

Puberty Ceremonies for Young Women: A critical appraisal of scholarly work

By

Katie Hobson

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Chairperson Dr. Michael J. Zogry

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Dr. William Lindsey

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Dr. Daniel Stevenson

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The Thesis Committee for Katie Hobson certifies that this  
is the approved version of the following dissertation:

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Chairperson Dr. Michael J. Zogry

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## Abstract

This thesis is the first critical appraisal of two foundational and influential scholarly sources in the study of girls' coming-of-age ceremonies in the United States: Bruce Lincoln's *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation*; and Carol Markstrom's *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls: Ritual Expressions at Puberty*. These two books are the most well-known examples of scholarship in this area of study. Though brief reviews of both works exist, there are no substantial critiques that illuminate what I will argue is both books' lack of cultural and historical context. Both authors commit major oversights in their analyses that result in mischaracterizations of selected cultural practices of Navajo and Apache communities. In turn, certain of their conclusions misdirect research in puberty studies. My thesis also serves as a critique of broader trends in this scholarship, including deconstruction of what I term "the rhetoric of menstrual shaming" that further hinders discussions about menstruation in scholarly literature.

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## Introduction

This thesis is the first critical appraisal of two foundational and influential scholarly sources in the study of girls' coming-of-age ceremonies in the United States: Bruce Lincoln's *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation*; and Carol Markstrom's *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls: Ritual Expressions at Puberty*. These two books are the most well-known examples of scholarship in this area of study. Though brief reviews of both works exist, there are no substantial critiques that illuminate what I will argue is both books' lack of cultural and historical context. Both authors commit major oversights in their analyses that result in mischaracterizations of selected cultural practices of Navajo and Apache communities. In turn, certain of their conclusions misdirect research in puberty studies. My thesis also serves as a critique of broader trends in this area of study, including deconstruction of what I term "the rhetoric of menstrual shaming" that further hinders discussions about menstruation in scholarly literature.

Based on my research, I argue that very little scholarship on the subject of puberty ceremonies exists, that the available sources focus almost exclusively on indigenous communities, and that these two books, the most well-known examples, are seriously flawed. Combined, the two editions of Lincoln's book have been cited almost two hundred times, mostly in scholarly books and articles.<sup>1</sup> This is a significant number considering that other representative works regarding puberty ceremonies have been cited less than half as many times. This scholarly attention along with Bruce Lincoln's renowned reputation as a scholar of religions makes his book worthy of critique. But Lincoln ignored previous scholarship by specialists in the field that directly contradicted his conclusions, such as that Navajo women have no social status and that puberty ceremonies are tools of gender oppression.

Markstrom's work analyzes puberty ceremonies in terms of prevalent adolescent theory. This scholarship asserts that broadly speaking many societies today continue to view puberty as a particularly difficult period of change for young adolescents, and that formalized rites of passage can alleviate some of the stress and pressure associated with it. In other words, there seems to be scientific data that ritual is an effective and possibly necessary process for helping adolescents understand their new social status.<sup>2</sup> However, Markstrom contributed to a history of negative stereotypes about indigenous communities by being careless in her writing, and by asserting an assumed insider's authority and knowledge.

As stated above, this investigation will also contribute to the discourse by deconstructing the rhetoric of menstrual shaming that prevents important discussions about menarche in scholarly literature. In this regard, I am building on the work of psychologists Janet Lee and Jennifer Sasser-Coen, who also noted a lack of available scholarship concerning menstruation.<sup>3</sup> They claimed, "Public and private discourses surrounding menarche often reduce it to the biological reproductive processes involved, and treat it as a hygienic crisis or a symptom-laden illness."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, they asserted,

With Western industrialized societies, medical discourses of the body – with their accomplices, the discourses of hygiene – have worked together to frame the female body and its bloody discharges as problematic and potentially pathological. This underscored the message that women's bodies and genitals (coded in terms of sexuality) must be closely monitored lest they get out of hand, and certainly must be attended to lest they smell or offend.<sup>5</sup>

Menstrual shaming is what I will term negative stigma, such as described above, regarding menstruation that influences practices of secrecy and concealment regarding this normal bodily function in women. This issue is comparable to continuing controversies over public breastfeeding in which the act of breastfeeding is commonly understood as a function of nursing mothers' bodies and is encouraged as long as it is concealed. In other words, breastfeeding is

generally deemed acceptable in private, but not public spaces.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, I argue that this culture of menstrual shaming is reflected in the lack of scholarly literature about puberty ceremonies.

Psychologists Nichole L. Wood-Barcalow, Tracy L. Tylka, and Casey L. Augustus-Horvath have noted a lack of scholarly literature that emphasized positive body image. They defined positive body image as,

an overarching love and respect for the body that allows individuals to (a) appreciate the unique beauty of their body and the functions that it performs for them; (b) accept and even admire their body, including those aspects that are inconsistent with idealized images; (c) feel beautiful, comfortable, confident, and happy with their body, which is often reflected as an outer radiance, or a “glow;” (d) emphasize their body's assets rather than dwell on their imperfections; (e) have a mindful connection with their body's needs; and (f) interpret incoming information in a body-protective manner whereby most positive information is internalized and most negative information is rejected or reframed.<sup>7</sup>

This study argued that little research emphasizes positive body image, and instead focuses on “solely the absence of negative features.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, of the fifteen girls interviewed in their study, “most students (i.e., 12) revealed that they endorsed a negative body image during adolescence.”<sup>9</sup> The researchers further asserted that positive body image is an important field of study because of the fact that “women are socialized to connect their self-worth with their appearance.”<sup>10</sup> I argue that this definition of positive body image, along with troubling evidence in Markstrom’s book, are reason enough to suggest that more scholarly attention to puberty ceremonies is warranted.

Beyond works such as those of Lincoln and Markstrom, there is a gap in scholarly literature concerning puberty ceremonies and the positive aspects of menarche in non-indigenous communities in the United States. Currently there are two ways that menarche, or the first menstruation, is discussed in scholarly literature: in terms of puberty ceremonies in indigenous



communities and in terms of hygiene and concealment as Lee and Sasser-Coen noted. Lee and Sasser-Coen explained that feminist scholars have abstained from the discussion out of fear that “by studying uniquely feminine processes such as menstruation, one might indirectly perpetuate the essentialist ideology which defines women as sex objects and reproducers, and which sees women as being at the mercy of their biology.”<sup>11</sup> Yet, to what can one attribute the lack of attention by scholars of religion?

As a generally recognized rite of passage, menarche is an appropriate topic for scholars of religion. Scholars of religion have documented the cultural significance of menstruation and puberty ceremonies in several indigenous communities in the United States. Despite interest in indigenous ceremonies of this type, little scholarly consideration has been given to whether these ceremonies are taking place in non-indigenous contexts. I argue that this is because scholars have not been immune to the culture of menstrual shaming that Lee and Sasser-Coen reveal. This is not an acceptable excuse. It is intolerable that this cultural barrier is affecting academia. I argue that research that presents the positive aspects of menarche could be a positive step toward deconstructing this stigma. Moreover, this research also is necessary to correct inaccurate representations of indigenous communities and their religious systems that have been misinterpreted through scholarship such as that of Lincoln and Markstrom.

My method of investigation will be to survey the scholarly literature related to puberty ceremonies. The interdisciplinary nature of discussing a cultural phenomenon such as menarche has necessitated consultation of scholarship in other fields of study such as Psychology, Indigenous Studies, Anthropology, and Women and Gender Studies. The survey will be followed by a thorough critical analysis of Lincoln’s and Markstrom’s often cited scholarly works that consider coming-of-age ceremonies for girls in Navajo and Apache communities. Markstrom’s

book is based on her work as a scholar of developmental psychology, and Lincoln's as a scholar of religions. Though I am not a scholar of psychology, I can address what I see as deficiencies in both Lincoln and Markstrom's works and construct arguments based on these critiques.

The theoretical basis for my critiques is derived from an indigenous feminist critique of feminist theory. Rita Gross, a well-known feminist scholar of religions, explained the duality of "feminism" as both a scholarly pursuit to include the experiences of women in history and also as a social movement to advocate for equality.<sup>12</sup> However, critiques of "feminism" have suggested that the social and political goals do not fully represent women of color.<sup>13</sup> Renya K. Ramirez, an anthropologist at the University of California in Santa Cruz, argued for the "development of *multiple* feminisms." This viewpoint recognizes, for example, that sexism manifests in different ways for women from different communities, "emphasizing the intersectional relationship between race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and nation."<sup>14</sup> I will discuss indigenous feminist theory further in Chapter 1.

Finally, before beginning my review of the scholarly literature, I will describe some of the features of Navajo girls' and Apache girls' puberty ceremonies.<sup>15</sup> Ceremonies for both communities were originally eight days long, and now they are generally two to four days long depending on how much time the girls and their families have available and whether it is a public or a private event.<sup>16</sup> Preparation begins long before a girl reaches menarche.<sup>17</sup>

Other ceremonies, along with guidance from elders, help prepare girls from a very young age for the physical and mental tasks they will endure.<sup>18</sup> For instance, a girl initiate will be expected to run increasingly longer distances in each of the four cardinal directions throughout the ceremony, representing her passage through important life stages.<sup>19</sup> In the Apache ceremony, girls are also expected to dance for long periods of time during the days and throughout the

nights as male singers chant origin stories to her.<sup>20</sup> In the Navajo ceremonies, girls spend a significant amount of time grinding corn for a large cake that will be shared with everyone present.<sup>21</sup>

As part of the preparation, families choose a sponsor who helps ready the initiate for the ceremony.<sup>22</sup> The sponsor is chosen carefully because it is understood that her traits will be passed on to the girl initiate during the ceremony.<sup>23</sup> The sponsor assists with the transformation of the girl into a female deity by dressing the girl in a hand-beaded dress, brushing her hair, and molding the girl's body with her own hands.<sup>24</sup> The idea is that a girl is giving up her youth to the deity who in return blesses the girl. Once a girl has become the deity, she may extend those blessings to the rest of the community.<sup>25</sup> After the girl has been ritually transformed back into herself she spends a period of time reflecting on the experience.<sup>26</sup>

Based on the similarities described above, it is easy to observe how non-specialists can mistake the two ceremonies as identical. However, as I will explain in the body of the thesis, each ceremony is representative of very different worldviews. For instance, scholarship about Kinaaldá is not consistent in regard to the level of significance the ceremony has in Navajo worldview. My suspicion is that this is because scholars read the origins stories and see a lot of activity that looks similar to the Mescalero Apache ceremony. They then make the assumption that because the two tribes both have Athabascan origins, the two ceremonies must be the same. In fact, Navajo were known as "Apaches de Navajo" by the Spanish.<sup>27</sup>

In the early 1970s, the anthropologists Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton claimed, "The Navajo attitude toward the Apaches is sometimes patronizing--the Navajos seem to feel that the Apache way of life is ruder than theirs."<sup>28</sup> They also noted, "But there is a strong note of respect based upon the war prowess of the Apaches and their general toughness." What is

important here is recognition that the two groups are in fact different and thus analyses of their cultures must be mindful of these differences.

### Survey of Literature

Lincoln's book, *Emerging from the Chrysalis* (1981) is now in its second edition.<sup>29</sup> It has represented a significant addition to research in the field of puberty studies, particularly concerning Navajo girls. While Lincoln's method did not provide new data derived from fieldwork, and thus lacked emic voice, the book did initiate a stimulating conversation about ritual theory. The book describes female initiation ceremonies in four very different cultures from around the world, along with one classical interpretation of a female initiation rite. As Sally Falk Moore noted in a review of the work, a major underlying issue with Lincoln's analysis of female rituals is that despite the fact that he noted how problematic broad generalizations across cultures can be, he chose to make such statements anyway.<sup>30</sup> This precarious practice can lead readers to make misinformed assumptions about cultures with which they are unfamiliar.

An additional reason that this book is worthy of note is that in the second edition, printed a decade later, Lincoln included an afterword so that he could rectify some of the "flaws" in the initial edition. The second edition was published after Lincoln made a significant change in his methods of analysis, employing what Brian K. Pennington referred to as "a concern for the ability of religious ideology to authorize power and camouflage its very means for doing so."<sup>31</sup> Such a critical commentary on his work is commendable. Unfortunately, this second edition also lacked emic voice and thus the corrections he made to the flaws were also flawed. The feminist method he employed in his new investigation did not account for the experiences of indigenous women, and thus produced inaccurate conclusions. Even more problematically, these conclusions led Lincoln to debase *Kinaaldá*, the Navajo girl's puberty ceremony, as an

oppressive social tool against women. I will provide a thorough analysis of this work in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Markstrom's fairly recent scholarly work, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls: Ritual Expressions at Puberty* (2008) provides a major contribution regarding the function of puberty ceremonies in four Native American communities. The first half of the book introduces relevant concepts about adolescence from Western and Indigenous traditions. The latter half is devoted to analyses of puberty ceremonies from San Carlos and Mescalero bands of Apache; Navajo; Lakota; and Ojibwe communities. Markstrom has advanced the study of coming-of-age rituals due to her unique background as a developmental psychologist who specializes in adolescence. Her expertise allowed her to devote a significant portion of her book to youth development and the extreme changes young girls experience physically and mentally at adolescence.

According to Markstrom's research, "adult-sponsored" celebrations of adolescents at puberty are important during what can be a difficult life stage transition. Moreover, she asserted that the puberty ceremonies she examines are good examples of this adult-sponsored activity. I argue that because of the positive self-image the ceremonies are meant to instill, further research about their efficacy could impact adolescent studies in mainstream U.S. culture. Markstrom's knowledge of adolescent development is evident, and she provided ample and relevant data indicating her broad research on the Indigenous communities whose ceremonies she studied. Ultimately though, her representation of Indigenous cultures and their religious systems is alarming. Additionally, Markstrom fails to explain her use of Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner's classic three-stage rites of passage model which has been critiqued by scholar of

Western medieval history, Caroline Walker Bynum, as male-centric. I provide a thorough analysis of Markstrom's work in Chapter 3.

Markstrom's and Lincoln's works are the most influential contributions to the general study of coming of age ceremonies in the United States. Scholarship in this area has ranged widely in discipline, scope, and purpose. In what follows I will provide a survey of the three key topics in this literature that pertain to my thesis: Apache puberty ceremonies, Navajo puberty ceremonies, and puberty ceremonies in non-indigenous U.S. communities.

Apache girls' puberty ceremonies are described by anthropologists and scholars of religion such as Morris Opler (1941), H. Henrietta Stockel (1991), Claire Farrer (1991), and Inés Talamantez (1991 & 2000).<sup>32</sup> These sources emphasize that ceremonies celebrate the creative powers women possess in giving birth, but also link back to an Apache deity, *Isánáklèsh*, commonly referred to as White Painted Woman.<sup>33</sup> She is a central figure in Apache origin stories.<sup>34</sup>

H. Henrietta Stockel, who worked among the Chiricahua and Mescalero Apache communities, identified *Isánáklèsh Gotal* as the starting point for an Apache girl's "path to marriage and childbearing" and "hope for perpetual youth, abundance, and good health."<sup>35</sup> The ceremony takes place over several days in which the pubescent girls ritually reenact the origin story and actually embody the Apache deity, White Painted Woman. Upon being transformed the girls are said to move from childhood to womanhood, and are imbued with White Painted Woman's power. More recent sources on Apache Peoples such as Trudy Griffin-Pierce (2006), Ruth McDonald Boyer (2006), and Jessica Dawn Palmer (2013), do include a paragraph or a few pages on the topic, but nothing as substantial as Markstrom or earlier sources.<sup>36</sup>

Similar to Isánáklèsh Gotal, *Kinaaldá* is a puberty ceremony for Navajo girls. According to several well-known scholarly accounts, the first girl to have a *Kinaaldá* was *Asdzáá Nádleehé*.<sup>37</sup> She instructed that every Navajo girl should have a *Kinaaldá* upon menarche. The ceremony is mentioned with varying degrees of detail in scholarly literature. For instance, in their book *The Navaho* (1946, revised edition 1974) anthropologists Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton claimed that government relations with the Diné had failed, but policies could be improved upon by better understanding of Diné history, culture, and experiences.<sup>38</sup> Yet the girl's puberty ceremony was hardly mentioned.

In 1950, Gladys Reichard published a two-volume work entitled *Navaho Religion: A Study of Symbolism*. The first volume is an introduction to Navajo cosmology, worldviews, symbols, and rituals. The second volume is essentially a reference book for information on supernatural beings, symbols, and rites. The "girl's adolescence ceremony" as it is called is briefly mentioned in reference to certain symbols and beings. A short paragraph describes the first ceremony which was held for Changing Woman.<sup>39</sup>

The most substantial contributions about the *Kinaaldá* ceremony come from Charlotte Johnson Frisbie, an anthropologist who published a major work in 1967 which was reprinted in 1993 because of its continued relevance. In the book, Frisbie focused heavily on the musical aspects of the ceremony. Anthropologist Leland C. Wyman, who acknowledged Frisbie's contribution, published a book with extensive accounts of Navajo origin stories in 1970.<sup>40</sup> Wyman was carefully selected to finish the work of Father Berard Haile, a Franciscan priest who lived and worked among the Navajo in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> Versions of important narratives were provided by three Navajo men with whom Father Berard consulted: Slim Curly, Frank Mitchell, and River Junction Curly.<sup>42</sup> Included are versions of the birth of

Changing Woman, along with the account of the first Kinaaldá, and stories about her sons who rid the world of monsters.<sup>43</sup>

Louise Lamphere has two particularly noteworthy books in regard to Navajo social life and women's influence. *To Run After Them: Cultural and Social Bases of Cooperation in Navajo Community* (1977) is helpful in understanding social roles and responsibilities of men and women traditionally and after contact with U.S. government agents.<sup>44</sup> In *Weaving Women's Lives: Three Generations in a Navajo Family*, Lamphere, along with the help of Eva Price, Carole Cadman, and Valerie Darwin, portrayed the ways in which these women "utilized traditional Navajo conceptions and beliefs. It also included new practices and ideas from the larger U.S. economy and society in which the Navajo have been incorporated for 150 years."<sup>45</sup> Though it does not have a large section on Kinaaldá, or even a full chapter, *Weaving Women's Lives* is important to the literature particularly because of Valerie's account of her own ceremony. She is the youngest of the three women and thus had the most exposure to U.S. cultural customs. She recounted crying when she was told that she would have a Kinaaldá, but later realized the ceremony had a profound impact on her life.<sup>46</sup>

Maureen Trudelle Schwartz, an anthropologist, published a useful follow-up text to Frisbie's work in 1997 that delved more into the cosmological aspects of Navajo worldview.<sup>47</sup> It is probably most noteworthy for the number of Navajo voices and testimonies she included. In addition, there are smaller sections about Kinaaldá included in some general literature on Navajo life, such as the three-page section in Jordan Paper's 2007 book, *Native North American Religious Traditions* or the brief sentences in Robert S. McPherson's *Dinéjí Na'Nitin: Navajo Traditional Teachings and History* (2012).<sup>48</sup> However, such pieces serve more as introductions



to the concept of a puberty ceremony rather than as any original contributions to the field of study.

In contrast to the amount of scholarship that is available concerning Isánáklèsh Gotal and Kinaaldá, it is difficult to find examples of puberty ceremonies in mainstream U.S. society. Anthropologist Don E. Merten noted this point as a general rule in his article, “Transitions and ‘Trouble’: Rites of Passage for Suburban Girls,”<sup>49</sup> as did Ronald Grimes in *Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage*.<sup>50</sup> In fact, Merten’s article indicated that this lack of formal transition made it “even more important for girls to learn how to individually and collectively accomplish their change in identity.”<sup>51</sup>

However, it is possible to locate websites on which people discuss personal experiences with coming-of-age ceremonies that have some similar qualities to the Navajo and Apache ceremonies.<sup>52</sup> Hemitra Crecraft, who describes herself as a woman’s empowerment facilitator, holistic menstrual health educator, author, designer, filmmaker and red tent celebrationist has a Coming of Age Menarche Kit available for adults who want to put together some kind of ceremony for their daughters.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, there seem to be aspects of Native American ritual being adopted for use in coming-of-age camps for young girls and boys such as the *Stepping Stones Project* and *Rite of Passage Journeys*.<sup>54</sup>

Though scholarship specifically addressing puberty ceremonies in mainstream U.S. culture does not seem to be available, there is a great deal of research about puberty. Scholarship in mainstream U.S. culture has predominantly addressed puberty as a matter of hygiene, paying particular attention to the industry built around the production of feminine hygiene products, and the availability of sex education in schools. Representative works include Susan Kathleen Freeman, *Sex Goes to School: Girls and Sex Education before the 1960s* (2008); Robin E.

Jenson, *Dirty Words: The Rhetoric of Public Sex Education, 1870-1924* (2010); Jen Gilbert, *Sexuality in School: The Limits of Education* (2014) and Jennifer Burek Pierce, *What Adolescents Ought to Know: Sexual Health Texts in Early Twentieth-Century America* (2011).

In *Blood Stories*, Janet Lee (Professor of Women's Studies at Oregon State University) and Jennifer Sasser-Coen (Chair, Department of Human Sciences and Director, Gerontology Program at Marylhurst University), devoted most of their book to the embarrassment surrounding menstruation and how that has negatively impacted women's identities. They also provided an important feminist perspective meant to undermine how "girls' bodies are trained and molded in the context of prevailing systems of power, and girls receive important lessons about female blood and feminine bodies, women's place and desire."<sup>55</sup> Lee and Sasser-Coen identified menstruation as an important topic surrounded by a cloud of negative stigma that if left unaddressed will continue to serve as a major barrier to gender equality.

Since Pagan communities are in the habit of creating rituals, it stands to reason that scholarship on the efficacy of ritual transitions at puberty within these U.S. circles would be pertinent to Markstrom's revelations about adolescent development. However, while there are apparently puberty ceremonies and rituals being imagined, S. Zohreh Kermani, a scholar of religious studies and author of (2013) *Pagan Family Values: Childhood and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary American Paganism*, said that she "[has] yet to encounter a Pagan child who has actually experienced one."<sup>56</sup> Her conclusions regarding this fact seem to be meaningful in light of Lee and Sasser-Coen's revelations about women's continued insecurity with their bodies through adolescence and sometimes even throughout their lifetimes.<sup>57</sup> Kermani mused, "Perhaps more than most rituals, the planning of coming-of-age ceremonies is a clear

indicator of adult Pagans' attempts to re-fashion and relive their own childhoods from the perspective of the adult selves."<sup>58</sup>

In other words, Kermani suggested that there seems to be a shared experience of turmoil among Pagan adults' remembrances of adolescence. She further concluded that the reason puberty ceremonies do not actually get performed could be "dismay with which many adolescents greet the suggestion that their entrance to puberty be publicly observed."<sup>59</sup> Because children of Pagan parents are "free to construct their own authentic spirituality, even if this spirituality rejects religious teachings of their parents," the adolescent's choice to not participate is accepted.<sup>60</sup> It is my assertion that part of this fear of public attention to bodily changes at puberty is a result of the menstrual shaming that Lee and Sasser-Coen addressed.

Two more works require acknowledgement. First, Mary Douglas' (1966) work on purity and pollution remains relevant.<sup>61</sup> In some ways the scholarship on puberty ceremonies is still heavily reliant upon Mary Douglas because of her detailed discussion on pollution behavior and taboos concerning bodily fluids:

It is not difficult to see how pollution beliefs can be used in a dialogue of claims and counter-claims to status. But as we examine pollution beliefs we find that the kind of contacts which are thought dangerous also carry a symbolic load. This is a more interesting level at which pollution ideas relate to social life. I believe that some pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order.<sup>62</sup>

Order is maintained by discarding what is deemed dirt, such as menstrual blood, or other bodily fluids.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Western culture sees the need to separate sacred or holy space from pollution.<sup>64</sup> In contrast Douglas said that indigenous cultures did not see the need to make "distinction between sanctity and uncleanness" which led to their classification as primitive or less than by anthropologists.<sup>65</sup> Although she did not specifically address puberty ceremonies, her book is important because it explains the arbitrary assignment of pollutants. Menstrual blood is

not a taboo topic in and of itself. It is taboo because we as a society have determined it to be so. Moreover, since menstrual blood is a taboo topic, its connection with women's bodies makes other aspects of bodies taboo conversation as well.

Anthropologists Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb wrote a similarly foundational work, *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation* (1988). They specifically emphasized the need for scholars to accurately represent the cultures and histories of the groups they study. For instance, proper attention to cultural values and norms might suggest that certain kinds of taboos concerning menstruation actually denote a woman's position of power.<sup>66</sup> Additionally they argued that the Western understanding of menstrual blood as a pollutant, "manufactures overwhelming negativity."<sup>67</sup>

Like Douglas, Buckley and Gottlieb explained the reticence for public conversation about menstruation as a result of Western religious influence. They speculated that "the very power of pollution theory, coupled with Western societies' own codings of menstrual blood as a pollutant, has perhaps created 'dirt' where none previously existed, or existed only for some people and/or in some contexts in a given culture."<sup>68</sup> To support their point the authors provided examples of Christian influences on how menstruation is perceived broadly: "In the West we are accustomed to thinking of menstruation as largely negative. It is 'the curse' or, more fully, 'the curse of Eve': a part of God's punishment of women for Eve's role in the Biblical Fall."<sup>69</sup>

This view of menstruation as cursed is one of the central precepts of menstrual shaming. At the same time, Lee and Sasser-Coen argued that menarche is a crucial moment in the lives of girls as "it is at menarche that girls start to produce themselves as women, reproducing gender in compliance with and in resistance to patterns of domination."<sup>70</sup> In my discussion of Lincoln I explain how his work has enabled the continuation of a culture of menstrual shaming, by

producing an ahistorical analysis lacking emic voice that actually negatively impacted the study of puberty ceremonies. Conversely, Markstrom excelled in providing evidence that puberty ceremonies exhibit qualities that have been identified by adolescent development theorists as necessary in helping young girls transition from childhood into adolescence. However, as I will explain, her analysis is weakened because of generalizations that reinforce negative stereotypes about indigenous communities.

## Chapter 1: Lincoln Critique

The aim of Bruce Lincoln's *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation* was to inform ritual theory with data from women's rituals. As I discussed above, Lincoln's book is particularly interesting because he published a second edition in which he provided a critique of the original. However, his new analysis was still inaccurate because of the method he chose to employ. This chapter will demonstrate how Lincoln effectively disregarded the centrality of the hogan and domestic space for Navajo Peoples traditionally, misrepresented the respect and independence Navajo women traditionally have experienced, and incorrectly concluded that Kinaaldá is an oppressive weapon against young Navajo girls.

In reference to Kinaaldá, Lamphere wrote: "The days following the onset of her first menstrual period are particularly important since the young girl is in a holy and vulnerable state and what she does with her mind and body will influence her later life and the kind of woman she will become."<sup>71</sup> During the ceremony concepts like "hard work, generosity and cooperation" are stressed.<sup>72</sup> The young girl is initiated by way of a re-enactment of the first Kinaaldá which was given for *Asdzáá Nádleehé* or Changing Woman. She is the female deity who saved the world by giving birth to two sons, famous in their own right for ridding the world of the monsters who were destroying the earth.<sup>73</sup>

As part of the ceremony, the girl being initiated is ritually transformed into *Asdzáá Nádleehé* or Changing Woman. This transformation imbues the girl with power for a short period of time to provide blessings for individuals who approach her. For his part, Lincoln said that in women's rituals specifically, "the cosmos itself is transformed along with the initiand."<sup>74</sup> Along with this assertion, he made an important distinction that the girls ritually becoming the female deity are participating in something much more empowering than simple dress-up. As the

girls' appearance becomes more like that of the goddess, they are not just play-acting or "impersonating" her. They are actually physically embodying Changing Woman, assuming her powers to heal and renew.<sup>75</sup>

Another important point that Lincoln made is that the ceremony provides meaning for not just the girl performing the various rites, but also for the larger group. In his analysis, Lincoln explained that the skills and tasks the girls are ritually taught to do are not necessarily different from anything they would have already been doing. For Lincoln, the significance in performing the tasks is that "ritual makes it possible for people to derive profound emotional and intellectual satisfaction from otherwise pedestrian affairs, because it points to something cosmic, transcendent, or sacred concealed within the tedium of mundane existence."<sup>76</sup>

This association of skills and roles with those of cosmic figures gives a more profound sense of meaning to the initiates and renews meaning for others within the group as well through what they experience as "solidarity."<sup>77</sup> Lincoln added that "like all rituals performed by the social totality, it serves to preserve the social status quo."<sup>78</sup> In other words this ceremony is important beyond the more obvious function of providing some sense of guidance and stability for adolescent girls. Lincoln's words imply that the ceremony also has a role in cultural and social construction.

Nancy C. Lutkehaus and Paul B. Roscoe, anthropologists who co-edited the book *Gender Rituals: Female Initiation in Melanesia* agreed with this concept. They explained that initiation rites begin with bodies and thus "constitute a powerful locus for the reproduction of cultural beliefs and practices concerned with gender roles and sexuality."<sup>79</sup> Likewise, ritual studies scholar Catherine Bell has said, "Life-cycle rituals seem to proclaim that the biological order is less determinative than the social," and "The appearance of facial hair or menses does not make

someone an adult; only the community confers that recognition.”<sup>80</sup> In the case of Kinaaldá, Lincoln argued that the ceremony has a negative outcome for girls and women as it enables the continuation of oppressive social standards by giving women the impression that they hold more power or value than is actually the case. Where housework and other domestic responsibilities may seem mundane or boring, linking them to a supernatural being all of a sudden improves their appeal. Thus the ritual also generates cultural awareness that by extension maintains societal structures as they have always been.

Lincoln’s focus on girls’ initiation ceremonies was particularly significant at the time of his book because while boys’ ceremonies had received a substantial amount of scholarly attention, theories did not include women’s experiences.<sup>81</sup> A lack of attention to women’s rites simultaneously produced inaccurate assumptions. For instance, because less attention was given to the mechanisms of women’s rites, the notion developed that collective rites, namely male rites, were part of the public realm, and that individual rites, principally female rites, were part of domestic space.<sup>82</sup> These assumptions then spurred conversations about what this separation of genders must mean in terms of power structures within societies maintaining such ritual practices.<sup>83</sup> In other words, since women’s rites are held in domestic spaces, some observers, like Lincoln, decided this must symbolize that women are in fact relegated to that space. Any positions of power within the community cannot possibly be found within that boundary. Thus, since men’s rites were held in public spaces, it was decided that they must hold the sociopolitical positions of authority.<sup>84</sup>

Lincoln preserved this misconception about women’s initiation rituals as he ignored his own cautions regarding the generation of broad generalizations about the meaning of rituals across cultures. This is visible in his argument that all women’s ceremonies differ from men’s



ceremonies because “women do not have open to them a variety of sociopolitical statuses through which they may pass by means of initiation.”<sup>85</sup> Lincoln surveyed a few ceremonies that focus on women in very different cultures around the world and accepted that all women live under patriarchy. He later confirmed this assumption of all women having a shared lived experience of gender oppression when he claimed, “status is the concern of the male, and women are excluded from direct participation in the social hierarchy. The only status that is independently theirs, if status it be, is that of woman.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, women are relegated to the domestic sphere, which he perceives to have no positions of power.

Lincoln argued that the fact that Navajo girls are initiated within the confines of the hogan is evidence of his assumption. Lincoln did allow that women’s rites of passage initiate a cosmic status but he completely separated it from that of a sociopolitical status.<sup>87</sup> On top of that, he erred when he said, “there is nothing revolutionary in women’s initiation; it serves only to introduce an individual into society as society already exists, not to alter the nature of that society.” Here he misrepresented the ceremony, traditionally held values of women, and the roles women have traditionally held in Navajo society entirely.<sup>88</sup> Lincoln’s goal was to demonstrate what women’s rituals tell us about ritual broadly. His conclusion was that ritual is effective in validating societal structures and that identification of women with the cosmic order causes women to misrecognize the oppressive nature of the status and roles assigned to them by their dominating patriarchal male leaders.

In order for his theories to be true, Lincoln would need his readers to assume that Navajo societal structure is and always has been governed by patriarchy. A Native feminist theory of religion would instead claim that not all indigenous women lived under patriarchal systems.<sup>89</sup> On the contrary, in some tribes women have traditionally and still do hold positions of power.<sup>90</sup> A

history of colonialism and forced assimilation has in some cases imposed patriarchy on societies with a history of much more egalitarian values.<sup>91</sup>

Scholarly evidence does not support his claims either. For instance, in *Navajo Religion: A Study of Symbolism Volume I*, Gladys Reichard, argued, “Actually there is little to limit what women may attain in any phase of Navajo culture. Their status in the home, in the economic, social, even political life is equal to that of men.”<sup>92</sup> An anthropologist writing in the mid-twentieth century who studied under Franz Boas, Reichard shared that her own status as a woman never prevented her from carrying out her research and participating in different aspects of Navajo life: “Never have I been excluded from any rite on the grounds of my sex, nor was my right to an interest in ritual ever challenged because I am a woman.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, while there does seem to be a division of labor driven by gender, authority and power are shared among men and women. Evidence to the contrary was thus already published thirty years prior to Lincoln’s own publication. This is not to say that Navajo society is not nor ever was patriarchal, but the anthropological record does provide evidence that Navajo women, at least traditionally, have maintained a higher sense of independence and greater social capital than Lincoln identified.

The significance of the roles of males *and* females in Navajo society is rooted in Navajo worldview. In the story of First Man and First Woman, a Navajo origin story – as told by Gladys Reichard – First Man and First Woman were in the process of creating the earth when First Woman took the lead on sexual matters.<sup>94</sup> Reichard revealed, “She made male and female genitalia so that one sex should attract the other – the penis of turquoise, the vagina of whiteshell (*sic*).”<sup>95</sup> The story continues, relating that First Man teased First Woman for being obsessed about sex, leading to a conflict that ended in the complete separation of the sexes.<sup>96</sup> During that

time the women “became maddened with desire” and “as a result of self-abuse they gave birth to the monsters that later destroyed men.”<sup>97</sup>

In the story the men also “practiced perversion” but because they did not have the same creative reproductive abilities of the women, their actions did not have the same effects: “The separation of the sexes with its consequences proved that neither is complete without the other, that sexual needs must be allowed expression but should be controlled.”<sup>98</sup> World harmony demands woman’s potential, as well as man’s kinetic, energy.”<sup>99</sup> In other words it was understood that the sexes are mutually dependent upon one another, rather than that one, namely males, held an unequal balance of power.<sup>100</sup>

In order to combat the monsters that were destroying the world, First Man and First Woman gave birth to Asdzáá Nádleehé, also called Changing Woman.<sup>101</sup> She is considered “the most important female Holy One (Diyin Diné)” according to Louise Lamphere.<sup>102</sup> As the story goes, “Sun visited her four successive nights” in a shelter prepared by First Man, “after which she became pregnant.”<sup>103</sup> She gives birth to twins, Monster Slayer and Child-of-the-Water who were meant to rid the world of the monsters created by the separation of the sexes.<sup>104</sup> The story continues, “Although she had borne the children destined to kill the monsters, which feats made them the chief war gods with power against all foreign dangers, Changing Woman stood for peace.”<sup>105</sup> This point is important to understanding how Lincoln’s analysis misrepresents Navajo women’s political status because Changing Woman had more than a reproductive part to play.

Reichard also noted that Changing Woman prevented an additional war between Dark Thunder and Winter Thunder: “As soon as the subject was broached, she said decisively, ‘I did not bear these children to go to war, but to rid the world of monsters.’ Thereupon Monster Slayer stood up and said, ‘I shall not go to war with you. My mother is not in favor.’ Child-of-the-Water

refused to go for the same reason.”<sup>106</sup> Even though her sons were charged with the power to officially refuse to participate in the war, it was their mother’s bidding that drove their decision.

Moreover, in another story, Sun wanted Changing Woman to move to the West. He asked the boys to carry out his wishes to which Child-of-the-Water replied, “No, Changing Woman is subject to no one; we cannot make promises for her. She must speak for herself; she is her own mistress. But I shall tell her your wishes and plead for you.”<sup>107</sup> After “numerous attempts at persuasion,” Changing Woman did go, but Reichard accentuated the fact that, “her control over her powerful husband and sons is demonstrated by her indignation at the thought that the boys could make a promise for her or that they should think that anything Sun had done would benefit her.”<sup>108</sup> In her agreement with Sun, Changing Woman demanded specific requests be granted for her to comply with his wishes, all of which were given her.<sup>109</sup>

Further evidence of female autonomy and power in Navajo society exists in a deeply entrenched Diné cultural concept, *Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón* (SNBH) or Blessing Way. Schwarz characterized them as beings – Sa'ah naaghéi (SN) and, Bik'eh hózhó (BH) – who provide protection and blessings for Diné peoples.<sup>110</sup> SN is explained as being male and BH as female.<sup>111</sup> Gary Witherspoon also discussed this idea in his first work on “The Central Concepts of Navajo World View” in which he fully analyzed each term in the phrase.<sup>112</sup> According to Witherspoon, SN and BH are the parents of Changing Woman, “the mother of all Navajos,” who had the first Kinaaldá and instructed that all girls should have Kinaaldá for their first two cycles.<sup>113</sup> SN and BH are said to be “constantly manifested in the power of the earth to reproduce and sustain life.”<sup>114</sup> Changing Woman is “in control of reproductive power” of the earth, which comes from SNBH.<sup>115</sup>

Lloyd Lee, a scholar of Native American studies, characterized SNBH as a “vital foundational paradigm in Diné thought.”<sup>116</sup> Gregory Cajete, also a scholar of Native American studies, further revealed, “the dynamics of...modernity have affected the ways in which traditional metaphors such as SNBH may – or in many cases may not – play out in contemporary lives of Diné peoples.”<sup>117</sup> Lee further explained that Diné thought is better understood as a “web of related concepts” or “matrix” instead of a “worldview” that naturally implies some kind of hierarchical order of concepts.<sup>118</sup> This notion of matrix provides a better basis for understanding how individual Diné learn cultural concepts. They are learned over time through combinations of verbal explanation and through participation in ritual and everyday life. Schwarz similarly revealed that “multiple levels of understanding are acquired throughout a lifetime of incremental gains and learning by ‘doing.’”<sup>119</sup>

Moreover, Lee emphasized that each individual’s interpretation is important and a correct representation of Diné thought:

Diné thought in the self-determination era is fairly individualistic and less communal than in the past. While individual people will each have different thoughts on many aspects of life, they are still Diné because of their own personal histories, their connection to the ancestors, and their resiliency to survive and continue as distinct Native peoples.<sup>120</sup>

The scholarship concerning Navajo Kinaalda does not contain substantive discussion of this notion of interpretative freedom. Lincoln did not acknowledge the significance of differences in stories, or the notion of interpretive freedom in his work. Moreover, the cultural significance of SNBH along with the knowledge of Lee’s description of matrix directly counters Lincoln’s universal theory of women’s rituals. Rather than teaching readers about ritual in any one culture, or what rituals signify about those cultures, he essentially imagined a new reality that in effect does not accurately represent any of the cultures described.

Lincoln similarly misrepresents the use of hogans in Navajo communities. He likens them to his understanding of a home and assumes that they are simply domestic spaces to which women are confined. Yet hogans are much more significant structures. Trudy Griffin-Pierce divulged that hogans were instrumental in the creation of the world: “The first hogan, constructed after the Emergence into the present world by the *diyin dine’é* near the rim of the Emergence Place was not only the site for the creation of many elements of the present world, but also a model of the cosmos.”<sup>121</sup> She and McPherson both stress the layered meanings and metaphors regarding hogans.<sup>122</sup> To further make her point, Griffin-Pierce emphasized the way that one campus of Navajo Community College was inspired by the design of a hogan.<sup>123</sup>

The data available at the time that Lincoln was writing his book speaks for itself. For example, according to Gary Witherspoon, traditionally speaking, a Navajo man gains his social status through his mother and through his wife. Unlike Western cultures, Navajo society is matrilineal, so familial descent is passed on through mothers. This becomes particularly interesting in Navajo divorce cases. Though marriages initially may have been arranged, historically divorce has not necessarily been uncommon in Navajo communities.<sup>124</sup>

What is unique about Navajo relationships is how child custody and residence are determined.<sup>125</sup> Not unlike traditional Western trends, women traditionally have assumed custody of children in divorce.<sup>126</sup> However, if a relationship ends because for instance the mother dies, her children are likely to stay with her relatives if she is living with them at the time of death.<sup>127</sup> If she and the children are living with the father’s family at the time of her death, the children will be sent to live with her relatives.<sup>128</sup> The father does not simply assume custody of his children.<sup>129</sup> The fact that matrilineal ties are highly valued and maintained in Navajo social organization implies a much greater status for women than Lincoln portrays.

What is more, according to Lamphere and Reichard, Navajo men have traditionally practiced what is called “mother-in-law avoidance,” which they asserted is “a custom that pushed men even further to the edge of the Navajo matrilineal extended family.”<sup>130</sup> This practice involves Navajo men avoiding eye contact or any kind of communication with their mothers-in-law without the help of their wives.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, when the mother-in-law arrives to the hogan to visit, a Navajo man traditionally would even be expected to leave the hogan for the time that she remained inside.<sup>132</sup> It hardly seems accurate to make the generalization that all families adhered to this practice or that all men left their homes to live with their wives. However, we can gather that typically men left their residence to live with their wives and their families. This concept complements Reichard and Witherspoon’s descriptions of Navajo social organization and the significance of head mothers.

In accordance with Reichard’s perception, Witherspoon described Navajo social organization as centered on “a sheep herd, a customary land use area, a head mother, and sometimes agricultural fields – all of which are called mother.”<sup>133</sup> Moreover, Witherspoon added, “All residence rights can be traced back to her [the head mother] and her opinions and wishes are always given the greatest consideration and usually prevail. In a sense, however, she delegates much of her role and prestige to the leader of the unit.”<sup>134</sup> The leader that Witherspoon referred to is usually a male – either the head mother’s husband, or son-in-law, or the next eligible male in the household.<sup>135</sup> This idea of a male speaking for a household could be interpreted as an attribute of a patriarchal society. However, the way that Witherspoon and Reichard described the situation, it seems that the more appropriate assumption is that women in Navajo societies have a much more substantial role than women in Western societies were once

afforded. The execution of this role, though, is only visible on a very subtle level that perhaps only field researchers might notice.

Witherspoon further clarified the head mother's position by using a business metaphor:

If we think of the unit as a corporation, and the leader as its president, the head mother will be the chairman of the board. She usually has more sheep than the leader does. Because the power and importance of the head mother offer a deceptive appearance to the observer, many students of the Navajo have failed to see the importance of her role.<sup>136</sup>

In other words, women were responsible for land and livestock. Plus, they were the heads of household, though male representatives from the family generally spoke on their behalf in the same way that Child-of-the-Water and Monster Slayer represented their mother's view described earlier. This structure presents a sort of egalitarian form of society as it gives opportunities for leadership and power to both men and women. Witherspoon further noted that though "many students of the Navajo have failed to see the importance of her role," the power of the head mother is apparent when one is living with a Navajo family unit.<sup>137</sup>

In 1923, the first Navajo Tribal Council was established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This allowed U.S. companies to formally lease land from the Navajo for oil drilling.<sup>138</sup> This council was formed with all male leadership. It is likely this was acceptable because Navajo men formally represented families. The fact that U.S. society was still overwhelmingly run by men at the time and it was just taken for granted that Navajo society was structured in the same way is a more likely explanation. This short examination of Navajo worldview and history is important because it begins to undermine Lincoln's analysis that Navajo women naively accept a status that is less than that of Navajo men. Conversely this investigation shows that Navajo women actually have played a major role in decision-making, and that rather than by Adam's rib, it is actually through women that men gain their own sociopolitical status.



### The Second Edition

Lincoln corrects what he self-identified as “flaws” in the second edition of *Emerging from the Chrysalis*. He made clear, “My intention in this was not to correct errors of fact or interpretation; it was still less to update references of bibliography. Rather, I wanted to keep intact a provocative – if admittedly flawed – text, while adding an Afterword, through which I could pour my reconsiderations into a still-moving stream.”<sup>139</sup> In other words, Lincoln did not want to edit his original manuscript. Instead he chose to build upon the discussion and critique some of his earlier analysis with insight he gained after starting the project.

First he criticized his use of the chrysalis and emergence as a model of girls’ initiation. In the original conclusion to the book, Lincoln offered that rather than the well-known combination of Arthur Van Gennep’s and Victor Turner’s models of separation, liminality, and reincorporation, women’s initiation really resembles more that of enclosure, metamorphosis and emergence.<sup>140</sup> Lincoln preferred this model because like a butterfly, the girl does not really change sociopolitical status, but is simply initiated into a new stage of life. She continues to be relegated to the same physical spaces she has always been and always will be – domestic life.<sup>141</sup>

However, in the “Afterword” to the second edition, Lincoln’s perspective changed. He no longer felt comfortable with the metamorphosis metaphor because unlike the natural process of emergence that a butterfly experiences, the process of initiation in his opinion is completely unnatural.<sup>142</sup> He argued instead that society is strategically shaping girls to behave in such a way that benefits society as it exists, remarking that “less subtly, if no less manipulatively, through pushing, prodding, and bullying actions of various sorts, the same initiators can coerce their charges to comply with what is expected of them should the latter be less than fully persuaded.”<sup>143</sup> In other words, rather than celebrating the girls’ bodies as they are, society is

carefully ensuring that these girls will conform to the standards they have already set. Moreover, the active party in this manipulation is made up of men who claim hegemonic power over women.

In addition, Lincoln critiqued his use of gender in the first edition. In the second edition he appropriately defined gender as “the system through which differential behaviors, compartments, demeanors, appearances, statuses, opportunities, spheres of activity, preferences, capacities, and valuations are attributed to or prescribed for the two biological sexes.”<sup>144</sup> He then compared initiations like Kinaaldá to Western beautification practices:

For instance, dieting and workout equipment, like the whalebone corsets and spike heeled shoes of an earlier age, no less than Tiv razors and Navajo “molding” serve to create bodies that give visible testimony to the pain their owners have endured in order that they might: (1) conform to ideal types of health and beauty; (2) give aesthetic pleasure to others who value those same culturally constructed ideals of bodily existence; and (3) suggest the promise of erotic delights for those who find them particularly attractive.<sup>145</sup>

In so doing, Lincoln reduced the goals of Kinaaldá to physical appearance and sexual attractiveness. His final conclusions about girls’ initiation imply that these ceremonies have been used as tools of oppression against women: “On all of these issues, traditional rituals of initiation are most often on the wrong side, and I can no longer escape the conclusion that they are performed on *and against* women by societies that are hardly gender-neutral, but in which male interests enjoy hegemonic status.”<sup>146</sup> They help to isolate women. Whereas in male initiations, “group solidarity, which serves men exceedingly well in the political arena, is ritually constructed for them in the course of their collective initiation, the corresponding rituals for women most often atomize the initiands.”<sup>147</sup>

With this new commentary Lincoln performed his own ritual criticism of girls’ initiation ceremonies, asserting that they are actually harmful as they encourage half of the population to misrecognize their inferior status that has been imposed upon them by the privileged male half of

the population.<sup>148</sup> This is a powerful critique and were his prior assumptions about women's roles correct, it would be a valid feminist critique. Martha Aileen Hewitt, a feminist scholar of religion asserts, "A feminist critical theory and ideology critique of religion must seek to understand the ways in which religion informs, mediates, underlines, sustains, and reproduces dominating practices and relations throughout the larger social fabric."<sup>149</sup> Hewitt would appreciate the way that Lincoln "untangles the cultural practices of domination and subordination of women in order to reveal how they function to privilege men over women in most dimensions of life."<sup>150</sup> However, while Lincoln presented an incredible discussion of gender as a cultural construction that has been used to subjugate women in some societies, he continued to neglect the indigenous perspective and misrepresent women's status in Navajo culture.<sup>151</sup>

For instance, had he completed his section on the cultural construction of gender by featuring the Navajo view, it would become clear that gender has not traditionally been wielded in such a contentious manner. Navajo communities have had a more complex understanding of gender for much longer than the Western world. The feminist perspective Lincoln employed in his analysis of gender is limiting in that it does not account for indigenous women's lived experiences.

It is important to understand that while Native feminists are similarly concerned with "the common context of struggle," Native feminism is distinct from other forms of feminism. Historian Devon Mihesuah claimed that the difference is in the types of struggles Native feminisms address as well as methods for addressing those struggles.<sup>152</sup> Religious studies scholar Mary Churchill made a similar statement, arguing that women's studies historically has focused on "the concerns and experiences of white middle class and elite women over those of women of

color and working-class and poor women.”<sup>153</sup> Mihesuah elaborated that Native feminism must address issues of race because of the historical and cultural struggles against racism and colonial oppression, outlining racial identity as physical appearance, acceptance by the group, commonality of culture and psychological identification to the group, and percentage of biological heritage.<sup>154</sup> She called attention to cultural and spiritual histories and traditions in which women held positions of power within the tribe. Like that of the Navajo, “spiritual traditions of many tribes include a female divine spirit.”<sup>155</sup> A Navajo understanding of gender would have provided a better basis for analysis.

Another issue with Lincoln’s critique is that he charged Kinaaldá with being harmful to young adolescents because it imposes a particular gender and the associated acceptable roles. Yet, in *Weaving Women’s Lives*, co-author Carole Cadman explained that the mother would have become aware of the child’s tendencies toward a particular gender before she or he would even have reached the appropriate age for Kinaaldá.<sup>156</sup> In fact, Navajo communities have traditionally recognized four genders. They describe a Nádleehé, as “one who is in a constant state of change, or a ‘third gender.’”<sup>157</sup> The Navajo recognize two kinds of Nádleehé; the male-bodied woman and the female-bodied man.<sup>158</sup> Traditionally Nádleehé have been accepted without prejudice.

Walter Williams, now emeritus professor of anthropology, history, and gender studies, revealed, “For example, among the Navajos, a people who place great value on individual freedom, becoming a *nadle* is considered to be solely a reflection of the basic nature of the individual child. Parents would not try to impose such a role on a child, without the child’s initiative.”<sup>159</sup> In other words, children have the agency to choose how they wish to express their gender. This statement directly contradicts Lincoln’s assertion. Lincoln’s inaccuracies are precisely why Kinaaldá and other puberty ceremonies should be studied without pre-conceived

notions of culture or worldview. Research into how males and Nádleehé have been initiated in Navajo communities could reveal more about how Navajo actually conceptualize gender, and perhaps provide a model for parents and adolescents in other societies.

Another important point of discussion is Lincoln's conclusion that girls' initiations are an individual rather than collective affair in the way that some male initiations are performed. He used this distinction to emphasize his point that because girls do not have the sociopolitical status of their male counterparts, they are not encouraged to find the group solidarity that a male would need to act on this kind of power. In so doing Lincoln forgot that Kinaaldá is in fact a collective series of rituals.<sup>160</sup> Each girl must have a sponsor to guide the girl through the various tasks she must perform.<sup>161</sup> Male singers chant the origin stories and ritually transform the girl into the deity.<sup>162</sup> Family members help make the corn cake, not to mention all of the other food that must be prepared for guests.<sup>163</sup>

I would argue just the opposite – that these participants are just as integral to the series of rituals as the girl being initiated and serve to remind her of the massive network of friends and family to whom she is connected in solidarity. The girl initiate is empowered as a strong woman within her community, capable of providing cultural renewal. “Her coming of age is connected with new growth of plants and changes in environmental conditions.”<sup>164</sup> Moreover, as Frisbie stated, she is a reminder to the community of their history and an important means of maintaining balance: “Navaho religion is characterized by a sense of balance.”<sup>165</sup>

This critique of Lincoln is necessary for numerous reasons. First, it provides evidence of Lincoln's inaccuracies concerning Navajo cultural constructs concerning gender and social roles. Moreover it conveys how indigenous knowledge of gender could inform the dominant Western culture. Additionally it provides evidence for renewed attention to puberty ceremonies by

dismantling the idea that they are oppressive. In contrast to Lincoln's assertion that Kinaaldá and similar ceremonies are tools of patriarchy, Carole Markstrom provides evidence that they may actually be good models to guide adolescents at puberty in other cultures.

## Chapter 2: Markstrom Critique

Carol Markstrom's *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls: Ritual Expressions at Puberty* is an important scholarly contribution in the sense that it might advance the conversation on girls' coming of age and puberty ceremonies. The first half of the book addresses adolescent theory in Western and Native American contexts. The latter half is devoted to analyses of puberty ceremonies from four different Native American tribes. In my first encounter with it I really only explored the chapters related to the Apache ceremony; these are extensive, accounting for almost a quarter of her work. Markstrom's background as a developmental psychologist who specializes in adolescence led me to revisit the book a second time hoping to gain a better understanding of how Apache and Navajo communities culturally conceptualize adolescence. It is also a great source for adolescence theory on a broader level. As I mentioned before, Markstrom has advanced the study of coming-of-age rituals because her unique background allowed her to devote a significant portion of her book to youth development and the extreme changes young girls experience physically and mentally at adolescence.

Markstrom introduced the concept of protection factors in the first chapter of *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*. She described them as a necessary parental provision for positive social and psychological development.<sup>166</sup> Protection factors, "mediate risk factors to enhance the likelihood of resilient and adaptive outcomes in development" which she believes are specifically addressed through the puberty ceremonies she has researched and witnessed. She says that of the ceremonies she has attended, "operative protective factors encompass three broad domains of activity: the engagement of young people in meaningful tasks and responsibilities; the provision of social support and affirmation; and explicit cultural socialization."<sup>167</sup> These protection factors take the form of guidance, specifically parental

guidance, and intentional activities to help adolescents understand the significance of their transition from childhood into adolescence. Markstrom notes that this kind of “adult-sponsored and community-endorsed” activity is especially critical at adolescence when girls “are most likely to internalize the benefits of participation.”<sup>168</sup>

The notion of adolescence as a particularly impressionable period is not new. Adolescence has been understood as a critical developmental stage at least as far back as ancient Greece wherein it was termed the “age of reason”:<sup>169</sup>

In essence, the age of reason signifies society’s expectation that during the transition between childhood and adulthood, or what today is called early adolescence, young people are capable of greater maturity in decision making, behavior, and commitments in comparison to earlier years. . . . it is thought that the individual should now be capable of grasping the more complex matters of morality and social responsibility. While contemporary society permits a longer adolescent moratoria that can continue well into twenties, the expectation endures that the young adolescent should demonstrate some allegiance and commitment to the beliefs and values of their culture and engage in more socially responsible behavior.<sup>170</sup>

Younger children are not considered to have the same capacity for understanding socially acceptable behavior and are thus treated with more leniencies.<sup>171</sup> Coming of age rites, and puberty ceremonies in particular take on a whole new level of importance when it becomes clear that not only do adolescents experience a sharp shift in expectations of their social behavior, but also they simultaneously experience extreme bodily transitions.

Markstrom indicates that this new stage in a young person’s life can last more than ten years. She defines adolescence as a stage in the human life span that “is said to begin around age 10 and continue to the early 20s.”<sup>172</sup> Pubescence marks the beginning of adolescence.<sup>173</sup> Puberty is known as the period of time during adolescence in which the body is maturing in multiple “domains of development – endocrinological, physical, psychological, cognitive, social, emotional, and so forth.”<sup>174</sup> This data is crucial to studies of puberty ceremonies and menstrual



shaming, because as Markstrom revealed, “The child has not experienced biological change of this magnitude since infancy and the impacts reverberate into social and psychological domains.”<sup>175</sup> The growth rate increases significantly, and the child gains fifty percent of her adult weight.<sup>176</sup> What Markstrom successfully conveyed through just a few pages is that parents and adults generally, need to be extremely sensitive to the fact that from a scientific standpoint adolescents are going through transformation of epic proportions and that from a cross-cultural perspective they are understood to be particularly impressionable.

Markstrom acknowledged that rites of passage for adolescents are not uncommon in Western culture but that “the practices of North American Indians are distinguished because they are typically all-encompassing events.”<sup>177</sup> The term all-encompassing refers to the fact that “the kinds of coming-of-age ceremonies addressed in this book are more demanding in form and more all-encompassing in impact than those that may be more familiar to some readers, such as those found in Western religious confirmation ceremonies.”<sup>178</sup> Still further, she proposed “Perhaps all of us can learn something from culturally instituted ceremonies that recognize, celebrate, and affirm the multiple changes occurring in girls at pubescence and the broader impacts of these events for the initiates and their families and societies.”<sup>179</sup>

Additionally, Markstrom indicated that one of her goals is to examine the “meanings and significance, and the perceived impacts of these types of cultural activities on outcome of optimal development among North American Indian adolescents.”<sup>180</sup> She then in good fashion demonstrated a working knowledge of the “crisis of youth” that exists among some Indigenous communities. She contextualized it historically as “a multiplicity of causal factors that link to historical trauma stemming from long-standing colonization processes.”<sup>181</sup>

Despite her credentials and historical knowledge, Markstrom's book is lacking in attention to important details. For example, early in Chapter One, she claimed, "For North American Indian adolescents, spirituality, as a component of culture, plays a strong role in ethnic identity formation, as asserted by Gattuso (1991): 'religion is the cornerstone of American Indian identity' (p.69)."<sup>182</sup> This statement is problematic for the following reasons. First, Markstrom used the terms "spirituality" and "religion" interchangeably. This is not necessarily wrong, but she did not take the time to properly address the contentious histories of either term or even to acknowledge how she chose to define either or both. As Jonathan Z. Smith demonstrated in his well-known essay "Religion, Religions, Religious," the term "religion" alone can be defined in a hundred different ways and it is crucial for scholars to define exactly in what way they are using it.<sup>183</sup>

Second, a Navajo person participating in ceremonies may not recognize themselves as a religious practitioner as much as a citizen of the Navajo nation. As previously mentioned, Navajo call themselves Diné, or The People. In addition to the Diné, the Navajo Nation recognizes a second class of beings, called the Holy People, or Diyin Diné, of which Changing Woman is one.<sup>184</sup> Previously I described how the Diyin Diné brought about the existence of Earth People. Thus, participation in ceremonies is a part of cultural continuity.

Also misleading is Markstrom's inattention to scholarly contention regarding universal application of Arnold Van Gennep's and Victor Turner's theories on rites of passage. Markstrom did provide a good discussion of Van Gennep's classic three-stage analysis of initiation ceremonies: separation, transition and reincorporation.<sup>185</sup> She also included Turner's contribution regarding the "liminality" that a person experiences during the transitional stage.<sup>186</sup> Yet she failed to reveal the controversy over Turner's use of liminality in his seminal piece, "Betwixt and

Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage.”<sup>187</sup> Turner held initiation rites “as the quintessential rite of passage” and “liminality as definitive of ritual.”<sup>188</sup> Turner described initiates or neophytes as he referred to them, during this liminal period as being in a “condition [that] is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories.”<sup>189</sup> In the girls’ puberty ceremonies discussed, this would mean that the girls are neither girls nor women, mortal nor immortal. They’re betwixt and between.

Of course, while ritual theorists, especially those who research rites of passage, credit both Van Gennep and Turner for their places in the genealogical history of the subject, both are heavily criticized for their misrepresentation of women’s roles in society. Historian of medieval Europe Caroline Walker Bynum and Ronald Grimes, a well-known ritual theorist, both critiqued Van Gennep for formulating theory for all rites of passage using research strictly based on male initiation rites.<sup>190</sup> Likewise, Bynum and Grimes both argued that Turner’s theory was “inadequate” in that it was too male-centric.<sup>191</sup>

Bynum viewed Turner’s theory as elitist because he investigated women and saw them as liminal to men.<sup>192</sup> She acknowledged his theory as true, “but it is not the whole story.”<sup>193</sup> Turner assumed women to be exactly the “inferior” opposite of men.<sup>194</sup> Bynum critiqued Turner’s notions of liminality by applying his theory to the lives of medieval Christian women.<sup>195</sup> For Bynum, the major issue with Turner’s theory of liminality was that it “describes the stories and symbols of men better than those of women.”<sup>196</sup> Whereas Turner argued that the liminal period is a transition between genders, Bynum claimed that women would not describe their experiences in that way.<sup>197</sup> Rather, in discussing gender, women would be more likely to say that they are female or androgynous.<sup>198</sup>

Based on my review, internal conflict over gender has not been discussed in the literature on Isánáklèsh Gotal or Kinaaldá. Moreover, where Turner stressed the liminal period as transformative, Bynum asserted that, “Indeed all women’s central images turn out to be continuities.”<sup>199</sup> Rather than extreme reversals or dramatic transformations, women’s stories demonstrate a pattern of enclosure, metamorphosis, and emergence.<sup>200</sup> Here “metamorphosis” describes growth not through reversal but acceptance and embracing of one’s creative role.

Recognizing the controversy and the problems with creating universal theories about rites of passage, I would argue that Isánáklèsh Gotal and Kinaaldá, in some ways fit both models. What is important for this critique is that Markstrom dismissed the opportunity to comment on the absence of women’s experiences in the creation of ritual theory. Not to mention that she oversimplified what for scholars of religion is a complex category. The word “ritual” is in the title of her book, yet she is able to boil down theory relevant to her project to just a couple of pages. Where is the discussion about the significance of performance in rituals? Or how performance can affect bodies? Markstrom also missed the opportunity to accentuate how indigenous knowledge and practices of ritual could create positive changes for young girls at puberty.

Another example of Markstrom misrepresenting terms is in the way that she casually made generalizations about indigenous terms and concepts. It is important that scholars take cultural differences into account when writing about people who have different cultural backgrounds from their own. Devon Mihesuah described tensions between Indian and non-Indian scholarly writings in the introduction to *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*. She charged, “Drawing from sources produced largely by non-Indians, many scholars write as if they and other members of their profession have the monopoly on the

truth.”<sup>201</sup> Moreover, Mihesuah explained that these works, whether accurately representing Indian cultures and voices or not, by the very nature of having been produced in the academy are assumed to be exemplary: “Indeed, many authors of comfortable fictions sit in positions of power, setting the standards for how we should write about Indians.”<sup>202</sup> Mihesuah stressed the importance of including Indian voices in descriptions and also in analyses in order to create a more accurately representative picture.

There are five hundred sixty-six federally recognized tribes according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs website.<sup>203</sup> Each tribe is also considered inherently sovereign. For example, each tribe has its own origin stories, worldview, governing system, language, and so on. The way that Markstrom presented this idea of religion being an integral part of “*the* American Indian identity” mistakenly represents an array of American Indian identities as unified. Moreover, her source – Gattuso – for this stereotype is not even a scholarly source, but a travel writer taking liberties in a field that he has not been formally trained to represent. I find the latter issue to be especially surprising because Markstrom clearly demonstrated in her bibliography that she was well-versed in Native American Studies scholarship. Her neglect is more concerning and confusing given that one of her stated goals of the book is to correct misinterpretations of indigenous women’s ceremonies by providing, “Indigenous feminist interpretations” of the events.<sup>204</sup> How does a travel writer achieve this goal better than one of these scholars, or one of her consultants could have?

Markstrom even went a step further in the first couple of pages of her “Preface” to essentially declare herself not just a scholar and researcher, but also an inside authority on Native American coming-of-age rituals. She began with a two-page narrative about her experience doing fieldwork with the San Carlos Band of the Apache and described how attending a certain

number of ceremonies allowed her to reach a level of understanding that moved beyond her role as a researcher. She declared, “As a developmental psychologist who specializes in adolescence, I was trained to possess the traits of an unbiased, aloof social scientist. Instead, I was amazed and humbled on my journey to understanding these unique cultural events of North American Indians.”<sup>205</sup> What does that mean? Is she no longer presenting unbiased data? Is she no longer beholden to the structures of academia?

A couple of pages later she made a similarly controversial statement when she said, “There is lamenting of a loss of ritual and tradition among the melting pot of the broader, non-Native society in North America.”<sup>206</sup> I can sympathize with her argument that puberty ceremonies appear to address the needs of adolescents at puberty outlined above. However, it is illogical to make the conclusion from this set of data that non-Native’s are “lamenting a loss of ritual and tradition.” As I have stated before, from what I have surveyed of the available scholarship on puberty ceremonies, there does not appear to be any popular history of them in non-indigenous U.S. communities. There are, however, a number of examples of coming-of-age ceremonies among different communities of people, such as Catholic Confirmations, Jewish Bat and Bar Mitzvahs, Latina Quinceañeras, and more recently, Purity Balls, many of which Markstrom mentioned in her introduction.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, Markstrom’s statement is thoroughly inaccurate and misplaced.

Similarly concerning is the last paragraph in Markstrom’s “Acknowledgements,” in which she shared:

Writing this book has been an intellectual and spiritual venture. One is ultimately changed from engagement in cross-cultural endeavors, and I thank the Creator God for the many blessings and for the privilege of sharing segments of the spiritual journeys of others in their celebrations of life and the Creator who is known to the Apaches as Usen, the Navajos as Di’yin God, the Lakotas as Wakan Tanka, and the Ojibwas as Kitchi-Manitou.<sup>208</sup>

This paragraph is misleading and concerning on a number of levels. First, it is an example of a grossly inappropriate cultural misrepresentation of broadly applying a concept of “*the* Creator God” to four very distinctly different nations. Since this thesis is largely concerned with representations I will not go into the cosmology of each of the listed tribes, but at least for our purposes, Di’yin Diné are by definition a group of what are considered to be Holy People.<sup>209</sup> Therefore, the use of a singular term “Creator God” to describe a pantheon of supernatural beings is more than careless.<sup>210</sup>

Second, the authority the quoted paragraph implicitly gives to Markstrom is problematic. Again, she has claimed the ultimate and final word on this field of study. This is not to say that her book does not contain useful data. Her fieldwork, at least with Apache communities, is demonstrably extensive. However, Markstrom inappropriately takes liberties in her application of this concept of Creator God. One can only assume she based this assumption on individual testimonies. Thus applying those personal testimonies to a multiplicity of sovereign nations under the guise of an insider’s knowledge of spirituality puts her motives and authority as a specialist in this field into question.

In addition to confusing motives and insider claims of authority, Markstrom relies on peculiar sources. The example of Gattuso has already been raised. She also cited Bruce Lincoln’s book *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women’s Initiation* where he implied that Kinaaldá is the most important ceremony for Navajo people, thus adding to confusion about Navajo worldview which will be discussed in the next chapter. Earlier I briefly mentioned the problems of comparing Kinaaldá too closely with Isánáklèsh Gotal. Even though there are obvious similarities between Isánáklèsh Gotal and Kinaaldá, assuming they carry the same meaning or cultural significance is a problematic approach to the study of Kinaaldá, as it is in the

study of any cultural activities. Research that focuses on the unique qualities of Kinaaldá would serve Navajo peoples better in correctly representing their history and preserving an important cultural practice. Moreover, attention to how Kinaaldá is different from other ceremonies could benefit future studies about whether puberty ceremonies might be an effective means of guidance for adolescents at puberty in other cultures.

For instance, careful examination of the evidence refutes the assumption that Kinaaldá is the most important of all ceremonies for Navajo communities, as is the case with Isánáklèsh Gotal for Apache communities. As discussed above, for Apaches, Isánáklèsh Gotal is the most important ceremony in their complex of rituals because of its connection to their origin story and the layered meanings and performances of renewal.<sup>211</sup> Talamantez stated “Apache religious traditions consider women in a very special place in the culture as it seeks to establish balance and harmony.”<sup>212</sup> In an interview with Eve Ball, scholar and author of *Indeh: An Apache Odyssey*, Daklugie, a Chiricahua Apache man, said, “Ceremonials for the Maidens are the most sacred of all our religious rites.”<sup>213</sup> In fact, the girls’ puberty ceremony is so important that Daklugie says the group stopped in the middle of trying to escape a raid to honor one girl who had “reached maturity.”<sup>214</sup>

In contrast, in the literature on Navajo ceremonies, Kinaaldá is referenced as an important life-way ritual, but one that is a part of a larger system of ceremonies called *hozhooji* or Blessing Way.<sup>215</sup> Gary Witherspoon, explains *hozhooji* as a sort of category of rituals along with two other categories, *Diyink’eho* or Holy Way Rites and *hochoji* or Evil (also Enemy) Way Rites. This viewpoint is shared by others in the field including Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton (1938), Charlotte Johnson Frisbie (1967), and Leland C. Wyman (1970).<sup>216</sup> Reichard provided another level of insight that may be worth further investigation:



In Navaho religion no one thing has more absolute significance than another. We may speak of “high gods” as members of an elaborate pantheon, but Changing Woman or Sun is no more important at a particular moment than the humble roadrunner or a grain of corn. In the entire conceivable span of time the “great gods” may perhaps dominate, for their power spreads over all space and time. Since, however, for the most part the ceremony is concerned with a specific moment, omnipotence and omnipresence are subordinate ideas, if indeed they exist as absolutes.<sup>217</sup>

This quotation would suggest a much more horizontal conception of hierarchy. Not only would Kinaaldá not be viewed as the most important ceremony, but no being is considered to have any value over another. Perhaps value is assigned in the moment, but not as an absolute. This is not to say that Kinaaldá could not have taken on a higher level of importance in contemporary Navajo society, but that there is currently no solid evidence indicating just how Kinaaldá and hozhooji are related.<sup>218</sup>

As I discussed in Chapter 1, another important cultural concept that has not been clearly linked to Kinaaldá is Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH). Schwarz did provide a discussion of the concept; however, she was careful to make clear that it was not her goal “to construct a composite version of Navajo philosophy.”<sup>219</sup> Instead she focused on “distinct voices” and “how people draw on Navajo philosophy to deal with specific problems faced at various points in the life cycle.”<sup>220</sup> While not contributing to the misrepresentation of Kinaaldá, Schwarz also did not provide a clear understanding of how central the ceremony is to the community as a whole.

Markstrom similarly missed this opportunity.

In addition to hozhooji and SNBH, *nilch'i*, which is translated as Wind, Air, or Atmosphere, is another cultural concept containing multiple layers of meaning.<sup>221</sup> It is discussed in James Kale McNeley's *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy*. McNeley, an anthropologist, did not write about puberty ceremonies but his work is important to this study because he focused on important Navajo cultural concepts primary to Navajo origins and understanding the role of

Navajo supernatural beings. He described Holy Wind as “endowed with powers.”<sup>222</sup>

Additionally, he shared, “Holy Wind gives life, thought, speech and the power of motion to all living things” and that it is the “means of communication between all elements of the living world.”<sup>223</sup>

McNeley and Gary Witherspoon highlight the complexities of this concept of a Wind Soul, making the point that while it is an integral part of thought, speech and motion, an individual Navajo’s behavior and morality is more externally defined and that the Wind Soul is more of a unifying entity connecting beings within the universe.<sup>224</sup> Similarly, Schwarz seemed to be referring to this concept of wind souls when she discussed “male and female clouds.”<sup>225</sup> She also shared a comment from one of her interviewees in which he described a “Rainbow inside which is your *ágáál*, I mean your means of travel, the rainbow is what gives us movement.”<sup>226</sup> *Ágáál* seems to be related to *nilch’i*, but Schwarz sticks to her promise to not spend too much time discussing abstract philosophical concepts, leaving the reader to wonder as to the significance of the term.<sup>227</sup> Again, Markstrom similarly missed an opportunity to elucidate the uniqueness of *Kinaaldá* when she failed to discuss this important cultural concept.

Despite concerns, Markstrom’s work is still valuable in terms of focusing scholarly attention on indigenous puberty ceremonies and how they can inform adolescent theories of development and applications thereof. Her emphasis on the fact that at puberty, adolescents are “particularly impressionable” gives reason for adults to pay more attention to this important life-stage transition. Moreover, the fact that the puberty ceremonies she examines accomplish the goals of protection factors makes them appear to be good models for further study. Had she selected better sources and been more careful to not perpetuate negative stereotypes, Markstrom could have been more successful.

## Conclusion

The foregoing critiques are intended to be a small step toward deconstructing the culture of menstrual shaming in scholarly literature. They also aim to correct some scholarly misrepresentations of Navajo conceptions of gender, Navajo girls' puberty ceremonies, as well as some misrepresentations of indigenous communities more broadly. As I demonstrated in the introduction, there is very little research regarding puberty ceremonies in the United States. It is always important for scholars to carefully and accurately represent the cultures about which they are writing. However, because of the limited availability of research about puberty ceremonies, and the predominance of research concerning indigenous communities, careful representations of indigenous theories, perspectives, and social norms are all the more significant.

Additionally this thesis calls for scholars to build upon the foundations the current literature has created in order to rectify misconceptions about puberty ceremonies as well as to further deconstruct negative stereotypes about menarche. This is an important undertaking because as Lee and Sasser-Coen espoused, menarche is "a crucial site for critical cultural production."<sup>228</sup> Moreover, "Telling, writing and analyzing the stories of menarche are steps toward deconstructing the negative discourses that surround menstruation, and contribute to the historical study of the patterned nature of women's sexual and reproductive selves."<sup>229</sup>

Along with my stated scholarly goals, I also acknowledge the implications that academic paradigms have for social critique. Rita Gross, a feminist scholar of religions, has similarly argued that feminism as social vision is based on the work of scholars.<sup>230</sup> Thus, I am hopeful that further research on puberty ceremonies will contribute to improvement of young adolescents' body images and the breaking down of social barriers about female bodies in the United States.

What sets puberty ceremonies apart is the specific emphasis on celebrating female bodies and their ability to create life, as well as the emphasis on building strong character and self-image. “Female” here refers to the female sex, or the biological given. Unlike Lincoln, in my viewpoint these kinds of rituals will be crucial for achieving gender equality in the United States. By this I mean that rather than being confined to “male” or “female” categories based on sex, people would have the freedom and agency to express masculinity and femininity in whatever combinations represented them. This concept resonates with the way that Navajo children are supported when they express different combinations of femininity and masculinity.

I do not suggest that indigenous ceremonies be appropriated for use in mainstream U.S. culture. Anthropologist Bonnie Hewlett has suggested, “Adolescent research from a diversity of cultures is needed to evaluate existing characterizations about adolescence and adolescent identity development.” She further proposed, “The richest and most exciting research often emerges from cross-cultural, transdisciplinary approaches that integrate a range of perspectives on key issues.”<sup>231</sup> Theories about adolescence presented in Markstrom’s book indicate that indigenous knowledge concerning the onset of menstruation and puberty could inform education about and guidance at puberty cross-culturally.

In her work, Markstrom shared a comment from one of her interviewees about how girls visibly change over the course of the ceremony:

The fourth day they mature. They’re very mature. They’re not boisterous. They’re not goofing around. And by the end of the four day period, they rub that paint off, and it’s done. Then they start to realize what people try to tell them. And if all girls went through that, I think, the whole world would be in peace.<sup>232</sup>

Without saying so explicitly, this informant is describing how the performance of the ceremony and the rigors that the girls’ bodies must go through gives them the sense of empowerment that they express afterward. Simply explaining the significance does not produce this effect, as is

visible in the more child-like behavior of the girls at the beginning of the ceremony and the more mature, womanly behavior they begin to exert on the last day.

Rituals are inherently embodied because as Grimes put it they are “the enactment of our most generative gestures and most grounded postures” and “in ritualizing, human beings discover, then embody and cultivate their world views, attitudes, and ethics.”<sup>233</sup> When we study ritual, we cannot forget that it is by very definition a performance.<sup>234</sup> In this view, ritual instructs and inscribes aspects of religion and culture on the body. Even though Apache girls begin learning about *Isánáklèsh Gotal* from a young age and usually attend the ceremonies of other girls, they do not fully comprehend how the ceremony will change them until after they have gone through the process themselves.

As demonstrated by Valerie’s experience in *Weaving Women’s Lives* Navajo girls reflect similarly on their experience of *Kinaaldá*: “I was kind of skeptical; I was kind of afraid. I was kind of embarrassed at the fact that my mom and my grandma wanted to have this *Kinaaldá* for me. You know you’re young and you think, God, nobody should know this about me.”<sup>235</sup> However, when she was older she told a different story: “All the stuff that I did, like work real hard and push myself...today, I think when I start to do something, I want to finish it. When I’m in a bind or when I’m in trouble I work real hard to fix it...to make it better.” She continued adding that the ceremony instilled confidence in her:

You are outspoken and you express your feelings. You don’t sit back and not present to people around you who you are....you make yourself visible. Things like running [in the *Kinaaldá*]—the significance of that is like pushing yourself harder every time. Today when I look at my *Kinaaldá*, I’m glad that my mom and my grandma placed this opportunity upon me...It’s really helped to play a large part in my life.<sup>236</sup>

Valerie also shared how embarrassment about women’s bodily functions has prevented girls from going through the ceremony. She told Lamphere about a younger girl named April who was

given the option of having the ceremony or not. The girl opted out. Valerie explained that April had been to other girls' ceremonies, but, "I just think it's just...she just didn't want to because she was embarrassed. I think that's it. I wish that she would have had it."<sup>237</sup>

While there has been much attention to the specific aspects of girls' puberty ceremonies, very little research demonstrates what this kind of ritual activity does for girls. I would like to suggest some important questions to be asked in this regard. First, how do puberty ceremonies affect girls' experience of adolescence? Are girls' lives enriched or empowered when they undergo this kind of ceremony? Are girls in mainstream U.S culture being treated to this kind of ceremonious regard for their life-creating abilities? Are puberty ceremonies relegated to religious spheres, or does this kind of ritual activity happen in the secular world as well?

In order to answer some of these questions, I propose a multi-year fieldwork project among Navajo and Apache women. One piece of this project would involve interviewing women of different ages and life stages to identify what kind of lasting impact the ceremony might have. Though it would be an ambitious commitment, it would be particularly interesting to conduct interviews of the same women as they reached later life stages, i.e. before the ceremony, after the ceremony, in high school, in college, etc. Additionally, I would suggest a questionnaire for high school girls who have and who have not gone through the ceremony. The goal would be to identify whether girls who go through the ceremony stand out as more confident by using achievement of high grades, participation in leadership roles, or interest in pursuing advanced education as metrics.

Such a study would be an important step in revealing how integration of ritual at puberty can affect women's self-images. In my view, embarrassment and shame about normal bodily functions should not be part of transitioning between childhood and adulthood. If adolescence

really is the most influential period in our development as humans, what better time to start a revolution in the ways that people of all genders view and talk about menstruation and women's bodies?

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This number is taken from Google Scholar on 01/18/2016. There were 136 citations of the 1981 edition of *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, and 61 more citations of the 1991 edition. There were 32 citations of Markstrom's 2008 publication of *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls: Ritual Expressions at Puberty*; 85 of Charlotte Johnson Frisbie's *Kinaalda: A Study of the Navaho Girl's Puberty Ceremony* (1967); and 70 of Maureen Trudelle Schwarz's *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman: Navajo Views on the Human Body and Personhood* (1997).

<sup>2</sup> In this thesis I use the definitions of rite and ritual as described by Ronald L. Grimes in "Defining and Classifying Ritual," *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 192-93. Grimes uses "rite," and "a ritual," and "rituals" interchangeably. A rite "denotes specific enactments located in concrete times and places." Grimes argues that "ritual is an idea that scholars formulate," and should be used in "formal definitions and characterizations."

<sup>3</sup> Janet Lee and Jennifer Sasser-Coen, "Introduction: Menarche and Body Politics," *Blood Stories: Menarche and the Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary U.S. Society*, (NYC: Routledge, 1996), 18 and 169.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>6</sup> See examples: NBC4 Staff, "Public breastfeeding comments causes stir with N.H. lawmakers," *NBC4 News*, (January 4, 2016), <http://nbc4i.com/2016/01/05/public-breastfeeding-comments-causes-stir-with-n-h-lawmakers/>; Diane Falzone, "Equinox milking controversy with breastfeeding ad?" *Fox News*, (January 5, 2016), <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2016/01/05/equinox-milking-controversy-with-breastfeeding-ad/>; Angela Brown, "Alyssa Milano defends public breastfeeding on talk show," *The San Francisco Globe*, (January 11, 2016), <http://sfglobe.com/2016/01/09/alyssa-milano-defends-public-breastfeeding-on-talk-show/>.

<sup>7</sup> Nichole L. Wood-Barcalow, Tracy L. Tylka, and Casey L. Augustus-Horvath, "'But I Like My body': Positive body image characteristics and a holistic model for young-adult women," *Elsevier*, Vol. 7, Issue 2, (March 2010), 112.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>11</sup> Lee and Sasser-Coen, *Blood Stories*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Rita Gross, "Defining Feminism, Religion, and the Study of Religion," *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 16-17.

<sup>13</sup> Renya K. Ramirez, "Learning across Differences: Native and Ethnic Studies of Feminisms," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (June, 2008), 303-304. Also see Luana Ross, "From the "F" Word to Indigenous/Feminisms," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Native Feminism (Fall 2009), 39-52.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 304-305.

<sup>15</sup> This outline is by no means representative of all Apache or Navajo ceremonies, but serves to provide some background for readers who are unfamiliar with either community. Ceremonies may vary by family, geographic region, and tribal affiliation. Maureen Trudelle Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman: Navajo Views on the Human Body and Personhood*, (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), 175-76. For example, some Navajo girls will have two ceremonies. Carole A. Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls: Ritual Expressions at Puberty*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 224 and 250. Also see Charlotte Johnson Frisbie, *Kinaaldá: A Study of the Navaho Girl's Puberty Ceremony*, (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1967), 22. In some Apache ceremonies particular events will take place inside of a tepee or a wickiup whereas in Navajo ceremonies a hogan is the central structure.

<sup>16</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 248-57. For example, for the Mescalero band of the Apache, Isánáklèsh Gotal is the most important ceremony of the year. The ceremony is open to public attendance and held in conjunction with the fourth of July. Usually several girls will undergo the ceremony that weekend. Also see Morris Opler, *Apache Odyssey: A Journey Between Two Worlds*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 35. It became associated with the fourth of July during the late 1800s when indigenous religious traditions were effectively banned by the BIA. However, the Mescalero Apache were allowed to continue holding select ceremonies by paring them with established U.S. holidays. See Note 214. Also see Jessica Dawn Palmer, "Women's Roles: The Puberty Rite and Women's Responsibilities in Society," *Apache Peoples: A History of All Bands and Tribes Through the 1880's*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2013), 116-17. Among other bands of Apache, as well as in Navajo communities, individual ceremonies are more prevalent.

<sup>17</sup> Schwarz, *Molded in the image of Changing Woman*, 174-75. Also see Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 211-23.

<sup>18</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 211-23.



<sup>19</sup> Frisbie, *Kinaaldá*, 26-28; Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, 198-200.

<sup>20</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 232.

<sup>21</sup> Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, 202-16; Frisbie, *Kinaaldá*, 41-46; Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 309-10.

<sup>22</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 216; Palmer, "Women's Roles," 118; Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, 176-97.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 193. Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, 226-227.

<sup>26</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 247-48; Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, 228-29.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick Hoxie, "Navajo," in *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1996), 422.

<sup>28</sup> Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, *The Navaho*, rev. Lucy H. Wales and Richard Kluckhohn, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 128.

<sup>29</sup> Brian K. Pennington, "Introduction: A Critical Evaluation of the Work of Bruce Lincoln," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Jan. 2005), 1-3. A prolific writer and former student of Mircea Eliade, Bruce Lincoln currently holds the Caroline E. Haskell Distinguished Service Professorship of the History of Religions in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. Some of his other works include, *Priests, Warriors, and Cattle: A study in the Ecology of Religions* (1981); *Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (1986); *Discourse and the Construction of Society: comparative studies in Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (1989); *Death, War, and Sacrifice: Studies in Ideology and Practice* (1991); *Authority: Construction and Corrosion* (1994); and *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after 9/11* (2003).

<sup>30</sup> Sally Falk Moore, Review of *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation* by Bruce Lincoln, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May, 1983), 399-400. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/643945>. Sally Falk Moore also noted this point in her review of the first edition of *Emerging from the Chrysalis*.

<sup>31</sup> Pennington, "Introduction," 3.

<sup>32</sup> Morris Edward Opler, “The Girl’s Puberty Rite,” *An Apache Life-way: The Economic, Social, and Religious Institutions of the Chiricahua Indians*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), 82-134; H. Henrietta Stockel, *Women of the Apache Nation*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 5-6, “Puberty ceremonies were (and still are) a joyful, essential, and spiritual part of becoming an adult female Apache and were held, with variations, by each band of the tribe;” Claire R. Farrer, *Living Life’s Circle: Mescalero Apache Cosmovision*, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1991)128-183; and Inés Talamantez, “In the Space between Earth and Sky: Contemporary Mescalero Apache Ceremonialism,” *Native Religions and Cultures of North America*, ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan, (The Continuum Publishing Company, 2000) 143, “In other words, people’s beliefs regarding the transformations that occur in nature are associated with the ritual transformations that a young girls experiences in her rite of passage from girlhood to female deity to womanhood.” Also note that in different bands, the ceremonies may have slightly different expressions.

<sup>33</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 193. The San Carlos Apaches call her Ests’unnadlehi, the Mescaleros call her Es dzanadeha, Isdžanatlées, and Isánáklèsh, and the Cibecues call her Changing Woman in English and Ih sta nedlèhéh in Apache. She has other names among other Apache communities.

<sup>34</sup> Stockel, “Chapter 1: Not So Long Ago,” *Women of the Apache Nation*, 1. Origins stories “form the center of a society’s system of beliefs. They make things seem plausible; they satisfy; they interpret,” (Ibid, 2). Stories about White Painted Woman vary some between communities. See Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 197-201.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 5. Stockel mainly focuses on the Chiricahua tribe, but her book includes personal accounts of Isánáklèsh Gotal from both Chiricahua and Mescalero women.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see, Trudy Griffin-Pierce, *Earth is my Mother, Sky is my Father: Space, Time, and Astronomy in Navajo Sandpainting*, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 134 and 218;Palmer, “Women’s roles,” 116-122, Proquest e-brary.

<sup>37</sup> Gladys Reichard, *Navaho Religion: A Study of Symbolism Volume II*, (New York, NY: Bollingen Foundation Inc., 1950), 409. Maureen Trudelle Schwarz, *Navajo Lifeways: Contemporary Issues, Ancient Knowledge*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 19. Frank Mitchell quoted in Frisbie, *Kinaaldá*, 11. Slim Curly quoted in Leland C. Wyman, *Blessingway: With Three Versions of the Myth Recorded and Translated From the Navajo by Father Berard Haile, O.F.M.*, (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1970), 143-45.

<sup>38</sup> Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 26-30.

<sup>39</sup> Reichard, *Navaho Religion Volume II*, 409.

<sup>40</sup> Leland C. Wyman, *Blessingway*, 9 and 9n21.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, xv.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, xvii.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 139-47, 195-98, 403-12, 418-21, 509-39.

<sup>44</sup> Louise Lamphere, *To Run After Them: Cultural and Social Bases of Cooperation in a Navajo Community*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977).

<sup>45</sup> Louise Lamphere with Eva Price, Carole Cadman, and Valerie Darwin, *Weaving Women's Lives: Three Generations in a Navajo Family*, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2007), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 2 and 205.

<sup>47</sup> Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*.

<sup>48</sup> McPherson, *Dinéjí Na'nitin*, 215.

<sup>49</sup> Don E. Merten, "Transitions and 'Trouble': Rites of Passage for Suburban Girls," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (June 2005), 139, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3651382> . "The white middle class, as a rule, does not use formal rites of passage to facilitate the movement from one life stage to the next – even though such movement is spoken of in terms of informal rites of passage (Hersch 1998)."

<sup>50</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone: Re-inventing Rites of Passage*, (University of California Press, 2000), 94.

<sup>51</sup> Merten, "Transitions and 'Trouble,'" 139.

<sup>52</sup> Erin Chianese, "Coming of Age," *The Link: Home School News Network*, [http://www.homeschoolnewslink.com/homeschool/columnists/chianese/vol6iss5\\_ComingOfAge.shtml](http://www.homeschoolnewslink.com/homeschool/columnists/chianese/vol6iss5_ComingOfAge.shtml) and also see the discussion on *Berkeley Parents Network*, <http://parents.berkeley.edu/recommend/religion/comingofage.html>

<sup>53</sup> Hemitra Crecraft, "Coming of Age Menarche Kit," *Woman Wisdom: Empowering Women and Girls*, [http://www.womanwisdom.com/w\\_coa-menarchekit.shtml](http://www.womanwisdom.com/w_coa-menarchekit.shtml).

<sup>54</sup> See <http://steppingstonesproject.org/> and <http://riteofpassagejourneys.org/about>. These camps would be a great follow-up topic for a paper that would answer questions about what kinds of effects the camps have on adolescents and their self-images. Plus, it would be interesting to conduct further research regarding questions about the appropriation of indigenous knowledge.

<sup>55</sup> Lee and Sasser-Coen, *Blood Stories*, 6.

<sup>56</sup> S. Zohreh Kermani, "Chapter 6: My Dream Come True," *Pagan Family Values: Childhood and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary American Paganism*, (New York University Press, 2013) 172.

<sup>57</sup> Lee and Sasser-Coen, *Blood Stories*. Personal testimonies are scattered throughout the book.

<sup>58</sup> Kermani, *Pagan Family Values*, 172.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 185.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1966).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 1-6.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb, *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation*, (University of California Press, 1988), 10-14, 23-24.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Their emphasis on “dirt.”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Lee and Sasser-Coen, *Blood Stories*, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Lamphere, *Weaving Women’s Lives*, 89.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>73</sup> See note 9. Also see Reichard, *Navaho Religion Vol. II*, 410-12; Schwarz, *Navajo Lifeways*, 19; and, McPherson, *Dinéjí Na’Nitin*, 175.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Both, Bruce Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women’s Initiation*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 25.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>79</sup> Nancy C. Lutkehaus and Paul B. Roscoe, *Gender Rituals: Female Initiation in Melanesia*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 4.

<sup>80</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*, (Oxford University Press, 1997), 94.

<sup>81</sup> Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone*, 105. Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, 100. Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality," *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum, (MIT Press, 1991), 72.

<sup>82</sup> Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, 100-103.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 7; Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 87, "Native conceptions of menstruating women and menstruation fluids are controversial topics that have led to speculations on the perceptions of women and the degree of power women held in their societies." Also see page 106. Theda Perdue, *Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 30, "The seclusion and avoidance of women, which often has been cited as evidence for their subjugation and oppression, actually signified their power. Women secluded themselves; men did not force restrictions and rituals on them. Men, in fact, often observed similar restrictions before and after warfare, and they, like women, regarded seclusion as a practical precaution and a demonstration of the elevated plane they had achieved."

<sup>84</sup> Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone*, 109.

<sup>85</sup> Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, 101.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 102.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 105.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

<sup>89</sup> Devon Mihesuah, "Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History," in *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter 1996) 17, <http://search.proquest.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/216853327?accountid=14556>.

<sup>90</sup> See note 40.

<sup>91</sup> Devon Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 42, "Most tribes were egalitarian, that is, Native women did have religious, political, and economic power – not more than the men, but at least equal to men's. Women's and men's roles may have been different, but neither was less important than the other."

<sup>92</sup> Gladys Reichard, *Navajo Religion: A Study of Symbolism Volume I*, (New York: Stratford Press, 1950), 171.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 172.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 30-31.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. While I am not arguing for a generalized paradigm of balance vs. imbalance of power, emic reports emphasize this notion.

<sup>101</sup> In Reichard, *Navaho Religion Vol. II*, 408-10, Changing Woman appears to First Man and First Woman or is created from a turquoise image and a white shell image.

<sup>102</sup> Lamphere, *Weaving Women's Lives*, 16.

<sup>103</sup> Reichard, *Navaho Religion Vol. II*, 410.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 411.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 450.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 412-13.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 413.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>112</sup> Witherspoon, Gary, "The Central Concepts of Navajo World View (I)," *Linguistics: An International Review*, (January, 1974), 54.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>116</sup> Lloyd Lee, "Introduction," *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought*, ed. Lloyd Lee, (University of Arizona Press, 2014), 3.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, x.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 3. Lee borrows “matrix” from Viola F. Cordova, *The Native American Philosophy of V.F. Cordova*, ed. V.F. Cordova, Kathleen Dean Moore, Kurt Peters, Ted Jojola, and Amber Lacy, (University of Arizona Press, 2007).

<sup>119</sup> Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, xvii.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Griffin-Pierce, *Earth is my Mother, Sky is my Father*, 92.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 92-94. Also McPherson, *Dinéjí Na’nitin*, 139-142.

<sup>123</sup> Griffin-Pierce, *Earth is my Mother, Sky is my Father*, 94.

<sup>124</sup> Gary Witherspoon, *Navajo Kinship and Marriage*, (University of Chicago Press, 1975), 75-76. Lamphere, *Weaving Women’s Lives*, 100-102, “The anthropological literature on the Navajo suggests that while first marriages were arranged between families, they often broke up, and that second and third relationships were consensual and not marked by any ceremony.”

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 74-75. Also see 23-36.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 23-36.

<sup>130</sup> Louise Lamphere, “Gladys Reichard Among the Navajo,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1992), 92, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3346644>.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 93. Also see Gary Witherspoon, *Navajo Kinship and Marriage*, 26-28.

<sup>132</sup> See note 79.

<sup>133</sup> Witherspoon, *Navajo Kinship and Marriage*, 71-72. It is important to note that sheep were introduced by Spanish populations, Lamphere, *To Run After Them*, 3. However, in Reichard, *Navaho Religion Volume I*, 19-20, this idea of earth as mother comes from Navajo origin stories. Reichard explained, “The earth, very different from what it is now, had to be transformed. Essential parts, as well as the earth itself, are called ‘our mother.’”

<sup>134</sup> Witherspoon, *Navajo Kinship and Marriage*, 82.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Lamphere, *Weaving Women's Lives*, 60.

<sup>139</sup> Bruce Lincoln, "Preface," *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>140</sup> Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, 101.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 110-11.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 112. See also Malory Nye, *Religion: The Basics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Routledge, 2008), 79-102.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 116. Also see pages 117-18.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 112. Also see Ronald L. Grimes, "The Practical and Cultural Contexts of Ritual Criticism," *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in its Practice, essays on its Theory*, (University of South Carolina Press, 1990) for a discussion on ritual criticism.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>150</sup> Marsha Eileen Hewitt, "Ideology Critique, Feminism, and the Study of Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 1999), 51.

<sup>151</sup> Patricia Barker Leach, Review of *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation* by Bruce Lincoln, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (March 1993) 99. Patricia Barker Leach argued that Lincoln "imposes a rather traditional view of women in society and measures the status of women along a single unitary dimension." However I argue that she, like Lincoln, did not address indigenous women's experiences.

<sup>152</sup> Both, Mihesuah, "Commonality of Difference," 17.

<sup>153</sup> Mary C. Churchill, "Out of Bounds: Indigenous Knowing and the Study of Religion," *Reading Native American Women: Critical/Creative Representations*, ed. Inés Hernández-Avila, (AltaMira Press, 2005), 251.

<sup>154</sup> Mihesuah, "Commonality of Difference," 18.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 40.



<sup>157</sup> Lamphere, *Weaving Women's Lives*, 24. Different transliterations of this Navajo word exist. I have chosen this one; an alternative spelling is found in a quotation in the next paragraph.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 219n5.

<sup>159</sup> Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1986), 49. Earlier in the book, Williams asserted "Many tribes have a public ceremony that acknowledges the acceptance of berdache status," (23) because children know whether they are berdache or not by puberty. This was stated in reference to a Mohave community.

<sup>160</sup> Reichard, *Navaho Religion Volume I*, 316, "By a 'rite' I mean the short combinations of ritualistic acts that form a ceremony." Barbara G. Myerhoff, "Death in Due Time: Construction of Self and Culture in Ritual Drama," *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, ed. John J. MacAloon, (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), 170., "Sometimes audiences or witnesses are more engaged by watching a ritual than are its central subjects and participants."

<sup>161</sup> Frisbie, *Kinaaldá*, 358-60.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, 381-83.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 362-66. Also see Lamphere, *To Run After Them*, 157-59.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, 373 and 373n67. "As Reichard states, "Restoration to youth is the pattern of the earth, something for which the Navaho lives, for he reasons that what happens to the [Mother] earth may also happen to him."

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*. Also see Churchill, "Out of Bounds," 260. Churchill similarly argued that "Cherokee traditions are based on concepts of opposition, unity, and boundary-crossing found in Cherokee myth, ritual, and social organization."

<sup>166</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 4.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, 8-9.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid 26.

<sup>181</sup> Both, Ibid, 26. The “causal factors” that Markstrom outlines include (27)poverty – unemployment, high levels of crime, substance abuse; (28) higher drug and alcohol use among youths; (29) suicide among 15-24 is three times higher; (30-31) colonialism; (35) “Due to rearing in unnatural day-to-day institutional living environments children did not establish models for normative family life and parent-child relationships;” (37-38) sterilizations; (8) N.A: “maturation of the child to an adult as a central development transition in the life span.”

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>183</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 179-196.

<sup>184</sup> Ray Baldwin Lewis, “Navajo Beliefs,” *Discover Navajo*, accessed 02/01/2016, <http://www.discovernavajo.com/navajo-culture.aspx>

<sup>185</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 15-16. Van Gennep outlines a three-phase formula for initiation rites in his foundational work *The Rites of Passage*. According to Van Gennep, every rite of passage “is akin to a bodily movement through space.” Rites of passage can be characterized by *separation* of the initiate from the group, *transition* in which the initiate transforms into the new stage of life or overcomes the turning point, and *incorporation* of the initiate back into society in this new state of being.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites De Passage,” *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, (Harper & Row, 1979) 234-243.

<sup>188</sup> Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone*, 122.

<sup>189</sup> Turner, “Betwixt and Between,” 236.

<sup>190</sup> Grimes and Bynum on Van Gennep, *Deeply Into the Bone*, 104. See also Bruce Lincoln’s *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, 3. Lutkehaus and Roscoe, *Gender Rituals*, 4.

<sup>191</sup> Bynum, “Women’s Stories, Women’s Symbols,” 72.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 73-75.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 77-82.

<sup>199</sup> Bynum, "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols," 81.

<sup>200</sup> Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone*, 103-104.

<sup>201</sup> Mihesuah, Devon, "Introduction," *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 5.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>203</sup> "Who We Are," Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, accessed 12-23-2015, <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/index.htm>.

<sup>204</sup> Markstrom, *Empowerment of North American Indian Girls*, 22.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, x.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, xii.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 9-10. Purity balls at first sound like they would function as a kind of puberty ceremony for young girls in Christian evangelical movements. However, upon examination the outcome is rather the opposite of the two ceremonies focused on in this thesis. Instead of celebrating women's bodies and the creative aspects unique to them and empowering young girls to be strong and goal-oriented, in purity balls fathers aim to control their daughters' bodies and sexuality through chastity pledges, perpetuating a history of patriarchy and negative stereotypes about unmarried women as hyper sexualized beings in need of male protection. See Breanne Fahs, "Daddy's Little Girls: On the Perils of Chastity Clubs, Purity Balls, and Ritualized Abstinence," *Frontiers*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (2010) 116-144.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, xvii.

<sup>209</sup> Lee, *Diné Perspectives*, 5.

<sup>210</sup> Devon Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women*, xv. Mihesuah explains the unique qualities of indigenous communities and their philosophies or worldviews in the introduction: “Nor has there ever been a unitary worldview among tribes or especially after contact and interaction with non-Natives, even among members of the same group. Cultural ambiguity was and is common among Natives.”

<sup>211</sup> Haley, *Apaches*, 134.

<sup>212</sup> Inés Talamantez, “Images of the Feminine in Apache Religious Tradition,” *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World Religions*, ed. Paula M. Cooney, William R. Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 131.

<sup>213</sup> Daklugie, qtd in “The Apache Religion.” *Indeh: An Apache Odyssey*, by Eve Ball, (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 58. The only other references to the puberty ceremony in *Indeh* are the fact that the Catholic priests allowed it to continue (at a time when many ceremonies were being prohibited) because its significance was explained as “to impress upon the maidens their sacred obligation to be chaste,” 237-38.

<sup>214</sup> Talamantez, “Images of the Feminine,” 139. Talamantez says that not all girls participate. Some question whether the ceremony is even effective. Others may choose not to participate because they believe it conflicts with their religious identity as Christian. This further implies a connection between well-being and spirituality.

<sup>215</sup> Witherspoon, Gary, “The Central Concepts of Navajo World View (II),” *Linguistics: An International Review*. Vol. 161 (1975), 77.

<sup>216</sup> Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 212-13; Frisbie, *Kinaaldá*, 9; Wyman, *Blessingway*, 3-9.

<sup>217</sup> Reichard, *Navaho Religion Volume I*, 4.

<sup>218</sup> Cajete, Gregory, “Foreword,” *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought*, ed. Lloyd L. Lee, (University of Arizona Press, 2014), ix.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, xviii.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, xviii-xix.

<sup>221</sup> McNeley, James Kale, “Wind Concepts: Interpretations and Contradictions,” *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy*, (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1981), 1.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*, 3-4.

<sup>225</sup> Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, 70.

<sup>226</sup> Harry Walters in Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, 70.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, xviii.

<sup>228</sup> Lee and Sasser-Coen, *Blood Stories*, (8)

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Gross, “Defining Feminism, Religion, and the Study of Religion,” 21-28.

<sup>231</sup> Both, Bonnie Hewlett, “Introduction: Adolescent Identity, Risk, and Change,” *Adolescent Identity: Evolutionary, Cultural and Developmental Perspectives*, ed. Bonnie Hewlett, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 1.

<sup>232</sup> Adult informant, qtd in Markstrom, 295-296.

<sup>233</sup> Grimes, 70. See also Grimes – ritual environment, 33 – 34.

<sup>234</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, “The Obvious Aspects of Ritual,” *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 175. “I take ritual to be a form or structure, defining it as the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers.”

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>236</sup> Lamphere, *Weaving Women’s Lives*, 2

<sup>237</sup> Ibid, 212.

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