

Adolescent Identity Formation and Rites of Passage: The Navajo Kinaaldá Ceremony for Girls

Carol A. Markstrom

West Virginia University

Alejandro Iborra

University of Alcalá de Henares, Spain

Psychosocial and anthropological conceptions of adolescent identity formation are reviewed relative to identity formation of American Indian adolescents. The Dunham, Kidwell, and Wilson (1986) ritual process paradigm, an extension of van Gennep's (1908/1960) tripartite rites of passage model, is presented as a useful approach to examine identity transformations embedded in pubertal coming-of-age ceremonies. The rich array of rituals that constitute rites of passage ceremonies are argued to lead to optimal identity formation as delineated by Erikson (1968, 1987a). To illustrate a synthesis between psychosocial and anthropological approaches, the Navajo female pubertal coming-of-age ceremony called Kinaaldá is described and analyzed using the published literature, observations of two ceremonies, and discussions with experts on the topic. It is concluded that through a series of complex rituals, an identity is ascribed to the young woman that connects her and transforms her into the primary female supernatural being of the culture.

Adolescence is regarded as a transitional phase of the life span between childhood dependence to the psychosocially mature person who is prepared to assume adult roles and responsibilities. Within this context of maturation, the central psychosocial task of adolescence is the formation of a sense of identity. Erikson (1968), who regarded identity as one of the cornerstones

of ego development, popularized the notion of the identity crisis. Much of the Erikson-based research on identity is embedded in fields of psychology, sociology, and education. Yet, aside from Erikson's own cross-cultural applications, few attempts have been made to extend his work into the field of anthropology. This is surprising because, as argued in this article, rites of passage play significant roles in identity transitions in coming-of-age ceremonies, such as those still practiced by some indigenous nations of North America. The psychosocial framework of adolescent identity formation and the anthropological conception of rites of passage are reviewed and argued to be connected by the ritual component of rites of passage. The Navajo¹ Kinaaldá is described and interpreted according to the two frameworks of interest.

PSYCHOSOCIAL ANALYSIS OF ADOLESCENT IDENTITY FORMATION

Erikson (1968, 1987a) regarded identity formation as the central psychosocial task of adolescence. He identified four aspects of optimal identity: (a) becoming and feeling most like oneself and experiencing a subjective sense of comfort with the self; (b) having a sense of direction in life; (c) perceiving sameness and continuity of the self from the past, at the present, and to the anticipated future; and (d) expressing an identity that is affirmed by a community of important others. These four features are argued to be meaningful outcomes of the coming-of-age ceremony of Navajo girls and are explored later in this article.

Relative to American Indians, most of Erikson's (1963, 1968, 1987b) work centered on psychoanalytic interpretations of cultural practices, world views, and child rearing of Yurok and Sioux tribes. He did offer comments relative to group identity and argued that the central problem for American Indians was that the powerful psychological salience of history could not be integrated with a future perpetuated by, presumably, non-Indian educators of Indian children.

In spite of Erikson's direct experience with American Indians and his other writings on race and culture, his theory has been criticized for its lack of applicability to ethnic adolescents. Certainly the crucial role of culture was recognized by Erikson, but he "suggested that the search for and achievement of personal identity is superior in Western civilized societies" (Rotheram-Borus & Wyche, 1994, p. 65). This and related assumptions about the necessity of adolescents' engagement in individuation and

¹The label *Diné*, which means "the people," is also used to refer to the Navajos.

exploration are recognized as constructs of Western culture and less easily adapted to traditional, communal cultures (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Erikson's conceptualizations were popularized in the highly appealing Marcia (1966) exploration and commitment model of identity. However, in the last decade, several authors have provided alternative or complementary mechanisms, such as communion and individualization (Adams & Marshall, 1996), attachment and individuation (Kaplan & O'Connor, 1993), and assimilation, accommodation, and evaluation (Breakwell, 1986, 1988). It is recognized in these models that the development of identity is a process that emerges from the interaction of personal and contextual factors or through an exchange of information of the person and the context according to an iterative process. These perspectives provide perhaps a more evenhanded approach to understanding identity formation and are more meaningful in respect to ethnic adolescents who are socialized to be highly attentive to their communal culture.

A related conceptualization of interest is that of assigned or ascribed versus chosen or self-selected identity components (e.g., Grotevant, 1992). Assigned or ascribed identity, reflective of ethnic socialization, is a valued identity that is impressed on a young person. Pubertal coming-of-age ceremonies have as a primary function to assign to the young person the appropriate social identity of the group. Côté and Levine's (2002) definitions of ascribed, accomplished, and managed identities offer further clarification. Ascribed identity is similar to Grotevant's (1992) definition of assigned identity and is linked to premodern societies, whereas accomplished identity is aligned with early modern societies. In the contemporary late modern society, the identity label is managed, which refers to the complex challenge of presenting an image of the self that meets with approval and recognition in a world of changing standards and multiple contexts.

It is logical to examine the psychosocial approach to identity formation in relation to cultural anthropology when identity is embedded within cultural and societal distinctions. Rites of passage, and the rituals of which they are composed, are tools employed by a cultural community in the socialization of the young. Understanding of values, roles, and beliefs of a culture are acquired through participation in ritual activities that are thought to influence and transform the identity of the initiates.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON IDENTITY FORMATION

Rituals and Rites of Passage

Taxonomies of rituals have been proposed by various writers (e.g., Bell, 1997; Grimes, 1985; Turner, 1967), and of special significance, rites of passage

always appear as one of the categories. Rites of passage are understood as ceremonies that correspond and bring dramatization to major life events, such as, birth, coming-of-age initiations, marriage, and death, and they consist of a series of rituals that convey individuals from one social status or role to another. Through social conveyance, self-perception of the initiate is changed as well as society's perception of the young person. Turner (1967) defined ritual as "prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers" (p. 19). Symbols are the smallest elements of rituals and, rather than being understood as discrete phenomenon, operate as phases in larger social processes. The great importance of the dynamic and symbolic natures of rituals is apparent in our examination of a specific rite-of-passage ceremony. Rituals operate symbolically both in the broader context of the rite of passage and in the meanings of specific acts within the rite. In either case, the meanings of the symbols are easily lost on outsiders without the interpretation of cultural informants (Turner, 1967).

Dunham, Kidwell, and Wilson (1986) defined anthropologist van Gennep's (1908/1960) classic model of rites as passage as "formalized social interactions with a phasing which *separates* individuals from their previous identities, carries them through a period of *transition* to a new identity, and *incorporates* them into a new role or social status" (p. 140). The concept of rites of passage has really become the basis for describing and analyzing initiation ceremonies attached to the transition from childhood to adulthood. Dunham et al. articulated an expanded version of van Gennep's tripartite model called the ritual process paradigm (RPP). This four-phase, 11-step model accounts for identity transformations and includes notions of separation, transition, and incorporation, but adds numerous useful distinctions.

The first phase of the RPP model, preparation, consists of events leading to the actual rites, specifically, the old support group, the old identity, and the old identity completion. The old support group is composed of those who have played significant roles in the initiate's development. The second element, the old identity, refers to the social roles, personal traits, and affective or cognitive features that will be transformed. The old identity completion refers to a set of signs that signify readiness for the rite of passage (e.g., pubertal maturation, cognitive advancement). In the tradition of Erikson (1968), readiness signifies completion or mastery of earlier psychosocial tasks.

The second phase, separation, is similar to van Gennep's (1908/1960) classification but appears to include aspects of van Gennep's transitional phase. Specifically, separation is a detachment from an earlier fixed state that places the individual in a liminal status of insecurity. The ambiguity and uncertainty of liminality was noted by Turner (1967) as most informative in

understanding building blocks of a culture. This state of “betwixt and between” is delineated according to four steps in the RPP model. New environmental demands push the person out of the security of the old identity into the insecurity of new roles and requirements. Liminality is a marginal status of not having the old identity or a new identity available. Activation includes anxiety and fear, and agony is composed of helplessness, depression, and inner crisis. Both activation and agony are emotional consequences of the insecurity induced by the separation phase.

Van Gennep’s (1908/1960) transitional phase also has relevance for Dunham et al.’s (1986) third phase of transition. Liminality must still be present because the new status or identity has not yet been incorporated, but it appears that psychological and emotional discomforts of the liminal state have diminished. Instead, in Dunham et al.’s model, uncertainty is replaced by attitudes of respect and awe and openness to learn and to be guided called *numinosity*. A cognitive change of accommodation signals that the initiate is incorporating the new role. Following accommodation, ecstasy is experienced as relief and joy because the state of liminality with its accompanying anxiety and fear has diminished.

Reincorporation is parallel to van Gennep’s (1908/1960) final phase of aggregation or incorporation. The individual has successfully progressed to a new status and is once again in a stable state. During the sacred state of transcendence, the initiate and the community recognize that the old identity has been abandoned and the new identity is emerging. The new identity is formed by the new roles, commitments, and responsibilities expected for the self and demanded by the community. These new roles and responsibilities can produce anxiety because there is awareness of expectations of role performance in the absence of role mastery. Hence, a new support group, such as role models and mentors, is required to assist the person through exploration and mastery of the new role. Identity reinforcement, the last step of the RPP, consists of social reinforcers from the new support group, as well intrinsic reinforcers that serve to absorb the new identity into the self concept.

Synthesis of Psychosocial and Rites of Passage Approaches to Identity

The ritual aspect of rites of passage is argued to be the key element that links to the psychosocial conception of identity formation. It is the performance and repetition of rituals that occur throughout the rite of passage ceremony that advance the outcomes of optimal identity development. The outcomes are especially observed during reincorporation (transcendence, new

identity, new support group, and identity reinforcement). With respect to the first outcome of optimal identity as described previously, as the initiate successfully progresses through the series of rituals that constitute the rite of passage, a subjective sense of comfort and integrity is experienced. There are phases of the ceremony that may be physically and emotionally uncomfortable, but transcendence brings comfort.

Second, rituals bring definition and meaning to culturally prescribed values and principles that correspondingly set the young person on a trajectory toward adulthood. The rituals of coming-of-age ceremonies are embedded in cultural values, beliefs, and practices, and the reinforcement of the rituals during the ceremony leave the young person with a strong impression of her importance. The implications for her new identity may then become more apparent to her.

According to the third component of optimal identity, in the abbreviated span of time of a rite of passage ceremony, the repetitive nature of rituals bring a greater sense of continuity in self-concept as the past is connected to the present and the present to the future. Fourth, rituals strengthen pre-existing linkages to the community through a network of support from others (both old and new support groups who are the same at this point). Familial and community social support clearly affirm the value of the kind of identity that is ascribed during the coming-of-age ceremony. These self-perceptions will be further solidified during identity reinforcement in the days and years to come.

To explore the applications of both psychosocial and rites of passage models and their synthesis relative to identity formation, the Navajo Kinaaldá ceremony is described and analyzed in the following section (see Table 1). The ceremony's roots are embedded in the oral tradition of the Navajo creation story. It has historically been important and is still valued by both traditional and more acculturated Navajo (Begay, 1983).

METHOD

The description of the Kinaaldá ceremony that follows is partially based on extensive review of the literature. With the exception of work in the 1940s by Kluckhohn and Leighton (1948; Leighton & Kluckhohn, 1947), the literature cited in this article largely reflects contemporary practices of the ceremony. Some aspects of the Kinaaldá have most certainly changed from earlier times, but analysis of these changes is beyond the scope of this study. A special effort was taken to obtain works by Navajo authors (e.g., Beck, Walters, & Franciso, 1996; Begay, 1983; Roessel, 1981; Woody, Jack, & Bizahaloni, 1981), with support from writings of non-Navajo authors.

TABLE 1
Correspondence Between Ritual Process Paradigm (RPP), Psychosocial Conceptions, and Application to Kinaaldá

<i>Steps of the RPP</i>	<i>Psychosocial Conceptions</i>	<i>Kinaaldá Application</i>
<i>Preparation</i>		
1. Old support group: Significant others have prepared her for this ceremony.	Socialization by principal figures. Introjection and identification.	Preparation by family—begins early in life.
2. Old identity: Previously acquired social roles, personal traits, and affective and cognitive qualities that will be transformed.	Negotiate psychosocial stages. Ethnic group awareness and identification.	Mastery of basic competencies of childhood.
3. Old identity completion: Cues that the initiate is ready for the ceremony.	Cognitive advancement (formal operations). Affective and social maturation.	Menarche is the cue for the ceremony.
<i>Separation</i>		
4. New environmental demands: The initiate is pushed into the insecurity of new roles, requirements, and expectations.	Identity formation: crisis or exploration. Role confusion.	Onset of 4-day ceremony. Clothing change, tying hair back, food restrictions.
5. Liminality: Marginal, "betwixt and between" status.	Disequilibrium, dissonance, confusion, and uncertainty lead to:	Physical manipulations—molding, washing hair, painting face, running, grinding corn, and preparation of corn cake. Continuation of the preceding.
6. Activation: Emotional responses of anxiety and fear due to new demands.	Motivation for active involvement in identity formation.	Continuation of the preceding.
7. Agony: Feelings of helplessness, depression, and inner crisis.	Continuation of the preceding.	Continuation of the preceding.
<i>Transition</i>		
8. Numinosity: Respect and awe and openness to learn and to be guided.	Developing comfort with new self.	All-night sing in hogan, final molding, hair washing, face painting, final run. Mentorship by Ideal Woman.

Table 1. (Contd.)

<i>Steps of the RPP</i>	<i>Psychosocial Conceptions</i>	<i>Kinaaldá Application</i>
9. Accommodation: Cognitive change as initiate begins to incorporate new roles.	Developing connection to new identity.	Physical actions have psychological impacts.
10. Ecstasy: Relief and joy as the state of liminality diminishes.	Assigned or ascribed identity.	Identification with Changing Woman.
<i>Reincorporation</i>		
11. Transcendence: The initiate and the community recognize that the old identity has been abandoned and the new identity is emerging.	Affirmation from social group. Comfort with oneself.	Assignment of new name.
12. New identity: New roles, commitments, and responsibilities expected for oneself and demanded by the community.	Role enactment. Direction and focus in life. Perceived sameness and continuity of self.	Rituals of blessing others. Serving corn cake.
13. New support group: Mentors assist the initiate's understanding of and mastery of new roles.	Affirmation of new identity by significant others.	Identification with Ideal Woman and other adult women who instruct the initiate.
14. Identity reinforcement: Social reinforcers from new support group, as well as intrinsic reinforcers.	Continuation of the preceding.	Four days post-Kinaaldá and beyond.

In addition to the citation of prior published works, observations were made by the first author at two Kinaaldá she attended in 1999 and 2001 at the invitation of an acquaintance. The initiate at the first ceremony was the daughter of the acquaintance. The two initiates were second cousins on the maternal side and their ceremonies occurred at the same rural compound of their grandparents who lived on the Navajo Nation. The initiate of the 1999 Kinaaldá was 13 years old and had experienced her first menstrual period 1 month before the ceremony. This young woman's father was a professor at a community college and her mother was a pharmacy technician. She had one younger brother. The family lived in a town of approximately 34,000 that borders the Navajo Nation.

The initiate at the 2001 Kinaaldá was 12 years old at the time, and the ceremony was planned to occur during her second menstrual cycle. Because of unforeseen circumstances, the medicine man could not perform the all-night sing ritual at that time. Hence, it was permissible to conduct the sing ritual 1 month later. All other rituals occurred as specified during the 4-day ceremony, of which the first author attended the final 2 days. The initiate of this ceremony lived with her mother, who was an office supervisor in a social service agency, in a town of approximately 5,000 that borders the Navajo Nation. She had one older sister.

Additional sources of information for this article were obtained through numerous informal discussions with Navajo colleagues and friends, as well as attendance at various ceremonial and cultural activities that began during the first author's sabbatical leave 4 years ago and have continued through numerous follow-up visits to the Navajo Nation. It is impossible to properly cite the sources of this type of knowledge because it was informally obtained through personal experience.

The Navajo Reservation is located in the Four Corners region of the United States, and it encompasses 24,096 square miles in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah including off-reservation trust land (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). According to 2000 census data, 269,202 individuals are identified solely as Navajo (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002), and approximately two thirds of that number resided on the Navajo Nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a).

KINAALDÁ: THE NAVAJO PUBERTY CEREMONY

Description of the Rite of Passage

The Kinaaldá is a rite of passage for Navajo girls that is a celebration of entry into womanhood and firmly establishes them within the context of family life and Navajo society (see Table 2 for the purposes of the

ceremony; see also Begay, 1983; Frisbie, 1993; Hirschfelder & Molin, 2001; Keith, 1964; Lincoln, 1991; Manookin, 1996; Roessel, 1981; Schwartz, 1997). The social and celebratory aspects of this rite of passage are remarkable and in stark contrast to the privacy and embarrassment that sometimes accompany the onset of menses among girls in European American society. As stated by Navajo educator Roessel (1981), "In Navajo society the girl's first period is not a time of shame and anxiety, but, rather, a time of happiness and rejoicing" (p. 82). Such a distinction may be attributable, in part, to the fact that the purposes of Kinaaldá go far beyond the obvious sexual maturational and reproductive linkages. This ceremony is regarded as the most important personality-shaping event in a woman's life, and it is believed to set her life course (Frisbie, 1993; Keith, 1964). The significance of coming-of-age ceremonies to the life course of young women is a theme common to numerous other North American Indian cultures (Beck et al., 1996; Bol & Star Boy Menard, 2000; Hirschfelder & Molin, 2001; Pritzker, 1998).

According to an ethological interpretation, rites of passage are associated with gender-typed societies as young people are socialized into their appropriate male or female adult roles (Schlegel & Barry, 1980). Behavior was gender linked to some degree in many North American Indian cultures, but historically among the Navajo, there was "relative autonomy of women, egalitarian domestic relations, and comparatively undifferentiated public and domestic domains" (Maltz & Archambault, 1995, p. 236). Indeed, the power differential between men and women in American Indian cultures, in general, was far less than that of European society (Bolt, 1987). Although it is apparent that the rituals of Kinaaldá are linked to feminine gender roles, the Navajo value both masculine and

TABLE 2
Purposes of Kinaaldá for the Initiate

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- To celebrate her change in status from child to adult.
 - To ensure her reproductive capability.
 - To instruct her on the proper roles of Navajo women in the established social order.
 - To test and build her endurance and strength.
 - To give her good posture and physical beauty.
 - To focus her personality development.
 - To make her generous and giving.
 - To give her strength for later difficulties in life.
 - To influence her future endeavors.
 - To ensure harmony in her future and to protect her from misfortune.
 - To impress on her an identity that is embedded in Changing Woman.
-

feminine aspects of the personality (Moon, 1984). Within this framework, Kinaaldá is specifically a ceremony that reinforces the feminine side of women. It is not the only identity-shaping event in the life of young Navajo women, but it is an important one relative to social and ethnic identity.

To understand the significance of Kinaaldá, it is essential to examine the beliefs of Navajo about their creation and the supernatural *Diyin Dine'é* (or Holy People) who play central roles in the numerous ceremonies.² Rather than being understood as a religion, Navajo beliefs center on rituals that encompass and unite all aspects of being. As stated by Reichard (1974), "One purpose of ritual is to extend the personality so as to bring it into harmonious relation with the powers of the universe" (p. 35). The Kinaaldá is said to be the original of the foundational Blessing Way (*hózhóójí*) complex of ceremonies (Frisbie, 1993; Roessel, 1981; Woody et al., 1981), as well as the most important (Lincoln, 1991). The Blessing Way celebrates and shows appreciation of all forms of goodness and reinforces the Navajo conception of *Hózhó* a term not easily translatable, but indicative of "beauty, perfection, harmony, goodness, normality, success, well-being, order, and ideal" (Woody et al., 1981, p. 24). As an invocation of blessing, the Blessing Way is a significant ceremony for key transitional phases of the life cycle. It is meaningful that the Kinaaldá, as well as other Blessing Way ceremonies, occur in the context of the hogan or home as it represents all blessings associated with events of family life (Woody et al., 1981).

Changing Woman (*Asdzáá Nádleehé*) is one of the most important of Navajo *Diyin Dine'é* and is a significant figure in many ceremonies, especially the Kinaaldá, where her acts are recounted (Schwartz, 1997). Changing Woman is a multifaceted character and encompasses numerous purposes as shown in Table 3 (see Beck et al., 1996; Frisbie, 1993; Hirschfelder & Molin, 2001; Lincoln, 1991; Moon, 1984; Reichard, 1974; Schwartz, 1997). During their Kinaaldá ceremonies, girls are molded and shaped into the image of Changing Woman who embodies the ideals of Navajo womanhood. Indeed, it is believed that, at some level, initiates are transformed into Changing Woman. In Navajo creation stories, the *Diyin Dine'é* created the first Kinaaldá for Changing Woman who experienced it on the 12th day of her life when she reached womanhood (Roessel, 1981). After creating the Navajo people, Changing Woman instructed them that Kinaaldá coincide with girls' first and second menstrual cycles (Begay, 1983). Changing Woman's experience of the first Kinaaldá was the most

²The serious reader of the Navajo creation story is referred to *Diné bahane'* by Zolbrod (1984).

TABLE 3
The Identity of Changing Woman and Her Purposes

Identity

- The ultimate mother.
- Associated with the earth.
- Representative of the universal life cycle.
- Always good, giving, and nurturing.

Purposes

- Born to be the mother of the Hero Twins who would rid the world of evil.
 - To create the Navajo.
 - To give the Navajo the Blessing Way rite.
 - To regulate all of life and to ensure fertility of humans and nature.
 - To cause the change of seasons and annual rejuvenation.
 - To embody the ideal female and to be a role model for Navajo women.
-

common theme reported in Dickinson's (2000) statistical dissection of Frisbie's (1993) data from 19 anthropological reports. In this light, meticulous efforts are taken to follow teachings of the *Diyin Dine'é* to replicate the highly symbolic rituals of the first Kinaaldá.

Ideally, Kinaaldá should be 4 days in length and occur during the first or second menstrual cycle when it is thought that the girl's powers are greatest. The theme that the earliest menstrual flows are the most powerful is found throughout indigenous belief systems in North America, such as the Lakota puberty ceremony (*Išnati Awicalowanpi*; Bol & Star Boy Menard, 2000) and numerous other North American Indian cultures that practiced various expressions of seclusion during pubescence (Pritzker, 1998). In summarizing data across several Northern cultures relative to seclusion and taboos at menarche, Libby (1952) concluded that "stringent puberty observances of the northern Athabascans is not horror of women, of menstruation, or of menstrual fluid as such, but is, in part, a desire not to offend the game and fur animals on whose good will the natives still depend for much of their livelihood" (p. 2). As noted by Powers (1980), anthropologists have tended to regard Native taboos toward menstrual blood and menstruating women as misogynist. Alternatively, menstrual taboos can be examined from a culturally relativistic perspective wherein North American Indians viewed menstrual blood as a power active in healing or curing (Beck et al., 1996) and reflective of the creative forces of nature (St. Pierre & Long Soldier, 1995). We argue that for the Navajo, menstrual flow is regarded as an extension of the same power responsible for creation and annual

rejuvenation. Menstruation is the essence of Changing Woman that permits transformation of the initiate into this important supernatural figure.

Anthropological and Psychosocial Interpretations of Kinaaldá

In examination of some of the prominent rituals of the 4-day Kinaaldá, it is apparent that there is not a clear linear pattern in respect to the nine steps of the RPP model. Nonetheless, an attempt is made in Table 1 to delineate some correspondence among RPP steps, psychosocial conceptions, and Kinaaldá rituals. The reader should keep in mind that most of the rituals span many steps of the RPP. For instance, physical manipulations have applicability in both separation and transition, and the transformation of the initiate into Changing Woman really begins in earlier stages but reaches ascendance in transition and reincorporation. In the broader context of socialization, it would be erroneous to conceive of Kinaaldá as simply a 4-day event. As one Navajo mother explained to the first author, preparations for the Kinaaldá began early in the lives of her daughters. By virtue of being reared according to Navajo customs, traditions, and beliefs, the meaning and significance of Kinaaldá are impressed on girls at a young age. As explained by Keith (1964), "Kinaaldá is a summary, or way of giving meaning to skills and values learned gradually in childhood" (p. 35).

In observations of Kinaaldá, it was apparent that younger girls were prepared for their own ceremonies by participating in those of their older sisters and female cousins. An especially strong impression was left with the first author when, at the first Kinaaldá, a prepubescent girl expressed the excitement and anticipation she felt for her own future ceremony. Consistent with this observation, Talamantez (2000) noted that at the Apache Sunrise Ceremony, younger girls were encouraged by their mothers to observe and learn from the ceremonies of older girls. These illustrations are consistent with Step 1 of the RPP model, the old support group (i.e., significant relatives), wherein relatives prepare and socialize their daughters according to Navajo customs and traditions for the Kinaaldá and all that it embodies for the identity formation of Navajo women.

With respect to the RPP step of old identity, psychoanalytic processes of introjection and identification operate to emotionally connect the girl to her family and heighten her anticipation for participation in the ceremonial aspects of her culture. Old identity completion signifies correspondence to a developmental transition, namely, menarche. This occurrence constitutes the main cue to perform the rite, but in a developmental sense, the readiness of the girl is frequently associated

with maturation in cognitive, social, and affective domains that will aid her in predicting and understanding the changes to come. Begay (1983) observed that the Navajo call the advance in logical thinking just before puberty as *honitsékees níííinii hazlíí* (one begins thinking). This advancement is regarded as essential for engagement in Kinaaldá (Begay, 1983).

This discussion leads to the question: What domains of development are implicated in coming-of-age ceremonies? It has been stated that pubertal rites of passage aim to connect physical change to expected changes in social roles (van Gennep, 1908/1960; Weisfeld, 1997). In contrast, the Western view of psychology has focused on maturation in cognitive and intellectual domains (Scott, 1998). Talamantez (2000) observed that a timely convergence between domains of development does not always exist in early adolescence. However, she went on to argue relative to the Mescalero Apache female coming-of-age ceremony, that rituals compel correspondence between physical and social domains. In the Sunrise Ceremony, Apache girls are engaged in a complex set of rituals that transform them into White Painted Woman (*Isánáklésh*, who is a primary female supernatural figure comparable to Changing Woman) and then into Apache woman. We argue that both the Sunrise Ceremony and Kinaaldá encourage maturation in other domains of development to be on par with pubertal maturation. Indeed, the success of these ceremonies would hinge on such an outcome. To this end, it was observed at the two Kinaaldá ceremonies serving as case studies in this article that initiates received verbal exhortations and instructions from adult women in attendance and from the medicine man during the all-night sing on the fourth night.

The transition from preparation to separation and the beginning of the rite of passage can be understood in psychosocial terms according to Erikson's (1968) statement: "Identity formation begins where the usefulness of identification ends" (p. 159). The separation phase begins with new environmental demands and is evident with the demarcation of 4 days of rituals and physical challenges. Performance of rituals throughout the 4-day ceremony reinforces tasks learned in childhood and educates the initiate on the meaning and importance of these skills and tasks for adulthood (Keith, 1964). Indeed, across North American Indian cultures of the past, initiates were instructed on the expectations that they would assume proper adult roles and demonstrate responsibility to kin (Pritzger, 1998).

The degree to which initiates are separated and isolated during Kinaaldá has changed from earlier times, as illustrated in the classic work by Leighton and Kluckhohn (1947) on Navajo child and personality development. However, the specialized dressing of the initiate to resemble Changing Woman is still an important aspect of the ceremony. The

clothing component was the second most frequent occurrence reported in Dickinson's (2000) statistical analysis of Frisbie's (1993) descriptive data on Kinaaldá. Donning of special clothing is a visual cue of the girl's separation from childhood. It is interesting that across three age groups, informants from Frisbie stated that the features they disliked most about Kinaaldá were the hot clothes, the heavy clothes, and the heavy jewelry.

The separation phase and its four steps incorporate numerous rituals, some physically taxing, and many involving physical contact and some type of bodily manipulation. In Navajo conceptions of the personality, the barrier between the psychological self and physical body is weak—it is thought that physical actions yield psychological changes. The basic premise behind many of the rituals of Kinaaldá is that at menarche the girl's body and psyche are especially malleable, similar to a newborn, and it is desirable to maximize this opportunity to set her future life course (Lincoln, 1981; Schwartz, 1997). Most North American Indian cultures of the past recognized puberty as a critical phase in development. Consistent with this notion, contemporary developmental psychologists note the profound transitional nature of adolescence especially in respect to puberty (e.g., Petersen, Leffert, Graham, Alwin, & Ding, 1997; Schulenberg, Maggs, & Hurrelmann, 1997). The child has not experienced biological change of this magnitude since infancy, and the impacts reverberate into social and psychological domains (Petersen et al., 1997). Historical and anthropological documents illustrate that numerous North American Indian cultures believed that actions of pubescent girls could affect their well-being into later life. Cultures such as the Tlingit (De Laguna, 1990), Northern Athabaskan (McKenna, 1959), Nez Perce (Walker, 1998), and Kawaiisu (Zigmond, 1986) practiced coming-of-age rituals to maximize the potential for shaping the life course of young persons. These beliefs about puberty endure to the present and are expressed in coming-of-age ceremonies of cultures such as the Navajo, Apache Sunrise Ceremony (Talamantez, 2000), and the Lakota Iŋnati Awicalowanpi (Bol & Star Boy Menard, 2000; Powers, 1986).

Overall, the bodily manipulations of Kinaaldá indicate that the girl is affected in four areas of her being (i.e., spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical) and that she will be ultimately be shaped into the image of Changing Woman (Beck et al., 1996; Schwartz, 1997). Of special interest in this article are five types of physical actions or manipulations: molding, hair washing, painting, corn grinding, and running. In addition to the separation stage, later RPP steps of numinosity and accommodation also are applicable when analyzing the rituals of Kinaaldá relative to physical and psychological integrations.

To serve as guide and sponsor to the initiate through the physical manipulations and other rituals is the Ideal Woman—a mentor who is selected by the family (Begay, 1983; Schwartz, 1997). She is an adult woman believed to possess the power to reshape and remake the girl in her image and, indirectly, in that of Changing Woman whom she represents (Frisbie, 1993). It seems that the matrilineal nature of Navajo society is significant in this respect, with the Ideal Woman serving as the bridge between the initiate and Changing Woman. It was interesting to observe the respect and adherence shown to the Ideal Woman at the two Kinaaldá ceremonies. Not only did the initiates give their mentors proper attention, but other adult women who were younger than the Ideal Women at each ceremony closely observed her skill in the demonstration and leading of the rituals. Presumably this was because these women knew that one day it would be their place to oversee the performance of the complex rituals of Kinaaldá.

In essence, the relationship between the girl and the Ideal Woman is one of identification, but it is identification by absorption as stated by Reichard (1974) in respect to the pressing or molding ritual. Turner (1967) discussed such a relationship in respect to authority and obedience:

The passivity of neophytes to their instructors, their malleability, which is increased by submission to ordeal, their reduction to a uniform condition, are signs of the process whereby they are ground down to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to cope with their new station in life. (p. 101)

The submissive and respectful attitude of the initiates was demonstrated in the molding where they passively laid on blankets and sheepskins while the Ideal Woman massaged every part of their bodies (*Kinaaldá yik'qqs*). This same respectful attitude was observed when their hair was ceremonial washed with the yucca plant using the ceremonial Navajo basket (*Ts'aa'*). Their jewelry was washed, as well, as part of this purification procedure. The painting of initiates using white clay is believed to minimize physical signs of aging and increase their height (Frisbie, 1993). The corn grinding might be the greatest test of the girl's endurance (Frisbie, 1993). She grinds corn during the earlier days of the ceremony in preparation for the corn cake (*'Alkqad*) that is baked during the last night of the ceremony while she is required to be awake at the all-night sing.

Dickinson (2000) reported the racing or running ritual to be the third most frequently cited event of the Kinaaldá from Frisbie's (1993) data. Initiates must run two or three times a day, depending on local customs,

for the 4 days of the ceremony. The running is to make them strong and prepare them for a long life as well as the adversities of life. Reichard (1974) linked the initiate's running or racing to that of Changing Woman at her Kinaaldá and stated that it represents strength and fortitude. The length of her run is believed to predict the quality and longevity of her life. From observation, we conclude that girls take the running ritual seriously. For instance, at the second Kinaaldá observed, the girl ran 5 miles for her final run! Informally, initiates from both ceremonies disclosed that they tried to prepare in advance anticipating the difficulty of the running ritual.

The new environmental demands that are placed on the young woman at her Kinaaldá serve as reminders of her separated status and could potentially be associated with a temporary state of role confusion (in the psychosocial sense). The new challenges of this phase lead to liminality. She is between her old identity that has been abandoned and a new one that has not yet been acquired. Indeed, in a study of Kinaaldá initiates, they reported not being treated as women, but not allowed to play with children and felt "awkward, tired, and almost unhappy" (Keith, 1964, p. 29). In contrast to the suppositions of the RPP regarding the adverse emotions of separation, in the two Kinaaldá ceremonies examined in this article, neither initiate appeared psychologically distressed from any of the rituals of the ceremony. Fatigue associated with the all-night sing was certainly observed, and both initiates presented a degree of heightened tension before the conclusion of the rituals. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that in spite of these observed minor effects, perhaps other negative emotions were contained because girls are instructed to be cheerful and helpful during the ceremony.

Even if initiates experience adverse emotional states, both anthropological and psychosocial models recognize liminality and any accompanying unpleasant emotions as temporary. For instance, a phase of confusion is recognized as normative in the identity-formation process, as Erikson (1968) explained: "The adolescent, during the final stage of his identity formation, is apt to suffer more deeply than ever did before or ever will again from a confusion of roles" (p. 163). In the anthropological sense, Turner (1967) observed that "undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns" (p. 99).

One of the central tasks of Kinaaldá that begins during separation and is completed during reincorporation is the making of the round corn cake (*Alkqaad*) that represents Changing Woman. The cake is reflective of a solar image and is baked in the ground (womb of the earth) as an offering to the sun (Lincoln, 1981). Schwartz (1997) stated that the corn cake is the

dominant symbol of this rite of passage and that it summarizes the most important aspects of the ceremony, namely, “physical fitness, endurance, education, reciprocity, and the maximizing of potential positive effects” (p. 203). Corn is highly symbolic of fertility and life and the girl represents (and becomes) the corn and the cake. In that sense, she can only serve it to others and not eat any of it herself.

The initiate’s participation in grinding the corn and mixing the cake demonstrates her understanding and acceptance of the female role of sustenance provider (Schwarz, 1997). Her engagement in the preparation of the corn cake and the physical challenges reflect activation and signify her motivation and participation in her own identity-formation process. Indeed, the initiates in the two case studies appeared to be eagerly engaged in the making of the corn cake and other rituals of the Kinaaldá. Such active engagement was probably facilitated by an anticipation of role performance after having observed the tasks performed by girls at previous Kinaaldá.

The symbolic nature of corn with respect to fertility and its linkage to a female supernatural being are found in belief systems of various American Indian cultures (Bolt, 1987). In Creek creation stories, corn was derived from the body of an earth goddess who ultimately sacrificed herself to ensure corn for the future (Martin, 2000). Indeed, other Southeastern tribes (e.g., Cherokee) have stories of the Corn Mother who allowed herself to be buried in the earth to return as corn for humans (Awiakta, 1993). Historically, corn or maize was a staple in the diet of many American Indian cultures that practiced agriculture; therefore, it is not difficult to understand its attainment of a sacred status with associated emergence of stories and rituals. Corn is symbolic of food, fertility, and life and, among horticultural-based groups, “corn was variously seen as a gift from the mother-creator, mother corn, the spirit of corn, corn maidens or corn women” (Bolt, 1987, p. 264). The parallel food item integrated in the Lakota Išnati Awicalowanpi is buffalo (Powers, 1986) and, historically, served as the primary source of food for the Sioux as well as contributing to clothing and shelter needs (Zak, 1989). The central food or object of survival then symbolically represents fertility, procreation, and an altruistic giving of self because these things are regarded as essential for life.

Continuation of the rituals extends into the third phase of the RPP model, but it is perhaps the third night and fourth day of the Kinaaldá that best illustrates the numinosity, accommodation, and ecstasy components of transition. The all-night sing, under the leadership of the medicine person (*hataali*), is a time in which the uncertainty of separation is forgotten as a new awareness of the spiritual significance of the change is

heightened. Singing was fourth most frequent in its mention in anthropological reports of the Kinaaldá (Dickinson, 2000). In the physical context of the hogan, which represents the first hogan, the girl's identification with Changing Woman becomes complete (Lincoln, 1981). After the all-night sing, rituals continue with the ceremonial washing of the girl's hair and jewelry and the final run. These final acts bring accommodation, and on returning to her community after the run, the initiate perhaps feels a sense of ecstasy as successful accomplishment of this complex rite of passage is nearing its end. Indeed, in the first Kinaaldá observed for this study, the initiate appeared more relaxed and relieved after the all-night sing and her final run at dawn.

There are several rituals that occur during the last day of Kinaaldá that illustrate the reincorporation phase of the RPP model. This phase is most illustrative of Erikson's (1968) assertions on the necessity of affirmation by the social order in identity formation. There is a shared perception that the girl has transcended her former identity into a new one and now possesses capabilities that are of a divine nature (Manookin, 1996). The perception that she has the power to offer blessings to participants at the Kinaaldá signifies the degree to which her status has been raised through the absorption of the traits of Changing Woman and, indeed, the belief that she has been transformed into Changing Woman. This identification is the most important aspect of the Kinaaldá (Lincoln, 1981). Those attending the ceremony present personal objects of meaning (e.g., car keys, house keys, wallets) to be blessed by the girl for indirect blessings of their own lives (Begay, 1983). After the young woman is molded, she stretches the other children so they will have good lives and grow tall. Adults also may be stretched because the belief is that they will receive blessings by the touch of the young woman in this sacred state. The notion that the girl at her earliest menses possesses powers to bless others and is capable of curing and healing is a component of other North American Indian cultures (Beck et al., 1996; Martin, 2001).

The initiate's new identity also is affirmed by her serving of the completed corn cake as one of the final acts of the ceremony. Her association with Changing Woman, her capacity to bless others, and her ability to nurture and sustain others all are acts that solidify her new status and may justify the assignment of a new name, which occurred at the Kinaaldá of the first initiate discussed in this article. The new name signals a new social status, a new identity, and the expectation of a new role in society. The act of naming imparts a social identity, and the assignment of a subsequent name signifies to the person and her social network that an important transformation has occurred (Alford, 1988). In respect to naming and identity, Alford (1988) stated that "name changes actually

help to effect identity change. Assuming a new name encourages a person to regard himself or herself as a new, or substantially changed, person, and others are encouraged to see this person as changed and to alter their expectations accordingly" (p. 85). The assignment of a new name is tantamount with the assignment of an identity, and puberty is a common event for such an event (Alford, 1988).

It has been said that there are certain Navajo names given to a person during their life: (a) at birth, (b) when they reach adulthood, and (c) when they engage in certain ceremonies or through meditation (P. Charley, personal communication, June 4, 2001; see also Kluckhohn & Leighton, 1948). In this last instance, the name is given by the Creator (this is known only to the person and perhaps a few trusted others) and is not to be advertised because it is a means of protection from harmful and evil entities.

Turner (1967) observed that rites of passage change the nature of social relationships. In Kinaaldá the young woman is no longer regarded as a child by the adult community but as one of its own. Hence, the affirmation of her new support group is of special meaning. Those anxieties that can emerge again because of having the freedom of this new status and new identity, but not yet mastering role performance, are perhaps softened by the new support of the group. As well, it is recognized that undergoing Kinaaldá is her first step toward adulthood and her relatives are expected to guide and direct her for years to come (Schwartz, 1997).

Identity reinforcement occurs during the 4 days following the ceremony in which the girl is to rest and reflect on the meaning and significance of her recent experiences. Such a respite was compared to resting on the seventh day by the "White people's religion" (Frisbie, 1993). Identity reinforcement is also observed in the act of giving the rinse water from the ceremonial hair washing to the girl's mother so that she may pour it near the home in order that her daughter will always be drawn to home (Schwarz, 1997).

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

In many communal cultures, adolescence is a time to assume proper social roles that are frequently linked to responsibilities to family, kin, or clan. Clearly, we have described an event that represents ascription of a social identity embedded in the origin story of a culture. Kinaaldá is a specific event of female identity development that reinforces the very important feminine gender role in a matrilineal culture. The young woman participates in rituals that impress on her a role model (i.e., Changing

Woman) who embodies the ideals of Navajo womanhood. As argued earlier, it is the rich expression of rituals that compel advancement toward optimal identity, albeit a very specific ascription of a feminine identity.

A related consideration previously not addressed is that of the temporal quality of this puberty event. Specifically, it must be remembered that outcomes leading to optimal identity formation require years. So, how can 4 days of rituals make a significant impact? Keith (1964) argued that these are not just any 4 days. They are highly dramatic and encompass a vast departure from the day-to-day existence of young women. Intensive preparation efforts are required, and the initiate is essentially the focal point of her social network before, during, and after the ceremony. Furthermore, the performance of rituals during the 4 days serves as powerful connectors between less rigorous skill mastery in childhood to the expectation of more serious role adoption and performance in adulthood.

The significance of the 4 days have additional meaning according to Fogel's (2001) relational perspective on self, in which he maintained that events, frames, and development are three ways in which the sense of uniqueness or identity can be experienced. An event is a brief flow of experience that imparts an awareness of the moment. A frame is a longer pattern of an event sequence during which individuals can acquire a sense of their unique role in the authorship of the pattern. Development occurs over years, the time it takes for individuals to have a sense of the uniquely enduring aspects of the self. Every ritual performed during the Kinaaldá (e.g., running; molding of the body; and preparation, baking, and serving of the corn cake; etc.) constitutes a frame in itself, building a more complex frame of 4 days. The rituals, and the composite of the rituals in the 4-day ceremony, become amplified into seeds for developmental change and optimal identity that occur over many years.

Although the Kinaaldá endorses a certain type of social identity that is assigned or ascribed, it is significant to note that the initiate is not a passive recipient—the outcomes of this ceremony are partially dependent on her participation (Manookin, 1996). For instance, in the running ritual, it is believed that the length of her run is directly linked to her longevity. Furthermore, the attitude she holds during the ceremony and her commitment to it are believed to determine her future well-being and personality development. In short, although an identity is ascribed during Kinaaldá, the initiate must permit such ascription to occur.

Turner (1967) noted that rites of passage are not merely ceremonies of transition from one ascribed state to the next but also occur for achieved statuses. With respect to the Navajo, Schwartz (1997) argued that both independent and interdependent forms of identity are evident. The

Navajo clearly recognize their own volition to make independent choices but emphasize relationships and interconnection over autonomy. Hence, adoption of an assigned social identity builds connection to the social group. Nonetheless, chosen components of identity also are applicable. For example, at the first Kinaaldá attended, it was widely acknowledged that the initiate desired to become a veterinarian. This goal was affirmed by adornment of the hogan with the girl's stuffed animals and with pictures of animals. Furthermore, this chosen occupation was affirmed during the all-night sing by the *hataali* who instructed the girl to obtain all of her education before marrying and raising her own family.

The affirmation of her chosen occupational identity by her significant social group was a contemporary addition to a ceremony of long historical endurance and is significant in several respects. First, recognition was shown to the desire of many contemporary young women for accommodation of both career and family. It was acknowledged that such pursuits were permissible. Second, allowing the initiate choice in her occupational identity did not compromise the original instruction to Navajo women by Changing Woman. It was simply a matter of incorporating other pursuits and attending to matters of priorities and timing. Third, although the girl's personal choice was to become a veterinarian, her community permitted such a choice to occur. It also was meaningful that this choice (i.e., veterinarian) is an occupation with which the Navajo have a high degree of comfort because working with animals is a familiar and culturally useful activity. Perhaps choices in occupation and other domains of identity are not so individualistic for any adolescent. Rather, life decisions are influenced by the significant persons in adolescents' environments, and assuming that positive social recognition is desired, choices will be made that are congruent within the community.

With current interest on activities that accentuate character development, Kinaaldá is a ceremony of high significance and meaning to the Navajo that appears to provide socialization and endorsement of desirable cultural values and practices. The power of the Kinaaldá could be argued to come from various sources, but from a psychosocial perspective we observed that the coalescing of the significant social community on behalf of the girl and the positive recognition and affirmation she receives must produce an exhilarating experience that is not easily shrugged off in years to come. Limited available research indicates that girls reported some negative perceptions with respect to some of the more challenging rituals of the ceremony (Frisbie, 1993; Keith, 1964). However, Keith (1964) went on to examine the meaning of the event for adolescent girls and noted changes with respect to girls' conceptions of themselves in their: (a) attitudes toward the self, home, and the opposite sex; (b) status in the

family and community; (c) potential for health, beauty, and prosperity, and (d) actual behavior.

A cultural practice is likely to endure as long as it continues to serve a function in a society. Frisbie (1993) argued that there is promise for continued practice of Kinaaldá because of the matrilineal and matrilocal natures of Navajo society and the fact that it is the best understood and perhaps most frequently conducted Navajo ceremony. It was identified as serving an important function as a source of female socialization according to Begay (1983). However, it is unknown what percentage of Navajo girls experience Kinaaldá in current times. Roessel (1981) observed that its practice was increasing and Begay noted that the ceremony was still practiced by traditional as well as more acculturated parents. In consulting Navajo experts on this question, Eddie Tso, Program Director with the Office of Diné Culture, Language, and Community Services, stated that there is an increase in the performance of Kinaaldá and that more Navajo parents are requesting information on the ceremony (E. Tso, personal communication, October 11, 2002). Mitsi Begay, Cultural Educator at Fort Defiance Indian Health Service and Kinaaldá consultant, concurred and added that its practice diminished from the late 1960s to about 1980, but it has rapidly increased since that time (M. Begay, personal communication, October 11, 2002).

It is difficult to speculate on the degree to which the rituals of Kinaaldá have changed from earlier times. Navajo beliefs and ceremonies have always been central to their culture and were not completely lost because of European contact, as were some of the ceremonial practices of indigenous nations in the Eastern United States whose cultures were so severely undermined by contact. Nonetheless, the fact that Navajo live in a bicultural world raises the question of how the ceremony has been affected by acculturation demands from non-Native sources. Loss of language is a related issue. Although the U.S. Census Bureau (2000b) reported 128,957 persons of age 5 and older spoke Navajo, there is concern that younger Navajo are not acquiring their native language (Batchelder & Markel, 1997; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996). This leads to an unanswered question on the percentage of Navajo girls who understand the meaning of the Kinaaldá rituals and the degree to which they understand the words of the Navajo songs during the ceremony. Most Navajo children are reared and educated in the English language and, like all contemporary youth, are heavily influenced by non-Native sources of socialization in the United States, such as the media.

Related to these research questions is a recommendation to examine parental ethnic socialization practices in terms of cognitive and affective preparation for the ceremony. It also would be useful to investigate the

accommodations of this ceremony to the aspirations and lifestyles of contemporary Navajo young women. One of our interests is in longitudinal examination of young women who both have had and have not had Kinaaldá and following their psychosocial and character development over the adolescent years. In research on this topic, it is essential to incorporate the perspectives of cultural insiders on this event—both in the practice of Kinaaldá and in its meaning. In this study we made an attempt to integrate psychosocial and anthropological perspectives of identity in context and, at the same time, to present a culturally accurate description and analysis of an important cultural rite of the Navajo.

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To Danielle and Sandy: May You Always Walk in Beauty

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