from pre-Christian Germanic Europe. It adopts cosmological views from these religions, including an animistic view of the cosmos in which the natural world is imbued with spirits. The faith's deities and these spirits are honored in sacrificial rites known as blóts in which food and libations are offered to them. These are often accompanied by symbel, the act of ceremonially toasting the gods with an alcoholic beverage. Some practitioners also engage in rituals designed to induce an altered state of consciousness and visions, most notably seiðr and galdr, with the intent of gaining wisdom and advice from the deities. Although many solitary practitioners follow the religion by themselves, members of the Heathen community often assemble in small groups, usually known as kindreds or hearths, to perform their rites outdoors or in specially constructed buildings. They are often bound together by oaths of loyalty, with strict screening procedures regulating the admittance of new members. Prospective members may undergo a probationary period before they are fully accepted and welcomed into the group, while other groups remain closed to all new members.

Heathen rites often take place in non-public spaces, particularly in a practitioner's home. In other cases, Heathen places of worship have been established on plots of land specifically purchased for the purpose; these can represent either a hörg, which is a sanctified place within nature like a grove of trees, or a hof, which is a wooden temple.

Heathen groups assemble for rituals in order to mark rites of passage, seasonal observances, oath takings, rites devoted to a specific deity, and for rites of need. These rites also serve as identity practices which mark the adherents out as Heathens.

During religious ceremonies, many adherents choose to wear clothing that imitates the styles of dress worn in Iron Age and Early Medieval Northern Europe. They also often wear symbols indicating their religious allegiance. The most commonly used sign among Heathens is Mjöltnir, or Thor's hammer, which is worn as a pendant, featured in Heathen art, and used as a gesture in ritual. It is sometimes used to express a particular affinity with the god Thor, although is also often used as a symbol of Heathenism as a whole, in particular representing the resilience and vitality of the religion. Another commonly used Heathen symbol is the valknut, used to represent the god Odin or Woden.

The most important religious rite for Heathens is called blót, which constitutes a ritual in which offerings are provided to the gods. Blót typically takes place outdoors, and usually consists of an offering of mead, which is contained within a bowl. The gods are invoked and requests expressed for their aid, as the priest uses a sprig or branch of an evergreen tree to sprinkle mead onto both statues of the deities and the assembled participants. This procedure might be scripted or largely improvised. Finally, the bowl of mead is poured onto a fire, or onto the earth, as a final libation to the gods. Sometimes, a communal meal is held afterward; in some groups this is incorporated as part of the ritual itself. In other instances, the blót is simpler and less ritualized; in this case, it can involve a practitioner setting some food aside, sometimes without words, for either gods or wights. Some Heathens perform such rituals on a daily basis, although for others it is a more occasional performance. Aside from honoring deities, communal blóts also serve as a form of group bonding.

Another common ritual in Heathenry is sumbel, also spelled symbol, a ritual drinking ceremony in which the gods are toasted. Sumbel often takes place following a blót.

Different Germanic Neopagan groups celebrate different festivals according to their cultural and religious focus. The most widely observed Heathen festivals are Winter Nights, Yule, and Sigrblót, all of which were listed in his Heimskringla and are thus of ancient origin. The first of these marks the start of winter in Northern Europe, while the second marks Midwinter, and the last marks the beginning of summer.

Heathen festivals can be held on the same day each year, although they are often celebrated by Heathen communities on the nearest available weekend, so that those practitioners who work during the week can attend. During these ceremonies, Heathens often recite poetry to honor the deities, which typically draw upon or imitate the Early Medieval poems written in Old Norse or Old English. Mead or ale is also typically drunk, with offerings being given to deities, while fires, torches, or candles are often lit. There are also regional meetings of Heathens known as Things. At these, religious rites are performed, while workshops, stalls, feasts, and competitive games are also present.

Heathen ethical systems emphasize honor, personal integrity, and loyalty, while beliefs about an afterlife vary and are rarely emphasized.

A central division within the Heathen movement concerns the issue of race. Some groups adopt a "universalist" perspective which holds that the religion is open to all, irrespective of ethnic or racial identity, while conversely, others adopt a racialist attitude—often termed "folkish" within the community—by viewing Heathenry as an ethnic or racial religion with inherent links to a Germanic race that should hence be reserved explicitly for people of Northern European descent, or "white people" in general. Some folkish Heathens further combine the religion with explicitly racist, white supremacist, and extreme right-wing perspectives, although these approaches are repudiated by many Heathens. Although the term "Heathenry" is used widely to describe the religion as a

whole, many groups prefer different forms of designation, influenced by their regional focus and their ideological preferences. Heathens focusing on Scandinavian sources sometimes use Ásatrú, Vanatrú, or Forn Sed; practitioners focusing on Anglo-Saxon traditions use Fyrnsidu or Theodism; those emphasising German traditions use Irminism; and those Heathens who espouse folkish and extreme-right perspectives tend to favor the terms Odinism, Wotanism, Wodenism, or Odalism.

Some practitioners do not emphasize belief in an afterlife, instead stressing the importance of behaviour and reputation in this world. In Icelandic Heathenry, there is no singular dogmatic belief about the afterlife. A common Heathen belief is that a human being has multiple souls, which are separate yet linked together. It is common to find a belief in four or five souls, two of which survive bodily death: one of these, the *hugr*, travels to the realm of the ancestors, while the other, the *fetch*, undergoes a process of reincarnation into a new body. In Heathen belief, there are various realms that the *hugr* can enter, based in part on the worth of the individual's earthly life; these include the hall of Valhalla, ruled over by Odin, or *Sessrúmnir*, the hall of Freyja. Beliefs regarding reincarnation vary widely among Heathens, although one common belief is that individuals are reborn within their family or clan.

✓ HELLLENISM



Hellenism – symbol



Symbol used by Hellenism followers

Hellenism, the Hellenic ethnic religion, also commonly known as Hellenismos, Hellenic Polytheism, Dodekatheism, or Olympianism, refers to various religious movements that revive or reconstruct ancient Greek religious practices, publicly, emerging since the 1990s.

The Hellenic religion is a traditional religion and way of life, revolving around the Greek Gods, primarily focused on the Twelve Olympians, and embracing ancient Hellenic values and virtues.

In 2017, Hellenism was legally recognized as a "Known Religion" in Greece.

Hellenic polytheists worship the ancient Greek Gods, including the Olympians, nature divinities, underworld deities (chthonic gods) and heroes. Both physical and spiritual ancestors are honored. It is primarily a devotional or votive religion, based on the exchange of gifts (offerings) for the gods' blessings.

The ethical convictions of modern Hellenic polytheists are often inspired by ancient Greek virtues such as reciprocity, hospitality, self-control and moderation. The Delphic maxims, Tenets of Solon, the Golden Verses of Pythagoras, or even Aristotle's Ethics each function as complete moral codes that a Hellenic Polytheist may observe. Key to

most ethical systems is the idea of kharis (or "charis", grace), to establish reciprocity between humanity and the gods, between individuals, and among community members. Another key value in Hellenic Polytheism is eusebeia, often translated as piety. This implies a commitment to the worship of the Hellenic gods and action to back this up. There is no central "ecclesia" (church/assembly) or hierarchical clergy, though some groups (i.e., Hellenion) do offer training in that capacity. Individual worshipers are generally expected to perform their own rituals and learn about the religion and the gods by reference to primary and secondary sources on ancient Greek religion and through personal experience of the gods.

✓ ITALO – ROMAN NOEPAGANISM

Italo-Roman Neopaganism, known variously as Religio Romana (Roman religion) in Latin, the Roman Way to the Gods in Italian and Spanish (via romana agli dei and camino romano a los dioses, respectively), Cultus Deorum Romanorum (care of the Roman gods), Italo-Roman Tradition or Romano-Italic Tradition, is a contemporary reconstructionist movement reviving traditional Roman and Italic religious cults consisting of loosely related organizations.

Adherents can be found across Latin Europe, mainly Italy, but also in the Americas. While an international organisation, it is legally based in the United States, with a majority of its membership hailing from the United States and Canada.

✓ KEMETISM

Kemetism (also Kemeticism; both from the Egyptian kmt or Kemet, the native name of Ancient Egypt), also sometimes referred to as Neterism, or Egyptian Neopaganism, is the contemporary revival of Ancient Egyptian religion and related expressions of religion in classical and late antiquity, emerging during the 1970s. A Kemetic is one who follows Kemetism.

There are several main groups, each of which take a different approach to their beliefs, ranging from eclectic to reconstructionistic. However, all of these can be identified as belonging to three strains, including reconstructed Orthodox Kemetism (adopting a philological approach, also Kemetic Orthodoxy).

✓ ROMUVA



Romuva - logo (Tree of Twilingsh)

Romuva is a modern reinstitution of the traditional ethnic religion of the Baltic peoples, reviving the ancient religious practices of the Lithuanians before their Christianization in 1387. Romuva claims to continue living Baltic pagan traditions which survived in folklore and customs.

Romuva is a polytheistic pagan faith which asserts the sanctity of nature and ancestor worship. Practising the Romuva faith is seen by many adherents as a form of cultural pride, along with celebrating traditional forms of art, retelling Baltic folklore, practising traditional holidays, playing traditional Baltic music, singing traditional dainas or hymns and songs as well as ecological activism and stewarding sacred places. The community was organized and led by krivių krivaitis (high priest) Jonas Trinkūnas until his death in 2014. He was buried according to the old Baltic traditions. His wife Inija Trinkūnienė was chosen as the new krivė (high priest) and her ordination was held on May 31, 2015 in Vilnius on the Gediminas Hill. She is the first woman to become krivė in the long pagan history.

Like other neo-pagan faiths, Romuva has no scriptures and relies on historical tradition instead. It accentuates the link between the man and nature and sees other polytheistic traditional faiths, including Hindu, to be more acceptable than either monotheism or atheism. Romuva primarily exists in Lithuania but there are also congregations of adherents in Australia, Canada, the United States, and England.

The Baltic aukuras or "fire altar" is a stone altar in which a fire is ritually lit. Participants wash their hands and face before approaching the aukuras, and then they sing dainas or ritual hymns as the fire is lit. Food, drink, grasses and flowers are offered to the flame as the group sings the dainas. After the primary offering, participants offer their own verbal or silent prayers which are carried to the Gods with the smoke and sparks of the flame.

A Romuvan priest is known as a vaidila (plural vaidilos), and a Romuvan priestess is known as a vaidilutė (plural vaidilutės). As a recognised figure of authority in his or her community, the priest must have the proper skills and knowledge he or she needs to conduct religious ceremonies to honour the Gods.

There are four main festivals in a year:

- 23 March – Vernal equinox
- 22 June – Summer solstice
- 21 September – Autumnal equinox
- 20 December – Winter solstice

✓ SEMITIC NEOPAGANISM

Semitic neopaganism refers to a group of religions based on or attempting to reconstruct the old religious traditions of the Semitic peoples, mostly practiced among secular Jews in the United States.

Semitic Neopaganism is both ethnic and non-ethnic in nature, in that there are ethnically Semite groups of people recovering their ancient polytheistic cults (particularly among the Jews, the Assyrians, the Lebanese, and Crypto-Pagans across the predominantly Muslim populations), and non-Semite people adopting Semitic Pagan worship. The Semitic Neopagan religions are divided into Levantine, Arabian and Mesopotamian movements. Forms of Witchcraft religions inspired by the Semitic milieu, such as Jewitchery, may also be enclosed within the Semitic Neopagan movement. These Witchcraft groups are particularly influenced by Jewish feminism, focusing on the goddess cults of the Israelites.

✓ SLAVIC NEOPAGANISM



The Kolowrót or Kolovrat (Коловрат) is an Early Slavic symbol of the Sun

Slavic neopaganism or the Slavic native faith is the contemporary continuation of the ethnic religion of the Slavic peoples (codified in the corpus of Slavic mythology). It is characterised by a pantheist and polytheist theology, a focus on Slavic culture and folklore, and the worship of Slavic deities. In English sources the religion is often called Rodnovery and its followers Rodnovers.

Some Slavic native faith groups also incorporate elements of Hinduism and Vedism.

The basic structure of a temple of the Slavic native faith (капище *kapishche*, or храм *khram*) is constituted by a sacred precinct at the centre of which are placed the images of the gods enshrined (*kapy*). There are many such temples throughout Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

The most commonly used religious symbol within Rodnovery is the kolovrat ("spinning wheel"), a variant of the swastika (Sanskrit: "wellbeing", "wellness"). As such, it represents wholeness, the ultimate source of renewal, the cosmic order and the four directions.

Just like any other pagan faith, Rodnovery also has its own Wheel of the Year - a calendar of celebrations based on the seasons.

Rodnovers typically regard their religion as a faithful continuation of ancient beliefs that survived as folk religion or as conscious "double belief" following the Christianisation of the Slavs in the Middle Ages. Rodnover theology and cosmology may be described as

pantheism and polytheism - worship of the supreme God of the universe and of the multiple gods and ancestors of nature identified through Slavic culture. Adherents usually meet together in groups to conduct religious ceremonies. These typically entail the invocation of gods, sacrifices and the pouring of libations, dances and a communal meal. Some Rodnover organisations require that participants wear traditional Slavic clothes for such gatherings, although there is much freedom in interpreting what constitutes "traditional clothes", this definition generally referring to folkloric needlecraft open to a wide range of artistic patterns.

The basic structure of a temple of the Slavic Native Faith is constituted by a sacred precinct at the centre of which are placed poles with carved images of the gods enshrined. These poles, or statues, are called *rodovoi*, *stolb*, *chur*, but also *kapy* ("poles").

In Slavic Native Faith, priests are distinguishable into the orders of *volkhv* (translatable as "wiseman", "wizard", i.e. "shaman", or "mage") and *zhrets* ("sacrificers"). They are those responsible for holding rites for worshipping the gods and leading communities and religious festivals. *Volkhvs* are the higher rank of the sacerdotal hierarchy, while *zhrets* are of a lower authority.

Though the majority of Rodnover priests are males, Rodnover groups do not exclude women from the priesthood, so that a parallel female priesthood is constituted by the two ranks of *zhritsa* and *vedunya* ("seeresses").

The common Rodnover ritual calendar is based on the Slavic folk tradition, whose crucial events are the four solstices and equinoxes set in the four phases of the year. Slavic Native Faith has been described as following "the cycles of nature". A festival that is believed to be the most important by many Rodnovers is that of the summer solstice, the Kupala Night (June 23-24), although also important are the winter solstice festival Karachun and Koliada (December 24-25), and the spring equinox festival Shrovetide—called Komoeditsa or Maslenitsa (March 24). Festivals celebrated in spring include the Day of Yarilo and the Krasnaya Gorka (literally "Red Hill", celebrated between April 30–May 1), the latter dedicated to ancestor worship; while in autumn Rodnovers celebrate the Day of Marzanna and that of Mokosh (November 10). Other festivals include the Days of Veles (multiple, in January and February) and the Day of Perun (August 2), the latter considered to be the most important holiday of the year by some Rodnover organisations. Rodnover ethical thinking emphasises the good of the collective over the rights of the individual.

The religion is patriarchal, and attitudes towards sex and gender are generally conservative.

Rodnover organisations often characterise themselves as ethnic religions, emphasising that the religion is bound to Slavic ethnicity. This often manifests as ethnic nationalism, opposition to miscegenation and the belief in the fundamental difference of racial groups. Some—although not all—groups adopt far-right and ultra-nationalistic perspectives and espouse anti-democratic, anti-Western and anti-Semitic ideas.

Rodnovers often glorify Slavic history, criticising the impact of Christianity in Slavic countries and arguing that these nations will play a central place in the world's future. Rodnovers share a strong feeling that their religion represents a paradigmatic shift which will overcome Western thought and what they call "mono-ideologies".

✓ WOTANISM

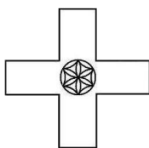
Wotanism is a form of neo-völkisch paganism which was founded in the early 1990s by Ron McVan, Katja Lane and David Lane (1938–2007) while Lane was serving a 190-year prison sentence for his actions in connection with the white separatist revolutionary domestic terrorist organization group The Order, of which he was a member.

Wotansvolk see their religion as being rooted in ancestral European paganism which was driven underground, calling it the true spiritual heritage of the "Euro-Tribes".

Unlike many Germanic neopagans within Heathenry, most Wotanists don't just revere the Nordic pantheon of Asatru but rather all the deities of European mythology, reject dualism, are initiates in the Hermetic wisdom school and see David Lane as a prophet "who was incarnated into this world to warn and save the White Aryan Race from near extinction" and view his sets of Fourteen Words as divine law.

Some Wotanists consider the Havamal to be their holiest text while rites of practice and well as philosophy are outlined and expounded upon in Creed of Iron: Wotansvolk Wisdom, Temple of Wotan: Holy Book of the Aryan Tribes and Deceived, Damned and Defiant: The Revolutionary Writings of David Lane.

✓ ZALMOXIANISM



Symbol of Zalmoxiana

Zalmoxianism or Zalmoxianism is a Neopagan movement in Romania which promotes the rebuilding of an ethnic religion and spirituality of the Romanians through a process of reconnection to their ancient Dacian and Thracian roots.

The religion takes its name from Zalmoxis or Zamolxe, at the same time the name of the primordial god and the archetype of the enlightened man in Paleo-Balkan mythology.

Scholars Bakó and Hubbes (2011) have defined Zalmoxianism, like the other ethnic religious revivals of Europe, as a reconstructionist ethno-paganism.

✓ CANARIAN NEOPAGANISM



Church of the Guanche People - official symbol

The Church of the Guanche People is a modern pagan religious body representing Canarian Neopaganism.

The Church is founded in 2001 in the city of San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. It aims to perpetuate and spread the traditional religion of the ancient Guanche people.

It was founded by a group of Canarian devotees of the goddess Chaxiraxi. The Church of the Guanche People performed baptisms and weddings according to what they know of Guanche custom. On 2002, a wedding held in accordance with purported Guanche rites took place on the island of Tenerife—a practice not observed for several centuries since the Spanish domination of the archipelago.

The Church of the Guanche People has its own liturgical calendar, which officially begins with the first celebration of Achu n Magek in 2001. According to this system, this is the year I of the Guanche New Age. 2018 would therefore be the year 18 on this calendar.

✓ MESOPOTAMIAN NEOPAGANISM

▪ Zuism



Zuism is a modern Pagan religious movement based on the Sumerian religion, deemed the "oldest religion, foundation of all major religions". It was founded in Iceland at the start of the 2010s by Ólafur Helgi Þorgrímsson, and in 2013 the Zuist Church was registered among the religions recognised by the Icelandic government. After the mid-2010s branches of the church were established in Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Gods are held to be immortal beings, who are human-like and yet invisible to human eyes. They are potencies who guide the development of the universe. The four main divine beings are: 1) the universal god An/Dingir (literally "Heaven"/"God", astrally identified as the ecliptic north celestial pole encompassed by the coil of the constellation Draco, and with all the constellations spinning around it), 2) Ki or Ninhursag (literally "Earth" or "Lady of the Mountain"), 3) Enki (literally "Lord of the Squared Earth", the god of water and craft, astrally identified as Aš.iku or Mul.iku, the "Field", that is the

Square of Pegasus, and generally with the southern sky-called Path of Enki -, that is to say the circle farther from the north celestial pole An) and 4) Enlil (literally "Lord of the Storm", the god of weather and thunder, identified as Mul.apin, the "Plough", that is the constellation Triangulum, and generally with the northern sky-called Path of Enlil -, that is to say the circle nearest to the north celestial pole An; his wife Ninlil, literally "Lady of the Storm", is Mar.gid.da, the "Chariot"). Sky, earth, air and water are thus considered the fundamental elements of the cosmos.

Lesser deities include Nanna (the moon), Utu (the sun), Marduk (represented with a sword and a dragon, astrally identified as Jupiter, and also associated with the north celestial pole An), Nabu (god of writing and wisdom, astrally identified as Mercury), Nergal (god of the underworld and plagues, astrally identified as Mars), Ninurta (god of war and farming, astrally identified as Saturn), Inanna (goddess of love, beauty, creativity and war; astrally identified as Venus) and Dumuzi (shepherd god of death and resurrection, astrally identified as Aries).

Belief and practice of Zuism is based on Sumerian poems, which Zuists recite in their worship services in honour of the gods. Regular gatherings are held for such scripture recitation in honour of the gods, as well as for prayers, which are either personal or for the welfare of others. Believers conduct their daily life according to the me, ethical codes given by the gods modeled after the laws of the universe, which govern every aspect of morality from individual to social economy.

Zuism is a "social religion", meaning that men and gods are considered symbiotic parts of the same complex whole. Gods govern the fate of men, and relationship with them may not be forsaken. Chiefs and priests are responsible for upkeeping the relationship with the gods through daily, monthly and yearly ordinances held at temples. Priests are called en, ensi and lugal.

■ **Kaldanism**

Kaldanism (from Arabic Kaldan, the term for Chaldea) defines those groups recovering ancient Mesopotamian religions, hence the blending of pre-Semitic Sumerian and Semitic Akkadian-Assyrian cults of Babylonian religion. There are ethnic attempts to revive the worship of the god Ashur within the nationalistic movement of the Assyrian people. Besides, non-ethnic Mesopotamian/Iraqi groups of followers have sprung up: Temple of Sumer (Sumerian), Temple of Inanna and Dumuzi (Sumerian), Order of Elder Light (Sumerian), Enkites and Anuities.

✓ **ODINISM**

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the cultural context of the research. It highlights the need for researchers to be sensitive to the values and beliefs of the communities they are studying. This is particularly important in the field of education, where cultural differences can significantly impact learning outcomes.

The second part of the paper focuses on the methodology used in the study. It describes the qualitative approach adopted, which involves in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The researchers aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of the participants, rather than testing a specific hypothesis.

The third part of the paper presents the findings of the study. It discusses the various themes that emerged from the data, such as the role of family in education and the influence of community norms. The researchers found that there were significant differences in the way that different cultural groups viewed education and its role in society.

The final part of the paper discusses the implications of the findings for future research and practice. It suggests that researchers should continue to explore the cultural context of education, and that educators should be aware of the cultural differences of their students. This will help to ensure that education is relevant and effective for all students.

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