

Copyright

©

Valentine McKay-Riddell

2006

All Rights Reserved

## **Abstract**

### **Coming Home to Gaia: Mentored Earth-based Rites of Passage for Adolescent Girls**

**by**

**Valentine McKay-Riddell**

The experience of co-creating a rite of passage with adolescent girls was examined over a seven-week period with brief follow-up interviews of mentors. The researcher (a middle-class Native American/Anglo woman), six middle-class Anglo women, and one middle-class Latina woman served as mentors for nine adolescent girls—eight Latinas and one Anglo—throughout the process of preliminary education, design, and enactment of the rite of passage. The rite of passage addressed the issues of trust, commitment, and self-empowerment in a multicultural population. Utilizing a blended research method (organic inquiry, feminist research, participative inquiry, and heuristic inquiry), the study evolved from the researcher's exploration of her own experiences while raising daughters and working with adolescents from multicultural backgrounds in group homes, detention centers, and on the street. The literature review placed the study in the context of multicultural education and counseling, adolescent female development, feminism, and earth-based (indigenous) and ecofeminist spiritualities. An intuitive analysis of the data revealed the themes of the experience, including (a) intergenerational and intercultural trust, (b) personal power versus external power, (c) passionate commitment to the pursuit of one's goals, and (d) transformative change. The study concluded that while girls and women derive mutual benefit from the mentoring relationship, and that ritual can provide a safe and flexible container for transformative intergenerational work, the issues of trust, self-empowerment, and passionate commitment arising in adolescence—which often

extend into young adulthood and even into middle age and beyond—are more critical for multicultural populations. Results contribute to further understanding the integration of multicultural relationships, Earth-based spirituality in transpersonal psychology, and the psychospiritual development of girls in patriarchal society. This process might be useful to spiritual guides, teachers, therapists and mental health professionals, and youth group leaders.

## Acknowledgments

My heartfelt thanks to all those who have encouraged and supported me in this work:

My husband and best friend Lewis Riddell, without whose patient support I could never even have begun;

The three goddesses who midwived this project, and provided guidance and support above and beyond the call of duty—Dissertation Committee Chair Genie Palmer, and Committee Members Dianne Jenett and Judy Schavrien;

My co-researchers—the five Wise Elders, seven Mentors, and nine Girls who participated in this project;

My great aunt Loretta Byrnes, who taught me to read and to love stories;

My father, John McKay, who taught me integrity, and to write what I felt;

My mother, Mary Helen Byrnes, who challenged me to fight for what I believe in;

My daughters, Krystal Irwin and Leigh Westergren, who cheered me on when I felt I could never finish;

My sisters, Mary Terence McKay and Claire McKay, who continue to encourage me, each in her own special way;

Friend and neighbor Helen Petrash, who listened to my ongoing tales of woe and offered wise counsel, prayers, and candles;

Friends and neighbors Mariska Miller, who helped me with photographs of Grandmother Olive; and Luther Miller, who provided sorely needed technical support;

My mentor, teacher, and friend Kate Wolf-Pizar, who has supported my academic and spiritual growth for six years;

My Global Masters program mentor, Annick Safken, who encouraged me to continue beyond that first experimental year in Santa Fe;

My Residential Ph.D. advisor Robert Morgan, who first suggested that I could write a dissertation and provided guidance during its earliest stages;

All of my wonderful teachers at ITP—Rosie Kuhn, Richard Kleiner, Sue Ann McKean; Pat Campbell, Ann Gila and John Firman in the Masters Residential program; William Braud, Rosemarie Anderson, Jan Fisher, Kartik Patel, and Henry Poon in the Global Ph.D. program; Genie Palmer, Bob Frager, Charles Tart, Olga Louchakova, Roulette Smith, Rosalva Vargas-Reighley, Herman Gill, Carl Word, and Ben Tong in the Residential Ph.D. program;

Harris Clemes, whose 3-year training in Psychodrama literally transformed my life;

ITP's incredibly supportive staff members, especially Paula Yue, Brian Lieske, Josie Melton, and Dissertation Assistant Eric Fitzmedrud;

All the wonderful library staff, with special thanks to Katrina Rahn, Lucy Erman, and Sharon Hamrick, for patience, perseverance, and humor in helping me over the literary humps (especially during the final stages of “dissertation psychosis!”);

Editor Karen Funk, who honed my work in the Proposal and Final Draft stages; and last, but far from least,

All my fellow students (too numerous to mention here), whose friendship and example have inspired me through the years.

## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my daughters, Krystal and Leigh; to my granddaughters, Coral and Peyton; to my grandsons, Zach, Ben, and Samuel; and to all the children of Earth.

May they grow up, live long, and be good men and women. May they love, honor, and protect our Mother Earth.

## Preface: Grandmother Olive

All my life I have looked for my Mother. When I was small, it was my Great Aunt Loretta I turned to—and later the Virgin Mary, whose statue graced a little rose-hung arbor at Loreto Academy where I first went to school. As I grew older, I looked to teachers and camp counselors, and even to gentle men, for the nurturing I craved. I had a mother, but it never occurred to me to look there for the missing motherlove. She wasn't that way.

As an adult, although I didn't realize it for a long time, there was still a big hole where motherlove should be, and I tried to fill it by loving my own daughters as best I could. But not until I returned to the Great Mother from which we all come, to Gaia Herself, did I find the peace and support—the motherlove—I'd been missing.

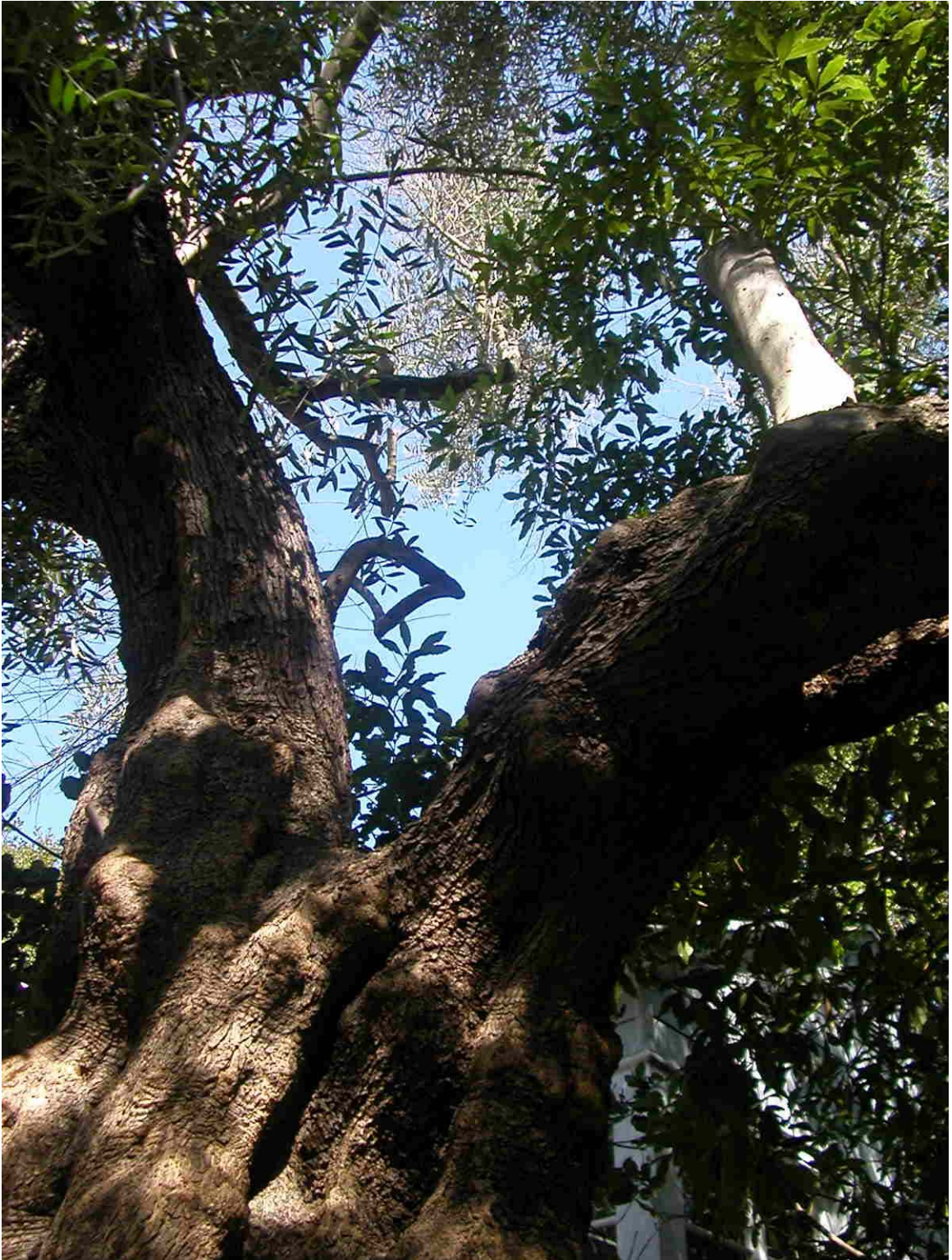
Gaia takes many forms. For me, right now, she is the Grandmother Olive—a 300-year-old olive tree by our house that I greet each morning with grateful ritual. The ritual is simple, really. I fill one bag with peanuts and another with birdseed and take them out to Grandmother Olive. I put the peanuts into a big hole high in her trunk, the seeds into the bird feeder. Then, as squirrels and birds gather for their breakfast, I embrace Grandmother. I thank Her for the peace, protection, and play that she brings to our home and to our lives. I ask to be peaceful, protective, and playful like Her. I ask Her to help me with my healing work, to keep me strong, to remind me to join my roots with Hers and sink them deep into the heart of Mother Earth when I need extra support. I bless Her, then, and go on with the day.

It is that close—this intimate connection with the Earth Mother. We find Her in stones and trees; in rivers and creeks; under desert cactus; in the tidepools and beaches

that border the sea; in the grave glances of animals, our fellow travelers on this Earth walk. She is available to each of us, always. We have only to look around, and She's there.

This was the gift that I wanted to give the adolescent girls who participated in this study; and it is the gift that I offer to you, my reader. Blessed be!





*Figure 1.* Grandmother Olive

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgments .....	v
Dedication .....	vii
Preface: Grandmother Olive .....	viii
List of Figures .....	xviii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	11
Classic Research and Modern Approaches .....	13
Indigenous Approaches .....	15
Overview of Design and Methods .....	17
Value of Blended Research Methods .....	17
Importance to Transpersonal Psychology .....	18
Conclusion .....	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	20
Feminine Perspectives on Adolescent Development Theory .....	22
Multicultural Issues .....	25
Goddess Worship and the Matriarchy .....	28
Feminism and Feminist Spirituality .....	33
Ecology .....	37
Ecofeminist Philosophy and Spirituality .....	39
Contemporary Rites of Passage and Rituals .....	43
Nonindigenous Rites .....	43
Indigenous Rites .....	47
Overview of Shamanism .....	49

Contemporary Shamanism.....	53
Chapter 3: Methods.....	56
Organic Inquiry.....	56
Participatory Research.....	60
Feminist Research.....	62
Heuristic Research.....	64
Validity of Blended Study.....	67
Threats to Validity.....	69
Participants.....	69
Procedures for Data Collection.....	73
First Meeting.....	74
Second Meeting.....	74
Third Meeting.....	74
Fourth Meeting.....	75
Fifth Meeting.....	75
Sixth Meeting.....	75
Seventh Meeting.....	75
Treatment of Data.....	76
Chapter 4: Results.....	78
Overview of the Findings.....	78
Characteristics of the Participants.....	80
Wise Elders.....	80
Mentors.....	81
Girls.....	82
Preparation Stage.....	82

Outreach.....	82
Finding the Wise Elders.....	83
Wise Elders’ Ritual Teachings.....	83
Viola’s Story .....	84
Laura’s Story.....	85
Diana’s Story .....	86
Cam’s Story .....	88
Beth’s Story .....	89
Overview of Themes: Wise Elders’ Ritual Teachings.....	90
Preparation/Separation.....	90
Liminality.....	91
Initiation.....	91
Incorporation.....	92
Relevance of a Ritual to a Young Person’s Life.....	93
Intimate Connection with the Earth as Sacred.....	94
Early Recognition of One’s Major Life Challenge.....	94
Art as Symbol and Agent of Change .....	94
Recognition and Appreciation for Who One Really Is.....	95
Summary of Themes: Wise Elders’ Ritual Teachings.....	95
Finding the Mentors.....	96
Mentors’ Motivation for Participating in the Study.....	97
Support.....	98
Safety .....	98
Empowerment.....	98
Helping.....	98

Power of Ritual .....	99
Creativity.....	99
Interaction with Youth .....	99
Summary of Mentors' Motivation for Participating in the Study .....	99
Mentors' First Group Meeting.....	99
Summary of Mentors' Themes and Suggestions .....	101
Finding the Girls .....	101
Participant Attrition .....	103
Summary of Preparation Stage .....	103
Liminality Stage.....	105
Working with the Girls .....	105
Mentor/Mentee Matching .....	106
Shamanic Journeys, Allies, and Ritual Names .....	108
Mask-making .....	113
The Girls' Challenges .....	116
Summary of Liminality Stage.....	118
Initiation Stage.....	118
The Ritual and Feast .....	118
Summary of Initiation Stage .....	121
Incorporation Stage.....	122
The Last Day.....	122
Summary of Incorporation Stage.....	124
Summary of Findings of the Study .....	125
Preparation/Separation.....	125
Liminality.....	126

Initiation.....	126
Incorporation.....	126
The Girls' Portraits .....	130
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	147
Introduction.....	147
Summary of Research Findings .....	147
Mentor/mentee Matching.....	150
First Shamanic Journey.....	151
Second Shamanic Journey .....	151
Mask-making .....	152
Challenges.....	153
Initiation.....	153
Incorporation.....	153
Limitations and Delimitations of the Study .....	156
Limitations of the Study.....	156
Cultural influences.....	156
Religious affiliation.....	157
Language.....	157
Social customs at home and in school.....	158
Other differences.....	161
Environmental influences.....	163
Personal limitations of the researcher.....	165
Summary of the Limitations of the Study.....	166
Delimitations of the Study .....	166
Strengths of the Study.....	167

Researcher's Personal Reflections .....	167
Leadership .....	168
Chaos/Order .....	168
Challenge .....	169
Empowerment .....	169
Help/Harm .....	170
Mentors' Feedback on the Study .....	171
Future Research .....	178
Implications and Further Applications .....	178
A Model .....	179
Relevance to Transpersonal Psychology .....	180
Concluding Remarks .....	180
References .....	184
Appendix A: Hawaiian Prayer for Forgiveness .....	192
Appendix B: Shamanic Journey .....	193
Appendix C: Wise Elders' Consent Form .....	196
Appendix D: Information Letter .....	198
Appendix E: Information Flyer .....	200
Appendix F: Parents' or Guardians' Release .....	201
Appendix G: Consentimiento del Padre o Tutor .....	203
Appendix H: Adolescents' Consent Form .....	205
Appendix I: Mentors' Consent Form .....	208
Appendix J: Pre-Rite Questions for Mentors .....	211
Appendix K: What is a Ritual? .....	212
Appendix L: Circles & Directions .....	214

Appendix M: Mentors' Post-Rite Questionnaire .....	216
Appendix N: Adolescents' Post-Rite Questionnaire.....	217
Appendix O: Medicine Cards .....	218
Appendix P: Girls' Rites of Passage Demographic Information .....	221
Appendix Q: Medicine Card Imagery and Limited Permission Letter .....	222



## List of Figures

Figures	Page
1	Grandmother Olive .....x
2	Altar for Dia de los Muertes .....51
3	Altar with Lavender and Feathers.....106
4	Butterfly Working on her Mask.....115
5	Air's Mask .....131
6	Air's Final Drawing.....132
7	Cougar Working on her Mask.....133
8	Monarch's Mask .....134
9	Monarch's Final Drawing.....135
10	Rain's Mask .....136
11	Rain's Final Drawing.....137
12	Rose Crystal's Mask .....138
13	Rose Crystal's Final Drawing.....139
14	Butterfly's Mask .....140
15	Butterfly's Final Drawing.....141
16	Eagle's Mask.....142
17	Eagle's Final Drawing .....143
18	Muffin's Mask .....144
19	Muffin's Final Drawing.....145
20	White Owl's Final Drawing.....146
21	Creative Synthesis—A Dissertation Weaving.....182

22	Grandmother Olive—Another View.....	183
23	Owl and Eagle Medicine Cards© .....	223
24	Skunk and Otter Medicine Cards©.....	224
25	Mountain Lion and Lynx Medicine Cards©.....	225
26	Spider and Frog Medicine Cards© .....	226

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Where ritual is absent, the young ones are restless or violent.*

—Malidoma Patrice Somé (1993, p. 95)

Many transpersonal research projects have their roots in a healing crisis, and mine was no exception. It began in 1983. My husband Lewis and I had decided to move to the little village of Elk, just south of Mendocino on California's north coast, to live simply, as far from the stress of city life as we could get. My older daughter, Krystal, was in college; my younger daughter, Leigh, had opted out of our little second family to move back in with her father and his wife in Marin County.

This was not a casual decision. Krystal was older and beginning to enjoy her autonomy. But Leigh, seven years younger, had never quite accepted my divorce; and her relationship with Lewis was adversarial. Enticed by a comfortable life in the suburbs during my first marriage, she detested the less affluent home that this new marriage provided. After several years of conflict, I offered her a choice: accept the redefinition of our family with grace and move to the north coast with us, or see if her father would let her live with him. I felt my heart drop out of my chest when she called me at work to tell me her father had accepted her proposal with open arms, but I had to let her go. I felt at the time, and still feel, that I surrendered my daughters to the patriarchy. (see Chapter 2)

Therefore, aside from my lackluster job on the UC Berkeley campus, I had no reason to hang around the Bay Area, and Lewis had quit his job earlier. It was easy to leave—in fact, it felt blissfully freeing. A Navy brat to begin with, I've always been a gypsy, rarely living more than two years in any one place, and the prospect of endless

peaceful days by the ocean with no more responsibility than caring for two cats and a vegetable garden was irresistible.

Within a few short weeks of our exodus and reestablishment in a tiny two-room cabin on Cameron Road in Elk, all hell broke loose. One of my cats, Camerson, was killed on the road the day we moved in. Leigh telephoned to say they were moving to Georgia. The winter rains began early and, overcome by grief on every side, I developed constant, excruciating abdominal and back pains. Over the next several months, despite many visits to a local doctor, the pains—accompanied by rapid loss of weight, hair, and energy—persisted. In the end, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. I had no medical insurance and very little money, and Western medicine was out of the question. Besides, my father had died of esophageal cancer in 1980, and I was convinced that the medical protocol had hastened his death—a prospect which terrified me even more than the distinct possibility that I might die for lack of proper care. I decided to try to heal myself, reading everything I could find on the subject of alternative healing, and soon plunged into an alien world of macrobiotics, meditation, yoga, and acupressure.

In the Spring we moved to a larger cabin on Greenwood Ridge. We put in a vegetable garden, and I sent off for a correspondence course in herbology and began to experiment with herbs on myself. An older neighbor who lived nearby, became a good friend and taught me gardening “from the ground up”—literally. There was something deeply healing about being in close contact with the earth. Gathering leaf mulch from under the oaks along the river and sheep manure from the hillsides, mixing these and sand with the hard clay soil, choosing and carefully planting seeds, watering, and waiting patiently for the first green shoots to appear, and sharing the sacrament of early lettuce

and peas together—these became a celebration of our mutual determination to stay alive. Dorothy, who was 70 when we met, insisted that there was nothing to keep you going like planting a tree. For me, it was sheer stubbornness and a wistful longing to be there for Lewis, and for my daughters, if and when either of them decided to reenter my life.

That summer Leigh came from Georgia to spend a couple of weeks with us. The visit went fairly well and I thought that perhaps her prolonged absence made us more appreciative of each other. Then, too, at 13, she was just moving into adolescence, and this might have created a rift under normal circumstances; so I was trying to be very gentle and uncritical. Towards the end of her visit, however, my alcoholic mother, who had cancer herself and was recovering from hip surgery, also arrived. We had planned to spend at least a week together, but when I saw her sitting on our little patio drinking gin straight from the bottle, I was horrified. Apparently she was determined to sit right there and drink herself to death. Our relationship had always been troubled—primarily because my Canadian Mother's idea of parenting, after her divorce from my father, had been to hand me and my sister Terry to our Scots nanny and depart for remote and exotic places—leaving us in the somewhat unstable care of her mother and alcoholic father and, when things got too chaotic in that household, of our great aunts. This continued for several years, until, at the age of 10, I begged my father to let us live with him in Texas. But the damage was done, and the sad and frightened child I had been, still very much alive in me at the age of 41, was unable to forgive my mother for abandoning us, helpless as we were at the time.

Now, however, our roles seemed reversed. I was the stronger one, and Mother's fragile physical condition, plus the fact that we lived 45 minutes (by narrow, winding,

and often fog-shrouded coastal highway) from the nearest hospital in Fort Bragg, was a serious concern, which made it somewhat easier to decide to send her back home to Washington D.C. Mother didn't care for the idea a bit and had no qualms about letting me know it, but when we drove down to the Bay Area to take Leigh to the airport, we took her as well. I felt terrible about this, but I could not, at the time, imagine anything else to do. I didn't know then, as I hugged her goodbye, that it was the last time we would see each other.

Shortly after Christmas Terry telephoned from Washington to tell me Mother had had a cardiac arrest in the Buffalo hospital where she'd gone for cancer treatment. At first I felt relieved—at least she wouldn't have to suffer for years as my father had done. Then Terry added that, although clinically brain-dead, she'd been put on life support—something she would never have agreed to herself. Terry went to Buffalo to be with Mother; I went to pieces. In an agony of guilt over our relationship to begin with, I was devastated about my mother being on life support, but too ill myself to fly to Buffalo to deal with my sister's grief and my doubts about the moral stance of allopathic medicine. Finally, after nearly a month of letters, Terry's late night bedside reports, and endless long-distance conferences with the doctors, I managed to convince everyone that not only would our mother have objected violently to life as a vegetable, there was no money to pay for it. Within a couple of days, papers arrived by Express Mail. I signed them, and we were all more or less free to pursue our separate paths.

Mine seemed to have reached a plateau. I was no worse, but no better either. Still terribly thin and subject to occasional bouts of pain, I turned to art making for relief. A local chiropractor had diagnosed scoliosis and this upset me tremendously. I'd made a

small sculpture of my twisted spine, using dead twigs and dull-colored yarn, and balancing the whole on a very unstable piece of driftwood—all of which very accurately represented my inner state as well as my physical condition.

Meanwhile, Leigh shocked me with the report that she had been seriously considering suicide, since life with her father was not what she had expected. When Terry called to say she had had a modified radical mastectomy I was devastated. I didn't know, then, about the connection between deep grief and physical illness. All I knew was that the life I had so wanted to be calm and orderly, *controlled*, was in total chaos, and that the people I loved most in the world appeared to be either sick or crazy or dead.

Talking with a friend in Mendocino one day, I shared my sadness about Mother, my sister, and my daughters—and my feeling that this was what was keeping me from healing. Concerned, Kevin loaned me a book on Huna, the Hawai'ian science of healing and magic, which stated that humans are three-part creatures: a higher ancestral self, or *Aumakua*; a middle or ego self, *Uhane*; and a little child self, *Unihipili*. The health of our bodies is governed by *Unihipili*, and the way to communicate with this self is exactly the way you'd communicate with a 4-year-old child—through art making, play-acting, music, and dance. Fun. No left-brained stuff—just intuitive, spontaneous reaching out to listen and learn. *Unihipili*, then, directly contacts *Aumakua*, who has charge of your life plan, and brings *Aumakua*'s messages back to you. (*Uhane* simply mucks things up by over-intellectualizing and trying to control what can't be controlled—just as the ego confuses believers in western psychology. Fortunately *Unihipili* overrides *Uhane*.) Huna also teaches that what you send out into the Universe comes back to you.

I thought about my gloomy spine sculpture and promptly began a second one, a mobile made of rice paper and rainbow-colored strips of mylar, hung between two pieces of driftwood that balanced beautifully. Six weeks later the chiropractor announced that my spine was actually beginning to straighten out.

“I’m no artist,” he said. “I’m a scientist. But whatever you’re doing is working—keep doing it!”

I was riveted by the thought that it might be useful to apply this same process to the healing of cancer, and made two sculptures of my abdomen with instant plaster cast bandages—one horrible, painful-looking purplish thing with moss and prickly horse-chestnuts for ovaries, and one bright pink one with silver mylar ovaries—and hung them both in the little studio behind our cabin. I also began to make paintings and drawings of my ovaries and uterus, some of which looked oddly like a Madonna and Child, and continued my study of Huna in the writings of Max Freedom Long (1948) and Serge Kahili King (1990). The pains seemed to lessen, and some of my energy slowly began to return. I met a real *kahuna*, or doctor-priest, in San Francisco. He gave me certain exercises to practice, and instructed me to say the *Ho’o’pono-pono* (Appendix A), the Hawai’ian prayer for forgiveness, every day. I worked on this, focusing especially on my mother, my ex-husband, and Leigh.

After several months of this new practice, I ran into Kevin in town again and gave him a progress report. I was much better, but still not completely well. He suggested that I might benefit from a psychodrama session with his partner. I agreed, and later that week I joined him and Jim for dinner and a three-hour psychodrama session, during which Jim directed me to play the roles of my mother and myself, moving back and forth between



two empty chairs to do so. When I was playing Mother, however, I noticed that the words I spoke were not mine, and the feelings I had were unfamiliar to me. I could only conclude that she was somehow communicating her feelings through me. Exhausted afterwards, I went home to sleep and didn't think anything more about it until the following morning on our way down to the Bay Area. Driving through the Anderson Valley in our little VW bug, I mulled over the night's events. We had just got past Cloverdale when I suddenly realized that the problems I'd had with my mother were not her problems, but mine! Mother had simply been herself—my approval or disapproval of her mothering style was my own issue.

Just as this thought hit home, I felt something turn in my abdomen and heard a little *click*. Lew, who was driving, glanced at me. "What was that noise?"

"I don't know," I replied. "But something just turned in my belly, too."

He looked back at the road, then glanced quickly at me again. "My God," he gasped, "you look like a completely different person!"

With no mirror I had no idea how I looked, but I certainly *felt* different. Somehow a huge weight had lifted off, and I felt I could breathe more freely. Over the next few weeks I began to notice that, while I still cared deeply about my sister and my daughters, I didn't feel so responsible for them. They would make their own decisions, and that would be OK. Healing progressed rapidly after that, and within a few months I was well enough to begin teaching the process I had learned, which I called "Healing Art."

Our nearest neighbors were willing guinea pigs, and we spent many a chilly morning in my studio, beginning with yoga, then doing the shamanic journeying to contact *Unihipili*, and ending with an art making session (for an example see Appendix

B). I loved this work and couldn't imagine how I'd ever managed without it. Not only that, as I worked with other people, teaching what I'd learned, my body responded eagerly. Within a year all the symptoms were gone. (Although I received no medical confirmation of remission, and allopathically trained practitioners may argue that the original diagnosis was inaccurate, the fact remains that I had clear symptoms of ovarian cancer, my health was rapidly deteriorating, and I chose—successfully—to use alternative methods of healing.) Whatever I was supposed to do with my life had begun.

The ensuing years were full ones. I had begun a serious study of how and why I'd been able to heal myself and was uncovering a great deal of information under the heading of vibrational healing. Certainly, though I tried to be rational, I couldn't deny that something quite remarkable had happened. I just didn't know what to call it. Still, I continued to teach the process as Healing Art. I offered a course through the Continuing Education department at Southern Oregon State College, did some private consultation, and got a little practice in making sense of my phenomenon to others.

After I had spent several years of serious training in Reiki and various forms of alternative and shamanic healing, we moved to Santa Fe, where I worked as a healer, teaching Reiki and Healing Art with all its mystical ramifications to cancer and AIDS patients.

We had been in Santa Fe for five years when, during a prolonged visit to Nevada City, I agreed to teach a short class in maskmaking at a "last chance" school for scholastically and behaviorally challenged teens. The school's administrators were quite skeptical about my proposal. They envisioned all sorts of behavioral problems (since these were considered "difficult" children) that they assumed I couldn't handle. However,

I convinced them that this was a safe and playful process, and that most people—especially young people—enjoyed the opportunity to dig deep into their psyches and bring out something new and fresh. As it turned out, I was right. The kids loved the class, the school’s administrators liked the program, and I loved the kids. I was hooked.

When we returned to Santa Fe, I found funding to help street kids there; and to sponsor writing and musical performance programs at the local youth detention center, as well as a musical arts training program at the Boys and Girls Club. For the next five years I directed Orenda, initiating a gardening project at one youth center, internet training at another, and a teen’s radio program with 8<sup>th</sup> graders that aired on Public Access Radio at the community college. However, the work with incarcerated teens—which included being an advocate in court for several of the girls—showed me that I needed a degree in counseling if I was ever going to be of any real help to them.

I was beginning to realize that underneath all this altruism, there was a hidden drive to make amends—to heal the relationships with my mother, my daughters, and my sister. In many ways, the teenage girls I was trying to help *were* my family; and on an even more subtle level, they represented myself. I began to ask deep questions. Why were all the women in my lineage lost? My mother, whose relationship with both her parents had been difficult; my sister, who had had a very adversarial relationship with our father; my daughters, abused by their father but clinging to him in spite of it—what had happened to them, to me, that had prevented us from growing up safe and sane? Was it something that we had done? Or something that had been done to us?

When I was eleven, I experienced menarche—referred to by some in those days as “the curse.” But nothing magical, nothing wonderful happened to celebrate this

enormous transition. There was no name change, no party, no gathering of female relatives to congratulate me and initiate me into the mysteries of womanhood, much less apprise me of the post-WWII world situation that even then was burgeoning into the sociopolitical, ecological, and spiritual maelstrom that faces young women today. In fact, people—my father particularly—seemed *embarrassed* by this evidence of my budding maturity. As for sex itself—it remained the elephant in my family’s living room and was never discussed.

The irony of such an omission is inescapable. Female sexuality is so powerful that no one can deny it. Honored or abhorred, it stands at the core of art, religion, philosophy, even commerce. Women’s bodies are used to sell everything from cosmetics to cell phones. Menarche, then, the first bloom of this sexual flowering, is a point of power often unrecognized in present day American society—a lack of awareness perhaps fueled by lack of information and support for this idea. This power carries great responsibility, first and always to oneself, and then to everyone else with whom one is in relationship. The concepts of power and responsibility, however, are quite alien to the uninformed. Obsessed with the superficiality of looking “pretty,” all too many girls spend their adolescent years overwhelmed with intense feelings of apprehension, embarrassment, and self-disgust, with no idea of the creative potential available to them at this time, or the mythic richness of the heritage that is theirs (Lelchuck, 2006; Wolf, 1991; Guidice, 2006). Add to this the pressures of school, interaction with family members and peers, and career choices in a constantly shifting economy, and adolescence becomes an overwhelming challenge.

### *Purpose of the Study*

My experience of using art for healing, and the work I had done with teenagers in Nevada City and Santa Fe, formed the matrix in which the idea for this research study was born. Given what I perceived as a lack of societal support during this crucial period in a young girl's life, I initially planned to write this dissertation on the experiences of adolescent girls creating an Earth-based rite of passage at menarche under the guidance of adult female mentors. If I couldn't recreate my own adolescence in a safe harbor, at least I could provide such a service for others. However, I did not take into account the subtle menstrual taboos that, surprisingly, still exist in present day culture. When I attempted to recruit adolescent participants, I discovered that few parents seemed particularly enthusiastic about their daughters' participation in such a project. Therefore, I decided to eliminate the emphasis on menarche and to focus the study on some of the other pressing challenges faced by young girls approaching womanhood

The purpose of this study, then, was to explore the experience of adolescent girls who were facing life challenges, and who were willing to participate in an Earth-based rite of passage that was oriented in ecofeminist spirituality and co-created within a supportive community of women. In this blended qualitative study, I sought to address issues of female development raised by Gilligan (1982,1993), Pipher (1994), Miller (1979), Mead (1928), and other researchers. While Gilligan and her colleagues have clearly defined many of the challenges facing young women growing up in patriarchal Western society, they have not yet identified consistently successful or long-lasting methods of addressing these problems. Studies by Rogers and Gilligan (1988), Brown (1989), and Pipher (1994) have highlighted what Lori Stern (1991) calls "disavowing the

self,” causing adolescent girls to arrive at young adulthood, voiceless and disempowered, in a world that sorely needs the informed, engaged participation of wise women.

According to Naomi Wolf (1991), author of a popular report on patriarchal manipulation of contemporary women’s self-image, women learn how to *compete* with men, but not how to rely on their own inner resources, their own deep feminine wisdom. Models of feminine expression are based on masculine models that do not speak to a woman’s needs or her abilities, and do nothing to foster her self-esteem. One example I have observed, peripherally addressed by professors and researchers William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson (1998) in their discussion of qualitative research, is the tendency of women in academia to relate their findings in the predominantly patriarchal idiom, even though those findings may be of a wholly personal, organic, or feminist nature. One explanation for this, that I hear daily repeated by female colleagues and classmates, is that women scholars who express themselves as women are less likely to be published in the more respected peer-reviewed journals. This observation is further supported by the experience of professor and feminist author Marjorie DeVault (1999), who writes of pursuing her Ph.D. at Northwestern University: “I can also easily recall becoming aware of a pervasive and frightening atmosphere of sexism. I watched as two outstanding junior faculty women...were denied tenure...as I came to know women faculty, I shared not only ideas but also their experiences of discomfort and marginalization as sociologists” (p. 9).

Many years have passed since my own adolescence. Now, in the dual roles of mother with daughters and granddaughters of my own and professional counselor to many young girls and adult women, I am painfully aware that little has changed. In my

experience, young women moving hesitantly out of childhood still trip at the threshold of feminine maturity with no more guidance than I had then and, given the current state of the world, with far more serious consequences. When I was an adolescent, my parents and their peers believed the worst thing that could happen to me was premarital pregnancy. Girls in today's strongly patriarchal and often misogynistic environment face many more negative possibilities, including being thrown out of their homes and forced to support themselves through theft, prostitution, or selling drugs; addiction to hard drugs such as cocaine or heroin; the possibility of contracting AIDS and other serious diseases; and the formation of self-defeating, abusive, and even life-threatening relationships. (Haag, 1999)

#### *Classic Research and Modern Approaches*

Although classicists such as Sigmund Freud (1905, 1931) and Erik Erickson (1968) have applied male developmental norms to adolescents of both genders, a growing number of clinicians and well-known feminist researchers, including Carol Gilligan (1982, 1993) and Mary Pipher (1994), report that girls need a particular kind of adult support as they enter adolescence. Unlike boys, girls are not shepherded through this transition in Western culture.

Well-documented rights of passage for young males date back to early records of indigenous societies around the world (for an example of both the documentation and the rituals themselves, see Arnold Van Gennep's 1908 and 1960 notes on male puberty rites of the Masai in Kenya and Tanganyika) and forward to such modern rites of passage as the wilderness vision quest, the Ropes Course, the Outward Bound experience, and many other transitional processes.

Although I realize that this is a very controversial issue, it is important to be aware of the fact that young men come of age today in a patriarchal society that automatically endows them with certain rights and responsibilities. This gives them (within the limits of their individual age and abilities) status in the eyes of the community, regardless of whether that community is of the “dominant” European American culture. As males, they are encouraged to develop and exercise powers that few females acquire, and they are trained to these tasks.

Many young women, on the other hand, once solely responsible for the home and the raising of children, are now expected both to fulfill these more “feminine” responsibilities and to compete with men in the workplace, merely to support their families in a shrinking economy. In addition, according to a report by Douglas & Michaels (2004), women are expected to perform these tasks—despite the harm that may be done to their own children by their enforced absence—regardless of the often harsh patriarchal criticism that accompanies their efforts.

Karen Liptak (1994) wrote a comprehensive study of rites of passage for youth in cultures around the world, including those of the Amazonian Tukuna tribe and the Masai of Kenya. Well-known anthropologist Margaret Mead (1928) recorded rites of passage for adolescent girls in Samoa, but these are not currently in practice. Liptak noted that girls’ ceremonies are most commonly held in hunter-gatherer societies; whereas industrialized societies, like ours, mark the passage into adulthood with legal milestones: getting a driver’s license, registering to vote, being allowed to drink alcohol or to smoke, or joining the military. Although such contemporary markers are accepted both by teenagers and the greater American society, they do not provide young people with the



moral strength and spiritual guidance of more personal and meaningful rituals. In the absence of such rites of passage into adulthood, young people, male and female, might be unable either to see clearly what is taking place in the world around them or to effectively address the pressing issues of our times. Global warming; unbreatheable air; polluted streams and oceans; depleted farmlands; destruction of old growth forests; AIDS, cancer, and heart disease; juvenile violence; growing homelessness; political dishonesty and manipulation of the many for the benefit of the few; devastating world-wide wars—all issues that have galvanized young Europeans—escape the notice of many of our youth, self-absorbed as they are in the instant gratification promised by the media. Young adults growing up in such a milieu may become parents who will pass their ignorance on to their own children, and the downward spiral continues.

### *Indigenous Approaches*

Indigenous cultures have sought to address adolescent developmental issues by assigning education of the young to tribal elders (Mead, 1928; Turner, 1969). In this way the adolescent acquires a self-image that encourages individuation, that supports a sense of oneself as uniquely feminine or masculine—and at the same time emphasizes one's relationship to others in the tribe in the context of that tribe's sense of place, its partnership with and responsibility to the Earth. This practice is still a highly successful part of tribal life among many Native American nations, which continue to hold ceremonies such as the Kinaalda, or coming of age ritual for Navajo females (Roesl, 1993), and the vision quest for the initiation of Lakota Sioux males (Liptak, 1994). The adolescent taught in this manner acquires a grounded worldview that fosters cooperation,

compassion, and nurturing as the most desirable qualities in an adult—qualities that are not honored in our increasingly corporate Western culture.

Such indigenous rites of passage often draw upon the psychospiritual practice of shamanism. The shamanic paradigm embraces a holistic worldview, in which human beings are inextricably connected to the earth and to all other beings on the earth, as well as to the elements of water, fire (sun), air, and earth itself. A popular bumper sticker, seen frequently in the area where I live, is a quote excerpted from a speech by Chief Seattle: “The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth.” Shamanism was, and still is, a world-wide practice, (Tedlock, 2005) and is briefly explained here in an article by sociologists Voss, Douville, Little Soldier, and Twiss (1999) on tribal and shamanic-based social work among the Lakota Sioux. They noted:

Shamanism emerges from a cosmology that views nonmaterial or transpersonal reality as the source of power and health. Canda (1983) noted that ‘the most ancient and widely distributed therapeutic systems in the world are those of shamanism’...

This spirit-centered worldview of the Lakotas sees the entire universe imbued with and intimately related to spirits and spiritual forces that have real power to influence outcomes. It is a worldview in that human beings are not superior to but equal with other creatures of the earth... (1999, p. 228)

Voss et al further noted that the roots of this shamanic gestalt are nurtured in the soil of tribal and community relationships. Being on good terms with the spirits is not just a personal matter—it is of vital importance to one’s entire community, for one’s own omissions or indulgences may negatively impact one’s family and friends, as well as oneself.

Perhaps the Lakota are right: Oakland, just across the “border” from Berkeley, where I live, makes new headlines on a regular basis with reports of people being killed either because they happened to belong to the family of a rival gang member or merely

because they were “in the wrong place at the wrong time.” All too often, these unfortunate victims are children. During preliminary research for this study, I realized that I could not situate the adolescent participants in the matrix of a larger community with all the attributes of an indigenous culture; however I hoped that our work together, though only a beginning, would be a step in the right direction.

### *Overview of Design and Methods*

This qualitative study, blending elements of organic inquiry, participatory research, feminist research, and heuristic research, paired 9 female adolescents between the ages of 12 and 14 with adult female mentors. With my assistance and the advice of a team of “Wise Elders” (women who had themselves experienced and/or created coming of age rituals), mentors assisted adolescents in co-creating their own meaningful rite of passage. This ritual was largely modeled after existing Earth-based indigenous rites, such as those used by Native Americans (Liptak, 1994; Voss et al, 1999; Paper, 1997) and modern Pagans (Crowley, 1996), and it incorporated symbolic representations of the girls’ own personal challenges. Material from pre- and post-ritual questionnaires was combined with my field notes, adolescent and adult participants’ comments, and adolescent participants’ artwork, to produce the final written account.

### *Value of Blended Research Methods*

The choice to use a blended research method was based upon the memory of my own adolescence and my deep interest in what happens to adolescent girls on the threshold of womanhood in a patriarchal culture such as ours (Wolf, 1991; Spretnak, 1982). I also felt the need of a research design that emphasized flexibility, inclusion, and positive change—all useful features in working with adolescents. Organic inquiry

provides that flexibility. Perhaps more importantly, organic inquiry, which supports the psycho-spiritual growth of both researcher and participants working in partnership with Spirit (Clements, 2002), promised to be a powerful tool for the kinds of change I hoped to encourage in members of the research group. Participatory research is based on collaboration and focuses on compassion and awareness of the experience of the participant (Reason, 1994a). Since these qualities were among the original catalysts for this study, I encouraged co-researchers to take part in all phases of the research. Feminist research supports emancipatory change in group members through its use of field work and open-ended interviewing; and the fact that it allows the researcher to be immersed in the social setting, which can facilitate mutual understanding between researcher and participants (Mertens, 1998). Heuristic research focuses deeply on the researcher's personal experience, and even more deeply on her intuition. In Chapter 3, I present each of these methods in more detail, with particular emphasis on organic inquiry and participatory research.

### *Importance to Transpersonal Psychology*

The paradigm of transpersonal psychology encourages holistic growth and the fulfillment of individual potential at all stages of life. The blended approach used in this study aptly addressed transpersonal psychology's six pillars of healthy human development: spirit, intellect, emotions, the physical body, community, and creativity. In designing the study, I believed that the co-creation of a powerful ritual would be a process that could validate the life experiences of the older participants, provide girls who might otherwise fail to recognize or reach their full potential with a vehicle for their own rich, grounded transition into womanhood, and encourage intergenerational

communication and understanding. I hoped that research outcomes would enrich the study of adolescent development in particular, and the field of transpersonal psychology in general.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, this blended qualitative study attempted to use Earth-based ritual to explore and address some of the gaps cited by Gilligan (1982), Pipher (1994), and others in understanding the development of adolescent girls, whose growth, according to Gilligan (1982), has been negatively compared to that of adolescent boys, to their mutual detriment. I sought to encourage the girls' development—especially improvement in self-image—by immersing the girls and their adult female mentors in a process of self-discovery and self-empowerment through the co-creation and enactment of a meaningful Rite of Passage.

Chapter 2 reviews pertinent literature on ancient and modern rites of passage for adolescents (especially girls), shamanism, and multicultural research. It also reviews research on adolescent developmental issues, goddess worship and the matriarchy, feminism and feminine spirituality, ecology, ecofeminism, and ecospirituality.

Chapter 3 details the methods used: organic inquiry, participatory research, feminist research, and heuristic research. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study and includes vignettes or “portraits” of the adolescent participants; and Chapter 5 discusses these results. The reader will find examples of informational flyers and letters, releases, and explanations of some of the procedures (such as the shamanic journey and the origin of the Medicine Cards (Sams & Carson, 1988) in the Appendixes.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*There was a time when you were not a slave, remember that. You walked alone, full of laughter, you bathed bare-bellied. You say you have lost all recollection of it, remember. . . . You say there are no words to describe this time, you say it does not exist. But remember. Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent.*

—Monica Wittig (1969, p. 89)

The search for historical background documenting ways to support the empowerment of adolescent girls has led me into a literary labyrinth. Searching in the fields of traditional and transpersonal psychology, women's spirituality, archaeology, anthropology, and sociology, I found articles and books on adolescent development, ancient and current Goddess worship, matrilineal and matrilocal societies, feminism, feminist spirituality, ecology, ecopsychology, rites of passage, and shamanism. Feminist philosopher Karen Warren's (2000) work on ecofeminism helped me to situate my topic in a particular context: that of ecofeminist spirituality. Because a great deal has been written on some of these subjects, and not as much on others, I have chosen one or two primary contributors from each major field as *representative* of a much larger body of work.

It is worth noting that, in all my research on empowering girls and teaching them to honor the feminine, there were few writers who addressed the issue of child development in that context. Furthermore, I found only dissertations (Staaecker, 1999) and a few articles by relatively unknown writers that encouraged beginning this task at the onset of puberty. While there is a substantial body of literature on ancient and modern rites of passage for adolescent boys, there is very little on similar rites for girls. Arnold van Gennep (1909) wrote of early puberty rites for boys, and Victor Turner (1969) expanded van Gennep's work through his own studies with the Nedembu people in

Central Africa; however, his focus was more on the general and structural aspects of ritual (itself an important facet of this study), and did not specifically address puberty rites for adolescent girls. Margaret Mead's (1928) seminal and controversial work on Samoan female puberty rites is well-known, but not current. Furthermore, it raises a central and somewhat disturbing question—one which supercedes even the burning anthropological question of Mead's time (nature vs. nurture): can research in any subject be purely objective? To what extent do we, as researchers, influence the behavior of the entities (human, animal, or otherwise) that we study? I will address this briefly in Chapter 5.

Many modern ritualists advocate wilderness rites for both genders (Davis, 2003; Loos, 1997; Hutter, 1999; Foster & Little, 1983), including programs such as Outward Bound, and much has been made of challenge programs such as the Ropes Course, but these do not address or help to reveal the inner “jewel” (Davis, 2003)—which in this case is the source of *feminine* wisdom that I intended the adolescent participants in this study would discover. According to ecologist and author Joanna Macy (1989), young people need a sense of the Earth as our Mother—not as an adversary we need to conquer—if they are to contribute to peace in the world.

In this chapter I briefly present the work of experts in adolescent development, goddess worship and the matriarchy, feminism and feminine spirituality, ecology, ecofeminism and ecospirituality, ancient and modern rites of passage, shamanism, and multicultural research.

*Feminine Perspectives on Adolescent Development Theory*

Although adolescent development is treated in great detail by many renowned male psychologists (see, for example, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, David Winnicott, and others), I decided to base this study on the viewpoints of feminine writers, because I believe that they may be closer to the truth of female adolescent development. Carol Gilligan (1982) reported that adolescent females develop quite differently from adolescent males, contrary to the theories of most researchers in the field at the time of her writing. According to Gilligan, males are more focused on competition, achievement, and control than are girls and women, while females value connection and are inclined to be accepting in order to maintain a valuable relationship (1982). This feminine inclination towards connection and community, however, is frequently disparaged—not only by males in our society, but by young girls and women as well. According to author Naomi Wolf (1991), adolescent females seem to consider themselves somehow inferior to males; and, although they seldom recognize and even more seldom express it, many young girls define themselves by male criteria. Wolf noted that such criteria may include beauty (hair color and length, breast development, slenderness of legs, flatness of belly), intelligence (a girl should be smart but not *too* smart), skill at games and areas of study such as science and mathematics, business acumen, decision-making ability, and more. Girls frequently compare themselves with boys and with each other on these points. Rarely, however, does a young woman define herself as being good at relationships, caring, generous, or kind. (Haag, 2000)

Wolf's findings are corroborated by the work of Joseph Guidice (2006), whose dissertation investigates the body image dissatisfaction emerging in the last several



decades among adolescent females. He writes, “These female teens are confronted with the daunting task of balancing normative pubertal body changes with unrealistic expectations of their bodies placed on them from the media, their parents and their peers” (2006, p. 23). Guidice found that this stress caused depression, social anxiety, and eating disorders, and that girls with poorer body images not only have lower self-esteem but are also more dissatisfied with their lives.

In a recent news report by Ilene Lelchuk, a Girls Inc. survey (2006) of more than 2,000 students nationwide in grades 3-12 revealed that “girls still feel pressure to please everyone and look perfect while also trying to seize opportunities their grandmothers might not have had, such as attending college and pursuing careers” (p. B-1, *SF Chronicle*, Sunday, October 29, 2006. “Girls reporting high stress.”) Lelchuk interviewed Pat Loomes, Executive Director of Girls Inc. Alameda County, who quoted one girl as saying: “The problem is I can never be thin enough, I can never be pretty enough, and I can never be good enough” (p. B-7). The study further found that 70 per cent of girls surveyed were concerned about their appearance, and that 60 per cent of high school and 40 per cent of middle school girls worry about sex, getting pregnant, and relationships.

Gilligan (1982) compared theories of male and female development that she believed underlie this phenomenon. She stated that after Freud tried unsuccessfully to fit women into his male-oriented theory of human development, he concluded that there was a developmental difference between men and women that rendered women morally inferior. Gilligan wrote, “Thus a problem in theory became cast as a problem in women’s development, and the problem in women’s development was located in their experience of relationships” (p. 7). She further noted that, according to feminist sociologist and

psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow (1974), girls tend to identify with their mothers, thus fusing the experience of attachment with the process of identity formation; while boys self-identify as masculine and separate themselves from their mothers. This tendency among young males curtails their experience of primary love and empathy. Therefore, boys, unlike girls, fail to develop a self-image that includes empathy. Gilligan concludes, “Since masculinity is defined by separation while femininity is defined by attachment... men tend to have difficulty with relationships, while women tend to have difficulty with individuation.... Women’s failure to separate then becomes by definition a failure to develop” (pp. 8-9).

American psychologist Erik Erickson (1950) charted eight stages of human development. Adolescence is the fifth stage, and its task, given that the adolescent has progressed successfully through the previous four stages—trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry—is to forge an identity capable of the adult commitments to devotion and fidelity. But about whom, Gilligan asks, is Erickson talking? She states:

Once again it turns out to be the male child. For the female, Erickson (1968) says, the sequence is a bit different. She holds her identity in abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will rescue her from emptiness and loneliness by filling “the inner space.” (1982, p. 12)

Gilligan’s findings, supported by the work of Mary Pipher (1994), Nancy Chodorow (1974, 1978), Matina Horner (1972), Alice Miller (1979), Jane Loevinger (1970), and other respected researchers in female development, competently challenge the work of Freud (1925), Jean Piaget (1970), Lawrence Kohlberg (1969), and Erik Erickson (1968). However, the masculine bias still prevails, although more subtly now than during the first half of the 20th century. Gilligan summed it up neatly:

Implicitly adopting the male life as the norm, they [psychological theorists] have tried to fashion women out of a masculine cloth. It all goes back, of course, to Adam and Eve—a story that shows, among other things, that if you make a woman out of a man, you are bound to get into trouble. In the life cycle, as in the Garden of Eden, the woman has been the deviant. (1982, p. 6)

### *Multicultural Issues*

Despite the preliminary research that went into this dissertation project, I was not fully prepared for the challenges that I encountered in working with a multicultural group of participants. It soon became apparent that I needed additional sources of information on multicultural issues. Details of these issues are reported in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5. Here, however, it is important to note that changes in the research design catalyzed changes in my perception of both the needs of the adolescent co-researchers and my own ability to address those needs.

In designing my *original* research question, “*What is the experience of adolescent girls co-creating an Earth-based rite of passage at menarche with adult female mentors?*” I had attempted to address all the issues I thought would arise, while at the same time allowing enough flexibility that the girls and mentors could create something new. What I did *not* consider was the possibility that the parents of these girls, and the girls themselves, might not be as enthusiastic about a menarche ritual as I was. This is presented in Chapter 4 and discussed further in Chapter 5. Despite all my planning, menarche was not the issue at hand for these young participants. Instead, my study became one of the *experience of creating ritual with adolescent girls facing life challenges in a multicultural context*.

It is possible that cultural differences between Latina/Hispanic (and to some extent, African American) girls and Anglo (Caucasian) and Native American mentors, as

well as among the mentors themselves, might have influenced the design of the research process. However, there is no proof for this theory.

The challenges faced by the girls in this study were practical life issues. They included such things as graduation from middle school; boyfriends; the frustrations of having to care for younger siblings; the girls' own behavioral problems; the necessity of bridging between their lives as typical "American teenagers" and their lives at home with largely non-English-speaking working parents; limited transportation and financial resources; and other more mundane challenges. In this respect they were not so very different from the young participants in a study conducted by researcher Pamela Haag (2000) and her colleagues, members of the American Association of University Women. Haag relates the opinions of a cross section of adolescent girls ranging in age from 11-17, shared during 150 Sister-to-Sister Summits held in 38 states plus Puerto Rico from November 1997 through July 1999. She notes that the girls' major challenges revolved around their identity and body image (pp. 20-21), the "complexities and paradoxes of adolescent sexuality and sexual activity that do not typically appear in pregnancy prevention programs" (p. 52), peer pressure and "fitting in" (p. 85), and school, especially the fact that "Peers and adults police gender barriers, effectively defining who can learn and who will win or lose approval" (p. 113).

Psychologists and professors Derald Wing Sue and David Sue (2003) address the challenge of working with multicultural groups. Although their focus is on counseling, I found that many of the same issues arose in my work with the adolescent participants in this study, particularly the matter of the girls' and school administration's commitment to prioritizing the after-school research session over other activities, such as basketball,

tutorials for students in need of extra help, and study hall—not to mention family activities. Sue & Sue note:

Since [Hispanic] family relationships are so important, decisions may be made that impact the individual negatively. Allegiance to the family is of primary importance, taking precedence over any outside concerns, such as school attendance or work ....For example, older children may be kept at home in order to help care for ill siblings or parents. They may be absent from school to attend family functions ... or to meet a family financial obligation.... Under these circumstances...the problematic behavior [must be]...characterized as a conflict between cultural and societal expectations. (p. 346) [italics mine]

In a similar vein, Angelica Ware (2006) has written a dissertation on the relationship between urban Latina mothers' parenting style and their daughters' level of anxiety and depression. Ware used both quantitative and qualitative methods, interviewing 200 girls and 101 mothers to explore the links among socioeconomic status, maternal acculturation, neighborhood crime/danger, sense of collective efficacy, and the mothers' perceptions of their control of their daughters. Her findings supported earlier findings on the negative effects of exposure to community violence in an urban setting and the positive influence of their mothers' affection on the girls' mental health symptoms. She also found that "the macro-level factor of Latino family practices influenced the micro-level factors of maternal acculturation and parenting which, in turn, affected the girls' mental health" (2006, p. 115).

My study was further complicated by the differences in Anglo and Hispanic societal expectations of young girls and women. According to Sue & Sue:

For females, [sex role] conflict may involve (a) expectations to meet the requirements of her role, (b) anxiety or depression over not being able to live up to these standards, and (c) the inability to act out her feelings of anger....Hispanic women are socialized to feel that they are inferior and that suffering and being a martyr are characteristics of a good woman. (p. 350)

There was no evidence of martyrdom among girls in my study, but they did seem unusually restrained at the beginning of our work together. This initially made it difficult for them to speak up and talk about their challenges, especially in the large group.

Finally, the cultural differences in spiritual and religious beliefs played a large part in the results of this study. Sue & Sue write:

The Catholic religion has a major influence in Hispanic groups and is a source of comfort in times of stress. There is strong belief in the importance of prayer, and most participate in Mass. This religious belief is related to the view that (a) sacrifice in this world is helpful to salvation, (b) being charitable to others is a virtue, and (c) you should endure wrongs done against you ....The consequences of these beliefs are that many Hispanics have difficulty behaving assertively. (p. 351)

This viewpoint is clearly in strong contrast to the more flexible and permissive nature of Earth-based spirituality upon which the Rite of Passage used in this study was based.

#### *Goddess Worship and the Matriarchy*

Since the focus of the study was on helping the girls to create a ritual grounded in Earth-based spirituality—the Divine Feminine—it was important to include studies on goddess worship and the matriarchy.

Author and Pagan priestess Margot Adler (1979) described a time when women ruled, a period now referred to as the matriarchy. Despite recent assertions that there was no such phenomenon and that the work of professor and archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (1974) lacks relevance because she could not verify her sources, Adler insisted that the mere *idea* of matriarchy holds transformative power for women. She believed that it is “fashionable for scholars to dismiss the idea [of a matriarchy]...due partly to the lack of conclusive evidence in any direction and partly to (predominantly male) scholars’ fear of the idea of women in power” (p. 128). Adler stated that while there is no consensus on what the word *matriarchy* means, there are many interpretations. Technically, it means

government by mothers, “or more broadly, government and power in the hands of women” (pp. 131-132). The word is also used to mean “an age of universal Goddess worship, irrespective of questions of political power and control” (p. 132). Many feminists consider matriarchy a society in which women have a different kind of power from that of men. Witch and political activist Starhawk (1982) calls this “power from within” as opposed to “power over [which] is, ultimately, the power of the gun and the bomb, the power of annihilation ...” (p. 3), and describes it as “the power we sense in a seed, in the growth of a child, the power we feel writing, weaving, working, creating...” (p. 3).

According to Adler, Alison Harlow, a feminist Witch from California, considered the word *patriarchal* to mean manipulative and domineering, while a *matriarchal* worldview values connection and intuition, and seeks Earth-friendly nonauthoritarian and nondestructive power relationships and attitudes toward the Earth. Adler noted that while some feminists, like the poet Adrienne Rich, believe that “there is a new concern for the possibilities inherent in beneficent female power, as a mode that is absent from the society at large” (p. 134), others, such as Harlow, believe that “the matriarchy...was better for women, but [it] had problems and difficulties of its own” (p. 135). Harlow wrote that a matriarchy was also usually a “Goddess-centered theocracy” (p. 135), a form of government that was incompatible with her concepts of individual human freedom. Adler acknowledged, however, that “most women who have explored the question do see a return to some form of matriarchal values...as a prerequisite to the survival of the planet” (p. 136).

Some scholars lean toward combining the best of both systems. Feminist author Riane Eisler (1987, 2005) writes that “All societies are patterned on either a dominator model—in which human hierarchies are...backed up by force or the threat of force—or a partnership model” (1987, p. xix). In a recent paper she further defines this difference with the words *dominator system*, ruled by an *andocracy* (society governed by men), and its alternative, *partnership system* or *gylany*, a word she has coined “implying that the female and male halves of humanity are linked rather than ranked” (2005, p. 406). [italics mine] She writes:

Most people still think of the roles and relations of men and women as “just women’s issues” to be dealt with after more important political and economic issues are addressed. But if we look at human cultures through a gender-holistic lens, we see ...the way a society structures the roles and relations of the male and female halves of humanity affects every social institution from the family, education, and religion to politics and economics. (2005, p. 406)

Eisler emphasizes that she does not intend to blame men. However, she adds:

But a dominator culture requires a male-superior, female-inferior model to serve as a template for all the superiority/inferiority differences among people and nations. (2005, pp. 410-411)

Discussing the more “caring and empathic” (p. 413) social policies of Nordic nations such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland, Eisler notes that it was not their economic prosperity that made these social policies possible, as the argument goes, but the social policies that contributed to economic prosperity. She states:

Along with movement toward the partnership model—and with this the higher status of women and the higher valuing of the “feminine” by men—came policies supporting stereotypically feminine activities such as caring for children, the elderly, and people’s health. These policies produced a well-cared for, highly educated population, the “high quality human capital” that led to greater economic prosperity. (p. 413)

Other feminist researchers have wholeheartedly embraced the Goddess tradition.

Feminist author Judith Grahn (1999) wrote her dissertation on the practice of Goddess



traditions rooted in menarche rites in Kerala, South India. She noted that this study was an application of her own theory, called metaformic theory, which proposes that human culture evolved from the connection between the lunar cycle and the menstrual cycle. She wrote:

The correlations I found affirm that goddess traditions appear to be rooted in the menarche celebrations of Kerala's diverse communities. Also, certain powerful rites that connect devotees with forces of nature can be interpreted as using metaphors (what I call metaforms) derived from and related to, menstrual rituals. The study deepens my theory, especially with new understanding of *shakti*, and reinforces crediting women's cultural contributions as well as making connections between women's and men's rituals. (1999, p. 3617)

In a similar vein, religious studies professor Carol Christ (1979) argued that feminists have to reclaim religion for themselves. She pointed out:

Because religion has such a compelling hold on the deep psyches of so many people, feminists cannot afford to leave it in the hands of the fathers....Religions centered on the worship of a male God create “moods and motivations” that keep women in a state of psychological dependence on men and male authority, while at the same time legitimating the *political* and *social* authority of fathers and sons in the institutions of society. (1979, pp. 72-73) [italics in original]

Christ stated that a woman who prays to a male God “may see herself as like God...only by denying her own sexual identity and affirming God’ s transcendence of sexual identity. But she can never have the experience...of having her full sexual identity affirmed as being in the image and likeness of God” (p. 73). According to Christ, this confirms a woman’s trust and dependency upon male power, and strengthens her innate distrust of her own power and that of other women—a powerful mood that motivates her social relationships and political actions (p. 73). Native American feminist author Louise Erdrich provides a beautifully crafted example of such a dilemma in her novel, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, the fictional autobiography of a woman who served as a male priest for over 30 years on an Ojibwe reservation.

According to Christ, the Goddess affirms four aspects of women's experience heretofore defined by the patriarchy. These are female power, the female body, the female will, and women's bonds and heritage.

Christ wrote that the symbol of the Goddess psychologically challenges the patriarchal view that women's power is inferior and dangerous. Politically, it leads to new motivations, supporting women's trust in their own power and the power of other women in family and society.

The denigration of the female body is expressed in cultural and religious taboos surrounding menstruation, childbirth, and menopause in women. The three-fold symbol of the Goddess (maiden, mother, and crone) "aids the process of naming and reclaiming the female body and its cycles and processes" (p. 79). In the potential of the maiden, the fertility and creativity of the mother, and the wisdom and acceptance of the crone, She is revered and worshipped (Crowley, 1996).

Christ noted that Goddess-centered ritual also values the will, unlike patriarchal religions, which consider the will to be sinful, especially in women. She stated that "This emphasis on the will is important for women, because women traditionally have been taught to devalue their wills, to believe that they cannot achieve their will through their own power, and even to suspect that the assertion of will is evil" (p. 81). Christ added that in Goddess worship, "*a woman is encouraged to know her will, to believe that her will is valid, and to believe that her will can be achieved in the world*" (p. 82) [italics in original]. This encouragement is given with the understanding that will can be achieved "only when it is exercised in harmony with the energies and wills of other beings" (p. 82).

Finally, Christ wrote of the Goddess as a source of revaluation of woman's relational bonds and heritage. She cited Rich on the mother-daughter bond, who noted that this most central of women's bonds is rarely referred to in patriarchal religion, literature, and psychology. She added that French author and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir has noted that this relationship is distorted in patriarchy because the mother must surrender her daughter to men in a male-defined culture that views women as inferior. However, she pointed out that authors like Virginia Woolf and artists like Holly Near have celebrated women's bonds in their stories and songs, and that this exerts a gradual but steady influence on women today (Christ, 1979).

Indeed, this supportive influence does seem to be increasing. Kristy Coleman's (2003) dissertation addressed the significance of the divine feminine in a study of the largest and longest lasting group of Dianic (exclusively female) Witches in the United States. She wrote, "Dianics, somewhat like Kali, dance the destruction of this [Western] metaphysics and from its cinders create a new worldview in which women begin to envision and enact their own potential" (2003, p. 1288). Coleman proposes that the concept of the Goddess might weaken the Western metaphysical system and help develop an alternative system of (transcendental) signification—which is why the concept of the Goddess is seen as holding such a threat to the patriarchy, and such promise for the Goddess community.

### *Feminism and Feminist Spirituality*

Another major focus of this study was to help the adolescent participants become aware of the patriarchal culture in which they would soon become adults, and the many ways in which this culture seeks to prevent them from achieving their full power. I

planned to do this, not through denigrating the patriarchy, but by pointing out some of the more spiritual aspects of feminism.

Although many people think of Goddess worship as feminist, feminist spirituality is a much broader cultural phenomenon that emerged from the feminist movement, which reached its peak in the mid-1970s (Spretnak, 1982). Women who had angrily rejected patriarchal religions began to feel drawn toward connection with something greater than themselves—not replacing what had been discarded, but rather arising naturally out of their newfound sense of freedom and self-empowerment. That something took the form of a spirituality that reflected female embodiment and human connection to Nature.

Feminist author and political activist Charlene Spretnak (1980) explained why women seek this embodied connection:

The lies about the nature and function of woman that are intrinsic to patriarchal religion have informed the legal, educational, political, economic, and medical/psychiatric systems of our society and are accepted as ‘natural truths’ by even the most modern and/or atheistic citizens...The Christian Right is acting out a predictable...scenario on the stage of national politics: Masses of fundamentalist Christians *and other concerned citizens* have been mobilized to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution, and other profeminist legislation at all levels, because it would upset “God’s natural law and disturb the ‘natural’ roles of the sexes.” (1980, p. xi) [italics in original]

What is most arresting about this excerpt from Spretnak’s introduction to her anthology of writings on feminist spirituality is that today, 24 years later, the very same scenario is being re-enacted. She referred to herself in 1980 as a member of the “second wave” of feminism, and briefly cited the efforts of “first wave feminists” such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who, along with Matilda Joselyn Gage and Lucretia Mott, is highly praised in Sally Roesch Wagner’s (2001) book on the influence of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) women on early American feminists. It is sobering to note that

women are still experiencing many of the same injustices and indignities that amazed the matrilineal, matrilocal Haudenosaunee.

It was the realization that so little has changed in 24 years that inspired the idea of designing a study to co-create a mentored Earth-based rite of passage with adolescent girls. I hoped that such a study would contribute to a healthier trend in female adolescent development and help to encourage stronger, more self-assertive young women.

Dawn-Sophia Waite (1986), in her exploration of Sophia as representative of the Divine Feminine and Wisdom, wrote:

The absence of a full and complete symbology of the feminine has recently begun to be most poignantly felt in the area of women's spirituality. On an individual and cultural level, the feminine-maternal wisdom has...remained hidden, residing mainly in the unconscious and asserting itself via dreams and symbols. As women have begun to seek models of psychospiritual wholeness, it has become clear that masculine developmental models have been the only available measures; their unsuitability is becoming increasingly apparent. (1986, p. iv)

Considering the tasks of women today, Waite added that women are “moving beyond their characterization as responsive/passive/nurturing and are exploring in depth their own feminine truth” (p. 256). They are voicing their transformative knowledge, and “rocking the patriarchal boat by challenging or encouraging others to look into their own deeper levels” (p. 256). It is meaningful to note that this was written only six years after Spretnak, by a student at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP), where I, twenty years later, am writing about essentially the same lack of female spiritual models, especially for young girls.

Vocata Sue George (1986), another ITP student, wrote a dissertation on the evolution of the Goddess in the West—Her significance in early history, Her decline with the onset of Judaism and Christianity, and the need for “Her return to contemporary society for the purposes of a Holy Marriage to heal the sickness of our civilization” (pp.

iv-v). However, George did not address the possibility that adolescent girls might be more in need of the Goddess than anyone else.

Spretnak (1980) pointed out that the status of women was not always so debased. She wrote that the earliest human artifacts depicted “the awe our ancestors felt for women and their mysteries, e.g., bleeding painlessly in rhythm with the moon, drawing *people* from their bodies, producing food from their bodies for the young” (p. xii) [italics in original]. She further explained:

At the moment this awe turned to envy, resentment, and fear, patriarchy was born. Why or how we do not know. What we do know, all too well, is the nature of patriarchy and its destructive effects on both sexes...All of the myriad varieties of patriarchal oppression—co-opting and replacing the Goddess, imposing patrilineal descent and ownership of woman’s womb, restricting and mutilating woman’s body, denying woman education and legal rights, forbidding her control of her body, and portraying that body as a pornographic toy—*all* of these acts are motivated by one desperate drive: to prevent woman from experiencing her power. (1980, p. xii) [italics in original]

Spretnak stated that experimental psychology reveals man as a “manipulative animal,” expressing himself in action, while woman is a “communicative animal” (p. xiii), remembering, sharing, and transmitting signs and symbols to others. She added that a person born with a mind that does not perceive connectedness, and raised in a culture that does not support it, will probably see only separations as he goes through life. “If the impulse to manipulate and control is more highly developed in the average male than is the impulse toward empathy, communion, and harmony, perhaps...most men physiologically *feel good* when they dominate a neighbor’s army, a football team, a business associate, a woman’s body” (1980, p. xiv) [italics in original].

According to Spretnak, then, patriarchal religion is obviously unhealthy for the female psyche. However, she noted that Goddess worship is not the only form assumed by women’s spirituality. It is often comprised of “the truths of naturalism and the holistic

proclivities of women” (p. xvii)—of the connection to elemental power a woman feels when she makes love, menstruates, gives birth, walks alone in the woods, or swims in the sea. In these ways a woman can physically and emotionally experience her connection to Spirit and to all life.

### *Ecology*

It is this sense of connectedness to all life that lies at the heart of the ecological movement. Deep ecologist Joanna Macy (1989) wrote that we humans are being called to rediscover our true nature, our existence as part of the world we live in, rather than as separate and competitive beings. She explained:

The crises of our planet-time, whether viewed in military or ecological or social terms, result from a dysfunctional and pathogenic concept of self. It is a mistake about our place in the order of things. It is the delusion that the self is so separate and fragile that we must delineate and defend its boundaries, that it is so small and needy that we must endlessly acquire and endlessly consume, that it is so aloof that we can—as individuals, corporations, nation-states or as a species—be immune to what we do to other beings. (1989, pp. 202-203)

Macy cited three significant factors that she believed have helped to promote this awakening: psychological and spiritual pressures exerted by the current dangers of mass annihilation, the emergence from science of the systems view of the world, and a renaissance of non-dualistic forms of spirituality. These forces combine to evoke often amazing personal responses to planetary crisis, such as the determination of Greenpeace activists, who pit their frail rubber boats against whale-hunting factory ships; or the passion of protesters like Julia Butterfly Hill, who helped to impede logging in Northern California old-growth forests by living for three years in a giant redwood tree she named “Luna” (Hill, 2000). Macy said that the purpose of such efforts is “to overcome the numbing and powerlessness that result from suppression of painful responses to massively painful realities” (p. 204). Such realities produce “a distress we feel on behalf

of the larger whole of which we are a part” (p. 204), and she likened the nature of this distress to the original meaning of compassion: “suffering with” (p. 204).

Environmental history professor Carolyn Merchant (1980) wrote of the affiliation between women and nature, which she saw expressed in similarities of interest between the women’s movement and the ecology movement. She stated:

Both the women’s movement and the ecology movement are sharply critical of the costs of competition, aggression, and domination arising from the market economy’s *modus operandi* in nature and society....The vision of the ecology movement has been to restore the balance of nature disrupted by industrialization and overpopulation....Similarly, the women’s movement has exposed the costs for all human beings of competition in the marketplace...and the view of both women and nature as psychological and recreational resources for the harried entrepreneur-husband. (1980, pp. xx-xxi)

Merchant noted that conservation and ecology movements, intersecting with women’s right and liberation, are beginning to reverse “the subjugation of [both] nature and women” (p. 294). Women’s groups such as the League of Women Voters, she added, were early leaders in the quest for legislation of clean air and water; and what she calls “science for the people groups” (p. 294) have worked towards an economy that would equalize female and male work options, and reform the system of capitalism that profits at the expense of nature and workers.

Developmental psychologist Anita Barrows (1989) took a step further to show how children are born into “not only a social but an ecological context” (p. 106), providing further validation for a rite of passage that would connect the girls in this study with nature. Barrows referred to Winnicott’s theory of transitional phenomena. She suggested that his place of “dynamic interpenetration between the self and something in the world” (p. 106) might be understood as “the permeable membrane that suggests or delineates but does not divide us from the medium [nature] in which we exist” (pp. 106-



107). She pointed out that this is also the “realm of interbeing” (p. 107) described by Thich Nhat Hanh. Evidence of the child’s “ecological self” (p. 107) is seen in a baby’s delight in her body and her sensuous reactions to the world, in the attraction of children to fairy tales set in nature, in the child’s affinity for animals. She asked what might be the implications for the way we practice therapy, how we might look for sources of depression, agitation, apathy, violence, or chronic illness in the child’s environment. She noted that we might come to understand that development does not necessarily rupture a oneness [as in individuation] but that “rather, it can make an increasingly widening circle of oneness possible” (p. 108). Barrows summarized:

If we see the child as inextricably connected not only to her family, but to all living things and to the earth itself, then our conception of her as an individual, and of the family and social systems in which she finds herself, must expand. (1989, p. 107)

### *Ecofeminist Philosophy and Spirituality*

Warren (2000) refers to expansion of the sort Barrows envisioned by the term “ecofeminism” (p. 2). According to Warren, ecofeminist philosophy is characterized by recognizing important interconnections in the unjustified domination of women, what she calls “other human Others,” (p. 43) and nonhuman nature; and by acknowledging that any solutions to such issues as balance of power, gender issues, and ecological issues arising from such domination must include “ecofeminist insights into women-other human Others-nature interconnections” (2000, p. 43). In this respect, Warren’s gestalt is closer to the holistic, more indigenous world view that I wished to share with the adolescent participants in this study.

While Warren seems to be restating a good bit of Macy’s philosophy, there are marked differences. Macy proposed awareness of and respect for nature as the innate

responsibility of a fully human being. Warren extends the realm of responsibility. She defines her version of ecofeminist philosophy as one that responds to the intersection of “three overlapping areas of concern: feminism (and all the issues feminism raises concerning women and other human Others); nature (the natural environment), science (especially scientific ecology), development, and technology; and local or indigenous perspectives” (p. 44). She points out the differences between an oppressive and a non-oppressive conceptual framework: “An oppressive conceptual framework...functions to explain, maintain, and ‘justify’ relationships of unjustified domination and subordination. When an oppressive conceptual framework is *patriarchal*, it functions to justify the subordination of women by men” (p. 46). [italics in original] Oppressive conceptual frameworks are characterized by what Warren calls “value hierarchical” (p. 46) or up-down thinking; oppositional value dualisms [e.g., being male/white/rational is given more value than being female/black/emotional]; power-over [rather than power from within]; privilege; and a logic of domination [justifying domination and subordination] (pp. 46-47).

According to Warren, the position of women under patriarchy, even today, fits all of these criteria. She asks how women can survive patriarchy, and posits that the way out is also, in a sense, the way in. That is, the urge for union with Nature is itself a spiritual impulse that creates the very response that it demands. She notes:

Historically, ecofeminist spiritualities have played a vital, grassroots role in the emergence of ecofeminism as a political movement... Epistemologically... practitioners often base their spirituality on claims about the importance of immediate, concrete, felt experiences of women-nature connection.... Methodologically, ecofeminist spiritualities require ecofeminist theorists who are “outsiders”...to come to terms...with methodological caution and methodological humility when engaging in criticism of spiritual practitioners who are “insiders.” (pp 194-195)

Warren states that ecofeminist spiritualities are first *feminist*, committed to eliminating male-gender privilege and power over women in their myths, rituals, symbols, language, and value systems; second *spiritual*, expressing faith in a life-affirming (rather than life-denying) power or presence other than, and in addition to, one's own being; and third *ecofeminist*, expressing a twofold commitment to challenge harmful women-other human Others-nature interconnections and to develop earth-respectful, care-sensitive practices toward humans and earth others. (p. 198)

Wicca, a nature-based Pagan religion, may be seen as an example of ecofeminist spirituality (Starhawk, 1982, 2004; Crowley, 1996). The rituals that we taught the girls (calling the Four Directions, creating a circle, respectfully communicating with the spirits of animal allies) illustrate another form of ecofeminist spirituality—an indigenous form that is even more down-to-Earth than Wicca.

Warren states that breaking out of the unhealthy patriarchal system will become possible when ecofeminist spiritualities use their spiritual power to help heal the wounds of patriarchy where cognitive and behavioral strategies alone are not enough. They will “provide opportunities for like-spirited people to be genuinely present to each other....By simply being present to each other—without fixing or curing or solving or recommending or teaching or evaluating—ecofeminist spiritualities provide the space, the ‘empty cup’ within which healing can occur” (pp. 211-212).

The problem with these worthy contributions to the literature is that not only do their authors fail to tell us *how* to begin reintroducing young girls to their inherent feminine spirituality and power, or *when* to begin this process—many of them include no reference to adolescent girls at all. Furthermore, each of these philosophies is presented

as a separate paradigm, when in fact it is part of a more holistic worldview that could, if applied, strengthen the self-esteem and capabilities of adolescent girls. I attempted to introduce this worldview to the girls in this study—to help them recognize that their personal problems are reflections of the problems facing all women in patriarchy; and that these are, in a sense, physical manifestations of the afflictions of the Earth. Thus, I believed, the healing of individual young women would result in the healing of Gaia Herself.

Gilligan makes a valid argument against the misinterpretation of female adolescent development. Adler—despite the more balanced approach suggested by Eisler, who advocates what she calls a “partnership society” in which men and women would assume equal responsibility and equal power—assures us that once upon a time women ruled, and believes there is precedent for a return to that fruitful past. Christ urges the veneration of a more compassionate, relational female deity. Spretnak supports the feminist worldview. Macy notes our connectedness, and, therefore, our responsibility, to all life on the planet; while Merchant writes of the affiliation between women and nature and is supported by Barrows’ argument for rearing the child as part of the ecological background into which she is born. Warren combines the philosophies of ecology and feminism in support of the connection between woman, Nature, and oppressed minorities. Each of these viewpoints illustrates an important aspect of supporting the healthy development of individuals and societies, and my personal (Native American) worldview embraces all of them as a *holos*, each part inseparable from the rest. But nowhere in this literature is there any mention of the importance of finding a way to help *young girls* begin to make sense of information that may seem to them like many different and

tangled threads, from which they must weave the mantle that will protect them and their children for the rest of their lives. All the more crucial, then, is a study that begins this process through mentored, Earth-based rites of passage for adolescent girls approaching womanhood.

### *Contemporary Rites of Passage and Rituals*

#### *Nonindigenous Rites*

Fortunately, we are not thrown wholly back on our own devices to conceive a way to guide young girls into womanhood. Early indigenous cultures around the world had wise elders who were able to instruct the young in the mysteries of sex and birth and in their responsibilities to their communities (Eliade, 1972; van Gennep, 1909; Turner, 1969). Many of these ancient practices have survived into present times, and provide excellent models for modern coming-of-age rituals. In American culture one sees a number of such rites of passage for males, especially for adolescent males at risk.

However, not all of these programs practice what they promise to teach. Marianne Neuwirth's (2006) dissertation describes a study of the efficacy and relevance of two wilderness therapy programs in the western United States. Her particular focus, as an employee of both programs, was how written, verbal, and nonverbal communication used by these programs framed nature, gender, and organizational goals as socializing agents, ostensibly designed to move vulnerable or at-risk youth toward new self-identities.

Neuwirth found that:

both programs *framed nature according to its usefulness to humanity*; both used gender-exclusive language in relation to aspects of nature, i.e., referring to all animals, plants, and insects as 'he'; both used a rite of passage model that parallels traditional organizational socialization models, which have been critiqued by feminist scholars as universalizing and incomplete renderings of many people's, particularly females', experiences... (2006, p. v). [*italics mine*]

She concludes that her study casts doubt on current Western conceptualizations of nature, which are based on views of nature as a commodity to be used and consumed, and she offers alternative and broader views of the natural world.

Neuwirth's study describes rites designed for clients of two specifically youth-oriented business organizations. However, many contemporary rites of passage are based upon updated versions of rites practiced by Native Americans, such as the Sun Dance, the Vision Quest, and the Sweat Lodge. These are among the seven spiritual practices said to have been given by the Native American deity, White Buffalo Calf Woman, to the Oglala Sioux (Geise, 1996; Voss et al, 1999). Many Native American people, according to Richard Voss (1999) and his colleagues, are reintegrating these three practices in lieu of the more invasive or secular Western medical treatments (Voss et al, 1999). Louis Mehl-Madrona (1997), a Western-trained Native American medical doctor, describes the conflict and confusion he felt when first reintroduced to the old ways of his people during his years in medical school. Today, however, he is a board-certified, well-respected family physician, psychiatrist, and geriatrician, successfully incorporating both approaches into his practice while serving as assistant professor of Clinical Psychiatry at the University of Arizona, where he is affiliated with its College of Public Health and is Coordinator of Integrative Psychiatry and Systems Medicine.

Such indigenously inspired, non-gendered or mixed (male/female) wilderness rites of passage, like those described by Linda Loos (1997), Denise Hutter (1999), and John Davis (2003), have become quite popular. Loos designed a qualitative study to explore ways in which a council of elders and peers provides mirroring—or responding, reflecting, amplifying and empowering—stories offered by adult participants in a

wilderness rite of passage. Organic inquiry was the method used in this study, and Loos drew her data from “narratives, interactions with co-participants, dreams, synchronicities, creative expression, guidance, meditations, and the mirror of nature” (1997, p. 3). She found that this organic process of inquiry moved in a spiral between primary and secondary modes of consciousness, facilitating a creative synthesis.

Hutter (1999) used organic inquiry to study the experience of personal and collective wisdom gained by 8 young adults (ages 18-21) participating in a wilderness rite of passage that was led by wilderness experts Steven Foster and Meredith Little (1983, 1988). Five females and three males met for a 2-week vision fast experience in eastern California, which included 3 days and nights in the desert without food, shelter, or company. Hutter interviewed participants before and after the vision fast and again one year later, to record their current life issues and reasons for participating, the experience of fasting, and their incorporation of the experience over the following year. She focused on the issues young people face as they transition into adulthood, the impact of the rite of passage on that transition, and the resulting wisdom, and found that wilderness rites of passage can be helpful in changing this culture’s perception “which discredits the voices of young people to one which empowers youth to become capable messengers of personal and collective wisdom” (1999, p. iv).

John Davis (2003) is a psychologist, Naropa University professor, and member of the faculty of Foster and Little’s School of Lost Borders, which conducts wilderness rites of passage for adolescents of both genders, as well as for adults dealing with life transitions. Davis writes:

Successful life transitions are truly cause for celebration. A soul is maturing, and the community is gaining new energy, creativity, and potential. At the same time, transitions bring disorientation, disenchantment, and distress...

Directed by the elders who have traveled the same path, inspired by the larger community, and supported by one's inner resources, a successful transition will be the basis for fulfillment and contribution in the next phase of one's life. For adolescents, the trials and ceremonies of transition confirm the beginnings of adulthood....However, without that guidance and support, the journey quickly turns sour. (2003, p. 2).

Davis extols the value of vision quests in Nature and notes that there are precedents for such therapeutic experiences in the fields of psychology (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich et al, 1991), spirituality (Keutzer, 1978; Wuthner, 1978; Swan, 1992) and ecopsychology (Rozak, 1993). He warns, "Wilderness rites of passage can also be viewed in relation to Native American vision quests. This raises the very important question of the misappropriation of spiritual and cultural traditions" (p. 14). In defense of the well-intentioned efforts of serious wilderness questors, he cites the example of using juniper and sage in his ceremonies, and argues that it is a "way of bringing the local aromatic plants into our ceremonies and inducing a sense of the sacred" (p. 14), and that these plants are "place-specific incenses [that] fit better with local ceremonies than imported incense" (p. 14). However, he notes that this kind of education should be presented in the contexts of Native Americans' social, political, and spiritual struggles; environmental activism; and universal rites of passage. We should not "pretend" to be doing Native American vision quests" (p. 14).

I did use sage during our ritual work with the adolescent girls in this study. The drum I used to facilitate the shamanic journeys and the journeys themselves, the invocation of the Four Directions, the concept of "animal medicine" (see Chapter 4 for a brief explanation), and the discovery of animal allies through use of the Medicine Cards,



are all Native American ceremonial tools. However, although I am part Native American, and these practices are rooted in my own cultural background, the study was never presented as an exclusively Native American process; therefore, I do not believe that we walked disrespectfully on that sacred ground. Through the use of these tools, I attempted to bring a sense of the wild beauty of Nature and respect for the Earth and all our fellow beings to the project.

### *Indigenous Rites*

Similar contemporary rites of passage intended exclusively for females appear to be scant or nonexistent, with the exception of menarche rites such as those described by the Wise Elders in Chapter 4. There are, however, a few examples of existing menarche rituals among the Diné (Apache and Navajo) and some other Native American peoples. Women's studies scholar Jordan Paper (1997) writes in detail of the Navajo Kinaalda, considered to be the Diné's most important ceremony, and the Isanaklesh Gotal of the Chiricahua and Mescalero Apache. He notes that many years have passed since the first recording of the Diné menarche rites, and much has changed (for example, the deerskin referred to below is now, for the Navajo, a hand-woven blanket). Yet for some Navajo families the female initiation ceremonies retain life-shaping importance, as in the case of 13-year-old Celinda McKelvey, whose Kinaalda is sympathetically recorded in text and photos by Diné writer and photographer Monty Roesel (1993). Roesel noted:

Navajo people believe that the Kinaalda is a way for young girls to understand what life will be like when they grow up. As she participates in the Kinaalda, a girl learns about her culture, and, for the first time, she feels the responsibility of her family. Even as she works side by side with her elders, she knows it is up to her to see that the Kinaalda is a success. (Roesel, 1993, p. 9)

Roesel gives a description of the First Kinaalda in the story of Changing Woman:

The first Kinaalda was performed for Changing Woman, the most honored of all Navajo Holy People. One morning at dawn, First Man and First Woman saw a dark cloud over Gobernador knob. When they went to see the cloud, they heard a baby crying within it. First Man found the baby girl who was born of darkness; the dawn was her father. First Man and First Woman raised the child under the direction of the Holy People.

When the girl reached puberty, the Holy People wanted to make a ceremony for her so she could have children. First Woman told the girl, who was called Changing Woman, that she must run four times in the direction of the rising sun. "As you come back you must make the turn sunwise," First Woman said.

To begin the ceremony, Changing Woman's hair was washed with suds made from the root of the yucca plant. Then her hair was tied back.

Next, First Woman decorated a dress for Changing Woman. First she spread out an unwounded buckskin--one without an arrow hole. On it she placed a piece of turquoise, a bit of white abalone shell, a piece of black obsidian, and a white bead. Then she put white beaded moccasins on the girl's feet. She gave her a skirt and leggings that were also made of white beads. She designed white-bead sleeve fringes and wristlets.

Then First Woman placed her hand on Changing Woman's forehead and moved her hand from Changing Woman's shoulders up over her head. She did this to mold the girl into a woman like herself.

The Holy People said that Changing Woman must make a large cake for the sun. She was to grind and mix the corn for the batter. When the Sun rose in the east, and after all the prayers were finished, the cake would be given to the Sun. . . (Roesel, 1993, pp. 16-17)

Celinda McKelvey's ceremony, conducted much like the First Kinaalda, lasted two days. It began just as the story describes, with her mother washing her hair and helping her to dress in the ceremonial clothing, and ended with Celinda serving the corn cake she had baked in a ground pit during an all-night prayer vigil with some 30 members of her extended family. Afterwards she poignantly expressed her feelings:

"I can't believe that I've done it. I kept telling myself, you can't quit. I know I don't look any different, but I feel different. I feel like a Navajo. Just like my mom and my aunts and my grandmother" (Celinda McKelvey, in Roesel, 1993, p. 46).

Although there are similarities between the ceremony of the Apache and the Navajo Kinaalda, the Apache believe that the young woman actually *becomes* White

Painted Woman/White Shell Woman, while the Navajo believe that she attains the powers of Changing Woman but does not necessarily *become* her [italics mine]. As White Painted Woman/White Shell Woman, the young girl is believed to possess healing powers, with which she heals those who come to her for healing (and many do!). In both Navajo and Apache ceremonies, the girl is ritually massaged or “molded” into the image of the deity. Paper wrote, “When everyone has been blessed, the female ritualist (singer) lays the initiate down on the deerskin and ‘molds’ her, praying, ‘May this girl be good in disposition, good in morals. May she grow up, live long, and be a fine woman’” (1997, p. 182). While I did not intend to restrict the girls’ rite of passage to the Native American model, my aim was the same as that of Paper’s female ritualist. The Diné ceremonies, however, unlike the girls’ Rite of Passage in this study, are initiations into a family and tribal lineage; the relationships developed in this process last throughout the initiand’s life. Although the continuation of most of the mentor/mentee relationships beyond the end of this project seemed unlikely, the girls’ post-Rite reflections were somewhat reminiscent of young Navaho Celinda McKelvey’s surprise and pride.

### *Overview of Shamanism*

These Navajo and Apache ceremonies are beautiful examples of what is called “sympathetic magic” (Frazer, 1922, pp. 13-15), or the use of symbolism and the manipulation of symbolic objects to bring about a desired result in real life. This was, and continues to be, common practice in shamanism. The controversial Scots social anthropologist and comparative ethnographer, James Frazer (1922), disparaged this practice. However, he explained it fully, and even described two distinct applications of sympathetic magic: *homeopathic* magic, based upon the belief that like produces like;

and *contagious* magic, whose practitioners hold that anything that has been in contact with someone may be used to affect him. [italics mine] According to Frazer, little wooden dolls made by “Ojebway Indians” (p. 15) were designed to injure or kill one’s enemy by means of piercing them with a needle—an example of the negative use of homeopathic magic—and the birthing dolls used to encourage pregnancy among the Bataks of Sumatra (p. 16) are an example of its positive use. A current example of homeopathic magic is seen in the Deer Dance of the Northern New Mexico Pueblo Indians, in which dancers dress in deerskins, wear deers’ antlers on their heads, and fasten anklets of deers’ hooves to their legs, in order to ensure a successful hunt.

I include this discussion of shamanism because, although the intent was not to heal but to empower adolescent participants, the work I did with the girls did include aspects of shamanism. Calling the Four Directions, creating the sacred center space or altar, drumming, working with animal guides through divination, maskmaking, the initiatory process itself—all have shamanic overtones. The masks made by the girls in this study were another example of sympathetic (homeopathic) magic. Each mask represented either an ally or another creature whose positive character traits its maker wanted to encourage in herself.

In addition, there is a strong relationship between what is known as shamanism and the practices of indigenous Latin American Catholics. These practices center around the legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is believed to have appeared to a poor and humble Indian man named Juan Diego in 1531, shortly after the Christian conquest of Mexico. Mexico was the original home of several adolescent co-researchers in this study.

Many spiritual practices in the Americas have shamanic roots. Latino immigrants to the United States have brought shamanic customs that resident North Americans have adopted as their own. One such custom is the practice of honoring one's dead family members from October 31 (Hallowe'en) through November 2 (*Dia de los Muertos*), by erecting an altar (Figure 2) with photos, candles, favorite foods, and other objects that departed family members may have enjoyed.



*Figure 2.* Altar for Dia de los Muertos

Shamanism is an ancient art and perhaps the oldest of Earth-based spiritualities (Harner, 1980). According to anthropologist and author Barbara Tedlock (2005), shamanism consists of “both a healing practice and a religious sensibility, with startling similarities between shamanistic ideas and activities in cultures as far apart as Siberia, the

Amazon basin, southeast Asia, and Nepal” (p. 27). Tedlock notes that “because it lacks an institutional framework and a central figure” (p. 27), it appears in a variety of historical and political settings, including modern Western countries such as our own. Anthropologist and contemporary shaman Michael Harner (1980) notes that the shaman experiences “a fluid movement between an ordinary state of consciousness (OSC) and a nonordinary or shamanic state of consciousness (SSC)” (p. xvi). A shamanic journey, such as the one employed with adolescent participants in this study, is one of the methods used to achieve this fluidity of awareness.

Called “the first religion of mankind” (Dobkin, 2002, p. 1577), shamanism is still practiced among many modern and somewhat remote cultures, such as the Tibetan Bon; the Alaskan Inuit; various Mexican, Brazilian and other Central and South American Indian tribes; and many North American First People’s nations, including the Lakota Sioux, the Navajo, and the Apache. According to Voss et al (1999), who studied shamanic and tribal practices for social work among the Lakota Sioux, in all shamanic practices, the supplicants believe themselves to be inept, helpless without the intercession of powerful spirits. They note that:

Shamanism is not a single religion. Rather it is a religious style that centers on the helping ministrations of a sacred specialist, the shaman, who utilizes a technique of ecstatic trance in order to communicate with spirits and other powerful forces, natural and supernatural. The shaman obtains sacred power from the spiritual realm to heal and edify the human community in harmony with the nonhuman environment. (Voss, Douville, Little Soldier, & Twiss, 1999, p. 228)

Voss et al add that much of the social work literature views Indian people as a “social problem group” (p. 2) and fails to acknowledge the contributions of American Indian tribal and shamanic-based traditions to Western social work.

In the case of the Kinaalda or the Isanaklesh Gotal, the young girl becomes the shaman who addresses the spirits on behalf of her people. She remains aware of this role, theoretically at least, for the rest of her life. This is noteworthy because, although anthropologists believed until recently that most shamanic practices were performed by men, Czech archaeologist Bohuslav Klíma discovered the bones of a female Ice Age shaman at Dolní Věstonice in 1986.

Dolní Věstonice was an Upper Paleolithic habitation in Czechoslovakia, on a swamp at the joint of two rivers near the Moravian mountains. Here Klíma found the bones of three people, two young men lying on either side of a young woman. The most important aspects of this find were first, that all three of the bodies had been richly decorated, indicating exalted rank; second, that the body of the young woman had been sprinkled with red ochre, thought to be a sacred substance and a special way of honoring the deceased; and third, that *approximately 27,640 years had passed since the three teenagers had been buried*. [italics mine] Thus, according to Tedlock (2005), the find at Dolní Věstonice proved that shamanism is nearly 30,000 years old, and that many powerful and highly-regarded early shamans were women.

### *Contemporary Shamanism*

In addition to shamanism as it has been studied and is currently practiced among indigenous peoples, there is what is called “contemporary shamanism,” “neo-shamanism” (more scornfully, “New Age shamanism”) or “urban shamanism” (King, 1990; Ingerman, 1991). Swedish scholar, esoteric writer, and occultist Thomas Karlsson notes:

Neoshamanism is a term applied to certain emergent shamanistic philosophies, whether they are a revival of older shamanistic beliefs and traditions or an amalgamation of new age spiritual beliefs. Neoshamanism is sometimes used as a disclaimer or qualifier, where revivalists who are trying to piece back together

shattered systems must admit that the system in question no longer exists as a whole due to the dying out of the original culture, sometimes as the result of genocide. Neoshamanism is not a single, cohesive belief system but several philosophies lumped together. However, certain generalities may be drawn between neoshamans. Most believe in spirits and pursue self-actualization through meditation and sometimes the use of entheogens. Most systems might be described as existing somewhere on the animism/pantheism spectrum. (Karlsson, 2006)

As Karlsson suggests, there are many approaches to this modern expression of an ancient healing practice. Recent research includes studies on contemporary Native American shamanic practices (Kehoe, 1997); African American shamanic practices dating from the period of American slavery (especially the gift/curse of “second sight”) (Perkinson, 2002); current Inuit practices erroneously believed to be in decline (Oosten, Laugrand, & Remie, 2006); current practices in Siberian shamanism, with special emphasis on shamanic beliefs about birds (Balzer, 1996); and the compelling stories of the shaman Don Juan by the late anthropologist and author, Carlos Casteneda (Krantz, 2006). The range of these studies—too broad to discuss here—indicates that the connection between ancient and modern approaches to shamanism appears to be almost seamless, and that the Western tendency to borrow from indigenous models easily confuses what is past with what is present.

Balzer’s research in particular validates the work with the adolescent participants in my study—especially the invocation of animal allies. She noted:

Shamans hone their skills through their helper spirits in a mutual courtship more subtle than most of the ethnographic literature portrays. In Yurok (Native American) shamanic thinking, “The Hawk is not just a beautiful bird who has certain physical characteristics; it is a spiritual source of power. It can be used for seeing because it is a good seer; it can be used for protection because it is a strong fighter; it can be used for soul travel because it can fly long distance against great odds and the forces of nature”.... Sakha believers similarly describe a range of power properties for helper spirits, for example the all-seeing pivot eyes, high flying, and endurance of the eagle, and the acute senses, wisdom, targeted violence, size, and nurturance of the bear. (Balzer, pp. 311-312, 2006)



These treatises on shamanism are interesting and edifying; however, it is important to note that only one of them refers to women—that of the burial at Dolní Věstonice—and none, with the exception of the Diné menarche ritual, to the specific application of shamanic techniques in working with adolescent girls.

The practice I used with the girls in this study is a form of contemporary shamanism. It derives from combining my experience of Huna, the Hawaiian “science of healing and magic” (Long, 1948; King, 1990), with what may be called genetic transmission or blood memory from my own Native American and Celtic roots, and a method of embodied artmaking that I developed as a student at the San Francisco Art Institute during the 1970s. Although it has always been seen as a means of gathering power from the spirit world to use in this one, shamanism has been and still is used in alternative healing (Dobkin, 2002; Stevens & Stevens, 1988; Balzer, 2006; Simonton & Simonton, 1978; Dossey, 2002), and that is how I first used it—to heal myself of cancer in the early 1980s. How shamanism works, in terms of Western thought, is best explained in Gary Zukav’s (1979) groundbreaking study of quantum physics and developed in Richard Gerber’s (1988) explanation of vibrational medicine.

Chapter 3, which follows, expands the discussion of the method. Here I present the aspects of organic inquiry (OI), feminist research, participatory research, and heuristic research that were used in this blended study.

### Chapter 3: Methods

*Ritual enables us to live a life that is much closer to what our souls aspire to.*

—Malidoma Patrice Somé (1993, p. 95)

This blended qualitative study used elements of four research methods: organic inquiry (OI), participatory research, feminist research, and heuristic research. I chose to use a blended study because I believed that this would most effectively address my original research question: *What is participants' experience of creating and enacting a mentored Earth-based ritual with adolescent Girls who are facing life challenges in a multicultural context?* I found support for this intuitive decision in the work of William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson (1998), researchers and professors at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, who note that “The world of human beings and their experiences is multileveled and complex, and to provide a faithful account of that world, research approaches must be correspondingly multifaceted and pluralistic” (p. 256).

This chapter defines each of these methods, describes which aspects of each one I used and how I used them, and presents researchers' comments on their validity and the validity of using a blended method. It also briefly sketches the process of co-creating the Rite of Passage with the Mentors and the Girls.

#### *Organic Inquiry*

Jennifer Clements, Dianne Jenett, Lisa Shields, and Dorothy Ettling (1999) designed the qualitative research method known as organic inquiry (OI) during work on their doctoral dissertations. They describe the new method as “... a qualitative methodology which acknowledges that every research study has an inherent and expanding nature which may be realized through subjective and intuitive methods”

(1999, p. 1). Some of its major facets include viewing the researcher's own experience and story as the instrument of the study, thus engaging the reader in such a way that she may be personally transformed; and encouraging both researcher and reader to remember that "the method is never frozen but is constantly responding to the creative shouts and whispers of the primary wisdom of the research itself" (p. 2).

The birth of the method itself, arising from the shared frustrations and triumphs of these four women, was a response to just such "creative shouts and whispers."

We four [Clements, Ettling, Jenett, and Shields] had set aside a weekend to sum up the experiences and discoveries that had come out of our weekly discussions of how traditional research methods just didn't leave room for feminine creativity in our research work. We were realizing that a collective vision was beginning to emerge...of a new way to do research....We had come together that day to name and describe our vision... (p. 7)

In a later work, Clements further describes the method:

Organic inquiry is a qualitative research approach for the study of topics relating to psycho-spiritual growth in that one's psyche becomes the subjective instrument of the research, working in partnership with liminal and spiritual sources as well as with participants who have had related experiences. (2002, p. 112)

I chose organic inquiry as a research approach because, given its flexibility and based upon my experience with adolescent girls, it seemed best suited to address some of the many challenges (besides hormonal ones) that adolescence presents. This proved to be true, as during the course of the project, we were required to change plans many times. The research design itself, originally proposed as a study of mentored, Earth-based rites of passage for adolescent girls at menarche, had to be changed so that the emphasis was placed not on menarche, but on the challenges of adolescent girls in a multicultural context. Reasons for this change are presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5.

I have observed that for myself, my daughters, and many young girls with whom I have worked, the entry into womanhood, in American culture, is not only a physiological

threshold, but also an unrecognized *psychospiritual* event. Therefore, I wanted to emphasize the psychological and spiritual aspects of becoming a woman, and organic inquiry seemed to provide a way to do this.

Clements notes that organic research “suggests the importance of developing a working partnership with the liminal realm...” (2002, p. 113). Liminality (from the Latin word, *limen*, or threshold) is the “creative space between structures” (Schavrien, 2006, personal communication). Researchers Deah Curry and Steven Wells (2004), who were among the first Ph.D. students to use the new method, refer to the liminal realm as “the space between the mundane and the sacred, which in psychological terms could be viewed as the personal subconscious and collective unconscious domains” (p. 17). In that in-between space we connect with creative chaos; we trust that chaos itself will guide our progress and bring us eventually into balance and harmony.

Because of the confusion evoked by the many changes that took place during the interactive phase of the study, I had to trust in Spirit to guide us—there was nowhere else to turn. Curry and Wells write, “... the [OI] methodology calls for asking for spirit to guide the endeavor, trusting where spirit leads, surrendering to the process, and recognizing when the inquiry has reached a plateau of for-the-moment completeness” (p. 63). This surrendering to Spirit became an ongoing practice, not only in conducting the research but in writing about it as well.

In addition to the fact that we were compelled to trust in Spirit for guidance in general, many of the practices to which I introduced the Girls were spiritual practices. Creating sacred space by calling the Four Directions, casting a circle, and setting up an altar for each meeting; using divination (the Medicine Cards) to find animal guides; using

shamanic journey to communicate with these guides, ancestors, and helpful entities—these are accepted spiritual practices in many Earth-based religions, and they were central to our work with the Girls. By teaching them about these aspects of Earth-based spirituality, the Mentors and I encouraged their development of Clements’ “working partnership with the liminal realm” (p.113).

Another important principle of organic inquiry is transformation—what Clements calls [the researcher’s] “changes of mind and changes of heart” (p. 112). While I hoped for transformational changes in the Girls and perhaps also in the Mentors, I did not anticipate the extent to which I would experience them, as well. Clements writes:

*Analysis...results in transformative changes to the researcher’s understanding and experience of the topic....These are changes of mind and changes of heart. In presenting the results, the researcher uses stories to invite the individual reader to a parallel, yet unique, transformative experience. (2002, p. 112) [italics mine]*

Although the stories to which Clements refers were not those of individual co-researchers—this dissertation is rather a story of the process of creating ritual together—it is safe to say that this study changed each of us. I discuss these changes more fully in Chapter 5.

Another reason for choosing organic inquiry was that I originally framed the Girls’ Rite of Passage within the context of feminine spirituality. According to Clements, organic inquiry has been influenced by “feminine spirituality and feminist research including a concern for mutuality, diversity, subjectivity, and social action” (p. 113). I intended to introduce this group of adolescent Girls to the Divine Feminine in the form of Gaia, the Earth. Because of the shortness of the time we were able to spend in group work (7 weeks) and other intervening influences, which I discuss in Chapter 5, I was unable to emphasize feminine spirituality as much as I had hoped. However, perhaps this

research project may be viewed as an *introduction* to the topic of feminine spirituality, rather than a full exploration of it, and may serve as inspiration for further research in this field. In my own spiritual practice, I repeatedly sought the Goddess's guidance for each session and asked for "divine feedback" afterwards, some of which I have recorded in my field notes and journals.

Because I attempted to include both adult and adolescent co-researchers in as many aspects of the process as possible, held the intention (since I am a feminist) to both inform and empower the adolescent Girls who were my co-researchers, and resolved to record my own process in my journals, it was clear that other research methods were involved. These were participatory research (from a feminist perspective), feminist research, and heuristic research.

### *Participatory Research*

Participatory research, which, like organic inquiry, is a relatively new method based upon collaboration between the researcher and co-researchers, basically focuses on compassion and awareness of the experience of the participants. However, there are several schools of thought within this research discipline. According to Braud and Anderson (1998):

Participatory research demands the development of compassionate consciousness. It explores how the various sensitivities of the researcher can be used to explore self and other and how the sensitivities of what is explored may help reveal itself to the researcher. Participation implies empathy and entering the territory of the phenomena studied on their own terms. (p. 269)

All the Mentors, including myself, were drawn to this study by feelings of compassion for adolescent girls in general. In my case, this feeling was greatly expanded by my realization, at the end of the study, that much more could have been done to improve the process for the Girls who participated.

Women's Studies professor Shulamit Reinharz (1992) writes:

This model is designed to create social and individual change by altering the role relations of people involved in the project. In feminist participatory research, the distinction between the researcher(s) and those on whom the research is done disappears. To achieve an egalitarian relation, the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risk. Differences in social status and background give way as shared decision-making and self-disclosure develop. (p. 181)

Social sciences researcher Patricia Maguire (1987) makes a salient point in describing the major differences between the dominant and alternative paradigms in research. The dominant (patriarchal) paradigm is concerned with maintenance or evolutionary change of the status quo in all its aspects, including maintaining the existing social order and seeking greater efficiency; cohesion or solidarity of the social group; meeting the needs of the individual within the existing system; and discovering and understanding “what is” (p. 12). The alternative paradigm (which applies to both feminist and participatory research) supports radical change, transformation of social systems and creating those which are more just; dismantling dominant systems; and providing a vision of “what could be” (p. 12).

Although the study leaned more towards the exclusion of *men*, since it was a process of initiation for young girls, these were certainly among my goals in designing this research project. Participants' co-creation of the Rite of Passage was a major aspect of the original research design. To that end, I repeatedly solicited suggestions and active involvement from both the Mentors and the adolescents. Only time will tell, however, whether the Girls' Rite of Passage has provided the encouragement these young women may need in order to be able to “color outside the lines” of the patriarchal paradigm.

### *Feminist Research*

Feminist professor Marjorie DeVault (1999) writes that feminist epistemologies suggest “that personal perspectives are valid and perhaps even essential elements of any systematic attempt to know the social world” (p. 105). She describes the origin of feminist research, citing authors Reinharz, Bombyk, and Wright (1983), and an interdisciplinary anthology, edited by philosopher Sandra Harding (1987), which features second wave feminist sociologists Marcia Millman, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Joyce Ladner, Dorothy E. Smith, and Bonnie Thornton Dill. DeVault warns that feminist research is a “broader category including any empirical study that incorporates or develops the insights of feminism” (p. 28). She reserves the term “feminist methodology” for “explicitly methodological discussion that emerges from the feminist critique” (p. 28). She also notes that feminist methodology is “not a stable orthodoxy but an evolving dialogue” (p. 28) that seeks to differentiate itself from the rigidity of patriarchal empiricism.

According to DeVault, feminist methodology is “a critique that views the apparatus of knowledge production as one site that has constructed and sustained women’s oppression” (p. 30). She notes that feminist researchers want to shift the focus of standard practice [in research] from men’s concerns to include the locations and perspectives of women. They want to minimize harm and control in the research process; and to support research of value to women, which leads to social change or action beneficial to women.

This study was not gendered (that is, it did not focus exclusively on the feminine or on feminist principles). However, the central focus—mentoring teenage girls to co-



create a Rite of Passage for themselves—certainly meets the criteria DeVault lists here for feminist research.

In addition, I felt there were other aspects of feminist research that this study incorporated. The first of these is that it encourages positive change in the participants. According to Braud and Anderson (1998), feminist research “tells, listens, emancipates, and empowers” (p. 26)—certainly what I intended that the Girls in this study would experience. Both adolescent and adult co-researchers revealed evidence of positive change during our final meeting. I discuss these, and my own changes as researcher, in Chapter 5.

Mertens notes that another important aspect of feminist research is that, rather than distancing the researcher from her subjects, it encourages “the immersion of the researcher in the social setting, and facilitate(s) intersubjective understanding between the researcher and the participant” (p. 162). The fact that such immersion was one of my goals (both because I wanted to be on equal terms with my co-researchers and because I believed that this would help to support the Girls) was an incentive to include feminist research among the methods used.

Anderson reports that for the feminist researcher, “all actions are political and at their best...have the power to emancipate, liberate, enliven, and energize human life and possibilities for all people, especially those who are socially and politically disadvantaged” (1998, p. 78). Although the study’s focus was not inherently political, to the extent that we encouraged the Girls to speak up, to identify and address their challenges, and, in short, to overcome the barriers imposed on them by being members of a sub-dominant culture, this project did meet these criteria. Braud points out that the

feminist, organic, and narrative approaches to research commonly emphasize “hearing and honoring the voices of the other person, particularly the previously unempowered person or the member of a previously unempowered group” (1998, p. 47). I intended to empower the Girls by teaching them skills that would enable them to contact their own inner feminine wisdom. However, Gore (1992) has much to say about the clumsy and often harmful attempts of members of a dominant culture reaching out to “help” sub-dominant members. DeVault (1999) reminds readers that social researchers have a “responsibility for continuing education. . . (especially about groups historically or typically excluded from our accounts of society and about the processes/mechanisms of exclusion)” (p. 211). These issues are discussed in Chapter 5.

Reinharz, however, insists that feminism is a perspective, not a method:

. . . feminist researchers do not consider feminism to be a method. Rather they consider it to be a perspective on an existing method in a given field of inquiry or a perspective that can be used to develop an innovative method. The fact that there are multiple definitions of feminism means that there are multiple feminist perspectives on social research methods. One shared radical tenet underlying feminist research is that women’s lives are important. (p. 241)

### *Heuristic Research*

After reviewing both my own experience and that of my co-researchers, I realized that I had used methods commonly part of heuristic research. Clark Moustakas (1990) describes the heuristic method:

Heuristic research is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance. (p. 15)

For years I had noticed that young girls seemed to lose their spontaneity and their self-assurance right around the onset of puberty. Since I had experienced this myself,

seen it in my own daughters, and often see it in the adolescent girls that I counsel, I wondered what could be done to help them. Therefore, Moustakas' description of heuristic research was certainly applicable to my process during the incubation of this project, although I was not aware of it until the end.

Douglass and Moustakas (1985) note that heuristics is concerned with “meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior” (p. 42). This, too, felt applicable, as did Moustakas' explanation of the progression of events in heuristic research.

This progression includes *identifying with the focus of inquiry*, or imagining oneself to be what one is investigating; *self-dialogue*, which requires being honest with oneself about the problem or question; *tacit knowing*, which allows one to sense the unity or wholeness of something from an understanding of its individual qualities or parts; *intuition*, which bridges between what one knows inherently and what one can see and describe; *indwelling*, which is the process of going inward to deepen one's comprehension of the meaning of a quality of human experience; *focusing*, which is the ability to keep one's attention on a specific experience; and *relating back to the internal frame of reference*, which means that only a person who is experiencing something can provide a valid description of that process. (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 15-26)

It was not difficult to remember myself as a teenager (identifying); nor to understand, from an adult's perspective, what had happened to me and to these other young girls (tacit knowing). The challenge was to revisit my adolescence and that of my daughters' as honestly as possible (self-dialogue)—to acknowledge how (and why) I had essentially acquiesced to the patriarchal paradigm which disempowers women. Once that

was accomplished, my intuition suggested a girls' rite of passage, and it was easy to maintain focus on this project.

Moustakas also describes six phases of heuristic research: *initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and culmination of the research in a creative synthesis*. However, his description of these phases and the progression through them are more linear than what I experienced. Instead, I found that I had been literally living with all six phases simultaneously and following intuitive inner guidance. In this respect, heuristic research seemed to share many of the characteristics of organic inquiry. Clements et al (1999) describe the similarities and differences between the two methods:

The heuristic methodology may be seen as a method which stands between phenomenology and the organic approach. Like phenomenology, it uses experience as data and anticipates focused results; however, it is more similar to organic inquiry in its embracing of the personal experience of the researcher, its acceptance of the mutability of the process and its receptivity to non-rational experience. (p. 78)

We have seen that the heuristic approach and organic inquiry have much in common. Both emphasize the sacred, the personal, the chthonic, the relational and the transformative; although each in somewhat different ways. (p. 83)

It is in the attitude toward the results of the inquiry, the transformative qualities, that the two methodologies seem to differ most. While a heuristic research aims toward a synthesis of the data, an organic study suggests that the reader engage in a personal analysis in order to experience transformation on an individual level. (p. 84)

My personal analysis revealed a new understanding—not only of the position of women in patriarchy but of that of men as well. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

Moustakas' process culminates in *creative synthesis*. Once the researcher has a good grasp of the material that illuminates the question, it may be expressed as a narrative, poem, story, painting, or other form of creative expression (p. 32). My “creative synthesis” was not intended as such—in fact, it was my way of resting from the

rigors of scholarly writing. However, I have created a mixed media weaving (Figure 21) which incorporates materials that I collected throughout the many months of research and writing—some for their beauty and others because they reminded me of interactions which seemed to have a bearing on some aspect of the research topic.

The use of a blended method—using elements of organic inquiry, participatory research, feminist research, and heuristic research—resulted in a greater intimacy among participants in this study. This, in its own way, contributed to the psychospiritual growth of all of us.

### *Validity of Blended Study*

Addressing the issue of the validity of using blended methods in research, Anderson (1998) reports that “validity concerns our capacity to relate accurately the fullness and richness of a given human experience” (p. 73). She notes that empirical studies often obscure and trivialize “a commonsense validity of just telling the whole truth of what occurred in lived experience” (p. 73). Braud (1998) also writes of validity, and states that it may be “helpful to consider indications from intellect, body, emotions, aesthetic feelings, and direct knowing as votes from different constituencies...” (p. 223). He adds that by observing patterns in the arrangement of these factors, the researcher may be able to validate her work through their coherence.

Moustakas, writing about heuristic research, notes that validity is a matter of meaning: “Does the ultimate depiction of the experience...comprehensively, vividly, and accurately present the meanings and essences of the experience?” (p. 32). The primary researcher, he adds, who alone is the one who has been involved in the entire process from the beginning, is the only one qualified to make that decision. This same criterion

may be applied to a blended study combining organic inquiry, feminist research and participatory research. Organic inquiry, however, best describes the specific means of validation that I used.

It is important to note that organic inquiry, by its very nature, challenges the normative views of validity in research. Curry & Wells (2004) write:

It holds the products of intellect (mental analysis) up to the responses of body, emotions, intuition, liminal realm (subconscious), and to alignment (resonance) with others (consensus), with past and present experience (experiential adequacy). In so doing, it requires us to view validity differently. (p. 64)

Clements (2004), writing on organic inquiry, notes that qualitative inquiry examines the validity of a study based on its textual authority and its patterns of consensus and coherence. She states, “This type of validity is personal and not necessarily generalizable or replicable. Validity is measured by asking the question, ‘Is this useful to me?’” (p. 43) She adds that a study has transformative validity when it affects the individual reader through identification with and change of her own story, “probably in the areas of self, Spirit, and service” (p. 43).

According to Clements, analysis of the material from different perspectives, such as triangulation (the congruence and coherence between the researcher’s story, the story of the participants, and the group story), provides a balance that promotes validity. Validity is also invited through examining one’s own thinking, feeling, intuitive, and sensory responses to the stories, as well as changes to heart and mind, through the use of “confirming signals... [such as] chills, a feeling of certainty, or tears” (p. 43).

Although this study was similar to, but not exactly like, a pure organic inquiry, these were the methods I used to validate the results. Throughout this study I was aware

of the synchronicities between the Girls' experiences, the Mentors' experiences, and my own. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

### *Threats to Validity*

Despite such reassuring criteria for validity, there were a number of internal threats to this study, specifically attrition and the interpersonal relationships of co-researchers. An additional threat was my failure to account for the possible confounds presented by the cultural mix of adults and adolescents. However, the object of the study was to investigate the experience of *these particular* adolescents and their Mentors, rather than *all* adolescents and *all* mentors. Furthermore, in future studies of a similar nature I will pay particular attention to the various cultures represented among participants, and engage mentors from the representative communities. Therefore, I believe that such threats have been addressed through the conscientious application of the methods of validation as described above.

Finally, it is important to state that this study arose from my personal experience. It was based upon a wish both to explore the experience of other adult women and adolescent girls co-creating an Earth-based ritual, and to empower the adolescent girls themselves. Therefore, encouraging both Girls and Mentors to assert themselves in the planning and enactment of the ritual was central to the research. Inviting co-researchers to share their experiences through journaling, written comments, and artwork revealed a greater depth of lived experience than a more rigid empirical design would have allowed.

### *Participants*

First, I chose a small group of five women (Wise Elders) who understood the importance of coming-of-age ritual, had experienced creating such a ritual, and were

willing to work with me *before* we began the actual study, to develop a blueprint for the ritual that we would co-create with the adolescents and their Mentors, as well as to support us throughout the process. Although age was not a factor in choosing the Wise Elders, as long as they were over 21, these women were all in their 50's or older, and were recommended by teachers of women's spirituality. I gave each one a Wise Elder's Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) to sign.

Participants (alternately referred to as "co-researchers" in this study) were originally to be a cohort of 16 adolescent Girls between the ages of 11 and 14 and a cohort of 16 adult female Mentors. Because of the intensity of interpersonal relationships in such a study, I believed that the ideal number of co-researchers in each age group would be 10-12 or fewer. Interestingly, although I attempted for several months to assemble a larger number of participants in each age group, fate provided me with 12 adolescent Girls (ages 12-14) and 9 adult female Mentors. I solicited adolescent co-researchers through local schools, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Girls Inc., churches and other religious organizations. As it turned out, 11 of the Girls attended a South Bay Area charter school for students experiencing serious academic challenges. The remaining girl was a member of the youth congregation at a nondenominational church in the South Bay. An Introductory Letter (Appendix D) and an Informational Flyer (Appendix E) were distributed to directors of these two programs to help them suggest Girls who could meet the following criteria: (a) adolescent female between the ages of 11 and 14; (b) interest in the subject; (c) willingness to participate in group activities; (d) ability to maintain a certain level of academic achievement during the study, if it takes place during the school year; (e) ability to obtain parental consent and support; and (f) a stable personality, as



determined by the program directors. This final criterion was particularly important, since such deep work is often contraindicated for individuals with a fragile ego structure. I also felt that it would be important for the Girls to have already established a feeling of trust and comfort with each other, so I looked for an existing group of Girls, rather than attempting to find individuals from various pools of adolescents. I depended upon the directors of the programs to recommend a group of Girls best suited to this study. I wanted to interview each girl privately to be sure she was comfortable with the idea of a Rite of Passage, sharing personal topics or life issues in a group setting, and the emotions that may arise during such a process; however, I was only able to interview one girl (who was from the South Bay church) in this way.

I informed participants that all parents or guardians of adolescents had to sign a Parents' or Guardians' Release Form (Appendix F). I also informed them that all personal interviews would be audio-taped, and non-identifying material from these interviews would be included in the final written narrative. This information was included in all Informed Consent Forms and in the Parent's or Guardian's Release Form.

This study was not initially intended to be a multicultural endeavor, but, given the demographics of the San Francisco Bay Area, I was not surprised to note that all the charter school Girls were Latinas, except for two African American students. The girl from the South Bay church was the only one who identified as Anglo.

I had initially planned for the Girls to choose the adult Mentors themselves, and had specified that an adult mentor could be an older sister, an aunt or grandmother, a godmother or close family friend, a teacher, or a counselor. However, according to the school's Program Director, these adolescent Girls were having academic problems

because their community lacked appropriate role models. Therefore, the final group of Mentors was composed of individual volunteers who had heard of my study through flyers and other announcements. One woman was a member of my own religious faith who responded to an announcement I had sent out on several email lists. Another woman was the director of a program I had contacted while attempting to solicit adolescent participants. Two women responded to flyers distributed by one of my dissertation committee members at her church, and a fifth was the former student of another committee member. Two were friends of women who had heard of the study but had not wished to participate; one was a Master's student at ITP responding to an announcement sent to the student body; and one was a personal friend and former classmate in ITP's Ph.D. program. Criteria for all Mentors, as stated in both the Adolescent's Informed Consent form (Appendix G) and the Mentor's Informed Consent form (Appendix H), included (a) being a female 21 years old or older; (b) having an active spiritual practice, (c) possessing strong advocacy skills; (d) having the ability to be open-minded and accepting of non-traditional, as well as traditional, religious practices, and comfortable working with youth of different cultures; (e) and having some life experience (such as being or having been in a stable romantic or marital relationship, raising or having raised their own children, or having explored various avenues of spiritual expression). Mentors had to meet all of the criteria. Here again, a stable personality was a prerequisite to all other criteria, and I did interview each Mentor personally to ascertain her level of interest and appropriateness. I also met with the Mentors as a group before we began, in order to see how we would interact. In matching Girls and Mentors, I wanted to be sure that no favoritism would occur. I also wanted Spirit to guide the research, and decided to have

both Girls and Mentors draw colored beads. The matching colors determined the mentor/mentee pair.

### *Procedures for Data Collection*

Initially, I had planned that data would be collected during a series of nine meetings. However, because of scheduling conflicts for both Girls and Mentors, I shortened the study to 7 weeks.

When I met with Mentors in a group for the first time, I gave each one a copy of the Mentors' Informed Consent (Appendix H) and the Pre-Rite Questions for Mentors (Appendix I). Between this meeting and the starting date of the project, I created an email list (the Wise Womyn's list) to facilitate communication among the Mentors. I also asked the Mentors if anyone could provide a Spanish translation of the Parents' and Adolescents' Informed Consents (Appendix F), because it occurred to me that some of the Girls' parents might not be fluent in English. The Latina Mentor provided this translation. Meetings were held on consecutive Thursday afternoons between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., in the Counseling Room at the school. Before each of these meetings, except the last two, Mentors met briefly at a restaurant in a nearby shopping center, a few blocks from the school. This gave us an opportunity to review the plan for the day and clarify any confusion or misunderstandings that may have arisen during or after the previous meeting. Before the first meeting two of the potential Mentors dropped out—one because of a scheduling conflict and the other because of health problems.

### *First Meeting*

The first meeting was an opportunity for Mentors and mentees to become acquainted. We held a brief ritual, shared bits of our personal stories, and paired Girls and Mentors by having each participant choose a colored bead.

We discussed the process of keeping a project journal to record the thoughts and feelings that might arise during our work together. I gave each participant a small journal and colored pen to be used for this process.

### *Second Meeting*

The second meeting began with a description of a shamanic journey (Appendix B) and was followed by the actual experience. The shamanic journey was presented as a guided meditation to find an ally, a special spirit or animal guide who would help the Girls create their Rite of Passage, and to give the Girls the experience of finding guidance within themselves. I planned that, in addition to helping each Girl (and Mentor) find an ally, the process would also enable her to choose a “ritual name,” which would help the Girls to begin to identify themselves in a new way and would be used to protect all co-researchers’ anonymity when the study results were published. Then I asked all participants to draw a picture of either their ally or what they experienced during the shamanic journey. I gave all participants copies of a brief explanation of ritual, “What is a Ritual?” (Appendix J), and a script for casting a circle and calling the Four Directions, “Circles and Directions” (Appendix K).

### *Third Meeting*

The third meeting was a “catch-up” meeting, since 7 of the Girls had been absent at the second meeting. (An explanation of this is offered in Chapter 4 and discussed in

Chapter 5.) I asked all participants to write a brief report on how they had experienced this meeting and the previous one.

#### *Fourth Meeting*

During the fourth meeting we made masks representing the allies. This activity was designed to help the Girls externalize their allies so that they could develop their relationships with these inner guides. The Mentor Emerald, who is an artist, helped the Girls with this project. Again, I asked participants to write a brief report on this meeting.

#### *Fifth Meeting*

During the fifth meeting participants collaborated in planning the Rite of Passage. In addition, the Girls who had not yet finished their masks did so.

#### *Sixth Meeting*

We devoted the sixth meeting to enacting the Rite of Passage, and held our “feast,” attended by only one set of parents, those of the Anglo girl. The Rite itself is presented in Chapter 4.

#### *Seventh Meeting*

The seventh meeting was the “recap,” during which the Mentors filled out a brief questionnaire (Appendix L) on their perceptions of the Rite of Passage and the group process. Instead of filling out their questionnaire (Appendix L), the Girls chose to make drawings representing the changes they felt they had experienced. These drawings are presented in the Girls’ Portraits.

Two weeks after our seventh meeting with the Girls, I invited Mentors to a “Wise Womyn’s” lunch in Palo Alto to thank them for all their support. Before the lunch, I

emailed a set of two questions to each of the Mentors. Four of the Mentors attended this lunch; three were unable to come.

### *Treatment of Data*

Data consisted of excerpts from my journal entries and taped recordings, participants' class comments and post-Rite reflections, transcriptions of audio-taped comments made during interviews and group work, and photos of participants' artwork. I transcribed all taped material and included photocopies of artwork and some pages from my journal entries and other written data as illustrations in the final reporting. A statement of how I would gather the data was included in all Informed Consent forms.

Clements (2004) describes a method of analyzing data that seemed appropriate for this study, using the three-step organic model of preparation, inspiration, and integration, along with Jung's four ways of knowing—feeling, intuition, thinking, and sensation. I reviewed the data initially to determine my own way of knowing and found that all four ways of knowing seemed to occur simultaneously. Therefore, I made notes to indicate which mode of perception was arising at a given point in the data for each of the data sets. Next, for each section of Chapter 4, I consulted the Medicine Cards (Carson and Sams, 1988). Then I continued to analyze the data, using Clements' organic process, with each of the major themes of the study: leadership; chaos/order; challenge; empowerment; and helping/harming.

What emerged may be perceived as a kind of weaving, a "whole cloth" that records our collective experience—not only of the Rite of Passage—but of the entire research process. The discussion of this effect on participants and myself as researcher is expanded in the discussion of transformative change in Chapter 5.

In summary, this blended qualitative study combined elements of organic inquiry, participatory research, feminist research, and heuristic research. Co-researchers consisted of a cohort of 9 adolescent Girls (ages 12-14), referred by teachers, and 8 individually interviewed adult female volunteers, paired by a mentor/mentee matching process. A small group of 5 women (Wise Elders) with experience of creating ritual helped design a blueprint for the Rite of Passage and supported me in the process of its co-creation. The study consisted of seven group meetings, during which we co-created and enacted a Girls' Rite of Passage, and one follow-up meeting of Mentors only (the Wise Womyn's lunch).

Chapter 4, which presents the findings of the study, follows. It also includes the vignettes, or Portraits, of each of the Girls, with photos of their masks and final drawings.

## Chapter 4: Results

*Even if it's one tribe a year carrying out its ceremonies, the earth can still be saved.*

—Bob Brown, Oneida High School Teacher (2001, p. 94)

### *Overview of the Findings*

In this chapter I present the findings of a qualitative study blending elements of organic inquiry, participatory research, feminist research, and heuristic research, in which I explored the process of creating ritual with adolescent girls and their mentors. The research question was, *What is participants' experience of creating and enacting a mentored Earth-based ritual with adolescent girls who are facing life challenges in a multicultural context?*

This study focused on the experience of immersing a culturally diverse group of scholastically challenged girls and their adult female mentors in a process of co-creating a girls' rite of passage, modeled after Earth-based or indigenous rituals. Victor Turner (1969) and Arnold van Gennep (1908, 1960) are considered classicists in the study of indigenous ritual. Van Gennep's notes on male puberty rites of the Masai in Kenya and Tanganyika provide an excellent example of rites of passage. Turner, incorporating some of van Gennep's findings and elaborating upon them with his own, has defined the classic stages of rites of passage. In its own way, this entire research process seemed to fit Turner's progression of classic stages. These stages are *preparation*, or separation from one's earlier state, community, and associates; *liminality*, a threshold, a time of "nakedness and vulnerability" (Turner, p. 17), a state of no longer being who one was, but not yet who one will become; *initiation*, when one is confronted with and overcomes one's challenge; and *incorporation*, a state of internalizing one's new status as a mature



and responsible member of the larger community. The *preparation stage* in this study consisted of all of my outreach efforts and preliminary interviews with girls and mentors. The stage of *liminality* best describes the first 5 meetings we had with the Girls, for none of us was who she had been before beginning our work together, nor had we become the women, young and older, that we are now. The *initiation stage* was the Rite of Passage itself, and how the Girls reacted to that ritual. The *incorporation stage* began to become evident on the last day of the study, when Girls and Mentors shared their understanding of the changes that had occurred for each of them. Further examples of this progression in terms of my own understanding and growth through the process are discussed in Chapter 5. Here, in this chapter, I report my findings in the context of Turner's four phases of the initiatory process.

Study data were gathered from taped recordings of open-ended preliminary interviews with a group of Wise Elders (older women experienced in creating ritual), questionnaires (Appendixes F-L) given to the Mentors (adult female volunteers) and the adolescents throughout the seven-week process, and all participants' written comments. My field notes, journal entries, and written and taped comments on the weekly meetings, as well as on the process of creating the Rite of Passage and the rite itself, also became sources of data.

In this chapter I describe the participants' characteristics and my outreach efforts, and include a "portrait," or personal vignette, for each of the girls, with photographed reproductions of their art work and comments on the ritual process. This chapter also includes a description of my own process (from dreams, journal entries, and field notes)

along with intuitive analysis of each segment of the research. I conclude each section with a summary of the findings.

### *Characteristics of the Participants*

Participants for the study included three distinct groups of people: one group of five adult women with experience of creating and enacting ritual (whom I called “Wise Elders”); a second group of eight adult women with experience, or the desire for the experience, of working with adolescent girls (whom I called “Mentors”); and a group of ten female adolescents with the desire to create a group rite of passage (whom I called “Girls”). The characteristics of each group presented here are based on personal interviews with individual Wise Elders and Mentors and demographic information collected from the Girls’ Ritual Demographics Information Questionnaire (Appendix N). These terms—“Wise Elders,” “Mentors,” and “Girls”—will be capitalized throughout the remainder of this dissertation in order to highlight each group. Since the identity of all participants was protected by creating pseudonyms for Wise Elders and by having Girls and Mentors choose ritual names, Mentors will be distinguished from Girls by the word “Mentor” whenever a Mentor’s ritual name is used.

#### *Wise Elders*

The Wise Elders group consisted of five adult women between the ages of 50 and 65. All are Anglos (Caucasians) from middle class backgrounds. One Wise Elder is retired, one is a secretary, one a legal professional, one an engineer, and one a healer. I called these women “Wise Elders” because they are people with extensive experience in designing and guiding rituals—specifically rites of passage for adolescent girls.

The choice of Wise Elders—all Pagans—was influenced by the fact that I am both Native American and Celtic, and practice an Earth-based form of spirituality; therefore, the women I would recognize as “wise elders” would most likely be Pagans themselves. However, the Girls’ Rite of Passage was not intended to be a Pagan ritual, but rather an Earth-based ritual, and the Mentors and I took care to present it as such to the Girls. It was designed to help the Girls focus on their connection to the Earth, rather than on any specific form of spiritual practice.

### *Mentors*

The Mentors group consisted of eight middle class women between the ages of 26 and 65. They included six Anglos, one Mexican, and one Native American/Anglo (the researcher), ranging in ages from 26-63. Three (including the researcher) are graduate students, one is an artist, one the director of an adolescent girls’ support program, one a professional photographer, one a technology professional, and one retired. Two of the graduate students were recruited by word of mouth and by announcements (Appendix D) posted online and at graduate schools in the Bay Area. All other Mentors were recruited from flyers (Appendix E) posted at churches in the Bay Area or by word of mouth. Mentors were not asked to reveal their personal spiritual practices. However, all professed being comfortable with the idea of helping to create an Earth-based ritual.

My own participation as a Mentor became necessary because three Mentors withdrew early in the study—two due to scheduling conflicts and one because of ill health. Because four Girls were withdrawn by the school’s administration after our second meeting and we had only five more weeks in which to work with the Girls, I chose not to recruit additional mentors. However, having the researcher assume the role

of Mentor for one Girl in the study posed a limitation, which is discussed in Chapter 5, under Limitations and Delimitations of the Study.

### *Girls*

The Girls consisted of nine adolescents between the ages of 12 and 14. They included one Anglo, seven Latinas/Hispanics, and one Mexican. The Latina/Hispanic and Mexican Girls were recommended by the Program Director at the charter school that was the site of the study. The Anglo Girl was recruited from a Youth Program at a Bay Area church. The Latinas/Hispanics and the Mexican Girl come from working class families and practice Catholicism. The Anglo Girl comes from a middle class family and attends a non-denominational church.

### *Preparation Stage*

The first stage of the research coincided with Turner's *preparation/separation stage*. This included outreach, finding the Wise Elders, finding the Mentors, and finding the Girls.

### *Outreach*

I refer to this phase of the research as "outreach" because, as founding director of a non-profit service organization (Orenda Healing International), I come from a community-oriented background. The term "outreach" describes not only what many non-profits do, but also the energy with which I approached recruiting participants for this study. I was in fact "reaching out" into the community to find people interested and willing to become my co-researchers—some of whom expressed a desire to help (Wise Elders and Mentors), and some who might be in need of it (Girls). The names of all participants have been changed, according to my agreement with them in the study's

release forms. Girls and Mentors chose their own ritual names; and although several participants (specifically the Wise Elders) gave permission to use their real names, I changed them to protect their confidentiality.

### *Finding the Wise Elders*

Finding the Wise Elders was a great deal easier than I had expected. Through a close friend I met a well-known Pagan Elder and told her of my study criteria to find “Wise Elders”—women who had experienced creating or participating in what Pagan culture calls “First Blood” (menarche) rituals. Although the eventual project veered away from menarche, the wisdom of the Wise Elders continued to guide my work. The Pagan Elder mentioned several Pagan Internet lists, such as Bay Area Reclaiming, New Reclaimed Order of the Golden Dawn (NROGD), Bay Area Pagan, and others, and suggested that I join those lists as soon as possible so that I could post my request for participants. She also gave me the name of a friend and suggested I call her for an interview. All of the Wise Elders met the study criteria: women who understood the importance of menarche ritual, had experienced creating such a ritual, and were willing to work with me *before* I began the actual study, to develop a blueprint for the ritual that I would co-create with the adolescents and their mentors, as well as to support us throughout the process. Age was not a factor in choosing the Wise Elders, as long as they were over 21 years of age. All of these women were recommended by teachers of women’s spirituality.

### *Wise Elders’ Ritual Teachings*

Although both earlier and more recent literature provides some information on ritual and rites of passage, I found no accounts of the kind of ritual I wanted to create for

the Girls in this study. To learn more about rituals firsthand, I sought the council of the five women who became the Wise Elders for the study—Viola, Laura, Diana, Cam, and Beth. These women were glad to share their experiences; and I include here portions of their personal accounts of creating and participating in Pagan and other Earth-based rites of passage for adolescent girls. The Wise Elders' personal accounts of ritual and rites of passage greatly influenced the creation of the Rite of Passage used in this study.

### *Viola's Story*

Viola is a professional with grown daughters and a long history of quiet activism in the Pagan community. I felt there might be a connection with her because I am also an activist, and hoped that she would be able to address that aspect of the research as well as the making of ritual. Viola was happy to share the experience of initiating her two daughters into womanhood, as well as why she felt the initiations had been so meaningful for her daughters. She listed several very important elements necessary to a successful initiation:

*I think there needs to be some kind of challenge—in order [for the young woman] to take her place, to join the community of women . . . Girls have written poems, drawn pictures of who they are . . . I think there needs to be a challenge, but I don't think it needs to be preparing a gift for the community—that's just what I've chosen . . .*

*Another element I think is important is a period of liminality . . . where she's completely alone and has some time to reflect on the step that she's taking . . . Where she's "between the worlds."*

*Another important element is what I call women's mysteries . . . A time where the young woman has an opportunity to connect with and hear from other women . . .*

*Then there needs to be something that happens in sacred space that is an actual change for the young women entering the community of women . . .*

*The final element is celebration. Those are the elements I try to insure are present, whatever the size of the ritual and however many people are involved . . . Whether there are weeks of preparation or whether it all happens on that same day, those elements can still be there.*

*My ex-husband and I created a small circle of rose petals outside the main circle and we . . . brought [our younger daughter] down and put her in that circle and said, "This is the circle that represents your childhood." We gave her a broom and she swept away the petals and had a basket of petals and she came into the center of the [main] circle and made a new circle for herself with the rose petals inside the circle of the community, representing her new status as an adult in the circle that she created.*

*My older daughter for years would say that her ritual was as much for me and my friends as it was for her, and I think in many ways that's true. These rituals . . . for both of my Girls . . . were very healing for women in the group. I do believe as she's getting older and is understanding more about what other people's traditions are, she's valuing more and more what her own experiences are.*

### *Laura's Story*

Another Wise Elder, Laura, came to me from the NROOGD list. Laura's story is more that of her own search for a "preferred family," her discovery of her path through connecting with well-known author Marion Zimmer Bradley; and the adventure of raising her daughter in the Pagan community. Laura related:

*Growing up in a pretty mundane Protestant Methodist frame, there was no great ritual in my life, though I think I was always looking for something special and expecting something special . . .*

*It was in high school that I started thinking about what is this whole adult thing and when am I going to get there? My 16<sup>th</sup> birthday appeared and it was going to be the 16<sup>th</sup> birthday party with all of the relatives and my godparents . . . and this was supposed to be the great transition point where now you're an adult or something. And we had the dinner—went down to Spenger's [seafood restaurant] . . . And all I remember is thinking, "OK, I'm supposed to feel different now and I don't." So whatever was supposed to happen didn't happen for me then. And I guess it wasn't till I was actually a mother that I felt I was an adult. And even then there was some back and forth because though I was 25 years old I was in no way prepared to raise a child . . .*

*The year I was pregnant I was looking for something else. I'd gotten disillusioned with what I was raised as. Anytime I found an odd book that talked about mythology or medieval history—Pagans and Witches and what not—I would pick it up and avidly read it . . . I kept thinking there's something here!*

*So there I was . . . a single Mom . . . with my daughter and looking for some sort of family or community or something. I'd seen a small group of [interesting-looking] people at a Renaissance Faire . . . Then when I went to my ex's wedding up at Tilden Park, who was officiating but some of these same people! So I managed to pick up a couple of names and decided I'm going to find*

*these people . . . and [after a false lead or two] that's how I found Greyhaven. I didn't know what I was getting into but it was indeed the founding household of the SCA [Society for Creative Anarchy] and most of what currently passes for eclectic outer Paganism in the Bay Area today.*

*Raising up a child in that whole milieu was very interesting . . . . We expected a lot of the children and they responded . . . . My friend's daughter and my daughter were the first ones that we did a coming-of-age ceremony for . . . . When the Girls reached the age of 12 or 13, we put together a transitional ritual for them with a circle in the Temple Room . . . and then down to the hot tub in the back yard, and then into the house afterwards for a sort of a debriefing where the Girls could ask questions and we would answer as honestly as we could manage, and give them whatever bits of wisdom about what it means to be a woman, what it means to be responsible to and in command of your own fate. None of us mothers had been raised that way. So this was a way for us newly liberated mothers to communicate with our daughters how wonderful this could be and how they could be in charge of their lives and their fates as women.*

#### *Diana's Story*

The third Wise Elder, Diana, came to my rescue when several Pagan Internet list members raised objections to a stranger wanting to initiate adolescent Girls at menarche. Usually, she informed me, these rites were held by mothers and close family friends—especially among Pagans. While most Pagans tend to practice some form of menarche celebration, they rarely, if ever, allow strangers (even those who are Pagan themselves) to conduct the rites. Also, she added, my email to these lists had been too cursory. When I sent an email introducing myself, my credentials, and my intention in detail, those who had objected were more accepting. However, none of them had young daughters of the proper age.

In addition to offering suggestions on how to allay the concerns expressed on the lists, however, Diana also provided me with a goldmine of information on ritual in general. She and other members of her community had created many wonderful rituals celebrating women's spirituality, one in particular whose script she sent as a kind of



blueprint, and which was the subject of author Anne Kent Rush's book, *Moon, Moon* (1976).

Some months after our initial meeting, she agreed to meet with me again. We talked for a couple of hours on this particular chilly December morning, while Diana told the sad, but helpful, story of her adolescent awakening. Even though this event took place some time ago, I include it here because many young girls today report feeling misunderstood by adults and alienated from their peers—the same feelings that were reported by girls growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. Diana's story also describes the socio-political context in which many women of my generation grew up; and, given the current status of women in patriarchal society, it is clear to me that the Equal Rights Amendment and the feminist activity of the 1970s have not made as much positive difference as we hoped at the time. Diana reported:

*But I had no [real] friends . . . I was what's now called a "nerd." I didn't like the sex roles offered Girls [at that time] either. Growing up in the 50s and 60s there was no feminist movement. There was a great division between what was expected of boys . . . and . . . that's hard to imagine today. It was almost like a little Victorian period . . . . If you were a woman you would get married. If you had a job you'd quit your job, keep house, have children, and maybe have some hobbies or do volunteer work—and that was it. The newspapers [at that time] all had segregated classified ads. If you wanted a job [listed in classified ads] for men it was perfectly legal for them to tell you, "No, you can't have that job because we don't hire women." If you wanted training to go into a particular field they could tell you, "No, we won't take you because this is men's work." There were very few women in public life other than entertainers and wives of famous men, so you didn't see women in the news . . . . I didn't have a lot of models of what to be as a woman . . .*

*I never had a date all through high school. As far as sex roles were concerned, the double standard prevailed . . . . And how you felt about this didn't even come into it, because Girls were expected to be virgins until they got married and if they weren't they were expected to do a good job of covering it up, because the boy would go out and boast if he got anything from you . . . .*

*The last two or three years I was living at home I was depressed to the point of having daily suicidal thoughts, though I didn't make any attempts. My parents were not attending to this—they were in denial . . . but I didn't have any*

*friends. That's a long time to not have any friends! I didn't have any adult people to talk to either. I think if I'd had a couple of friends this would all have been a lot more tolerable . . . than it was. At 16 my life seemed pretty worthless to me. But I was a good student and my folks were willing to support me . . . going away to college . . . So I thought "I'm going to hang on until I'm 18 and I can go to college and get out of here . . . maybe things are different somewhere else . . . and I'm going to . . . give that a couple of years, and if things don't change I'm going to kill myself."*

*So that's what I did . . . And when I got to [UC] Davis there was a little bit of it actually there—the "cowtown version of sex drugs rock'n'roll'n'revolution," which was mild enough not to be seriously dangerous and it was tremendously fun for me.*

*I had a very prolonged and late-arriving adolescence that started when I was about 17 and lasted until I was about 35, where I was making up for all the stuff I didn't get to do when I was in junior high and high school.*

Diana cried as she recounted parts of this story, and I shared her grief. This was something we had in common—having been shy and “nerdy” adolescents, with few friends or proper female role models, and very much in rebellion against the double standard and all the oppressive patriarchal influence that we sensed was keeping us down—not only throughout childhood but in the future that, as women, we would face.

#### *Cam's Story*

Cam, the fourth Wise Elder, was not available for a face-to-face interview.

However, she sent a written account of the initiation of her older twin daughters and a young friend of theirs at menarche. This Rite of Passage combined a number of different practices and included the twins' father in the actual ritual. Cam wrote:

*Their father gave a hand-made and hand-decorated Sacred Hoop for use as a Symbolic Gateway for the Girls to pass through going from Girlhood to womanhood. Then [he] said, "I give to you this hoop I made. This hoop symbolizes the gateway between worlds. The gateway you'll pass through on your path from Girl-to-Woman. I say good-bye to you as my daughter, the Girl . . . in anticipation of greeting you anew as my daughter, the Woman. I love you, Daughter. Good-bye for now." Then he held the hoop for each Girl to pass through, and greeted each Girl by name as she passed through the hoop.*

Cam and I have been friends for many years. An herbalist, holistic healer, storyteller, and artist, she is one of the most resourceful, courageous, and creative women I know. She and her husband have faced many challenges during the time I've known her. Despite this, the twins, now nearly 19 years old—largely home-schooled, bright, and ambitious—are currently investigating scholarships and other college options. Cam looks forward to initiating their younger sister any day now.

### *Beth's Story*

Beth, a NROOGD Priestess, was one of the first and most helpful Wise Elders to respond to my request. She, too, had participated in many rituals, but she did not share a personal story. Instead, she sat with me for a couple of hours, while we brainstormed various approaches to the ritual I planned to design. The following is my memory, bolstered by field notes, of the content of our conversation.

*We talked about the underlying themes of a menarche ritual: beginnings and endings; the bittersweet aspects of growing up; responsibility to one's self, to other women, to the Goddess, to one's community of family and friends, to one's greater community, and, finally, to the planet itself. We felt such a ritual should bring in the virtues of order, care for the environment, compassion, and justice, and that it should help a young woman to act out her beliefs, to "walk her talk."*

*Then we discussed the more technical aspects of creating a ritual. There should be sacred space—a circle, calling the Four Directions (East, South, West, and North).. It would be best if we could have our ritual on a beach or in a park. There should be a cleansing, perhaps smudging everyone with sage or cedar. What aspects of their childhood would these young Girls be leaving behind? How would this change be symbolized? There should be grounding into the Earth, and a question: "What aspect of this planet interests you most? Plants? Animals? Stones? Water?"*

*The ritual should relate to each girl's focus. We decided that there should be a challenge, a second question: "What's your greatest life challenge?" Mentors should design the ritual around helping the Girls to address their core fears. There could be music, color in the form of veils or ribbons, a ritual Dance of the Maidens, red clothing . . . after all of it we would dismiss the Four Directions, open the circle, and celebrate.*

Although the Rite of Passage in this study did not take place on a beach or in a park, and did not include elements of the menarche ritual we had discussed, I was able to bring many of the elements Beth had suggested into our ritual work with the Girls. The Mentors and I did teach them how to cast a circle, call the Four Directions, use the Medicine Card animals as guides and allies, identify and confront a challenge, and incorporate colors and other artistic elements—and, in doing so, we did help them recognize their connection to the Earth.

### *Overview of Themes: Wise Elders' Ritual Teachings*

I used a process of intuitive analysis to allow themes and patterns to emerge from the Wise Elders' stories, from which I have included italicized excerpts in their own words. As stated earlier, each of the four classic stages (preparation/separation, liminality, initiation, and incorporation) was illustrated by aspects of the Wise Elders' stories. Other themes emerged here also. These were (a) relevance of a ritual to a young person's life; (b) intimate connection with the Earth as sacred; (c) early recognition of one's major life challenge; (d) art as symbol and agent of change; and (e) recognition and appreciation of who one really is, rather than merely the representative of a role assigned by one's parents or the larger community. The importance of these emergent themes is central to the findings of this study

. In addition, they focus the reader's attention on areas of inquiry that may require further study.

### *Preparation/Separation*

Laura's story begins with an example of a theme of *separation*—a theme that has become more obvious over the last couple of decades in Western culture—the issue of

dissatisfaction with the spiritual ground of one's biological family and the urge to seek contact with Spirit in the bosom of one's "real family."

*The year I was pregnant I was looking for something else. I'd gotten disillusioned with what I was raised as. Anytime I found an odd book that talked about mythology or medieval history—Pagans and Witches and what not—I would pick it up and avidly read it . . . I kept thinking there's something here!*

Diana's story best illustrates the theme of *separation* through her feelings of being awkward and out of place as an adolescent.

*The last two or three years I was living at home I was depressed to the point of having daily suicidal thoughts, though I didn't make any attempts. My parents were not attending to this—they were in denial . . . but I didn't have any friends. That's a long time to not have any friends! I didn't have any adult people to talk to either. I think if I'd had a couple of friends this would all have been a lot more tolerable . . . than it was. At 16 my life seemed pretty worthless to me.*

#### *Liminality*

Viola noted the importance of a young girl's having a time of liminality or non-being—a time in which she is neither the child she was nor the young woman she will become.

*Another element I think is important is a period of liminality . . . where she's completely alone and has some time to reflect on the step that she's taking . . . . Where she's "between the worlds."*

#### *Initiation*

Viola also detailed the *initiation* of each of her daughters. This is her description of part of her younger daughter's rite of passage.

*My ex-husband and I created a small circle of rose petals outside the main circle and we . . . brought [our younger daughter] down and put her in that circle and said, "This is the circle that represents your childhood." We gave her a broom and she swept away the petals and had a basket of petals and she came into the center of the [main] circle and made a new circle for herself with the rose petals inside the circle of the community, representing her new status as an adult in the circle that she created.*

Beth's comments, also focused largely on the theme of *initiation*, dwelled strongly on the aspect of the young woman's *responsibility* and *relationship to others*.

*We talked about the underlying themes of a menarche ritual: beginnings and endings; the bittersweet aspects of growing up; responsibility to one's self, to other women, to the Goddess, to one's community of family and friends, to one's greater community, and finally to the planet itself. We felt such a ritual should bring in the virtues of order, care for the environment, compassion, and justice, and that it should help a young woman to act out her beliefs, to "walk her talk."*

### *Incorporation*

Cam's inclusion of her husband as an active participant in her daughters' Rite of Passage illustrates the theme of *incorporation* through her attempt to honor a girl's need (often ignored, especially in women's rituals) to be witnessed not only by women, but by men as well. While this was and still is often part of indigenous rituals and also of the modern Jewish Bat Mitzvah, the practice is new to more contemporary Earth-based rites of passage, many of which are for women only. Since so much of modern women's spirituality has arisen in contrast, and often in opposition, to the patriarchal spirituality under which most of my generation grew up, it may be even more important now to have men participate in their daughters' rites of passage, at least in some capacity, as a further validation of women's right to worship as we please. I discuss this further in Chapter 5.

Cam noted:

*Their father gave a hand-made and hand-decorated Sacred Hoop for use as a Symbolic Gateway for the girls to pass through going from girlhood to womanhood. Then [he] said, "I give to you this hoop I made. This hoop symbolizes the gateway between worlds. The gateway you'll pass through on your path from Girl-to-Woman. I say good-bye to you as my daughter, the Girl . . . in anticipation of greeting you anew as my daughter, the Woman."*

Linda's story ends with a reference to *incorporation* as a form of generativity.

*When the girls reached the age of 12 or 13, we put together a transitional ritual . . . where the girls could ask questions and we would answer as honestly as we*

*could manage, and give them whatever bits of wisdom about what it means to be a woman, what it means to be responsible to and in command of your own fate. None of us mothers had been raised that way. So this was a way for us newly liberated mothers to communicate with our daughters how wonderful this could be and how they could be in charge of their lives and their fates as women.*

Here is a summary of the additional themes that emerged: (a) relevance of a ritual to a young person's life; (b) intimate connection with the Earth as Sacred; (c) early recognition of one's major life challenge; (d) the importance of art (the masks and drawings) as both symbol and agent of change; and (e) the need to be recognized and appreciated for who one really is, rather than merely as the representative of a role assigned by one's parents or the larger community.

#### *Relevance of a Ritual to a Young Person's Life*

Viola's story introduced the theme of *relevance of a ritual to a young person's life*—and raised a major question: For whom are rites of passage conducted—for the adolescents or for their elders? Viola said:

*My older daughter for years would say that her ritual was as much for me and my friends as it was for her, and I think in many ways that's true. These rituals . . . for both of my girls . . . were very healing for women in the group.*

Do Western adolescents really wish to be incorporated into the larger community? Or is it we adults, fearing that which is new and therefore unfamiliar, who insist on engulfing the young? This question—*For whom are rites of passage really conducted—for the adolescents or for their elders?*—is one that became central to the creation of ritual for the adolescents in this study, and I will address it further in Chapter 5, under Relevance of Rites of Passage.

### *Intimate Connection with the Earth as Sacred*

Beth brought out the necessity of grounding such rituals, not only in the Earth, but in those aspects of being alive on this planet that most interest the initiate—bringing in the theme of *intimate connection with the Earth as Sacred* in everyday life.

*It would be best if [we] could have [our] ritual on a beach or in a park. There should be a cleansing, perhaps smudging everyone with sage or cedar. What aspects of their childhood would these young Girls be leaving behind? How would this change be symbolized? There should be grounding into the Earth, and a question: “What aspect of this planet interests you most? Plants? Animals? Stones? Water?”*

Considering the ritual names chosen by many of the study participants, animals were the most interesting planetary aspect (White Owl, Cougar, Eagle, Butterfly, Monarch—a species of butterfly, Mentor Coyote, Mentor Swan). Other participants took the names of elements (Air, Rain, Rose Crystal, Mentor Emerald, Mentor Stone). One participant chose to honor food (Muffin), one trees (Mentor Redwood), one insects (Mentor Firefly), and one the cosmos (Mentor Solar Wind).

### *Early Recognition of One’s Major Life Challenge*

Beth also emphasized the importance of *recognizing one’s major life challenge*.

*The ritual should relate to each girl’s focus. We decided that there should be a challenge, a second question: “What’s your greatest life challenge?” Mentors should design the ritual around helping the girls to address their core fears.*

### *Art as Symbol and Agent of Change*

Three of the Wise Elders—Viola, Beth, and Cam—referred in one way or another to the *importance of using art* (color, music, dance) as an integral part of the ritual. Viola mentioned her daughters’ artistic performances, given as a gift to the community of women they were about to join:



*Girls have written poems, drawn pictures of who they are . . . my older daughter is a dancer. She choreographed a dance which she performed at the ritual. My younger daughter sang a song . . . She's a poet and a singer. And actually she sang "The Burning Times."*

Cam spoke of her husband's artistic gift to his daughters:

*Their father gave a hand-made and hand-decorated Sacred Hoop for use as a Symbolic Gateway for the girls to pass through going from girlhood to womanhood.*

Beth offered several ideas for the ritual:

*There could be music, color in the form of veils or ribbons, a ritual Dance of the Maidens, red clothing . . .*

### *Recognition and Appreciation for Who One Really Is*

Linda expressed her disappointment in her family's lack of understanding her true self:

*My 16<sup>th</sup> birthday appeared and it was going to be the 16<sup>th</sup> birthday party with all of the relatives and my godparents . . . and this was supposed to be the great transition point where now you're an adult or something. And we had the dinner—went down to Spengler's [restaurant] . . . And all I remember is thinking, "OK, I'm supposed to feel different now and I don't." So whatever was supposed to happen didn't happen for me then. And I guess it wasn't till I was actually a mother that I felt I was an adult.*

### *Summary of Themes: Wise Elders' Ritual Teachings*

Since participatory research was the source of several elements of this blended study, it was important to consider the Wise Elders' ideas and suggestions. Many themes arose from these suggestions. Here is a summary of those I incorporated, not only into the Rite of Passage itself, but into all our interactions with the Girls. In addition to Turner's classic themes, which were expected to emerge (*preparation/separation, liminality, initiation, and incorporation*), additional themes also emerged. These included (a) relevance of a ritual to the young person's life; (b) intimate connection with the Earth as

Sacred; (c) the need to recognize, acknowledge, and confront one's major life challenge; (d) the importance of art (the masks and drawings) as both symbol and agent of change; and (e) the need to be recognized and appreciated for who one really is, rather than merely the representative of a role assigned by one's parents or the larger community.

### *Finding the Mentors*

During the slow process of recruiting the Girls, I had decided to reach out to find Mentors in order to save time. This was relatively easy in comparison to finding the Girls, although I didn't know until nearly the last minute exactly how many women I had, since two of them were somewhat undecided. Initially, I sent out an invitation to students via the *ITP Community Voice*. Three women responded to this letter. Of those three, a Master's student agreed to join the study. She had worked with adolescents before. Another potential Mentor was a classmate in my Ph.D. program. She was quite interested in the project—because it would help her decide how to design her own study, and because she wanted the experience of working with adolescents. An email request for Mentors was sent out to students and alumna of academic Women's Spirituality programs. One graduate, a talented young artist, responded. She contributed greatly to our brainstorming and the actual design of the ritual. While looking for Girls, I had contacted another woman, who is Director of a Girls' program herself. A notice was posted at a local church, and three women from one of the programs there contacted me. Two of them had done a menarche ritual with their daughters the year before and, I thought, would be the two women most likely to understand all the nuances of creating ritual. The third woman had no mentoring experience but wanted to learn. A woman I'd met on one of the Pagan Internet lists also expressed interest in the study. This woman

had not worked with adolescents, but looked forward to the opportunity. Finally, I conducted a telephone interview with the family friend and mentor chosen by the girl from the South Bay church, who wanted to support her young friend and also to gain “more formal” experience in mentoring. During each interview with a potential Mentor, I remained acutely aware of the criteria for Mentors listed in Chapter 3: (a) being a female 21 years old or older; (b) having an active spiritual practice; (c) possessing strong advocacy skills; (d) having the ability to be open-minded and accepting of non-traditional as well as traditional religious practices, and comfortable working with youth of different cultures; and (e) having some life experience (such as being or having been in a stable romantic or marital relationship, raising or having raised their own children, or having explored various avenues of spiritual expression). All of the Mentors met these criteria.

#### *Mentors' Motivation for Participating in the Study*

Since participatory research was the source of several elements of this blended study, it was important to consider the ideas and suggestions of all the Mentors. I wanted their input to be as spontaneous and authentic as possible, so that I could determine whether a potential Mentor actually qualified for the study. Preliminary Mentor interviews, therefore, were informal, open-ended, and varied in length. Whenever possible, I met and interviewed each Mentor in person. If a Mentor was unable to meet with me, I conducted an open-ended telephone interview. In order to provide a degree of homogeneity, however, I worked from a brief questionnaire (Pre-Rite Mentors Questionnaire, Appendix I), which I asked each Mentor to fill out after the initial Mentors' group meeting. An intuitive analysis of their responses to that questionnaire revealed that Mentors were motivated by the wish to provide their mentees with (a)

support; (b) safety; (c) empowerment (of women); (d) helping; (e) understanding of the power of ritual; (f) an opportunity to be creative; and (g), as Mentors, to experience the opportunity to interact more closely with young people.

(Although Mentors did not choose ritual names until the second meeting with the Girls, I use them here to avoid confusion.)

### *Support*

The majority of the Mentors expressed a desire to provide *support* to their mentees. Mentor Swan most clearly expresses the theme of support.

*I am excited about taking part and facilitating in a Rite of Passage ritual, and developing a relationship that will be supportive and growth enhancing for a teenage girl.*

### *Safety*

Mentor Swan emphasizes the importance of the theme of *safety*.

*I hope she will feel safe, heard, and respected in a way that will help her to develop compassion for herself.*

Mentor Redwood also speaks of *safety*.

*She learns about herself and finds safe adults.*

### *Empowerment*

Mentor Hortense best sums up the theme of *empowerment*.

*[I want her]to feel empowered as a young woman in a society that does not foster empowerment in females.*

### *Helping*

Mentor Redwood summarizes the importance of the theme of *helping*.

*I love to help.*

### *Power of Ritual*

Mentor Solar Wind was the only one who wrote about her wish to share *understanding of the power of rituals*.

*[I am here] to support an issue I believe on (sic)—the power of rituals.*

### *Creativity*

Mentor Emerald, although she did not turn in the questionnaire, repeatedly mentioned and demonstrated her belief in the importance of *creativity*.

### *Interaction with Youth*

Mentor Firefly noted a strong motivation, shared but not so clearly expressed, by all the Mentors:

*To learn more about how to interact with younger people.*

### *Summary of Mentors' Motivation for Participating in the Study*

Several themes emerged from the Mentors' responses to the questionnaire. Swan wanted her mentee to feel respected and heard, and to learn compassion for herself. Redwood spoke of safety and self-knowledge. Hortense wanted her mentee to feel empowered as a woman. Stone wanted her mentee to be happy. Firefly knew her mentee personally, and wanted her to develop tolerance for herself and her family members and to be true to herself. Solar Wind wanted her mentee to discover the power of sisterhood. Emerald did not turn in the answers to this questionnaire.

### *Mentors' First Group Meeting*

This meeting took place two weeks before we met with the Girls. Of the Mentors, Stone, Swan, Redwood, Solar Wind, and Emerald were present. Firefly was unable to be there, and I had not yet recruited Hortense. Two of three potential Mentors, Hanna and

Merry, were also present, but the third, Allie, was not. I later brought these Mentors up to date via a private email list. However, Hanna withdrew, due to scheduling conflicts, shortly after this meeting; Merry withdrew for the same reason after the second meeting with the Girls; and Allie decided not to participate because of ill health. With these withdrawals, I was left with 8 Mentors, including myself.

During this first meeting, Mentors introduced themselves to each other. Since all had been informed of the purpose of the study and had been given a general outline of the plan during the initial interviews, we were able to exchange ideas easily. We agreed that we would follow an Earth-based ritual format (see *Circles & Directions*, Appendix K) similar to what I had described for each potential Mentor in the initial interview. Then we discussed various details: (a) casting a circle in order to create a container for our activities; (b) calling the Four Directions; (c) having a special altar or sacred center space for each meeting and having participants bring something special and personal to place there; (d) bringing snacks for each meeting; and (e) focusing especially on the strengths of each of the Girls as they were revealed to us. We decided, both to avoid the possibility of favoritism and to let Spirit guide the research, that we would have all participants draw colored beads to pair Mentors with Girls. Since Thursday was the best day for most of us to gather together, that would be the day we'd meet with the Girls. I had brought Mentors' Consent Forms (Appendix H) along with the brief Mentors' Pre-Rite Questionnaire (Appendix I) to be returned at the next meeting. We agreed to meet at a restaurant in a shopping center near the school before that first meeting with the Girls. There we could check in with each other, and then everyone could follow me to the school.

### *Summary of Mentors' Themes and Suggestions*

In summary, I was able to incorporate most of the themes and suggestions that arose from the Mentors' meetings. Mentors' themes included (a) respect and acceptance of self and others, (b) compassion for self and others, (c) safety, (d) self-knowledge, (e) authenticity, (f) sisterhood, (g) feminine power, and (f) creative play.

Mentors' excellent suggestions included (a) casting a circle, (b) calling the Four Directions, (c) having a personalized "sacred centerpiece," and (d) providing nourishment (snacks). In addition, (e) colored beads resolved the issue of favoritism, and (f) all participating adults agreed to make an effort to support the Girls' strengths. We also agreed that I would create an internet mailing list to facilitate communication among the Mentors. This list would save our having to type in each person's email address with every message, and would enable us to discuss aspects of our work with the Girls that we did not have time to address either during or immediately after each meeting. I invited the Mentors to join the "Wise Womyn's" email list, and everyone agreed. In order to provide security, this was a "closed" list, meaning that only members could access the messages; and after ritual names had been chosen, these were the names used in our email communications.

### *Finding the Girls*

Although the Girls did not choose their ritual names until the second meeting, I use them here to avoid confusion. The Girls (using their ritual names) were Rose Crystal, Butterfly, Cougar, Eagle, Monarch, White Owl, Rain, Muffin, and Air. Finding them was in many ways the most difficult and frustrating part of the whole project. Most of the women suggested by my Wise Elders were older, with daughters who were now fully

grown. Those with younger children balked at releasing their daughters to a stranger for what was originally planned as a menarche ritual. I decided that a thorough search of organizations in my local community would provide the best sources of adolescent participants. Not wanting to follow the advice of people at ITP who suggested I approach organizations in the South Bay, because of the distance of that locale from where I live, I contacted a number of organizations closer to home that provide support for adolescents—in Berkeley, San Francisco, Oakland, and Marin County—all to no avail.

Next, I approached Youth Education Directors at several Unity Churches in the South Bay. Given the general lack of enthusiasm for a menarche ritual, I decided to design a ritual to address other challenges adolescent girls might be facing, such as problems with school, their families, or their boyfriends. (See Haag, 2000; Wolf, 1991.) The Director at one of these churches introduced me to two girls in Unity Teens and a mother who felt her daughter would enjoy participating. One of the girls seemed interested; fortunately, I was able to interview her a few weeks later. With her parents' permission, we agreed that she would become a participant in the study. None of the other girls in Unity Teens were interested.

Finally, I contacted the Director of the Counseling Center at a South Bay middle school. This is a charter school established for students with serious academic problems, which has successfully adopted the doctrine of “tough love” in order to keep students off the streets and encourage them to go on to high school. I had worked in a similar school before, in Nevada City during the mid-‘90s. I telephoned the Counseling Director, who arranged a meeting with the Founding and Executive Director of the school. During this very brief meeting, the Founding Director quickly agreed to my proposal, and soon I had



12 more girls lined up for the study. The Program Director at this school was responsible for selecting the girls, and she assured me that each one met the criteria for adolescent participants: (a) adolescent female between the ages of 11 and 14; (b) interest in participating in this research project; (c) willingness to participate in group activities; (d) ability to maintain a certain level of academic achievement during the study, if it takes place during the school year; (e) ability to obtain parental consent and support; and (f) a stable personality (as determined by the Program Director).

#### *Participant Attrition*

There was no attrition of Wise Elders. However, initially there were ten adult Mentors, not including myself. Of these, two women withdrew before the project began—one because of ill health and one because of a previous commitment to another after-school program. A third woman withdrew after the second meeting with the Girls because the demands of her profession conflicted with our meeting time. This left a total of eight Mentors, including myself.

In addition, there were originally one Girl from Unity and twelve Girls from the charter school. Four of the charter school Girls were withdrawn from the project by school administration—three Girls because of disruptive behavior, and one because of a scheduling conflict. A fifth girl who wished to participate was not allowed to, because the school administration feared her grades would suffer. This left a total of nine Girls.

#### *Summary of Preparation Stage*

In summary, during the preparation stage of this research, the adults (Wise Elders and Mentors) who chose to participate were motivated by feelings of empathy for the Girls who would be undergoing the Rite of Passage. In addition to Turner's classic

themes (preparation/separation, liminality, initiation, and incorporation), new themes emerged. Emerging themes expressed by Wise Elders included (a) relevance of a ritual to the young person's life; (b) intimate connection with the Earth as sacred; (c) the need to recognize, acknowledge, and confront one's major life challenge; (d) the importance of art (the masks and drawings) as both symbol and agent of change; and (e) the need to be recognized and appreciated for who one really is, rather than merely the representative of a role assigned by one's parents or the larger community. Emerging themes expressed by Mentors included (a) respect and acceptance of self and others, (b) compassion for self and others, (c) safety, (d) self-knowledge, (e) authenticity, (f) sisterhood, (g) feminine power, and (h) creative play. These themes, along with the Wise Elders' recommendations, served to inform and influence the entire ritual experience and work with the adolescent girls in this study.

During recruitment efforts, parents of potential adolescent participants may not have fully understood the motives for the research project and/or did not know and may not have trusted the researcher. Therefore, schools and other organizations, such as church youth groups, were the best source of adolescent participants. Teachers, youth directors, or program directors in such organizations proved to be the best judges of which adolescents might benefit from the experience. Among the adolescents chosen by these administrators, those who were facing various life challenges, such as difficulty at school or at home, were considered the most likely candidates for such a project.

Even after administrators had carefully chosen adolescent participants for the study, there was some attrition. Attrition also occurred with the Mentors; however, attrition can be expected in research studies, especially with adolescents.

### *Liminality Stage*

The concept of *liminality*, the term used by Turner (1969) to describe the threshold between one state of being and the next (in the case of this study, the state of adolescence and the state of young womanhood) best describes the situation during the five meetings we had with the Girls *before* the enactment of their Rite of Passage. (There were two additional meetings after the first five, for a total of seven meetings.) This phase of the process turned out to be very different from the original plan. It was characterized by many unexpected developments, and required a great degree of flexibility on the part of all participants. The data from which I drew my conclusions were collected from my field notes, co-researchers' and my own taped comments, co-researchers' written comments and responses to questionnaires, and the Girls' art work (masks and drawings). Each meeting presented its own challenges and revealed its own themes, which I summarize at the end of the Liminality section, and whose relevance to the findings I discuss in Chapter 5.

### *Working with the Girls*

In this section I describe detailed aspects of the first five meetings with the Girls: Mentor/mentee matching, which occurred during our first meeting; shamanic journeys to find allies during our second and third meetings; mask-making to further familiarize the Girls with their allies and to support them in finding their own inner guidance during the fourth meeting; and identifying the Girls' challenges and planning the Rite of Passage during the fifth meeting.

### *Mentor/Mentee Matching*

Our first meeting had been planned as a time for getting acquainted and pairing Mentors with Girls, using the matching of glass beads. First we set up a sacred centerpiece, or altar, in the center of the room, on a low surface covered with a striped Guatemalan cloth.



*Figure 3. Altar with Lavender and Feathers*

We used this makeshift altar each time we met with the Girls for the duration of the study. On the altar, Mentor Swan placed a feather in the East to represent the element of Air, a candle in the South for Fire, a shell filled with water in the West for Water, and a crystal in the North for Earth. I explained the placement of these objects to the Girls, and added that in my tradition we called in the spirits of the Four Directions (East, South, West, and North) to guard the circle we would form to create a sacred “safe space.” Then

I called the Directions (Appendix K), and we formed our circle “hand to hand.” This way of creating sacred space is simple but powerful. The leader says, “I cast the Circle hand to hand,” and takes the right hand of the person to her left. That person repeats the statement as she takes the right hand of the person to her left. The third person repeats the statement while taking the right hand of the person to *her* left, and so it goes around, until the circle reaches the leader again. The leader then says, “The Circle is cast; we are between the worlds.” The Girls at first seemed somewhat confused by this particular process, but they picked it up quickly, and, by the time we had finished this preliminary ritual, everyone knew what to do. Then we sat down, and each person, beginning with the Mentors, briefly shared some information about herself, as an “ice breaker.” Finally, I asked each participant to choose a colored bead—Mentors from one container and Girls from another. Those whose beads matched were a mentor/mentee pair. I had brought colored wire so that the matched pairs could make bracelets for each other, to remind themselves of the bond they were creating.

This procedure met with mixed responses. Rather than simplifying the process of matching Girls with Mentors, as I had intended, it was one of the most confusing and chaotic events of the entire study. For example, if a Mentor drew a bead of a certain color and a Girl drew the same-colored bead but didn’t like the looks of that Mentor, or decided that she wanted a different-colored bead, she would put the bead back in the container and draw another. (Fortunately this happened only a couple of times, but the Mentors on the receiving end of it reported feeling uncomfortable and rejected.) Also, with fewer Mentors than Girls, several Mentors drew more than one bead and wound up with more than one Girl, while others drew beads that didn’t match what the Girls had

drawn, and so had none. Eventually, however, we managed to sort everyone out—I assigned mentees to the Mentors who had none. By the time the Girls left for the day, each one had a Mentor. Mentor Firefly, whom I’d interviewed by telephone but hadn’t met in person, brought Rose Crystal, the girl from the South Bay church, and they had hoped to be a Mentor/mentee pair. But the spirit of Coyote, that mythical Native American trickster who constantly confuses everyone and causes all sorts of difficulties, intervened to match this girl with Mentor Merry instead, while Mentor Firefly wound up with two other Girls.

*Shamanic Journeys, Allies, and Ritual Names*

During the next two meetings Girls and Mentors participated in shamanic journeys in order to find spiritual guides or allies, and to choose ritual names. Our first shamanic journey, during the second meeting, was a fascinating experience for the Girls who were there. Unfortunately, not all of the Girls were present at this meeting. Apparently both Girls and school administrators felt that this was simply one more “after-school activity,” and, therefore, Girls could attend or not as they chose, or as the staff saw fit. As a result, three of the Girls were in “tutorials,” one was interviewing at the high school she planned to attend, one had gone somewhere with her parents, and two were “out sick.” Seven of the Girls were absent. However, I decided to proceed with the five Girls who were there, speak with both the Executive Director and the Program Director, and just do a “catch-up” for the absentees at the next meeting. I realized I would need to extend the project a week, but by then I was getting used to the intervention of my personal Goddess, Coyote, or whatever other spirits had decided to meddle with this study. In addition, I’d received an email from Mentor Firefly saying she’d been taking

photos of us all, Girls included, and had put them up on her web site. After I had firmly reemphasized the importance of confidentiality, protection of minors, online predation, and other important considerations (such as the fact that this could compromise the entire study), Firefly removed the photos and apologized.

Although only five of the Girls were present at this meeting, those five enthusiastically helped cast the circle “hand to hand,” called the Four Directions, and allowed the hypnotic beating of my *bodhran* or skin drum to lull them into a light trance. The shamanic journey through which I led everyone was the same one I had used many times before—the one I had devised to heal myself (Shamanic Journey, Appendix B). At the end of the journey, they all opened their eyes and were given instructions to draw—with the oil pastels I had brought—a visual record of their journeys. After the drawings were finished, Mentors and Girls talked one-on-one about this experience. Interestingly, many of the Girls and a couple of the Mentors did not find an ally on this journey, so I brought out the Medicine Cards (see Medicine Cards, Appendix M) and each person picked a Medicine Card, read about her animal’s characteristics, and chose a ritual name. In most of the Girls’ cases, the names were related to the animals they picked, while the Mentors chose names related to recognized aspects of themselves.

We all enjoyed this part—however, when I reminded everyone to turn their cell phones off at the beginning of the meeting, one of the Mentors refused to do so. She explained that she was waiting for a client’s business call. If I was not comfortable with that, she was prepared to leave the meeting. I did not want to leave her mentee without a Mentor and agreed that she could stay if she would turn off the ringer so that it wouldn’t

disturb the group. This was not the best solution to the problem, but I planned to address it later after the meeting was over.

In addition, Mentor Redwood's mentee had arrived with a friend, whom I had to send away, explaining that this was a research project and that all participants needed to be there from the beginning to the end. At this, Mentor Redwood's mentee became very disruptive and continued to create a disturbance until she left halfway through the meeting to go play basketball. Redwood and I felt that perhaps she didn't want to be in the group, and I said I would speak to the Program Director.

The following day I called the Executive Director and explained that we had all, herself included, agreed on a specific day—Thursday—as the one for the project, and we couldn't change it now. But, more importantly, while tutorials were supposed to be academically helpful, our project might help the Girls mature in *many* ways, including academic performance. The Director agreed that it “wasn't fair to sign the Girls up for one thing and then put them in another.”

Finally, Mentor Firefly emailed a request that we keep Mentor Redwood's mentee “in the game” because she believed that the Girl was probably acting out from shyness. I explained she was Redwood's mentee and it was Redwood's decision and mine that would have to be honored. If the girl really wanted to participate, I said, she would now have to personally assure me of the fact and promise to stay in the study. I added that this was not a simple after-school mentoring program, but a time-bound dissertation research project with firm deadlines. If we had to spend our time troubleshooting the behavior of dissidents, we'd never get anything accomplished.



After a long talk on the following night with the Mentor who had refused to turn off her cell phone, we agreed that she would not continue as a Mentor. Her professional commitments made it difficult for her to keep Thursday afternoons completely free.

Finally, I felt I had addressed these unforeseen challenges, and could move ahead with an idea suggested by Mentor Swan: writing up a simple information sheet explaining the meaning and possible uses of ritual (see What is a Ritual? Appendix J), and a script for calling the Four Directions (see Circles & Directions, Appendix K), since the Girls tended to forget which direction symbolized which element. I handed these out to everyone at the next meeting.

During our third meeting, we had to bring the Girls who had missed the second meeting up to date. The Girls who had been at the second meeting were delighted to do another shamanic journey, and the returning Girls were, for the most part, intrigued. The Girls were extremely shy of my digital tape recorder, or “talking stick.” Initially White Owl, whose family includes a Native American grandfather, had refused to be tape-recorded, saying she didn’t want anyone to hear her voice. I did not push her, and she eventually relented and said she was willing to record her journey on the “talking stick.”

*“Hi I’m White Owl. I’m here to tell the story about the white owl [seen in her shamanic journey]. Well, my grandpa told me that every time you see a white owl it’s bad luck. It means something bad is gonna happen to somebody you care about. So, the direction that the owl is going . . . if you have family that lives in that direction, you have to call them and see how they are. And if the owl is going another direction, wherever the owl is going, that means something bad is gonna happen. So if you see a white owl, tell everybody and make sure that your family is OK.”*

Given her grandfather’s opinion of owls, which is a common one for many Native Americans (although some shamans and medicine people may not share it, seeing the owl as a power animal instead), it’s surprising that this girl chose “White Owl” as her ritual

name. Her mentor, Emerald, and I gave her the Medicine Card book and suggested she might enjoy reading the chapter on Owl, which—although authors David Carson and Jamie Sams are both Native American—offers a broader view of owls.

At the end of the meeting, I asked all participants (Girls and Mentors) to turn in a short statement to let me know how they had experienced the shamanic journey. Six of the nine Girls and two of the eight Mentors present responded in writing to this request. In order to accurately represent each participant's response, I have left spelling and punctuation as it was written.

*Rain: It was a relaxing day today. I like when we did the drum thing. It was cool to do that. I like this day. It was fun and sunny like me.*

*Air: Today was a relaxing day for me. I had lots of fun today. This program is helping me in becoming a mature lady. I would like for this program to continue. So thank you all for coming to help us become more mature. The sharmanic (sic) journey was the best part today.*

*Eagle: Today was a really relaxing day. I really enjoyed when we went into our journey. I also enjoyed going thourgh (sic) the rituals.*

*White Owl: Today's a good day. I got to finish my assignments. I had allot (sic) of fun even though it was dramatic!*

*Rose Crystal: Today was mostly productive. We had a shimanic (sic) journey again. This time was really different from last. (I didnt "fall asleep" at the end, either.) It was really really hot in the room though I wish it were cooler. Im waiting for us to get past this point, its kind of slow right now. But today was better than last week. I changed my name again, Rose Crystal. (Not Cat.) Today was fun though, an improvement.*

*Monarch: I was trying to go down the hole And I saw two red mean eyes and a mouth that had spikie (sic) & sharp teeth. It looked very evil so I was too scared to go down the hole. So I just stayed outside staring down the pitch dark hole and the evil eyes and mouth.*

*Mentor Swan: I felt a strong feeling of community today, sitting together around the altar and talking about what a ritual is for. I felt the sense of purpose and meaning in the group growing stronger. My journey was renewing for me. I went*

*swimming in a beautiful lake and was visited by a frog. I enjoyed talking with the Girls about their experience and the sense they made of it.*

*Mentor Stone: Felt sunny & cheerful. Girls blossoming. Giggly—mature, responsibility, Comings and goings still, but less disruptive. Still unclear about mentor/mentee thing but it can wait. Looking forward to planning our big Ritual.*

After this meeting with the Girls, I told Mentor Swan about a broom-jumping ritual (a simple Pagan rite of passage employed when our class graduated from my school's Clinical Master's program). She suggested that we arrange something similar for the Girls, and perhaps construct a "threshold" or barrier for the Girls to jump over. I added that perhaps they could place something representing their challenges on it. I also asked Mentor Emerald, our resident artist, if she would help the Girls make masks based upon either their power animals or their ritual names.

#### *Mask-making*

During our fourth meeting, all the Girls worked on making masks representing the allies they had found in their shamanic journey or through the Medicine Cards. This process met with great success. The Girls poured all their energy into the project. The school's focus is more on academic prowess than on the arts, and I was delighted to see how beautiful their masks were. Mentor Firefly made a huge hit by bringing a large bunch of peacock feathers, and almost everyone seemed to find some way of using one or two feathers in her mask. I had made a quick sketch of a generic mask (which looked a bit like Coyote's face) and cut it out, to show them how to begin. Mentor Stone loved this shape and asked if she could use it to make a mask of her own. I hadn't thought about Mentors making masks because I imagined they'd need all their energy to help the Girls—but I thought, why not? So she joined in the general hilarity and collaged her mask with images cut from old calendars.

While we didn't have much time to talk in the circle, it was clear that the mask-makers and their Mentors were having a great time working together. Mask-making seemed to release some of the constraints the Girls had exhibited during earlier meetings—they were much more outgoing and relaxed with the Mentors. Again, I asked for written comments after this session. All nine of the Girls' provided written comments, as did five of the Mentors.

*Cougar: Today I had fun. I Really enjoyed it.*

*Rain: It was fun today because we did some masks. This day was more fun than the other ones.*

*Eagle: My day today was fun. I had a lot of fun and I really enjoyed being there!*

*White Owl: 2 Day was a good Day! But I don't like Monarch's metor! (sic)*

*Monarch: My day today was fun and exciting because in P.E. we played baseball and I really enjoyed it. In another class we saw a movie about Patriots and it was very interesting.*

*Rose Crystal: Today went very well, it was much more exciting than some previous meetings We made our masks today I think maybe the adults could have controlled it better, the Girls are a little crazy. But today was very fun! I loved it.*

*Air: Today I had fun. Especially when we were decorating the masks. Today was bright*

*Muffin: I really enjoy doing the mask I had lots of fun.*

*Butterfly: My day was fun and exciting  
Love Always, Butterfly*

*Mentor Solar Wind: It was nice to see the Girls having fun. Art projects are a blessing*

*Mentor Swan: The time flew by today—making masks kept us all busy. It was challenging to help the Girls find allies that had meaning for them, and then represent them on a mask. But it felt uplifting and playful.*

*Mentor Firefly: Masks to play in alternative & hidden demeanors. Animals that help represent the glitter—the cat—the wise owl—fun to play with each girl &*

*interact. Some shy to start—then made a gorgeous representation of selves in mask—fun—pretty—*

*Mentor Stone: today big time bonding among mentees. They really ‘got down’ making their masks. Like kids.*

*Mentor Emerald: today felt easy & free. So much natural creative spirit flowing through & out of these young women. When my mentee got frustrated it felt difficult to get her out of it w/out pushing.*



*Figure 4. Butterfly Working on Her Mask*

Towards the end of our brief check-in, after the mask-making was finished for the day, I reminded the Girls that we would begin planning our Rite of Passage the following week, and they should remember to invite their parents to the celebration feast after the ritual. However, except for Rose Crystal, who said her folks were planning to come, no one else wanted to invite their parents. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

### *The Girls' Challenges*

For the fifth meeting I had planned to have each Girl sit with her Mentor and attempt to identify her major challenge. After casting the circle and calling the Four Directions, the main group broke into dyads. However, three Mentors—Firefly, Stone, and Redwood—and three Girls—Rose Crystal, Eagle, and Cougar—chose to form one small group. Eagle and Cougar had been Firefly's original mentees. Because the mentor-mentee ratio had changed with the departure of one Mentor and the other four Girls, Redwood and Stone had agreed to mentor Eagle and Cougar. Since these two Girls wanted to stay together and Firefly was now Rose Crystal's Mentor, forming a small group of their own seemed like the best solution at the time. However, it proved not to be. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

Field notes, recorded in my journal, are the best written record of the Girls' challenges and how they used "animal medicine" to address them. Sams & Carson (1988), speaking of "animal medicine," explain that for many Native Americans, certain animals represent different personality traits and characteristics. Here I describe these characteristics as the Girls understood them.

*24 February 2006*

*Yesterday was wonderful! The Girls sat with their Mentors and talked (perhaps for the first time ever) about their challenges, dreams, and determination to succeed.*

*For Butterfly it's math—she is getting a tutor. But she also loves to dance. I suggested a dance class as a fun thing to balance out the drudgery of math—she looked happy at that. She wants to be able to "look on the bright side," like [her ally] Otter*

*The Mentors were in their element too. Hortense was thrilled to report that Rain wants to be a scientist! And she'll use Spider's skills to construct webs of wonder.*

*Eagle will take a higher view of her situation and try not to get in trouble so much. (Eagle is the girl I had to retrieve from detention.) She'll use Eagle's strength and vision.*

*Rose Crystal will use Cat's grace and wisdom to choose supportive relationships with friends.*

*Air will borrow Frog's cheery voice to speak up—especially to boys.*

*White Owl will use Owl's wisdom to pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade.*

*Monarch will lean on Eagle's power to control her life so she can pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade too.*

*Muffin faces shyness and will depend upon Skunk to build self-esteem and a good reputation, in order to overcome this.*

*Cougar had to leave early, and we don't know yet what her challenges are.*

After the Girls shared their challenges, the Mentors (all except Emerald, who was overseeing the finishing of the masks) talked about the setting for the Rite of Passage. The fine points of the ritual—what the Mentors would say and do, and how the Girls would be expected to respond, were left for me to refine. I wanted each Mentor to choose something special for her mentee, something based upon the challenge each Girl hoped to overcome. However, most of the Mentors felt that we should give each Girl the same gift—something that symbolized parts of our process that had already begun to take hold with them. Mentor Firefly thought that a compass would be ideal, since they all enjoyed casting the circle and calling the Four Directions. I had been fascinated to note that on one occasion, when I tried to cast the circle a different way—pulling up earth energy and sending it around from heart to heart—the Girls collapsed in a fit of giggles. One of the braver ones waited until I'd finished before raising her hand to ask if we could go back to “the old way”—casting the circle “hand to hand.” Clearly this had become important to them and was now something they wanted to continue.

### *Summary of Liminality Stage*

Having completed the first five meetings and the liminality phase of the study, I discovered that the main themes arising in our work together at that point were: (a) building trust, (b) overcoming cultural differences, (c) maintaining a healthy balance between order and creative chaos, and (d) encouraging freedom of expression. I also found that (e) art-making was a great icebreaker between adolescents and adults; and that (f) my leadership style had become an issue, particularly with some of the Mentors.

### *Initiation Stage*

#### *The Ritual and Feast*

My field notes, written during the evening after the Girls' Rite of Passage, describe the energy surrounding this culmination of our work together.

*The magic day at last! Mentors had arrived in plenty of time to decorate and the room looked fantastic, hung with sarongs and other pretty, bright-colored fabrics. A friend had loaned me two 4' x 1 1/2' pieces of plywood, which we covered with a long white cloth to create a low barrier between the hallway and the main room. Those who had them brought candles in votive glasses, and we covered the windows with [Mentor]Redwood's and my Hawaiian palaus. Hers had a wonderful female dancer on it (which [Mentor]Firefly later, to general applause, tried to mimic!). Several of us brought drums, rattles, cymbals, and other instruments.*

The day of the Rite of Passage finally arrived. I was worried that some of the Girls would be late, or not come, or that Eagle would be stuck in detention again—but none of that happened. Instead, the Girls were all lined up at the door, whispering and giggling, within minutes of the three o'clock bell. Mentor Stone, wearing her collaged "Coyote" mask, marshaled them into the front room to find their masks, and Mentor Hortense gathered their challenge symbols (most of which were school books) and placed them on the barrier, between candles set at either end. While this was going on, the rest of



the Mentors beat a low, hypnotic cadence with drums and rattles, swaying as one to the ancient rhythms stirring our blood. I began by calling my mentee, Butterfly, to the barrier.

She approached, all nerves and embarrassment, and I asked her to state her challenge. She replied that it was math. I then encouraged her to symbolically overcome her challenge by jumping over the barrier. She stepped back to jump, thought better of it, and climbed over instead. On the other side, I took her hand, looked into her face, and said,

“You, who were a child, are a child no longer. Welcome to the Sisterhood, to the Circle of Women.”

As the other Girls began to cross over, I gave Butterfly the Mentor’s gift: a small compass and a laminated copy of her Medicine Card (see Medicine Cards, Appendix M), the Otter, on the back of which my husband had calligraphed the words that best represented her ally’s chief characteristics. (We had made these cards for each of the Girls.) As her Mentor, I blessed her:

“May you always know where you are, so that you may know where you must go. And may your guides go with you.”

As she crossed the barrier, each girl was met by her Mentor. I welcomed her to the Circle of Women, and the Mentor gave her mentee the gift of a compass and her Medicine Card with the Mentor’s blessing. Then the Girl joined the larger circle, taking up a drum or a rattle to join in beating out a rhythmic encouragement for the classmates who had not yet crossed.

When everyone had crossed the barrier, we cast our circle “hand to hand,” and the Girls (with much coaching, because it was too dark to read the script) called the Four Directions, and then they opened their gifts. This evoked considerable comparison of Medicine Cards and compasses, and many explanations, exclamations, and comments in Spanish, English, and the Girls’ special Spanish version of Pig Latin.

It was time for the “feast”—frosted cupcakes, strawberries, and apple juice. The Girls stormed the food table and carried their plates back to the circle while we talked about how they had experienced their Rite of Passage.

The most noteworthy aspect of this feedback process was that the Girls no longer seemed shy. Everyone talked—often at the same time—and Mentors were addressed as equals, rather than superiors. Clearly the Girls did feel themselves to be part of the Circle of Women. This was further confirmed when one of the Girls suggested a game of “Charades,” insisting that the Mentors act out themes as well; and we went through several hilarious versions of this game, with Girls teasing the Mentors as boldly as they did their classmates. The answers to questions like “What is a mammal?” “Does it live on land or in water?” “What does it eat?” “Is it wild or domestic?” “What is it—predator or prey?” evoked howls of laughter from everyone. The reproductive practices of whales and dolphins came under close scrutiny, the rhinoceros seemed to have developed an appetite for monkey, and one girl insisted that a weasel was a kind of cat. We were reassured, finally, to see Rose Crystal, no longer the outsider, lying on her stomach on a floor cushion while she nibbled at strawberries from a plate shared with Monarch.

White Owl and Cougar had mentioned the possibility that some of their family members might come, and I had hastily saved a plate of berries and several cupcakes

when I saw how voraciously the Girls attacked the food. Although they had been invited, Rose Crystal hadn't been sure that her family would come. I was surprised and touched when her parents and brother appeared with their own contribution to our feast: pizzas, cookies, and sparkling apple juice. The Girls wolfed this down, too, with mumbled thanks; then most of them disappeared into the front room, where they could be heard shrieking with laughter as they traded masks back and forth. Rose Crystal was left alone to introduce her family members, with some reserve, to the Mentors. Later, the Mentors quickly called the Girls into the circle, and the quarter callers dismissed the Four Directions. Then we opened the circle, said our goodbyes, and people began to drift away.

#### *Summary of Initiation Stage*

In summary, having completed the initiation stage of the study, I realized that the most important challenge that had existed for *all* participants, including myself as researcher, had been that of *trust*. Although trust was not at any point in the study a solid, unmoving bulwark, it *was* possible—not only to create a Rite of Passage for adolescent girls, but to build intercultural, intergenerational trust in the process. This was positively illustrated by the Girls' easy acceptance of the Mentors as equals after the Rite of Passage, when they had been welcomed into the "Circle of Women." It was less positively demonstrated by the dampening effect that the sudden appearance of Rose Crystal's parents had on the group—especially on Rose Crystal herself. These results are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

### *Incorporation Stage*

*Incorporation* is the term Turner uses to describe the stage in which the initiand is welcomed back into the community with the new understandings and powers gained through the initiatory process. It is the term I use here to designate the sharing of understandings and experiences that took place on our last day with the Girls.

#### *The Last Day*

The final day of our project had arrived. I was so busy preparing for it that there was no time to feel the sadness that waited beneath the surface. Since the Girls had been reluctant to use the “talking stick,” I borrowed two recorders and two microphones from the school library. I planned to put one mic on the altar and one over by the snack table. I gathered all the art supplies and brought them along as well, then picked up Mentor Swan and drove to the school. Mentor Redwood was there, and Mentor Emerald, and soon Mentor Firefly arrived with Rose Crystal. The remaining three Mentors were absent. (Stone was traveling; and I remembered that it was Solar Wind’s birthday. I hoped she’d told Monarch of her plans. The Program Director came in right after we had settled into our circle to tell us that Hortense had called the school to say she had a migraine.) All the Girls were there except for Cougar, whose 12-year-old cousin was having her baby that day.

I handed around copies of my three questions (Real Rite of Passage, Appendix L): “*What was the real rite of passage for you? What gift for yourself are you bringing back from this experience? What gift for your community are you bringing back from this experience?*” and asked each participant to consider them carefully before giving their answers. I asked these three questions because I had realized that for me, the initiatory

moments had been first when the Girls had requested that we return to the “old way” of casting the circle, and second when they had allowed us to join them in a game of Charades. I told them that their answers to this questionnaire could be written or made into a drawing, and passed out large sheets of drawing paper. The Girls all chose to make drawings. Mentor Firefly and I were able to get photos of most of them, and the Girls asked for copies. When I asked my three questions again after this process, the Girls were not only willing to answer them, but several (Butterfly, Air, and Monarch especially) were already able to report positive growth and change.

Butterfly’s gift to her community (family) was “my new self—the one my parents won’t have to come down here and talk to the teachers about.” Her gift to herself was her ally, Otter. The change she was able to report was that she’d been able to do math much more easily since the Rite of Passage.

Air, too, was having less trouble with school, and had been able to finish her homework every night. Rain was shy, and said nothing. Muffin was largely silent, as usual, but smiled a great deal. Monarch spoke more in the group than she had ever done previously, and shared that she probably would not graduate from 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but might repeat it at another school. The rest of the Girls expected to graduate, and I asked if they would like us to come to graduation. They thought that would be “awesome!” and I promised to ask the Program Director about it.

Too soon, it was time to end. I asked the Girls if they would continue to practice any of the things we had taught them. Would they meet together and support each other, honoring the Sisterhood of which they were now part? Air answered that they would probably keep calling the Four Directions, at least in private. She added that she wished

we could “keep doing this class,” and I said maybe we could, and maybe some of the older girls could help younger ones start a circle, now that they knew how. I said I would talk to the Program Director.

For the last time, and quickly, because White Owl’s parents were waiting, we gathered in the circle. The Girls dismissed the Four Directions. We looked at each other and the Girls began to gather their backpacks as Mentors called, “Be careful!” and “Have fun!” and “See you at Graduation!”

It was over. I drove home, tired but hopeful that this one “small thing done with great love” would bear fruit.

#### *Summary of Incorporation Stage*

The final stage of the study, incorporation, is ongoing. So far it has yielded the knowledge that in spite of my misgivings about rapidly changing plans and the ability of Mentors and Girls to work together, the Girls had emerged from the process with something they could use. They were able, as a result of our work together, to report positive change in three areas: school, home, and their sense of themselves. In school, several girls reported improvement in the ability to study effectively (Air, Butterfly, and Rain). At home, two of the girls (Butterfly, Muffin) mentioned wanting their families to be proud of them. All the girls demonstrated having arrived at a more mature sense of themselves, both in their ability to articulate their experience of the Rite of Passage and in their ability to deal with disappointments. (For example, White Owl had had to accept responsibility for two younger siblings during our last meeting; Monarch had learned that she would not graduate; and Cougar, whose cousin was giving birth to her first baby, had been unable to join us for the final meeting.)

### *Summary of Findings of the Study*

Here I present a summary of the findings of this study, under the headings of the four stages which seemed best to describe the work we did with the girls.

#### *Preparation/Separation*

Adult participants (Wise Elders, Mentors) were motivated by feelings of empathy for adolescent girls. Themes expressed by Wise Elders included relevance of a ritual to the young person's life; intimate connection with the Earth as Sacred; the need to recognize, acknowledge, and confront one's major life challenge; the importance of art (the masks and drawings) as both symbol and agent of change; and the need to be recognized and appreciated for who one really is, rather than merely as the representative of a role assigned by one's parents or the larger community. Themes expressed by Mentors included respect and acceptance of self and others, compassion for self and others, safety, self-knowledge, authenticity, sisterhood, feminine power, and creative play.

Schools and other organizations, such as church youth groups, were the best source of adolescent participants; and teachers, youth directors, or program directors in such organizations proved to be the best judges of which adolescents might benefit from the experience. I found that, among the adolescents chosen by these administrators, those who were facing various life challenges, such as difficulty at school or at home, were considered the most likely candidates for such a project. Even after school administrators had chosen adolescent participants for the study, there was some attrition. This was true not only for the four adolescents who were withdrawn by the school administration, but for three of the Mentors as well.

### *Liminality*

The main issues arising in our work together at that point were: building trust, overcoming cultural differences, maintaining a healthy balance between order and creative chaos, and encouraging freedom of expression. I also found that art-making was a great icebreaker between adolescents and adults; and that my leadership style had become an issue, particularly with some of the Mentors.

### *Initiation*

The most important challenge that had existed for *all* participants, including myself as researcher, had been that of *trust*. Apparently, although trust was not at any point in the study a solid, unmoving bulwark, it *was* possible—not only to create a Rite of Passage for adolescent girls, but to build intercultural, intergenerational trust in the process.

### *Incorporation*

At the final meeting, I gave each Mentor a questionnaire (Mentors' Post-Rite Questionnaire, Appendix O) asking two questions:

- (a) What most clearly expresses your sense of each of the 7 sessions? What stood out for you? What worked? What did not work?
- (b) What most clearly expresses your sense of our ritual creation process, in general? Time spent with other mentors? Time spent with the Girls? What stood out for you? What worked? What did not work?

The Mentors' answers to this questionnaire illustrate five themes that arose during my intuitive analysis of the results. These were: (a) leadership; (b) chaos/order; (c) challenge; (d) empowerment; and (e) helping/harming. These themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.



Redwood responded to both questions holistically. Her answers to the first question did not focus on any particular theme.

*I was happy to see so many Girls deciding to stay for the whole thing. And impressed with their feedback.*

*I think they really liked calling in the directions and they obviously talked with their relatives at home since we heard about the grandfather who said to take off our shoes to be even closer to the earth. Also they really liked making the circle through holding hands.*

*The allies and maskmaking were very important and went well. Also the ritual names was a wonderful way for them to step out of their normal everyday personal. Journey was a new experience for them.*

*Identifying the challenges was very important as well.*

*The gifts chosen I think were meaningful to the Girls and they all brought something to jump over which was significant.*

*The recap was important.*

*The food and water was very important to have each time.*

Emerald's response to the first question focused on the themes of *hierarchy* and *empowerment*

*Valentine, I appreciated your gentleness with the young women as well as your feeling that we were not there to discipline the Girls into participating or being silent, etc . . . . The ritual container was also key as the young women really got into creating that through the directions and the elements . . .*

*Session 2: The journeying worked, the young women seemed to get into it and have much to share afterward . . . . I thought you did an excellent job . . . of "normalizing" the process. I think it is so exciting that the seeds of this kind of work have been planted in the young women's experience.*

*Session 4: I thought this [maskmaking] was a great activity for the young women . . . a great way to integrate their allies and power animals into their experience . . . It felt like watching a magical transformation happen before me . . . I think the choosing of ritual names was also a good idea and went over well . . . it took me out of my "normal" life and put me in a space that was unique to this particular experience . . . . It also took away any hierarchy (not that there was much hierarchy, except for the one already socially imposed by our age difference) . . . because we were all starting from our collective experience together to find a new name for ourselves.*

Stone's responses to the first question focus on the theme of *chaos/order*.

*Sessions 1 & 2: chaos, bad feelings, cell phone issues, detention issues . . . .*

*General noisy, mentees talked and sat together, spoke in Spanish which disrespected us.*

Stone's response to the second question focuses on the theme of *leadership*.

*I felt that the leadership was erratic and uneven—that the leader could have done much more to step up to the plate; at times when she chose to let it flow and disintegrate, and that she was autocratic, sometimes hostile, just when she could have been more sensitive, mindful, and mellow.*

Solar Wind's response to the first question also conveys her dissatisfaction with the *leadership*.

*I really like the two shamanic journeys we did. They meant a lot to me. I really think that the session (sic) were too unorganized. I was really frustrated with the lack of leadership. We saw it since the matching of mentor/mentee. I agree that teenage Girls need to find their way, their voice. But they need leadership, and the lack of it just makes things more confusing.*

In answer to the second question she refers indirectly to *chaos/order*.

*Unfortunately I saw no clear way in our sessions. I come from a culture where nothing is plan (sic). I know you planed (sic) the sessions but we really did not follow the outlines many times. As I said I enjoy the actual rituals, the shamanic journey but I was a bit frustrated.*

Firefly's answer to the first question also illustrates the theme of *chaos/order*.

*Session 1: I remember it being a little bit confusing that day . . . The Girls . . . were so chatty that we didn't have a lot of control over the group . . . I think it was a fun mystery to us all—to start the circle rituals, and I liked meeting the 2 mentee's (sic) I ended up aligned w/for a while . . . My original Mentee was confused, nor introduced . . . as another girl in the same age groups as the others that was just from another school. Even on the last day, people—mentee's (sic)—thought she was one of the mentors.*

Swan's response to the first question shows the extent of her empathic involvement with her mentees. Here she addresses the themes of *chaos/order* and *helping/harming*.

*Session 1: We didn't have too much structure this session, which made it hard to create a sense of sacred space . . . My first chance to talk with my mentees one-on-one was challenging. One of the Girls talked a lot, while the other was very quiet . . . I wondered how the Girls felt about a group of mostly Caucasian women coming in to facilitate a ritual for them—would they feel seen? Would the ritual be personally relevant for them? What about their religious beliefs—would*

*they be compatible with the ritual? What would their parents think about what we were doing?*

*Session 2: The exercise kept the Girls busy and gave them a chance to experience having an ally to ask for help when they need it. Muffin didn't like the ally card she picked—Skunk. During her journey, she didn't experience any imagery, so I think she felt a bit left out. She drew a picture of a desert island . . .*

Here Swan addresses the theme of *empowerment*.

*Session 4: The maskmaking was a lot of fun for everyone, I think. I remember Air saying that she wanted to make masks every week. Muffin still didn't like her ally, Skunk, but ended up making a mask anyway with some encouragement. She loved the result.*

*Session 5: I remember making a decision before this session that I was going to let go of any expectations for how I wanted it to go. I was aware...that Muffin may not share very much, but I accepted it without trying to make the experience any different for her. What happened when we actually broke off into small groups really surprised me—she had lots to say about her challenges and goals, and the conversation went very smoothly . . . for me, this session was probably the highlight of the entire mentoring experience . . . I think the smaller context for sharing really worked for my mentees, who tend to be more introverted and shy about sharing in front of the larger group.*

Here she refers to the theme of *hierarchy*.

*Session 6: The ritual itself is what stands out most for me—the fun we had decorating the space before the Girls came in, the process of witnessing each one cross the threshold, and the joy of welcoming them on the other side. It was a moving, beautiful experience. The charades afterwards were a great way to celebrate and let the Girls take the lead in an activity. It felt to me like all of us—Girls and mentors—came together as a group of women.*

I wished to include Hortense's responses to the questionnaire as well, but she had not returned them at the time of this writing. She did, however, attend the Mentor's lunch and was happy to report that she is continuing her relationship with her mentee, Rain, who is hoping to become a scientist like Hortense.

Girls emerged from the process with something they could use. They were able, as a result of our work together, to report positive change in three areas: school, home, and their sense of themselves. Mentors reported enhanced feelings of satisfaction with

themselves and their relationships, in terms of generativity with the Girls, and in terms of sisterhood with each other. These and all results are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

### *The Girls' Portraits*

This section introduces each Girl (using her ritual name) with a brief synopsis of her demographic information and a “portrait” of her mask, and where available, her final drawing. One of the Girls did not finish her mask, and one did not complete her mask or her final drawing.



*Figure 5. Air's Mask*

Air is 13 years old, of Hispanic heritage. She comes from a working class family and has 2 siblings, a younger sister and younger brother. Her father works in construction, and her mother stays home. Her family's religious preference is Catholic.

Air's ally is Frog. She acquired this ally during the first shamanic journey, and hopes that Frog's cheery voice will help her to speak up, especially to boys. She also wants to do better in social studies. As a symbol of her major challenges Air brought a microphone to place on the barrier for the Rite of Passage.

Air's mentor was Swan. Her wish for Air was "*she will feel free to express her thoughts and feelings about coming of age, and what it means to her to become a woman.*" Swan noticed that Air was very moved after the Rite of Passage.

Her mask is a Frog mask (Figure 5), and her final drawing (Figure 6) illustrates her experience of the ritual process.







Figure 7. Cougar Working on her Mask

Cougar is 13 years old, of Latino heritage. She comes from a working class family and has 2 siblings, an older brother and a little sister. Her father is an arborist (tree cutter), and her mother sells sporting clothes. Her family's religious preference is Catholic.

Cougar's ally is Mountain Lion. She acquired this ally through the Medicine Cards, and hopes that Cougar will lend her courage and help her to become a good leader.

Cougar's mentor was originally Firefly. After the change, Stone and Redwood became her mentors. Their wish for Cougar was *"that she learns about herself, finds safe adults, and experiences happiness."*

Her mask is a cougar mask (Figure 7). She was unable to attend the final meeting, and therefore could not illustrate her experience of the ritual process.



*Figure 8. Monarch's Mask*

Monarch is 14 years old, of Latino heritage. She comes from a working class family and has 3 siblings, 2 older brothers and a younger brother. Her father does not live with the family, and her mother does house cleaning. Her family's religious preference is Catholic.

Monarch's ally is Eagle. She acquired her ally through the Medicine Cards, and was relying on Eagle's overview to help her pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade. After the Ritual, Monarch related that she would not pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade but would probably repeat it in another school. During the school's Graduation Ceremony, she said that she was going to stay at that school after all, and would be interested in helping to create a circle for other young girls.

Monarch's mentor was Solar Wind. Her wish for Monarch was "*that she sees the power of women's circles and ritual.*"

Her mask is a feathered eagle mask (Figure 8), and her final drawing (Figure 9) illustrates her experience of the ritual process.



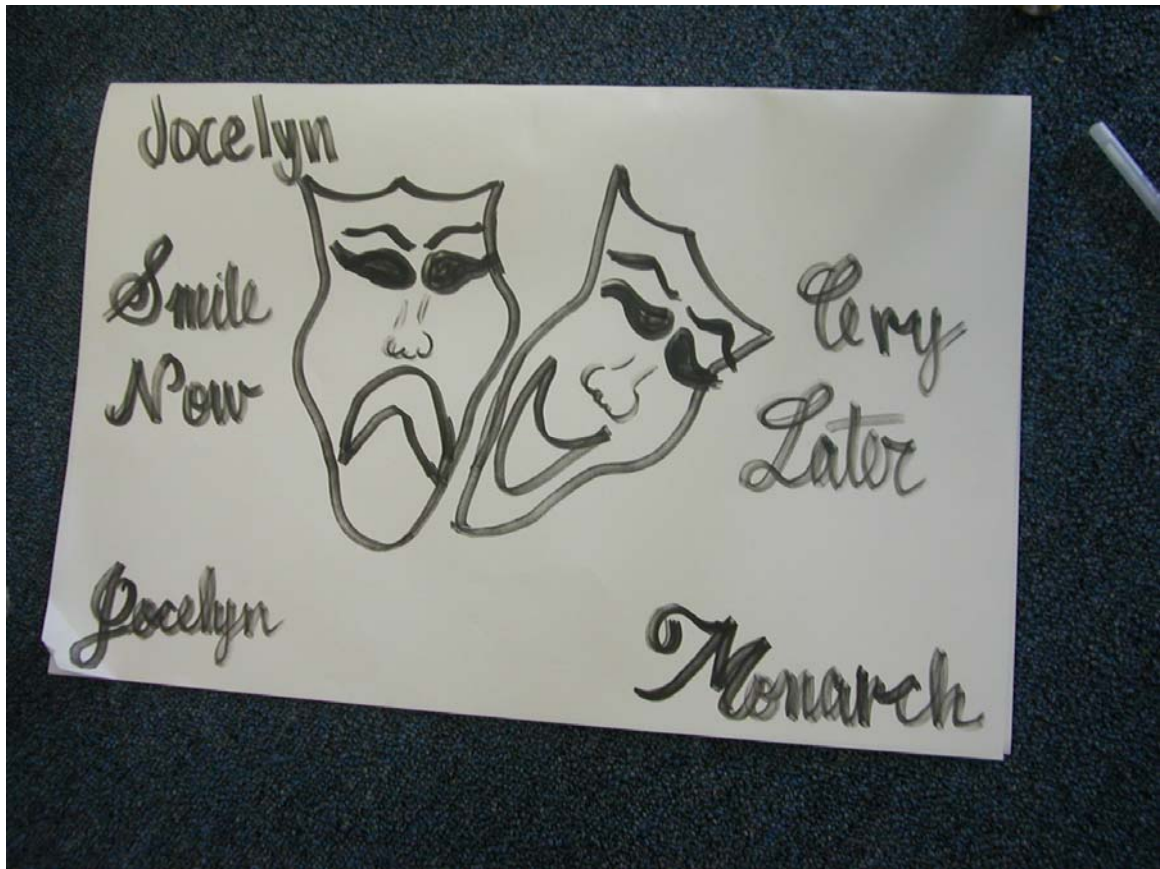


Figure 9. Monarch's Final Drawing



Figure 10. Rain's Mask

Rain is 13 years old, of Mexican heritage. She comes from a working class family and moved to the Bay Area from Mexico only three years ago. Her family's religious preference is Catholic.

Rain's ally is Spider. She acquired this ally through the Medicine Cards, and hopes that Spider will help her weave a career as a scientist. Her challenge was shyness, and difficulty in becoming familiar with English. At the Graduation Ceremony, however, Rain was chosen to be the valedictorian for her class.

Rain's mentor was Hortense, who is a scientist herself. Her wish for Rain was *"that she will feel empowered as a young woman in a society that does not foster empowerment in females."* Hortense and Rain are continuing their mentor/mentee relationship.

Her mask is a Spider mask (Figure 10), and her final drawing (Figure 11) illustrates her experience of the ritual process.



Figure 11. Rain's Final Drawing



Figure 12. Rose Crystal's Mask

Rose Crystal is 14 years old, of Anglo and Mexican heritage, although she looks and identifies as Anglo. Her family is middle class. She has two older brothers, one still living at home. Her father works in technology, and her mother is studying at a nearby college. Her religious preference is non-denominational. She is extremely interested in art and is thinking of attending an art school after she graduates from high school.

Rose Crystal's ally is Cat. She acquired this ally during the first shamanic journey, and although Lion came to her during the second journey, she blended them both into the one feline being. Her main challenges are gaining her parents' trust and dealing with boys. In the following segment, she has recently broken up with her boyfriend and recounts her ally's advice to her:

*...the lion came up to me. And kinda just comforted me, 'cause I wasn't feeling that great there. And... my cat, actually my pet cat, came up and laid with me on the bed. So I kinda had two guides in this."*

*...And they said that it would like take patience and it would be kind of gradual but if I worked towards it, it would happen."*

*[My challenge is]... I'm kinda working on getting over my boyfriend and getting my parents to trust me, so I can kinda do some of the stuff...I want to do by myself—'cause the trust level with them isn't all that great."*



Rose Crystal's mentor was Firefly. Firefly was Rose Crystal's original choice as a mentor, and is a friend of the family. Her wish for Rose Crystal was *"For her to learn to love herself and family as they are. To reach outside her frustrations and more globally be aware and accepting. To have fun and be true to herself."*

After the Ritual, Rose Crystal told Firefly that "she had inspired her." Her mask is a Cat Mask (Figure 12), and her final drawing (Figure 13) illustrates some of the influences and pressures she is currently experiencing in her life.

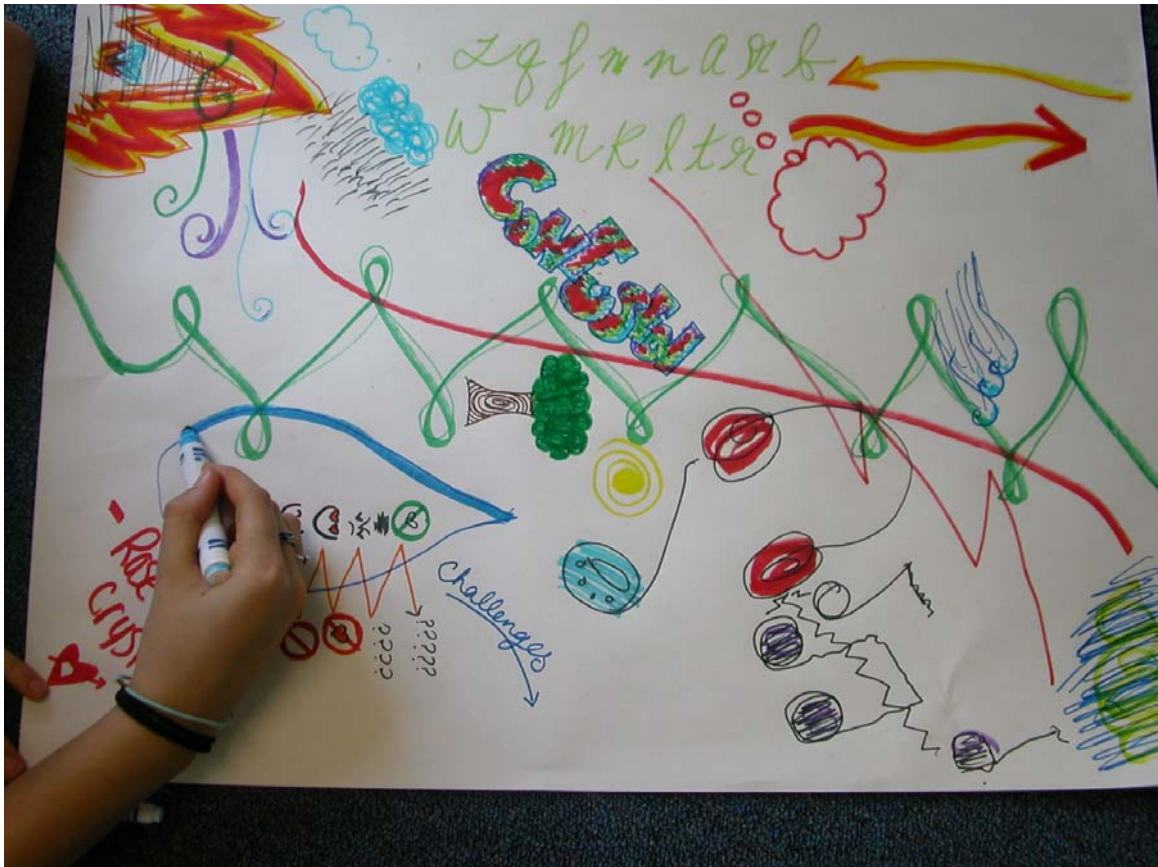


Figure 13. Rose Crystal's Final Drawing



Figure 14. Butterfly's Mask

Butterfly is 14 years old, of Hispanic/Latino heritage. She comes from a working class family and has 2 younger brothers. Her stepfather is a driver, and her mother works in a restaurant. Her family's religious preference is Catholic. She enjoys dancing and would like to take classes in hip hop.

Butterfly's ally is Otter. She acquired this ally through the Medicine Cards, and wants playful Otter to help her brighten her life. Her main challenge is school—especially math. After the Ritual, Butterfly shared:

*After I jumped the barrier—and met my challenge—I could do my math homework! My gift to myself is my ally [Otter]. And my gift to my community—my family—is myself—only better. Now they won't have to come to school and talk to the teachers so much anymore.*

At the Graduation Ceremony, Butterfly was chosen as “Most Improved Female Student.”

Butterfly's mentor was Coyote. Her wish for Butterfly was “*to encourage her to follow her dream, and to help her find means to pursue it. To enable her to see the difficulty she is having in school as something she can overcome more easily, if she works when she has to work and then allows herself to dance and play.*”

Her mask is a Butterfly mask (Figure 14), and her final drawing, co-created with White Owl (Figure 15), illustrates her experience of the ritual process.



Figure 15. Butterfly's Final Drawing



Figure 16. Eagle's Mask

Eagle is 14 years old, of Mexican heritage. She comes from a working class family and has 4 siblings: one older sister, 2 younger brothers, and a younger sister. Her father works in construction, and her mother works at a cleaners. Her family's religious preference is Catholic.

Eagle's ally is Eagle. She acquired this ally through the Medicine Cards, and hopes that Eagle's overview of the situation will help her stay out of trouble. She is a natural leader and very sociable, which is her main challenge. After the Ritual, Eagle shared that for her the most important part of the ritual process was

*"when we jumped over our challenge. It felt good. I think that I will continue to do the directions. My gift for others? I am taking my ally with me!"*

Eagle's first mentor was Firefly. After the change, Redwood and Stone became her mentors. Their wish for Eagle was *"that she learns about herself, finds safe adults, and experiences happiness."* Her mask is an Eagle mask (Figure 16), and her final drawing (Figure 17) illustrates her experience of the ritual process.



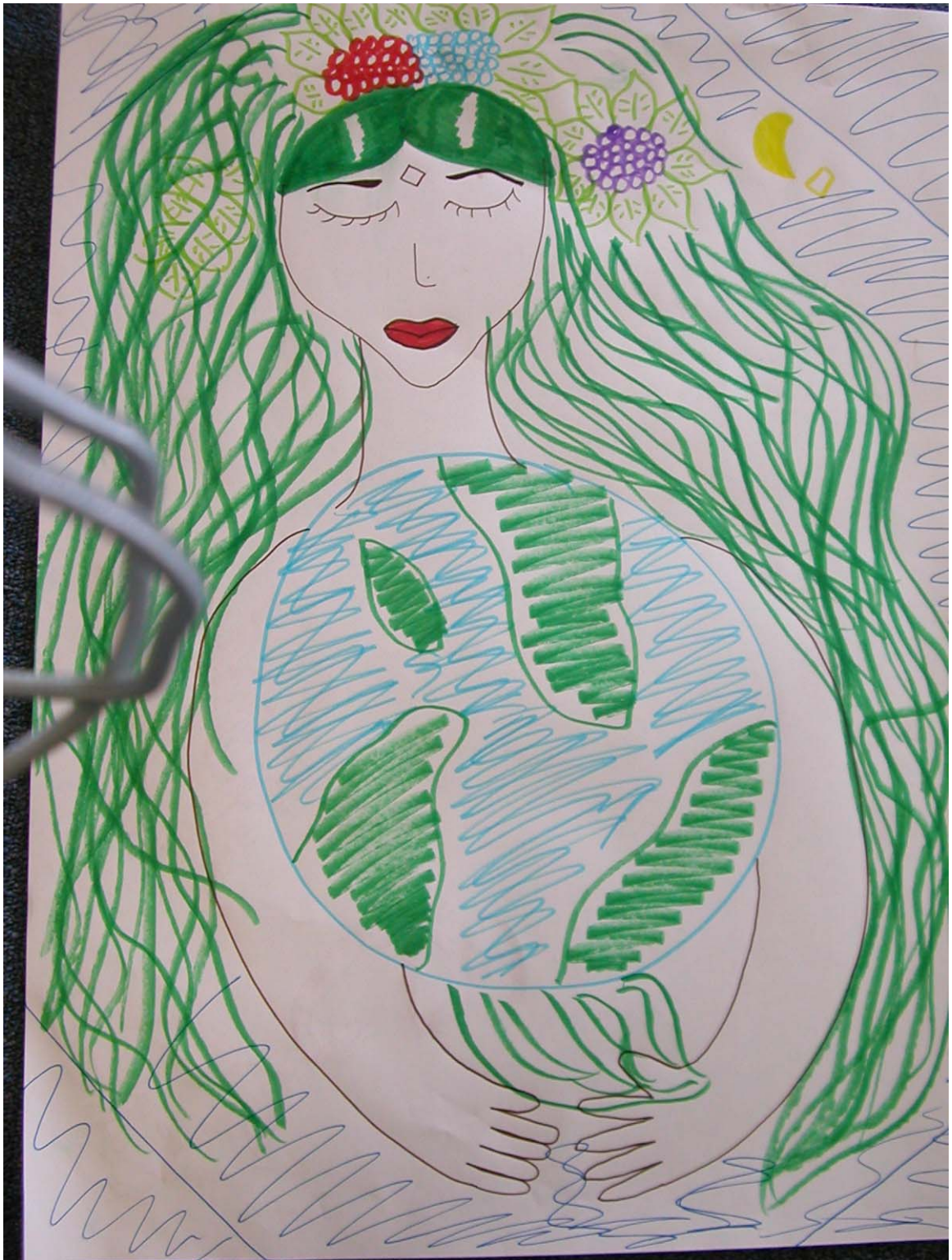


Figure 17. Eagle's Final Drawing



Figure 18. Muffin's Mask

Muffin is 14 years old, of Hispanic heritage. She comes from a blended family and has 6 older stepsiblings, 2 younger stepsisters, 1 younger brother and 2 younger half brothers. Her father is currently unemployed and her stepmother stays home. Her family's religious preference is Catholic.

Muffin's ally is Skunk. At first she didn't like having Skunk as an ally. Now though, she will depend on Skunk to help her overcome shyness by building self-esteem and a good reputation. She wanted to do better in language arts, and to know how to say goodbye to her dying grandmother. Muffin brought her language arts textbook to place on the barrier for the Rite of Passage. She wanted to bring more courage into her life as a result of the ritual.

Muffin's mentor was Swan. Her wish for Muffin was "*a meaningful experience that will help her feel good about herself and her stage in life, and her future possibilities. I hope she will feel safe, heard, and respected in a way that will help her to develop compassion for herself.*"

Her mask is a Skunk mask (Figure 18), and her final drawing (Figure 19) illustrates her experience of the ritual process.



Figure 19. Muffin's Final Drawing



White Owl is 13 years old, of Hispanic/Latino/Native American heritage. She comes from a working class family, and has a little brother and several cousins. Her grandfather is Native American. Her family's religious preference is Catholic.

White Owl's ally is Owl. Owl came to her during the second shamanic journey, and she will rely on Owl's wisdom to help her pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

White Owl's mentor was Emerald. Her wish for White Owl was that she learn to enjoy being creative.

White Owl did not finish her mask, but her final drawing, co-created with Butterfly (Figure 20), illustrates her experience of the ritual process.



Figure 20. White Owl's Final Drawing

## Chapter 5: Discussion

*A bit of advice given to a young Native American at the time of his initiation: “As you go the way of life, you will see a great chasm. Jump. It is not as wide as you think.”*

—Joseph Campbell (1991, p. 107)

### *Introduction*

#### *Summary of Research Findings*

This was a qualitative blended study, using elements of organic inquiry, participatory research, feminist research, and heuristic research, which explored the process of creating ritual with adolescent girls and their mentors. The research question was, *What is participants’ experience of creating and enacting a mentored Earth-based Rite of Passage with adolescent girls who are facing life challenges in a multicultural context?* The study focused on the experience of immersing a culturally diverse group of scholastically challenged girls and their adult female mentors in a process of co-creating a girls’ Rite of Passage, modeled after Earth-based or indigenous rituals. I chose all female co-researchers for two reasons. According to Gilligan (1982, 1991, 1993) and Pipher (1994, 1996), girls are in need of processes that will help them to acknowledge and reclaim their feminine power. In Western society, boys and men are still at the top of the social, political, and financial pyramid. Furthermore, while this is not the place to discuss, in full, the subject of the patriarchy, women are feeling increased urgency to heal the patriarchal wounds—both spiritual and physical—that have been inflicted on the feminine and on the planet. (Christ, 1979; Adler, 1979; Warren, 2000; Eisler, 2005) I hoped to contribute to this healing work through creating a Rite of Passage with the young participants in this study.

Interestingly, in the process of chronicling a girls' rite of passage, the project itself became one. The Rite of Passage—indeed, the entire research project—followed Turner's (1969) four stages of initiatory processes: preparation/separation, liminality, initiation, and incorporation.

Results showed that adult co-researchers (5 Wise Elders and 8 Mentors) were motivated to participate in the study by feelings of empathy for adolescent girls in general, and particularly for the 9 girls in this study, who would be undergoing the Rite of Passage. Schools and other organizations, such as church youth groups, proved to be the best sources of adolescent participants; and teachers, youth directors, or program directors of such organizations were the best judges of which adolescents might benefit from the experience. Adolescents who were facing various life challenges, such as difficulty at school or at home, proved to be the most likely candidates for such a project.

Results further showed that building trust between Mentors and Girls was the first challenge facing us in this project. We eventually established a foundation of mutual trust by finding ways of addressing cultural and generational differences—differences that in themselves constituted the second challenge. Encouraging the Girls' freedom of expression through sharing with their mentors and artmaking were the main methods used to overcome this challenge; however, this contributed to a third challenge: maintaining a balance between order and *creative chaos*. My preference for creative chaos then brought about the fourth challenge, differences of opinion among Mentors on appropriate leadership styles

(Mindell, 1992). I discuss leadership styles more thoroughly under Researcher's Personal Reflections.

Despite these challenges, however, at the end of the study the Girls were able to report positive change in three areas: relationships and performance in school, relationships at home, and their sense of themselves. Several of the Girls reported improvement in the ability to study effectively. Girls also mentioned feeling happy that, since both their behavioral and academic performance at school had improved, their families would be proud of them. All the Girls demonstrated having arrived at a more mature sense of themselves, both in their ability to articulate their experience of the Rite of Passage and other aspects of the study, and in their ability to deal with changes of plan and other disappointments.

These findings suggest that mentored, Earth-based rites of passage *can* be beneficial to some adolescent girls. The Rite of Passage enabled the Girls in this study to experience enhanced feelings of self-esteem; a sense of sisterhood (the feeling of belonging to a supportive community of women); greater understanding of themselves and others; expanded ability to learn and benefit from new experiences; and improvement in self-control, motivation, and goal attainment. These findings are commensurate with Roesl's (1993) findings in his study of a young Navajo girl's coming-of-age ceremony, or Kinaalda. It is also validated by the work of Hutter (1999), who found, in her study of young adults participating in a wilderness rite of passage, that rites of passage can support young people facing issues of transition into adulthood, as well as help to change this culture's negative perception of young people to one which encourages them to discover and share their personal and collective wisdom.

Although I did not learn of it until the school's graduation ceremony, two Girls in particular emerged from the study on a positive note: Butterfly was voted the "most

improved” female student in the school, and Rain was chosen to be the valedictorian for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. Such intergenerational work may have benefited the adult participants, also. The Mentors in this study reported feeling more validation of important life experiences; the satisfaction of fulfilling the innate drive for generativity; and, for some, a sense of sisterhood with other mentors. Mentor Hortense and her mentee, Rain, have chosen to continue their relationship—an outcome that illustrates one of the benefits for both mentors and mentees of such an intensely focused project.

A most interesting (and unexpected) outcome of this study was how the difference in Anglo and Latino cultural viewpoints affected such issues as building trust, gaining cooperation of group members, and arriving at consensus regarding what was to be done and how to do it. (“Culture,” as used in this case, refers not simply to race or the heritage of one’s country of origin but also to one’s religious beliefs and practices; relationships to family and non-family members; sexual beliefs and sex role practices; social customs at home, school, and work; language; career expectations; and a host of other aspects of one’s life.) Since each of these aspects of culture arose during our interaction with the Girls, I will focus the discussion around the difference between Anglo and Latino cultural viewpoints as listed above, and how it played out in this research study.

#### *Mentor/mentee Matching*

The system of pairing mentors and mentees using colored beads did not work. More time was required for ice-breaking before attempting this process, not only because we were new to each other, but also because of the noticeable difference between the largely Latina group of adolescents and the group of mostly Anglo mentors. Gore (1992) and Sue & Sue (2003) address these differences in some detail. [See Chapter 2: Literature



Review.] Gore cautions against assuming that as members of the dominant culture we may be able to help sub-members, and warns that sub-members may not perceive our efforts as helpful. Indeed, they may consider such efforts harmful.

### *First Shamanic Journey*

Issues around how participants valued the research project arose. Seven girls missed this meeting—some because of the school’s program and others for personal reasons. One of the mentors insisted on conducting business conversations on her cell phone during the meeting; and another mentor inadvertently broke confidentiality by publishing pictures of participants on her web site. Clearly defined and written instructions—what was expected at each session from girls and mentors—were needed. It became clear that attrition in such a project with adolescents can be expected to be higher than with adults.

### *Second Shamanic Journey*

Specific cultural differences began to emerge. White Owl’s grandfather’s beliefs about owls colored her experience of the shamanic journey, and many of the girls were leery of using the digital recorder. Diller (1999) notes that cultural differences dictate how individuals receive new information. In the Hispanic culture, for example, women are taught to be quiet and much less forthcoming than are men, which may partially explain the Girls’ reluctance to be recorded on my “talking stick” or digital voice recorder. Also, some Native Americans, White Owl reminded us, consider owls to be omens of misfortune rather than helpful allies, and many Native Americans appear to be suspicious of such modern tools as cameras and tape recorders. In spite of these initial

reservations, however, both girls and mentors appeared to enjoy the process. [See participants' comments in Chapter 4.]

### *Mask-making*

Art proved to be a great icebreaker. In many ways, the masks were reminiscent of Turners' *sacra*—the symbolic ritual objects shown to initiates during the initiatory process, whose purpose is to “unite the organic with the sociomoral order, proclaiming their ultimate religious unity, over and above conflicts between and within these orders” (Turner, 1969, p. 52). [italics mine] According to Turner, a mask also serves not only to provide a degree of anonymity but also to symbolically protect its wearer with the power of the animal or spirit represented by the mask.

The mask-making exercise overrode the cultural and generational differences, and both girls and mentors seemed to enjoy choosing ritual names, some of which were those of the animals represented by the masks. However, the girls balked at inviting their families to the Post-Rite Feast. At that point, I asked myself why. Did they fear that the strong contrast between their families' practice of Catholicism and the Earth-based rituals in which we were engaged (casting a circle, calling the Four Directions, using divination in the form of the Medicine Cards, the shamanic journey, and the Rite of Passage itself) would seem threatening to their parents? Was it perhaps the challenge of having to explain what was going on to their largely Spanish-speaking parents? Or were they simply embarrassed, as teenage girls often are, at being seen with their parents? When asked, the Program Director had no explanation of this behavior. In religious terms, however, Sue & Sue (2003) emphasize the power wielded by the Catholic Church over the lives of Hispanic and Latino parishioners. In psychological terms, Rebecca Ford

(2006) found that the relationship between acculturation and the mental health of Latino youth is still enigmatic for researchers. Her survey of 160 Latino adolescents (ages 10-19) did not yield the information she sought; in fact results indicated that summary scores and group classifications are inept research tools in these circumstances. However, Ford noted that their proficiency in English, and their perception that they were not being discriminated against, increased young Latinos' sense of psychological well-being.

### *Challenges*

The one-on-one sessions were successful; Mentors working individually with their mentees were able to get the Girls to talk about their challenges and begin to look at ways of overcoming them. The group sessions, in which three Mentors met with three Girls in a larger group, were less successful in this respect. [See Mentors' Feedback on Researcher's Personal Reflections.]

### *Initiation*

The girls experienced the actual Rite of Passage as positive. However, cultural and/or generational influences may have been responsible for the Latina girls' disappearance into the front room at the arrival of Rose Crystal's parents. I also noted both cultural and generational influences in the comments of some mentors in the Mentors' Post-Ritual Questionnaire (Appendix O).

### *Incorporation*

This process, which had only just begun by the end of the study, seemed to be proceeding fairly smoothly for Mentors and Girls. A longitudinal study would provide more accurate information on the successful incorporation of a rite of passage and all its attendant teachings. According to some of the mentors' comments, however, Earth-based

rituals and rites of passage *are* beneficial to both adolescent girls and their mentors. [See Mentors' Comments on Researcher's Personal Reflections.]

My own incorporation process will take time. Even now I am surprised at the revelations that emerge as I reread my journals, our emails, the notes and questionnaires from the participants, and the Mentors' final reflections.

The consensus of several of the Mentors, as expressed in their final reflections [Mentors' Post-Rite Questionnaire, Appendix O] was that there was "not enough leadership." At first I thought I had failed miserably to achieve anything even approaching what I'd hoped for. However, as I continued to read their final reflections, I noticed that the least critical Mentors were also those who had contributed the most value to our joint effort. These women had consistently offered creative suggestions both during the seven weeks of the ritual creation process and in their final reflections. They suggested helpful ideas for future projects, as well. Their comments were phrased in more all-inclusive terms than those of the Mentors who had participated sporadically or half-heartedly. Their suggestions made it easier to accept their criticism.

There are many interpretations of appropriate leadership. Native Americans, for example, tend to make decisions consensually—or they used to. Most tribes were governed by a leader or chief, but, in council, that role could shift from one speaker to another—which was the reason for use of the "talking stick" (Silent Wolf, 2006, retrieved from website). Council members would pass a feathered and decorated stick from person to person. Whoever held the stick had the floor. I do not know how it is in tribal councils now, especially with so many young Native Americans, many of whom are fairly well assimilated into Anglo society. I hear, from friends in northern New Mexico pueblos, that

council meetings can be fairly contentious. In the old days, however, all present were allowed to speak their piece without interruption, including and—among the matrilineal Haudenosaunee (Iroquois)—*especially* the women. Women were the *sachems*, or leaders, of the Iroquois nation, and men only their representatives in dealing with outsiders (Roesch Wagner, 2000).

This kind of interaction was what I had in mind when I began work with the seven women and nine adolescents who were my co-researchers. I have found that, in most cases, although it takes longer and there is often some confusion, the consensus process works better in the long run than what one of the Mentors referred to as a leader's "autocratic decision making," because if everyone eventually agrees, there are no dissidents to surreptitiously oppose a majority vote. However, the process of arriving at consensus can indeed appear chaotic. If some Mentors perceived a lack of leadership, then, perhaps it lay not so much in my style of leading as in my failure to clearly explain the meaning, as I saw it, of the concept of *co-creation*.

Interestingly, however, educator and researcher Jennifer Gore (1992), quoting Kathryn Pauly Morgan (1987), clearly states:

If the feminist teacher actively assumes any of the forms of power available to her...she eliminates the possibility of educational democracy in the feminist classroom; *if she dispenses with these in the name of preserving democracy, she suffers personal alienation, fails to function as a role model, and abandons the politically significant role of woman authority.* (Gore, p. 335) [italics mine]

Certainly Pauly Morgan's worst-case scenario was not my intention in urging an equality-based method of working with the Girls; however, it is what occurred as a result of that decision.

### *Limitations and Delimitations of the Study*

It is important to note that all participants in this study were California residents, which may have been a factor in determining the results. Also, such a study is not generalizable to all populations of adolescent girls, nor is it intended to be replicated, according to the tenets of organic research. A study of this nature, given its use of organic and participatory methods, tends to create something more than the sum of its parts—an earmark of transpersonal work.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

This study had a number of limitations, among them (a) cultural influences; (b) environmental influences; and (c) personal limitations of the researcher. Cultural influences can be many things; here they are limited to participants' differences in age, religion, language, and social customs or lifeways. Environmental influences include both the emotional ground, expressed and unexpressed, and the physical location, of a gathering of people. Arnold Mindell (1992) refers to these two influences as “timespirits” and “spacespirits.” My personal limitations included my own cultural assumptions and failure to plan for the unexpected. Each of these limitations will be discussed fully, because each sheds important information on the process of working interculturally with ritual and adolescents.

#### *Cultural influences.*

Before detailing this experience, it is important to note that by “culture” I mean not only those characteristics by which we commonly define ourselves, as listed above, but also such characteristics as political affiliation (liberal, moderate or conservative), power differentials (adolescent/adult), personality traits (introverted, extroverted, fearful,

brave, etc.), and occupation. In short, “culture” means everything by which, in the four cultures represented in this study, participants defined themselves. Finally, to honor the terms that the study participants used, I substitute the word “Anglo” for the more formal “Caucasian.”

*Religious affiliation.*

In order to understand the powerful effect of religious differences, it is useful to remember that all of the Wise Elders who were my initial advisors in this project were not only Anglo but Pagan, as well. While the Bay Area Pagan community is comprised of people of diverse races, cultural backgrounds, political and sexual persuasions, interests, and means of self-expression, most of the Pagans I know are White, middle-class, and have “day jobs” in a variety of fields, including the legal, financial, academic, health, and other service professions. In addition, most of my Pagan friends are Witches.

The primary religious affiliation of the Latinas in this study was reported as Catholic. None of the Mentors professed any specific religion, and all said, during the initial interviews, that they were comfortable with the idea of Earth-based ritual. However, only two or three of them showed familiarity with such rituals, and the rest, although cooperative, were not as well-versed in the protocols. Therefore, while there is no proof that the differences in participants’ religious practices contributed to some of the “creative chaos” referred to, it is possible, based on my observation of the demographic spread of this study.

*Language.*

All participants spoke English. However, the Latina Girls spoke Spanish to each other and had also constructed a Spanish version of “Pig Latin,” the old secret language

of childhood which removes the first consonant and reattaches it, followed by the suffix “ay,” to each vowel, as follows: *Ou-yay eed-nay o-tay ead-ray ore-may ooks-bay* (*you need to read more books*). This practice amused some of us, but a few of the Mentors were insulted and felt that the Girls were “disrespecting” us. Requests that everyone speak English for courtesy’s sake were often ignored; however, it’s only fair to say that, after the Rite of Passage, the Girls were less inclined to separate themselves from the Mentors in this fashion. Interestingly, the Latina Mentor, Solar Wind, did speak Spanish almost exclusively during interactions with her mentee—a fact that I interpreted as an attempt to establish rapport rather than as a way to create isolation. On the other hand, more time was needed to build trust between Mentors and Girls.

*Social customs at home and in school.*

According to sociologist and Professor Inez Souza (Diller, 1999), Latin American lifeways are in stark contrast to the Anglo way of life. [See also Ware, 2006; Sue & Sue, 2003.] Latinos/as enjoy a kind of collectivism that is pathologized in our very individualistic North American society... [there is] “a lot of interdependence among nuclear families, extended families, and in the community as a whole. This connectedness sustains life for its individuals and is very important to the fabric of Latino/a society....but [because it is considered a negative characteristic by the ‘dominant culture’] members of collectivistic societies also tend to feel limited by the perceptions of others.” (Diller, 1999, p. 143) [See also Ford, 2006.] In addition, according to Souza, the Latino concept of *machismo*, or strong male influence, requires that a Latino man exert his power in the home, especially if he has little or no power on the job, while more martyr-like behavior is expected of the wife or female. Souza notes that one result of this



sex role belief is that there is often a lot of domestic abuse in Latino families—rarely addressed, for fear of overstepping the bounds of propriety that demand that a family keep its skeletons in the closet. This is in sharp contrast to the concept of feminine power that was the core of our study.

Several of the Latina Girls spoke of their fathers, but, since we did not address whether they came from single-parent or two-parent households, I do not know if any of their parents were separated or divorced. The fathers' *machismo* at home may have played a part in the Girls' behavior at school, especially in our study group, which allowed the Girls more freedom of expression than they seemed accustomed to having. They were highly energetic, very talkative, and obviously quite attached to each other.

There are normal developmental reasons for this as well. Keri Ryan (2006) found that the quality of the friendships between adolescents and children in fifth through eighth grade depended upon how secure these young people felt. Also, the fact that they were perceived as either central or peripheral members of their social groups seemed to make a difference in their ability to articulate their needs and have satisfying relationships, whether or not they felt secure or insecure. Central group members, even insecure children who have more difficulty dealing with interpersonal relationships, were more successful at these tasks than peripheral group members. The more central or popular group members in my study, like Eagle and White Owl, did appear to be more self-assured.

Jeanette Fahey's (2006) study of developmental changes in attention performance showed that children who exhibit poor performance when required to pay attention to auditory instructions for extended periods of time may develop behavior and learning

problems later. It is important to note that her study participants were much younger (ages 5-7) than the girls in the present study (ages 13-14). Therefore, although her findings may not apply directly to this study, they do suggest a correlation between the ability to hear and understand oral instructions and later behavioral and learning difficulties. In the present study, the girls' familiarity or lack of familiarity with the language used in the classroom (English) may have affected their behavior and learning ability.

Lauren Baskir (2006) studied cognitive impulsivity and behavioral problems in adolescents, and found that the majority of adolescents 16 years old and younger showed significantly higher levels of cognitive impulsivity than adults. Baskir suggested that adolescents committing only minor offenses, and then only during their adolescent years, exhibit expected normative adolescent brain development and the attendant inability to make mature decisions. (Curiously, many parents in Western culture seem to expect more of adolescents in some areas, such as "making mature decisions," and less of them in others, such as taking responsibility in household tasks. In Hispanic and Latino cultures, I have observed that children are expected, as both Sue & Sue and Souza indicate, to participate fully in all family activities.

Overall, however, the garrulousness and high sociability of the Girls may have been part of the reason they were placed in this particular "last chance" charter school. (Such behavior would make it hard to concentrate on studies.) Several of the Mentors found these characteristics particularly irritating and said so, especially the Latina mentor and one of the older Mentors who had had no previous experience of mentoring adolescents. On the other hand, the younger Mentors and those who were more

experienced found the absence of strict rules governing behavior refreshing and “freeing.” As a researcher, however, I believed that discipline was not my prerogative nor, beyond establishing acceptable behavioral boundaries and maintaining a safe environment for young participants, my responsibility.

*Other differences.*

Aspects of other cultural differences may also have acted as limitations of the study. These were age differences (the Girls seemed more comfortable with the younger Mentors than with the older ones); the fact that all the Mentors were well-educated, literate, and “successful” in their professions or retired from successful professions (in contrast to the limited resources available to most of the Girls’ families); and the fact that several of the Mentors expressed somewhat liberal political viewpoints, in contrast to the Girls, who expressed very few viewpoints, political or otherwise.

The Girls did not divulge much information about their families. However, based on Souza’s work, other issues which *may have* played a part in the cultural differences we experienced included the currently volatile matter of legal citizenship; the physical health of family members (men in particular are exposed to harsh working conditions with little or no recourse if they need medical attention, and often become addicted first to pain medication and then to hard drugs as their condition continues to deteriorate); isolation (particularly for women, who often spend an entire day cleaning the empty houses of Anglos with no one to talk to); parents’ inability to assimilate the new language, [which fosters] a growing distance between themselves and their children, who are learning English in school; and a sense of “split locale,” since new residents either tend to idealize the new country and denigrate the old one, or miss the old one and disparage the new.

Children also suffer loss of extended family, problems with acculturation and language that contribute to their “very high school dropout rate,” and immigration-related family dysfunction, as mentioned above. (Diller, 1999, pp. 148-149)

Regarding the high school dropout rate, the Program Director at our study site told me that graduation from 8<sup>th</sup> grade is a huge event for the families of the Latino/a students at the school. In fact, 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation itself is a rite of passage in this particular Latino community, since many of the adolescents don’t graduate from high school. When I asked why, she mentioned such deterrents as lack of transportation to distant high school campuses, the need to care for younger siblings while the parents work, and problems with language and mathematics. One deterrent she did not mention, but which arose at the beginning of the study, is teen pregnancy. One potential participant was not allowed to join this study because, at the age of 12, she was pregnant. This girl gave birth to her baby on the last day of the study. Latino customs require family support for such events as births, deaths, graduations, birthdays, and other important events (Diller, 1999). Because of this requirement, Cougar, who is her cousin, had to miss the final meeting to be with her family.

On a similar note, according to Souza (1999), sexuality itself appears to be a taboo topic among some Latinos/as. This taboo contributed to why a menarche ritual was not acceptable for this particular group of girls. Latinas do celebrate a coming-of-age ceremony with the family when they reach the age of 15—the *quinceanera*—but its emphasis is on a girl’s marriageability rather than her psychospiritual and sexual maturity. A recent independent film, “Quinceanera,” (Clements, Glatzner, & Westmoreland, 2006) sympathetically relates the story of a young girl in East Los

Angeles who, during preparations for her *quinceanera*, discovers that she is pregnant, and how this impacts her family.

Souza also cites other delicate topics: domestic violence, substance abuse, and incest. She states that all of these factors make it very difficult for a Latino family experiencing difficulties to seek help and, when offered, to accept it. However, the families of this research study's adolescent participants appear to have recognized and responded to their daughters' needs for a more structured academic environment, which was the reason for their placement in this particular school. Whether this impacted this research study or not is uncertain; perhaps, however, the fact that all the parents agreed to allow their daughters to participate in the study is significant.

*Environmental influences.*

Often *where* we are is as important as *who* we are, and the psychological ground where people meet may be just as crucial to the success of a gathering as the physical space. Mindell (1992) notes that all events are influenced not only by the personalities of the participants but also by what he calls "timespirits." (p. 37) According to Mindell, a timespirit is the part of a group's energy that is not being expressed openly, and, therefore, influences events from behind the scenes. A group may feel resentment of something a leader is doing, for example, and although no one may say so openly, that resentment may erupt in the aggressive or nonproductive behavior of one or more group members. A perfect example of this was the disruptive behavior of one of the four Girls who were removed from our study by the school's administration. I identified this example of a timespirit as *lack of trust*. The Girls (all Latinas except for Rose Crystal and the two African American Girls who withdrew from the study) initially did not appear to

trust eight or nine unfamiliar Anglo women. We soon realized this and discussed it among ourselves in early Mentors' meetings. I regretted the lack of an African American mentor and was deeply grateful for the presence of Solar Wind, because I hoped that, being Latina herself, she would be more able to understand and, perhaps, even mediate our group of Girls.

In addition to timespirits, Mindell (1992) addresses the phenomenon of "spacespirits:"

...in specific localities a timespirit cannot be thought of as being independent of the place. A timespirit may also imply characteristics of a given locality. Thus in given areas we must also consider *spacespirits*.

...today we expect our architects and city planner to create the atmosphere of a place. Nevertheless, we are all sensitive to spacespirits, and, like indigenous people who identify certain areas, forests, and mountains as having more or less power, we are attracted to or repulsed by places and intuitively feel those "places of power" as areas that can either support us or make us ill. (p. 37)

I identified a spacespirit at work, as well. The place in which we met was the school's Counseling Center. It was the largest free space available at that time of day. However, it was also charged with the energy of the many counseling sessions that occur there. Few adolescents, in my experience, go willingly to counseling. Most of them are sent by teachers or administrators to address perceived deficiencies or excesses in their behavior. Children are extremely sensitive to the presence or absence of adult approval. The student who acted out early in our program may have been responding to the Center's energy of non-acceptance, of repression, which each of us felt in one way or another, and to which Rose Crystal gave voice: "It's *really really* hot in here!" (Mentor Firefly, as well, would frequently fling open a window to release what she felt as "stifling heat," and wonder, "Is this just me or do the rest of you ladies need some fresh air too?")

As a further example of the presence of a spacespirit, I noted that every person in the room, during the entire seven weeks of our project, returned each time to the same location in the circle that she had occupied from the beginning (even though we tried to break up “chat groups” by having Mentors sit with their mentees). Only on the final day, during the game of “Charades,” did Rose Crystal, for example, choose to sit on the opposite side of the circle from her accustomed place—and that was to share strawberries with Monarch. Even in that sterile counseling room, we had each found our “place of power” (Mindell, 1992, p. 37) and were most comfortable in that place.

*Personal limitations of the researcher.*

In addition to the limitations imposed by cultural and environmental pressures, there were my personal limitations: my own cultural assumptions, and an over-optimistic outlook that prevented me from planning for unexpected developments.

The first personal limitation was my own cultural assumptions. I assumed that since I am both Anglo and Native American, this would serve to bridge any cultural gaps that might exist between the Girls and myself. This was not the case, perhaps because I do not look like a Native American (I have auburn hair and blue eyes and look more Celtic than anything), and also because I was not as familiar with the lifeways of the Girls who were participants as I might have been. Nor, having based my opinion of each Mentor on a preliminary interview in which the discussion of leadership styles did not arise, did I take into account that a Mentor might have a radically different viewpoint from my own.

The second personal limitation, although it seemed to be unavoidable, was my failure to plan for the unexpected. With the loss of three Mentors and only seven weeks

to spend with the Girls, there was no time to recruit additional adult women. Therefore, I was forced to act as a Mentor in my own study—a decision that compromised my ability to maintain the overview I would have preferred, and made analysis of the events that took place more difficult.

On the other hand, it is useful to note that I chose to use elements of organic inquiry and participatory research in this study because both methods encourage flexibility, self-disclosure, and sharing of power. In addition, as Clements states, the researcher's psyche is the "subjective instrument" (p. 112) of the research, partnering with the liminal and spiritual realms. In the absence of a more controlling and hierarchical approach, the researcher's flexibility, and her ability to be honest about both her strengths and her weaknesses, may be the very elements that enable her to stay empathically connected with co-researchers and psychically connected with Spirit. In future studies, however, I recommend a research assistant to help keep track of the many details.

#### *Summary of the Limitations of the Study*

In summary, the limitations of this study were (a) cultural influences, including differences in religious affiliation and practices, language, and social life at home and at school; (b) environmental influences, described as timespirits and spacespirits; and (c) personal limitations of the researcher, including cultural assumptions and the failure to plan for unexpected contingencies.

#### *Delimitations of the Study*

Delimitations included the following:

1. In my proposal, I specified qualifiers that would eliminate inappropriate candidates.



2. As Wise Elders, I chose only those women who were experienced in creating rituals.
3. In recruitment of Mentors, I specified qualifiers that would attract women who had empathy for young girls and a strong interest in mentoring. I also specified that each Mentor must have her own spiritual practice, which would strengthen her understanding of the Earth-based ritual we would create with the Girls.
4. I specified that participating adolescents must be familiar with each other and be chosen by a teacher or counselor, prequalifying them for the work we would do together.

### *Strengths of the Study*

Upon reflection, I realized that this study had many innate strengths. Foremost among these was the fact that it was a more feminine approach to research, and, therefore, especially useful in working with a population of Latina adolescents. In a milieu such as the Hispanic culture, which has been defined by the patriarchy, what could be more empowering than inviting and honoring the sacred darkness of liminality—its chaos, its ever-changing organic nature, its need for personal honesty and integrity at all levels? These are the qualities of the sacred feminine—qualities that are disparaged by the authoritarian male voice. As Gilligan says, we must learn, and teach our daughters, to speak in a *different* voice—their *own* voice—if we are to effect the changes that the world so badly needs.

### *Researcher's Personal Reflections*

The realizations that emerged from an intuitive analysis of the research study results centered around five major issues. These were: (a) leadership; (b) chaos/order; (c) challenge; (d) empowerment; and (e) helping/harming.

### *Leadership*

The issue of *leadership*—who leads and who does not, how strong or weak the “leader” is perceived to be, what the effect of “strong” or “weak” leadership has upon the group—arose early in the research group’s relationships. The most visible illustration of this issue was the opinion expressed by three Mentors (specifically Solar Wind, Firefly, and Stone) that I as researcher/leader was not acting decisively enough. Since it was my intention to establish an atmosphere of equality, especially for the benefit of the Girls, I did not consider this too disruptive a viewpoint; however, as I recorded in my field notes and journal entries, my style of leadership resulted in what these three Mentors considered to be “chaos” (Mindell, 1992).

### *Chaos/Order*

Turner (1969) refers to structure and anti-structure in terms of anthropological research methods; however, these terms serve well to define the conflict between proponents of *creative chaos* (myself and one of the Mentors) and proponents of *order* (three of the Mentors). Striving to eliminate hierarchy and thus to bring all participants equally into the experience of co-creating a Rite of Passage, I supported creative chaos. Those who sought to preserve the tradition of hierarchy (teacher vs. student; adult vs. child, etc.) wanted more order and control.

According to Roger Abrahams (1995), in his Foreword to *The Ritual Process*, however, Turner (1969) considered ritual to be:

...the operation of the work of the gods—but work in the sense only of how a group develops ways for channeling common energies and endowing the effort with a sense of moral purpose. As such...the work of the gods also involves the play of extrapersonal forces. (Abrahams, 1995, in Turner, p. vi)

In this sense, Turner's concepts of "structure and anti-structure" (p. ix) perfectly describe the dynamics of this research study. Given that structure is the maintenance of the status quo, anti-structure may be seen as "all confrontative activities, especially those drawing on a refashioning of self through masking, costuming, acting in a predictably disorderly fashion" (p. xi). Turner believed that the acting out of subversive motives is fundamental to culture itself.

### *Challenge*

A third issue was that of *challenge*. Not only were we working with the challenges faced by the Girls; the Mentors had their own challenges to face. One Mentor's challenge, for example, was having to decide whether to stay with us or leave because of her work. Stone and Solar Wind were challenged by my style of leadership. Firefly's challenge was how to be the Mentor that Rose Crystal needed and at the same time remain a friend to her mentee's family. My challenge was juggling all of the multiple manifestations of group members and my own emotional responses to them, while attempting to maintain some degree of professional distance in order to direct the project. Perhaps these are examples of Turner's *liminality*—that stage in which (as he wrote):

The neophyte . . . must be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status. The ordeals and humiliations . . . to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges. (p. 103) [*italics in original*]

### *Empowerment*

The issue of *empowerment*—who has power and who does not, how power is passed from one person to the next, how the holders of power are perceived by the

disempowered and vice versa—was a fascinating aspect of this research project. Certainly, empowering the Girls as they approached womanhood was my initial intention. However, there were existing concepts of empowerment that I did not anticipate until the research project was underway. For example, I believe that we are all empowered to be who we are; that no one can give us that power or take it away from us; and that my task was to share this understanding with the adolescents in the study. However, the consensus of many groups (and this research group was no exception) is that “powerful” adults can *bestow* power on adolescents—or not—as they choose, according to the behavior of the adolescents (e.g., administration, staff and faculty of various schools, juvenile detention facilities, and other youth-oriented venues). I have also observed, through my work in leading and participating in groups, that many group members seem to expect the group leader to be more powerful than the rest of the group—a concept that confronts teachers, counselors, spiritual guides, and other “helpers” with the challenge of avoiding harming those they are trying to help. [See Gore, 1992.). However, Mindell (1992) notes, “Power...cannot ultimately be attached to the person in the leadership position; we confuse personal power with the field forces that create the leadership timespirit. A person in the leader role can only channel processes, not create them!” (p.75)

### *Help/Harm*

How much of what we do for others is truly *helpful*, and how much of it *harms*? The assumption that anyone needs to be empowered already implies that they are not as powerful as the one making that assumption—and is this helpful? Furthermore, was learning about the innate power of womanhood through this mentoring process

something these Girls could take back to their families and communities and use to improve their own lives and those of their family members, or was it placing them in a position from which interaction with family and friends would become more difficult rather than less? For example, why did the Girls refuse to invite their parents to the Ritual Feast? Was it possibly because the new path we were showing them was something they sensed their families would not accept? [See Diller, 1999; Sue & Sue, 2003; Ware, 2006; and Ford, 2006.]

#### *Mentors' Feedback on the Study*

The Mentors' feedback was detailed. However, I believe it is important to include the most illustrative points in their own words, both because the account is more accurate and because it lends richness to the account of our process.

As stated in Chapter 4, during the final meeting, I gave each Mentor a questionnaire (Mentors' Post-Rite Questionnaire, Appendix O). An intuitive analysis of Mentors' answers to this questionnaire elaborates on the five themes discussed above: (a) leadership; (b) chaos/order; (c) challenge; (d) empowerment; and (e) helping/harming.

Redwood responded to both questions holistically. Her answers to the first question did not focus on any particular theme.

*I was happy to see so many Girls deciding to stay for the whole thing. And impressed with their feedback.*

*I think they really liked calling in the directions and they obviously talked with their relatives at home since we heard about the grandfather who said to take off our shoes to be even closer to the earth. Also they really liked making the circle through holding hands.*

*The allies and mask-making were very important and went well. Also the ritual names was a wonderful way for them to step out of their normal everyday personal. Journey was a new experience for them.*

*Identifying the challenges was very important as well.*

*The gifts chosen I think were meaningful to the Girls and they all brought something to jump over which was significant.*

*The recap was important.*

*The food and water was very important to have each time.*

Redwood's extensive experience through her own work with girls enabled her to understand the flexibility required for interaction with volatile adolescents. Although her suggestions for future studies indicated that she would have preferred a firmer container, Redwood had enough trust in my intuition and in the process itself to approach it in a more relaxed manner. On the other hand, several of those excellent suggestions would have required more time with the Girls than we had.

Emerald's response to the first question focused on the themes of *hierarchy* and *empowerment*

*Valentine, I appreciated your gentleness with the young women as well as your feeling that we were not there to discipline the Girls into participating or being silent, etc . . . . The ritual container was also key as the young women really got into creating that through the directions and the elements . .*

*Session 2: The journeying worked, the young women seemed to get into it and have much to share afterward . . . . I thought you did an excellent job . . . of "normalizing" the process. I think it is so exciting that the seeds of this kind of work have been planted in the young women's experience.*

*Session 4: I thought this [ mask-making] was a great activity for the young women . . . a great way to integrate their allies and power animals into their experience . . . It felt like watching a magical transformation happen before me . . . I think the choosing of ritual names was also a good idea and went over well . . . it took me out of my "normal" life and put me in a space that was unique to this particular experience . . . . It also took away any hierarchy (not that there was much hierarchy, except for the one already socially imposed by our age difference) . . . because we were all starting from our collective experience together to find a new name for ourselves.*

Emerald's natural fluidity as an artist may have enabled her to be open and accepting of the "chaos" we experienced. As a result, she was present to nuances of our process in ways that others were not. She speaks of "watching a magical transformation

happen,” of being taken out of her “‘normal’ life, and put in a space . . . unique to this particular experience.” It is significant that, since I am also an artist, and familiar with the phenomenon of order emerging from even the most chaotic situations, we were able to work well together.

Stone’s responses to the first question focus on the theme of *chaos/order*.

*Sessions 1 & 2: chaos, bad feelings, cell phone issues, detention issues . . . .  
General noisy, mentees talked and sat together, spoke in Spanish which  
disrespected us.*

Stone’s response to the second question focuses on the theme of *leadership*.

*I felt that the leadership was erratic and uneven—that the leader could have done  
much more to step up to the plate; at times when she chose to let it flow and  
disintegrate, and that she was autocratic, sometimes hostile, just when she could  
have been more sensitive, mindful, and mellow.*

Stone’s responses indicate that she may feel more comfortable dealing hierarchically with adolescents. She referred several times to “disrespect,” implying that she wished to be respected as a Mentor and an older person. Her criticism of the leader as “autocratic and hostile” rather than “sensitive, mindful, and mellow” may refer to my removing Merry from the study, or to my view on the disruptive student’s behavior. She does not explain precisely what she means. However, her observation that the process seemed chaotic was not inaccurate. It felt chaotic to me at times as well, and during my discussion with her at the end of the project, the Program Director jokingly referred to “controlled chaos” as the school’s *modus operandi*.

Solar Wind’s response to the first question also conveys her dissatisfaction with the *leadership*.

*I really like the two shamanic journeys we did. They meant a lot to me. I really  
think that the session (sic) were too unorganized. I was really frustrated with the  
lack of leadership. We saw it since the matching of mentor/mentee. I agree that*

*teenage Girls need to find their way, their voice. But they need leadership, and the lack of it just makes things more confusing.*

In answer to the second question she refers indirectly to *chaos/order*.

*Unfortunately I saw no clear way in our sessions. I come from a culture where nothing is plan (sic). I know you planed (sic) the sessions but we really did not follow the outlines many times. As I said I enjoy the actual rituals, the shamanic journey but I was a bit frustrated.*

Firefly's answer to the first question also illustrates the theme of *chaos/order*.

*Session 1: I remember it being a little bit confusing that day . . . . The Girls . . . were so chatty that we didn't have a lot of control over the group . . . . I think it was a fun mystery to us all—to start the circle rituals, and I liked meeting the 2 mentee's (sic) I ended up aligned w/ for a while . . . . My original Mentee was confused, nor introduced . . . as another girl in the same age groups as the others that was just from another school. Even on the last day, people—mentee's (sic)—thought she was one of the mentors.*

Firefly's response indicates that her style of working with people may be action and result-oriented. She seemed impatient with the organic quality of our process, wanted to feel more “active” in mentoring, and wanted to see measurable results.

Swan's response to the first question shows the extent of her empathic involvement with her mentees. Here she addresses the themes of *chaos/order* and *helping/harming*.

*Session 1: We didn't have too much structure this session, which made it hard to create a sense of sacred space . . . . My first chance to talk with my mentees one-on-one was challenging. One of the Girls talked a lot, while the other was very quiet . . . . I wondered how the Girls felt about a group of mostly Caucasian women coming in to facilitate a ritual for them—would they feel seen? Would the ritual be personally relevant for them? What about their religious beliefs—would they be compatible with the ritual? What would their parents think about what we were doing?*

*Session 2: The exercise kept the Girls busy and gave them a chance to experience having an ally to ask for help when they need it. Muffin didn't like the ally card she picked—Skunk. During her journey, she didn't experience any imagery, so I think she felt a bit left out. She drew a picture of a desert island . . . .*

Here Swan addresses the theme of *empowerment*.



*Session 4: The mask-making was a lot of fun for everyone, I think. I remember Air saying that she wanted to make masks every week. Muffin still didn't like her ally, Skunk, but ended up making a mask anyway with some encouragement. She loved the result.*

*Session 5: I remember making a decision before this session that I was going to let go of any expectations for how I wanted it to go. I was aware...that Muffin may not share very much, but I accepted it without trying to make the experience any different for her. What happened when we actually broke off into small groups really surprised me—she had lots to say about her challenges and goals, and the conversation went very smoothy. . . . for me, this session was probably the highlight of the entire mentoring experience. . . . I think the smaller context for sharing really worked for my mentees, who tend to be more introverted and shy about sharing in front of the larger group*

Here she refers to the theme of *hierarchy*.

*Session 6: The ritual itself is what stands out most for me—the fun we had decorating the space before the Girls came in, the process of witnessing each one cross the threshold, and the joy of welcoming them on the other side. It was a moving, beautiful experience. The charades afterwards were a great way to celebrate and let the Girls take the lead in an activity. It felt to me like all of us—Girls and mentors—came together as a group of women.*

Swan's natural empathy enabled her to be fully present to her two mentees in a way that finally encouraged them to trust her, to open up to her and to our process. Also, being a spiritual guide herself, Swan was able to trust that Spirit's influence would eventually bring order to the chaos that she observed. Throughout the project she remained uncomplainingly supportive, often offering suggestions and assistance that I found invaluable.

As I read over these comments, I found myself agreeing with many of them. The leadership *was* erratic. In my attempt to be non-hierarchical and to model equality, I did not anticipate the need, expressed by these Mentors, for a more controlled and contained process. In contrast, although they each offered suggestions for future work in mentoring

adolescents, Redwood, Emerald, and Swan were more comfortable with letting our process be what it was.

I wished to include Hortense's responses to the questionnaire as well, but she had not returned them at the time of this writing. She did, however, attend the Mentor's lunch and was happy to report that she is continuing her relationship with her mentee, Rain, who is hoping to become a scientist like Hortense.

Reflecting on the events of the seven weeks we spent together as a small community of women, I realized that our reactions to the process varied in accordance with our personal approaches to *trust* and *power*. Given this, I was intrigued to note that the Girls revealed themselves more fully and naturally on only two occasions: the day that they made their masks, and during the game of "Charades" after their Rite of Passage. Evidently mask-making provided them with a freedom of self-expression *and self-empowerment* they had not felt previously, while the ritual itself elevated them to a new status, that of young women—therefore they may no longer have felt "one-down" in front of the adults. *They trusted that we would not—and could not—overpower them.* During most of the meetings (except the mask-making day) they seemed quite repressed, expressing this through lowered eyes, subdued voices, the invention of a private language they used among themselves, and the phrase "I don't know" when they felt unsure of how a response to a question might be received. This self-repression became even more evident when Rose Crystal's parents and brother arrived after the Rite of Passage. In the presence of adults who (besides being her family members and, therefore, already suspect) were *not* members of our Circle of Women, Rose Crystal retreated like a turtle into its shell; and the other Girls, perhaps not wishing to lose the newfound sense of

freedom they felt in the presence of the adult Mentors, went immediately into a different room.

How, then, did these two factors—trust and power—influence the third, commitment? I was surprised to realize that from the very beginning, all but two of the Mentors saw our project as something more or less peripheral to their lives. Swan, Redwood, and Emerald were the only three who seemed to have made a total commitment to the project, attending all meetings. Stone missed one meeting, and Firefly, Solar Wind, and Hortense each missed more than one meeting. Although I can only assume the connection (based upon their levels of commitment as well as their final reflections), *the Mentors who had the greatest issues with trust and power were also those who appeared to be less committed to time spent with the Girls*. It might be possible, then, to see a connection between trust, power, and commitment. Perhaps people tend to be more committed to those individuals with whom, and those activities in which, they feel the greatest trust and the most personal power.

How do these findings impact the young women with whom we worked for seven weeks? Does the confidence they displayed at the end of our time together indicate an increase in both their levels of trust and their sense of self-empowerment? Will this create in them the willingness to make lasting commitments—in school, at home, in whatever profession they eventually choose? Although we were already seeing evidence of positive change by the final meeting, when several of the Girls reported being able to complete their homework, do better in math, and speak up for themselves, these are important questions that only a longitudinal study could answer.

It is not possible to know all the results of this effort. However, as we worked together to co-create this Rite of Passage, which included elements of indigenous Celtic and Native American models [See Lipp, 2003; Johnson, 2001], as well as vital elements provided by the co-researchers themselves, it became apparent that all participants, in varying degrees, had begun to recognize their relationship to our Mother Earth. In the recognition of this sacred relationship, they discovered more collaborative and effective ways to address the challenges facing them in their daily lives.

#### *Future Research*

The results of this study indicate that further research is needed in the use of ritual as a tool for self-empowerment of adolescent girls. Such research might focus on several areas. These areas might include cross-cultural group work; intercultural and intergenerational mentoring; extended studies (semester or year-long), with more emphasis on the cultural and historical background of participants, of Goddess cultures, and of women and spirituality; outdoor experiences in Nature, including girls-only wilderness vision quests; mother-daughter studies (especially at menarche); and longitudinal studies of any of the above.

#### *Implications and Further Applications*

The results of such studies could be useful in clinical settings, in spiritual guidance work, in school counseling, and with incarcerated adolescents. My own future research interests include, among others, Earth-based ritual with mother-daughter pairs (to be offered next Spring at Ocean Song in Sonoma County); ritual with incarcerated adolescents; and ritual as an alternative to medication for depressed adolescents. I also

plan to do an extended study on the effects of patriarchal expectations on adolescent girls, with a focus on Eisler's partnership model as a possible method of addressing this issue.

### *A Model*

A map for such a project as this blended qualitative study would be an excellent guide for future researchers. However, by its very nature, it defies mapping. Furthermore, maps, as we often see, can lead the traveler in a wrong direction. Sometimes it is better to set out in the Indian way: ask Great Spirit for a safe journey and trust that one will arrive at the place one is meant to be in due time. Therefore all I will offer is a sketch—a prototype of a model—with the caveat that researchers in this field should be prepared for change in any moment, on all levels.

When I began this project, I had very little knowledge of what I would encounter. Although I had planned the study with all female co-researchers, I did not anticipate working with a multicultural population of adolescents; nor did I expect that there would be such a vast difference in the ages of Mentors and Girls. I had established a basic outline for the process; however, as indicated in Chapter 4, it was only an outline. Plans changed several times, both before the study began and during the study itself.

Among the things I learned for future studies were the need for a more structured process with clearly defined expectations; and the need to know, in advance, the demographics of adolescent co-researchers, so that mentors could be recruited from appropriate cultural backgrounds.

However, in any study with *adolescent girls*, I urge future researchers to bear in mind that by its very nature, such a study will inevitably evoke emotional eruptions in co-researchers, sudden changes of plans, and moments of both humor and sadness. In this

case, researchers would be wise to proceed with the knowledge that empathy, flexibility, and a good sense of humor will best serve their purposes.

### *Relevance to Transpersonal Psychology*

Certainly there is fertile ground here for further investigation into the nature of ecofeminist spirituality, including ritual and other Earth-based spiritual practices, among women of all ages, and the extent to which such practices impact their ability to support the energy and growth of their families, communities, and world. Ecofeminist spirituality is a field that has recently gained ground in transpersonal psychology, and one that holds great promise for the future. It is possible that the long-term results of this study, and others to come, will expand our understanding of a spirituality that connects us to the feminine and to the Earth, and will add appreciation of the richness and importance of using blended qualitative studies in the advancement of transpersonal psychology.

### *Concluding Remarks*

Reflecting on the many months of preparation and the seven weeks I spent with the nine Girls and seven other Mentors on this research project, I realize just how ambitious it was. There were a multitude of things I did not know, and perhaps might have known, before embarking upon such a venture. However, I have learned so much in the process that it has been well worth all the work and worry that it entailed.

Perhaps the most important realization is that this was a Rite of Passage, not only for the adolescent girls who were my co-researchers, but for me as well. In that respect it has presented all that Turner described: separation from my original state (in preparation for what was to come), liminality (an extended and often uncomfortable process!), initiation (the crucible of writing this dissertation), and now the beginning of

incorporation into a new state of being. I have a sense that incorporation will take a very long time—and that I will continue, on some level, to be confronted with rites of passage, large and small.

May all women, young and old, embrace the challenges Life presents with the same spirit of openness and courage that the Girls in this study showed us. May we step boldly into the future, knowing that our innate grace and wisdom will help us through all the initiations we will face. May we never forget where we are, so that we may know where we must go.

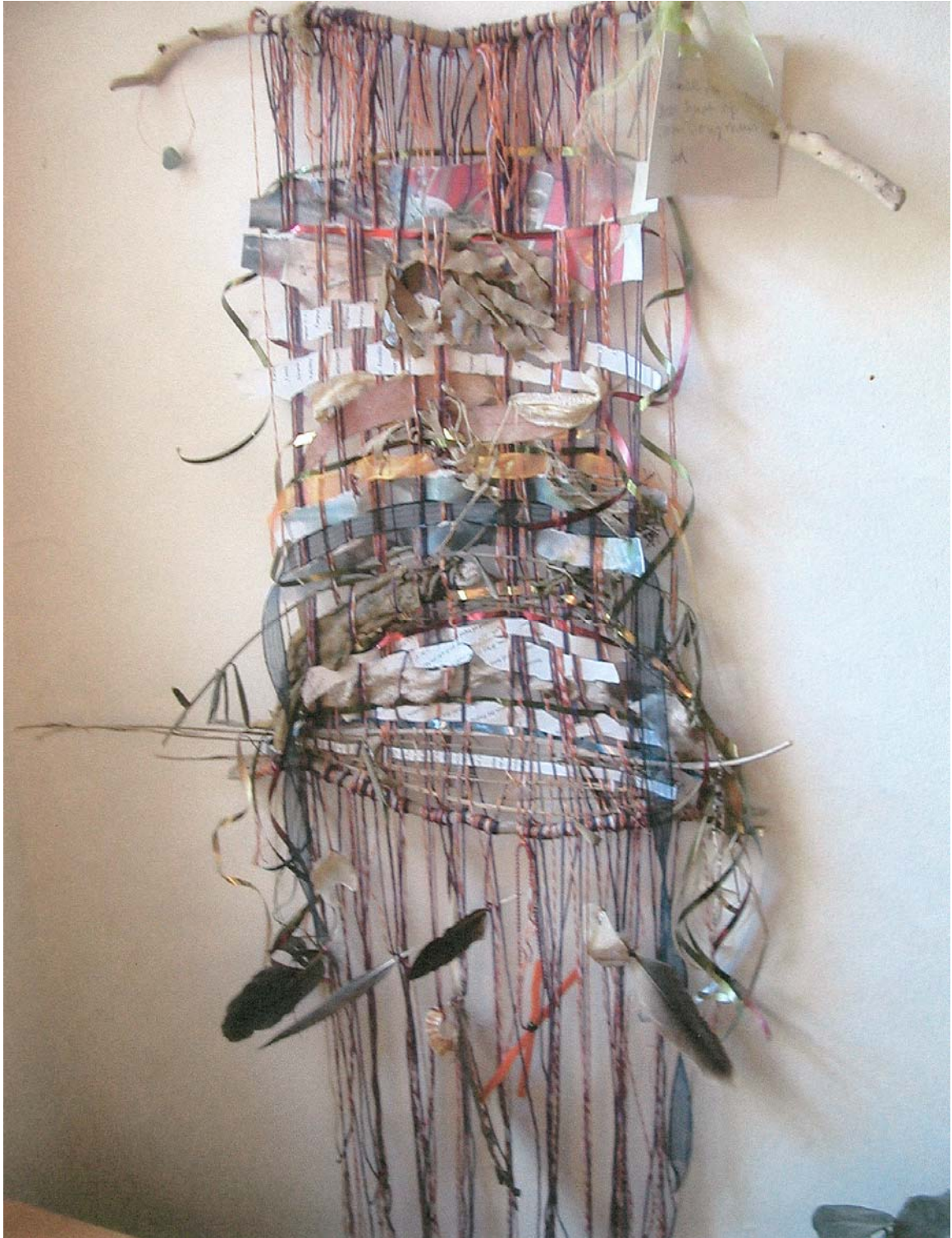


Figure 21. Creative Synthesis—A Dissertation Weaving



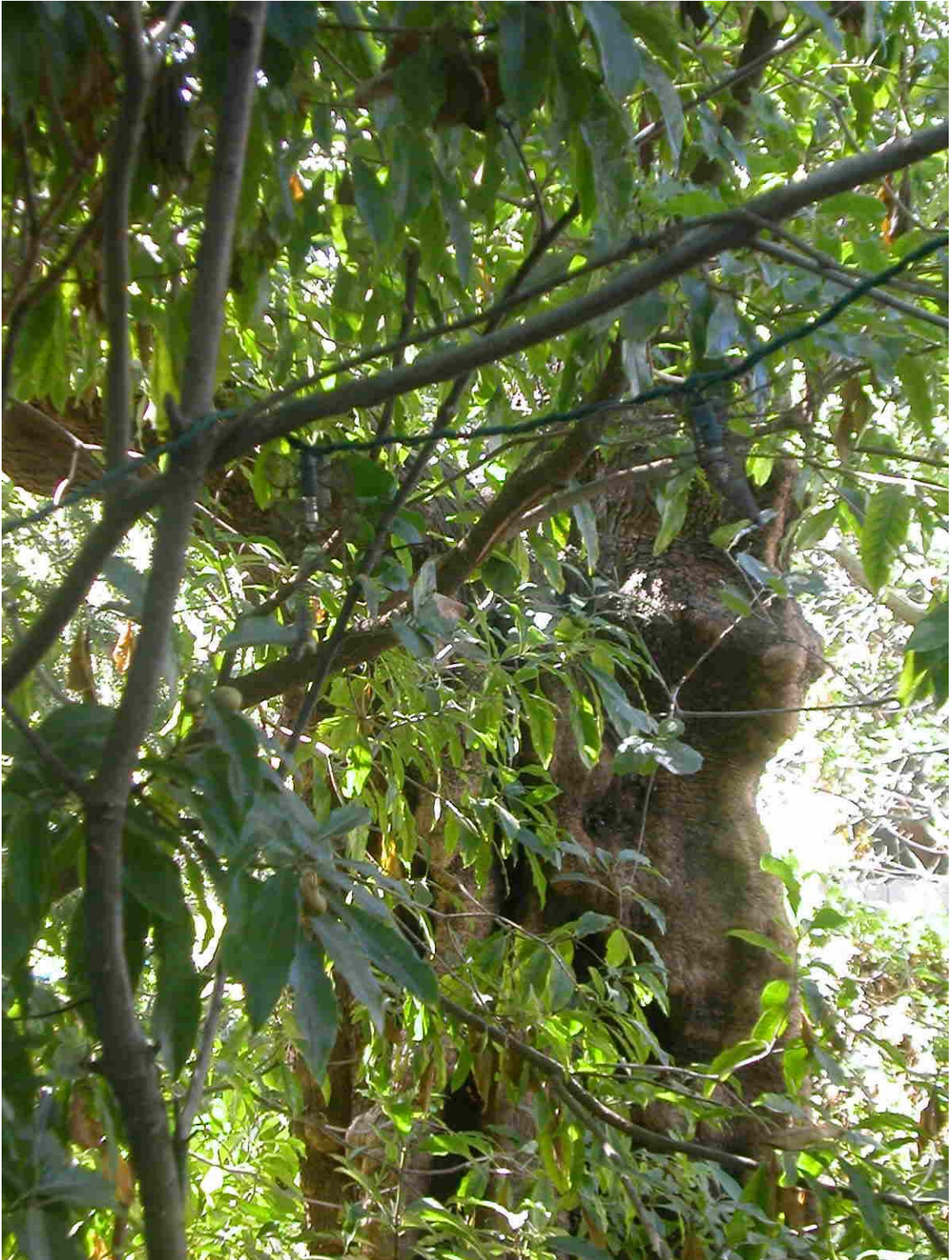


Figure 22. Grandmother Olive—Another View

## References

- Achterberg, J. (1985). *Imagery in healing: Shamanism and modern medicine*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Adler, M. (1979). Meanings of matriarchy. In C. Spretnak, (Ed.) (1982), *he politics of women's spirituality: Essays on the rise of spiritual power ithin the feminist movement* (pp. 128-136). Garden City, NY: AnchorPress/Doubleday.
- Balzer, M. M. (1996). Flights of the sacred: Symbolism and theory in Siberian shamanism. *American Anthropologist*, 98(2), 305-318.
- Barrows, A. (1995). The ecopsychology of child development. In Rozak, Gomes, & Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology* (pp. 106-108). San Francisco: Sierra Club.
- Baskir, L. R. (2006). Cognitive impulsivity and behavioral problems in adolescents (Doctoral dissertation, Fordham University, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International-B*, 67/05.
- Braud, W., & Anderson, R. (1998). *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Campbell, J. (1991). *The power of myth*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Chodorow, N. (1974). In Gilligan, C. (1982, 1993), *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development* (pp. 8-9). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Christ, C. (1979). Why women need the Goddess. In C. Spretnak, (Ed.) (1982). *The politics of women's spirituality: Essays on the rise of spiritual power within the feminist movement*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Clements, A. (Producer); Glatzner, R., & Westmoreland, W. (Directors and Writers). (2006). *Quinceanera* [Motion picture]. United States.
- Clements, J., Ettling, D., Jenett, D., & Shields, L. 1999. *Organic inquiry: If research were sacred*. Self-published manuscript.
- Clements, J. (2004). Organic inquiry: Research in partnership with Spirit. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. 36(1), 26-49.
- Coleman, K. S. (2003). Resurrecting the repressed feminine: An ethnographic study and analysis of a contemporary goddess spirituality practice employing the feminist philosophical lens of Luce Irigaray (Doctoral dissertation, The Claremont Graduate University, 2003). *Dissertation Abstracts International-A* 64 (04), 1288.

- Crowley, V. (1996). *Wicca: A comprehensive guide to the Old Religion in the modern world*. London: Element/HarperCollins.
- Curry, D. & Wells, S. J. (2004). *An organic inquiry primer for the novice researcher: The who, what, when, why, and how of a sacred approach to disciplined knowing*. Kirkland, WA: Liminal Realities.
- Davis, J. (1983). *Wilderness rites of passage: Initiation, growth, and healing*. Retrieved November 16, 2006, from <http://www.johnvdavis.com/wild/WRoP%2011-26-03.pdf>.
- DeVault, M. (1999). *Liberating method: Feminism and social research*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Diller, J. V. (1999). *Cultural diversity: A primer for the human services*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Dobkin, M. (2002). What we can learn from shamanic healing: Brief psychotherapy with Latino immigrant clients. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92(10), 576.
- Dossey, L. (2002). *Reinventing medicine: Beyond mind-body to a new era of healing*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Douglas, S., & Michaels, M. (2004). *The mommy myth: The idealization of motherhood and how it has undermined women*. New York: Free Press/Simon & Schuster.
- Douglass, B. & Moustakas, C. (1985). Heuristic inquiry: The internal search to know. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 95(3), 39-55.
- Eisler, R. (1987). *The chalice and the blade: Our history, our future*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Eisler, R. (2005). Partnership: Beyond patriarchy and matriarchy. In C. Biaggi, (Ed.), *The rule of Mars: Readings on the origins, history, and impact of patriarchy* (p. xix; pp. 410-413). Manchester, CT: Knowledge, Ideas & Trends (KIT).
- Erickson, E. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Erdrich, L. (2001). *The last report on the miracles at Little No Horse*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Fahey, J. C. (2006). Developmental changes in attention performance and their relationship to behavior and school problems (Doctoral dissertation, Drexel University, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International-B*, 67 (02).

- Fernandez, C. (1992). La raza and the melting pot. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.). *Racially mixed people in America*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Fine, M., Weis, L., Weseen, S, & Wong, L. (2003). For whom? Qualitative research, representations, and social responsibilities. In N. K. Denzin (Ed.). *The landscapes of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Ford, R.E. (2006). Acculturation and mental health of Latino youth: A developmental perspective (doctoral dissertation, DePaul University, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International-BI*, 66 (12).
- Foster, S., & Little, M. (1983). *The vision quest: Passing from childhood to adulthood: A course book for graduating seniors*. Big Pine, CA: Rites of Passage Press.
- Frazer, J. G. (1922). *The golden bough*. London: Penguin.
- Geise, P. (1996). *White Buffalo Calf Woman brings the first pipe, as told by Joseph Chasing Horse*. Retrieved November 16, 2006, from <http://www.kstrom.net/isk/arvol/buffpipe.html>.
- George, V.S. (1986). *The history of the Goddess and the transpersonal significance of her decline and re-emergence in the West*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. Palo Alto.
- Gerber, R. (1988). *Vibrational medicine: New choices for healing ourselves*. Santa Fe: Bear.
- Gilligan, C. (1982, 1993). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gilligan, C., (1991). In C. Gilligan, A. Rogers, & D. Tolman (Eds.), *Women, girls, & psychotherapy: Reframing resistance*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- Gore, J. (1992). What we can do for you! What can “we” do for “you”? Struggling over empowerment in critical and feminist pedagogy, in J. Gore, & C. Luke (Eds.). *Feminism & critical pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- Grahn, J. (1999). Are goddesses metaformic constructs? An application of metaformic theory to menarche celebrations and goddess rituals of Kerala and contiguous states in South India (Doctoral dissertation, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1999). *Dissertation Abstracts International-A* 61 (09), 3617.
- Guidice, J. (2006). Body image concerns of the adolescent female and the impact on self-esteem and life satisfaction (Doctoral dissertation, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67 (02).

- Haag, P. (1999). *Voices of a generation: Teenage girls report about their lives today*. Washington D.C.: AAUW.
- Harner, M. (1980). *The way of the shaman: A guide to power and healing*. New York: Harper & Rowe.
- Hill, J. B. (2000). *The legacy of Luna: The story of a tree, a woman, and the struggle to save the redwoods*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.
- Hutter, D. M. (1999). Weaving the fabric of culture: The emergence of personal and collective wisdom in young adults participating in a wilderness rite of passage (Doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 1999). *Dissertation Abstracts International-B 61* (01), 563.
- Ingerman, S. (1991). *Soul retrieval: Mending the fragmented self*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Jung, C. G. (1963). *Memories, dreams, reflections*. New York: Random House.
- Karlsson, T. (2002). Neoshamanism. Retrieved November 14, 2006 from [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com).
- Kehoe, A. (1996 Summer-Autumn). Eliade and Hultdrantz: The European primitivism tradition. *American Indian Quarterly, Special Issue: To hear the eagles cry: Contemporary themes in Native American spirituality*. 20(3), 377-392.
- King, S. K. (1990). *Urban shaman: A handbook for personal and planetary transformation based on the Hawaiian way of the adventurer*. New York: Fireside Simon & Schuster.
- Krantz, D. L. (2006). Carlos Casteneda and his followers: Finding life's meaning in your local bookstore. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 39(4), p 576.
- Lelchuk, I. (2006, October 29) Girls reporting high stress over looks, weight. *San Francisco Chronicle*, pp. B-1, B-7.
- Lipp, D. (2003). *The elements of ritual: Air, fire, water & earth in the Wiccan circle*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Liptak, K. (1994). *Coming of age: Traditions and rituals around the world*. Brookfield, CN: The Millbrook Press.
- Long, M.F. (1948, 1976). *The secret science behind miracles*. Marina del Rey, CA: DeVorss.

- Loos, L. K. (1997). *Sitting in council: An ecopsychological approach to working with stories in wilderness rites of passage* (Doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 1997). *Dissertation Abstracts International-B* 67 (02).
- Macy, J. (1989). Awakening to the ecological self. In Judith Plant (Ed.). *Healing the wounds: The promise of ecofeminism* (pp. 202- 204). Philadelphia: New Society.
- Malidoma Patrice Somé (1993). *Ritual: Power, healing, and community*. Portland, OR: Swan/Raven.
- Mehl-Madrona, L. (1997). *Coyote medicine: Lessons from Native American healing*. New York: Simon & Schuster Fireside.
- Merchant, C. (1989, 1990). *The death of nature*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Mertens, D. M. (1988). *Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative & qualitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, A. (1979, 1997). *The drama of the gifted child: The search for the true self*. New York: Basic.
- Mindell, A. (1992). *The leader as martial artist: An introduction to deep democracy*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Neuwirth, M. (2006). A study of the intersection of nature, gender, and organizational socialization in western wilderness programs for at-risk youth (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Utah, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International-A* 67 (03).
- Oleson, V. (1994). Feminism and models of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 158-174). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Oosten, J., Laugrand, F., & Remie, C. (2006). Perceptions of decline: Inuit shamanism in the Canadian Arctic. *Ethnohistory*, 53(3), 445.
- Paper, J. (1997). *Through the earth darkly: Female spirituality in comparative perspective*. New York: The Continuum.
- Perkinson, J. (2002). The gift/curse of "second sight": is "Blackness" a shamanic category in the myth of America? *History of religions*. Chicago: Aug 2002. 42(1): 19-58.



- Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. New York: Random House.
- Pipher, M. (1996). *The shelter of each other: Rebuilding our families*. New York: Random House.
- Reason, P. (Ed.). (1994a). *Participation in human inquiry*. London: Sage.
- Reason, P. (1994b). Three approaches to participative inquiry. In N.K. Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 324-339). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.
- Roesel, M. (1993). *Kinaalda: A Navajo girl grows up*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company.
- Rush, A. K. (1976). *Moon, Moon*. New York: Random House.
- Ryan, K. C. (2006). Attachment style, centrality of groups membership, reported emotional intelligence and friendships in children and adolescents (Doctoral dissertation, Adelphi University, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International-B*, 67 (04).
- Salomonsen, J. (2002). *Enchanted feminism: The Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco*. London: Routledge.
- Sams, J., & Carson, D. (1988). *Medicine cards: The discovery of power through the ways of animals*. Santa Fe: Bear.
- Silent Wolf (2006). *The Native American talking stick*. Retrieved November 8, 2006, from <http://healing.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm>.
- Simonton, C., & Simonton, S. (1978). *Getting well again: The best-selling book about the Simontons' revolutionary lifesaving self-awareness techniques*. New York: Bantam.
- Spretnak, C. (1980). In Charlene Spretnak (Ed.) (1982), *The politics of women's spirituality: Essays on the rise of spiritual power within the feminist movement*. Garden City (p. xi). NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Staadecker, R. (1999). Preparing daughters for the adolescent passage by strengthening their connection to women and to the feminine: The mother daughter goddess group (Doctoral dissertation, The Union Institute, 1999). *Dissertation Abstracts International*. 60 (3-B), 1332. (UMI No. 9921607)
- Starhawk (1982). *Dreaming the dark: Magic, sex, and politics*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Starhawk (2004). *The earth path: Grounding your spirit in the rhythms of nature*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Stevens, J., & Stevens, L. S. (1988) *Secrets of shamanism: Tapping the spirit power within you*. New York: Avon Books.
- Sue, D.W., & Sue, D. (2003). *Counseling the culturally different*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tallard Johnson, J. (2001). *The thundering years: Rituals and sacred wisdom for teens*. Rochester, VT: Bindu /Inner Traditions International.
- Tedlock, B. (2005). *The woman in the shaman's body: Reclaiming the feminine in religion and medicine*. New York: Random House.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Vale, V., & Sulak, J. (2001). *Modern pagans: An investigation of contemporary pagan practices*. San Francisco: RE/Search.
- Van Gennep, A. (1909). *The rites of passage*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Von Franz, M-L. (1975). *C.G. Jung: His myth in our time*. New York: G.B. Putnam's Sons.
- Voss, R., Douville, V., Little Soldier, A., & Twiss, G. (1999). Tribal and shamanic-based social work practice: A Lakota perspective. *Social Work*, 44(3), 228-242.
- Wagner, S.R. (2001). *Sisters in spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) influence on early American feminists*. Summertown, TN: Native Voices.
- Waite, D-S. J. (1986). *The archetype and myth of Sophia: An exploration of feminine wisdom-consciousness*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto.
- Ware, A. (2006). Latina mothers' parenting and girls' anxiety and depression in an urban sample: Associations with ethnic identity and neighborhood context (Doctoral dissertation, University of New York, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International-B* 67 (04).
- Warren, K. (2000). *Ecofeminist philosophy: A western perspective on what it is and why it matters*. Latham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Wittig, M. (1969), Les Guérillères. In Charlene Spretnak (Ed.) (1982), *The politics of women's spirituality: Essays on the rise of spiritual power within the feminist movement*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday.



Wolf, N. (1991). *The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women*. New York: William Morrow.

Zukav, G. (1979). *The dancing Wu-Li masters: An overview of the new physics*. New York: William Morrow.

## Appendix A: Hawaiian Prayer for Forgiveness

### Ho'o'pono-pono

#### Hawaiian Prayer for Forgiveness

Great Spirit, I wish to make a Ho'o'pono-pono now.

I wish to forgive (*name*) for (*whatever he/she did*).

I send all of (*name's*) energy back to him/her now, in whatever form is most healing.

I ask to be forgiven, and I forgive myself now, for any thoughts, words, or actions by which I may have hurt my Self or any other Self, especially (*name*), at any time, in any place, in any dimension.

May the energy of those thoughts, words, or actions be transformed now into pure positive energy. May that pure positive energy return to me now to use for the highest good of all concerned in this matter.

It is done.

## Appendix B: Shamanic Journey

### Finding Your Ally/Spirit Guide

*I use a small Native American skin drum for this exercise. I begin with a slow, regular beat, like a heartbeat, and keep this up as I talk. First I explain the use of the drum.*

This is a Native American drum. My people use it to journey-- in fact, this sort of drum is called the shaman's "horse!" A shamanic journey is a kind of meditation in which you find yourself traveling in your imagination to another place-- perhaps it's a place up high, in the clouds or at the top of a mountain. It could be a low place, under a tree or even underground, in a cave. Many people find themselves at one of their favorite places-- the beach, perhaps, or in a grassy meadow, or at a family vacation place. Sometimes it's a place right inside your own body, and it might look like your heart, or your lungs, or like a room which represents one of these "body places." Wherever you wind up is where you're supposed to be. It's very safe-- it's your own place after all. In this place of yours you may meet your ally or spirit guide-- a wise person or animal friend. Don't worry if you don't see an ally or spirit guide during your journey. If that happens we will use the Medicine Cards *[show them the cards]* to help you find one. Your ally will help you with your menarche ritual. You can ask questions and get answers from your ally, and maybe a symbolic gift as well.

I'll beat this drum, like this *[show them]* while I talk to you and guide you along this journey. When you hear 4 quick beats 3 times *[show them]* you'll know it's time to end the journey and start coming back into everyday awareness. I'll beat the drum much faster *[show them]* to help you return. When you are back in your body and feel ready, you may open your eyes. At that point, the drumbeats will fade softly away, and we'll start on the next part of this practice, which is to make a drawing about our journey. When everyone has finished their drawings, we can begin to share what happened for us during the journey. Let's just do a quick "sample journey" so you get the feel of it. *[I guide participants through a very short journey, as described above, without waiting for the appearance of an ally-- just a quick "in-and-out" experience.]*

Any questions? *[allow time for questions]* OK. Let's begin. *[slow regular drum beats]* Just make yourself comfortable. Feel your body in the chair (or cushion), your feet on the ground. *[pause]* Now take 3 deep breaths. As you exhale the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, just pretend that you're very small, a tiny little person, and creep up to the top of your head. Imagine you are looking down through a little hole there-- that's your *kopavi*, or crown chakra. In your imagination you may see a passageway, a sort of tunnel or staircase spiraling down. *[pause]*

When you feel ready, start to move slowly down your imaginary passageway. You may see cave openings or doorways on either side as you move down. One of them may feel special-- you'll want to go in there. Feel free to go into that space. Take your time, enjoy looking around, getting to know that space. There's nothing to fear-- it's your own safe space. Remember you can always wake yourself up anytime you like. Just look around and see what's there. Don't change anything, though-- just let it be what it is. Is it a cave? A room? Does it have a window? Any furniture? Is it outdoors? What does it look like? *[pause]*

Sit quietly in your space for a few minutes. Soon you may see someone or something coming towards you. This could be an animal, another person, a spirit, maybe just a bright light. It could be anything at all. This is your ally, your spirit guide. This ally has come to help you answer any question you may have about your menarche ritual or about anything else that's really important to you. Sit with your ally for a minute, ask your question, and listen carefully. The ally may speak to you in words or give you a silent message, or maybe a vision, which is the answer to your question. When this happens, thank your ally. Ask your ally what you need to do about this question and its answer. Somehow you will get a response. *[pause]* Remember if no ally comes, you can choose an animal guide with the Medicine Cards after this journey.

When you feel like you understand your ally's message, thank your ally again. Ask your ally to give you a gift-- something symbolic, like a stone, or a feather, or a bead--something that will help you remember this visit. Be sure to thank your ally for the gift! *[pause, then the series of 4 sharp beats, followed by rapid drumming]*

Now it's time to return. Say goodbye to your ally, look around your special place one more time so you can remember it and come back to it whenever you want to. Start to come back now, out through the doorway or cave entrance, back up the passageway to your *kopavi*. Climb back out onto the top of your head, and as you begin to resume your normal size, be aware that you are back in your body. You can wiggle your fingers and your toes. You can feel your body in the chair (or cushion), your feet on the ground. Take 3 deep breaths. As you exhale the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, slowly open your eyes, and be here now.

*As participants open their eyes and begin to look around, I indicate the pastels/pens and paper beside them.*

Without speaking just yet, pick up the paper and pastels beside you, and make a drawing of what you remember from your journey. Take about 10 minutes to do this-- it doesn't have to be too artistic-- just something to remind you of what was important to you during the journey. When everyone is finished with their drawing, those who want to can begin to share what happened for them during the journey. *[10-15 minute pause]*

Looks like folks are finishing up. I'll share my journey so you get the idea. *[I show my drawing and briefly share my journey.]* Who else would like to share their journey? Please let us know if you want us to comment afterwards, or if you'd rather we just be quiet and sit with what you tell us. Also, please remember to allow time for others who might want to share. *[Participants begin to talk about their journeys and show their drawings. This usually takes about 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending upon whether girls, mentors, or wise elders feel moved to comment briefly on a particular piece.]*

*As this part of the session comes to a close, I say:*

Does anyone want to say anything else about their experience? It might be a good idea to write about this journey experience in your journal. Remember to keep your drawing where you can see it-- often these drawings have more messages for us after we take them home and look at them over the next several days. We'll talk about the journey the next time we meet, and about how this experience can help us with our ritual.

## Appendix C: Wise Elders' Consent Form

### To the Participant in this Research:

You are invited to participate as a Wise Elder in a study to investigate the short-term effects of co-creating-- with adolescent girls, their mentors, and the researcher-- a menarche or coming-of-age ritual for adolescent girls. Your chief role will be to advise me as the researcher and work with me on creating a blueprint for this process. In order to accomplish this goal, we will need to meet two or three times before the actual project begins. After the project begins, your continued presence as a representative of the community of Wise Elders is strongly encouraged, particularly since this is a study of the effects of mentoring and ritual based upon close personal relationship among group members. However, if you wish, you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the conduct of the study and for any reason without penalty or prejudice.

The procedure will involve one initial audiotaped face-to-face interview with me to see if you qualify and would like to be part of this study, and a total of 5 consecutive weekly meetings and one follow-up meeting a week after the 5th meeting with other participants and their mentors, several wise elder women, and me as the researcher. During the first meeting we will share stories and identify our challenges. In the second meeting we will learn how to keep a project journal, do a guided meditation called "shamanic journey" to find our inner helper or "ally," and make art together. During the next couple of meetings we will design and perform the ritual, which will include confronting our challenges. After the ritual meeting and community feast (to which your mentee may invite parents, other family members, or close friends), we will take a week's break. During the 6th and final meeting we will review the experience of creating and enacting our ritual, and share how we see this process affecting our lives. Portions of each of these meetings may be audiotaped.

For the protection of your privacy, all information that you provide will be kept confidential in a locked file cabinet in my office. You are not required to share any personal information, but in the event that you choose to share, your identity will be protected, and I will transcribe all written material myself. If it becomes necessary, I will hire a professional transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement. All information that might identify you will be altered to ensure your anonymity.

The study is designed to minimize potential risks to you. However, you might find that you feel anxious or fearful about sharing personal information in a group. If at any time you have questions or concerns about any issue, I will make every effort to discuss your concerns with you and help you find ways of

resolving them. You may call me collect at (510) 847-0412 [not home phone]. You may also call my Dissertation Chairperson Dr. Genie Palmer, at (650) 493-4430, or Dr. Olga Louchakova, the Chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, at (650) 493-4430. The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology assumes no responsibility for psychological or physical injury resulting from this research. If you would like a summary of the results of this study, please check the space indicated below and provide your address and telephone number.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I want a summary of the study results.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone

My signature below indicates that I have read and understood this form, and had any questions about this research answered to my satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Wise Elder

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wise Elder's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Valentine McKay-Riddell, MACP  
Name of Researcher

Telephone: (510) 847-0412      Email: mckayriddell@msn.com  
Researcher's Contact Information

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D: Information Letter

25 July 2005

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a doctoral student at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California. I plan to receive my Ph.D. degree in Transpersonal Psychology in Spring 2006. This letter requests your permission to invite adolescents girls from your organization to participate in a study investigating the experience of adolescent girls and their adult female mentors as they co-create and participate in a menarche ritual.

Participating female adolescents must be 11-14 years of age, comfortable with each other and with group participation, interested in the topic, and psychologically stable. They must also be able to obtain their parents' or guardians' permission and support. Mentors must be females at least 21 years of age and have considerable life experience. They must be good youth advocates, open-minded and accepting of different spiritual practices and of people from different cultures, and have their own active spiritual practice. Mentors must also be psychologically stable.

The procedure for all participants will involve one initial face-to-face interview with the researcher to see if they qualify and would like to be part of this study, and a total of 8 consecutive weekly meetings with a 9<sup>th</sup> follow-up meeting, held one month after the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, with other participants and their mentors, several "wise elder" women who have created or participated in menarche ritual, and me as the researcher. During the first few meetings we will share stories, learn how to keep a project journal, do guided meditations called "shamanic journeys," and make art together. During the next couple of meetings we will design and perform the menarche ritual. The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting will be a time for adolescents and mentors to share their experience of the ritual. The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting will be a community celebration to which adolescents may invite their parents, other family members, or close friends. During the 9<sup>th</sup> and final meeting we will review the experience of creating and enacting our menarche ritual, and share how we see this process affecting our lives. Portions of the initial screening interviews, as well as all of these meetings, may be audiotaped.

No results are guaranteed from participating in this study. However, in addition to finding it interesting and enjoyable, adolescent participants may learn how to tap into their creative ability, gain some self-confidence, and begin to look forward to growing up as women. Mentors may be able to revisit their own coming-of-age experiences with an adult's wisdom, validate their own growth process, and be of immeasurable help to the girls and other mentors who are participating in the study.



Please contact me by telephone (510) 847-0412 or email [mckayriddell@msn.com](mailto:mckayriddell@msn.com) with any questions you may have regarding this study. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Valentine McKay-Riddell, MACP

Appendix E: Information Flyer

GIRLS  
RITES OF PASSAGE

Would you like to participate in a fun research project?

You will choose a Mentor, and with other Girls and their Mentors  
you will help create a powerful Rite of Passage to celebrate  
becoming a Woman.

Eight weeks and a follow-up meeting one month later  
beginning September 1, 2005.

Contact:

Valentine McKay-Riddell, MACP  
(**Doctoral student** at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology)  
(510) 847-0412  
[wholebeing@orenda-arts.org](mailto:wholebeing@orenda-arts.org)

Illustrations by Angela Werneke are reprinted with permission of Jamie Sams and David Carson, authors of *The Medicine Cards*, St. Martin's Press, Copyright 1988. The authors are not affiliated in any way with the subject of the research project.

## Appendix F: Parents' or Guardians' Release

I agree to allow my daughter,

\_\_\_\_\_, to participate in this dissertation research project. I understand that she will be expected to attend all 6 consecutive weekly meetings and a 7th follow-up meeting held one week after the 6th meeting, and to keep a project journal of her experiences. I understand that she will be expected to participate in the co-creation of a coming-of-age ritual with her mentor and other participants, and to take part in that ritual. I understand that she will also be expected to maintain her academic grade level throughout this study. I understand that the purpose of the 6th meeting is for my daughter to share with the researcher and all participants whether and how the process of creating and enacting this ritual has affected her daily life.

I understand that my daughter's name and any other identifying information about her will be changed in order to protect her identity since this dissertation will be published. If it becomes necessary, the researcher will hire a professional transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement. I also understand that my signature below gives the researcher, Valentine McKay-Riddell, permission to include non-identifying information audiotaped during my daughter's initial interview and/or during group meetings, written comments she will hand in after each meeting, photocopies of her art work, and anything she feels she wishes to share from her project journal.

I understand that no results are guaranteed from participating in this study. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary, and that my daughter has the right to withdraw from this dissertation research project at any time and for any reason without penalty. I also understand that the study is designed to minimize potential risks to my daughter; however, she may experience feelings such as anxiety or fear about sharing personal information in a group. I understand that any questions or concerns I may have about my daughter's participation in this study have been fully addressed by the researcher. I understand that I may contact the researcher at any time in the future with additional questions or concerns.

I have read this Parents' or Guardians' Release. I have also read both the Adolescent's Consent Form and the Mentor's Consent Form. My signature below indicates that I have read and understood these forms, and had any questions about this research answered to my satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's or Guardian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Parent's or Guardian's Name

Date

---

Valentine McKay-Riddell, MACP, Researcher

---

Date

### Appendix G: Consentimiento del Padre o Tutor

Doy mi consentimiento para que mi hija, \_\_\_\_\_, participe en el proyecto de investigación de tesis. Entiendo que ella atenderá 6 reuniones consecutivas, una por semana y una sexta reunión después de una semana de descanso seguida por la reunión numero 6 y que ella llevara un diario donde escribirá sus experiencias. Entiendo que se espera que mi hija participe en la co-creación en un ritual junto con su mentora y las otras participantes y que participará en dicho ritual. Entiendo que se espera que mi hija mantenga buenas calificaciones mientras participa en este estudio. Entiendo que el propósito de la reunión numero 7 es para que mi hija comparta con la investigadora y las demás participantes como su participación en la creación y participación en el ritual ha afectado su vida diaria.

Entiendo que el nombre de mi hija y cualquier otra información que la identifique serán cambiados para proteger su identidad ya que la tesis será publicada. Si es necesario, la investigadora contratará un transcriptor profesional quien firmará un acuerdo de confidencialidad. También entiendo que mi firma en este documento da permiso a la investigadora, Valentine McKay-Riddell de incluir información sin identificación que fue grabada en casete durante la entrevista inicial con mi hija y/o durante las reuniones con el grupo, así como comentarios por escrito que ella entregar después de cada reunión, fotocopias de su trabajo de arte y cualquier otra cosa que ella desee compartir de su diario.

Entiendo que puede no haber resultados garantizados por la participación en este estudio. Entiendo que la participación es totalmente voluntaria y que mi hija tiene el derecho de dejar de participar en el estudio de investigación de la tesis en cualquier momento y por cualquier razón sin ninguna penalidad. También entiendo que el estudio esta diseñado para minimizar cualquier potencial de riesgo para mi hija; de cualquier manera, ella puede experimentar sentimientos como ansiedad o miedo al tener que compartir información personal con el grupo. Entiendo que cualquier pregunta o preocupación que yo tenga acerca de la participación de mi hija en este estudio han sido explicadas por la investigadora. Entiendo que puedo contactar a la investigadora en cualquier momento con preguntas y preocupaciones adicionales.

He leído la forma de Consentimiento del Padre o Tutor. También leí las formas de Consentimiento de la Adolescente y la forma de Consentimiento del Mentor. Mi firma al calce indica que he leído y entiendo estas formas y que las preguntas que tenía han sido contestadas a mi entera satisfacción.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma de la Madre o Tutor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre de la Madre o Tutor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Padre o Tutor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Padre o Tutor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Valentine McKay-Riddell, MACP, Investigadora.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

## Appendix H: Adolescents' Consent Form

To the Participant in this Research:

You are invited to participate in a study to investigate the short-term effects of co-designing-- with your mentor, other participants, and their mentors-- your own coming-of-age ritual.

The procedure will involve one initial audiotaped face-to-face interview to see if you qualify and would like to be part of this study, and a total of 6 consecutive weekly meetings and one follow-up meeting a week after the 6th meeting with other participants and their mentors, several wise elder women, and with me as the researcher. Each meeting should last 2-3 hours. Throughout this study, you will be expected to maintain your academic grade level. If you do qualify and wish to participate, you will be asked to choose a mentor to partner with you throughout the process. *Your mentor must fulfill all the following requirements:*

1. Your mentor must be female, at least 21 years old, with some life experience, and be someone you respect. She may be an aunt, older sister, grandmother, or family friend. Some girls like to choose their mothers and that is fine.
2. She must be someone who has an active spiritual practice (regularly attends church, synagogue, temple, or other spiritual community gatherings).
3. She must be a good advocate for young people.
4. She must be open-minded and accepting of non-traditional as well as traditional spiritual practices.
5. She must be comfortable working with people from different cultures.

After you choose your mentor, I will interview her. If for any reason she does not qualify, you may choose a second mentor. It may be a good idea to have a back-up mentor in mind. If you cannot think of anyone who qualifies, or if you need help in finding a mentor, I will help you find someone who matches your interests.

During the first meeting we will share stories and identify our challenges. In the second meeting we will learn how to keep a project journal, do a guided meditation called "shamanic journey" to find our inner helper or "ally," and make art together. During the next couple of meetings we will design and perform the ritual, which will include confronting our challenges. After the ritual meeting and community feast (to which you may invite your parents, other family members, or close friends), we will take a week's break. During the 6th and final meeting we will review the experience of creating and enacting our ritual, and share how we see this process affecting our lives. Portions of each of these meetings may be audiotaped.

For the protection of your privacy, all information that you provide will be kept confidential in a locked file cabinet in my office. Your identity will be protected, since you will choose your own fictitious ritual name, and I will transcribe all written material myself. If it becomes necessary, I will hire a professional transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement. All information that might identify you will be altered to ensure your anonymity. However, by signing this form, you give me permission to include in the study audiotaped parts of your story as told during the initial interview and during group meetings, written comments you will hand in after each meeting, photocopies of your art work, and whatever you want to share from your project journal.

No results are guaranteed from participating in this study. However, you may find your participation a fun and enjoyable experience. You may learn how to tap into your creative ability, discover that you have a special animal spirit or wise inner guide, gain some self-confidence, and gain a more positive attitude about growing up as a woman.

The study is designed to minimize potential risks to you. However, you might find that you feel anxious or fearful about sharing personal information in a group. If at any time you have questions or concerns about any issue, I will make every effort to discuss your concerns with you and help you find ways of resolving them. You may call me collect at (510) 847-0412 [not home phone]. You may also call my Dissertation Chairperson Dr. Genie Palmer, at (650) 493-4430, or Dr. Olga Louchakova, the Chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, at (650) 493-4430. The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology assumes no responsibility for psychological or physical injury resulting from this research.

Because the success of this study depends upon a close personal relationship with your mentor and with other group members, it is important that you commit to the study for all six meetings. However, participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the conduct of the study and for any reason without penalty or prejudice. In addition to your consent, you will also need your parent's or guardian's consent to participate in this study. There is a space for your parent's or guardian's signature on page 3 of this form, and you will be given another form, the Parent's or Guardian's Release Form, for your parent or guardian to sign. *Please have your parent or guardian sign and return both forms to me.*

If you would like a summary of the results of this study, please check the space indicated below and provide your address and telephone number.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I want a summary of the study results.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address



---

Telephone

My signature below indicates that I have read and understood this form, and had any questions about this research answered to my satisfaction.

---

Name of Participant

---

Date

---

Participant's Signature

---

Name of Participant's Parent/Guardian

---

Date

---

Parent/Guardian's Signature

---

Name of Participant's Parent/Guardian

---

Date

---

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Valentine McKay-Riddell, MACP  
Name of Researcher

Telephone: (510) 847-0412      Email: mckayriddell@msn.com  
Researcher's Contact Information

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

## Appendix I: Mentors' Consent Form

To the Participant in this Research:

You are invited to participate as a Mentor in a study to investigate the short-term effects of co-designing-- with your mentee, other participants, and their mentors-- a coming-of-age ritual for adolescent girls. *As a mentor you must fulfill all the following requirements:*

1. You must be female and at least 21 years old, with considerable life experience.
2. You may be your mentee's mother, aunt, grandmother, older sister, or family friend.
3. You have an active spiritual practice, regardless of tradition.
4. You are a good advocate for young people.
5. You are open-minded and accepting of non-traditional as well as traditional spiritual practices.
6. You are comfortable working with people from different cultures.

The procedure will involve one initial audiotaped face-to-face interview with me to see if you qualify and would like to be part of this study, and a total of 5 consecutive weekly meetings and one follow-up meeting a week after the 5th meeting with other participants and their mentors, several wise elder women, and me as the researcher. During the first meeting we will share stories and identify our challenges. In the second meeting we will learn how to keep a project journal, do a guided meditation called "shamanic journey" to find our inner helper or "ally," and make art together. During the next couple of meetings we will design and perform the ritual, which will include confronting our challenges. After the ritual meeting and community feast (to which your mentee may invite parents, other family members, or close friends), we will take a week's break. During the 6th and final meeting we will review the experience of creating and enacting our ritual, and share how we see this process affecting our lives. Portions of each of these meetings may be audiotaped.

For the protection of your privacy, all information that you provide will be kept confidential in a locked file cabinet in my office. If it becomes necessary, I will hire a professional transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Your identity will be protected, since you will choose your own fictitious ritual name, and I will transcribe all written material myself. All information that might identify you will be altered to ensure your anonymity. However, by signing this form, you give me permission to include in the study audiotaped parts of your story as told during the initial interview and during group meetings, written comments you will hand in after each meeting, photocopies of your art work, and whatever you want to share from your project journal.

No results are guaranteed from participating in this study. However, in addition to finding this an interesting and enjoyable experience, you may be able to revisit your own coming-of-age experience with the wisdom of an adult, validate your own personal and spiritual growth process, and be of help to the girls and other mentors who are participating in the study.

The study is designed to minimize potential risks to you. However, you might find that you feel anxious or fearful about sharing personal information in a group. If at any time you have questions or concerns about any issue, I will make every effort to discuss your concerns with you and help you find ways of resolving them. You may call me collect at (510) 847-0412 [not home phone]. You may also call my Dissertation Chairperson Dr. Genie Palmer, at (650) 493-4430, or Dr. Olga Louchakova, the Chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, at (650) 493-4430. The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology assumes no responsibility for psychological or physical injury resulting from this research.

Because this is a study of the effects of mentoring and ritual based upon close personal relationship with your mentee and with other group members, you are requested to commit to the study for the length of its duration. However, participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the conduct of the study and for any reason without penalty or prejudice.

If you would like a summary of the results of this study, please check the space indicated below and provide your address and telephone number.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I want a summary of the study results.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone

My signature below indicates that I have read and understood this form, and had any questions about this research answered to my satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Valentine McKay-Riddell, MACP

Name of Researcher

Telephone: (510) 847-0412      Email: mckayriddell@msn.com  
Researcher's Contact Information

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix J: Pre-Rite Questions for Mentors

1. Why am I here?
2. What is my experience of mentoring?
3. What do I wish for my mentee?
4. What do I wish for myself?

## Appendix K: What is a Ritual?

### 1. *What is a Ritual, or a Rite of Passage?*

All Rituals are symbolic acts. A Rite of Passage is an enactment or play that depicts overcoming a challenge, celebrates an accomplishment, or marks a transition.

### 2. *What is the purpose of a Rite of Passage—what does it do?*

It helps a person cross a threshold between one state of being (childhood) and the next (young womanhood).

### 3. *What are the parts of a Rite of Passage? It*

- (a) defines a person's question, her *quest*, or that which she wants;
- (b) defines her *challenge*, or that which stands between her and what she wants;
- (c) invokes protection from an *ally* or spiritual guide who helps her overcome the challenge;
- (d) confronts her with her challenge; and
- (e) rewards her when she has overcome the challenge. The reward could be actual (i.e., the young woman's increased feelings of strength or accomplishment; her knowing that she is accepted as a new member of the community of adult women) or symbolic, (i.e., a ring or necklace with precious stones representing qualities that the young woman has acquired, such as kindness, wisdom, or the ability to heal).

### 3. *A Ritual can be life-affirming and can*

- (a) support growth (as in menarche, marriage, or childbirth) or
- (b) encourage acquisition, (the gaining of health, knowledge, experience, etc.)

### 4. *A Ritual can be life-denying and can*

- (a) support entropy (as in war, rape, domestic violence, substance abuse) or
- (b) encourage release or dissolution (as in death, divorce, etc.)

A Rite of Passage is a *life-affirming* Ritual. It provides a “threshold experience,” for the young person who is in a place of *liminality*—a middle place or threshold.

On a threshold you are neither here nor there. You are no longer a child and not yet a woman. Your younger friends and siblings no longer see you as one of them, but your parents and older friends do not yet acknowledge you as an adult. As a woman you will experience the mysteries, privileges, and responsibilities of womanhood; you will be seen as a young woman by your younger friends, your family, and the community of women who are waiting to welcome you. But to enter the world of women you must *cross the threshold*, leave your childhood behind, and let go of a child's attitudes, actions, and playthings. Your Rite of Passage will help you do this.

*5. What are some events in your life that could be called Rituals or Rites of Passage?*

First Communion  
Confirmation  
Quinceanera

Bar Mitzvah  
Bat Mitzvah  
Graduation

*Note: The information in this document is drawn from my personal experience.*

## Appendix L: Circles & Directions

### CASTING A CIRCLE

The easiest way to cast a Circle is “hand to hand.” The leader takes the right hand of the person to her left (going sunwise or clockwise is always best!) with her left hand and says “I cast the Circle hand to hand.” The second person takes the right hand of the person to *her* left with her left hand and says “I cast the Circle hand to hand.” And so it continues until the Circle gets around to the first person (the leader) again.

When the Circle is complete, take a moment to feel your feet on the ground, to let all the busy energy of the day drain down into Mother Earth, to draw strength and peace up from Mother Earth into your body.

### CALLING THE DIRECTIONS

The Directions, Quarters, or Airs (as the Celts say) are East, South, West, and North. We always begin in the East as follows:

EAST: Facing East, the caller stretches out her right hand and says, “*Power of the East, Power of Air, Power to Know, Welcome! Guard our Circle and witness our Rites.*”

SOUTH: Facing South, the caller stretches out her right hand and says, “*Power of the South, Power of Fire, Power to Will, Welcome! Guard our Circle and witness our Rites.*”

WEST: Facing West, the caller stretches out her right hand and says, “*Power of the West, Power of Water, Power to Dare, Welcome! Guard our Circle and witness our Rites.*”

NORTH: Facing North, the caller stretches out her right hand and says, “*Power of the North, Power of Earth, Power to Keep Silent, Welcome! Guard our Circle and witness our Rites.*”

Now the Circle is complete. When everyone has finished with the business of the day, the leader opens the Circle and the callers release the Directions as follows:

EAST: Facing East, the caller stretches out her right hand and says, “*Power of the East, Power of Air, Power to Know, we thank you for guarding our Circle and witnessing our Rites. We bid you farewell.*”

SOUTH: Facing South, the caller stretches out her right hand and says, “*Power of the South, Power of Fire, Power to Dare, thank you for guarding our Circle and witnessing our Rites. We bid you farewell.*”



WEST: Facing West, the caller stretches out her right hand and says, *“Power of the West, Power of Water, Power to Dare, thank you for guarding our Circle and witnessing our Rites. We bid you farewell.”*

NORTH: Facing North, the caller stretches out her right hand and says, *“Power of the North, Power of Earth, Power to Keep Silent, thank you for guarding our Circle and witnessing our Rites. We bid you farewell.”*

The reason we do this when we begin our work together is because it helps to remind us that we are part of the Earth, the elements (air our breath, fire our spirit, water our blood and lymph, earth our bones and flesh), and everything that surrounds us—all the animals, plants, rocks, streams and oceans are related to us, for they too are made of fire, water, earth and air. We are all Children of Gaia, which is the name that ancient civilizations gave to our Mother Earth. Therefore whatever happens to her, happens to us as well.

*Note: The information in this document is drawn from my personal experience.*

## Appendix M: Mentors' Post-Rite Questionnaire

1. What did you like most about this project?
2. What did you like least about this project?
3. What did you like or dislike about the Shamanic Journeys?
4. What did you like or dislike about the Mask project?
5. What did you like or dislike about the Ritual?
6. How would you have changed any of these activities?
7. Were you comfortable with your Mentee? What did you like about her? Would you like to continue seeing your Mentee?
8. Were you uncomfortable with your Mentee? Why?
9. Do you feel different now from when we began? In what ways?
10. How will you integrate these changes into your everyday life?

## Appendix N: Adolescents' Post-Rite Questionnaire

1. What did you like most about this project?
2. What did you like least about this project?
3. What did you like about the Ritual?
4. How would you have changed the Ritual?
5. Were you comfortable with your Mentor? What did you like about her?  
Would you like to continue seeing your Mentor?
6. Were you uncomfortable with your Mentor? Why?
7. Does your Ritual Name say something about who you are or who you  
want to be?
8. Does your Mask say something about you?
9. Did you like the shamanic journeys? Would you want to do shamanic  
journeys yourself or with a group of friends?
10. Do you feel different now from when we began? In what ways?
11. How will you use what you have learned here in your everyday life?  
(Use the blank page to answer this question.)

## Appendix O: Medicine Cards

### Medicine Cards: Discovery of Power through the Ways of Animals

Jamie Sams & David Carson  
Illustrated by Angela Werneke

The Medicine Cards (Sams & Carson, 1988) were given to me by my teacher, Nancy Ananda Howell, for my birthday in 1988. Since then, I have used them in many ways and for many purposes—but their chief purpose has been to facilitate understanding and deep healing in myself and in others. Sams and Carson write:

We are very fortunate to have been handed down these teachings from many elders in the Choctaw, Lakota, Seneca, Aztec, Yaqui, Cheyenne, Cherokee, Iroquois, and Mayan traditions. Due to the diverse teachings of these traditions, we have only scratched the surface of a deep understanding that is possible with this system of divination . . . . Our intention, as shamans and healers, is to begin a process for many people who have never understood their connection to our Mother Earth and to all her creatures. We hope to open a new doorway of understanding for those who seek the Oneness of all life. (1988, p. 11)

The purpose of this study was to enable adolescent girls to begin, through the process of co-creating an Earth-based Rite of Passage, to understand their connection to the Earth and to the deep feminine energy of the Earth. The Medicine Cards were perhaps the most powerful tool used in this project.

I was fortunate, during the early '90s, to meet and, for a brief time, to work with David Carson on another project of mine, a written and videotaped compilation of the efforts of many dedicated people whose lives have been devoted to healing the Earth and to preserving those teachings which make this possible. (This project, which is still in progress, was called "Earth Keepers." I hope soon to finish it.) During our time together, David shared that he and Jamie

Sams had received the information contained in this book and in the cards through direct channeling over a period of several days, from the Source which he refers to as “Great Mystery.” In view of the fact that every time I have used the cards they have revealed the deepest truth of my life at that time, and that this has been true for my clients and students as well, I believe him. It was in this spirit of trust that I offered the cards to the girls in this study, in hopes that they would be helped as I have been.

The original Medicine Cards set consists of a deck of 44 cards and a book explaining the characteristics and teachings of the various animals in the deck. These include Eagle, Hawk, Elk, Deer, Bear, Snake, Skunk, Otter, Butterfly, Turtle, Moose, Porcupine, Coyote, Dog, Wolf, Raven, Mountain Lion, Lynx, Buffalo, Mouse, Owl, Beaver, Opossum, Crow, Fox, Squirrel, Dragonfly, Armadillo, Badger, Rabbit, Turkey, ant, Weasel, Grouse, Horse, Lizard, Antelope, Frog, Swan, Dolphin, Whale, Bat, Spider, and Hummingbird. There are also 9 blank cards, which may be used to represent any animal not found in the deck. (My latest is Shark.)

The girls in this study found that the animals they chose represented exactly the qualities that they needed to meet their challenges. Photo reproductions\* of the 8 cards chosen by the girls (two girls chose the same card) are included in Appendix Q.

Sams and Carson note:

To understand the concept of medicine in the Native American way, one must redefine “medicine.” The medicine referred to in this book is anything that improves one’s connection to the Great Mystery and to all life....This medicine is also anything which brings personal power,

strength, and understanding. It is the constant living of life in a way that brings healing to the Earth Mother and to all of our associates, family, friends, and fellow creatures. Our fellow creatures, the animals, exhibit habit patterns that will relay these messages of healing to anyone astute enough to observe their lessons on how to live. (1988, p. 13)

\*Note: Illustrations by Angela Werneke are reprinted with permission of Jamie Sams and David Carson, Authors of the Medicine Cards, St. Martin's Press, Copyright 1988. The authors are not affiliated in any way with this research project.

## Appendix P: Girls' Rites of Passage Demographic Information

Please fill in the information below and return to Ms. Turoczi.

**Your Ritual Name**

**Your Age**

**Your Family's Cultural Background**

**Your Religious Preference**

## Appendix Q: Medicine Card Imagery and Limited Permission Letter

## BOGATIN, CORMAN &amp; GOLD

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

M.J. BOGATIN  
WILLIAM CORMAN  
ANDREW M. GOLD\*

THE ROTUNDA BUILDING  
300 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA, SUITE 370  
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612  
TELEPHONE (510) 832-5005  
FACSIMILE (510) 832-5020  
E-MAIL [info@bcgattorneys.com](mailto:info@bcgattorneys.com)  
[www.bcgattorneys.com](http://www.bcgattorneys.com)

503 DOLORES AVENUE, STE. 201  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94110  
TELEPHONE (415) 982-5530  
FACSIMILE (415) 982-5550

\* ALSO ADMITTED TO PRACTICE IN  
THE STATE OF NEW YORK

May 18, 2006

Valentine McKay-Riddell, MACP  
1911b Berryman St.  
Berkeley, CA 94709

Re: MEDICINE CARDS Imagery  
Limited Permission

Dear Ms. McKay-Riddell:

As I recall, last year you requested permission to use certain of the MEDICINE CARDS illustrations for your "Girls' Rites of Passage Research Project" invitation flyer. Permission was granted for this purpose with the understanding that you would provide the following credit:

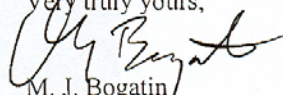
"Illustrations by Angela Werneke are reprinted with permission of Jamie Sams and David Carson, authors of the MEDICINE CARDS, St. Martin's Press, Copyright 1988. The authors are not affiliated in any way with this research project."

You have recently requested permission that in conjunction with the Project, your research participants had selected up to nine MEDICINE CARDS images, a single copy of which was provided to them at the end of the Project. I further understand that you may need to reproduce the images in a limited capacity in conjunction with your upcoming dissertation on the subject.

With the co-authors' authority, this letter confirms your limited permission to use up to nine images in the manners indicated above. It is my understanding that the dissertation may be published by UMI, but for publication purposes by UMI, the MEDICINE CARD imagery will not be used. With respect to your dissertation use, a credit to Ms. Werneke and the publishers in conjunction with your use of the imagery would be expected in whatever copies contain the imagery, along with the requisite copyright notice in the name of the authors.

If you have further questions or concerns regarding the particulars of this letter, you may contact me as needed.

Very truly yours,



M. J. Bogatin

MJB:bb  
cc: clients





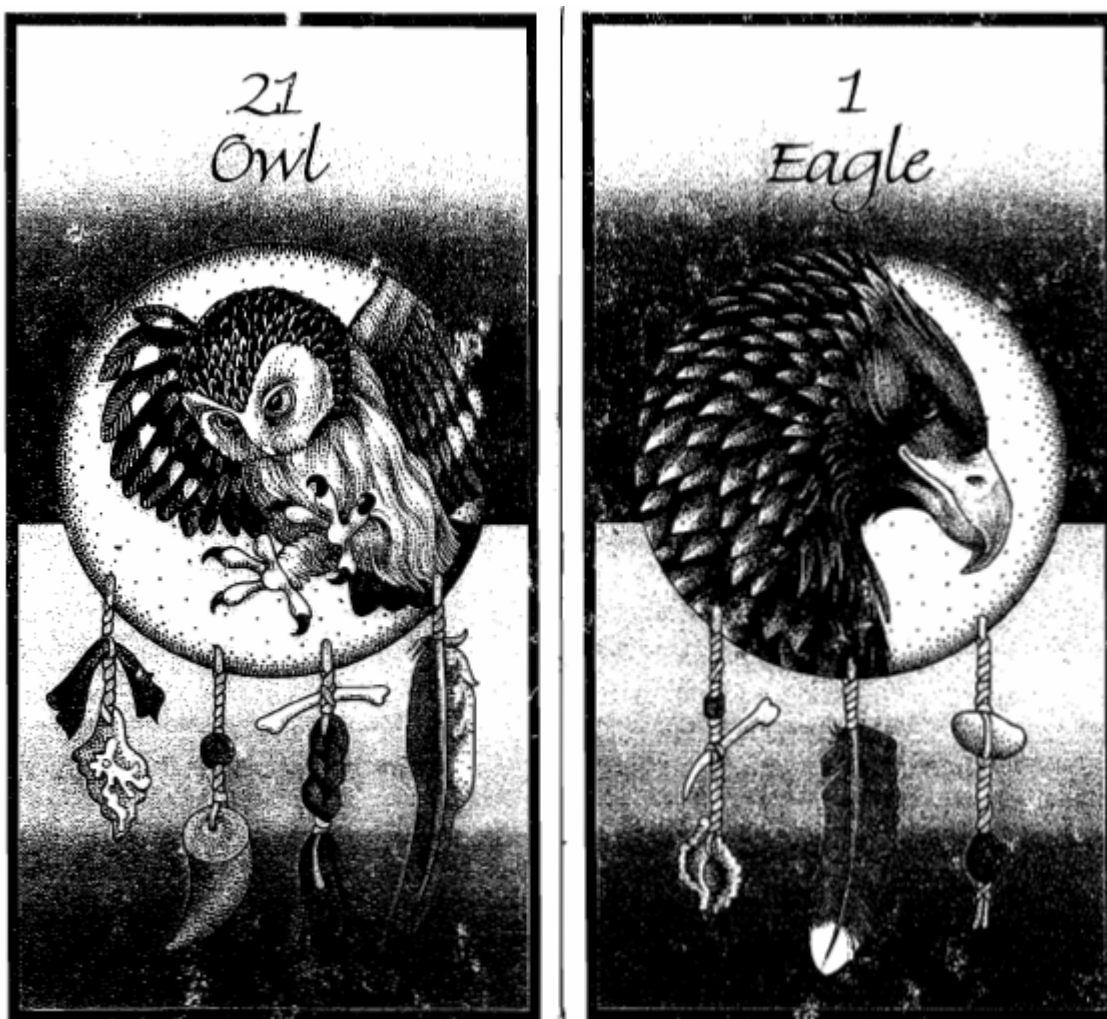


Figure 23. Owl and Eagle Medicine Cards©

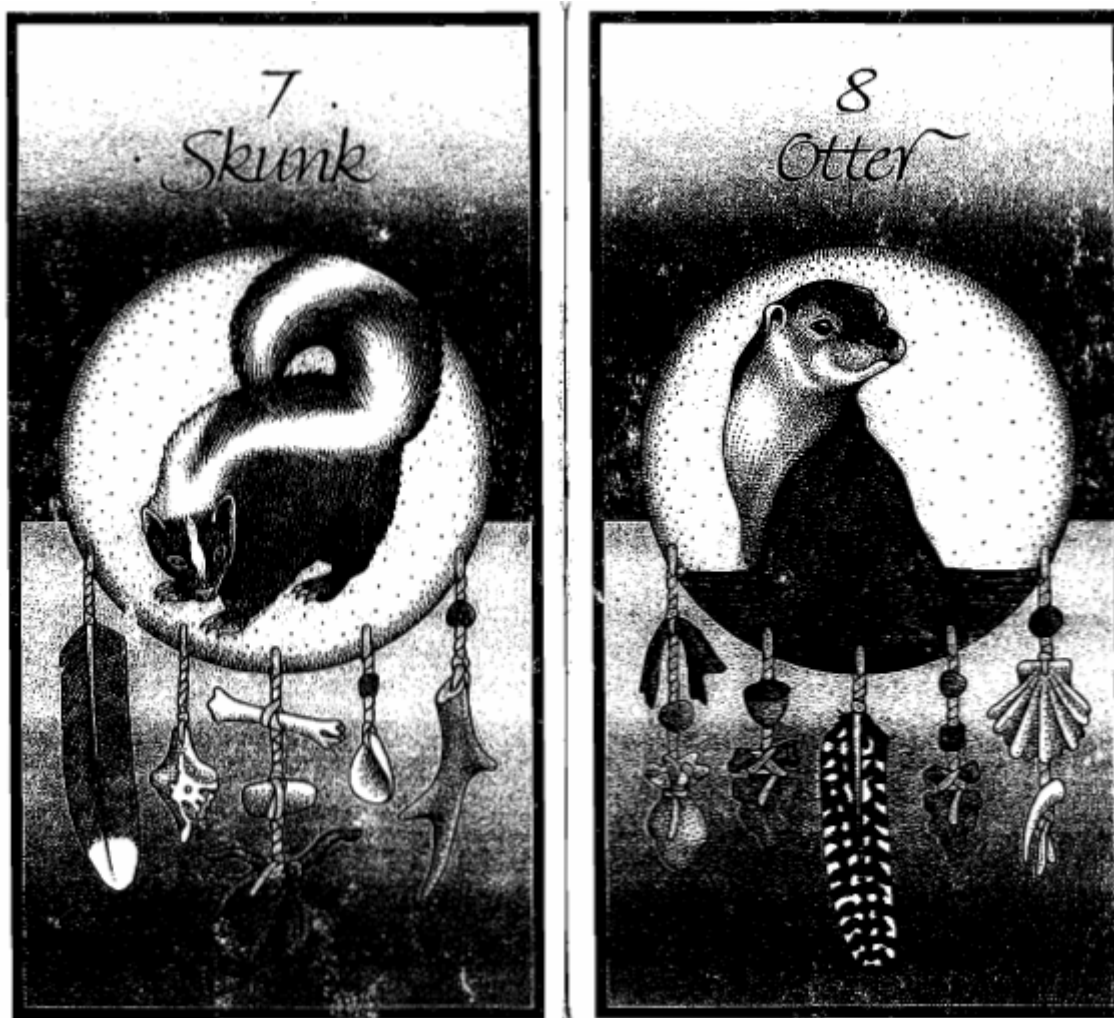


Figure 24. Skunk and Otter Medicine Cards©

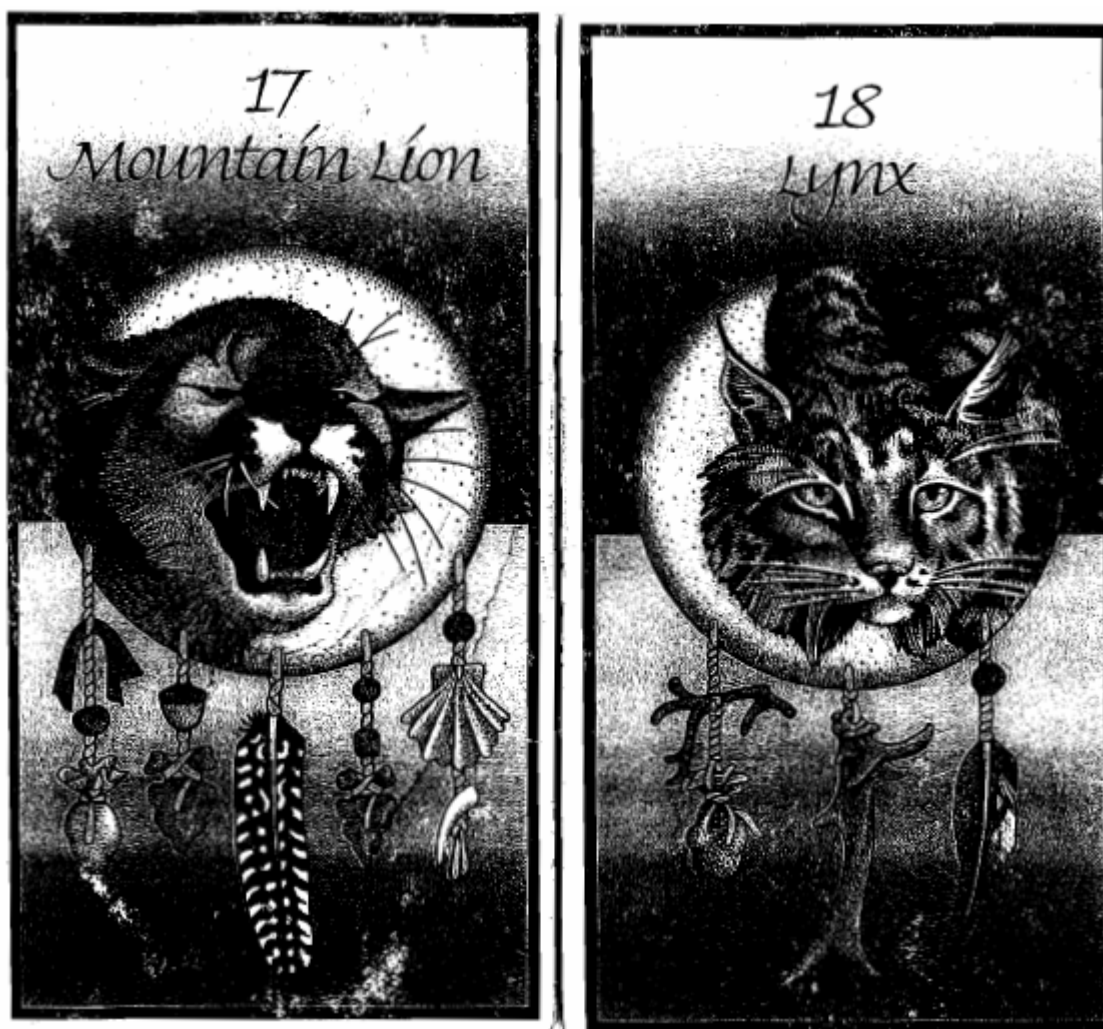


Figure 25. Mountain Lion and Lynx Medicine Cards©

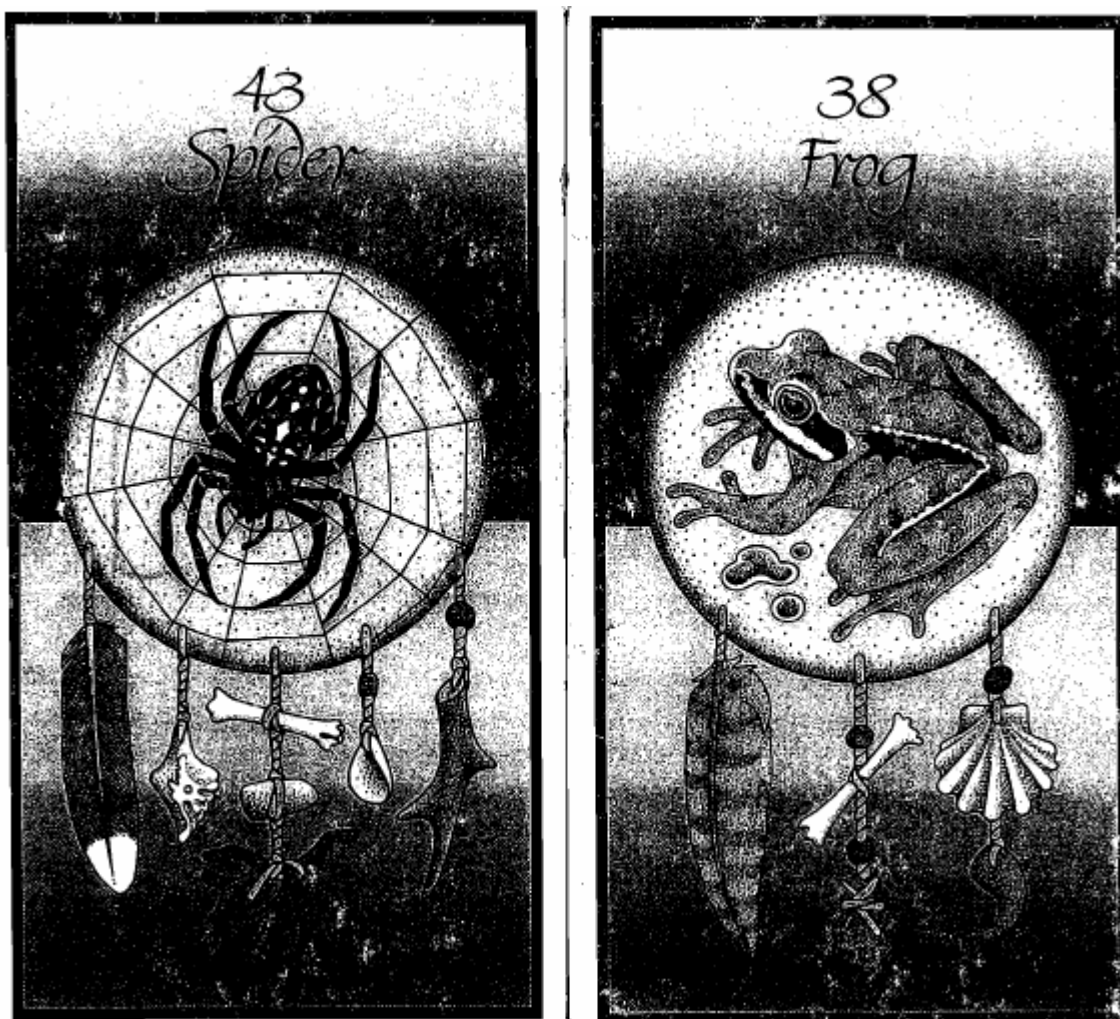


Figure 26. Spider and Frog Medicine Cards©