

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-IMAGE
AND THE ACTIVATION OF THE ARCHETYPE OF THE LOVER IN ADULT
FEMALES: AN INTUITIVE INQUIRY

by

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Abstract

Exploring the Relationship between Self-Image and the Activation of the Archetype of the Lover in Adult Females: An Intuitive Inquiry by Sarah Astarte

Research indicates that negative self-image, which produces self-abusive thoughts and behavior, is a sociocultural problem for adult females in the United States. Body image is an important part of overall self-image. Negative and distorted body image has been linked to depression, eating disorders, sexual dissatisfaction and dysfunction, and diminished quality of life. Utilizing Intuitive Inquiry to gain greater understanding of the relationship between self-image and the archetype of the lover (also referred to in this study as Aphrodite in the Western context), this study allows co-participants to be observed and researched, and provides space for the researcher's own experience and knowledge to be included as part of the research and its findings. This work is grounded in Jungian theory, which states that archetypes are motifs that recur in human history throughout all cultures, making them universal. The archetype of the lover, when activated, can inspire and create greater self-acceptance and self-love. This researcher worked with the co-participants to see what changes,

if any, occurred in their self-images over the course of a 4-week study. The work included a 4 session experiential process, in which co-participants engaged in activities such as collage making, body mapping, eating different kinds of foods, dressing up, dance/movement, and mirror exposure work. Semi-structured interviews followed the experiential processes, focusing on the co-participants' experience of their self-image. All of the co-participants expressed more acceptance of their bodies. Two co-participants experienced dramatic shifts in their gender identities. Many of the co-participants spoke on body image in relation to racial/ethnic stereotypes, and how that affected them. Twelve lenses were developed to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between self-image and the archetype of the lover, helping to deepen the understanding of the ways in which this archetype may be of service to those suffering from negative self-image.

Dedication

I honor the goddess Athena, whose clarity and peace of mind aided me tremendously to focus on my work and see it through to completion. I honor the goddess Bridget, whose fire burned on my altar, reminding me of my own burning desire to graduate and do great work in the world. I also honor Aphrodite, my muse and inspiration, as it is her work that this dissertation is specifically concerned with, the task of self-love and acceptance.

I, therefore, dedicate this dissertation to the brave and beautiful female co-participants who chose to face themselves for the purpose of my study. May you all shine your light brightly in this world! Blessed be.

Preface

As a student at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP), I have studied different spiritual traditions for many years, and in fact, had been doing so before coming to graduate school. For example, I took a particular interest in indigenous, earth-based, and goddess-centered traditions, studying them vigorously. For the past 6 years, I have had very meaningful and powerful experiences through my engagement in this work. In my second year at ITP, I had an experience that was a turning point, one from which I could not turn back. It could best be described as ecstatic, a mystical experience in which I had been touched by the Divine. My experience came within the context of a ritual festival in honor of the goddess of love. During the ceremony, I came to feel as though I had been claimed by her. In some traditions, one might say that I directly felt that this goddess "owned my head," meaning that there was a special bond or lesson this deity had for me. This deeply personal experience took my studies to a whole new level, as I had had the intimate experience of physically and spiritually being one with her. On sharing my experience with numerous faculty members who had studied or were part of goddess-worshipping traditions, many offered the wisdom that this was a sign; that I was, according to the spiritual tradition in which the ritual took place, now a

full-blown, bona fide, "uncloseted" child of the goddess. This feedback helped validate my experience and offered me affirmation that I was not simply going crazy. I have had many very auspicious, amazing, and intense experiences in my work with the goddess since then. I have also been blessed to experience similar connections with her consort, the god. I continue my work with them in my own personal spiritual life, and in community.

Given my experiences, my academic work continues to unfold with the Lover archetype more completely engaged within my psyche. I now very much honor it on the conscious level, and my whole personality and day-to-day experience has shifted, given this focus. My self-image, for example, especially pertaining to my body, has shifted. Initially, I started taking better care of myself. I engaged in mundane activities such as eating in a more sensual manner. I would dress in clothing that was less conservative than my usual attire, and allowed myself to become a relentless flirt, in direct opposition to the way that I had been raised. Most of all, I just stopped holding back, and in so doing, chose to reframe the way that I saw my body and myself. Not only did my self-image improve as a result of these changes in my behavior, but over time my quality of life did as well, lending directly to more confidence and greater self-esteem. The way that I live my life now is much more open and authentic to

my true self than it has ever been; and this is largely as a result of my experience with the Goddess of Love.

On this path, it has become clear to me that I am here to do the goddess' work, in being part of empowering, transforming, and healing those who wish it, especially with those utilizing the Divine Feminine in their own psychospiritual process. I have come to know that feeling called is a common part of the hero or heroine's journey. I have since been training to become a priestess in the contemporary pagan tradition of Wicca, which is largely based on the reconstructed Celtic indigenous tradition from the British Isles. I also intend to be trained in contemporary tantra, a tradition originally from the Indian subcontinent, where my ancestry is from, that focuses on union with the Divine, and creating sacred intimacy with one's self and others. I will have a professional practice as a spiritual guide, in which I can use the shamanic techniques that I have learned in addition to my knowledge and skills in psychology to help clients. I am currently a volunteer in the Spiritual Care Program at Stanford Hospital, and plan to go on to become a chaplain. In this way, I will not only be doing my work as a spiritual guide, but also I will be able to bring representation for indigenous and pagan traditions to a mainstream institution. Furthermore, I will bring representation for the tradition in which I was raised, Islam. I feel that this is an important

position to hold as Islam is greatly misunderstood in the United States.

Therefore, it is from much of my own personal journey work that I am inspired to recreate some of those experiences that I had by doing the same activities, such as eating consciously, dancing, and spending time in front of a mirror in order to help others improve their self-image too. I do not see this as simply an experiential process, but understand that it can be a spiritual practice as well. My self-love work has taken me to new levels of understanding myself as well as understanding the Divine (especially in the form of the goddess). The results of my self-work have been amazing, despite how taxing and difficult the work can be. It has taken years for me to get to where I am, going from being someone who would be in the back of the room of her belly-dance class in a frumpy, oversized T-shirt, to now being someone who will be in the front of the classroom in a sports bra.

Practicing self-love is some of the hardest work that one can do, and this work of the goddess comes under the lover archetype. It is from a foundation of self-love that people can allow themselves to love others, to live more fully, to be in tune with the life force. Facing, breaking down, and breaking away from the body image ideal in our mainstream culture is critical, if we are to accept and appreciate the bodies that we

have, and is by no means an easy task. In the end, I would expect the work on one's self to yield great rewards, on personal, social, and political levels, as it has for me in my own work around my body image. I believe that this is the work assigned to us by the goddess of love, she who holds us tenderly in her embrace as we do some of our most painful and challenging work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The study of ancient and contemporary goddess traditions can potentially offer validation, healing, transformation, and empowerment to women on psychological, emotional, and spiritual levels (Bolen, 1984; Kinsley, 1989; Lauter & Rupprecht, 1985; Mascetti, 1990; Neu, 1995; Stone, 1990; Teish, 1985; Wehr, 1987; Woolger & Woolger, 1987). Numerous feminist theorists and scholars have argued that using goddess images can be inspiring and hopeful to women (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Bolen, 1984; Daly, 1978; Gadon, 1989; Neu, 1995; Noble, 2003; Stone, 1990; Teish, 1985; Wehr, 1987). Therefore, there is ample justification to investigate the efficacy of goddess-centered image-based experiential exercises and their ability to positively impact women. This study will determine the efficacy of experiential exercises involving representations of the Lover archetype in achieving a positive transformation in the self-image of adult females.

Purpose and Significance

There is an increasing need for the development of clinical practices that assist women in developing a healthy and empowered body image. Women are the bearers of beauty in U.S. culture (Wolf, 1991); however, the standards to which they are held are unrealistic and unhealthy (Cash, 1987; Wolf, 1991). According to Striegel-Moore, McAvay, and Rodin (1986), as well as Van den Buick (2000), the mass media's portrayal of women is inaccurate, with

unrealistic standards placed, in particular, on the size and shape of women's bodies. This phenomenon puts pressure on women to attain and maintain a nearly impossible degree of thinness, with most women seeking to fully avoid weight gain and obesity (Striegel-Moore et al., 1986). As a result of mixed messages about beauty from peers, parents, educators, the fashion industry, the cosmetics industry, television, film, and print media, an overall negative and distorted body image has become a sociocultural problem (Heinberg, 1995; Van den Buick, 2000). Negative and distorted body image (Cash, 1988; Heinberg, 1995) has been linked to depression (Pinhas, Toner, Ali, Garfinkel, & Stuckless, 1999; Rogers, 1961), eating disorders (Cash & Deagle, 1997; Higgins, 1987; Strauman, Vookles, Berenstein, Chaiken, & Higgins, 1991), sexual dissatisfaction and dysfunction (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), and diminished quality of life (Cash & Fleming, 2002).

Definitions

In the dictionary of terms released by the American Psychological Association (VandenBos, 2007), self-image is defined as a person's view or concept of self, a crucial aspect of an individual's personality that can determine the success of relationships and a sense of general well-being. In defining negative self-image VandenBos (2007) maintains that negative self-image is often the cause of dysfunctions and of self-abusive,

self-defeating, or destructive behaviors. Body image however, is only one aspect of a larger concept of self-image.

Jung (1959c) defined archetypes as universal motifs and images that influence thoughts and behaviors, affecting how the physical world is perceived. He postulated the collective unconscious, which, according to Jung (1959c) carries in it a breadth of symbols, myths, and primordial images to which humanity has access. Archetypes within this framework are motifs that recur in human history and are found despite variances of culture, creating a more-or-less universal understanding. Archetypes are one way for people around the globe to perceive and understand the world (Jung, 1959c). They are images that can be applied to an individual's role in a group, how individuals see themselves in the world, and to how one may be defined by others (Bolen, 1984; S. Butler & Wintram, 1991; Cashford, 1998). Some of the most basic archetypes stem from the concept of gender, including aspects of both the masculine and feminine.

However, there have been critiques and criticisms of Jungian theory as gender biased (Goldenberg, 1976; Lauter & Rupprecht, 1985; Meador, 1992; Romaniello, 1992; Wehr, 1987) citing that it promotes a dualistic view about gender (Daly, 1978; Goldenberg, 1976; Lauter & Rupprecht, 1985; Romaniello, 1992; Tannen, 2007; Wehr, 1987). Jung (1959b) attributed to women the characteristics of passivity and inferiority. Though there is gender bias in

Jungian theory, it still has much to offer in terms of understanding the psyche. Thus, contemporary Jungian analysts and feminist writers have compensated for this bias in their own works, updating Jungian theory to reflect a more empowering attitude toward the feminine, assigning value to feminine characteristics and claiming that females do not need to rely on their masculine side in order to be strong (Bolen, 1984; Daly, 1978; Lauter & Rupprecht, 1985; Romaniello, 1992; Tannen, 2007; Wehr, 1987).

To elucidate Jung's positioning of the archetype, one such empowered figure is Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty of the ancient Greek pantheon (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Bolen, 1984; Cotterell & Storm, 2007; Stone, 1990; Woolger & Woolger, 1987). Those who embody this archetype are given the qualities of the goddess: able to raptly focus on someone or something, receive what he/she/it has to give, and deeply feel sensations and emotions through the experience offered with the attention and intensity as if they were in love. This is what Bolen (1984) calls "Aphrodite Consciousness" (p. 226). Bolen also attributes creativity to Aphrodite Consciousness, noting that artists and writers describe having this experience of oneness and love (p. 227). Aphrodite is also concurrent with the archetype of the Lover (Bolen, 1984; Pearson, 1986; Woolger & Woolger, 1987). For the purpose of this proposal, the terms *Aphrodite* and *the lover* will

be used interchangeably. As an archetype, Aphrodite represents love of others, love of life, love of self, and love in all its forms. In this study, both the lover and Aphrodite are to represent a state of being, and the love of one's self, not the love experienced in relationship with another person. There is more research on the feminine aspect of the lover; therefore, there is more detail given specifically on Aphrodite, but the archetype of the Lover is universal and applicable to all genders.

To embody the lover energy is to have an activated archetypal energy within one's self (Bolen, 1984; Jung, 1959b). Within many polytheistic belief systems, it could also be believed that a specific deity has an influence or bond with an individual, and in this context, the individual would be seen as a child of that deity, or a vessel or representation for that deity (Cotterell & Storm, 2007; Stone, 1990; Teish, 1985). What might be seen as an activated archetype in the Jungian context may be seen as a spiritual connection within the context of certain spiritual traditions. In working with the archetype of the lover/Aphrodite, should this archetype become activated within a co-participant, it may be interpreted by some as that individual is forming a connection, or even becoming one with the goddess of love. Regardless of what one's religious preferences may be, working with archetypal energies can be seen as part of one's psychospiritual development.

Aphrodite, "as the Goddess of Love is firstly in love with herself" (Bolen, 1984, p. 242). This archetype can be activated (meaning brought to the conscious level of the mind from the unconscious level) by learning to enjoy pleasure, feeling through one's body, alerting one's senses, and taking excellent care of one's self (Bolen, 1984; Mann & Lyle, 1995; Woolger & Woolger, 1987). Female images and iconography will be used as the co-participants are female, to represent the lover archetype. In this proposal, the co-participants will be encouraged to bring forth the archetype of the lover, with a goal of the process being the reevaluation and integration of a healthier self-image.

Literature Overview

Currently, much of what is portrayed as the ideal body image in mass media is highly uncommon and largely unattainable (Levine & Smolak, 1996). This kind of public reinforcement of an ideal leads to negative affect, body dissatisfaction, and discrepancies between perceived and actual body size (Henry, Anshel, & Michael, 2006). Gurari, Hetts, and Strube (2006), for example, state that "findings suggest that frequent encounters with highly attractive exemplars in the media could be damaging to self-views of women, especially if the comparisons cannot be successfully fended off or corrected for their inappropriateness" (p. 274). Therefore, idealized media portrayals can lead to negative views of one's self in terms of body image, causing a decrease in feelings of

self-worth and appreciation in one's self-evaluation (Gurari et al., 2006).

Body image is more than the physical body itself; it is moreover the projection or image that one has of one's physical self (Freud, 1953, 1961; Schonfeld, 1969; Secord & Jourard 1953; Traub & Orbach, 1964). As noted earlier, body image is part of the larger concept of self-image, which includes self-concept and self-esteem (Gurari, et al., 2006; Henry et al., 2006; Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, & Rodin, 1993). Thus, when idealization of the body and perfectionism conflict with self-image, it can lead to internal conflict and unhappiness (Bybee, Luthar, Zigler, & Merisca, 1997, Higgins, 1987; Powers & Erickson, 1986; Ryff, 1991). It can also lead to fear of failure and constant self-doubt (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990), as well as to depression (Rogers, 1961). Perfectionism (thoughts and behaviors toward striving to meet an ideal) and negative self-image are further linked to eating disorders (Brandtsadter & Rothermund, 2002; Leung, Schwartzman, Streiger, 1996; Minarick & Ahrens, 1996; Rosch, Crowther, & Graham, 1991), and obesity (Striegel-Moore et al., 1986).

To date, cognitive therapy (Dworkin & Kerr, 1987) and cognitive behavioral therapy (Butters & Cash, 1987; Dworkin & Kerr, 1987; Kazdin & Mascitelli, 1982; Margolin & Weiss, 1978; Taylor & Marshall, 1977) have been found to be effective in

working with females on their self-image and body image, becoming the treatment of choice among clinicians (Butters & Cash, 1987; Dworkin & Kerr, 1987). Other methods utilized in the psychotherapeutic setting include sociocultural and personal interventions (Glidden & Tracey, 1989), reflective therapy (Butters & Cash, 1987), and interactive psycho-educational intervention (Zabrinski, Wilfley, Calfas, Winzelberg, & Taylor, 2004).

Mirror exposure therapy (Delinsky, 2005) is one of several methods that is currently developing to assist clients in reevaluating and transforming their self-image. By engaging in literal self-reflection in the therapeutic process, gains are being made toward increasing healthy and appropriate self-image among females (Delinsky, 2005; Teish, 1985). Interestingly, the mirror is a symbol of the deity and archetype of the lover (Bolen, 1984; Jobes, 1962; Stone, 1990; Teish, 1985). Therefore, the combination of the use of the archetype of Aphrodite with one of her symbols, the mirror, in a process based on mirror exposure therapy seems fitting.

In a study done at Rutgers University (Delinsky, 2005), a technique called mirror exposure was developed in which the participants spent time in front of a mirror with a facilitator present. Participants identified their thoughts about the various parts of their bodies reflected with the intention of changing

those thoughts from self-deprecating ones to self-affirming ones. This study was done with women who were assessed as having body-image disturbance, meaning that they had extreme weight and shape concerns. According to Delinsky (2005), the treatment was determined to be effective at the conclusion of the study.

One of the study's most valuable components was having the participants meet as a group, to support each other. Indeed, support groups are very popular as part of the therapeutic process. In support groups, and through related experiential processes, adults can reclaim a particular source of strength by working through issues they bring to the group in a safe space. Sharing experiences with others, in addition to the emotional support that is given, can make the experience of being in a group very valuable. From women's spirituality groups to Alcoholics Anonymous, support groups serve to enhance the experience of therapy for many people (S. Butler & Wintram, 1991; Geertsma & Cummings, 2004; Kimmel & Kazanis, 1995; Neu, 1995; Scher, Stevens, Good, & Eichenfeld, 1987).

The commitment to empower others, while enhancing one's own power, is called mutual empowerment (Miller, 1991; Surrey, 1991). For a group to have a leader who is a participant and role model has been found to be of help as well (C. M. Brody, 1985). This researcher will be in the role of group leader/facilitator, and in this way be a participant in the study, as well as responsible for

running it. Also, because of this group empowerment model, the participants are referred to as co-participants. The emphasis on having the leader on more equal footing with the participants is in line with feminist group models. This form of group work has been used successfully with couples, as well as in feminist support groups, and men's and women's spirituality groups (C. M. Brody, 1985; Neu, 1995; Scher et al., 1987). Therefore, this research will utilize it as a component of the experiential processes.

Research Overview

The main research question that this study was designed to address is "What is the relationship between self-image and the activation of the archetype of the lover in adult females?" The goals of the research were to observe and evaluate self-image in adults as they work with the archetype of Aphrodite. Observation and evaluation was done iteratively throughout the duration and completion of the experiential process. The method that was used in the research was intuitive inquiry, which is a qualitative approach. Intuitive Inquiry is well suited for research that includes psychospiritual development (R. Anderson, 2004; Braud & Anderson, 1998). This method includes and honors the researcher's assumptions and experience as well as those of the participants. Given my own personal story and relationship to body image, this is important to my engagement in this work.

R. Anderson (2004) states that intuitive inquiry "encourages the actualization of the capacity to envision creative responsibilities . . . for the [researchers] participants and their own impressions" (p. 336). Intuitive Inquiry is inclusive of its readers as well as its participants, acknowledging that those reading the research can and do experience transformation simply by being a reader. Data analysis, using the method of intuitive inquiry, is done in five cycles of interpretation, with different perspectives of the researcher and the participants taken into consideration in the analysis.

As previously described, because adult females are held to unrealistic and unhealthy standards of beauty, negative body and self-image is common in U.S. culture (Cash, 1987, 1988; Heinberg, 1995; Wolf, 1991; Van den Buick, 2000), and incongruencies between the actual body and body image occur (Powers & Erickson, 1986). These lead to self-image alterations that may produce harmful effects (Bybee & Wells, 2003; Rogers, 1961; Ryff, 1991; Secord & Jourard, 1953). This researcher postulates that working with an empowering archetypal image, such as Aphrodite, will help adult females to reevaluate the way in which they see and experience themselves. Aphrodite's presence in the Greek pantheon facilitates engagement with her by those familiar with or from the Western context. Although she is depicted as very feminine to Western sensibilities and resides in a female body, she, nevertheless,

represents self-love and sensuality, which can be invoked in anyone, no matter their biological sex or gender identity. With this in mind, the research proposed in this study aims to help adult females transform their self-image by engaging in activities that are specific to the body image of each co-participant, the mass media's body image ideal, and activities that are related to the archetype of Aphrodite. These include creative expression activities: the activity of making collages from fashion magazines is to induce thought and reflection on the mass media's body image ideal; making maps of one's own body is an activity to bring awareness to one's own self-evaluation; dance and movement is an activity that relates to the lover archetype, in that it is a form of one's own creative and authentic expression. The work also includes thoughtful self-reflection in the form of journaling after each activity, and mirror exposure work to be done at home by each co-participant on her own time.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Adult Females, Self-Image and the Goddess

In polytheistic religions, there is generally a female deity who represents that culture's ideal of beauty. She is also, typically, the goddess of love, pleasure, sensuality, and is sometimes a patron of the arts. In ancient Greece, and most widely known in the Western world, is Aphrodite (also commonly known by her Roman name, Venus). A key aspect of this deity, as offered from the myths and stories of ancient Greece, is that she is first in love with herself (Bolen, 1984; Rose, 1958). She takes excellent care of herself and her body, takes pleasure in many things, and is then able to be in relationship with others (Bulfinch, 1979; Mayerson, 1983; Mascetti, 1990). This speaks to self-care and self-love that not only affects the individual, but also affects one's relationship with others. In this way, Aphrodite may be of service to those seeking external verification of beauty.

The Mass Media and Its Ideals

The mass media are "the loudest and most aggressive purveyors of images and narratives of ideal slender beauty" (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002, p. 2). There is no doubt that the media implicitly and explicitly express the benefits of their projected ideals of beauty (Bull & Rumsey, 1998; Cash, 1990; Eagly, Ashmore,

Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Heinberg, 1995; Jackson, 1992). The "beauty bias" that operates in society implies that people deemed as attractive are favored whereas those seen as less attractive are often discriminated against (Lavin & Cash, 2001). Body-image experiences mirror the cultural context (Fallon, 1990; Rucker & Cash, 1992), meaning that individuals widely hold views that they are socialized to hold and, therefore, judge themselves and others according to the socially prescribed standards. This can lead to stereotyping on a sociocultural level, as well as to the fostering of negative self-image in the individual (Lavin & Cash, 2001). According to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), individuals exposed to imagery of unrealistic beauty standards will compare themselves to the imagery thus having negative effects on their self-evaluation (Groesz et al., 2002).

In a national survey conducted by Cash (1997) it was found that body dissatisfaction has increased for both sexes in comparison to reports done up to 24 years earlier (Bershcheid et al., 1973; Cash et al., 1985). Adult males and females both experience low self-esteem, poor eating habits, depression, sexual inhibition, and social anxiety from negative body image (Cash, 1990, 1996; Cash & Deagle, 1997; Cash & Grant, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999). Males and females with eating disorders display similar symptoms and phenomenology. These increase with the severity of the disorder (A. E. Anderson & Holman, 1997; Carlat,

Carmargo, & Herzog, 1997; Pope, Harrison, Hudson, & Jonas, 1986). Both sexes are affected by the body image ideal pushed by the mass media, showing its wide and often harmful influence.

Within the broader cultural context, there is a degree of "normative discontent" that people are socialized to have about their weight and appearance (Cash, 1989; Cash & Henry, 1995; Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990; Fallon, 1990; Freedman, 1986; Jackson, 1992; Rodin, 1992; Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1984; Wolf, 1991). Rieves and Cash (1996) assert that some of the negative self-evaluation comes from teasing and criticism, social comparison, and family body-image attitudes. Stormer and Thompson (1995, 1996) found two factors to account for body image disturbance: the tendency to make social comparisons, and the internalization of sociocultural norms. Weight and appearance are influential variables in both social relations and psychological functioning (Bull & Rumsey, 1998; Cash, 1995; Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990; Thompson, 1990; Thompson et al., 1999). This leads to the creation of body dissatisfaction schemas within the individual (Stice & Shaw, 1994).

Numerous studies have shown there are no universal negative reactions to media-image exposure, and that negative reactions in individuals occur under certain conditions (J. D. Brown, Novick, Lord, & Richards, 1992; Champion & Furnham, 1999; Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Joshi, Herman, & Polivy, 2004; Mills, Polivy,

Herman, & Tiggemann, 2002). Though it can be generalized that all of the U.S. population is exposed to the mass media's unrealistic ideals, only 2% of the population develops body dysmorphic disorder (Gorbis, 2004). While most females are exposed to the media's thin ideal, only a small percentage develop eating pathology (Hausenblas, Janelle, Gardner, & Focht, 2004; Hayes & Ross, 1987; Heinberg & Thompson, 1995; Patrick, Neighbors, & Knee, 2004; Waller, Hamilton, & Shaw, 1992). However, 50% of women report having a negative self-evaluation (Cash & Henry, 1995) and there is the remaining half do not.

Although both males and females suffer from eating pathology and negative body image, females have shown greater body dissatisfaction than their male peers (Cash & Henry, 1995; Cash, Morrow, Hrabosky, & Perry, 2004; Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990; Feingold & Mazzella, 1998; Muth & Cash, 1997; Wolf, 1991). Research has shown females to be more cognitively and behaviorally aware of, and invested in their physical appearance in comparison to males (Cash & Brown, 1989; Cash & Hicks, 1990; Jackson, Sullivan & Hymes, 1987; Muth & Cash, 1997; Rozin & Fallon, 1988). It is due to these reasons that it is important to focus on females, and the surrounding issues that create such widespread negative body-image attitudes for them.

Despite the feminist movement, there are still media and cultural images that perpetuate negative and self-deprecating

views in females about themselves and their bodies (Wolf, 1991). Much of what is idealized more closely resembles a male body than a female body, such as a very small body fat percentage, toned muscles that show through the skin, and an angular face (Young-Eisendrath, 1999). Negative attitudes toward those individuals who are overweight or obese are reinforced and perpetuated, especially for females (Puhl & Brownell, 2001). This can lead to views of the self that are very damaging. With physical attributes being an important part of identity and self-presentation, for those who conform to societal standards, gender-role enactment is crucial (Ashmore, 1990), as is how one is perceived. Those who subscribe to traditional values are more interested in heterosocial relations and, therefore, are invested in portraying "feminine beauty" (Cash, Ancis, & Strachan, 1997). To those who internalize societal standards, it is believed to an unrealistically high degree that these societal standards of feminine beauty are the basis for men's judgment of women (Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Jacobi & Cash, 1994; Szymanski & Cash, 1995).

Self-Image and Body Image

There have been many differing perspectives on what body image is. Freud (1961) saw body ego as an image of the body, not just the body itself. Secord and Jourard (1953) added that body image is "the feelings that one has about one's body" (p. 343). It

is the image that one has in one's own mind, rather than the actual body (Schonfeld, 1969; Traub & Orbach, 1964).

Body-image is a multidimensional attitude toward one's own body, especially appearance (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990); but it also includes what other people think, feel, and how they behave in regard to their own bodies (Cash, 1994). Overall appearance, body size and weight are the main concerns (Cash, 1990; Garner, 1997; Lavin & Cash, 2001) that affect all genders (Jackson, 1992; Muth & Cash, 1997). Concern lies not just with weight and level of body fat, but other features, such as hair, facial construction, and muscle tone (Cash et al., 2004). The American Psychological Association (VandenBos, 2007) defines self-image as "one's own view or concept of oneself. Self-image is a crucial aspect of an individual's personality that can determine the success of relationships and a sense of general well-being" (2007, p. 831). Conversely, negative self-image is defined as "often a cause of dysfunctions and of self-abusive, self-defeating, or destructive behavior" (p. 831).

According to Cash (1994), body image is the image one has of one's own physical form, which has three components: evaluation, affect, and investment. Evaluation is the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's physical attributes (Cash, 1994). The evaluations are partly from self-perceived discrepancies between

one's appearance and internalized ideals (Cash & Szymanski, 1995; Strauman et al., 1991; Szymanski & Cash, 1995).

Investment refers to focus on one's appearance and the behaviors that are part of managing and enhancing one's looks (Cash, 1994; Cash & Jacobi, 1992; Cash & Labarge, 1996; Cash & Szymanski, 1995). This includes self-schemas, which are "cognitive generalizations about the self derived from past experiences that organize and lead the processing of self-related information contained in an individual's social experience" (Markus, 1977, p. 68). It is important to know what one's investment in one's body image is, as it relates to one's self-esteem, and ultimately self-image. If one is to work toward the transformation of one's self-image, as is the goal of this study, it is important for those participating to know what their investment in their appearance is when they begin the study.

Body image affect refers to the emotional experiences that accompany self-evaluations. Some affects are specific to certain contexts, such as specific social situations or life changes and rites of passage. For example, attending a fancy, high-profile party, having a birthday and facing the aging process, or having one's body change after a pregnancy (Cash, 1994; Cash & Szymanski, 1995) can lead to body image affect.

There are dramatic changes in self-image discrepancies during an individual's lifespan, with the ideal self-image rising from

childhood through adolescence. Later in life the self-image disparity decreases, allowing individuals to become more realistic in their body image standards, and allowing them to become more accepting of themselves (Bybee & Wells, 2003; Bybee & Zigler, 1991; Ryff, 1991).

Body Image Disturbance and Dissatisfaction

Henry, et al. (2006) have defined body image disturbance as body dissatisfaction, negative affect, and discrepancies between perceived and actual body size. Heinberg (1995) suggests that the greatest source of body image disturbance is sociocultural. Van den Buick (2000) supports this by asserting that messages from the mass media are largely responsible. According to numerous researchers, the mass media perpetuates unattainable and unrealistic standards by presenting artificial, airbrushed images (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Cash, 1997; Fallon, 1990; Striegel-Moore et al., 1986). Body dissatisfaction is often a precursor to dieting, and has been found to lead to disordered eating (Thompson, 1992; Twamley & Davis, 1999). When the idealization one holds conflicts with one's self-image, it can lead to internal conflict, unhappiness, and disappointment (Bybee et al., 1997; Higgins, 1987; Powers & Erickson, 1986; Ryff, 1991).

Negative body image has links to impairments in psychosocial functioning, such as self-consciousness and social anxiety, and diminished quality of life (Cash & Fleming, 2002; Cash & Grant,

1995; Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990, 2002; Thompson, 1990). Negative or low body image has been found to be linked to depression (Pinhas, et al., 1999; Rogers, 1961; Stice & Shaw, 1994), eating disorders (Cash and Deagle, 1997; Higgins, 1987; Polivy & Herman, 2002; Stice, 2002; Stice & Shaw, 1994; Strauman, Vookles, Berenstein, Chaiken, & Higgins, 1991; Striegel-Moore, et al., 1993; Thompson & Stice, 2001) and sexual dissatisfaction and dysfunction (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is an abnormal dissatisfaction with one's physical appearance that is often the result of a severely negative body image (Gorbis, 2004). It affects about 2% of the U.S. population, or roughly over 600 thousand people, occurring in males and females in equal proportion (Gorbis, 2004). Those with Body Dysmorphic Disorder often seek out cosmetic surgery and professional treatments to perfect their appearance; estimates place up to 50% of affected individuals in this category. Unfortunately many individuals are not identified as having BDD until after having had numerous surgeries (Veale, 2000). The origins of body-image distortion are thought to be largely from social factors that have been internalized, such as peer pressure and the criticisms of others (Slaughter & Sun, 1999).

Perfectionism is similar to self-image disparity, and is repeatedly linked with eating disorders (Brandtsadter &

Rothermund, 2002; Leung et al., 1996; Minarick & Ahrens, 1996; Rosch et al., 1991; Steiger, Leung, Puentes-Neuman, & Gottheil, 1992). Perfectionism is in fact used as an operational indicator of eating problems, and is a subscale on the Eating Disorders Inventory (EDI), which is one of the most widely used measures of eating disorders (Garner & Olmstead, 1983). Perfectionistic tendencies can further lead to diet restriction, all-or-nothing thinking, inability to accept minor flaws, constant self-doubt, and fear of failure (Frost et al., 1990; Landa & Bybee, 2007).

The Mass Media's Affect on Adult Females' Body Image

As women are idealized for upholding the cultural standards of beauty in the West, the body image held by many individuals becomes increasingly unhealthy as the standards become unrealistic (Cash, 1987; Striegel-Moore, 1997; Wolf, 1991). What is portrayed in the media and greater society in the U.S. is highly influential, and has an adverse effect on the development of women's self-image (Cash, 1988; Heinberg, 1995; Lerner & Jovanovic, 1990; Thompson & Stice, 2001). Though in the last few decades, the average American woman's weight has increased, the body ideal has become more slender, increasing the discrepancy between the real and the ideal (Bybee & Wells, 2003; Garner, Olmsted, Bohr, & Garfinkel, 1982; Ryff, 1991). At least one half of American women have a negative self-evaluation about their appearance (Cash & Henry, 1995), if not most women (Aruguete,

Yates, & Edman, 2006; Smolack, 2006); this creates greater potential for increased body-image dysphoria (Cash, 1994; Muth & Cash, 1997; Szymanski & Cash, 1995). Dissatisfaction with one's body has been found across the life span for females (Pliner, Chaiken, & Flett, 1990). This has also coincided with an increase in eating pathology (Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, & Ahrens, 1992).

Women are bombarded with images of what and how they are supposed to look, dress, and behave. Through media exposure, much gender-role endorsement and stereotyping is done (S. M. Anderson & Bem, 1981; Morgan, 1982; Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw, & Stein, 1994), especially in the areas of body-image, affecting the self-image and self-esteem of females (Stice et al., 1994; Wolf, 1991). Females are given mixed messages about beauty from peers, parents, educators, the fashion industry, the cosmetics industry, television, film and print (Cash, 1987, 1988; Gurari et al., 2006; Stice, Spangler, & Agras, 2001).

Women try to conform to the unrealistic standards set by the mass media, women believing the media message that in order to be popular and successful, one must be thin (Fallon, 1990; Kilbourne, 1994; Polivy & Herman, 2004; Wolf, 1991). In what Young-Eisendrath (1999) calls the "menace of female beauty" (p. 33), she observes that American females are told that their power lies in their appearance. Teasing, criticism, and ridicule about one's appearance has been found to be significant in the development of

negative body-image in young adulthood in adult females (Cash, 2002; Cattarin, & Thompson, 1995; Fabian & Thompson, 1989; Thompson, 1990; Thompson, Fabian, Moulton, Dunn, & Altabe, 1991; Thompson & Psaltis, 1988).

Women who are dissatisfied with their bodies compare themselves to a wide range of targets, not just thin models (Trampe, Stapel, Siero, 2007). Often women make upward social comparisons to others of a different age range, body type, or lifestyle choices (Cash, Cash, & Butters, 1983; Hausenblas et al., 2004; Irving, 1990; Stice, Nemeroff, & Shaw, 1996; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004), thereby making inappropriate comparisons. Cosmetic use and aesthetic surgeries are seen as favorable to enhance one's looks, giving some control over their appearance (Cash, 1987; Cash & Horton, 1983). Females who use cosmetics have been deemed by both male and female peers as more attractive (Cash, Dawson, Davis, Bowen, & Galumback, 1989). The results of this study could exemplify the social approval expressed by peers toward those females who choose to meet the sociocultural standards of beauty.

Women's magazines have 10.5% more advertisements and articles on weight loss than men's magazines (A. E. Anderson & DiDomenico, 1992; Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler, 1999). Women exposed to images of thin models resulted in lower self-esteem and decreased body satisfaction (J. D. Brown et al., 1992; Irving, 1990). Exposure to pictures of thin models can also lead to increased shame, guilt,

and insecurity (Stice & Shaw, 1994). Even those who know they are not overweight often express the desire to lose weight (Connor-Greene, 1988). Wiseman et al., (1992) found that the rise in eating pathology in women has paralleled the increase in advertisements and articles in magazines on weight-loss diets. An estimated \$5 to \$7 billion dollars are spent on weight loss products in the U.S. (Young-Eisendrath, 1999). Yet, even given this, there may be some awareness of healthy choices. With some of the growing public consciousness around dieting and eating disorders, such as widely published books, articles in mainstream magazines, characters in television and film, as well as real-life celebrities speaking more openly about eating pathologies, cultural media literacy may help to empower more people to accept the body that they already have (Levine & Piran, 2004; Levine & Smolack, 2001, 2002).

In a meta-analysis of 25 studies, it was found that females who viewed thin models experienced negative effects on body image, and that the viewing of thin models had an impact on their own body-image schemas (Groesz, et al., 2002). Appearance schemas are related to one's body image assumptions and experiences, therefore body image affect in females will influence how they think and feel about their bodies (Cash, 1994; Cash & Grant, 1995; Cash & Labarge, 1996; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2002). Trampe et al. (2007)

found that exposure to thin body shapes on just one occasion was enough to affect their participants' self-evaluations.

In a study done by Jansen, Nederkoorn, and Mulkens (2005), eye movement registration (electroculography) was measured in participants to see how preoccupied they were about their weight and body type. It specifically measured how much time they spent looking at their self-identified ugly body parts and the so-called beautiful parts of others. This study was done in the Netherlands with adult women over the age of 18. Females who were satisfied with their bodies showed the opposite behavior, spending an equal amount of time looking at their self-identified beautiful parts as they spent looking at the so-called ugly parts of others. Body satisfaction, therefore, determines how one processes information about other people. The researchers of this study recommended that changing the way that information is processed is one way that could prevent the formation of self-deprecating messages and negative body image in individuals.

In a study done by Mills et al. (2002), it was found that when college-age females were exposed to images of thin models and were asked to compare themselves to them they felt worse about themselves. In another experimental condition, college-age women were first asked to view the same images and rate if the images were effective advertising, given other tasks, then asked about their self-images as part of a supposedly separate study. The

participants rated themselves as having their body images improve in comparison to when they first began the study. Mills et al. (2002) attributed this to the ideal of a thin-fantasy, in which young women look at popular images and imagine looking like a model or celebrity.

In another study by Trampe et al. (2007), 132 female college students were assigned to rate themselves on the Body Dissatisfaction Subscale, a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *extremely*) to determine their self-evaluation at the beginning of the study (Garner, Olmstead, & Polivy, 1983). After this, they were to rate their own attractiveness after looking at a fake perfume advertisement. In the perfume advertisement, pictures of a real model, and a non-model were used; in one condition, the picture was labeled as being a model, in the other condition, a non-model. It was found that the body-dissatisfied females rated themselves negatively, regardless of whether the target was presented as a real model or not. In contrast, the body-satisfied women evaluated themselves lower only when exposed to the attractive non-model condition. This study demonstrated that body-dissatisfied females would be dissatisfied with themselves when exposed to realistic standards (non-model) as well as unrealistic ones (model); whereas, the body-satisfied women lowered their self-evaluations only when the unrealistic standard (model) was

presented as a realistic one, such as when the photo of the model was presented as a non-model.

Self-perceptions are influenced affectively (emotionally), and cognitively (mentally) (Cash et al., 1989). Females with favorable body-image levels have reported less disturbed eating patterns, fewer body-related cognitive distortions, and less investment in appearance for self-worth (Rudiger, Cash, Roehrig, & Thompson, 2007). Females with a more satisfied body-image reported being more comfortable undressing in front of a lover, more comfortable initiating sexual activity, more adventurous sexually, more confident in their ability to please their partners, and as having orgasms more frequently than those who reported higher body dissatisfaction (Ackard, Kearney-Cooke, & Peterson, 2000). This study would indicate that those with higher body satisfaction are able to appreciate their physical forms, as well as receive the appreciation of their lovers, in comparison to those with body dissatisfaction.

Eating Pathologies and Body Image

Studies show that females with identity deficits, low self-esteem, or high body dissatisfaction are more likely to internalize sociocultural standards (Katzman & Wolchik, 1984; Posavac, Posavac, & Posavac, 1998; Schupak-Neuberg, & Nemeroff, 1993; Stice et al., 1994), and translate those into eating pathologies (Katzman & Wolchik, 1984; Leon, Fulkerson, Perry, &

Cudeck, 1993). Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder in which thinness is pursued by the extreme loss of weight; bulimia nervosa is an eating disorder marked by frequent bingeing and purging behaviors, along with other compensatory behaviors to avoid weight gain (Comer, 2001). In some studies, this means bulimic symptoms (Kendler et al., 1991; Stice & Shaw, 1994). Dieters are known to have internalized social standards to a significant degree (Griffiths et al., 2000). Some researchers have found that restrained eaters had internalized social standards and had explicit negative attitudes toward fatness which they endorsed as their own personal beliefs (Karpinski & Hilton, 2001; Vartanian, Herman, & Polivy, 2005; Wilson, Lindsay, & Schooler, 2000). Dieting itself can be part of disordered eating (Polivy & Herman, 1987; Surrey, 1991), leading to binge eating, fasting, and vomiting (Polivy & Herman, 1985; Stice, et al., 1994). Biological, cognitive, and personality factors can be moderating components in preventing the development of eating pathology in many women (Stice et al., 1994).

Among those who are discontented with their bodies, the more invested they are in appearance, the more psychological distress they will experience concerning their self-image in their daily lives (Muth & Cash, 1997). Those females who enrolled in body image therapy programs had higher scores on the Appearance Schemas Inventory (ASI) and were considered to be body dysmorphic as

compared to their female peers (Cash & Grant, 1995). Furthermore, some researchers have found high rates of comorbidity with eating disorders and psychiatric disorders (Garfinkel, Lin, & Goering, 1995; Kendler et al., 1991; Striegel-Moore, Seeley, & Lewisohn, 2003; Walters, & Kendler, 1995); further research is required to explore their correlation. It is also interesting to note that eating disorders are likely to occur in societies where food is readily available and abundant; in these societies, the body ideal is thin and tubular rather than curvaceous and rounded (Polivy & Herman, 2004). This implies that societies, depending on the resources that they hold, have expectations of females to look like that which is difficult to attain.

Clinical Interventions for Body Image Disorders

Interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy were utilized to change beliefs and self-statements, as well as improve self-image and body-image; these interventions have been highly successful (Altabe & Thompson, 1996; Butters & Cash, 1987; Cash, 1992; Cash & Fleming, 2002; Cash & Grant, 1995; Dworkin, & Kerr, 1987; Freedman, 1990; Kazdin & Mascitelli, 1982; Margolin & Weiss, 1978; Taylor & Marshall, 1977). In a study done by Butters and Cash (1987), for example, two groups of undergraduate women went through a six-session intervention using cognitive therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy. Each session had an activity assigned, with homework given in between, including relaxation,

detailed body inventory of what they did not like about their bodies, time in front of a mirror, and listening to various audiotapes on cognitive restructuring. The participants were given several assessments. The results were measured in terms of affective evaluations and appearance-related cognitions. The results confirmed the efficacy of the intervention using cognitive-behavioral procedures to alter affective and cognitive negative body image.

In another study, Dworkin and Kerr (1987) administered three different counseling interventions using cognitive therapy techniques, cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques, and reflective therapy techniques. Women who were experiencing body image disturbance were classified as either moderate or severe body-image disturbance affected. The participants were randomly assigned to either a therapy group or a control group. Those assigned to a therapy group went through structured interviews and were assigned homework. In the cognitive therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapies, cognitive techniques were employed, with the purpose of changing the self-statements the participants would make. The reflective therapy emphasized the exploration of the participant's feelings. Though all participants improved in their body image and self-concept, it was found that the cognitive therapy techniques were most effective for changing body-image. Cognitive therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques when

used together were most effective for self-concept. It has also been noted by other researchers that when cognitive therapy is administered with behavioral techniques, such as imagery and reinforcement it increases the power and effectiveness of the intervention (Kazdin & Mascitelli, 1982; Margolin & Weiss, 1978; Taylor & Marshall, 1977). It is most effective with regular monitoring rather than having participants be completely autonomous (Cash & Lavalley, 1997).

The History of the Archetype

Archetypes are motifs that recur in human history, throughout all cultures, making them universal; they are a way for people to perceive and understand the world (Jung, 1959b). In Jungian theory, individuals are to have access to archetypes through the unconscious mind. There are two types of the unconscious: the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious (Jung, 1960). The former is unique to each particular individual, whereas the latter is a deeper layer, which is according to Jung, the "true basis of the individual psyche" (Jung, 1960, p. 152). The collective unconscious carries in it a breadth of symbols, myths, and primordial images. "Psyche and matter are two different aspects of the same thing" stated Jung (1954, p. 57), articulating that archetypes are energetic living entities that are part of our psyches. "As far as the collective unconscious contents are concerned, we are dealing with archaic or, I would say, primordial

types, with universal images that have existed since the remotest times" (Jung, 1959b, p. 5). Pearson (1986) simplifies understanding of the archetypes by stating that "they are nothing more than deep structures in the psyche and in social systems" (p. 19).

Archetypes have been called imitations of the gods by Eliade (1971), whose work is closely compared to Jung's. Both agree that archetypes reside deep within the collective unconscious. This enables them to perpetuate themselves (Meadow, 1992). Eliade thought that what may be expressed in individuals as archetypal to possibly have been skewed or distorted from what the archetype first began as, whereas Jung saw what was being expressed as accurate to the original archetypal experience. Eliade (1971) sees historical remembrance as misconstruing what may be in the collective memory; he believed that this can influence what is remembered in the long term, instead of what may have happened and been true on energetic and archetypal levels. Jung saw collective memory as sedimenting the true meaning of an event, the archetypal meaning being what is exact and appropriate to the individual, and the situation (Meadow, 1992).

Archetypes are energetic entities (Jung, 1959b, 1959c). Jung explains that they are "unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes on the color from the individual consciousness in which it happens to

appear" (Jung, 1959b, p. 5). Jung wanted to make the distinction between an archetype and an archetypal idea, or image. An archetype is irrepresentable, but draws to it "certain themes and images" (Wehr, 1987, p. 52). Archetypal images, on the other hand, are the visualizations of an archetype, and carry much emotion, being the "human experiences and accompanying images that touch us most deeply" (Wehr, 1987, p. 52). Making the distinction is important, as it is discerning the difference between an energy, and an image of that energy. The behavior in an individual that is characteristic of an archetype would be the expression of that archetype through the particular psyche of that individual (Jung, 1959b). According to Wehr (1987), "a symbol can never be fully explained or understood rationally, which is why Jung preferred to amplify symbolic themes rather than pin them down with logic" (p. 55). To have an individual display behaviors that are related to an archetype may simply be a matter of invoking, or activating that archetype, bringing it to the conscious level from within that individual. This study aims to invoke characteristics of lover archetype in the co-participants, thus distinguishing between the activation of an archetype and an archetypal image being expressed is of the utmost importance.

Though Jung is credited with bringing archetypes into the realm of psychology, the idea of archetypes has been around since long before Jung's time (Bolen, 1984; Goldenberg, 1985; Meadow,

1992). Jung stated that the term archetype was in use at the time of St. Augustine, and was part of Platonic usage, synonymous with the Platonic "idea"; he also drew a parallel between an archetype and light, saying that an archetype is light that shines through individuals (Jung, 1959a). Jung's concept of archetypes follows the same ideas as platonic forms. Platonic forms were thought to be not of the physical world, but part of it, as entities that are transcendent (Goldenberg, 1985). It is important to know this in order to discern what is happening should an archetypal activation occur in a co-participant.

It was Jung's exploration of the stories and mythologies of various cultures that expanded his theories further away from Freud's view of the subconscious (Freud, 1953; Jung, 1954). In contradistinction to Freud, Jung sought to try to help people realize themselves and a greater reality through the use of archetypes, whereas Freud's theories centered on the different parts of the psyche, being the id, the ego, and the superego, and the relationship between them to explain human behavior (Comer, 2001). Jung also saw people largely in terms of their instincts, referring to them as patterns of instinctual behavior (1954). By this he meant that much of human behavior originates in the unconscious mind.

An archetype is also largely unconscious, and when it comes to the conscious level in an individual, it begins to take on a

more personal meaning and expression for the individual in which it is appearing (Jung, 1959b). Young-Eisendrath and Wiedmann (1987) add that archetypes are "the organizing cores of meaning for complexes whose specific content must be interpreted with regard to an individual's particular life experience in a particular culture" (p. 38). This can also provide one with a greater understanding of one's self, as well as more meaning in one's life specific to one's own cultural context. In gaining knowledge on archetypes, one can also gain a better understanding of a greater reality.

Archetypes not only tie people of different backgrounds and cultures together, but also people from different times. Information and experiences throughout human history comprise the content of the collective unconscious; it is a tie to all of our ancestors. Jung (1959b) explains that "there are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution" (p. 41). Furthermore, the archetypal myths and stories of various cultures are "first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul" (Jung, 1959b, p. 5).

Archetypes appear in folklore, stories and mythology, and are used by people to teach a concept, lesson, or value. For example, a story may contain a hero figure with which the individual listener or reader identifies, and with whom they might share a

dilemma. The hero, as well as the story itself, serves as an example to the individual. The hero's journey and struggle helps to expand the views of the individual, emotionally and psychologically (Bolen, 1984; Murdock, 1990), and furthermore encourages the "hero within" (Pearson, 1986, p. 14).

With his extensive study of ancient and current polytheistic traditions, however, some argued that Jung bordered on Paganism, the belief in the existence of numerous deities and supernatural entities. Due to his conceptions of archetypes as largely based on systems of mythology (inclusive of pagan and indigenous beliefs), Jung's theories were seen by many as controversial at the time of his first publications. Much of the controversy centered around a belief that his views were in conflict with not only Christianity but also much of Western thought (Burston, 1999). Nevertheless, theories and applications on archetypes have continued, in the fields of psychology and sometimes spirituality. Jung's theories express respect for Pagan and indigenous beliefs at a time when they were not widely respected (and in some places are still not respected), and in this manner, he may be seen as a man ahead of his time. This study utilizes archetypal theories in the psychological context and is open to the possibility of spiritual experiences for both the researcher and the co-participants.

Archetypes and Gender

Archetypes are images that can be applied to an individual's role in a group, to how the individual sees himself or herself in the world, and to how one can be defined by others. Some of the most basic archetypes stem from the concept of gender, from the constructs that are applied to being male and female, and thus leading to what is considered in any given culture to be masculine or feminine. According to Cashford (1998), "The difficulty of disentangling sex and gender (itself by definition impossible) is then compounded by the way that mythic images are concretized . . . by the way that images are abstracted from stories and generalized into principles" (p. 109).

Jung conceptualized the two genders of masculine and feminine, believing that whatever biological package one came in, one had a subconscious piece of the opposite sex inside (Jung, 1954). Jung did not make the distinction between biological sex and gender identity in his theories. Thus, a man had an *anima*, or subconscious feminine part, and a woman had an *animus*, a subconscious masculine part (Jung, 1954). In critiques of Jungian theory, many feminist Jungian analysts find Jung's work to be discriminatory against women. In describing female or feminine characteristics, they argue that Jung often relegates them to an inferior or negative position in comparison with male or masculine ones (Bolen, 1984; Dinnerstein, 1976; Goldenberg, 1976). Archetypal theory has been critiqued and revised by many others

since Jung's time, and as a theory it still has great value. With many of the revisions done by feminist-oriented Jungian analysts, the archetype of the Lover, especially in its female version, as Aphrodite (in the Western context) is an empowering feminine figure.

Feminist Critiques of Archetypal Theory

Feminism can provide a lens through which to look at Jungian psychology, to "unmask sexism and misogyny in society and in women's psyches" (Wehr, 1987, p. 126). Some of the first feminists to critique Jung's mind-body dichotomy were Goldenberg (1976), Dinnerstein (1976) and Griffin (1978). Goldenberg (1976) states that Jung's assertions lead her to rethink Freud's theory instead. She argues that in Jungian theory, the influence of the body over the formation of the mind is minuscule (Goldenberg, 1985). Coming from a feminist perspective, she says that it is best for feminist theory to reject the idea of the mind/body dichotomy because the body's role in cognition is ignored in this dichotomy (Goldenberg, 1976, 1985). Dinnerstein (1976) believes that "the hatred of the body is expressed in our hatred of women" (p. 58). The body, its needs, desires, and functions, has been devalued, seen as unimportant, inferior, and even as degraded. This includes not only sexuality, but aging and mortality, in which women are often made to be scapegoats (Dinnerstein, 1976). Furthermore, it is asserted that the oppression of women is linked to the abuse of

the environment, mother nature, as it were (Griffin, 1978). This is the ecofeminist argument, which is the social and political movement that draws parallels between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature, "with human and nonhuman life being entwined, the struggle for social justice for women and other people cannot be achieved apart from care for the earth's resources" (Enns, 2004, p. 162).

Social and political structures that are already in place during an individual's lifetime also have an influence on the development of his or her personality. These structures have just as much influence as Jung's conceptualization of psychological forces (Wehr, 1987). With many cultures around the world being patriarchal, meaning that they are societies in which the institutional power is held by males, their values strongly influence perceptions of sex and gender in the favor of males. Tannen (2007) calls patriarchal masculinity and femininity "masquerades in which both sexes adopt a role which covers over the ambivalence and anxiety of subjectivity and sexual identity" (p. 51). J. Butler (1990) supports this assertion, describing gendered behavior to be a set of performances that are repeated and conceal the true self.

The wounding suffered by people due to the patriarchal structure is internalized, in a phenomenon that Wehr (1987) calls "internalized oppression" (p. 19). This can create self-hating

thoughts and behavior (Young-Eisendrath, 1984), with women having a sense of being inadequate or deficient (Young-Eisendrath, 1986). Goldenberg (1985) calls this a disembodied way of thinking that moves towards the belittling of women and discrediting of physical life in general. Instead, she recommends shrinking away from the mind/body dichotomy (Goldenberg, 1976), and that both women and men need to do further research on how the body leads to higher intellectual activity, and thus give more support to physical life, proving how "physical life gives birth to thought" (1985, p. 64).

Numerous feminist authors have argued that there is an obvious gender bias within the current formulation of archetypes that further promotes a dualistic view about gender (Daly, 1978; Goldenberg, 1976; Lauter & Rupprecht, 1985; Romaniello, 1992; Tannen, 2007; Wehr, 1987). Jung (1959b) attributed to women the characteristics of passivity and inferiority, and claimed that that was why women "continually play the injured innocent" (p. 34). Thus, a capable woman does have a well-developed animus, but is still less than a man, because a man's masculinity is on a more conscious level. Jung viewed men as being superior, as they more clearly held the characteristic of rationality, despite the animus in women. Rationality and clarity of thought was valued and considered masculine, whereas intuition was seen as feminine and not as valued within the patriarchal paradigm (Meador, 1992;

Tannen, 2007; Wehr, 1987). He thought that women also held "magic authority" (Jung, 1959b, p. 82), and, therefore, women are assigned darker and mysterious qualities, such as intuition. One could become possessed by an archetype, stuck in acting out on its tendencies (Jung, 1954; Wehr, 1987). Furthermore, Jung thought that some women could become ruled by their animus, and thus would become dogmatic, volatile, irrational, and power driven (Bolen, 1984; Jung, 1959b; Young-Eisendrath, 1995).

One must make the distinction between anima and femininity not being the same thing. The anima is the unconscious female in males, and the femininity is culturally prescribed female-gendered behavior; this is especially important in preventing the projections from the animas of males onto real females (Wehr, 1985). Tannen (2007) asserts that masculine and feminine in an individual actually depends on how the unconscious archetypal images manifest within their psyche.

In order to function in Western culture a woman may have to take on more masculine attributes; she has to develop her animus more in order to be successful, especially on the professional front (Zanetti, 2002). What needs to be done, according to some authors, is that male privilege must be recognized; this would lead to men being liberated on some level, and would help them relate to and be more open to women and their experiences (Gill, 1992; Starhawk, 1992).

Efforts at Reconciliation

Many contemporary Jungian analysts have attempted to present the archetypes in a less sexist manner. Anima and animus have been redefined, and the archetypes themselves reevaluated in order to eliminate what may be deemed sexist. In their academic work, Lauter and Rupprecht (1985) called for greater emphasis on the individual's experience defined by the context in which he or she resides, and besides much of what people know is socially constructed, rather than based on the biology of males and females. Young-Eisendrath and Wiedmann (1987) explain that socially constructed differences in gender "present some typical themes across cultures, but these are not clearly enough established to allow the conclusion that there are specific archetypal differences between men and women" (p. 40). Sex is biological, humans being born as either male or female (with the exceptions of intersex, those individuals with genitalia that is neither fully male nor female, being between 1 in 1500 and 1 in 2000 births in the U.S.), whereas gender is acquired. There is the famous quote by de Beauvoir (1953) stating that "a woman is not born but made" (p. 267).

Although in Jung's definition the archetypes are universal and internal (1959b, 1959c), social construction must be taken into consideration as well. Wehr (1987) puts it succinctly in saying that "gender-linked archetypes can be seen as inner

representatives of socially sanctioned, seductive but [often] oppressive roles and behavior patterns" (p. 37). She equates assimilating and integrating archetypal images with "wrestling with the demons of a sexist culture" (Wehr, 1985, p. 37). Although not all archetypes fit neatly into the patriarchal paradigm, some of them pre-dating patriarchy, they may have threads of oppressive patriarchal constructs woven into them. To have the awareness of what is socially constructed, or rather what is sanctioned within the patriarchal paradigm can be a struggle, let alone to try to reconfigure, or eliminate those thoughts, ideas, and behaviors from one's personality.

To be aware of archetypes and social constructs may yield the most freedom to people in understanding themselves and it can offer them various alternatives in their choosing of who they want to be; this is a key concept for the purpose of this study. In this study, participants are made aware a particular archetype, are invited to engage with it, and if they choose to, can eventually integrate it into their personalities. Wehr (1985) goes on to say that if Jungian psychology can account for patriarchy, misogyny, and their relationships with both the individual and society, "we discover a useful description of our culture as it is experienced inwardly, and as it is reflected by the psyche in dreams, fantasies, and moods" (p. 37).

According to Meador (1992), to return to the archetypal feminine one must connect with the unconscious feminine and go through a re-initiation through the stages of female development. There is also a need to reconnect with what has been pushed underground, to reclaim the body, emotions, spirit and creativity (Murdock, 1990). When the body is seen as sacred and is treated as such, it becomes the vessel for life, for the Divine. This is especially true in goddess-based traditions (Murdock, 1990, p. 111).

The Archetype of the Lover

In ancient Greek mythology, the goddess of love Aphrodite had a consort named Eros; the later Greeks depicted him as her son (Bulfinch, 1979; Cotterell & Storm, 2007; Rose, 1958; Stone, 1990). Eros in Jungian and contemporary terms has come to mean love and life-force energy that runs through all living things (Moore & Gillette, 1990). Pearson (1991) goes on to say that Eros is "the passion that results when Soul and body are in accord" (p. 150). There are other forms of love as well, such as *agape*, or non-erotic, brotherly love (Moore & Gillette, 1990). *Philia* was friendship or love that included a broad range of types of love, such as lifelong friends, lovers, political and business contacts, parents and children, or members of the same tribe, religious group, or community (Aristotle & Irwin, 1999). The contemporary usage of the word *philia* is abnormal craving or attraction,

according to the American Psychological Association (VandenBos, 2007). The Jungian literature uses the word libido in association with the lover archetype, which has come to mean appetite for life, and not just sexual desire (Bolen, 1984; Moore & Gillette, 1990). The ancient Romans also used the Latin word *amour*, which meant the union of body and soul with another body and soul (Moore & Gillette, 1990).

Those that embody the lover archetype are vibrant, passionate, and sensitive, and are not ashamed of their sensuality (Bolen, 1984, 1989; Moore & Gillette, 1990, Pearson, 1991). In her detailed book on archetypes, Pearson (1991) describes the lover as one who follows one's bliss, be it a call to love a person, idea, or cause. The mature lover has committed to what it is he or she loves, and has come to a place of "radical self-acceptance, giving birth to the Self and connecting the personal with the transpersonal, and the individual with the collective" (Pearson, 1991, p. 157). "'I have come to bring you life, so that you might have it more abundantly' says the Lover" (Moore & Gillette, 1990, p. 140). It is love that gives everything a golden glow and illuminates us, bringing life and charisma to what we do (Bolen, 1984; Pearson, 1991; Spretnak, 1981). It is the primal energy that makes us alive (Bolen, 1984; Moore & Gillette, 1990). The lover "invites us to embrace our natural instincts and make peace with them" (Bonheim, 1997, p. 91).

Although other archetypes and deities give and receive love, the lover embodies it, lives and exemplifies it in the mythological stories, and is its archetypal representation. The lover archetype has been criticized by some feminists as expressing the need for power over one's partner rather than the choosing of an egalitarian approach. This argument has risen to criticize the patriarchal version of the lover that is featured in the Mythopoetic Men's Movement; it depicts the lover as being manipulative, seductive, and emotionally needy, which demonizes the feminine (Clatterbaugh, 1995).

Numerous feminists have thought that using goddess images, especially those that are pre-patriarchal, can be inspiring, helpful, and empowering to women, because they supply images of the Divine that are female, affirming the female and feminine as Divine; they show that feminine characteristics are also sacred and should be honored; and show strength and power in femininity, without needing to rely on masculine for such strength (Bolen, 1984; Gadon, 1989; Spretnak, 1981; Stone, 1990; Wehr, 1987; Woodman, 1985). Rowland (2002) notes that the "metaphysical feminine principle is mapped onto pre-Christian mythologies in order to seek out non-patriarchal narratives and ways of thinking" (p. 61). An example would be one offered by well-known religious and women's studies writer and lecturer, Carol Christ. She calls Aphrodite's temple on the Mediterranean island of Lesbos her

spiritual home, the place to which she felt called by Aphrodite in order to work on unfolding her sexuality (Christ, 1987). Aphrodite was a primary deity on Lesbos, with many temples dedicated to Her, where priestesses were devoted to working with those who came to them for guidance and healing, much of which had to do with issues of sexuality. In Carol Christ's case, it is still a place for guidance and healing for one's sexuality.

In Bolen's popular work, *Goddesses in EveryWoman* (1984), female deities from the Greek pantheon are presented as archetypes that are within each woman. Deities are divided into three sections: virgin goddesses, that are independent; vulnerable goddesses, that are relationship oriented and emotionally vulnerable; and alchemical goddesses, representing change and creation. Aphrodite is the one and only goddess in the alchemical goddess category. This is notable since she is constantly in relationship with others and represents creation and change, but she is also a virgin, being "one-unto-herself" (Baring & Cashford, 1991) and living for herself (Bolen, 1984; Spretnak, 1981; Walderr, 1995). The virgin is also autonomous. The archetypal virgin is to "have the courage to Be and the flexibility to be always Becoming" (Woodman, 1985, p. 78). Woodman explains that this is the process of discovering one's self, coming from a place of feeling more than of thinking, and allowing one to be who one is rather than defined by what one does (1985, p. 79). Within the

contemporary patriarchal structure, to be a lover means to be dependent, which is expressed as social and economic dependence, emotional codependence, and often includes low self-esteem and negative self-image; this is not so for the pre-patriarchal virgin, who has been repressed, but can be recalled to aid women to reclaim their autonomy, equality, and self-worth (Tannen, 2007).

The archetype of the lover is symbolic of what Bolen (1984) calls "Aphrodite consciousness" (p. 226), which is both focused and receptive. This type of consciousness is made analogous to limelight, which illuminates, enhances and dramatizes. It is comparable to being in love, a state in which everything is intensified, magnified, and fascinating. It is with rapt attention, passion, and devotion that the lover approaches.

History of the European-American Love Goddess

The goddess Aphrodite is originally of Eastern origins. She is believed to be based on the lover aspect of the Middle Eastern goddess Astarte (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Spretnak, 1981; Stone, 1990). As Astarte, a goddess in ancient Israel, Canaan, Mesopotamia, and Cyprus (also known as Asherah among the Israelites, Isis in Egypt, Ishtar in Babylon, and Inanna in Sumer, comparable to Freya in Nordic regions, and Ostara in Germanic regions) she was the great mother goddess, holding all aspects of being a woman, representing, in fact, both feminine and masculine

as well (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Dever, 2005; Gadon, 1989; Stone, 1990). With the onset of patriarchy, Astarte was compartmentalized into different forms, and worshipped as earth mother, as warrior, as virgin, as lover, and as dark mother, with different names for each (Cotterell & Storm, 2007; Dever, 2005; Stone, 1990). In the Hebrew Bible, it spoke of the worship of Astarte being forbidden in ancient Israel as patriarchal structures gained power (Dever, 2005). As the Lover, she became Aphrodite (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Cotterell & Storm, 2007; Dever, 2005; Spretnak, 1981; Stone 1990). She was assimilated into the Greek pantheon, and was revered as one of the Greeks' most powerful deities (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Stone, 1990). Aphrodite is the goddess of love, beauty, sexuality, and the arts. In mythology, she is described as "golden," giving life and warmth to everything and everyone around her (Hillman, 1980; Kerenyi, 1979; Kinsley, 1989; Mann & Lyle, 1995).

Aphrodite is very much her own woman, and unlike the other goddesses in the mythology who were raped, abducted, or seduced, she chose her lovers and lived life on her own terms. These were rights not granted to the women of ancient Greece at the time, with the exception of the women of the city-state of Sparta who had more freedom, with the right to inherit property, the right to divorce, and had more social mobility (Durant, 1966; Martin, 1996). In the mythology, Aphrodite was depicted as sexually

assertive, receptive, and was an autonomous figure. The love goddess is an "unbridled erotic force of nature" that represents the full power and range of love (L. Teish, personal communication, April 20, 2008). She is a virgin goddess in the sense that she is one-unto-herself, obviously not abstaining from sex, but remaining independent (Spretnak, 1981). With the coming of spring in Ancient Greece, much like the rituals acted out for Persephone, goddess of the spring and queen of the underworld, rituals were enacted that symbolized Aphrodite's renewal of her virginity, which was important to show that she was fertile and able to sustain new life (Baring & Cashford, 1991). Thus, Aphrodite is radiant, life giving, and is renewed to create and spread fertility each year, ensuring new growth and reproduction amongst plants, animals, and human beings (Downing, 1988; Walderr, 1995).

What is most essential about Aphrodite, more so than her liaisons with others, is her love for herself. As the goddess of love, she represents not just the stereotypical love which is romantic or sexual, but love in all its forms. Compassion, empathic understanding, and friendship, as well as lust, sex, and romantic love are all expressions of love, and therefore are also expressions of Aphrodite (Bolen 1984). Aphrodite as an archetype represents love of others, love of life, and love of self; and love in all its forms is divine, as is she. According to Mascetti

(1990), to feel the touch of the goddess of love "for sensual enjoyment transforms her attitude towards herself, towards others, and life in general" (p. 81). She goes on to say that "as the Goddess of Love, she is firstly in love with herself" (1990, p. 82) taking excellent care of herself by being well-groomed, dressed, and adorned, smiling, and having a fluidity to her movements (Bolen, 1984). Addressing Aphrodite, Downing (1988) says "warmth and truth that is your magic, a magic that enhances natural beauty." (p. 46). According to Bonheim (1997) Aphrodite's own love for herself "invites us to embrace our natural instincts and make peace with them" (p. 91). This archetype can be activated by learning to enjoy pleasure, feeling through one's body, and alerting one's senses (Bolen, 1984; Young-Eisendrath, 1999).

Aphrodite in Myth

Aphrodite brings forth spiritual growth and psychological development, bringing people new challenges, giving them new experiences, causing new stirrings and awakenings. In the story of Psyche, a mortal princess who boasted that she was as beautiful as Aphrodite, was not yet in her fullness and power as an adult woman. Eros, Aphrodite's son, fell in love with Psyche, and married her, only to leave her when he felt that he could not trust her. To get him back, Psyche went to Aphrodite, who assigned her difficult tasks, in which she learned the lessons of knowing herself, exercising discernment, having power and still being

compassionate, and standing up for herself. It was after these trials that Psyche went to live on Mount Olympus as Eros' wife (Bolen, 1984; Cotterell & Storm, 2007). This is an example of the experience and pursuit of love forcing someone to learn and grow beyond what they already know (Bolen, 1984; Goodrich, 1989). Aphrodite was also worshipped in a male form, named Aphroditus, on Cyprus (Kerenyi, 1979). Indeed, Aphrodite's male counterpart, Eros, her consort, was made into her son by the later Greeks and, finally, Cupid by the Romans (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Stone, 1990).

Many spiritual traditions have similar symbols that represent lover deities. Use of these symbols and objects is a way to engage people in working with the deity. Sweets are typically associated with the lover; for example, cakes were made in honor of Astarte/Asherah (Dever, 2005). Honey is often used as an offering to Aphrodite, Astarte, and Oshun, all of them being faces of the lover (Jobes, 1962; Mann & Lyle, 1995; Stone, 1990; Teish, 1985). The eating of sweets is symbolic of being indulgent; humans eat for the sake of nutrition, but the archetypal Lover eats for more than that: the lover eats for the sake of pleasure (Mann & Lyle, 1995; Teish, 1985). The love goddesses are also attracted to jewelry and ornamentation, representing luxury, pleasure, lust, and sensuality (Bolen, 1984; Bonheim, 1997; Teish, 1985); the

mainstream media usually associates jewelry and other luxury items with love in order to market such goods.

Water is a common symbol for the lover archetype, representing feeling, emotion, and the unconscious. The ocean is the place of creation, where life began (Teish, 1985). Aphrodite was born from the ocean, as was Lakshmi of the Hindu pantheon (Bonheim, 1997; Cotterell & Storm, 2007; Gimbutas, 1974). Asherah, the Hebrew goddess linked to Astarte/Aphrodite was called "Lady of the Sea" (Bonheim, 1997; Dever, 2005). Isis of ancient Egypt was said to have been "born in all the wetness" (p. 91). Oshun of Nigeria is the goddess of rivers and streams, "sweet water" as it were, being water that is potable (Bonheim, 1997; Teish, 1985). Water is essential to the lover, reminding us that beauty is essential to the soul as water is to the body (Bonheim, 1997). The mirror is sacred to Aphrodite, as well as Oshun and other lover deities, as it is a tool for self-reflection (Jobes, 1962; Teish, 1985).

A potential way to counter negative body image is to activate images and concepts that exist through the archetype of the Lover in order to help females appreciate and enjoy themselves more, thus helping them reevaluate and transform their self-image. Historically, to have Aphrodite represent the lover archetype as the catalyst for the co-participants, therefore, seems appropriate (Bolen 1984; Kerenyi, 1951).

From Symbols of the Goddess to Interventions

The mirror is a symbol of the deity and archetype of the lover, and is found in the mythologies of several goddesses. The love goddess' use of the mirror does not indicate vanity but self-awareness according to Luisah Teish (personal communication, May 30, 2005). According to the *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (de Vries, 1984), mirrors reflect the truth of what is, representing self-knowledge. With the lover being the archetype that is relational, the mirror is an object that reflects who a person is back to them; one has to know one's self if one is going to be in relationship with others. Without self-care and self-awareness, one has nothing to give anyone else, which is what makes the mirror so important.

In Ancient Greece, the power of Aphrodite was invoked by having a vision of oneself in her mirror of transformation (Mascetti, 1990). The Japanese goddess of the sun, Amaterasu Omikami, was coaxed out of a cave with the sight of her own reflection in a mirror and, thus, the light of the sun was restored to the world (Cotterell & Storm, 2007; Jobes, 1962). The story of Amaterasu Omikami symbolizes the importance of self-awareness, self-love, and metaphorically letting one's light shine in the world. Mirrors have been long regarded as soul catchers or doorways into other dimensions in a number of different traditions (Walker, 1988). There is one such myth about Dionysus' soul

becoming trapped in a mirror, indicating the importance of healthy self-awareness rather than leaning toward self-absorption (Jobes, 1962; Walker, 1983). The soul of Narcissus, an arrogant, self-serving, young man, was trapped in reflective water, providing us with a warning about the consequences of vanity (Walker, 1983).

As mirrors have been used as tools for self-awareness and self-reflection in the past and in mythology, the technique has also been administered in psychological research. In a dissertation study done at Rutgers University (Delinsky, 2005) a technique called mirror exposure was used with females who were assessed as having body-image disturbance, meaning that they had extreme weight and shape concerns. There were 45 participants, between the ages of 17 to 31; being 64% Caucasian, 16% Asian, 5% African American, and 7% Latina. This study took place at the university, located in New Jersey, where the participants were recruited from the student population and surrounding areas. The participants were asked to describe themselves from head-to-toe, then toe-to-head, while standing in front of a three-way mirror, as if describing themselves to a blind person. They were not allowed to use critical or unkind language, and were modeled an example by a therapist. In the following two sessions, they were to wear more form fitting clothes and critique fashion magazines, respectively. The participants were also required to keep a journal about their experiences.

The results were measured with several assessments, such as the Body Image Questionnaire, and Satisfaction With Body Parts Scale. The mirror exposure participates and the control group participants' results were calculated by doing a Repeated Measures Ancova; for the therapists involved in the study, the Repeated Measures Anova was done. The participants of this study showed improvement on all of the hypothesized improvements in body-image behaviors, body-image concerns, dieting, mood, and self-esteem (Delinsky, 2005). All of the improvements were further maintained at the follow-up, most participants having returned the follow-up questionnaire within 6 weeks of termination of the treatment program. The results suggest that Mirror Exposure is an effective treatment for women with body-image disturbance (Delinsky, 2005). This would also suggest a need for further research with other populations, such as with women suffering from eating disorders and women who are obese.

In another study done at the Westwood Institute for Anxiety Disorders, with those who had body dysmorphic disorder (Gorbis, 2004), crooked mirrors were used that would distort the reflection of the object it was showing. The 7 participants of the study were both male and female; more specific demographics were not included in the article. The participants had fifteen 90-minute therapy sessions. By facing an exaggerated image of themselves, the participants had to habituate themselves to it. In so doing, they

gained control of their anxiety and prevented fear-based responses to their internal self-images. Five out of the 7 participants had a significant decrease in their anxiety about their physical appearance. The small sample size, however, does not lend itself to making generalizations on this treatment as yet. Mirror exposure work is a new form of treatment for body image issues, which needs to be developed further, as it appears to hold great potential in the transformation of body-image.

Feminism, Queer Theory, and Social Constructionism

This study is open to a diversity of people and, with gender identities being likely to vary, there is the possibility that their gender identities may shift and change during the course of the study. What can be accounted for is biological sex; therefore, the co-participants will be referred to as females, according to their biological sex. In his book, Wittgenstein (1952) talks about meaning arising from the use of language in the local context, and not from universal definitions that are finite; this leads to the creation of knowledge. According to C. Butler (2004), therapists are not objective observers but part of the system that is operating within the client's life. What we say and how we say it has an effect on the social and political context around us. Therefore, choosing one's words carefully is of the utmost importance. It is due to these reasons that this researcher has chosen to use the term "female" to refer to the co-participants as

opposed to calling them "women." Sex refers to the biological aspects of being male and female, whereas gender refers to the psychological, social, and cultural characteristics and experiences that are assigned to certain sexes (Crooks & Baur, 2005; Enns, 2004).

Fausto-Sterling (2007), orienting her theory and research in biological perspectives, asserts that there are more than two biological sexes; from her assessment, there are five. She accounts for male and female, and comprises three more sexes from intersexual bodies. There are individuals who have one testis and one ovary, making them a true hermaphrodite, whom she calls *herms*. Fausto-Sterling names the male pseudohermaphrodites *merms*, in that they have male gonads and genitalia (but have some female characteristics). Those with female gonads and genitalia (but having some male characteristics) are called *ferms*. She acknowledges the complexity of each of these categories, in that there can be great variances in characteristics within each subgroup. Fausto-Sterling goes on to say that the inner life of these individuals has yet to be studied, especially in terms of what their attractions and repulsions are. Their biology may be accounted for by science, but their gender identity and sexual orientation are other categories entirely.

The terms "men" and "women" are social constructs. The social construction model emphasizes how social influences are integrated

between and within persons and in communities of persons (Enns, 2004). Banaji (1993) sees social constructionism as psychology's way of holding postmodernism. Shawver (1996) explains postmodernism as having one part that deconstructs old ways of thinking, and a constructive part that allows for new ways of thinking. Postmodernism acknowledges the socially constructed nature of reality and the interests that are served by these constructions (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002; Layton, 1998). Feminism and postmodernism can be paired together in an attempt to deconstruct gender categorizations and end oppression, by working with identity politics; this can be done by using consciously chosen language and acknowledging multiple perspectives (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002; Frasier & Nicholson, 1990; Herbold, 1995).

The social construction model is widely held as the dominant perspective in feminist psychology in academia at this time (Enns, 2004; Gergen, 2001). Cosgrove and McHugh (2002) believe that "situating feminist research within the postmodern creates a space for women to speak about their gendered experience" (p. 23). The assumption is that "one does not have gender, one does gender" (Allan & Baber, 1992, p. 13).

Within feminist psychology, social constructionism asserts that meanings vary for events and experiences, as they can be observed from various perspectives (Enns, 2004). Gender is shaped by multiple levels of interaction (2004, p. 277). Consciousness

itself is said to be "something produced rather than the source of ideas about the social world" (Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn, Walkerdine, 1998, p. 8). The language that is used is also of utmost importance in that it constitutes reality rather than merely describing it (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002; Layton, 1998; Shawver, 1996). "The power to name reality is the power that gives rise to oppression" (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002, p. 26).

The way that gender is viewed in postmodernism and social constructionism has also been influenced by queer theory (Duggan, 2006; Lax, 1992). It reexamines assumptions about the connections between gender and sexuality, as well as looking closely at experiences of those that are marginalized due to sexual orientation and/or gender (Enns, 2004). According to C. Butler (2004): "In queer theory terms, psychology may thus be described as being involved in the production of knowledges that have served to reinforce the normalizing of heterosexuality and gender dichotomy and the oppression of other practices and identities" (p. 29). Layton (1998) supports this concept in saying that categorization constricts identities in a multitude of ways, which perpetuates patriarchal dominance and heteronormativity. Therapists and researchers can choose not to reinforce heteronormativity and allow for what is in the room in terms of sex and gender be there, and be seen from a multitude of perspectives.

According to Gabbard and Wilkinson (1996) and Harris (1991), the individual is a multifaceted being and, therefore, can have varied gender identifications and have associations with each of those identifications. There are multiple parts that formulate one's identity, such as race, gender, and social class, that interact to create who one is, which is called *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 2005). Intersectionality invites dialogue about identity politics and the construction of group politics with the differences between people being accounted for (Crenshaw, 2005, p. 298).

Harris (1991) explains gender fluidity by saying that "gender may in some contexts be thick and reified, as plausibly real as anything in our character. At other moments, gender may seem porous and insubstantial" (p. 212). Third-wave feminism accounts for complex identities, and gender fluidity (Enns, 2004; Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003; Hernandez & Rehman, 2002; Heywood & Drake, 1997). It shares with postmodernism a framework for questioning assumptions, and offers principles on issues of power and diversity (Allan & Baber, 1992; Enns, 2004). It emphasizes organizing activism across lines of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and culture, as well as tackling global issues in feminism (Enns, 2004; Heywood & Drake, 1997). This movement also includes theorists and researchers who view body-image and freedom from society's unrealistic ideals of beauty to be one of

third-wave feminism's major tasks (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Enns, 2004; Hernandez & Rehman, 2002; Rubin & Nemeroff, 2001). "Body-image may be a pivotal issue: the common struggle that mobilizes the current feminist generation" (Richards, 1998, p. 196).

Feminist Approach to Running a Group

Women and men have congregated throughout human history, coming together as family, and community, to do ritual (Eliade, 1971). In the last 3 decades for women to come together as support for each other in a therapeutic setting has been viewed as a pertinent part of a woman's process (R. Brody, 1987; Kees & Leech, 2004). According to research, groups allow individuals to have witnesses, participants, and other people to share with, breaking down isolation, and giving them a place to experience power over personal situations (C. M. Brody, 1985; S. Butler & Wintram, 1991; Geertsma & Cummings, 2004; Neu, 1995). Yalom (1995), a psychotherapist and researcher, emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships, and the emotional experience of the individual in a group, as well as seeing the group as a social microcosm.

In her article on feminist rituals, Neu (1995) says that women "seek to be part of a community that conducts rituals that embraces our sense of ourselves as spiritual" (p. 186). Spirituality groups provide women with a community to share their

personal spiritual journey and be validated. According to Miller (1991) and Surrey (1991) there is a reclaiming of one of women's particular sources of strength that occurs in group situations. Woodman (1980) explains feminine mysteries from past cultures in which women had a bond, "a bond that made them proud to be part of the life-stream that flowed through them" (p. 101), which she sees as being reestablished in our contemporary culture. The commitment to empower others, while enhancing one's own power is called *mutual empowerment*. Neu (1995) sees this as the essence of feminist spirit, including respect for nature, equality of human beings, and acceptance of the body. Kimmel and Kazanis (1995) support this notion by adding that "women's groups function as a circle around the fire that allow women to reconnect with their original goodness . . . providing ritual, multivocal symbols, the finding of the voice, and telling stories" (p. 215). Group members are able to measure their own growth by comparing themselves to other group members, which may reinforce what is being learned and modeled within the group (C. M. Brody, 1985). Women's spirituality groups give women not only a sense of community, but personal empowerment as well.

For a group to have a leader that is a participant as well is a group model that has been found to be effective, and contributes positively to group process work (C. M. Brody, 1985), and has been effectively implemented in group and couples therapy, as well as

in feminist support groups, and spirituality groups (C. M. Brody, 1985; Neu, 1995). Having the therapist lead and be a participant modeling behavior to the other participants can lead to the participants' having feedback that is more engaging, as opposed to comments from a leader with a more detached style (Ables & Brandsma, 1977). It can also lead to offering new behavior traits (Lieberman, Yalom, & Miles, 1973), and reflecting back behaviors to the participants (Collett, 1983).

There being many kinds of client/therapist relationships that are non-hierarchical and nonsexist (Scher et al., 1987), a feminist therapist can have his or her pick of many approaches. If the facilitator/leader is authentic in his/her expression, and is willing to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences, then he/she is able to also better facilitate the client's therapeutic process, despite there being some personal risk taking for the therapist in doing so (C. M. Brody, 1980, 1984; Joliff & Horne, 1996; Kaslow, Cooper, & Linsenber, 1979). Another issue to be considered in self-disclosure for the therapist is that he or she must evaluate if sharing personal information is for the benefit of the client, or for the therapist (J. Schavrien, personal communication, May 26, 2009). C. M. Brody (1985) says that a "feminist therapist may make her values explicit . . . considering disclosure important for clients validating their own often accurate perceptions" (p. 90). The therapist is to model

competencies and self-respect, as well as being caring and understanding of the group member's processes (C. M. Brody, 1985). This helps to create a more egalitarian relationship between the leader and members, making it a group of experts instead of just one expert (R. Brody, 1987; Kees & Leech, 2004; Oakley, 1996). For the leader to be a participant as well adds to the experiences of all of those in the group, and "evens out" the power dynamics more closely (R. Brody, 1987; Oakley, 1996).

For group members, working through difficult feelings with other group members can bring more authenticity, strength, and validation (Billson & Disch, 1991). It is often a goal for many women in groups to not only share what their experience is, but also to end dependencies on others, as well as bring change to their sociopolitical environments (Rohrbaugh, 1979). The egalitarian structure of a feminist group could allow for more democratic ways of leadership to be learned and practiced (C. M. Brody, 1985; Kahn, 1981). It is important for the leader to balance out the participants in the group as well as establishing female authority (Martin & Shanahan, 1983).

It is also important in the feminist approach to appreciate different ways of knowing and being in group work (Goldberger, 1996). It was suggested by Hackett, Enns, and Zetzer (1992) for a feminist counselor to share with the group her feminist orientation, and not be overly concerned with the reactions of the

group members. They found that the students in their sample preferred the feminist approach to some forms of humanistic counseling (1992, p. 329).

In running a group it is imperative to have a well developed understanding about stereotypes, socialization, cultural differences, and an educated awareness of diversity (Kees & Leech, 2004). Attention should be called to gender stereotypes and socialization, and should be brought up by the leaders as well as members of the group, so that there can be sensitivity and education about them. The group can be used as a container to potentially mediate through the effects of stereotypes (Gottlieb, Burden, McCormick, & Nicarity, 1983; Schoenholtz-Read, 1996). The language used in the group can change, and interactions between group members can be better facilitated (L. S. Brown, 1984; Reed & Garvin, 1996). One concern for the therapist would be the possibility of the stereotypes and projections that would come her way due to her role as therapist (R. Brody, 1987). Self-disclosure and the realistic reactions of peers can help with challenging and breaking down stereotypes (Schoenholtz-Read, 1996).

It is important to acknowledge some of the differences in people's lives, the diverse backgrounds of each person creating a different reality for each of them inside and outside of the group (Espin, 1993; Goldenberger, 1996; Hertzberg, 1990; Olarte, 1996). In addressing and evaluating issues of stereotyping and

socialization, we acknowledge social construction, and in so doing we become social analysts and "ethical advocates" (Gergen, 1990, p. 474).

Conclusion

Introduction to group work processes that may provide space for adult females of the U.S. to reevaluate what is being portrayed to them as the standard of beauty may lead individuals to reevaluations of body-image standards. What is contemporarily being modeled in mass media is unrealistic and unhealthy (Cash, 1987, 1988; Gurari, et al., 2006; Wolf, 1991). For those who have body-image disturbance (Henry et al., 2006), as well as people who do not, taking more time to look in the mirror, to reevaluate their self-image, may yield some therapeutic benefits. Experimental designs have shown that to encourage people to challenge sociocultural standards can help to eradicate the negative effects of those standards (Stice, Mazotti, Weibel, & Agras, 2000; Strahan, Wilson, Cressman, & Buote, 2006). Activating Aphrodite, people may bring, from the unconscious, much of what has been buried underneath the conscious level; to awaken one's archetypal lover may aid in the cultivation of self-acceptance, and ultimately, self-love (Bolen, 1984; Moore & Gillette, 1990; Pearson, 1991).

Chapter 3: Research Method

Overview

In the field of psychology, Abraham Maslow (1971) has said that the further reaches of human experience can be explored by studying those individuals who have achieved greatest self-actualization. Intuitive inquiry "encourages the actualization of the researcher's capacity to envision creative responsibilities . . . for their participants and their own impressions," meaning that it allows for both the researcher and participants to realize and act upon their creative abilities (R. Anderson, 2004). In this method, the researcher is both a scientist as well as an artist, studying what the researcher feels called by; it is a search for new understandings through focused attention on the researcher's passion (R. Anderson, 2004). Intuitive inquiry is transpersonal. It allows for the inclusion of spirit, in addition to the mind and body.

Intuitive inquiry is intended to be an epistemology of both the heart and intellect joined in a hermeneutic process of interpretation (R. Anderson, 2004). It brings together the personal, the political, and the universal, drawing a complete circle (Braud & Anderson, 1998). It aims to bring more capacities of human awareness into conscious application in the social sciences (Braud & Anderson, 1998). Braud and Anderson elaborate:

This research method has a three-fold purpose: (1) to allow intersubjectivity of the researcher, participants, and anticipated audience to influence the gradual unfolding of the researcher's inquiry, (2) to assist the researcher in exploring thoroughly the landscape of a particular facet of human experience, and (3) to impart creatively the character of the experience without diminishing it in the telling. (p. 82)

R. Anderson (1998) developed this method of studying complex human experiences in order to offer doctoral students a qualitative approach that incorporates intuition, compassion, and support for research on topics that involve psycho-spiritual development. It is meant to be a way for researchers to explore what enthuses them, yet honor their life experiences in the process. The method invites the researcher to transform her or his understanding of the topic as well as their own lives (Esbjorn-Hargens & Anderson, 2006). For example, in one dissertation on walking the labyrinth, the researcher, Sholem (1999), stated that using intuitive inquiry provided structure for the creative processes in her study. Another dissertation, completed in 2000, used intuitive inquiry to study body-size concerns in adult females in an inquiry similar to this researcher's topic (Coleman, 2000). Another dissertation using intuitive inquiry was concerned with women who suffered from intimate partner abuse working toward a path of self-reclamation (Raphael, 1998). In it the researcher affirmed that she was allowed to utilize all of her own experiences and those of others in her study, as it was important

as part of her own learning and healing process. It also gave her new insights into the topic, asking questions of the participants that came up for her in her own journey for self-reclamation. It aided in the work with the participants as well, helping her to create a safe space for them as someone who had similar experiences as they had in an intimate relationship. As a researcher, Raphael had an advantage, as she had an insider's perspective (Raphael, 1998).

Intuitive inquiry was influenced by a number of other research methods, including heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), feminist theory and research (Nielson, 1990; Reinharz, 1992), focusing (Gendlin, 1978), liberation social movements (Boff, 1993; Gutierrez, 1990), and hermeneutics (Bruns, 1992; Husserl, 1989; Packer & Addison, 1989; Romanyshyn, 1991).

It should also be noted that intuitive inquiry is a feminist research methodology, and it is concerned with consciousness that is constructed, rather than the source of ideas about the social world that might be considered as innate (Henriques et al., 1998). Intuitive inquiry is concerned with language and the constructs through which information is presented (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002). It is important to take into account what the constructs are based upon, and from where they are coming (Frasier & Nicholson, 1990; Herbold, 1995; Layton, 1998). An example would be if information was being collected concerning women's liberation in Kuwait, the

information's source would be noted, to make explicit the perspectives represented. Was the information from organizations in Kuwait, or is it an outside source? Are the information sources coming from a perspective of allowing the women to speak for themselves, or are the organizations making up the information, or looking at it only from their own perspective? Are the organizations that the information is released from sympathetic toward the women of Kuwait, or are they opposed to them? Looking at the information, what perspectives, assumptions and ideas the information is based upon, and where it comes from is carefully examined and taken into account in intuitive inquiry. This can lead to the ability to discern through different sources of information, creating broader perspectives, and can lead one to be better informed. Questioning is part of third-wave feminism and social constructionism, in that it "provides a framework for organizing the multiple truths of women's lives" (Enns, 2004, p. 278).

The Cycles of Intuitive Inquiry

In *Intuitive Inquiry*, the research includes five cycles of interpretation (R. Anderson, 2004). The first cycle begins with the topic is being selected by an image or text that grabs the attention of the researcher. The second cycle is to develop the preliminary lenses, in which the researcher brings out the values and assumptions about the topic before collecting the research

data. Lenses refer to the researcher's perspective which is why this step is usually done during or immediately after the researcher has read and evaluated previous research through the writing of a review of theoretical and research literature.

R. Anderson (2004) has noted that this step has been commended on by other researchers for being realistic and honest in its approach.

The third cycle is to collect the data and prepare the summary reports in the most descriptive manner possible. The researcher is to summarize the data using conventional thematic content analysis, descriptive summaries, or portraits (Moustakas, 1990). The fourth cycle is to transform and refine the lenses, taking what was developed in cycle two, and expanding and fine-tuning the pre-understandings. The experiences of the participants is added, and the researcher's summaries that were done in cycle three are represented (R. Anderson, 2004). The fifth and final cycle is to integrate the findings, as if drawing a larger hermeneutic circle around the hermeneutic circle that was already drawn, by taking in all considerations about the study. The intuitive researcher must evaluate what he or she has learned, and what is felt as part of the experience as well (R. Anderson, 2004).

Some of the challenges of the method are that the intuitive researcher must be rigorously subjective, and tell the truth no

matter what (R. Anderson, 2004). Circularity is something to be avoided, in that the researcher must not be circling around his/her own ideology, but be open to other information and data that may even contradict his/her own assumptions and values (R. Anderson, 2004). Being aware of trickstering, or things that happen unexpectedly that bring new insight and understanding is something to be watched for; auspicious bewilderment has also been known to happen, meaning that confusion, contradictions, and nuances that may occur in the data may lead to new insights as well, despite the frustration it may cause due to the additional time and work it may take (R. Anderson, 2004). Maintaining a process-oriented and inclusive perspective is important as well, acknowledging that reality is not objective but is constructed; our understanding of the world around us is subjective, depending on how we see and interpret things, depending very much on our physiology, personality, history, and culture (R. Anderson, 2000). Writing with one's own voice, writing with compassion and expressing feelings and experiences will help to not only engage the reader but also allow for sympathetic resonance (R. Anderson, 2004). Intuitive Inquiry favors the particular and the personal, valuing the researcher's unique experience and interpretations (R. Anderson, 2004). Imagining possibilities is also part of the process; possibilities that are "implicit in the data, especially of subtle and complex human phenomena . . . in this sense,

intuitive inquiry is both practical and visionary" (R. Anderson, 2004, p. 330). R. Anderson (2004), furthermore, describes this research method by equating it with chasing a moving target. In using this method, the researcher risks personal change and transformation; with each cycle, the researcher gains not only new information, but a fresher perspective, and it manifests on a personal level as well as on an academic one (R. Anderson, 2000).

Cycle 1: Clarifying the Research Topic

In selecting the topic of research, it is the belief of this researcher that the topic chooses the researcher rather than the other way around. According to R. Anderson (2004), the research begins with the selection of an image or text that repeatedly attracts the researcher. This is followed by careful thought, reflection, and meditation. Creative expression methods, such as dream work and art, can also be part of the process. The topic is slowly developed into a researchable inquiry. It is to be clear, researchable, and promising (2004, p. 317).

Cycle 2: Developing the Preliminary Lenses

In this cycle, the researcher asserts her assumptions and beliefs that pertain to the research. As designed by R. Anderson (2004), this step is commended for its honesty, as it acknowledges the researcher's perspective and possible biases. This is an alternative to claiming that the researcher is simply neutral and unbiased, without his or her views influencing the research. The

researcher is to contemplate and loosely organize a list of assumptions and from that create lenses, meaning the ideas and values that the researcher holds about the topic and the research. It "allows the circle of understanding to expand beyond the researcher's projections (in the positive sense) by spiraling in the experiences of others" (R. Anderson, 2000, p. 37).

It is at this stage that this researcher created a list of 14 preliminary lenses, upon the recommendation of R. Anderson (2004). The list had been created from the information thus far researched and this researcher's own experiences and held beliefs. This list of lenses was updated before data collection begins in Cycle 3.

Preliminary lenses.

1. Adult females are subject to the mass media's promotion of unhealthy and unrealistic standards of beauty, which negatively affects their self-image.
2. Third-wave feminism is the sociopolitical orientation of this researcher, and, therefore, it is the perspective through which data will be seen and interpreted.
3. Engaging in activities that are presented in a body-positive space will help to create self-acceptance for the co-participants' body images.
4. Having a variety of images to work with in terms of body types will be validating for the co-participants.
5. Having a variety of images to work with from a number of

- different cultural and ethnic backgrounds will be validating for the co-participants.
6. Insecurities around self-image are likely to arise within each of the co-participants as they work with the materials presented in the experiential process.
 7. Previously held beliefs about appearance, self-image, and sociocultural standards of beauty will be questioned and challenged by the co-participants.
 8. Issues around eating habits and food choices will arise during the experiential process due to the various foods offered in the sessions.
 9. Co-participants will be a supportive presence for each other for the duration of the experiential process.
 10. Given the material presented and the self-work that will be initiated in the course of the experiential process, using the Lover archetype may lead to shifts in the gender identities of the co-participants.
 11. To activate the lover archetype in the co-participants will bring self-love and body-positive thoughts and feelings to the conscious level of the co-participants.
 12. The activities performed as part of the intervention will aid in cultivating a more sensual, or sensation-based orientation in the co-participants.
 13. With the self-work that the co-participants will be

doing, there may be shifts in their self-images.

14. The Divine presence of the Love Goddess and God will be part of the space during the course of the intervention. The Love Goddess and the God are real archetypal forces that can be activated and brought to the conscious level.

Cycle 3: Collecting and Summarizing the Data

In Cycle 3 the researcher collects data and prepares summary reports (R. Anderson, 2004). There is minimal interpretation at this stage, and the reports are to be as detailed as possible. The target populations are identified and recruited. The researcher organizes the data using thematic analysis, descriptive summaries, or portraits (R. Anderson, 2004; Moustakas, 1990). This researcher created narrative portraits of the co-participants from the data collected through this study. Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) define a narrative:

If one defines a narrative as a story with a beginning, middle, and end that reveals someone's experiences, narratives take many forms, are told in many settings, before many audiences, and with various degrees of connection to actual events or persons. Thus themes, principal metaphors, definitions of narrative, defining structures of stories (beginning, middle, end), and conclusions are often defined poetically and artistically and are quite context bound.

The idea that narratives can be very context bound is also supported by Atkinson (1990), and Potter and Wetherell (1987). According to Riessman (1993), narrative analysis can be very intuitive, using terms that are defined by the researcher. Manning

and Cullum-Swan (1994) add that the perspective of the teller is shared, rather than the perspective of society.

Participants. Co-participants for this study were adult females, between the ages of 26 and 39, that are from this area (Silicon Valley), and are graduate students in holistically based psychology programs at a graduate school in the Bay Area, or are in some way affiliated with this school. Fliers were posted around the school, in the student lounge and library, to advertise for research participants, as well as distributed through e-mail (see Appendix C). For this qualitative research method, it was decided to have between 8 and 10 co-participants, instead of the usual 12 participants required for most qualitative methods. With fewer co-participants, the study would be richer, and deeper in its quality. This study included 9 co-participants, in addition to the researcher (Braud & Anderson, 1998). There were no prerequisites in terms of ethnic background, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Demographic information was collected upon the admittance of the co-participants in regard to their racial and ethnic background, biological sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, and education level for the sake of monitoring the diversity within the study.

As participants were being recruited, it was noted that most of the females that responded were of color; it took more effort

to recruit participants of Caucasian heritage. Most of the co-participants were recruited within 2 days from one e-mail that was sent out. Within 2 more weeks there were more than enough participants, and as soon as this researcher was given permission to begin research, the study was launched, after having done a pilot study.

Potential co-participants were also asked questions regarding their psychological well-being to determine their ability to fully participate in the study; those with a history of mental illness or eating pathology were not eligible to participate due to the nature of some of the material (see Appendix B).

All participants were required to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). The nature of the exploration of body image has risks such as emotional distress, anxiety, and depression (Delinsky, 2005). Should the co-participants have experienced a high level of anxiety or distress after a session, this researcher was willing to spend time with the co-participant until she felt well enough to take her leave. Thankfully, this did not occur, and the only occasion in which this researcher stayed late was to share with a co-participant the proper way to do eye makeup and pencil on one's eyebrows. If a co-participant expressed feelings of anxiety or distress, this researcher suggested the option of seeing a therapist as well as reconsidering her involvement in the study. This occurred with one co-participant,

in which she considered leaving the experiential process due to her anxiety during the body mapping session, but she chose to stay. She also intended to take her body map to share with her therapist. If the experiences became too difficult or distressing for a co-participant, she could excuse herself from the study, and could also terminate her involvement at any time, without penalty of relationship with the researcher being affected. This researcher was a supportive presence for co-participants during the study, but did not take on the responsibilities of a therapist, especially if a co-participant needed the help and support of a clinician. Though therapist referrals were offered to co-participants for therapists should they need them, as a result of this study, none were requested.

A second consent form was created and signed by those co-participants that allowed their photographs to be taken during the third session (see Appendix O). The taking of photographs was an organic part of the research process. The researcher brought a camera and allowed the co-participants the choice to have their photographs taken, or else refuse their consent. The photographs featured in the dissertation are all consensual.

Materials from the study were stored within the secure confines of this researcher's home. Confidentiality is expected as part of the study, between the researcher and co-participants, as well as among the co-participants. Confidentiality was part of

consenting to the study, and was emphasized by the researcher to the co-participants throughout the duration of the study. Confidentiality was clearly defined and stated to the co-participants at the beginning of each session; it was defined as keeping the information shared concerning other co-participant's processes within the study. One may share one's own personal process with others, but not disclose information about other co-participants processes, not even by using a pseudonym. The real names of the co-participants are not used, but rather fictitious names of the co-participants own choosing have been used to protect their identities; some of the co-participants decided to take names of goddesses as their pseudonym.

The co-participants had access to the results of the study upon its conclusion, if they wished to review them. Each co-participant was given the results that came from her engagement in the study (from that specific co-participant only), as well as from the discussion of the study as a research summary. An e-mail copy of the dissertation was sent to the co-participant if it was requested.

Procedure. The experiential processes in this research included four sessions with the co-participants, with two groups of females each week, one on Tuesday evenings and one on Saturday evenings, with 4 and 5 females in each group respectively. Though the sessions were scheduled to be 2 hours in duration, the

sessions typically went overtime, as the co-participants had much to share. Although the co-participants were not required to stay past the amount of time that they had committed to, almost all of them stayed until the session was brought to a close after everyone had presented and shared their experience.

The co-participants were given a brief summary of the purpose of this study in the first session. There was an altar set up in the front of the room of the love goddess, featuring three statues and numerous cards with names of this goddess featured from among many different traditions. One of the main names and faces that was used for the purposes of this study was the name and face of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love (Venus of the Roman pantheon), since that is the name and face of the love goddess most widely known in Western, more specifically North American cultures. Her statue was white, done in classic Greco-Roman style, with a semi-nude, curvy woman standing next to a small, ionic-style pillar, with a small bowl of water at her feet. Another statue was of Astarte, the Middle Eastern face of the love goddess, the statue done in the image of a famous carving of Astarte in her fertility aspect, with wheat sheaves in both of her hands. This statue depicts a very voluptuous woman with large, bare breasts, and wide hips. She is the color of wheat as well, a light golden brown. The statue of Oshun was of a very dark-skinned and long-limbed, slender woman. She is smiling with her eyes

closed, running her hand over her other arm, a water jug at her side. This statue yielded the most appreciation from the co-participants, being the only one that received comments.

Each session focused on a particular activity that is affiliated with the love goddess, and was tailored to invoke this archetype. The sessions were to be 2 hours in duration. Co-participants were told the format for each particular session, and allowed to do their process work within the boundaries of that time frame. However, the sessions often went overtime, as the co-participants were very thorough in what they shared, and, though I attempted to regulate time for the sake of respecting the time commitments that had been made, the co-participants took longer to complete their processes. With few exceptions, all of the group stayed until everyone had completed what they were sharing. The four sessions including the exit interview made the number of hours spent by a co-participant in the study to be 13 hours at maximum.

Each session included a brief lecture on the activity for that session and its relatedness to the lover archetype being worked with for that week. Each activity was designed to engage with the archetype of the lover on a new level. All five senses were to be engaged in the course of the study. The first session involved making a collage. Fashion magazines aimed at female audiences were provided as material to cut images from, primarily

Vogue, Vanity Fair, People, US, InStyle, Cosmopolitan, and Oprah. The co-participants were given the open-ended question "What is beauty?" and were asked to put together their personal collages as an answer to that question. The collage was a creative project to engage the co-participants in a creative way to think about their own personal views on beauty and the mass media's portrayals of it. This researcher observed the collage projects to see what came up in the process for the co-participants, and to observe what images they choose as representing beauty, as well as engaged in my own collage making project. There was rich discussion of the collages in the large group afterward.

The second session focused on body image, specifically on size, shape, and body parts. The co-participants were asked to pair up with another co-participant to take turns lying down on a large piece of paper and trace an outline of one another's bodies. They directly wrote on to their body maps their thoughts and feelings about their body parts; for example, writing onto where their stomach is supposed to be what they think of their stomach, such as "flabby," "toned," or "seat of my power." Issues around size, shape, and facial and bodily features were discussed among the paired co-participants. This researcher also partook in this activity and made and shared my body map, as the group was to share their map with the entire group.

In the third session, the focus was outward appearance and presentation. The activity was to have the co-participants dress up in various types of clothes, accessories, and cosmetics. This researcher provided most of the materials; the co-participants were also asked to bring things to swap and share, which they did. The wigs were provided by a co-participant, as were select items of clothing. This researcher observed how the co-participants chose to look, to see how it may or may not vary from their previous choices in appearance. This researcher did not participate in dressing up, but helped co-participants in their looks if they asked for assistance, and took photographs of them. The co-participants were again asked to get into the large group to talk about their experiences.

The fourth session involved dance and movement. Co-participants were to dance and move around, alone or with others according to their own comfort and pleasure. Movement can be used as not only a means of expression, but in a larger sense, can be an activity that can induce transformation (Stromsted, 1999). Music was played for them to move to, mostly provided by the researcher, but with some of it brought in by the co-participants. In this way, there was music of different genres and artists played, so that everyone's diverse tastes could be satisfied, and no one would be sitting down through most of the session with the complaint that it was music that they did not like, or could not

dance to. After the dancing, the co-participants had discussion around what their process was for that evening. Outside of the sessions, the co-participants were asked to spend at least 5 minutes a day in front of a mirror through the third and fourth week of the study, between the dress up session and the dance and movement session; this corresponded with some of the concepts of Mirror Exposure Therapy (Delinsky, 2005).

In the group sessions, following the creative expression work, co-participants shared their experiences in the large group. There were two groups, the first one of had 4 women, the second having 5 women, not including the researcher. It was important that the co-participants were able to share with the other co-participants about their process. This allowed for support and positive reinforcement among the co-participants, creating a safe space for those in the experiential process to do work on their body images. The sharing also allowed for multiple perspectives to be exhibited and new ideas to be explored. It was the expectation of this researcher that group sharing would provide support for the issues that arose around self-image, and how the Lover archetype was manifesting within each of them. The group was given between 30 to 45 minutes to talk.

After each activity in each of the sessions, the co-participants were given time to write down a reflection of the activity. These short papers were collected as data for analysis.

Each session also included eating, with various kinds of food being served, such as fruits, vegetables, bread, numerous rich desserts, and other snacks; the refreshments changed every week, for the sake of variety. The co-participants were asked to reflect on their choice in foods and include that as part of their journal entries for each session. These activities were from the lived experience of the researcher's own creative expression activities, ritual activities, and were of the researcher's own design.

Any questions or concerns that the co-participants had were addressed by the researcher during the sessions, before the activity, or they were discussed afterward. This researcher held this study and its potential as meaningful for the co-participants as well as the researcher. It was hoped to be powerful work with the goddess. It was this researcher's intention to have create a safe and comfortable space for the participants to experience what may arise for them during the course of the study.

Pilot Study. A pilot study was conducted to observe and reevaluate the research design of the experiential process. It involved the dress up activity, and had two volunteers that were acquaintances of the researcher. The session was 2 hours long, and after the discussion around body image after the activity, this researcher asked for feedback and suggestions. The feedback was very encouraging, and the suggestions that were made pertained to

the accessories and cosmetics, with requests for more variety of colors and styles.

Interviews. In addition to the four short papers that the co-participants turned in at the end of each session, there was an exit interview for each co-participants a day to a week after the conclusion of the experiential process. The interviews were typically between 30 minutes and 1 hour long, with two interviews running closer to 75 minutes. The interviews were held on site at the Bay Area graduate school. There was the exception of the interview with Artemis outside of a coffee shop in San Mateo. Since she is located in San Francisco, we agreed to meet half way to make it easier for her. Each time a space was created to permit privacy for the researcher and participant. A small altar was set up with a votive candle burning in the center, surrounded by cards of the goddesses of different traditions that represented the lover. The interview was semi-structured, with open-ended questions about the co-participant's experience to invoke thoughtful reflection (see Appendix D). More important than the questions being answered was the story that each participant had to tell of her experience; it was more than just seeking an individual answer for each question. There was much rich storytelling, with the co-participants often sharing past experiences as part of the formation of their body images, experiences during the course of the experiential process, and experiences following

the experiential process that pertained to and encouraged the work that they had done on their body images.

Cycle 4: Transforming and Reforming Lenses

Cycle 4 involves taking the lenses that are created in Cycle 2 and reevaluating, refuting, and modifying them to what is better suited to the study after data collection (R. Anderson, 2004). The beliefs and assumptions that the researcher previously articulated can be modified in light of the experiences of the co-participants at this stage (p. 321). This researcher prepared narrative portraits of the data from each of the co-participants; the lenses were rewritten as part of this cycle.

Data Analysis. Self-analysis was encouraged in the co-participants through the interview questions, so that the co-participants could comment on their own experiences. One-page reflection papers were collected that the participants wrote at the end of each session. These reflection papers were read and along with the information gathered at the closing interview were used to put together a narrative portrait.

In Intuitive Inquiry it is also important to consider the role of the interviewer and the level of engagement, and to be mindful of whose voice is being communicated (K. Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner, 1990; Reinhartz, 1992). The co-participants were asked questions regarding their self-image before they began the experiential process, as well as after its

completion; this was in semi-structured interviews to provoke thoughtful reflection and self-evaluation (see Appendix D). This researcher also shares her experience as part of the results section.

Cycle 5: Integration of Findings

In the final cycle, the researcher is to take a step back from the entire research process and take all aspects of the study in a new light. It is described as drawing a large hermeneutical circle around the already existing hermeneutical circle and returning to the arcs of the study (R. Anderson, 2004). The assets and liabilities of the study are determined. At this point, researchers evaluate and articulate what they have learned in the study; the opinion of the researcher matters (R. Anderson, 2004, p. 323).

The data collected from each of the co-participants were put into narrative portraits, thus remaining in the words of the co-participants themselves, telling their own stories. According to Polkinghorne (1988), "narrative is a scheme by means of which humans beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions" (p. 11). Josselson (1995) recommends personal narratives as a way to attempt to comprehend the human condition, as the storyteller's ideas, passions, and conceptual systems are all represented in their original voice. Though the narrative stories are not records of facts, they are a system of meaning-

making (p. 33). R. Anderson (2004) acknowledges the stories of co-participants stating that "stories must remain as a unit, and not subjected to analysis, including the interpretive analysis in intuitive inquiry, because analysis breaks up its integrity" (p. 309).

This researcher has had some reflection and discussion on the co-participant's processes in the discussion section of the dissertation, and has striven to present the data as close to the essences of the co-participant's experiences as possible. This researcher spent a few weeks putting together the narrative portraits. This helped to create much reflection about the experience of each co-participant, about the journey that each of them took to evaluate and perhaps transform their body image, a journey that was shared with their co-participants and the researcher.

Validity. There are two types of validity that are prevalent in intuitive inquiry, the first is Resonance Validity. This is based on sympathetic resonance, with the analogy of a cello string being plucked on one side of the room, and a cello on the other side of the room vibrating at the same pitch (Braud & Anderson, 1998). It suggests that research can "function like poetry" (R. Anderson, 2004, p. 331), that it can be understood by the reader and other researchers, as it plucks cords inside of them, so to speak.

The other type of validity is Efficacy Validity, which refers to a study's capacity to add value to the lives that the researcher touches: researcher, participants, and reader alike (R. Anderson, 2004). For a study to be replicable in scientific terms is one thing, but for it to give meaning to the lives of those involved in it has a great sense of value in itself. The reader is also included in the changes that the study potentially brings. The researcher and reader are evaluated for how they were affected in terms of compassion and transformation. It is hoped that a study using intuitive inquiry holds a vision for the future, as well as moving the readers to take action, and bring change in the world (R. Anderson, 2004). Validity in this study is addressed further in the discussion chapter of this dissertation.

Limitations and delimitations. "An introspective and intuitive perspective is demanding and rigorous. Nonetheless, this perspective sustains a process that helps thoroughly permeate the nature of an experience" (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p. 80). This researcher chose to use intuitive inquiry as the method to closely examine and interpret meaningful experiences that this experiential process allowed for the co-participants. The opportunity for experiential learning, and the opportunity to study spiritual phenomena are of great importance (R. Anderson, 1998).

With the study being administered at a Bay Area graduate school, the co-participants were recruited from the school and its surrounding areas. With having a small sample size, and being limited to the demographics of the school and the surrounding geography, though there was a possibility that there may be a lack of diversity in the demographics of the co-participants, in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, socioeconomic status, and education level, this study nevertheless yielded great diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The study also yielded some diversity in age, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Given the people that are drawn to a holistically-based psychology school and to the nature of this study, it can be assumed that many of them have had some exposure to goddess traditions, and that they may have already have done some work with goddess imagery. This was the case for some of the co-participants, and therefore it was likely that the results that they yielded may have differed in terms of the level of changes and shifts in their body images, or perceptions of the goddess, as compared to a population that might not have had exposure to goddess traditions or transpersonal psychology. However, the co-participants that did not have much or any exposure to goddess traditions still yielded some very interesting results, also displaying shifts in their body images, and in one case, more

radically than any other of the co-participants. Rather than exposure to goddess traditions being a defining factor for body image, it was more so the work on one's self, the exploration of one's body image that each co-participant did, and how willing each of them was to see and experience themselves in new and different ways.

The decision to conduct research at a Bay Area graduate school was made based on the researcher's convenience, regarding location and a base for recruitment of co-participants. It was the belief of this researcher that regardless of amount of knowledge and exposure to goddess traditions and transpersonal psychology a given co-participant might have, the study would yield some if not significant results.

Delimitations that intuitive inquiry accounts for are researcher bias (R. Anderson, 2004). This is done by the researcher is stating assumptions during the second cycle and again in the fourth cycle of data analysis (R. Anderson, 2004). Therefore, any biases and assumptions that the researcher may hold will be assessed, and minimized in the data interpretation (Creswell, 1998).

Other procedures used to increase the quality and verification in qualitative research that was employed in this study include persistent observation and thick description (Creswell, 1998; Mertens, 1998). This researcher has chosen these

procedures as they are the most relevant to this particular study. It is recommended by Creswell (1998) that at least two procedures that critically analyze qualitative research be used in any qualitative study. Persistent observation of the co-participants in their process was done by the researcher is being the group leader and co-participant, as well as collecting reflection papers and interviewing the co-participants at the study's completion (Creswell, 1998; Mertens, 1998). Reflection papers and interviews of co-participants also brought thick description to the data, allowing the reader to make decisions about transference between the researcher and the co-participants (Creswell, 1998; Mertens, 1998).

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter is comprised of introductions to the co-participant interviews and their narrative portraits. The complete interviews are included in the appendixes. Exit interviews were conducted at the Bay Area graduate school, with the exception of one interview which was conducted outside of a coffee shop in San Mateo, because the co-participant was located in San Francisco, and we decided to meet halfway for her convenience. The rest of the interviews were done in a classroom at the Bay Area graduate school, with the co-participant and I sitting across from each other. There was a small altar on the table between us that had a tea light candle burning, and was decorated with cards from the *Goddess Knowledge Cards* (Babcock, 2003) deck, featuring the paintings of Susan Seddon Boulet. These cards had been part of the altar during the experiential process, all being cards of goddesses that represented the Lover archetype in different pantheons. I thought to create a space that would be comfortable and still hold the energy of the love goddess in order to help the co-participants be in a space conducive to open sharing about their experiences.

The journal entries and exit interviews were transcribed entirely by me, which allowed me to get to know the data extremely well, and piece together narrative portraits that I believe are

able to speak to the experience of each co-participant very well. The portraits include data from both the exit interview and the journal entries, and, thus, are constellations of multiple experiences. They were pieced together to answer the interview questions as thoroughly as possible and include other information that was a significant part of each co-participant's experiences. To see the full transcribed interviews and journal entries, one can refer to the Appendixes. The narrative portraits have been arranged so that the experience of each co-participant is told in her own words, as much as possible. Words that are in bold print are words that the co-participant emphasized.

Photos of each co-participant's work from each session are included, with the exception of photos of the fourth session, since the images of the co-participants dancing were not clearly captured. Therefore, the reader will have to imagine what each co-participant looked like while dancing. Each narrative portrait is done using a pseudonym of the co-participant's choosing to protect her identity; some of the co-participants chose to take a name from a goddess to whom they felt connected.

Adelma

Adelma is a single, 38-year-old, heterosexual woman from South Africa, whose gender identity is feminine. Her spiritual practice is Christian. She is from a black, working class background, and is currently a graduate student at the Bay Area graduate school.

My first experience with her was on the Diversity Committee, and when I began to recruit for my study, she was eager to participate.

I asked her about her body image before the experiential process:

I've always felt like I wasn't perfect. That I had big feet, all sorts for things that were not perfect. I think the biggest thing is that my feet, that came up in the body mapping session. I have ugly feet, masculine feet. Then we got talking about masculine and feminine, and if I said that my feet are like my father's and that they shouldn't be mine, and yet they are my feet. My ugly feet: my toes with corns; my big legs; my dark knees; big thighs, big/curvy hips' stretch marks. I have cold hands; pain under my left breast; acne on my skin; oily skin; skin with spots; not balanced skin, not a balanced complexion. Issues brought some emotions for me, especially when thinking of past-sadness-thinking of how I was teased! When I was growing up I was teased about my legs; my complexion. I was darker than my siblings. My body size, I was fat and bigger than my siblings. I was told that I didn't have a nice figure, I felt very insecure and conscious about my body-these were negative messages.

But I also feel *happy*, content with parts of my body that I feel proud of and love. I love my big legs; my curvy hips; my breasts; flat stomach; my vagina. I love my femininity and my beautiful facial features. I have to accept them as my own. That was a big shift for me, that I have to accept my feet as my own. But of late, before entering this study, I had the feeling that I had started forming a positive body image, feeling that my body's perfect. I can control my weight; I see a shape that I like. I have insecurities but as bad as they used to be. And being in this study it sort of confirmed that I am not as bad as I'm thinking, I'm perfect as I am. I just have to accept myself.

On what shifts took place for her during the experiential process, she started from the beginning:

I think we started off with a collage. I think from looking at the images, what looks like beauty in my eyes, I'm sure

that had you asked me that question 2 or 3 years ago, you would've gotten a different answer. I had multiple images of Michelle Obama, African drummers, and a full-figured underwear model. My theme is freedom to express our being, the "freedom to being" who we are.



Figure 1. Adelman's collage.

I think what I realized reflecting now based on that experience is that I'm more at peace being black, I'm more at peace being an African. I'm just proud to appear as such and not be confused as anything else. The type of pictures that I cut there, observing that, I see that I'm more accepting. If I'm South Africa I could be something else, but if I'm outside, the borders, somewhere in the middle of no where, I am very strong. My sense of identity has become very strong as a black, African female. And it's amazing. Being an African often goes into body shape, a person expects to see some type of a body shape; curvy, not much above average, heavy, not fat but heavy-meat (laughter). I think it depends on the situation, if the situation is such that I am in an informal setting, the person would have an expectation of what an African girl is. It's in my mind that the person will comment. In some settings where it is formal, I don't expect people to be commenting in that way or holding those stereotypes, I expect them to be more enlightened or more awake.

In the third session, I had fun, it brought back positive memories. I put on a pink dress and scarf, hat-I felt like I was in a spring mood. I brought memories of summer- hat- shiny days of Africa. I felt good. I felt younger and good looking. The process was really fun and playful. I also wore a blue skirt and top-also summer clothes. And lastly, I put on a wig and a long, brown dress. I had fun, and took pictures. I was not consciously thinking of themes when dressing up, I was mainly wearing what looked attractive. I only realized after dressing up that I went for summer and spring-like clothes.



Figure 2. Adelma, pretty in pink.

The dance and movement session, that was playful, very, very playful, and a source of release for me. It was a break for me, after the quarter, so many courses that I took, so it was really relaxing for me. I remember getting out of the session, going home and I slept like a baby. I could not

believe it, I went into sleep just like that! I felt energetic; it felt as if I were releasing some negative energy from my system. I felt free to be-it reminded me of being a child, without any inhibitions, but being spontaneous. I felt happy, joyful, playful, relaxed and had fun. Embodiment was experienced when I went deep into myself while moving to the music. I created a certain rhythm in dancing to the music; I closed my eyes and inwardly experienced peace and being one with the music. I feel good about my body. I am aware of my femininity, the way that my curves move; I realize how my breasts, bum and waist were moving. I felt alive. It kind of reminded me of how strong I identify with my femininity. I could embrace some parts of me, masculine parts of me, somewhere, somewhat, when it is required of me. But mostly, particularly in that exercise I was just comfortable in my feminine.



Figure 3. Adelma's summer look.

Adelma described her experience of Session 2, the body mapping exercise as her most poignant:

In the body mapping exercise, I shared about my family background, how I would be teased. Big feet, ugly whatever, you know, I will never be perfect as far as my sisters were concerned. I grew up chubby, fat, I was the darkest (complexioned) in my family. I was a misfit so to speak. What came back was that I grew up into this, and I am appreciating it, even though I could have easily hated myself because of the criticism that I grew up under. But I turned around, somewhat, and I appreciated myself. That helps, because then I carry myself with a lot of appreciation. And people say that I appear calm, warm, approachable, all because I have accepted this body who I am working with. It has helped me in creating and maintaining relationships, when I needed to appear a certain way, despite of the trauma.

Growing up now as an adult, my body image is generally positive. I feel happy; I love my shape and almost all parts of my body. I am a Model (compared to my sisters now)! I just keep calm, and everyone says "Oh, you look beautiful." That is also showing a lot of hard work on my side. I had to prove that I belonged to this family, so I had to work to look acceptable. There is a lot of hard work behind it, painfully so.

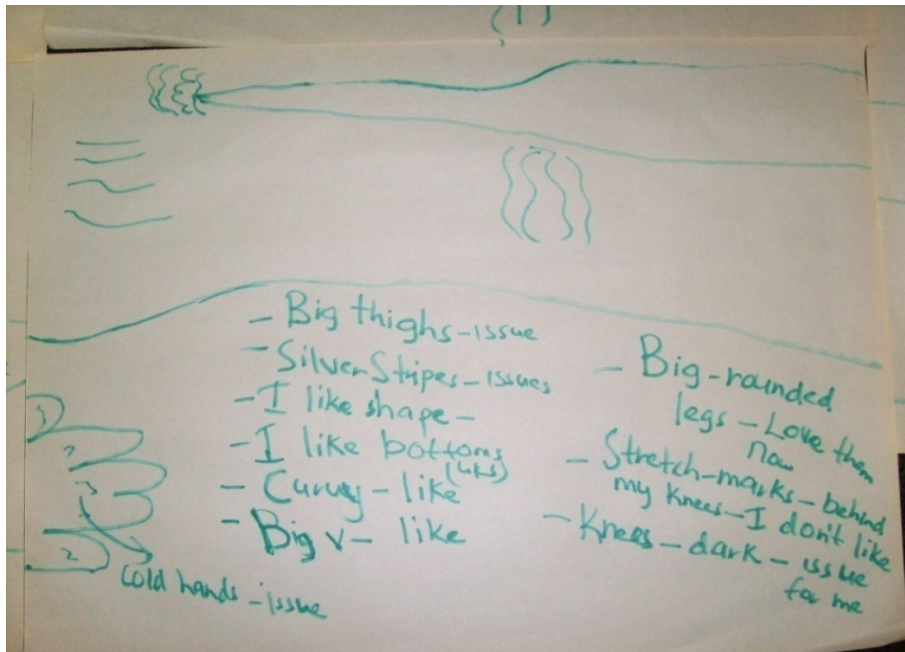


Figure 4. Details of Adelma's body map.

Adelma talked about her food choices and if anything came up for her around them:

For me it was just to have fun, relax, and nibble on something. In some cases when I needed more energy, I would pick up something, more sugar. I chose to eat for pleasure. No guilt!

Adelma commented on her experience of the group that she was in, if it helped or hindered her process:

I think people were more authentic, willing to participate, cooperate with what had to be done. So that felt like I belong, like I was understood by the group. People shared deep thoughts, and shared, which was good. It was quite a good group.

As far as the experience of the Lover energy as part of the experiential process, this is what Adelma had to say:

I think it was more a feeling of acceptance, compassion, no judgmental attitudes or whatever. That was more the feeling I had in our meetings. It was not in the form of an image, but more as compassion, that people are with me that are caring, the energy in the room. The study went so fast and was so enjoyable.

Adelma talked about how her body image is now after she completed the experiential process:

It is almost like reassurance, that I have what it takes and what I have is valuable and I just have to embrace it and keep moving. I think it was reinforcement of moving away from the doubts, and I am embracing more of what I am struggling with. Like the feet, I am embracing it, it my portion, it is part of me, I have to do it, and no one will do it on my behalf. That helped me, to somewhat resuscitate and beef up my confidence as I present myself. I'm content with how I present myself, being in my body. The key thing is for me to embrace the body that I have, including those ugly feet (laughter)!

Amara

Amara is a single, 39-year-old straight female that identifies as feminine. She is of mixed heritage, being half German and half south Indian. She considers herself spiritual but not religious. She has completed a bachelor's degree, and her economic background is middle class. I met her through a mutual friend, and she had been very enthusiastic about my research, and had let me know ahead of time that she would like to participate.

Amara described her body image before the experiential process:

I've always had body issues. One of the things is that I have become more conscious. I was telling my therapist, saying that I actively love my body. I am conscious about wanting to unconditionally loving my body, and I did not do that before, but I am conscious of it now. In the hamster wheel of my mind I had these (negative) messages, but hearing others in the group talk about this or that, brought me more to a place of realizing that my thoughts are not different from others. Everyone has their issues about the package that they are wrapped in.

My parents came from a shame paradigm, shame around the physical and sexual. I got this from both my parents. I have become more authentic knowing that this shame is not mine; I can give it back to them. That's they're choice, and they can live like that, that's fine.

Amara talked about how the different sessions were for her:

In Session 1, the collage was good in that it brought me awareness of what I find beautiful right now. I showed my longing for a family and children. Had I done this project in my twenties, it would have been totally different, higher fashion. Now I would say that family and nature is beautiful. Beautiful, empowered women, families, motherhood, nature, yoga; things I want and love. Angelina Jolie and her family is a dreamy ideal, strong father figure. Huge lilies growing

the inside is vivacious, youthful, svelte, vibrant, and athletic.



Figure 6. Amara's evening look.

One woman commented on my waist to hip ratio that if she had my small waist that she would show it off. I've gotten busy cloaking myself rather than adorning myself. I have lots of sets of jewelry, that I have designed, had made in India; I used to wear lots of jewelry, I was known for it. For the past ten years, I haven't really worn it, adorned myself at all. I was depressed, overweight; it was about hiding.

Actually, I'm adorning myself now, with some cloaking. Showing off some parts while covering other parts, trying to accentuate what is acceptable. I have plenty of jewelry. I am dressing nicely because in the professional environment, I'm seeing clients, going in front of the CEO, and I have to look presentable, be high-end. I learned cloaking from my mom, who

made lots of negative comments, she wanted me to cover more, and she thought it was inappropriate to show cleavage, for example; we're not fucking Amish! One time I was wearing a skirt that was long, ending between my knees and ankles, almost to my ankles, and it wasn't long enough for her. The day we played dress up, I made the comment that I am bringing sexy back. It's a big piece of my personal power! There's more swivel in my hips now!

Session 4 reminded me of how dance is important to me. I had let it go, and now it has been like a reclaiming (of dance). I had danced the weekend before. It was fun. It was a bigger part of my life in my twenties, going out with friends and dancing. I used to dance bhangra (traditional Punjabi dance) with people from Stanford. I am dancing more now, and I am going out with friends this coming weekend.

On describing a turning point for her, Amara talked about Session 2, the body map session.

The body map was most profound. During the body mapping, one woman talked about having a big, sexy brain. You are only as sexy as your brain. Having a brain is sexy. One woman talked about her breasts and having a belly to go with them, that made me reflect on myself. I have a big, sexy brain! I am split on my ethnicity (mixed heritage). I have a pear shaped body, abundant boobs, which are good mostly. I have thin, vein-revealing skin, stretch marks bad, gummy bear body (received positive comments on love of gummy bears and cuteness of them from co-participants). I have a somatic, emotional belly (which other participants also resonated with). I have a "turbo body" which my older sister has a song and dance about (which is funny and do not feel demeaned by it); it's too much of a good thing! Negative features that I have: short, fat, dry skin, getting old. Positive features that I have: cute feet, lips, teeth, eyes, body split, waist down seen as bad, waist up seen as good. I am happy to be in one piece. I have a loving heart.



Figure 7. Amara's body map.

I asked her about any issues with food that may have come up for her.

It was fun to have different things to nibble on. Some of the things I'd avoid eating, I'd have a piece but not gorge on it. I love experimenting, Bread, I know I shouldn't eat it, but it went well with dip, so fuck it; yum, spicy. No guilt, ok, a bit about bread. All else was yum, fun, hmmmmmm. Love is beautiful.

Amara noted that she would typically try a little bit of everything, and liked to try new things. She did express some guilt over eating carbohydrates, but other than that, was happy with her food choices. She was mindful of portion size.

Amara spoke on the group she was part of and if it was helpful for her process.

I loved it; it was helpful, and it was precious! I love holistic people; the people are conscious and working on themselves, are open and self-aware. Being in that particular group was good. It was insightful, interesting, and positive. My foundation as a person is very European, and later in life there was more Indian influence. To have two Caucasian women in the room, I was identifying more with them. My extroverted side is Caucasian, my introverted side is Indian. To have an Indian woman in the group, she was very introverted. Her quiet influence was very powerful. When we did the body maps, what she said about her "ethnic hair" and features reminded me of my own. I'm in a place where I want to heal my body, this incarnation. I want to own it, honor it.

Amara talked about whether or not she felt the presence of the lover archetype, or Love Goddess as part of the experiential process:

I felt the Goddess in a grounded form, not airy and light. It was in an earth mother, in an earthy way. Sweet water, is that Oshun? I experienced the sessions like that, that they flowed really well, nothing was rough; it was like flowing water. Oshun, she is definitely with me. From the African tradition, she is the one I connect with. She helps me to "own it and work it!"

In talking about her current body image, after the experiential process, Amara noted her more positive attitude:

I kind of love that I'm fat, marshmallow-like, it's like bumper cars, where I have this cushion between me and the world. I don't take myself so seriously now. When I am fit then I take myself more seriously and fuss more, but when I am like this I can not be so serious and laugh more, like "I'm so soft, haha!" When you give up, you don't have anything to lose, and there is less to worry about. Before the experiential process, I wouldn't have been so lighthearted. "You can't love yourself because of this or that," now I see that I have flaws and I can love them

anyway. I love myself and I am healthier and happier because I have a positive attitude.

I have a relationship with a male right now, that is showing up to be about love and sensuality, not sexuality. It's very nurturing, satisfying, and actually very healing. I have two new things I am holding: I love my body; I love men. I realized that I want to shift my relationship with my masculine, and in loving men. My masculine is half of me, and if I'm not in alignment in me, it's not going to be good. There is a connection with my masculine, men, and my sexuality. My masculine is my physical incarnation, my being on this earth, it's what grounds me here.

I inquired as to whether she had a shift within herself when she saw her reflection in the mirror:

I feel more powerful compared to myself when I was younger and thinner. I'm overweight, and I still feel attractive. I feel that when I am thinner, I am healthier and more athletic, but other than that, I am happy. The hated that what I received from outside sources, the criticism of my parents, never being good enough. I've gotten rid of the majority of it. This (my body) is what I've got, and I'm happy with who I am. Being in relationship with my family is handing them back their garbage. This is a new way of being with my family. And I'm attracting new people, people that blow my mind. The quality of interaction is amazing, and it's become normal to have that. I have raised my vibration.

Artemis

Artemis is a single, 26-year-old heterosexual, Caucasian female. Her gender identity is feminine. She does not have any spiritual affiliation, and her background is upper middle class. I chatted with her at a diversity-related event that I had helped organize. She expressed interest in my study, and signed up as soon as I began recruiting participants.

Artemis explained her body image before beginning the experiential process:

I would say that I was pretty comfortable with my body before so. Growing up with my (critical) mother, my body was always a topic of conversation. The comments about my nose being perfect are something I remember my mother saying. It may have been the only bodily compliment I ever got from her. Now that I am reflecting, I remember her saying it when my sister was lamenting her larger "Jewish" nose, and I wonder if my sister internalized feelings of her nose being inadequate.

Now that I'm grown up I'm in more comfortable place. I have friends that are very self-conscious about parts of their bodies. For me, I'm grateful that I've been able to get past that; there are minor things that don't bug me as they used to. But I see those things still bothering some of my friends. I would say being tall, that I definitely feel is very much part of my identity. I think that it is one of the first things that people notice about me, I'm taller than most women. I consider myself to be an average weight right now. I was heavier in college, I was skinnier in high school, and now I'm healthy, even though I don't feel perfect, I feel comfortable and maybe healthy is more important than squeezing into those tiny pair of jeans or something!

Artemis articulated her experiences of the different sessions:

Before Session 1, I had mentioned to a friend earlier that I had missed making collages, and wanted to get back into doing it. And then I walked in and you said that we were making collages, and I thought, "Oh, wow." For a collage on beauty, the first thing that came to mind was nature. In flipping through the fashion magazines, I then remembered that I am in a study on body image and should probably pick images of people too. What quickly arose in me is the split between what I think is beautiful and what society tells us is beautiful. In pulling images, I was drawn to many images of nature, which can be hard to find. Most of what was in the magazines were made up and what society thinks is beautiful. I searched for images that were more natural and evoked a calm feeling in me. I was struck by the amount of advertising

of "stuff" in all of the magazines, and actually think most of my imagery comes from ads as opposed to from articles. In organizing the collage, I wish I'd had more time to pull images and arrange them. I have 1/3 of the space (on the left) with societal beauty images and words, and the remaining 2/3 for what I consider beautiful. Perhaps with the open space remaining I will add some more images, as I do not consider my collage complete at this point.



Figure 8. Artemis' collage.

Session 3 was fun. It was fun to try on new things, things that I normally wouldn't wear. But in terms of it affecting my perception of my body image, it didn't do that much for me. It was fun for me, but the first two sessions did more for me. The stuff that I tried on you wouldn't find in my closet, but it was stuff that I would try on at a store. It was like being a little kid again and playing dress up. The first thing I picked was a multicolored scarf. I wanted to pick an outfit that matched it. I couldn't find a skirt at first so I went to shirts, where I picked up a cropped halter top. My first thought was that my breasts are too big for it,

but trying it on over a sports bra it fit. Moving back to skirts, I found a stretchy, red skirt and tried it on. It fit, so I went with it. I tried on some leg warmers, but felt the skirt was too long and that the proportions were wrong (not enough leg) so I took them off. I picked some big, metal earrings, a sparkly bracelet, and necklace. For makeup I did dark eyes with some silver, and red lips. Dark eyes I am used to wearing when I dress up but I usually don't wear color on my lips. In the dim light of the room I felt it looked good, but under brighter lights I'm not sure.



Figure 9. Artemis' festive outfit.

At first I did not want to pick an outfit that showed my belly, but then decided that if I am going to be wearing a bikini over break then I can show my stomach here. Part of it

is the context of being in Hawaii, but I also think that the nervousness of the other girls made me more self-conscious. I wanted to wear something that I would not normally wear, so I stayed away from the conservative things and sweaters and long skirts and was drawn to skimpier things. I think I enjoy these items but many times feel I am too old or too large to wear them. I like my look! I would love to wear this to a festival.

In Session 4, I felt that it was a little awkward at first. I enjoyed the music so that helped. There were definitely songs that I was more into than others. I remember the Shakira song coming on and thinking "Oh good!" Somebody else didn't like her, But for me it was great. I like to go dancing with friends on occasion, and you know, we will get hit on by men you don't want to get hit on by, and like the ones that come up from behind you and its like "Where did you come from? Go away!" So it's fun to dance without that! I've had that experience happen before, and it's fun to just dance by myself sometimes.

I felt good about my body while dancing, though part of me is always self-conscious about what to do with my arms. I like how it feels to move my body to music. At one point I got a glimpse of myself in the mirror and at first didn't want to watch, but I did and it was interesting to see what I looked like while feeling the movement. I felt in touch with my body and could express what I was feeling.

Artemis described Session 2, the body mapping session, as a turning point in the experiential process for her:

I would say in terms of going through the different exercises, the body mapping was probably the most meaningful. I could see the things that were both positive and negative. I was glad to see I had a mix of both. After that exercise in particular, it gave me a better, real, and positive outlook on my body image.

I was looking forward to doing my body map. Having dealt with body issues most of my life due to a super skinny and critical mother, this was a way for me to really see what my perspective on my body is. I had a mixture of positive,

negative, and neutral thoughts, but overall I think I have good outlook on my body and am thankful for my health. I had most trouble writing about my hip and butt region, as most of what came to mind was negative. The first thing I wrote in the whole exercise was "strong core" and I really feel this is true both physically and mentally, an important part of who I am. I noticed that many things I wrote (calves, ears, and veins) were things that used to bother me a lot but now I have come to accept those parts of myself and I am okay with them.

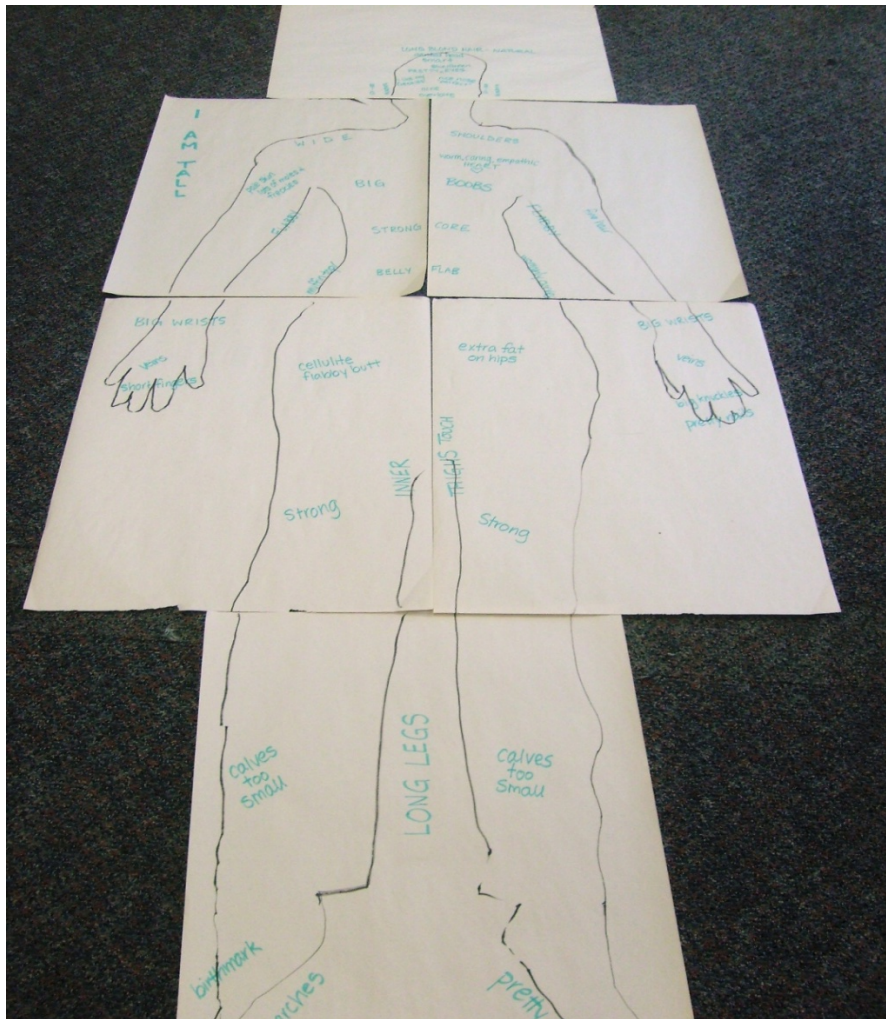


Figure 10. Artemis' body map.

I think that doing the body mapping thing gave me an awareness of all the things I do positively about my body. I think most of the time my awareness is on "Oh I'm too chubby here, this isn't perfect . . ." or whatever. And to have it

all on there, the negative things on there, it also forced me to see all the things I have in a positive way. So in an overall sense it was a good activity, because it showed me all the good things too.

Artemis commented on her choices in food, and how that fitted in with her body image and how she took care of herself:

I try to pick healthy snacks, generally. So definitely I went for the fruits and veggies, and by the end, I would go for the chocolate or dessert thing that there was (laughter)! Because for me, if I don't eat it until the end then I just grab one. If I ate one earlier then I can more easily get a second one. So I wait until the end to grab the dessert.

I don't buy snack foods at home, I don't have cookies or chips, or anything. So if they are around, I enjoy them! But that's specifically why I don't buy them, because I'll just eat them and never make a meal for myself. That's why. But I also like fruits and vegetables. I also like eating them with peanut butter, which is good. I feel good about what I eat. Like, I feel better about eating a handful of carrots than a handful of potato chips, it doesn't weigh me down. Then you feel groggy; a lot of the snack kinds of foods do that. It's been an interest of mine for at least the last few years. And I grew up with my mom, who is a little health nut, and it's rubbed off on me. She talked about moderation. Since I eat healthy most of the time, if I splurge, I don't feel guilty. I just go back to normal the next couple of days.

Artemis reflected on whether the group was helpful in her process or not:

I liked the group. I didn't know anybody coming in. I usually hold back if I don't know people, so there was a little bit of that in the beginning. I think as a whole, having a group there helped the process, because having other people there first encouraged me to open up and do the same. I feel like our group has a good balance, people that were the first to answer, then encouraged me and others that didn't want to be first to then open up. Yeah, I think having a small group was helpful, maybe a couple of other people, but to have a larger group would have been overwhelming.

I think it took a couple of sessions (to get comfortable). It opened up people's vulnerabilities and was less exposing than the other activities, so I think the second session, after hearing about people's collages, hearing what people's issues were, that was a good way to break the ice, since I didn't know these people. I definitely felt a connection to the people in my group, and it can't really be explained in words, but there was definitely something going on, like us being on the same page, same wavelength, something.

Artemis spoke on the energy of the experience, be it the presence of the Goddess, or the Lover archetypal energy in the room:

I don't know. I like how you had the altar with the different statues on it, once I knew who they were and what they represented. I don't know, I feel that you, to me personally, seemed to exude confidence, and to me represented positivity in body image, which was helpful. For me, if the person running it didn't seem confident, it wouldn't have worked as well.

So I don't know if I felt like a general, or some sort of spirit around, in the room. I don't know what the word is I'm looking for. Just the room, what we did in there generated a feeling of openness, confidence. Safety, comfort, empowerment, positivity; all of those being in the room with other women encouraged me to be more confident, be more positive.

Artemis talked about her body image after the experiential process was completed:

In general I have more acceptances of my positive qualities. I remember you're telling me about it at the diversity event after school, and I thought, "Cool, I want to be in that." It furthered the changes that I was already working on, so it helped contribute to that. I think it has been good for me, good timing, for my growth. I enjoyed being part of it.

Athena

Athena is a single, 35-year-old, heterosexual Caucasian female. Her gender identity is feminine. Her spiritual practice is

following shamanic, indigenous traditions. She is a graduate student, and comes from a middle class background. Athena and I have known each other casually since she began the program here at the Bay Area graduate school, although I have not gotten to know her until her involvement in this study. She saw my fliers posted around campus and joined the study after it initially began, missing the first session and joining the second group I was running for the first time in the second session. In asking about her body image prior to the study, this was her response:

It's not overly healthy; I think of myself as fat and unfit, and it stems from childhood, and generally unattractive. That has been my body image for years. It makes self-worth a little challenging, not that I don't have self worth because I do, it's just that it takes me awhile in relationships and things to get to a place where I can think, wait, I don't need to put up with this I don't need to act this way, or do something or think this way. My opinion is that I put up with a lot of stuff before I realized that I can have more, have better than what I already have. It affects how I think of myself, how I work in the world, how I dress. It comes from some deep wounding that I haven't addressed enough yet, that has shaped how I function.

The process has been like a pendulum. There have been times where I have not been in touch with "You're not sexy, beautiful . . . you are not." And then I have swung to thinking that maybe I am those things. I have those moments of weakness around the works thinking "Maybe I am." It swings back and forth, the center of the pendulum is not as close to self-acceptance as I would like.

I'm not as apologetic for existing, but as far as body image, I still have some ways to go. It's gotten better over the years, but it's not that way when it comes to sex (with partner). If I'm going to sleep with someone I don't care. I have no problems walking around naked in front of someone (lover, or at a gym) despite society thing. (It's) not a

moment to be ashamed of my body. Body image issues come up around food, not fashion for me.

Athena talked about how her first session in making a collage was for her:

The collage I enjoyed thoroughly. It's a medium that I'm comfortable with. And I know that the assignment was to make a collage about "what is beauty?" and to think about body image. But my collage was totally not related to physical beauty. It's a reflection of where I am in life in terms of other things going on. Most of it brought up stuff. So here I go again. Given fashion magazines I couldn't believe that I was drawn to nature. What is beauty? Beauty is nature. I'm drawn to those pictures and the pictures of animals. The animals don't surprise me given my dissertation topic (human relationship with pets). What surprised me was that I *absolutely* needed to find people who looked connected to each other or to the natural world. The women I chose who are without others in the pictures with them are strong. Queen Latifah never apologizes for her size. She has a "this is me, like it or don't" attitude. If you don't like her beauty, it's your problem. Dr. Maya Angelou encourages strength and freedom through her writing. How could these women not be beautiful? Women's bodies are beautiful, more pleasing than men (although I am attracted to men). I like to hear love stories (Barak Obama's first date with Michelle).

Children, nature, strength, connection, and love; happiness and light; these are the makings of my piece; this is beauty. I want more of it in my life. All of it. So I'm seeking it. The fire had to be added for two reasons. First, I love a book (or anything actually) by s fire; second, the fire is symbolic of my spiritual practice (the elements, shamanism, intimacy with Spirit). The fire will help me to connect to all the other aspects that I am missing. It will help me connect to the beauty and love in people, animals, and nature. The theme is Intimacy. With every living thing, including self.

Nature pictures (thank goodness for Oprah magazine) hard time finding models attractive. Nature, animals, pictures of people in connection (relational), boy and dog, man and woman, looking for happiness (dog with tongue hanging out)

eyes shine (woman and child) that's what joy looks like to me. Then, I hope, my eyes will shine as brightly as the mother and daughter in the store. That's what happiness looks like in people. In the collage, it wasn't that I intentionally that I didn't look for white people, I wanted to make sure I had people of all different skin colors on my collage, it was important to me.



Figure 11. Athena's collage.

Athena mentioned the impact of Session 2, the body mapping session:

The body map, I was amazed at how negative I am. Kind of like, "this is good, but . . ." where is this but coming from, can't I just say I like this, full stop? The amount of negativity that came up, that's why it's (the body map) in my car, because I can take it to therapy, like here's some stuff I have to work on.

The process of making the map was kind of fun. It was interesting because I didn't care as much about the detail as the person drawing me was. I was overly aware at how judgmental I am about my body. I was also aware that I am

because I wasn't pretty enough. Angry, I went to go ask the boy out. I got nervous and I didn't ask the original boy out. I met another boy in the process. And generally, that is how it has worked for me. I think I am immensely unattractive, and that on one will go out with me. Then the universe brings me someone amazing who spends time and effort trying to convince me that I am beautiful. I think it's very interesting that I believe the negative more than the positive. I think I'll take that to therapy.

Session 3, the dressing up session, was also meaningful for

Athena:

It was good, it was interesting, some of the things it brought up. It brought up undressing in front of others for me. I usually like at the gym or something, I don't care, but in that situation, I shouldn't subject the poor participants to what I look like nude. If someone was walking by and peeked in, I was going to think that they got what they deserved [if they saw me]! Thinking about some of the comments made were about women in their household, the community thing; and I thought, oh yeah. The way I grew up, it was just me and my mom, so there wasn't a lot of sharing the mirror or anything. I've done it with friends before, but it's been a long time. It showed me something that I didn't have, I haven't had for a long time. With some of the women, sharing about the dressing up was fun.

I started with the makeup because I never wear any. After I did my face, I added jewelry. Jewelry is a very comfortable thing for me to wear. The clothes were a bit of a problem for me. I was really aware of my size. There were many things that I like but know would never fit on my body. I stuck to things that I was confident I could make fit. I absolutely loved the afro [wig]. It really helped me get in touch with a wild and fun part of myself.



Figure 13. Athena, the cool cat.

At one point while I had it on I was trying to decide if I should take off my shirt. I looked at my stomach, having pulled my shirt up a couple of inches and thought "you're a white girl." It was like I suddenly remembered that or something, and in that moment I didn't want to be white. I don't usually think about my race/color of my skin so it was surprising to me. Most of the time I like being pale, it doesn't bother me, so it was interesting that it came up. Wearing the afro wig, I was thinking of Diana Ross and these '70s women that are African American women, to realize that my skin is really pale. I saw that I'm not this '70s diva kind of person. Diva is Diana Ross, you know, Beyonce, Mariah Carey; who's white and a diva? Maybe Madonna. It seems to be more if you are ethnic in our culture. It wasn't so much a conscious thing.

I wore the afro and after others put it on I went and picked it up again, I can wear this. I wouldn't wear it in public, but I loved it. It gave me an image of an African American woman on roller skates, a disco scene. It was unexpected, I didn't expect anything about the color of my skin to come up

because I don't think about it, or think about the color of other people's skin.



Figure 14. Athena, the diva.

I totally feel like I got in touch with my inner hippie. I wish I felt more comfortable in my skin. It would be fun to wear and do what I want and feel confident and comfortable with whatever that is.

Athena came to Session 4 but left early, unable to engage in that evening's activity. She wrote about what had happened for her, and why she could not be part of the activity; she explains below:

And the authentic movement session, I just couldn't do. Like unfortunately, I really tried, but I just couldn't do it.

I've gotten some disturbing family news, so I'm trying to deal with that information and loss that's going to happen to the best of my ability. Sometimes I can handle things and sometimes I can't, and that was one of those times I couldn't. I had been resistant to the session all week. I had planned for six different things for that evening, then I remembered that I had a commitment. I didn't want to do it, it's because it's challenging. I love to dance, but there's something about that; I haven't danced in a long time. It's challenging. And with the news that I received, that was it, I was toast. There were just too many things that were pushing my limits then.

My mother was diagnosed several months ago with cancer. The day before group my mother called to inform me that her prognosis had been shortened from potential 5 years but most likely 2-3 years to 3-4 months. I spent my Friday and Saturday digesting the information and surrounding myself with friends. On Saturday I showed up for group with the idea that I wanted to be a good participant. Looking at the altar of the goddesses, I have noticed over the past few weeks that I've been attracted to the picture of Venus. I don't remember who she is until I pick up the card and read the back of it. When I picked it this time, I was just aware of how overwhelmed I felt. I'd thought that dancing would be good for me. I think that in general I need to be more embodied. There is no way I am ready to take the information about my mother into my being. I feel like I should dance and celebrate the life I have, but I can't do that yet either. It was too much and I needed to leave.

I was very concerned about the study and wanted to help Sarah's dissertation go as smoothly as possible. I have also realized over the last several days that I am feeling very me-oriented, meaning that it's normal for me to want to take care of everyone else. The last few days I feel like I'm not interested in taking care of the people on the outskirts of my life. I am having a hard time taking care of myself, let alone anyone else. So no matter how much I wanted to be a good participant, I absolutely could not stay for group. I had no interest in celebration and no interest in embodying my grief.

Athena had mentioned that issues with food were important as far as her body image was concerned. She elaborated more on that:

Bread and sweets are my comfort foods, and that is what I gravitated to! I remember picking it up and saying this is my comfort food! So here is my first issue! I was aware of it and I still did it. Being aware that my choices are unhealthy has not changed them. I'm making the choices that I'm comfortable with even if they are not good for me.

I also was writing Chapter 3 of my dissertation while in the last week of the study, so it was a really anxious time for me. I bought a thing of cookies, and I wrote and ate cookies! I knew it wasn't good for me but I thought you know, it's okay, this is what I do when I write, just don't make it a daily habit. To get this done, if this is the mode that you are switching back to, it's fine. I may be doing it more than someone who is a little healthier, but I thought its fine, Chapter 3 got done. I don't want to get through the dissertation and gain forty pounds. The thing about me, eating and body image, is probably like Athena (the Goddess), is that I know intellectually what's good for me. I can be totally conscious of how I'm eating, like "You didn't even taste what you were eating, did you realize what you were doing? Try to be more mindful." The mental part is rarely flowing with actions. Awareness is good and part of my image and part of my stuff is sort of a self-judgment, I've been aware of this for a long time, but I'm still doing stuff I shouldn't do! It's kind of my internal, immediate reaction, which is more food for therapy.

The group's impact and influence were also discussed, whether the group was helpful or hindering of her process.

I have mixed feeling about the group. I think that they are a wonderful group of women with great personalities. I just felt really uncomfortable. I joined the group and saw the other women, and I thought that okay, they may have their issues, but I don't see them. Being the biggest woman in the group, oh my gosh, what did I agree to come here for? It was body mapping, it was my first interaction with the group. And you asked me a question about race as it had come up in the conversation. I was in a group I didn't know.

When we did the dress up session, Inanna joined us, and that made me more comfortable because I know her, not very well, but I had some interaction with her. The others I did not know them; I had seen a couple of them in the hall, but didn't know their names. So it made me more comfortable. The

dress up was really fun. By the time we sat down on the sheet to take a picture, it was like, come on girls, let's all be sexy together! And it wasn't a sexual thing, it was like a way of us being friends or sisters. It's not the kind of intimacy that you have with people that you just met, but I felt like, come on, let's pretend that we have this, come and take this picture! I got more comfortable and my little, hippie persona, I was probably very comfortable. I was concerned that if I acted wrong with somebody that they might take it the wrong way. I wanted to act like sisters and I didn't want anyone to interpret it as acting like lovers; I didn't want anyone to think I was being inappropriate, that I was hitting on them. But I enjoyed getting everyone on the sheet to take the picture.

I asked Athena about the energy of the room, and if she felt the presence of the Goddess, or some sort of energetic shift from the mundane world as part of the experiential process:

During session, no not so much, although me and this card of Venus/Aphrodite, you've had this card on the altar the whole time, and I pick it up, read it and look at it, but there is something about it that I feel the need to pick it up and read it again. When you walked in today, again I was reading the Venus card. So during the sessions I didn't feel it so much. In the past four weeks, it's been freaking coming from everywhere! And so can I totally discount this study as part of it? I can't. It's all over the place, so with my lover, it always comes up, and it's powerful what came up in the course of this study. Last week, there was an Amma in town, the reincarnation of the divine mother, so I went and got a blessing from her. Someone invited me to a church of Mary Magdalene, so I went up there. Part of it may be what is physically happening with my mother [my mother's illness], part of it needing to be in this study, to have this come up for when you are with your lover, you need people to invite you to these divine feminine events, this is what the universe has decided I need. I haven't tried to separate it all but it's been interesting in the last week, week and a half, it's all over the freaking place.

I don't know what to do with it [experiences of the Divine Feminine], but I was raised in a very relaxed Protestant household. My spiritual practice that I've adopted since then [shamanic traditions] has some of the feminine, but I'm not

really in touch with it other than to acknowledge that it exists. In the last couple of weeks, I don't know what to do with it. It's like, keep coming, eventually I will know the right thing, whatever that is. The tantric practice brings a lot of the feminine stuff up. I have found it to be a very enjoyable way to bring the feminine stuff up. I don't know exactly it will come up in a way that I can integrate it, functionalize it well with more balanced understanding of the Divine Feminine. I think if I don't get it, it will keep coming until I do. Thank you (I gave her the Venus card that she was so drawn to keep).

Athena elaborated on her perception of herself changed when she looks in the mirror:

It depends on the day. This morning it was like, where did I get all this gray hair? A couple of days ago I had a pre-doc interview, so I went out and bought some mascara, because I didn't have any. I put it on and thought, wow, it makes a huge difference. I liked what I saw. I've worn it before, it may be this brand, or it's just been so long since I've worn it, it jumped at me, that it makes a big difference. In general it's kind of dependent on the day. I haven't spent a lot of time in front of the mirror, or come up with any revelations that I didn't already know. And there are moments in front of the mirror that I can look in the mirror and think, oh yeah, that's right, this looks really good, the lip gloss looks really good, I can see why men are attracted to this part of the body. But lately in the chaos that has been my life I haven't really thought about it.

I had a really interesting experience where the night before we did dress up, I spent with my lover, and one thing that he shared with me was that I had this beautiful, brilliant mind, and this incredible, sensual body. And I don't think of myself that way, as a tactile, sensual being; it goes against ignoring the fact that we have a body! He said something about being sensual, and I said what do you mean? And he said do I not notice how my body reacts when he touches me, not even sexually. And I thought, no, I don't. So at this same time as I'm doing this study, it's being pointed out to me that I have a body, and I can see that I'm not in touch with it, and it's being brought to my attention. So it is coming up. So have things changed when I look at myself in the mirror, not so much, but are things coming up? Yeah, they are. My lover says many things to me, complimenting my mind,

my body, about all women as the Goddess. But that was the first time he said something like that. He says lots of beautiful, healing things, but that's the first time I heard this!

Athena explained her body image after completing the experiential process, and how it has affected her.

This study brought this more in my face. I haven't thought about these things for awhile to be honest. In that way it is a reminder, something else I need to work on. I get caught up in my intellectual self, thinking self is the part of me that I can entertain myself for hours, and am generally not an embodied person. It has been a growing experience at my holistically-based graduate program to get embodied, this study is trying to get embodied. I've been about of classes for a year, so I'm in my own little world. His study was like, oh yeah, remember, here is part of yourself that you are not fully embracing. You've got all this junk that you need to work on, want to work on. I saw your flier and thought I should get on touch with you. A week went by, and then I thought I should do it, its stuff I really need to work on. I thought I'd get good dissertation karma, helping out a fellow student.

Has this shifted my body image? Not really, other than the "what is beauty?" piece is on my wall. I really enjoyed doing it and am in touch with it, it was to remind me of what my view of beauty is. The body map is in the trunk of my car so I can take it to therapy; I've been busy, but when I get there I can take it in and talk about it, like "look how screwed up I am!" In general, I haven't had a lot of shifts yet. I'm okay with that, in terms of not expecting any shifts. The way I view my body originates at such a young age that I wouldn't expect a four week study to change it, unless I was really open and ready. But I would say that the awareness increased that I don't pay enough attention to part of me, I need to have a more holistic me.

I'm not at the point where I can look in the mirror and say "Oh look at my butt, it's awesome!" But I'm more aware (of my body image). It's a step. It reminded me that I can't ignore it, I can ignore it for awhile but it doesn't go away. It's like, oh that's right, here's things I need to work on. Like in dress up, I don't typically wear funky clothes and this is why. It has a lot to do with my self-confidence, how I

present myself to the world. For instance, I don't wear short skirts, because I think my legs are fat. I don't feel comfortable in them, I'm not comfortable presenting myself to the world in that way. When I'm in a yucky mood, I try to hide from the world. So being able to play in that way, you could do this, you could do that, it brought it all to the surface, so it was good. There are lots of things for me that are shifting and transforming, and this is one of them (body image), and I think that is okay. (Athena shared with me later that she purchased new cosmetics and was enjoying them, and was having fun).

Bellagrun

Bellagrun is a 27-year-old, Caucasian (with some Native American as part of her heritage) female. She describes herself as being fluid in terms of sexual orientation, and has a blended (between feminine and masculine) gender identity. She is engaged to be married. Her spiritual affiliation, in her own words, is "open-hearted, open-minded." Bellagrun is a Ph.D. candidate, and comes from a middle class background. Although we have mutual friends, we do not know each other at all well. When I began informally recruiting participants by chatting with people, she took a keen interest, and as soon as I began officially recruiting participants, she signed up for my study.

Bellagrun explained her body image before she began the experiential process:

Cold, trapped, stifled, those aren't really physical descriptors but how I felt about my body. I'm learning how to be more open to the feminine aspects of myself. Having grown up in a society that honor and rewards masculine behavior, I've come to learn how to honor the strong masculine side of myself but not the strong feminine side of myself. And so I feel like my body image as a woman was definitely was trapped

and stifled. I feel pretty androgynous about myself, as the masculine thinker, even though I'm a woman.

Bellagrun talked about her experience in the first session:

In Session 1, in making the collage, I found myself drawn to depictions of connection and harmony. Connections between parents and children, between animals and humans, between nature/earth and beings. I was especially drawn when emotional warmth was displayed in these connections. I included depictions of resilience and strength, and joyful connection between beings or elements. I also noticed that I chose a lot of curvy images, round, smooth, fluid. I chose a lot of bright colors, especially green. I was more drawn to images of nature and animals than to humans. The themes were connection, strength and resilience, peacefulness and harmony, and comfort.



Figure 15. Bellagrun's collage.

I saw how ethnocentric the imagery was and I wanted to consciously rebel against it. I don't want to look at it, like at the grocery store. I wasn't to see in newsstands in

popular culture what I see everyday, which is all kinds of people. There are all kinds of ways of expressing beauty. I felt like there wasn't a lot of beauty in these magazines, like women who were starving themselves for no purpose. I had pictures in my collage of connection, animals, animals with humans, father-son dyads, I had a lot of ethnic people in my collage, more than Caucasian people. I saw so many images of these tiny, tiny Caucasian women, and I thought that that is not beauty to me. It feels like cognitive dissonance, why is this being presented to me when I live in a place that is so rich culturally; ninety percent of my clients, my friends are not Caucasian. I think that's intentional. I don't want to spend so much time with other people. I know what it means to be white, I've got that down! My parents taught me that, my older sister taught me that, and there's nothing left to learn there. I expose myself to more than that because there is so much more than that, I have curiosity too. There are many different ways of being; who's to say which way is the right way?

That's what I didn't see in those magazines, there were not enough differences. You know those underwear ads with big, little, dark, and light women? That makes me so happy, like this is what life is, life is differences, and similarities and it doesn't matter which is which, because it's such a...I don't know, it's so abstract. But I don't want sameness; sameness is what I grew up with, people in my house that look just like me, and isn't that what growing up is about, getting over the sameness?

In exploring the feminine, I think of the feminine form, and all my mom and I talk about is body, so I wonder if that's a reflection of the Caucasian culture not talking about bodies. It's like I get sexual education, but it's intellectualized, I get information about exercise and nutrition, but it's intellectualized. It's not embodied education, it's disassociated education, global education. I've always considered the Caucasian culture to be gender-equal, but the experience that I just had about women not talking about their bodies, not honoring their curviness, at least in my family, goes completely goes against that. It's a whole form of gender stereotyping. It's not just that we honor men and women equally, women are disassociating their femininity to become equal. That's not gender equality, its gender neutralization. What's weird, I never thought about that before!

I would say that about 70% of it came from something other people said at some time in my life. The other 30% comes indirectly from me comparing myself to other people. Then I remembered our body mapping, about my sister, how I'd never grow into my nose, and that's about her. I struggle with that when I try to buy sunglasses (laughing), if they don't fit my face. But that's about her, there's no reason for me to buy into it! I don't need to see through other people's lenses, they honor them when they look through them. I can honor my own lenses, and don't think I've ever looked through my own lenses, and how they see, but I don't want to rely on other people's lenses, I want my own lenses!

I think walking away from Session 2, I was surprised by how many positive messages I had about myself despite all the negative messages I had received, and I was walked away feeling really resilient. This is pretty cool, that I didn't count anything positives to negatives. Most of what I wrote was positive, and most of what I've heard from other people about my body is negative, and the fact that I still feel good about myself, it showed me that I'm a resilient human being. I can survive this crap!

Session 4, the dance and movement session, yielded more self-awareness for Bellagrun, as well as the experience of embodiment:

I was very aware of how little sexuality seemed to be expressed in the room, and I missed it. I really enjoy the sexual aspects of dancing at clubs, and felt that aspect missing in this dancing experience. I felt a desire to express more Lover/sexual energy, but felt as if that wouldn't be accepted by others in the room. I felt about my own body: sexy, invigorated, energized, connected to the Goddess/Lover archetype, passionate, open.

Did I experience embodiment? Absolutely, but I wanted to go more deeply into it, and felt inhibited by the lack of sexual/Lover energy in the room. Embodiment for me is very linked to feeling an openness toward sexual energy. I think I had an opening towards a healthier perspective on my body, and feeling my body more, less ignoring it. I am listening to my body. I am less disassociated from my body, I think it is good for me. After the dance session, I thought that dance and sexuality are such an important part of my

life, and I have been completely neglecting them. The we end up with this split in self, and it seems sad to me. I never really realized how much of myself I've been neglecting, because I have only been showing parts of myself that I think are culturally accepted. I had no idea that I had subscribed to the norms in that way, it really opened my eyes.

Session 3, the dressing up session, was a major turning point for Bellagrun, in which she sensed a shift in her. She explains this in detail:

That was my breakthrough session. I felt really at peace with myself at that session. I know when we started I was nervous and had to have a conversation with you to calm my head, but once I felt my head get quiet, I felt like I could get into things now. I listened to my body, heeded its call. Then I went for the stuff that I don't typically wear, that was the challenge. I'd never do this, but I can do this here. It's a risk I'm taking, but it's a safe space.

I put on a silk dress, it was a symmetrical, and I was afraid that I couldn't wear it, it would show all my bumps, but it worked. I wore big bangles and bright red lipstick. I was drawn to soft flowing fabrics, things that felt elegant and romantic. I was repelled by styles that looked young, hoochie (grossly immodest), cheaply made, or unrefined. I felt glamorous, I felt more accepting of myself, I felt deliciously comfortable in my own skin! I felt deserving of being loved. I felt wild and free; I felt uninhibited; I felt sexy; I felt strong and empowered. I felt emotionally supported and internally motivated to break out of boxes I was unaware of creating for myself. *I feel deliciously comfortable in my own skin.*

Why do I withhold? It's a need for control, but I don't need to control, it's a matter of releasing. I just started looking at the little things I was withholding? Right then, I was looking at clothing, but how many other areas of my life am I withholding? Am I holding tight and cold to control when I have to let go of control, for that is when I am actually expressing my true self? I'm manifesting my own fear by controlling things I'm afraid of, that's not good. So I expressing myself with the lipstick, with the bracelets, with the dress, it had a low back it was silk, but it looked and felt great. It was a great experience, I have to do that

again! To experience it again, I would want to go someplace where I can't afford anything, so there is no pressure to buy anything, and bring myself down to places where I can afford things; this would allow for the fantasy and the growth. This is where an opening happens.

Bellagrun would not allow photographs of herself to be taken during Session 3.

She shared about issues with food that came up for her, and expressed much awareness around them:

It's an interesting parallel that I have with food allergies. I tend to give my body what it is asking for, and it often asks me for things that I'm allergic to. It's an interesting parallel to my Mom who doesn't allow herself to have sugar or carbohydrates. For me to keep wheat, garlic, onions out of life, there are parallels. But it was interesting that in the sessions, especially later that the more I let go, and was in tune with my body, it asked for food that was good for me. I was really drawn to the fruit, which is fine. There's a dynamic that I'd like to explore, of once we let go of being so strict with ourselves, that the thing that we should have been doing all along is what becomes natural. So in trying to take care of myself, I've been restrictive with myself, and then was craving things and would comfort eat. My need to take care of myself caused comfort eating!

One thing that came up for me was the experience of hearing my mother say that because I have a tummy I'm going to become diabetic. It wasn't a conversation of "If you don't take care of yourself . . . it was you will become this." I've never heard anything like it before, and I felt like I'd been painted by the plague. If I'm going to get diabetes no matter what I do, and die of this disease, then why the fuck should I martyr what I'm eating? It totally backfired on her. I felt that come up for me and I felt a release. Because that's not about me (getting emotional), that's about her and her fear of dying from diabetes because her father did. I let it in and I let it in for a long time, and I'm going to let go of it. It was an integration of the four weeks (in the experiential process).

You should see my grocery lists, they are totally different! I went from chips, processed sugars, lots of salt, lots of carbohydrates, lots of fat to fruits and vegetables, and whole wheat. I was looking at two bills, before and after this study and I thought how interesting, comparing the two grocery bills, I am choosing things that are healthier for me; it's great pre- and post-data! And I noticed my portion size changed, I eat less because I don't need as much to comfort myself.

I think that's where we go to quality from quantity. In this culture, furniture, and televisions, and food portions! People want satisfaction, and if the portion size grows then the quality goes down. I'd rather have a small piece of chocolate cake that tasted amazing than a piece that's big that's not as good.

Learning how to take care of you by honoring part of yourself that doesn't get honored on a daily basis, it all comes together. When you realize that you are calling back in a part of yourself that was disassociated, you invite in all the other parts of yourself. And the best part of it, according to my partner, is that fruits and vegetables and whole grains cost a lot less. He wanted to know what the change is, and I said this is the work I'm doing with Sarah.

Bellagrun shared how the group was helpful for her as part of her process. It also yielded self-reflection for her on how she took care of herself and set boundaries with others:

I think it helps to have an openness to how others were having that experience. I appreciated how everyone was, we had such different personalities. I have never in my entire life spent four weeks just thinking about me. I think it was a great opportunity. I had me time! I encourage others to have me time but when do I do it myself? I need to take more care of myself. To fight gender inequality we're supposed to work, and take care of the house, and keep the husbands happy?! The stronger women are the ones that say enough is enough. I was taught that being strong meant that I could take on more and more "Stick it on my back." But that's not it; you have to set boundaries.

In experiencing the Goddess, or Divine Feminine as part of the process, Bellagrun spoke on what her experience was:

I definitely felt curiosity, and the need for facilitating there. I think I described an opening earlier, going from cold and closed to really open and warm. You talked about the Lover archetype, I definitely felt that when we were dancing, and I felt that I want to but I don't know how. I don't know where to go with that. I feel kind of like a kindergartner, like here are some blocks, what do I do with them? I have an openness, willingness, curiosity, and I'm not sure what to do with this, so I'm hoping that I can facilitate a situation to continue this in my life, or this will come into my life some other way, but I feel loss of this new Goddess-essence in my life. But I also fear judgment, mostly from myself, but from others too. I've been a left-brained, left-hander for so long. I was into science, and math, and logic. I tend to be such a clinical individual. I think my own worst enemy here is myself.

So to answer your question, I did experience something, and I got a taste of it, and I love it, now I don't know what to do with it. I hope that those around me are supportive of this new side of me, and that it won't be rejected. But often times when there is a shift there can be a collapse, and I don't fear that so much with my partner but with my friends, because they are so used to my being a pillar. But I don't want to be a pillar right now, I want to be jell-o for awhile.

I really appreciate the [Goddess] images you brought in. I could see why these images developed in the cultures that they did. And why don't these images exist in my culture now? I feel such loss, that maybe it's just modernization and the worship of technology, but how can I bring it in a way that is...maybe selfishly I want this energy in my life? How do I bring it in when it's not in my culture? I don't know. I'm a big religion bouncer, I bounce from church to church. And when I go to a church and they refer to God as Him, I am so turned off. I feel like the monkey in the middle, like I'm not included (as a woman), I have a little tantrum inside don't go back to that church (we talked about her looking into some of the more Goddess-centered traditions and communities in the Bay Area).

I feel much more open to it (Divine Feminine), more open, more aware. The biggest piece for me is a willingness to explore the feminine, instead of a cold, trapped fear, there is a curiosity. I have more interest in exploring this Lover archetype you're talking about, goddess energy. I spent years at this Bay Area graduate school neglecting the Goddess. It was a nice experience; I think it was a testament of being ready, and not holding on to control, masculine control on things. I am sad that this study is over, only four weeks, because I don't think as women in this culture we are given enough time to spend together.

Bellagrun articulated her body image after completing the experiential process. She also described in detail some of her new perceptions, ideas, and experiences, which show a dramatic shift in her body image and her new relationship with the feminine:

I don't how to say this without being cheesy. I feel like there was a point where I looked in to the mirror, and I saw the progress I had made with exercise and diet, and it wasn't like I had been exercising more or eating less in these last four weeks. One day I just stood in front of the mirror and noticed the progress, and was feeling good about myself, instead of "Ugh, there is so much more to do, ugh, I'm never going to fit into my dress the way I want to. My mom is going to comment on how I should have lost more weight!" Instead of feeling these heavy, negative things, I thought this is good, and if I don't lose any more weight, I'm going to be just fine. This is the most ridiculous thing in the world, but in accepting myself, I am inspired to eat healthier. It was like a pressure was off. Instead of external pressure, it became internal motivation.

Why was I listening to these other people (their criticism)? That's about them, that's not about me. And when I do stop and think about what is it about me that I want to nourish about myself? It's different than what I am hearing; it's different than what I see in magazines; or from patriarchal women in my life; it's different than the messages I'm getting. When I stopped to listen to my body, I was told something else; my [internal] team kind of gathered. My brain got aligned with my body. We're a good team! When it's dissociated, it's no wonder we feel separated from our

connection to the earth, and from whatever nourishes us as women.

Everything is so patriarchal, and so masculine, I had no idea I had bought into that until I saw how much I was buying into it. I can even see it in my own closet: minimizing my curves, lots of black and gray, lots of masculine colors. I don't have patterns, I don't have bright colors, or anything flowery and lacy. It's all just simple lines, strong pieces. When I look at my closet, it's a little depressing. It's one of the signs that I was buying into this. You know in the field of psychology, it is strong, masculine women who succeed; administrative qualities, if you want to be a program director, you want to be in charge; it's not very honoring of your inner goddess, it's about seeing how structured and linear you can be, very masculine.

You don't know you're not whole until you look at it. I didn't know I was neglecting myself until later. I saw it not just in my professional life but my personal life as well, in relation to the kind of partner I have. My partner is very feminine, and I tend to be more masculine, and we fit really well. But I realized that I was stepping up my masculine, and when I realized this, I stopped. I realized that I can embrace my feminine, and my partner stepped up his masculine, it was interesting to watch the ebb and flow.

I came home 1 day, and I realized that I wanted to pick flowers, and run around in the garden, and just hugged a tree at one point, and I thought that I hadn't connected with my garden in a long time. I was in my underwear, I left my suit and heels by the door, and usually I put them away, but I just left them there. My partner came home to see my clothes on the floor, and he couldn't find me, and he came out back to see me in my underwear, covered in mud. I told that I didn't feel like cooking dinner, I just felt like spending some time in the garden! I'm kind of gardening, kind of dancing in my underwear! We had a conversation about it, and I saw myself as being kind of flaky, although I would like a positive way to reframe that; I was being spontaneous. My partner stepped up his masculine. He took charge and said that we were going to do certain things tonight, and usually that's my job: we'll do this, we're going to have this for dinner, and so on. It was good to see him step up, he was totally flexible. He was sad that our group was ending, he said that I would come home so positive, so energized!

I feel like I gained the experience of seeing myself in a positive light. I tend not to think about my body very much because I tend to be in my head. And being embodied these last four weeks and thinking about my body, and being encouraged, you did it in a gentle way, to take a look, both the positive and negative came up. And that was the only piece of negative that caused any distress. And the moment that I started to feel bad about it, I saw that I could let this go; this wasn't for me, it wasn't about me, I can let it go now.

I think I have a more overarching positive appreciation for myself and the things that I see as valuable and also the things that make me unique. I have honored and appreciated homogeneity for so long, that I neglected fostering things that made me unique, so a desire to explore those things, and try new things, and reaching new limits and finding where they are. Just because I've made this compact box doesn't mean that I have to stay in this box. I've worked really hard to make this box to fit inside it, but there's no need to stay in it; I can go out if I want to. I never realized how much pressure I put on myself, to be this hard-working, overachieving . . . I feel like I have all my ducks in a row finally, and suddenly I'm realizing I don't need my ducks.

I'm really appreciative of the doors and windows that have been opened. And I'm afraid that they may close and I don't know how to hold on to that, so I'm trying to savor the opening rather than control it, to let it go, that those doors and windows will be there for me to look through when I need to. I'm a big preacher of "You can't take care of other people if you don't take care of yourself" but somehow I think I've managed to think that I'm an exception with that rule. I've been playing with the idea of what would I do if I had an hour of time just to myself; I have no idea what I would do with that time. If someone came up to me and said you don't have to save the world I'll do it, you take an hour for yourself, I wouldn't know what to do. Would I go grocery shopping, or pick up prescriptions? What would I do? I feel so bad. I preach taking care of you, but I don't know how to do it for myself.

I think it will come from spending time with other women, I don't think I will get it from them, they are not conscious enough, embodied enough. The men that are my friends, I don't even know if I'd want to . . . see, I didn't know any of the women going in, I didn't even know you that well. I could go

in representing me instead of who my friends think I should be. It's inspiring to get a group of women together, keep this group together; it's just starting and I don't want to give it up. I don't know what this will look like but maybe the Goddess will show me.

Inanna

Inanna is a single, 33 year-old-female. She identifies as heterosexual/bi-curious, and her gender identity is feminine. She is South Asian American, and her spiritual practice is Buddhist. She is a graduate student, and her background is middle class. We met when she first began the graduate program some time ago, and we would chat when we ran into each other. When I began recruiting participants, she responded right away that she was interested.

Inanna spoke on what her body image previously was:

I realized that there is a lot to it. It's not even all external, it's also internal. I have different messages in myself, and they are mostly from early criticism. You know, it's amazing how things like that stay with someone. The messages I have come from the inside out, not the other way around so much. Sometimes I feel like "the other." "The other" can be a lot of things. I guess the other can be what is un-integrated in a person, or something is so different that it can't be integrated. I know now that my body is more than what is on the outside.

Inanna described her experience in Session 1, the collage making session:

Through this exercise, I realized that the way in which I define beauty has changed. A lot more of beauty is internal and reflected through the person's spirit. This is what I see on Oprah's photos. Also, beauty is women being comfortable in them. It is the rugged woman in her scarves and cowboy hat. It was difficult to find images that reflected me in the journals. They seemed too shiny, glossy, and Caucasian. This

was surprising for me. Where are the beautiful embodied ethnic women who have been inspirational in my life? Motorcycles are sexy, as is the woman in the black sexy dress! I guess this is more of the "wilder side" of me that just feels natural. So in conclusion the collage helped me see (or mirrored) how beauty has changed from an external to a more internal piece.



Figure 17. Inanna's collage.

Session 3, the dressing up session, allowed Inanna to express herself in ways that she thought she had long left behind:

I chose clothes that felt sexy and did not feel too off from my identity. I guess I chose the outfit that I would normally see on someone else and say, "Wow, that looks great." I wore a short, colorful dress and black boots. The dress was a new style and felt too cool for how I see myself. But after I wore it, I felt sexy wearing it. And yes, I would wear this dress in public, now. The clothes were more daring than what I normally wear, and it reminds me to wear more of this in public. I usually just dress up for a date, but I guess that

I can dress up for "regular days" too. I wore some of the hip clothes that I don't feel that I wear these days.



Figure 18. Inanna in her sassiness.

Pre-graduate school, I thought it was normal to have a bunch of clothes for going out. Since starting graduate school, I have let go of a lot of "fashion stuff." Today, I remembered this other part of me. I am wondering what my inner dialogue should say or remind me of when I feel judged by others. I saw that inner messages don't determine how I look. In my early 20s, I lived more with my inner and outer self aligned, I made more fun out of fashion. Now in my 30s, I wear things that are down, I wear things that are comfortable. In the session, it was great to try on different looks, and be with other people. It was a safe and fun space.

Inanna described what happened for her in Session 4, the dance and movement session, and how she got in touch with her body:

I was very self-conscious at the beginning of the dance exercise. By the end of it, I felt like I've feel like a let a weight off my shoulders, and invited more fun into my life. I miss this freedom of me, just being me! There are only a few places where I feel like I can totally be me. And dancing (today) is one of those spaces. My body felt very stiff at first. Later I became more grounded in my hips, and could relax within myself. I also could vaguely feel that "what is beautiful" is coming from a more conscious place. This seems to be one of the first times that I am conscious of this.

Movement was powerful. I could move freely. Something woke up in me from that. I realized that there needs to be more fun brought back into this program.

Inanna's breakthrough session was Session 2, in which the body maps were made. She articulated her experience:

I wrote the negative first and then balanced with the positive. I started with criticism first and then found strengths. The strongest messages were about my belly and heart. I was surprised during the body mapping session that I had lots of self-judgment, I had lots of negative messages at first. I was surprised that seeing my "hairiness as a negative" is so natural for me. This is changing, slowly. I said something about my arms, and about my shape. Shape was a big part of it. My curves, my curves are different, depending on what I have then. I have these five pounds that I fuss about. If I have these five pounds, I feel like I'm bloated. Without them, I feel good about my self, lighter, healthier. It's often the base of my body image.

The main messages that I got from others are from my mom saying "stand straight," "walk straight," "be polite." I still have some comparisons from my older sister, she is "skinny, muscular, successful," et cetera. Internally it is more negative. Coming from the Indian culture, and being criticized, it is normal to talk about body/looks in community. But there is nothing in the arena to counter the criticism, or to reflect what I look like in the mainstream culture. But today I sat with more acceptance.

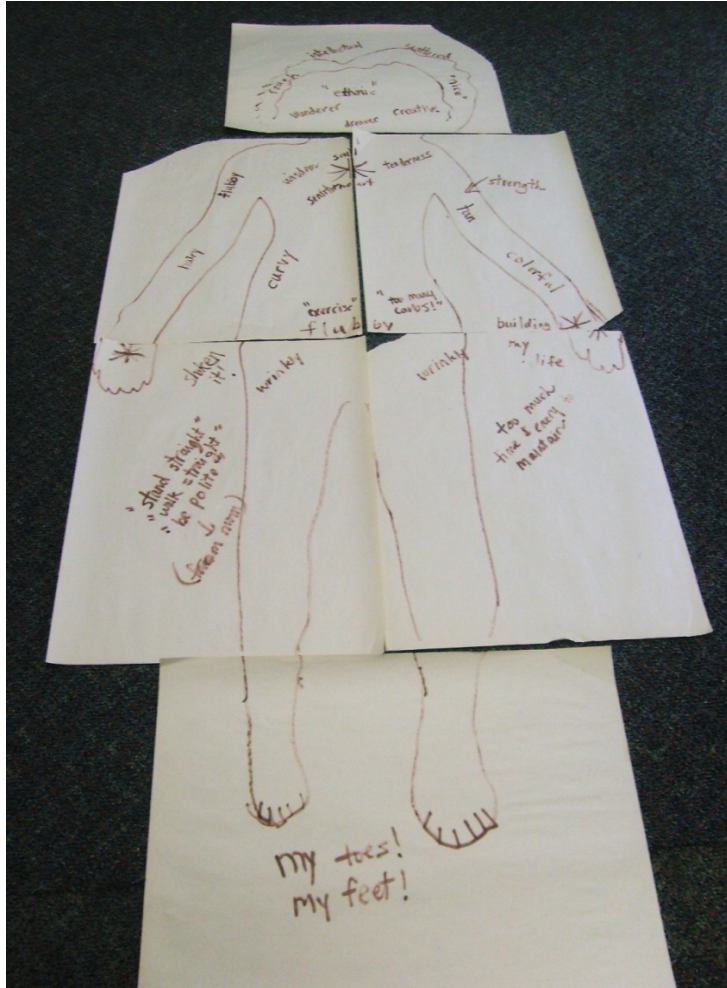


Figure 19. Inanna's body map.

Inanna mentioned the effects of having increased self-awareness around food choices and dietary habits:

I got healthier food today, I went shopping. I now see myself as my body. I know that I can change myself and not just my shape. I want to nourish myself more. I am more accepting of myself now.

Inanna described how the group helped her in her own process:

It definitely helped the process. I didn't know everyone on the group, but it was still good. I saw that we were able to create a container, and it was authentic.

In asking Inanna if she felt the presence of the Goddess,
this was her response:

I did. She was there in some form, I definitely felt something. I appreciated the statues, they were great, it was good to have the altar as part of the room. I especially appreciated the Oshun statue; I saw a presentation about her some time ago, it was good to have her there.

Inanna explained her body image after the completion of the experiential process, and how it continues to transform:

I realized that there is a lot to it. It's not even all external, it's also internal. I have different messages in myself, and they are mostly from early criticism. You know, it's amazing how things like that stay with someone. The messages I have come from the inside out, not the other way around so much. I know now that my body is more than what is on the outside. Rather than thinking how is my stomach today, I will think, how is my whole self today?

You know this morning I was looking at myself in the mirror and I thought, hmm, I have a bit of tummy, but so what? This is my body. I have more acceptance around what I look like. I thought that this is my body and I have to love it as it is, I have to love all of me.

I did some shamanic journey work the other day, and this (body image issues) was part of it. The work that I started with you has evolved. It was a shift, like in therapy, though through a different container. I'm working on it, and its wide open!

Lupe

Lupe is a single, 26-year-old female. Her sexual orientation is straight, and her gender identity is queer. She is of mixed ethnicity, being half Mexican and half Irish. Her religious affiliation is Catholicism, though her spirituality goes beyond that. She is in a graduate program, and her background is lower

working class. We met through her involvement in the Diversity Committee, and she was eager to participate in my study. She described her body image before the experiential process began:

In this study, I know that directly before the process I was generally in a bad place. I was disconnected. My skin was breaking out, and I did not really want to look in the mirror, because I was psychologically in a bad place and was disconnected from my body almost entirely. Over the years, I've been less and less identified with my body. I don't solely identify with my body, but the way I look certainly affects my mood. And if other people perceive me as ill put together, it would make me feel like I was kind of shitty.

Lupe described her experience in Session 1, the collage making session:

I was feeling really shitty. My collage was darker than I intended it to be. It was supposed to be about beauty, and I had a dark idea of beauty. I was intimidated by other women's collages, other's collages were more externally oriented. I feel like there was a component that I left out, stereotypical feminine beauty. For me at that moment, I did answer the question of "what is beauty?"

I was drawn to faces of familiar people (celebrities). The eyes were of particular interest to me. The thought that came to my head when I was cutting eyes out was that Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Strong colors and serious faces. Men's eyes on women's faces, was going to have them looking through other's eyes. Resonated with eyes that She [the Goddess] chose, blend of perspective. I made a dreamscape: stairs by ocean (it was a personal dream that I had). Woman in surrendering pose on a classical Freudian couch; surrender to things, work through them.



Figure 20. Lupe's collage.

Lupe spoke on how Session 2, body mapping session, was for her, what it brought up:

I was slow to start. All of the superficial things came up first. I remembered all of the comments in Spanish that my mom and tias [aunts] make about me. I got the message that my face was ugly and scary for children [acne]. That I was too boyish in the way I carry myself [short hair]. I drew my vagina last and it felt good to drip blood from it. So often people are disgusted when I talk about it, and I was happy to share. I was a little embarrassed to talk about my hairy pits and legs. For some reason I felt that people would judge that harshly and be grossed out by it. I happen to be feeling good about my body right now, as the outline made me feel better because it accented my small waist.

The messages I got from other people are mixed. People often talk about my big butt and I have been compared to cartoon characters. Feeling like a cartoon isn't always fun. My family gave me shit about my face and hair. They always ask

why I let my acne get so bad and recommend remedies. All of the men in my family hate my hair and people are always telling me to let it grow. Most days I love my short hair, but recently I have decided I might be prettier if it was long.

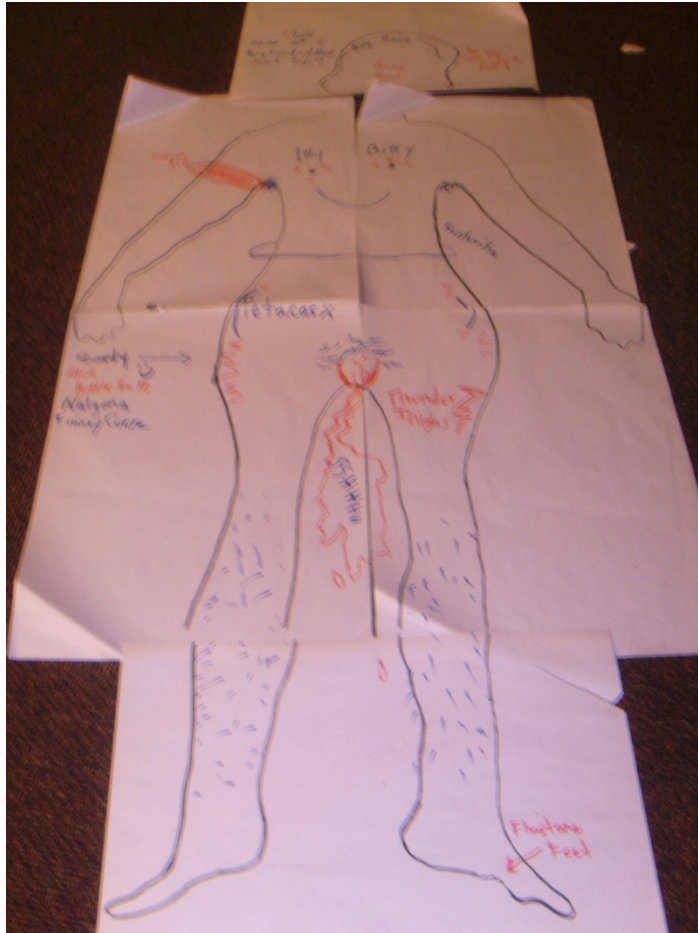


Figure 21. Lupe's body map.

It was interesting to reconnect with childhood voices because I hadn't really been bothered by them anymore. And then I remembered people's comments. It was a reminder, a wake up call to me. You know I've got all the women, beautiful women, in my family. I'm a godmother, I have nephews and nieces, and I always am mindful to not treat them the way the older generation treated my generation, and I don't have any criticisms to offer them. And that (the body map) was a reminder that what is said to me sticks, I carry those messages with me. I try not to, and for the most part I don't let them get me down, but they are there. In tough times I have looked in the mirror and only see the bad, the bad that

was told to me not the bad that I discovered myself necessarily.

Lupe shared her experience of Session 4, the dance and movement session, below. During the session, she had brought music to play, a CD of a popular Latin singer, Celia Cruz, who is from Cuba. Lupe also tore her skirt doing somersaults during this session. She makes a reference to a painting that was hanging in the classroom of Samadhi at ITP which is of Ardhinarishvara, and androgynous deity who is depicted as physically being half male and half female (Cotterell & Storm, 2007):

I enjoyed being a boy/girl, and leading and following. At a club, with men around, I am more in a feminine role, and allow myself to be led. The realization that the last night we were all with women it felt, I didn't feel hyper-feminine, the way I did with men around, so the realization that my sense of femininity and masculinity is altered contextually, that was new. I'd never paid attention to that before.

Here, I felt like a child. Dancing puts me in an altered state and I particularly enjoyed the safety in the room. I was able to close my eyes and be free. The one point in the process I felt like I was at a rave. It felt like I wasn't separate from anything or anyone in the room. I thought of Shiva (looking at the painting of Ardhanarishvara) and I could see his blue skin. I'm still bursting with energy. I was moved to do cartwheels and in doing so tore my skirt. It was great, jumping singing, and clapping. Words do the experience little justice.

My body felt great. I am always worried that my sweat will gross people out, I was a little proud of it today though. If embodiment means being fully present in my skin and not separate from it, then that's what I felt.

Session 3, the dressing up session, was the most poignant for Lupe. She explains what unfolded for her:

My process started slow, I felt a bit nervous to start, but once the music started I was excited to try on wigs and hats and to take my clothes off. I wore a slinky, silky dress and a couple of long wigs to contrast to my short hair. I put on some dark lipstick towards the end that was great! I loved the lipstick and hats, I felt cute in them. It was great to get feedback from the other girls.



Figure 22. Lupe, the silky mermaid.

Certainly feminine, long hair was a "theme" at first, but the lipstick made me feel good about my natural hair. I think I was exploring a bit with time periods on different "looks" from the '20s/ '30s to the '70s/80s.



Figure 23, Lupe, the colorful gangsta.

When we all got to dress up, sharing space, doing ourselves up, it tapped into a part of me that had not been accessed at all. It was very free, and uninhibited spirit. It made me feel like a kid, without anyone telling me to sit down and be quiet, cross your legs, don't wear that, don't put that on your face, so it was nice to be in that space again. It lent (freedom of expression) and company, more than anything it was very magical and supportive company.

I think in retrospect session 4, and session 3 have the same feeling. Even though in session 3 we were in women's clothes, I don't necessarily relate women's clothes and make up with women. I have male friends that are cross-dressers and drag queens. Having the power to alter the way you look, in a way that suits you no matter your gender . . . and that day I was unshaved and I didn't have a bra, I came as I was. The last day was good. I feel privileged to have that opportunity.

Lupe talked about her food choices and what her reactions to the refreshments were:

When there was anything that was really good and sweet, I felt that I had to stay away from it. I just felt like I didn't want to be greedy, and hog it all, like get away from the brownie, I'm going to eat it all! And I noticed myself being kind of picky about bell peppers. And I thought what's my problem? It was good, I was just being a stinker, not wanting to...did you serve them with sweets? I was in a funky mood that day, so nothing tasted how I wanted to.

The group had a very positive impact on Lupe, as she related below:

I loved it. I could not have shown up in the ways that I did had it not been for the other women there. As a safe container, as support, and they were more than that, they were partners in crime. Their honesty and trust allowed me to be honest and trusting. It was great. I hadn't realized how important that is (being with other women), because I grew up with my aunts, cousins, sister and mother. And when it was gone, I just attributed a lot of my funk to other things. And being in that group (in the study) it was like wow, naturally my spirits lifted over the course, just being in the company of other women.

There's something very special, the dynamic about being with others of the same sex. Safety and I guess having, being able to share experiences. There were just experiences that were common for us, being socialized as women and born anatomically female, so there were a lot of unspoken things that bonded us, which was nice. I wish there were more opportunities. I'm going to start creating more opportunities!

There was this word that you used, reclaiming, that I liked. I was reading somewhere about older cultures where women and men were isolated, and all the things that women did together, and it was a place to be together. And I feel that our society is losing touch with that. Maybe when we get our nails and feet done, we come in contact with other women, we pay another woman typically to be in contact with us. But other than paid services, and growing up in a family, I haven't encountered many opportunities to be with other

women. I realized that I need to reclaim that, be with other women, and not have to exchange monies and not have to feel guilty, and not have to feel weird, or have people think I'm a lesbian. That's why friends are important, right?

In answering whether she felt the presence of the Goddess,

Lupe answered:

Yeah, of course, the entire time, I was in the presence of Goddesses! It was palpable. And I think that the honest and free energy that was embodied by all of us allowed it to be such a healing, spiritual experience. And it wasn't you know, this foreign entity that I felt unfamiliar with, but definitely a little bit of a mischievous air, being in the presence of Goddesses. The easiest way to understand it is that these other women were glowing, so to speak [seeing the divinity in the other participants].

Lupe noted a shift in her body image, and articulated some of the changes in her perceptions as well as self-image:

After the last day of our process, I went home (to the family) and I wore shorts and a tank top. And I hadn't shaved my armpits or my legs the whole time we had this study. And the only other time in my life that I didn't shave for so long is when I went to India and was isolated. I have never exposed my hairy legs and armpits in public. And during our dress up session I allowed myself to say here are my hairy legs and armpits, and trusted that no one in the group was going to say "Eew, that's disgusting!" And then experiencing people being, okay, whatever. Some women were curious, like, show us your hairy armpits! But no one recoiled in horror or anything. It wasn't a big deal, I was even kind of digging it! It wasn't a big deal.

This morning I was looking at myself in the mirror, like I do every morning when I get ready. And generally for the past week, I've been in high spirits, and when I'm like that I feel good. When I look in the mirror I feel good. And potentially the blemishes and things could make me feel sad and self-conscious; now they're just kind of little quirky parts of me that are not so bothersome.

Interestingly enough, my body image has changed. It's such a privilege to open up Pandora's box and really have sacred

space to work on things with other women that are willing to be honest. It feels like maybe that cleared up some space energetically, to bring consciousness to these issues that I rarely have the opportunity to talk about, like hair, body image, femininity, masculinity, all of these things that are so vital! My world is not just shut up to be communicating about these things frequently. Having the opportunity and the space [to process these things], feels very liberating, and very freeing.

Magika

Magika is a heterosexual, divorced, 28-year-old female. She identifies as feminine for her gender identity. She is African American, and has no religious affiliation at this time. She is a graduate student, and comes from an upper working class background. We met through her involvement in the Diversity Committee, and she eagerly accepted the opportunity partake in my study. She explained her body image before beginning the experiential process below:

The way I look greatly defines who I am, I am black, I look black. It is a huge part of my identity, more so than being a woman, being a New Yorker, being heterosexual. It's more than just appearance. It adds to my identity, body image, and how I carry myself.

I think generally I have an experience about my body, it's very contextual, in some contexts I like it, in some I don't. In some of the contexts, I am participating in this research, I have a good body image. As a fitness instructor, my body is a plus. I teach dance and my body allows me to do that, which I'm very grateful for. When I was not dancing many years before, I had some mild depression, and now that I'm doing it regularly again that my outlook on life is better! It's my thing but I wish I could just get paid for it. I like to be active and moving, and my body allows me to do that. I need to eat more regularly to sustain my body, that is one part that...I'd like to have the discipline to take care of it, I'm just lazy. With the amount of movement that I do, I should be

eating six times a day and I don't. And I want to, I don't want to hurt my body by exerting more energy and give it more efficient fuel. I don't want to abuse my body. In that way it's kind of a harmful act towards me.

Also being a black American the body type is supposed to be voluptuous, that is still with me. And I'm very muscular, and slim, and not soft, and not very curvy. I feel envious, I do, of women with curves and everything. I can't imagine being any other way; if I just woke up one day with watermelon boobs and a juicy butt, I'd be like, "Aaaaaaaah! What the hell happened to my body?!" I'm so used to being in this body, I wouldn't be myself. It's kind of like one of those things that is best to stay in the realm of fantasy, I can fantasize about having a soft, curvy body, but if it were to come true, I would probably freak out!

I know that for the average person the average body goes through a lot of changes. As you get older, I'll be thirty next year, but in terms of my body, I haven't gone through many changes at all. When I see pictures of myself as a teenager, when I was young and first entered puberty, my body has pretty much been the same, for a long time, for over ten years. My body is me, and it hasn't changed much, with the exception of my hair, which changes all the time. My hair is part of my body but I definitely see more of my external changes through my hair, not necessarily my body. It's been a constant . . . people can look at me and recognize me because I haven't changed. I guess that's not a bad thing. My face looks a little older, my face. There's more scars, yeah, from playing rough and things like that.

Magika shared her experience of Session 1, the collage making session, and all that it brought up for her, not just in terms of body image, but in terms of race and ethnicity as well.

I really like collages; I'm trying to improve my collage making abilities. I like having the colors flow. I'm not going to lie, one of my motivations was to make something that was aesthetically pleasing. I wanted to make something that signified what is beautiful; I wanted it to be a cohesive piece. Because I knew it was a body image project, I wanted to find pictures of me: I think I'm beautiful, and I wanted to really find pictures that reflected what I thought about others and myself. I found a piece that was a

background, which was a beach. My introverted side is underdeveloped, and the ocean is one of the few places I feel at peace, like I'm not alone, the ocean has a presence. Then I tried to find women that looked like me, most women were in poses, and I wanted to find someone real.



Figure 24. Magika's collage.

I have a really challenging time identifying with women that are white. I look at race as a spectrum, it's weird, and I know that not just how it is, but being a black American is like that. There's juxtaposition between black and white in this country. Black and white people have the longest standing history of being in this country, not counting Native Americans. White people came here, and black people were brought as slaves; both races came here later on their own. So black and white people have a concurring experience, so that's why there is this historical trauma in me and I'm very serene about it. I think a lot of black people don't think about it, I'm a history buff; it's kind of absolutist, that's why I don't want to invalidate anyone else's experience in coming to this country; God knows it's hard being in this country. So I see juxtaposition between black and white and I have a hard time identifying with white women and that's why I chose to put words on my collage instead of images. I found the one *Essence* magazine that had women of

color but I didn't identify with them, because I consider myself the average Jane and they were high fashion, drop-dead gorgeous, black models with long weaves. I don't see myself that way, and they didn't look real.

I was telling my roommate who is white about it. I just love her to death; I call her my-sister-from-another-mister, and was explaining to her that I like to look at health magazines. In there they are action oriented, they're not posing. They look like me, they are muscular and toned. They are smiling, they look normal, they're eating, they're running with a dog, and usually in fashion magazines they look unhappy. Looking at health magazines I feel affirmed. I love gossip magazines, I read those too. So in my collage I was pleased with what I used, I was pleased with the theme. I liked the woman with a fro that I chose as the main image. I liked ultimately how it came out.

Magika spoke on what came up for her during Session 3, the dressing up session, which she saw as her favorite session:

That was my favorite. I loved the clothes that were brought in, the wigs I brought in. I do feel like a different person with wigs on. I loved the sarongs because you can wrap them up and make them into anything. I like the creativity they allow. I generally don't wear hats because they mess up my hair. I really enjoyed being with the others, dressing putting on make up, it was like we were getting ready to go somewhere. For the outfits I chose, any intention was to dress up in a way I ordinarily won't do, but also to look good. I wanted to look glamorous and flashy in the way they do in fashion shows. They look outlandish and I tried on things that don't fit in any "real life" context but they still look beautiful, not like a joke. I gravitated to colors, however, that are a little brighter than what I would normally wear, but were still safe.

When another participant suggested a brighter colored dress I felt different. I felt upbeat and exuberant. I wouldn't wear those colors in my normal life because it feels too attention grabbing, but the colors really match the way I feel inside. I brought in all the wig selections. I love wigs, they really allow me to embody different personalities. My favorite was

the afro wig. I feel really powerful and beautiful in it. That is the same reason for adding tribal marks on my face with makeup. The afro wig and marks connect me to my heritage, but also look contemporary beautiful and fashion forward.



Figure 25. Magika, the sassy lady.

During the discussion portion, two of the participants had the feeling of getting ready with their sisters and mothers, and I don't have that growing up, so it was fun to have that with the other ladies. Once we showed off the finished product, it was great. It allowed us to have fun and have humorous moments, I like those. It was silly, and I like being silly. And I like what I had on, I wanted to look pretty, it wasn't all a joke. I enjoyed it very much. I still have hang ups like when we took pictures of the dress up. I guess I like myself when I'm not looking at myself. When we did the map, I looked at myself, when we did dress up and took pictures, I looked at myself, you know. Instances

where I am prompted to look in the mirror, I get in a negative zone. As a result of this study, I feel more connected in myself; because it was with a group of women. I was part of a group, so there is a nurturing element that allowed me to not focus on my self. Some parts are touchy-feely, and I wanted to be respectful of the women, and not say things that were too touchy. So in that way, it took the focus off of me.



Figure 26. Magika getting her groove on.

Session 4, the dance and movement session, was also meaningful for Magika. She explains below:

I really wanted to experiment with movement. Being a trained dancer I have a library of movements I can refer to. I have muscle memory of movements. I was trying to purposefully feel awkward at times, like during the Michael Jackson song, I know I don't look like him or can move like him, but I tried! With some of the hip-hop movements, those are some of the ones that I was least comfortable with; I still tried them to see if I could see if I feel free. I thought, what would I do

with my body, other than the two-step? Since I'm not trained in hip-hop, I don't have a dictionary of moves, so I was making stuff up, and I hope I looked good. *I'm pretty!* I like the way I feel when I dance. I like my body when I dance; I like how it allows me to speak. I think my body makes the movements look interesting and *powerful!* There was more freedom here than at the club, where it's crowded! If I have space, I love it, so I can do wide, big movements; I can run across the room, do whatever. I also like to take dance classes, so there is space in the studio to move around. I dance in my living room or at the club, where the space is small, so I like to be able to move around! I like my body when I dance. I hope it looks good, but if it doesn't . . . I'm not going to lie, the aesthetics of dance attract me to it, but I try to go with more of the feeling of it.

I felt embodied in a sense that I was attended with the music. Music is really important to me. I like to listen for the subtle sounds that make the song rich and I like to punctuate the rhythms with movement. My goal is to make it seem as if the music is coming from my body. I am slowly regaining confidence in my abilities as a dancer. I used to train with the hopes of becoming a professional dancer. Now that the pressure is gone, I have the freedom to do what feels good. When I was unable to perform steps it decreased my self-esteem. I thought my body literally was unable to move the way I wanted it to. Now I do what I please without caring how it comes out. As a result I dance with more passion and motivation. That really comes through, I love the way it feels and I love the way my body responds to different music.

Session 2, the body mapping session, was the most poignant for Magika:

The one that made me reflect most was the map. Generally my issues lie in the butt area. I deal with the flatness of the booty. That experience made me think of all the things I want to change. It let me go through all the issues with a fine-toothed comb. I didn't give it much thought, but it was a good thing to go through all the things I'd want to change if I could. But then listening to other people, I saw that we were worrying about these small things, and I realized how stupid it is. I was worrying about these small things, and it

was like what, what are you talking about? I don't see these things when I look at you, and you probably don't see those things when you look at me, so I worry over these tiny imperfections that no one is going to notice. In the grand scheme of things, that's something that I don't think about. Sometimes when I do a scan in the mirror, it's like, oh, look at my stretch marks, look at this scar, look at my raisin boobs (laughter), but they are just passive parts. I don't focus on them for long but I really shouldn't focus on them at all, it's just triggering. I'm the only one thinking about it. It makes it real because it's my experience, but sometimes a general consensus is a good thing, from the outside looking in, like here's the birthmark on my back, the corns on my feet, and maybe there is nothing you can do.

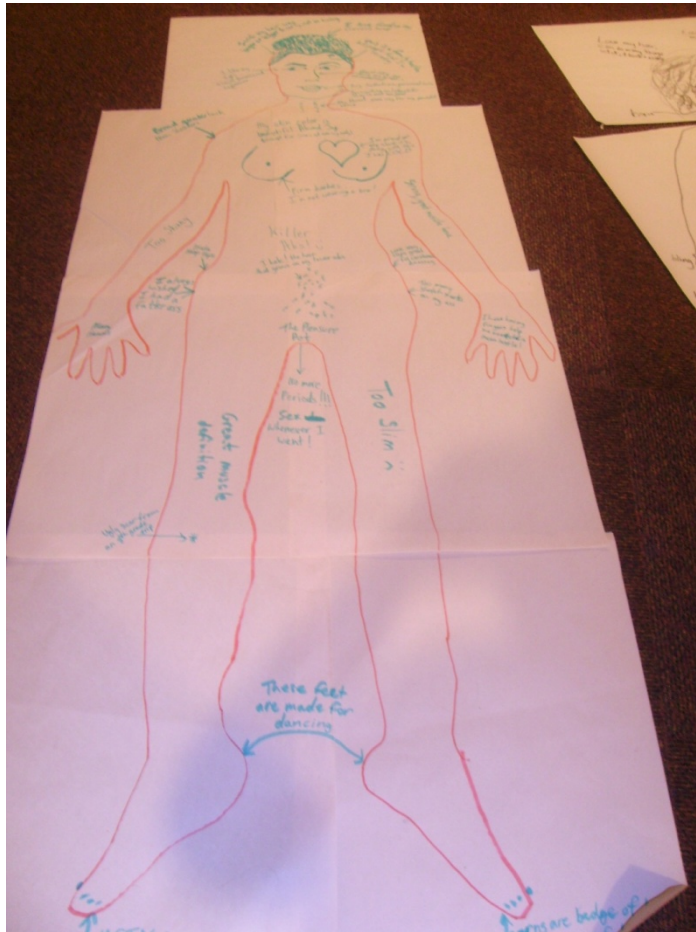


Figure 27. Magika's body map.

The messages I heard from others were that I was too skinny. My body is this way naturally and doesn't require any work to maintain it. People assume that I sculpt my body intentionally so they have said things like "you need to gain

weight," or "you're too skinny," but my feelings were hurt because I'm sensitive about my weight. I've also been made to feel that I wasn't smart so I am sometimes insecure about my intelligence. Sometimes general consensus can be bad, but you can pick the messages that empower you. You can choose the messages to empower you; I choose the ones that empower me.

Magika mentioned her food choices, and that she was satisfied with the choices that she had been making:

I ate almost all the food choices, veggies, fruit, and sweets. I made my choice based on whatever I happened to be closest to. I usually eat sweets all the time with no issues about it. I could like to eat more veggies and fruit because they are good for me. But they are not as sensually fun as sweets. I ate the hell out of the brownies because they were yummy. I loved them and loved the way I was able to enjoy them. I ate the chocolate. I felt no guilt and it was delicious as I ate the pieces over and over. *I'm pretty!*

Magika had a mixed experience of the group, with racial dynamics being an important part of it:

I found the group to be supportive, I know them from outside this context, and it was great. Different perspectives and no one gawked at anyone's perspectives. I think people had a good time and no one was competitive. We were sharing and it felt like we had a very communal vibe.

The group hindered me at times. It was such a multicultural group, and I appreciated that. Sometime if I'm the only one though, if I'm the only women of color, I feel censored. I don't want to be perceived as the representative of my entire race. That happens with people of color, even though everyone else was a person of value, but there is something about being black. Most of the stereotypes affiliated with being black are negative, otherwise have to do with dancing or singing.

This project was about body image and women gripe, but I didn't want my gripes to be about every black woman! There's the stereotype of black women being sassy and angry, and I don't want to come across like that, I would confirm some sort of stereotype. I find it interesting, the standard of

aesthetics are so different across the races. Everyone wants to be thin, and I want to have a big butt, thunder thighs, and be round, and soft, and luscious. And I think people look at me weird when I say that!

About feeling censored, it's my own baggage, and I'll just be honest, I'm not trying to be racist, but it was because we had the one white person in the group. I feel that as a counselor and doing multicultural classes and things like that white women have their own body image issues, all women have their own body image issues. Because of the hidden standard in mainstream culture, there are certain things that they do not think about at all. I sometimes feel like I don't want to turn things into teaching moments (not knowing what people in the room already know); I want to just be there and speak, and have people understand me. That happens sometimes, because I have white friends, I have a white boyfriend. Even if I was dating a black person, there would be teaching moments because we come from different backgrounds. Maybe just a group of black or Latina women, I would have just gone on and on (because of shared culture and feeling more comfortable).

Magika explained her recent exploration of spirituality and how it related to embodiment and the experiential process we had just completed:

I recently started writing this paper in embodiment and dance, and the premise of the paper is that dancers can find embodiment and spirituality through technical dance. In dance you are mimicking someone else's movements, and it becomes very cognitive, the story, the meaning it may inspire can get lost. So in embodying the movement, how does that strengthen your spirituality? I had to define spirituality; I found one definition that I added to: spirituality is a non-ordinary state of consciousness or being.

Anything that brings you to that point (a non-ordinary state) can be sacred. Interacting with others helps me to get to that point, since I am an extrovert. So interacting with other women to me was a reflection of my higher self, because when I am with other people, I am trying to be the best that I can be, I try to tap into my higher self. Of course ego is mixed up in there somewhere, but it was spiritual for me. The latter two sessions were more spiritual than the first two. I

had some sort of element of performance, and when I perform, I have this (divine inspiration).

Magika articulated that she now has a different view on how she sees and relates to her body:

When I look in the mirror I find that I want to look at myself in the mirror less. I have large mirrors in my room. My room is small so there is a good chance I will see myself. I do think that upkeep is important, I want to look good, and I want my man to continue to be attracted to me. It's not that I don't care how I look. But I think that not reflecting helps my confidence because it helps me to not nitpick. I give myself a look in the mirror for an overall look to see if I look good, rather than look at my ears, my eyebrows, my booty, and have a reductionist view.

After doing the body map, I don't want to have a Gestalt-like view of my body. I'd like to see myself as a whole, all things that I like, all the small things that I don't like, it's still a whole. It was really funny, silly, and then it was annoying to be thinking about all of these small things, that's what the body map brought up for me. I think about these small things that are wrong with me, but I don't think about all the things that are right about me. When you're looking at the mirror, you're looking at yourself, but when you are looking at the floor, it's abstract, and you can get a different view. That's what I got out of it, a different view.

Sun-geo

Sun-geo is a single, heterosexual, 28-year-old female. Her gender identity is feminine. She is Vietnamese American, and does not have any spiritual affiliation at this time. She is a graduate student with two B.A. degrees already, and her background is working class. We met in the library and began chatting when I commented on how fashion savvy she was. She had been looking forward to my study since then, and signed up as a participant as

soon as I began recruiting. She explained her body image before beginning the experiential process:

I felt pretty conscious of my body already. I used to go to the gym a lot already before I started grad school. Since then I have been going less, and I think the gym has a lot to do with how I feel about my body, how well I take care of my body. How I am eating, just how much work I've been putting in to it. So I haven't been so much in the last 6 months, since my priority is academics, school, since right now I have a lot of work. I'm conscious of my body but not exceedingly proud of it. I'm not keeping up with my body, and my strength. Going to the gym for me is not about getting skinnier, it's about being more toned. When I walk around being more toned, and more conditioned, I feel stronger, more alive, more appealing, more like a warrior princess!

Sun-geo had increased self-awareness throughout all of the sessions. She explains what happened for her firstly in Session 1, the collage making session:

For the collage, I didn't know that I viewed beauty so much in abstract concepts of what life meant. I had pictures of family, relationships, a man and woman together, connections, nature. I had a few images of females that I thought were cute, but I didn't have too much concern about culture. When I heard the other participants share about culture, I thought about it. I tried to present my art as my own culture. I didn't have many images of people that were Asian (from my background). When Magika said that she couldn't find images of people like her, I realized I wasn't looking for that. My view of beauty is from a more philosophical aspect. I like to see beauty in cultures, which is why I like to travel, but I didn't express that in the collage. I also didn't express women idols; one person, Maya (the singer), and I think that's it. I didn't put any other celebrities, not that I don't find them physically beautiful it's just that I don't know them, their biographies well enough to know if I consider them beautiful. I didn't bother including actors and actresses. For gender, I see men and women to be beautiful. I do like to say men are beautiful too, but I think that women are more naturally beautiful. My collage was very feminine.

Session 3, the dressing up session, was enjoyable for Sun-geo, and had some slight affects for her:

I had a lot of fun not caring about looking how I should look. For example for wear is more conservative. Tonight, I got to play and express myself! I wore skirts, tank tops, and artistic put together. I really liked it when I'd wear a wig and posed. I was glad that I didn't care about being "proper." I liked showing my skin and not worrying that men would gawk at me or women would talk behind my back. I feel I wore what looked best on me color-wise and style wise. I was going for the laidback island style. There, skin is shown and body is looked at differently than here in Northern California. I noticed my theme was unique and funky.



Figure 28. Sun-geo's laidback look.

For the dress up it was more of a subtle change because I dress up all the time. It's not like I completely reinvented

myself, though it was fun. I already use clothing to express myself. When I was traveling a lot, and I couldn't do art work I would use my clothing as art work. I didn't challenge myself to dress up like a hip-hop dancer or librarian, because then I wouldn't be expressing myself. That would just be putting on a different image, and how long could I hold it? So I did what I did to express myself.



Figure 29. Sun-geo as hip-hop queen.

Session 4, the dance and movement session, was fun and liberating for Sun-geo, bringing about the experience of embodiment as well:

During the dance and movement, I didn't care that I was dancing to music that I didn't put on. I was able to transcend my own beliefs on what was danceable. At first through the person, depending whose music it was, I felt connected to them, and then I would fall into it. I had a

personal element to it then would get into the music. The community connection helped me become more inclined to let it all out. Listening to my own CD, I burned it last minute; I danced to what I wouldn't usually. So I was able to let loose and move my body in all different ways. At times I would look around and get out of experience of being completely embodied in the experience, but it was also part of it, seeing different women dance around.

In Session 2, Sun-geo made a color-coded body map, with one color for positive messages, the other for negative messages; she was the only one to make such an obvious distinction on her body map:

When we made the body maps, I color coded the messages, I think purple and red, and one color was for positive and one was negative. I wasn't quite conscious of what was more positive and negative, so now I'm aware of that. I'm kind of not caring anymore. It's not a big deal. Who cares if my toes are long, if my back gets chubbier quicker than my legs or something like that? I'm actually realizing how ridiculous those negative things are, because why should I feel bad about myself if that is the natural way my body changes? Before I felt that about my hands, I would see them less. Now that I look at them I see that they're really nice. Before my friends and I would joke about my hands being E.T. hands, but now I see that it's ridiculous and same thing about my feet. Once I kind of look at it I see that if I can make a joke out of it, then I can let it go. I can look at it and say that's what makes me unique. I feel like I can play with myself now, like I can laugh at it, like why does it have to be negative?

About my back, that is something that runs in my family, all girls. I hadn't even thought about it until one of my sisters brought it up, "Oh you have the Pham (chubby) back too!" It's ingrained by the people around me sometimes, what matters to me. Messages about my body from other people were numerous. My toes, arms, back, were features I got comments on from my family. My hairline, breasts, arms, from inside myself. My mom made me feel great about my face and hips. My vagina-myself. I used to be very self-conscious about my being too skinny. So, now that I am more voluptuous, I love it. Except when there is excess and it feels unnatural.



Figure 30. Sun-geo's body map.

I have a friend that is gorgeous, and she has pimples on her back so she wouldn't wear anything backless, and I wondered why she would care about something so small. Even with this [discoloration on upper arms] I will still wear something sleeveless, like who cares? I do feel like a minor thing. If I were to wear certain clothes to cover it, it's a bigger issue. It's like in middle school; it was not wearing certain shirts because I had no boobs! That was a bigger issue, but the bigger thing is the thing on my arms. Another thing is that my skin on my face and neck are different colors! I can wear makeup; it makes it look more unnatural. It's minor, but it's something that I thought about today, when looking in the mirror and putting on makeup.

Some features are more subtle, some are more obvious. Looking at myself more negatively, that was obvious, and now I have changed. That was embarrassing that I had some small thing, and I felt bad about it, that I made a big deal about

something that doesn't matter. It only matters to me, and that's kind of vain? Like who cares about the pimples on my arms?! If I were to do the body map now, I would like to think that it would be all positive, or mostly positive. It takes time to accept it, like it doesn't happen right away. I remember you talking that way too, and that helped, I brought that to myself. Like you talked about criticism you had received, then you said, "Who cares?" You showed that there are still things that you are working on.

I've started paying attention to my stretch marks, because before I didn't. Somebody talked about it in our session, and I think about them. But they don't bother me, it just kind of looks like a watermelon rind. I was just thinking I lose weight, I gain weight, and of course I'll have stretch marks. But it doesn't bother me. I feel good about my body. I wish I could be less clothed more often, I appreciated my skin.

A poignant issue that came up for Sun-geo was around her use of cosmetics, and some of the judgments and stereotypes that she had faced in the past around her choice to wear makeup:

I put on makeup almost everyday. I wear more at nighttime. I like to play with different colors, mostly lips, different shades. My eye makes up stays pretty much the same, the same shades. I'm more self-aware when I'm putting on makeup. Sometime I feel a little insecure that maybe I wear too much, if others around me are not wearing it. Is it just another art costume glamming things up for the day? So I'm aware of it. Even in indigenous cultures, they use natural things to be made up, it's art. It's also discerning other people's opinions, its like am I masking, or am I concerned with how other people think? Am I expressing myself or do they just see me as masking? We can't please other people anyways, so I'll do what I want. If you look a certain way, people assume you are a certain way. I have felt that even here, with a community in which we share a vision. I thought perhaps because I do wear make up and dress like I do that people might assume that it's not artistic, that I'm self-absorbed or something like that. I can feel it when certain people talk to me, but not others, but oh well!

Sun-geo spoke on issues with food choices that came up for her:

I usually never feel guilt about eating something, unless it's artificial unnatural, bad, dead food. That's the only time. I don't feel bad about eating too much chocolate or bread. And I actually eat so much bread I probably don't get enough protein. My body right now seems to not mind, like I don't feel that my body is saying that I'm eating too much. I tend to go towards fruit first, because it is natural sugars, it tastes better. Then I'll go for the chocolate. And about the food, I also go for what tastes good. So I didn't really feel guilt about anything, except for not eating to overdo anything so that my body would have a balanced amount of nutrition. I tried a little bit of everything.

Sun-geo articulated how the group was helpful for her, and how those in the group were able to help her broaden her perspective:

I think it helped (to be part of a group). I really did like hearing what other people's input was. Magika talked about the cultural icons, with skin color being interesting. It awakened a part of me that I tend to not hope for; in mainstream media I do not expect to find a Vietnamese celebrity. If there is an Asian person, they look really plain, like they just came from Vietnam. I don't expect to see someone who is Westernized; maybe in some music videos, but not really in magazines. There are differences, like there might be Chinese and Japanese people, but not Vietnamese.

And for what Lupe brought up, the experience of feeling genderless, that was interesting. I want the experience of feeling more genderless, like not needing a man to feel completed, but also want to surrender to union. So in union there is like a man and a woman, and there are different parts that do best, which are how Lupe said things, and it was interesting to hear that. I'd never heard of that, not moving like a female. If I was the blue man (Shiva), or the other half, how would I have danced? I never really thought of that. That was good for me to hear.

Also from you, meeting you at school, and to hear you talk on a little more personal level, I liked it. I liked being in the group and being able to respect each other's views and opinions. We were judging to appreciate each other, not to put each other down. It was very safe, contained, and worry-

free, just letting go. It felt great to be in the group. If I were to do it alone, I may have been more judgmental about myself. Seeing other people, I could hear them and not judge myself more. The group helped facilitate acceptance and balance.

The Goddess' presence was felt by Sun-geo throughout the experiential process, and she explained how that was for her:

I felt it most in the dance session. I don't think it had to do with the music, but it was letting the music take over. The body image, it was still very much like we were judging ourselves from a personality level. In the collage session maybe there was a higher source there in the cutting and pasting; it was there, but it wasn't as obvious as the dancing. As an artist, I tend to experiment in different ways. The clothing session, I didn't feel like something took over me, it was still coming from the personality level. The next strongest was the collage day. The dancing: I would decorate the movements with what I knew, but the movements came from another source, it was more vibration-related, invoking in my body. My personality came through in the style of the dance, but it wasn't the main core of the dance.

Sun-geo expressed some of the changes in her body image since the completion of the experiential process:

I feel like I move in different ways, because I moved so differently during the dance (session). I felt like I should move my body more, not just be concerned about posture all the time, be more flexible in my movements. I'm also more aware of what I used to know as negative about my body as before. I'm pretty aware of my shape. Every time I look in the mirror I like to look at my shape. It changes; my hips change. My breasts change depending on the time of the month. And I can see the changes; I'm not really fixated on what it looks like, when I gain weight or lose weight it changes. I like to be somewhere in the middle, and see how it changes on my structure, my natural structure.

One thing I would like to include is that I'm more actively aware of looking out for women icons to look up to and respect not just abstract, philosophical concepts. Not just in people, but in their stories, and what's behind them. And there are a lot of women out there who have struggled, and I

respect them. But I've learned to appreciate those who haven't struggled, and appreciate them too, that I can like someone just for their looks, like a celebrity or a model. Like what is behind that, why do I need someone to have substance, like a model? Like a Victoria's Secret model, I have trouble appreciating someone just for their beauty. So I'm on the lookout for women role models. Like how you explained these different goddesses, I would like to learn more about them, like archetypes. I want to learn more about more about these things.

To move forward and be more grounded in and understand the experiences of woman, I think it's overall what I've learned. Body image and these other things are parallel experiences that we have. I don't think I've ever talked about body image with my girlfriends before. We talk about family stuff, boyfriend stuff, not how do you feel about your changing body? I can be a better friend to my lady friends now. I can better understand myself and others too.

I really appreciate this experience; I've been looking forward to it from the beginning of the school year. I'm very impressed with the way that it was, it was organic yet structured. It was a good experience for me and others.

Synopsis of the Interviews

The narrative portraits are presented to tell the story of each participant's experience. The full interviews along with the journal entries are featured in the Appendixes so that the authentic words of each co-participant are entirely represented. The narrative form of the experiences have not been analyzed, as R. Anderson (2004) explains:

Interviews generate stories. In some cases stories must remain as a unit and not be subjected to analysis, including the interpretative analysis available in intuitive inquiry, because analysis breaks up the integrity of the story . . . the stories, perhaps presented in outline, should be presented intact in Cycle 3 without analyses. (p. 9)

What was your body image before the experiential process?

Each co-participant came in with her own individual body image, complete with strength and insecurities. Each one articulated what her overall body image was. Adelma explained that she had always felt that she was imperfect, many of her insecurities stemming from childhood. In the last several years, however, she had been working to change her body image, and it was far more positive now than it was years before. Amara said that she had always had body image issues, feeling that she was overweight. Around this time, she had chosen to actively love her body. Artemis felt comfortable with her body, and still wanted to work to improve her body and self-image. Athena had childhood beliefs about being fat and unfit; her choosing to participate in this study was part of her choosing to actively address her negative self-image. Bellagrun described her body image as cold, trapped and stifled, feeling that she was androgynous, and more masculine than feminine. Inanna had lots of self-judgment about her body, especially her midsection and weight gain. Lupe felt very disconnected from her body and had been avoiding looking in the mirror as of late. Magika liked her body in certain contexts, but did not like it in others. Sun-geo described herself as conscious of her body, and felt like she had not been taking good enough care of herself lately.

Artemis and Sun-geo both reported relatively positive body images before starting. Amara, Bellagrun, Lupe, Inanna had relatively negative body images before beginning the experiential process. Athena was the most forthright about having a mostly negative body image before entering the study. Magika and Adelma both expressed self-acceptance, Magika's dislike of her body being contextual, whereas Adelma's dislike was focused on one of her features (her feet). Both Amara and Adelma spoke on self-acceptance, saying that they had been working on improving their body images recently, and in Adelma's case, she had been working on it for several years.

What was your process in Session 1?

Adelma's collage expressed that beauty lies in people being who they are, shining as their individual selves. Amara's collage had images of families and nature, displaying her desire to have a family and her connection to nature. Artemis showed the dichotomy between popular culture's view of beauty, and her own view which included nature, family, and being healthy as an individual. Athena found beauty in relationships of different kinds, between people, animals, and nature. Bellagrun saw beauty in nature, in relationships, in connectedness. Inanna saw beauty in individuals that expressed themselves, and were strong and often of color, such as Oprah. Lupe articulated her belief that beauty was literally in the eye of the beholder. Magika tried to find beauty

in images that resembled her, and used words and phrases that talked about quality of life to show what she thought of as beautiful. Sun-geo thought that the exploration of us and the world was beautiful.

Amara, Artemis, Athena, Sun-geo and Bellagrun had images specific to families, animals, and nature, all finding beauty in relationships and connection. Adelma and Inanna found beauty in individual expression. Sun-geo expressed beauty in more abstract terms, and had an overarching philosophy of beauty. Magika had somewhat of a philosophical approach, but she also looked for images similar to herself that would validate her. Magika and Inanna, both being women of color, searched for images that validated them as being ethnic and outside of mainstream culture.

What was your process in Session 2?

Adelma has much acceptance around most of her body, though she was negatively fixated on one feature. Amara found her body image to be more negative than positive, that she spent time cloaking and hiding herself. Artemis shared some of her issues growing up, but on the whole found herself to have a "strong core" as she put it herself and was happy with her body. Athena saw her body image as mostly negative, and shared some anger and pain around how she looked. Bellagrun was surprised by how positively she felt about her body despite the many negative messages she received from her family. Inanna tried to balance the native

messages with positive ones, but realized that internally her body image was more negative. Lupe remembered a lot of family criticism, and it was a wake-up call for her to not be self-critical, and to positively reinforce her younger family members about their bodies. Magika went over all the things she wanted to change about her body, then realized how small and ridiculous some of the things were. Sun-geo made a color-coded body map to show both positive and negative messages that she had about her body, which brought up small things for her that used to bother her; she also realized how silly it was to fuss over these small things.

Artemis showed an overall satisfaction with her body. Amara, Athena, and Inanna saw that their current body image was more negative than positive. Adelma and Bellagrun both felt resilient that despite the criticism that they had received in the past, their body images was more positive than negative. Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo shared in the realization that fussing over small things that they saw as negative about their bodies was a waste of their energy.

What was your process in Session 3?

Adelma enjoyed dressing up and appreciated the company of other women as part of the experience. Amara felt very sexy and empowered in this session, choosing to wear what she normally would not, and she enjoyed herself. Artemis appreciated the safety of being with just women, and liked being able to play with

different clothes. Athena got into a hippie persona and had fun, taking fashion risks she was comfortable with; though she had some insecurity arise around her skin color. Athena also expressed ease in being with the co-participants when being in her hippie persona. Bellagrun started out very uncomfortable, but ended with feeling very feminine and attractive. Inanna reclaimed a fun, sexy part of herself that had not come out years. Lupe experimented with different looks and enjoyed dressing up with other women, and ended the session feeling good about her looks. Magika enjoyed dressing up but realized that the way she typically carried herself was not as feminine as she would like; she was also self-conscious about taking photos. Sun-geo followed a theme of uniqueness for herself, and had fun with the co-participants.

Adelma, Athena, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo all expressed enjoying the company and comradeship of other women as part of the experience. Bellagrun had a breakthrough in her manner of dress, as she wore something she would typically not go near, then at the end of the session, wanted to purchase the dress she tried on. Amara and Inanna reclaimed a fun and sensual part of themselves that had not emerged in several years for both of them. Amara, Artemis, Athena, Bellagrun, Inanna, Lupe, and Magika pushed the boundaries of their self-expression through fashion. All participants expressed enjoyment as part of this experience.



Figure 31. The ladies (Magika, Inanna, Adelma, Athena, Lupe, and Sun-geo).

What was your process in Session 4?

Adelma danced alone and moved to the rhythm of the music, aware of her femininity and feeling deep embodiment. Amara enjoyed shaking her "ass-ets," as she called it, and felt very energized from dancing, realizing that she ought to go out dancing more. Artemis found dancing alone awkward at first, then found it empowering. Athena came to the session but left as soon as the dancing started, feeling overwhelmed with another situation in her life, and felt uncomfortable to dance with others at that time. Bellagrün enjoyed herself, but felt that there was not enough sexual` energy in the room; dance being a medium for sexual

expression for her, she felt something was lacking for her. Inanna found dancing alone very freeing, and appreciated taking the focus off of her mind and on to her body. Lupe enjoyed that there were only females in the room, and that she did not have to stay in a feminine role, but could dance however she pleased rather than be led around by a man; she tore her skirt doing cartwheels. Magika appreciated how much space there was for her to dance, and that she could flow with the music, and do a lot of large, wide movements, and more self-expression. Sun-geo experienced embodying the music, and appreciated her body, feeling that it was perfect as it was; she enjoyed physically moving in new ways.

Adelma, Amara, Artemis, Bellagrun, Inanna, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo all described the experience of embodiment at some point during the session, if not throughout the session. Artemis and Inanna mentioned feeling awkward at first, but becoming more comfortable and enjoying themselves later on. Athena was the only one who was unable to participate in this activity. Adelma, Bellagrun, and Sun-geo specifically mentioned being in their feminine selves during this activity. Lupe, however, experienced "genderless-ness," of not being confined to a gender role, and that she was able to dance however she pleased. Lupe also had an interaction with the image of Ardhinarishvara, the androgynous Hindu deity that there was a painting of on the wall; she described dancing with the masculine part, Shiva, whom she called

the "blue man." Amara, Artemis, Bellagrün, Lupe, Magika and Sun-geo commented on appreciating the variety of musical genres and artists. All of the co-participants that partook in this activity said that they greatly enjoyed the experience.

Which session was the most poignant for you?

For each participant, there was typically a particular session which they experienced as a turning point for them, or that was especially meaningful. For Adelma, it was the body mapping session that was very important, as she put all for her body image issues on paper and remembered the criticism that she received from her family and community from a young age. She was able to work with these ideas in this session, and come to a place of empowerment. For Amara, the body mapping session was also the one that caused the most self-reflection, being inspired by much of what was shared by her co-participants. Artemis found that the collage making session was important for her, as it was an artistic medium that was favorable to her that she wanted to engage in more. She hung her collage in her room, and planned to add more imagery to it, in which she presented the dichotomy between mainstream culture's ideas of beauty and her own ideas of beauty. There were two sessions that brought the most self-awareness for Athena, the first being the collage making session, the second being the body mapping session. The collage she made hangs in her room as a constant reminder of what her definition of

beauty is. The second session's body map was in her car to take to therapy, it being full of her body image issues on which she wanted to continue working. Bellagrun marked the dress up session as her breakthrough session. She needed to talk through some of her concerns, then allowed herself the freedom to use clothing and accessories as self-expression, and went far outside of her own comfort zone as well as enjoyed herself. Inanna realized how many negative messages she had about her body in the body mapping session, and since then chose to look at herself as a whole person rather than fuss over the five pounds of belly fat that would often fluctuate. Lupe saw the dress up session as the most powerful, in which she had the freedom to express herself in multiple ways through different looks. She also greatly appreciated the group she was part of as a supportive presence. Magika found the body mapping session as the most important, as she wrote down things about herself that she wanted to change. But in reflecting on them, was able to appreciate herself more, and realized how insignificant the things she felt bad about herself were. Sun-geo noted two sessions that were especially meaningful, the body mapping session and the dance and movement session. The body map she made showed her both the positive and negative messages that she had about her body, and she also saw how ridiculous it was for her to feel bad about herself over such menial things. In the dance and movement session, she became aware

of how she could move her body, and wanted to be able to move in different ways, and allow herself more physical expression, and enjoyment of her body.

Adelma, Amara, Athena, Inanna, Magika, and Sun-geo saw the body mapping session as very powerful for them, marking it as a turning point with increased self-awareness about their body images and the messages that they had about their body, noting where many of those messages came from. Bellagrun and Lupe noted the dress up session as the most influential, as they were able to experiment with different looks and allowed themselves more freedom of expression. Artemis saw the collage making as the most important for her, and Athena saw it as very important as well. Sun-geo also found the dance and movement session as a second turning point, as it allowed to move her body in new ways, and she gained the awareness of allowing herself more freedom to move her body, giving her a wider range of self-expression.

What came up for you around food choices?

Adelma chose to eat for pleasure, and did not experience any guilt. Amara liked to try a little bit of everything, and felt some guilt about eating bread. Artemis was very balanced in her approach to food, trying different things and sampling the dessert just before leaving, therefore eating less of it. Athena was aware of what was good for her, but chose to eat what she described as "comfort food," which was bread and sweets. Bellagrun would sample

different things. Her new awareness around food during the experiential process elicited more conscious eating, which led to healthier choices in food, also reducing her grocery bill. Inanna also expressed new awareness around food, that she was making more healthy choices in terms of diet, and wanting to take better care of her body. Lupe noticed that she wanted to hoard the desserts for herself, and that she felt that she ought to avoid them to keep her from doing so. Magika would try different things, thinking that she should be eating the fruits and vegetable, but food eating the desserts to be a more sensual experience. She felt no guilt over eating the desserts and enjoyed herself. Sun-geo went towards the fruit first, then chocolate. She tried everything and would try to balance what she was eating for nutritional purposes.

Adelma, Artemis, Magika, and Sun-geo expressed little or no guilt in their food choices, and took pleasure in what they ate. Athena and Amara expressed some guilt over their choices. Lupe felt the need to regulate what she was eating and tried to avoid the desserts. Bellagrun and Inanna, in observing what they were drawn to during the study, both began to eat healthier.

Was being part of a group helpful to you or hindering to your process?

Adelma found the group to be helpful, she appreciated that the co-participants were authentic, willing to share and cooperative. She felt acceptance from them. Amara felt that the others in the group mirrored parts of her, that the 2 Caucasian females in the group mirrored her European side, and the South-Asian American female mirrored her Indian side. She found the group to be insightful and very positive. Artemis did not know anyone coming in but felt comfortable after awhile and appreciated being able to share and be vulnerable, finding the group to be supportive. Athena had mixed feelings about the group, saying that she thought that it was a great group of people, but that she found herself feeling very uncomfortable. Bellagrun appreciated the different perspectives that were shared, and learned a good deal from her co-participants. Inanna did not know everyone, but saw everyone to be authentic, and appreciated the safe container that was created in the group. Lupe saw her co-participants as goddesses, and loved being part of the group, enjoying sharing her experience with others. Magika appreciated the group being multicultural but felt hindered at times on what was acceptable to share in the presence of others in terms of her experience as a woman of color. Sun-geo saw the group as a way to facilitate and balance her process, as well as allowing her the opportunity to learn new things by hearing other perspectives.

Adelma, Amara, Artemis, Bellagrun, Inanna, Lupe and Sun-geo all saw the group as a helpful and supportive part of their process. Amara, Bellagrun, Lupe and Sun-geo expressed appreciation of the different perspectives that were shared and noted learning a lot from the co-participants. Athena, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo specifically commented on how multicultural the group was. Athena and Magika expressed mixed feelings about the group, both saying that they thought everyone in the group was great, but felt a strong degree of discomfort and hindrance.

Did you feel the presence of the Goddess as part of the experiential process?

Adelma did not note a divine presence in the room per se, but did note the energy in the sessions, which was one of openness, acceptance, and compassion. Amara experienced the Goddess as grounding; she experienced the sessions like flowing water, citing Oshun as that kind of energy. Artemis said she did not know if she experienced the Goddess, but she appreciated the altar with the different goddesses on it. She liked the energy in the room, and that the facilitator created a safe container, and exuded self-confidence. Athena was very drawn to the Venus goddess card that she picked up off of the altar and read during every session, which I eventually let her keep at the end of her exit interview. She said that goddess-themed things were popping up everywhere for her, and thus the goddess was showing up for her and pointing out

where she needed to go. Bellagrun appreciated the goddess images and statues that were brought in, and took the time to read the cards and ask about each statue; she felt angry that there was not more such imagery for her to see while growing up and in mainstream culture. The goddess was present for her, and she believes that she will be shown what she needs to do for her growing sense of self-care and expanded femininity that she began working on in this experiential process. Inanna felt the presence of the Goddess in some form throughout the study, but noted the Oshun statue to be especially captivating for her. Lupe noted strongly that she did feel the presence of the Goddess, especially in the presence of her co-participants. Magika experienced the divine the most in the dress up and dance and movement sessions, saying that in those she had the element of performance, which allows for divine inspiration. Magika also mentioned the Oshun statue as her favorite, and felt very drawn to it. Sun-geo experienced the Goddess the most in the dance and movement session, as part of the flow of her dance.

Adelma and Artemis both mentioned the energy in the sessions being one of safety, openness, compassion, and confidence. Amara, Athena, Bellagrun, Inanna, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo all accounted for experiencing the Goddess in some form or the other. Athena and Bellagrun both had newfound interest in learning more about goddess traditions, and exploring the Divine Feminine as part of

their own growth and possibly their spiritual practices. Athena felt drawn to the Venus goddess card, and thus felt called by Venus/Aphrodite. Amara, Inanna and Magika all specifically felt very drawn to the Oshun statue on the altar.

What was your body image after the experiential process was completed?

Adelma expressed the need for more self-love, embracing all of her. Amara was more comfortable in her own body and had reframed her body image in more self-accepting rather than self-critical terms. Artemis said that the experiential process helped her along with more acceptance and self-love that she had been working on for over a year now. Athena noted that she did not expect to have her body image change in just 4 weeks, but that she was able to work on her self-image, and was planning on continuing it. Bellagrün showed radical change on multiple levels, from her eating habits, fashion sensibility, acceptance around her size, shape, and weight, exploring and claiming her own femininity, and overall body image. Inanna showed much more self-acceptance around her size, shape, and weight; she also changed her eating habits as a result of seeing herself as a whole person, and wanted to nourish her entire self. Lupe no longer saw things that previously bothered her as troublesome anymore, but had reframed them as quirky parts of her. She also had experienced a shift in gender identity, and had allowed herself to explore what femininity and

masculinity meant for her. Magika reflected on things that she wanted to change about herself, and decided that tormenting herself over small things was not worthwhile; the experiential process elicited more self-acceptance for her, as well as helping her to be more embodied. Sun-geo also was able to let go of small things that in the past had bothered her, and had more self-acceptance about her body. She also had increased self-awareness about her body, and experienced more embodiment.

Adelma, Amara, Artemis, Bellagrun, Inanna, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo all expressed increased self-acceptance. Amara, Inanna, Lupe, Magika and Sun-geo saw themselves differently than before, reframing their overall body image from a more self-critical one and shifting to a more self-accepting one. Adelma and Artemis both spoke on the experiential process being part of the work that they had been doing on themselves already. Athena and Bellagrun both spoke on wanting to continue shifting their body images.

Researcher's Experience in the Experiential Process

As someone who has consciously worked on her body image for several years now, it was out of my own experiences that I found the inspiration to do this study. I was excited to work on issues I felt passionately about, in the hope to help women transform their self-images to more self-accepting, positive ones. Having completed the study, I feel very encouraged by the results, and am confident that what was done in the experiential process allowed

the co-participants the opportunity to explore their body images, self-images, and brought a shift in their self-perceptions.

As for my own background, I am a 29-year-old female of South Asian descent, born and raised in the United States. Though I appear to be feminine, I see myself as gender fluid, and acknowledge the many parts of myself that could be labeled in numerous ways. I am from an upper middle class background, and have B.A. and M.A. degrees, both in psychology. This dissertation will award me a Ph.D. in transpersonal psychology.

In the role of researcher, I observed the co-participants, as well as participating in the activities of each session, lending to my own process in working on my body image. In the first session, I made a collage with each group, and with the participant that joined the study a little late, I again made a collage with her, yielding three collages (I am including an image of the one that I hung in my room). In running the second session, I made a body map twice. In the third session, I chose not to dress up as I came in dressed as I wished already, though I did add some accessories and brighter lip-gloss while the other co-participants experimented with fashion. In the final session, I changed the music, as well as danced through the entire time. In this way, I was participant as well as researcher.

In Session 1, after explaining the activity and making sure that everyone had glue and scissors, I began my own collage. I

looked for images that appealed to me, choosing women of different body types, ages, and ethnicities. I found this to be challenging, and felt frustration in finding models and celebrities of diverse backgrounds. I would often search for a magazine with a celebrity of color on the cover, knowing that within the magazine there would at least be a spread of pictures of her, if no one else was to be found. I also chose symbolic imagery, such as things that were star-shaped to convey the message to "Shine like the star that you are." I picked bold high-heeled shoes, bright colors, loud jewelry, all of which to me conveyed vivaciousness, power, and daring. I had an image of an interracial couple, which is hard to find, saying that love goes beyond any manmade boundaries. I had an image of a woman in risqué clothing tied to a wheel with daggers being thrown at her; to me, this was her response to criticism that was thrown at her, and she was unapologetic for her sexuality. I had a picture of Michelle Obama with a quote above her head that said "How America flatters her body." As the new First Lady, Michelle Obama is the representative to this nation and the rest of the world what the American woman is (and she is a woman of color as the first lady for the first time in the history of the U.S.), and thus far I find her to be an icon of intelligence, grace, and style. All of these things communicated beauty to me. I enjoyed sharing my collages with my co-

participants. I hung this collage on the door of my room, so I see it in passing several times a day.



Figure 32. Researcher's collage.

I found it interesting how certain images were common among us co-participants. One of the co-participants was in tears when she thanked me for including the picture of the interracial couple, saying that it is near impossible to find such pictures in mainstream magazines. It also recalled her memories of a past relationship with someone that was of a different background, and how painful it was for her that no matter how wonderful this man was, and how important he was to her, her family did not understand, and would not accept him. My having dated people of different backgrounds myself, and being a diversity advocate, the

image of the interracial couple held many meanings, all of them important. I was touched that my co-participant felt so deeply about the picture, and what I was trying to convey, let alone that she shared in my experience. I felt at that moment, with my own eyes welling up, that she and I, briefly, became one being.

In Session 2, I made a body map with both groups. In having each co-participant share, I found myself identifying with much of what was shared by them, even if they did not have my body type or similar issues, the fact that they had a body that they had some insecurities about and found beauty in, and were willing to share about it was enough for me to feel close to them. With some of what was shared, I found myself marvelling at some of the things that women torment themselves over, so many things being unnoticeable to an onlooker unless the so-called flaw were pointed out, or how small or obscure a thing could be, yet how upset someone could be over it. When it came time for me to present my body map, I explained what my body was like, what messages I had received about it, how I felt about it in the past and how I felt about it now. In so doing, I realized that I had come a tremendously long way since I began my journey to consciously love my body. I had completely forgotten some of the previously held insecurities I had. It was not until other participants named them that I remembered I used to have similar feelings, or that I have the same feature they are talking about, but it does not bother me

at all anymore. Before I presented my body map, I quickly squiggled on a few stretch marks and blemishes to show that I too had those problems, but that they were not psychologically problematic for me. The feedback that I received from the co-participants was that they appreciated that I not only shared my own body image issues, but that I also expressed confidence in myself. It was also encouraging to be told that I had a "Bodacious body!"

In giving feedback to co-participants, I was mindful to not tell them how they should feel about their body, rather I tried to reflect some of what they were sharing. I was mindful of what the co-participants were sharing with each other; there were no put-downs or negative criticism. Instead they reinforced each other positively, and complimented each other, often reframing what a particular co-participant had shared in a more positive way. I and other participants often would point out that a particular feature that a participant felt distress over was often hardly noticeable, that unless it were pointed out, it might go completely unnoticed or remarked upon, which indicated the absurdity of some of the insecurities that some of us held.

In Session 3, I did not dress up as I did not feel the need to partake in the fashion experimentation which for me would take some imagination and energy. I had decided to put my energy into facilitating and taking photographs of the co-participants. When I

was egged on a little by a couple of the participants in the Saturday group, I chose to put on a sky-blue feather boa and some shiny, fuchsia lip-gloss, "There, I put on something more dramatic! Ya happy?!" I told them. It was amusing to me. It was enjoyable, watching the inventiveness and creativity of the co-participants. Being in the company of other females having fun, laughing, being playful with each other was not only pleasurable, it was nurturing for me.

I helped some of the participants in getting ready, especially in helping them with cosmetics. My training as a beauty consultant was very useful for this session. One participant went home with a new eyebrow pencil, two went home with new lip-gloss that was brighter than what they normally wore, and one took home a pair of tight pants. I let them have these items as I had plenty of cosmetics at home, much of which I had accumulated for the purposes of this study, so it was of no consequence to let the other participants keep them. The pants I gave away were not my size, and since they looked so flattering on a particular co-participant, I let her have them. I thought that it would encourage the co-participants as they explored and expanded their body image, and how they utilized fashion in their self-expression. What they did in the session could go beyond our time together, and they could strut around in the outside world in their bolder eyebrows, glossier lips, and tight pants.

In Session 4, the dance and movement session, I had brought in music to play from various genres and artists. I had also asked the co-participants to bring music to share, so that we could have a variety of music to dance to. I was the one changing the music, so that there would not be any confusion over what or whose music was being played. I danced for the entire session along with the co-participants, though we rarely danced together in either group. Therefore we each had our own process in dancing.

With the first group, there was more awkwardness at first, but there was also less physical space, as we were in the Ouroboros classroom, but we managed. One co-participant brought music to share. Each person stayed in one part of the room, though at one point we came together in a circle, but quickly dispersed to our own corners again. I enjoy dancing, and am professionally trained as a belly-dancer, so it is always a joy for me to dance; it is something I don't do enough of. So despite the awkwardness of dancing in a small classroom in the late afternoon, I had a good time. I appreciated sweating, loosening my body up, and having fun music of different kinds to dance to. I can say that I had the experience of embodiment, feeling the music, letting my body move as it needed to express what needed to come out of me. At one point a co-participant left the room to go to the ladies room, and upon her return, the pop song "Promiscuous" by Nelly Furtado was playing. The participant and I looked directly at each

other, pointed fingers at each other, and sang in unison with the lyrics, "Promiscuous girl, I got what you need!" Though neither of us are promiscuous people, it was a synchronistic moment of shared song and dance.

In the second group there was more playfulness. There was more physical space than the previous group had since we were in the Samadhi classroom. Two co-participants brought music to share, both of them bringing music from different parts of the world. There was more engagement between participants in this session, though for most of it each co-participant was dancing by herself. At one point, one of them grabbed my hand and twirled me around. A couple of them danced together briefly. One co-participant was dancing on one end of the room alone with her eyes closed, and no one disturbed her. During the "Bootlicious" song by Beyonce I danced with my backside stuck out in front of the mirror, and one of the co-participants did the same, giggling to herself. I again had the experience of embodiment, and dancing for my own expression and pleasure. I did have some awkwardness when one of the co-participants played a song of her choice, "Don't worry, be happy" by Bobby McFerrin. I was afraid I would look ridiculous (like a dork) in front of the others, since the song is an old pop song and so cliché. The other participants were laughing and encouraged me to join them, so in this manner we all let loose and had a good, amusing time.

In facilitating the sessions and addressing my own body image issues as part of it, I found it to be an enriching experience for me. In doing the collage, I saw what images I drew on out of popular culture as beautiful, especially with meaning that I assigned to them rather than the magazine editor's intention. In the body mapping session, I saw on paper how much I have grown to accept, love, and celebrate my own body. In the third session, I was able to provide materials for a variety of looks that were suited to the imaginations of the co-participants, validating how diverse I can be with creative expression, fashion and gender, and be able to give advice and support to other co-participants in how they want to look. And in the fourth session, I was able to relax, dance, enjoy myself, flaunt myself, as well as facilitate a session with other people.

I had set up an altar in the front of the room for each session, with the same three statues of Oshun, Aphrodite, and Astarte, with small cards of goddesses from different traditions that represented the Lover archetype. For me, the Goddess was ever-present as part of the study, whether I or my co-participants were acutely aware of Her or not. The work of self-awareness, self-love, and transformation are part of what She represents. I felt Her in each session, as I saw each session as an opportunity to do Her work. I also saw Her in each of the co-participants, as they all came with the willingness to take a closer look at

themselves, and try to get to know the lover archetype better. I would call on the Goddess' help to guide me through each session, and be able to work with each individual co-participant to the best of my ability, and to give them what they needed in doing this sacred work. I would think of this consciously as I set up the altar for each session, in the hope that things would go well, and that I was able to make a difference to those who volunteered for this study.



Figure 33. The altar, with Oshun, Aphrodite, and Astarte.

I had the opportunity to partake in the exploration and transformation of body images for other females, and was able to create and hold a space for them, as well as offer a new

perspective and positive reinforcement. This has been the kind of work I have wanted to do with people for a long time. This is an important piece of the empowerment work that I would like to do with others, and I believe it to be part of my professional and spiritual calling. It was encouraging for me to see the experiential process that I put together yield fruitful results.

Chapter 5: Discussion

After completing the data collection, in the intuitive inquiry process the researcher must spend time contemplating and meditating on the lenses that were created in Cycle 2. The researcher must go over what was collected carefully, and reevaluate the way in which he or she saw things, and add to, subtract, or create new lenses. This is the process for Cycle 4, which can take several days or even weeks, because the researcher must do an in-depth evaluation. R. Anderson (2004) explains:

In utilizing the hermeneutical lenses developed [in Cycle 2] . . . the researcher analyzes the new texts as a means for modifying, redefining, reorganizing, and expanding his or her understanding of the research topic. This final step . . . allows the circle of understanding to expand beyond the research's projections (in the positive sense) by spiraling in the experiences of others." (p. 37)

As the researcher, I spent several days going over the lenses, reorganizing them, combining them, throwing some out, and creating new ones. It was a tedious process, as it encompassed all of the data that I had collected. Manos (2007), refers to this as "incubating the data" (p. 158).

I also had the awareness that this was not mere data that I had picked up from running tests in a lab; rather, I had been part of an experiential process with other people, and I had the responsibility of doing justice to what their experiences were, as well as to my own. To have partaken in the process of collecting

the data was enthralling and very personally rewarding, with one of the long-term effects being that I had become close with some of the co-participants. I had seen and experienced those of them that I had previously known in new and intimate ways. As the researcher, I wanted to present the results in a clear and succinct manner, however, with the experiences of the co-participants put into narrative portraits, the data was story-like, not just numbers and figures that could easily be added or subtracted. It was easy to become engrossed in the narrative portrait of a co-participant's journey in their work with body image and the lover archetype. However, as researcher, despite my being part of their process as well as witness to it, I had to gain the perspective of looking at their experience from a distance too. Looking at all of the co-participants to see how their experiences compared to the preliminary lenses allowed an evaluation of the goals of this study. It facilitated a determination of whether or not the experiential process could be deemed successful, and on what basis. The standards I chose were in that those that partook in the study showed more self-acceptance, exhibited more self-care, and felt more love for themselves.

This process yielded new awareness and insights, and can bring new perspectives in unexpected ways. This is attributed to

the trickster archetype, and is often part of the process in intuitive inquiry (R. Anderson, 2004).

Cycle 4: Transforming and refining the lenses

The preliminary lenses were developed according to the information obtained during the literature review. The 14 lenses were also based on the assumptions of this researcher. In Cycle 4, these lenses were applied to the data collected, and some of the lenses were retained as *seed lenses*. Some of the lenses were changed or combined with other lenses, becoming *changed lenses*. Still *new lenses* were also created. The new lenses were findings that the researcher did not anticipate. Twelve lenses were developed in Cycle 4.

One of the preliminary lenses, Lens 2, which concerned third wave feminism, has been removed as a lens. Instead it has been included in the literature review, because my own perspective as researcher is informed by this movement. The lenses are created to state the assumption of the researcher as part of intuitive inquiry (R. Anderson, 2004) process. Third-wave feminism is more than a lens that I can state as an assumption going forward into this study; it is larger than that, as it is part of my worldview. As the researcher, the data are seen and interpreted through my eyes, and therefore is subject to, and assimilated into my worldview. It is important to me as the researcher, that those who will read this study know that I give credit to third-wave

feminism as an ideology-one that I use to understand and interact with the world. Issues of body image are of the utmost importance, with third-wave feminist activism around it aiming to "overcome the limiting effects of internalized cultural messages around beauty and body ideals" (Enns, 2004, p. 286). This is the philosophical position to which I subscribe in terms of the social and political activism in which I engage, in the hope of bringing positive change. I hope to have this research participate in continuing this important effort.

Cycle 4 Lenses

Seed lenses.

1. Adult females are subject to the mass media's promotion of unhealthy and unrealistic standards of beauty, which negatively affects their self-image.
2. Previously held beliefs about appearance, self-image, and sociocultural standards of beauty will be questioned and challenged by the co-participants.
3. Insecurities around self-image are likely to arise within each of the co-participants as they work with the materials presented in the experiential process.
4. The co-participants will find having a variety of images of different body types to work with to be validating for them.

5. The co-participants will be a supportive presence for each other for the duration of the experiential process.
6. Given the material presented and the self-work that will be initiated in the course of the experiential process using the Lover archetype may lead to shifts in the gender identities of the co-participants.
7. The Divine presence of the Love Goddess and God will be part of the space during the course of the intervention. The Love Goddess and the God are real archetypal forces that can be activated and brought to the conscious level.
Changed lenses.
8. The experiential process will induce the activation of the lover archetype, and aid in the cultivation of sensuality, more self-acceptance, and body-positive ways of thinking and feeling within the co-participants.
9. Images of females from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds will be validating for the co-participants. Caucasian-oriented ideals are invalidating for some of the co-participants, in particular those that are not of Caucasian descent.
10. Awareness of food choices and eating habits will arise due to the various foods offered in the sessions, possible eliciting changes in the dietary habits of the co-participants.

New lenses.

11. The co-participants viewed the container for the experiential process to be a safe space in which to do their process work, some of them feeling free of traditional gender roles as the groups were all female.
12. The experiential process was utilized as a means to work on one's body image consciously for those that had been working on their body images already, or had wanted to work on their body images.

Seed lenses expanded.

1. *Adult females are subject to the mass media's promotion of unhealthy and unrealistic standards of beauty, which negatively affects their self-image.*

This Lens was created to represent the hypothesis of this dissertation, that the imagery of beauty presented in the mass media was not representational of most people (Cash, 1990, 1996; Cash & Henry, 1995; Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990; Fallon, 1990; Freedman, 1986; Heinberg, 1995; Jackson, 1992; Lavin & Cash, 2001; Stormer & Thompson, 1995, 1996; Wolf, 1989). Media images set a standard of thinness, certain features and Caucasian-oriented looks that were unrealistic; this made the sociocultural pressure to conform to such standards harmful to the self-images of females across the country (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Hernandez & Rehman, 2002; Riley, 2002; Wolf, 1991). All of the co-participants

expressed an understanding of sociocultural standards from the very first session onward, and how they had been harmful to them. They expressed their pain, fears, insecurities from the past and the present around their body image throughout the experiential process as it came up for them. It was often tied to the activity in a particular session. The harm had been done in numerous forms, such as seeing imagery in mainstream media, such as television, film and magazines that promoted unrealistic and unhealthy body image ideals (Cash, 1996; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Wolf, 1991). These unrealistic ideals were further promoted by other people, from teasing, criticism, social comparisons, and pressure from family, friends, lovers, and community (Rieves & Cash, 1996; Stormer & Thompson, 1995, 1996). All co-participants came into the study with the premise of the media's standards being unhealthy in mind; there was no argument made in favor of the unrealistic ideals by anyone.

1. Previously held beliefs about appearance, self-image and sociocultural standards of beauty will be questioned and challenged by the co-participants.

This was true for all of the co-participants; some of the co-participants already had knowledge of the mass media's unrealistic and unhealthy standards. However, their participation in this study gave them the opportunity to further explore those standards, especially in relation to their own body image. Co-

participants had increased awareness of what external messages from the mass media, family, friends, lovers and community members that they had incorporated into their own self-image, and were able to discern their own internal beliefs from them. Internal beliefs that were either their own or internalized from others were questioned.

3. Insecurities around self-image are likely to arise within each of the co-participants as they work with the materials presented in the experiential process.

All co-participants shared stories of past or current criticisms, insecurities, and the pain, sadness and frustration that they had in the past, or currently carried about the way that they looked. This was true for the co-participants whether the negative body image stemmed from specific features or parts of the body, or consisted in an overall sense of self. The body mapping session in particular allowed for evaluation and discussion of each co-participant's body image, including the researcher's body image. Many of the co-participants, namely Adelma, Artemis, Bellagrun, Inanna, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo expressed issues that they had with their body, but had come to accept and did not feel insecure about anymore. Magika and Sun-geo specifically expressed feeling ridiculous about fussing over small things about their bodies after hearing the stories of other co-participants, realizing how trivial their supposed flaws were. Adelma, Amara, Artemis,

Bellagrun, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo talked about those who had or were criticizing them. They concluded that the criticism (or in Artemis' case, the praise she received about her nose) was not about them, but had more to do with those who were criticizing them, stemming out of their own insecurities. Adelma, Amara, Inanna, Lupe, and Magika attributed some of their insecurities to the cultural and communal pressure of their collectivist backgrounds as well.

4. The co-participants will find having a variety of images of different body types to work with to be validating for them.

The co-participants expressed appreciation for the diversity of body types presented in the experiential process. First and foremost, there was an altar in the front of the room during each session which had three different goddess statues, each from a different ethnic and cultural background, each having a different body type. The goddess cards on the altar were also various goddesses from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and again showed different features and body types. In the collage making session, with various magazines that promoted mainstream culture's body image ideals, several co-participants, including the researcher, expressed frustration about the limited diversity in terms of size, and shape among the imagery. We sought out different body types to include in their collages. In the dress up session, the co-participants appreciated clothing of different

sizes that were features, including sarongs, wrap dresses, scarves, and accessories which would fit any body type.

5. The co-participants will be a supportive presence for each other for the duration of the experiential process.

Seven out of 9 of the co-participants found the members of their groups to be a supportive presence during the experiential process, which was a safe space to openly share their thoughts and feelings, and be heard and understood. They were able to mirror each other's experiences, and appreciated the depth and vulnerability expressed by each other. This created an environment that allowed for those willing to do the same to receive positive reinforcement. All of the co-participants gave each other constructive feedback, encouragement, and new perspectives which helped to reframe old thought patterns about their bodies. Some of the co-participants brought in things to share appropriate to the session's activity: Magika brought wigs to share for the dress up session, and Sun-geo and Lupe brought clothing and accessories to swap; Bellagrun, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo brought music to share during the dance and movement session. In bringing items to share, these co-participants promoted togetherness, and it aided in further unifying the group. In running the group as a space of openness, acceptance, and encouragement, the researcher utilized the feminist approach, and brought about a fruitful outcome (C. M.

Brody, 1985; S. Butler & Wintram, 1991; Geertsma & Cummings, 2004; Neu, 1995).

There were two co-participants, Athena and Magika, who had mixed feelings about their group, saying that they respected everyone in their group and thought they were all nice people, but there was still some discomfort. Athena felt uncomfortable and anxious in her group because she was the oldest and physically largest female in her group. She later expressed some mixed feelings arising about her being the only female of Caucasian descent in her group as well. Magika felt the need to regulate what she said in terms of racial issues, thinking that with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in the room, including a Caucasian person, she might be projected upon as the "angry black woman" and thereby affirm negative stereotypes (Greene, 1992; Riley, 2002).

6. Given the material presented and the self-work that will be initiated in the course of the experiential process using the Lover archetype may lead to shifts in the gender identities of the co-participants.

All of the co-participants explored the feminine gender identity more as part of this experiential process, and 8 out of 9 of them experienced more femininity than in their usual selves. Adelma felt very feminine in the dress up session, wearing summer dresses and a long-haired wig. She also got into her feminine side

more during the dance session in which she danced alone with her eyes closed, feeling the music, and letting her body move as she was inspired, absorbed in her own process. Amara expressed her feminine side more during the dress up session, choosing to wear bright colors and dark makeup, which she did not do in her everyday life, wearing plain clothes for work and little makeup during the day. She particularly wanted what she called "diva music" during the dance and movement session, as she found it energizing and empowering. Artemis enjoyed her femininity, and though she wore practical clothes on a regular basis, chose very colorful, playful, and revealing clothing for the dress up session, with bright makeup; she laughingly said that she would love to dress like this at a festival. Even though looking feminine was not so much a part of her everyday life, she permitted more of it to be expressed throughout the experiential process. Athena, though guarded and anxious at first, shared with me after the experiential process that she was allowing more of her feminine to emerge: she purchased cosmetics, she wore brighter colors and more jewelry, and she seemed more comfortable in her own body. Despite her thinking that it would be quite some time before she would master her body image issues, it is the impression of this researcher that she is well on her way. Inanna also became more comfortable in her own body, began to take better care for herself in terms of diet and exercise, and wanted to

express more of her femininity as she used to in her 20s, using fashion as a means of expression. She had me stay late after a session one evening to show her the proper way to do eye makeup. Magika let herself play with colors and styles in the dress up session, as contrasted with what she wore to her typical everyday outfit of plain black or grey, simple clothing. She acknowledged wanting more femininity in her appearance, and in her approach, wanting to relate to other people more from a heart-centered place than in previous years. She also allowed more creative expression in her dance, letting her process be organic, rather than doing a previously choreographed dance; she appreciated the freedom of movement she had in the session. Sun-geo was already feminine in her appearance, but expressed more awareness and acceptance in seeing herself in the mirror. She also expressed more awareness and pleasure in her movements during the dance session, appreciating her femininity in a new way.

Bellagrun experienced a powerful shift in her gender identity. She had previously identified more with the masculine, being very intellectual, organized, and structured. Through the experiential process, she became more aware of her body, its needs and desires, and dramatically changed her diet, not from external pressure, but (as she said it herself) from internal motivation. When we began the dress up session, she was very nervous, but rose to the occasion, and chose to wear things that she previously

would not wear, and fell in love with what she tried on: a silk, paisley-print dress. She then took inventory of her wardrobe, realizing how her clothing was plain and simple, and did not have much color or style to it, and she wants to slowly change that. Bellagrun permitted herself to step out of the masculine role she was in with her intimate partner, and let herself feel more sensation and emotion, and do what she was inspired to do, rather than follow her everyday structured plan. This was most obvious in the incident that she related to me about going home, and instead of cooking dinner for her partner and herself, she took off her professional clothing, leaving it on the floor, and went into the garden to connect with nature, and hugged a tree in her underwear. When her partner came home to see the mess she made, her partner stepped more into the masculine role, and made the decisions of what needed to get done that evening, rather than Bellagrun's being the one to lead. She questioned her lack of self-care, and was trying to integrate more of it into her life, tiring of the roles she had been playing out, and of neglecting herself and her own pleasure and happiness. She finds her exploration of the feminine to be very good and joyful for her, and was sad that the experiential process was ending, fearful that she would lose the connection to the feminine that she had just recently gained. She decided to actively seek out the company and friendships of more women to help her cultivate her own femininity, relaxation, and

enjoyment. What Bellagrun described is very much in line with the literature on the emergence of the archetype of the lover (Bolen 1984; Woolger & Woolger, 1987).

Lupe had the experience of being genderless, which occurred in the dance and movement session. Without the restrictions of traditionally prescribed gender roles that would apply in a typical dance club setting, she did not have to restrict herself to dancing with a male and be imposed upon with the expectation of following his lead. She also had the experience of Ardhanarishvara, the androgynous deity of the Hindu pantheon, whose painting hung on the wall of the room the session was held in. She described having Shiva, or the "Blue Man" as she called him, which was the masculine side of Ardhanarishvara, come out of the painting and dance with her, therefore being honored by the masculine for dancing as she pleased. Lupe released the traditional feminine role, dancing in an open and "genderless" manner. When the "authentic female body [is] unburdened of patriarchal assumptions, [it is] in full acknowledgement of the multiple and fluid possibilities of differential embodiment" (Price & Shildrick, 1999, p. 12). Having a representation of the divine masculine dance with her, honoring of her as she honored herself, could be seen as her experiencing her own intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2005; Gabbard & Wilkinson, 1996). In allowing her own authentic expression to come through, and in

describing feeling genderless, she induced the experience of gender fluidity (Harris, 1991).

7. *The Divine presence of the Love Goddess and God will be part of the space during the course of the intervention. The Love Goddess and the God are real archetypal forces that can be activated and brought to the conscious level.*

Two of the co-participants described an atmosphere of openness, acceptance, and empowerment, more so than feeling a divine presence. Adelma cited that there was the feeling of compassion, rather than an image of a goddess coming to her. Artemis noted liking the altar, and appreciating the confidence exuded by the researcher/facilitator in creating a safe space.

Seven of the 9 co-participants felt a divine presence, described most often as the goddess. Amara experienced the sessions as "flowing like water," attributing that feeling to Oshun, the Yoruban goddess of love, who rules rivers and streams. Athena at first said that she did not feel a divine presence during the study, but then spoke of her strange attraction to the goddess card of Aphrodite, which she picked up every week from the altar and reread each session. She also was astounded that she kept seeing the goddess, saying "She's everywhere!" and felt very called by the divine feminine at this time. Therefore, in the opinion of this researcher, Athena did feel the divine, in her feminine form as Aphrodite, which is fitting as Aphrodite is from

the European-American context, and this co-participant is of Caucasian descent. As Athena expressed frustration with some of the racial dynamics in her group, for her to feel called by an image that is representational of her own ethnic background and physical appearance was validating, and empowering. Inanna acknowledged feeling the goddess in some form, and felt a particular closeness to the image Oshun, one of the statues on the altar. Lupe saw her co-participants as goddesses, and acknowledged the divinity in each of them. She also described the experience of dancing with Shiva, the Hindu god associated with sexuality, so she not only experienced the divine; she was the only co-participant that had an experience of the divine masculine during the study. Magika explained the connection between spirituality and dance, which was her most powerful experience of the divine during the study. Sun-geo felt the presence of the divine the most in the dance and movement session, allowing the goddess to flow through her as she moved. She also felt the goddess in the collage session, attributing her artwork to divine inspiration.

Interestingly, Amara, Inanna, and Magika expressed a special connection to the goddess Oshun, and felt drawn to her statue. Her statue is of the darkest complexion, as she is West African, and the co-participants that felt most connected her were women of color, with Amara being of mixed Caucasian and South Asian lineages, Inanna's heritage is South Asian, and Magika is African

American. There were no other comments or preferences expressed by other co-participants about the other statues in particular. Artemis and Bellagrun expressed appreciation of the various goddesses on the altar. Bellagrun and Sun-geo wanted to look for more imagery of goddesses and women to be empowering for them at the conclusion of the experiential process.

Changed Lenses expanded.

8. The experiential process will induce the activation of the lover archetype, and aid in the cultivation of sensuality, more self-acceptance, and body-positive ways of thinking and feeling within the co-participants.

All of the co-participants confirmed varying degrees of the lover archetype emerging for them, whether it was at the level of the co-participant's questioning their previously held beliefs about body image, trying something new, making a creative expression project, or having a dramatic transformation. These are the researcher's interpretations of how the lover archetype manifests itself. Within that interpretation, such manifesting occurred.

Adelma had more acceptance around her body image, which included revisiting some of her childhood issues in the process. She expressed more acceptance around her body as a whole, saying she needed to love all of herself, "including those ugly feet!" She had consciously been working on her body image for years now,

and after having completed the experiential process, she saw it as a reassurance about her growing confidence and self-love. Amara had a more positive attitude toward herself, embracing her flaws and deciding to love all of herself just as she is. She did not fuss over things that bothered her before, but took a more lighthearted approach to her body, and found herself to still be attractive. Artemis had also been working on her body image consciously for a few years, and saw the experiential process as a means to speed along her self-work. She focused on her positive qualities more now, and has found much of the self-acceptance than she had been seeking; she also saw the research as a good experience for her growth. Inanna reconnected with more of her feminine which she had not expressed in the last several years; she wanted to bring that part of herself back. She had more self-acceptance about her body, and was more celebratory of herself than before. She also wanted to take better care of herself out of a commitment to love all of herself, and had changed her eating habits. The work she did in the experiential process is unfolding for her in other areas of her life, leading her to greater self-love. Lupe communicated more self-acceptance about her body, saying that flaws she saw in herself before the experiential process, which caused her to avoid mirrors, now did not bother her. She in fact was aware of a lot of the sociocultural pressure put on her about her body, and vowed to only give positive

feedback to her younger family members to help in preventing their internalization of negative messages. Lupe was enjoying her body more, and displaying her sensuality, attending a dress-up party the weekend after completing the experiential process, and partaking in a ritual honoring the love goddess as the "honey girl," serving sweets to those in attendance. Magika reported looking at herself in the mirror less, as she felt more confident about her self, and spent less time nitpicking at her so-called flaws. She said she realized how trivial so much of what she disliked about her body was, that it was a waste of energy to focus on. She emerged from the experiential process more appreciative of herself, as well as allowing more creative expression to come through her artistic medium of dance. She is now teaching a dance class on sensual dance to help others get in tune with their bodies, and to enjoy themselves through movement. Sun-geo also shared in Magika's revelation about wasting energy on trivial things, and decided instead to focus on what she did like about her body. She became more aware and sensual in her movements, especially in dance. She also believed that she now had more insight and perspective to offer her female friends on body image, and wanted to talk about it rather than leave it as an unspoken issue or taboo topic. Sun-geo also wanted to actively seek out female role models, wanting real life women to look up to.

Athena said outright that she did not expect her body image to change in just 4 weeks, though at the very least had increased self-awareness about the messages that she held about her body; had increased awareness about her eating habits; and explored her femininity and her means of self-expression. Despite her own skepticism, she intended to continue consciously working on her body image, keeping her body map in the trunk of her car to take to her next visit with her therapist, and the collage she made hung in her room. Within weeks she was wearing brighter clothes with more jewelry, and excitedly told me that she started playing with cosmetics more, having purchased new products. It is safe to say that despite her resistance and hesitance with some of the work, she does have more self-acceptance. She is cultivating her sensuality, is expressing herself more through the use of clothing, accessories and cosmetics. Athena is showing dedication to continuing her work on her body image.

Bellagrun had a dramatic emergence of the lover archetype, causing a noticeable shift in her personality, eating habits, manner of dress, and gender identity. She noted that even her intimate partner noticed the shift in her, and attributed it to the work she was doing on herself in the experiential process. She had far more self-acceptance about her body, commending herself for the progress she was making in her self-care, and appreciating her body as it was, rather than focusing on supposed flaws. She

was cultivating her sensuality and intuition through eating different foods, and letting her body tell her what she needed. Her sensuality and creativity were blossoming in her wanting to add and subtract things from her existing wardrobe in order to have more colorful clothing, with different textures and styles, to look and feel more feminine. She was also consciously connecting with nature more. Bellagrun decided to connect with her feminine side through friendships with other women. She even expressed a curiosity about the divine feminine, wanting to learn more about goddess traditions.

9. Images of females from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds will be validating for the co-participants. Caucasian-oriented sociocultural ideals are invalidating for some of the co-participants, in particular for those that are not of Caucasian descent.

Eight out of 9 co-participants made a comment about diversity, Artemis being the only one that did not make a direct statement about the need for, or appreciation of diversity. Artemis said that she liked the altar, which implies that she appreciated the different deities on there, but made no specific comment about them. Adelma used multiple images of Michelle Obama in her collage, and spoke of how important certain imagery was for her. She felt the strong need to validate herself as a black, African female, as it was a very important part of her identity,

especially while living outside of South Africa. She managed to find imagery of African drummers, which she included in her collage. She also had an image of a full-figured underwear model, which concurred with the stereotypical image of the body type of an African woman. During the body map session, Adelma shared that she was undervalued for her looks, since she had a darker complexion than those of her sisters. Therefore, the history of oppression for black South Africans was more poignant for her. Adelma had received discriminatory remarks and treatment from members of her own family and community that had internalized the ideals of the dominant white culture. During the dress up session, she chose summer dresses, carrying herself as if she were home in South Africa, enjoying the warm weather. One of the outfits she wore had a large, tribal print on it, and she tried summer hats with it. Though she was playing dress up here, she was dressing as if she was back in her country of origin, making comments about the fashion industry and its trends back in South Africa. For her to find imagery and clothing that fit her identity as an African woman was essential.

Amara noted the Yoruban goddess Oshun as a divine presence with her during the experiential process. Oshun's statue sat on the altar, and was the darkest complexioned of the three statues. Even as Amara's heritage is German and Indian, she was identifying with the most "ethnic looking" deity on the altar, including the

images on the goddess cards, most of which were from European traditions. In her collage, she had a picture of Angelina Jolie with her family, which is multiethnic and multicultural. In including this picture, Amara was acknowledging and valuing Angelina Jolie's family, and its diversity. The picture expressed her own desire to have a family. She also hoped that the family that she would create for herself in the future would be diverse and appreciative of this fact.

Amara also commented on the racial dynamics of her group, that there were 2 Caucasian females, whom she saw as representing her European heritage, and 1 female of Indian descent, who represented her Indian heritage. The racial dynamics of her group became a poignant part of her experience.

Athena was the only Caucasian female in her group. During the dress up session, she found herself regretting that she was white, as the image that she had in her mind about the empowered female was an African American 1970s diva. Though she felt a level of discomfort with her group, she spoke of the significance diversity had for her; that it was normal for her to be around different kinds of people. She had numerous images in her collage that represented different people, including Maya Angelou, Michele Obama, and various people of different ages, ethnicities, and genders. Most of Bellagrun's heritage is also Caucasian, and she made a very strong statement in the first session, commenting on

an image of an interracial couple that was part of my collage. She had become emotional and spoke about some of her previous relationships with partners of different ethnic backgrounds. It had been painful for her when her family did not accept her partners, or when some of her partners did not embrace diversity either. Her collage also featured people from various backgrounds. She thanked me for the numerous goddess images, and displayed anger at not having more such images promoted in mainstream culture. She articulated the need to have diverse images in her life, as that was her reality; she was surrounded by diverse people, living in the Bay Area, and working in a clinic that largely has Chicano/Latino clients.

Inanna credited Oshun as playing a part of her experience, and similar to Amara, she felt a connection to the darkest complexioned deity featured on the altar. Inanna's heritage is Indian, and she has grown to love her non-white complexion in the last few years. Her complexion was of value to her despite the members of her family and community that valued fair skin over dark skin. This was her way of owning, and celebrating her background.

Lupe enjoyed the diversity within her group, the females of different ages, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. She allowed fluidity for herself in terms of gender, and was honoring of others in the room in their gender identities as well. Sun-geo

also enjoyed the diversity of her group, highly regarding what her co-participants had to say; it brought new perspectives and gave her new things to contemplate. She felt at a loss for images of people from Asian and specifically Vietnamese background, and wanted to seek out more female role models at the conclusion of this study. In her collage, she had many images of people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, even though she was unaware of how much diversity she presented in her collage until it was pointed out to her.

Magika was vocal about her need for representation in the first session, feeling frustration over the lack of images of real black women. In her collage, she had an African American woman with a large afro as the central figure, since it was an image that seemed the most authentic to her, as opposed to light-skinned models or black women with straightened hair. In the body map session, Magika shared esteem for her body type, but also expressed sadness for not having the body that is celebrated in the African American, and African communities, which is larger, and more voluptuous. She brought in wigs to share during the dress up session, which was enjoyable for everyone. She put on tribal style makeup to represent her African roots. She spoke at length during the exit interview about the racial dynamics of her group, and how having just 1 Caucasian female in the room felt inhibiting to her, fearing that if she plainly spoke her mind, she would be

stereotyped, and would be misrepresenting the black communities. Magika spoke of the experience of the minority person often feeling like a token, not wanting to be treated in this way. Nor did she want to be the voice in the room that became the representation of minorities, which was often unheard, not taken seriously, or treated as a scapegoat. She felt frustration on many levels throughout the experiential process, in regard to her own body image, and the group that she was part of. Though the experiential process was fruitful and fun for her, compared to the other co-participants, she articulated issues around diversity the most succinctly, and showed the most distress about diversity issues as well.

10. Awareness of food choices and eating habits will arise due to the various foods offered in the sessions, eliciting possible changes in the dietary habits of the co-participants.

All of the co-participants had increased awareness of their dietary habits as part of the experiential process. Adelma, Artemis, and Sun-geo were very balanced in their approach to food, eating well and making healthy choices without guilt. Magika made healthy choices as well, but had an inclination towards desserts and let herself indulge, affirming her athletic body afterward by declaring "I'm pretty!" Lupe also preferred sweets, but thought to stay away from them, as she feared devouring all of them,

therefore exercising some self-discipline. Amara felt some guilt over eating bread, and was consciously trying to eat healthier. Athena was aware of the dietary choices that she was making; though she said she knew better, she chose to eat what she craved, rather than what she deemed to be good for her. Awareness was not enough to deter her from making unhealthy choices. She also explained that she was going through a tough time, and that she reached for certain foods as comfort. She was consciously allowing herself those foods, carbohydrates and sugars, breads and sweets, at this time.

Bellagrund and Inanna had significant shifts in their dietary habits. Bellagrund saw how she reached for her comfort foods which consisted of junk foods like potato chips and sweets, and would eat large portions of food. After completing the experiential process, she was more in tune with her body. She found herself craving things like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and no longer had the need to reach for her usual comfort foods. She also ate less, decreasing her portion size. In identifying those that gave her some of the negative messages she had about her body, and acknowledging that they were acting out on their own issues, Bellagrund let go of those negative messages. She was able to see her self through her own eyes instead of someone else's eyes. She was now able to eat for herself, for her own health, well-being, and pleasure, rather than for the sake of conforming to the

standards of an external source. Inanna had reframed her self-image as a more integrated one as well, and wanted to take better care of herself, all of herself, and therefore decided to consciously eat healthier. Both of these co-participants reported back to me after going grocery shopping, and shared with me that they had purchased only healthy foods. Bellagrun, in fact, told me that her grocery bill was significantly less than her previous bill since she was not purchasing her typical comfort foods any longer.

New lenses expanded.

11. The co-participants viewed the container for the experiential process to be a safe space in which to do their process work, some of them feeling free of traditional gender roles, as the groups were all female.

All of the co-participants appreciated the safe container that was created for them to do their process work. Adelma, Artemis and Inanna all commented on the space being safe, authentic, and positive. Artemis and Athena became more comfortable as the experiential process went on and people allowed themselves to be vulnerable. Amara and Sun-geo both expressed that they learned a lot from their co-participants. Magika liked that the group was diverse, and that it seemed communal. Bellagrun loved that she got to spend time in the company of just females, and experienced the group as a nurturing and joyful presence for

her. She expressed sadness that the experiential process had ended, and that she wanted to create more quality time with other females in the future. Lupe had the opportunity to step outside of traditional roles in the dance and movement session, since the group was all female: there were no males around for her to feel as if she had to conform to a specific role, or set of behavior. Adelma, Athena, Bellagrun, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo made comments specific to the group being all female, and the safety and freedom that they felt due to that.

11. The experiential process was utilized as a means to work on one's body image consciously for those that had been working on their body images already, or had been wanting to work on their body images.

All of the co-participants saw their participation in the experiential process as one that induced self-awareness, growth, and saw it as a positive experience. Adelma and Artemis both had been working on their body images for a few years now, if not longer, and saw the experiential process as a means to enhance their self-work. Amara and Athena had both wanted to work on their body images, and took up the opportunity to do so when this researcher began recruiting participants. It was a chance to address what had been on the backburner for them. Amara had, in fact, been waiting for the study to be launched so that she could work on her self-image within a structured setting, other than

therapy. Bellagrun had been vigorously working on her body by going to the gym regularly, and signed up for the experiential process to help out a classmate. She gained much more than “good dissertation karma,” as she did an incredible amount of self-work, and had a sizable shift in her body image, eliciting changes in her self-perception, eating habits, self-expression, and gender identity. Inanna, Lupe, Magika, and Sun-geo all had varying degrees of comfort and discomfort about their bodies. They chose to partake in the experiential process for the reasons of helping a classmate, as well as address their body image issues. Sun-geo also had been eagerly awaiting the launch of this study, as it seemed like an enjoyable experience for her, especially since she is an artist and loves to express herself through fashion.

Cycle 5: Integration of Findings

R. Anderson (2004) says that in Cycle 5, the researcher must take a step back and consider “all aspects of the study anew, as though drawing a larger hermeneutical circle around the hermeneutical circle prescribed by the forward and return arcs” (p. 323). The intuitive researcher is to honestly evaluate the findings, determine what was valuable, and include their feelings about what was learned; the researcher’s final opinion matters (R. Anderson, 2004).

In the experiential process created and implemented by this researcher, the way to counter negative body image was to engage

the co-participants in activities that could potentially activate images and concepts that exist through the archetype of the lover. This archetype can be activated by learning to enjoy pleasure, feeling through one's body, and alerting one's senses (Bolen, 1984; Young-Eisendrath, 1999). The lover brings forth spiritual growth and psychological development, bringing people new challenges, giving them new experiences, causing new stirrings and awakenings (Bolen, 1984, Mann & Lyle, 1995; Teish, 1985). The experiential process helped the co-participants to reevaluate, appreciate and enjoy the bodies that they had, thus helping them to transform their self-images. Each activity was tailored for a specific purpose, and placed in the process to lead from self-evaluation to transformation. The first session explored the mass media's imagery and the sociocultural standards that it promoted. Each of the co-participants chose imagery from mainstream magazines, but the imagery chosen was specific to each person's concept of beauty. Despite the media's implicit and explicit expression of the benefits of their projected ideals of beauty (Bull & Rumsey, 1998; Cash, 1990; Eagly et al., 1991; Heinberg, 1995; Jackson, 1992), the co-participants were able to look beyond the mere images, and find imagery that communicated to them beyond the picture itself. Themes that came up repeatedly as the answer to the question "what is beauty?" were images representing

nature, relationships (between family, friends, lovers, animals, and people) individuality, and self-expression.

The second session had body mapping as the activity, in which co-participants made a map of their body, directly writing on to their maps what thoughts and feelings that they held about their body. This exercise elicited the most self-awareness specific to each co-participant's individual body image; they were able to see and take inventory of what messages, be they positive or negative they had about their physical form. Many of them shared how they had let go of messages from their past, while some co-participants were able to do so as a result of this activity. Sharing in a group enabled the co-participants to have the support and positive feedback of others. They shared that despite size, shape, and color, all females had wounding from sociocultural sources, be it from mass media imagery featured in print, television or film, teasing and social pressure, or family body image attitudes (Groesz et al., 2002; Rieves & Cash, 1996; Stormer & Thompson, 1995, 1996; Wolf, 1991).

In the third session, the emphasis shifted from sociocultural and self-evaluation, to transformation. This session had dressing up as its activity, and creating a safe space in which to explore different looks, different ways of showing up in the world. It gave the co-participants the chance to experiment with how they looked, releasing them from their usual socially prescribed or

situational roles, and stereotypes. In this activity, there was no limit or regulation on how they chose to look. The co-participants were given a large variety of clothing, accessories and cosmetics, to create looks for themselves however they pleased. Some of them took big risks, some took comfortable risks, and some just enjoyed themselves. It was a pleasurable experience for all of the co-participants, despite some of the anxieties that arose in some of them from experimenting with different looks, and feelings of self-consciousness in dressing in front of others. Many of the co-participants enjoyed the experience of dressing up with other females, helping each other to get ready, and giving each other feedback. The activity had a playful and festive sense to it.

In the fourth and final session, the activity was dance and movement, which can induce not only exercise and enjoyment, but could also induce transformation (Stromsted, 1999). The co-participants (with the exception of Athena who found herself feeling overwhelmed and distracted by events in her life, and left the session) danced to a variety of music that was brought by the researcher, which they supplemented by some of their own music (I asked for requests frequently). The co-participants danced primarily by themselves, seldom coming together. It became an internal experience of moving one's body to the music, allowing self-expression for each individual. Many of the co-participants reported an experience of embodiment during this activity.

The experiential process elicited self-awareness, and more self-acceptance for all of the co-participants. Some of the co-participants had significant shifts in their self-perceptions and self-concepts. This included becoming less critical, accepting supposedly negative traits, or shifting their focus from their supposed negative traits to the positive traits. The experiential process' results varied, and were specific to each of the co-participants. Each person had her own journey of self-exploration, and how far she went was to be determined by her, the inner workings of her psyche (and the Divine, if it is to be included as part of the larger picture). Adelma, Amara, Bellagrun, and Inanna specifically commented on wanting to love all of themselves, and the experiential process had helped them to realize this and work on doing so.

Adelma and Artemis pointed out that they had been consciously working on their body images for a few years now, and the experiential process aided them to further their self-work. Other co-participants saw the experiential process as an opportunity to address their self-images. Whether their need for self-work on this topic was strong, as it was for Athena, or had more to do with pleasure and creativity, as was the case for Sun-geo, they were no longer putting it on the backburner.

Two of the co-participants experienced a shift in gender identity, Bellagrun and Lupe. Bellagrun became immersed in the

feminine in ways she had not yet experienced. She shifted from her typical structured, organized, intellectually based masculine approach; she began to have a more feeling approach, and found herself being more spontaneous, sensation-oriented, and engaged in far more self-care activities. Her diet changed, as she was more aware of what her body wanted and needed. She began thinking of herself in terms of her own needs and desires, rather than continuing to place the needs of others before her own. She realized the importance of nurturance, and her need for quality time with other females. Lupe had the experience of being genderless. In the space of the dance and movement session, without the confines of socially prescribed gendered behavior, and she could dance as she felt inspired to. Her experience included a mythological masculine figure, Shiva (Cotterell & Storm, 2007), who danced with her. This experience affirmed for her that she could be fluid in her gender identity.

Other co-participants explored, experienced, and integrated more of the feminine within themselves. Adelma accentuated her femininity greatly in the dress up, and dance and movement activities, in wearing flowing dresses, and dancing to her own inner rhythms. Artemis enjoyed dressing in risqué feminine clothing, stepping outside of her usual unisexual, athletic clothing. Athena explored the feminine more as well. Her shift began in the experiential process and continues to unfold, as she

has slowly been dabbling in the feminine through her expression, through her manner of dress and recent use of cosmetics. In the dress up session, Inanna wore a very colorful and sexy dress, and boots that she would not typically wear. She wanted to reclaim some of the sensuality, playfulness, and self-expression that she used to have during her 20s. Amara noted that she too would dress up for fun more in her twenties, and would go out dancing for pleasure, which she recently took up again. Magika decided to allow more creative expression in her dancing rather than focusing on technique and choreography, and in thus doing, allowed more femininity into her dance. Sun-geo, already a fashionable dresser, became more aware of her body, specifically her feminine curves. She made an effort to observe and accentuate the movements of her body, especially in dance. Lupe was also experimenting with clothing, and enjoying her body more.

In the co-participant's articulation of their experiences, they named certain feelings and behaviors as "feminine," "masculine," or "genderless." It is of importance to note that these terms are social constructs; they are gender categorizations that can be deconstructed, have multiple meanings, and be seen from different perspectives (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002; Enns, 2004; Frasier & Nicholson, 1990; Herbold, 1995; Layton, 1998). This study allowed room for the participants to have the experiences and discussion of "gendered experiences" (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002,

p. 23). With 8 co-participants expressing more femininity, and one co-participant explaining an experience of feeling genderless, these experiences were specific and subjective to each of the co-participants. The meanings the gendered terms are also specific and subjective to each co-participant's conceptualization of gender. The language one uses constitutes one's reality, rather than merely describing it (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002; Layton, 1998; Shawver, 1996). Categorization, though it may help in conceptualizing information, may also constrict identities and identity formation in many ways (Butler, 2004; Enns, 2004; Layton, 1998). As the researcher, in the narrative portraits, I have featured the co-participant's experiences in their own words. However, there are multiple ways in which their experiences can be looked at, especially in terms of gender identity (Allan & Baber, 1992; C. Butler, 2004; Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002; Enns, 2004; Frasier & Nicholson, 1990; Herbold, 1995).

Although none of the co-participants made any specific comments about sexuality or sexual orientation, there were still some remarks made pertaining to sexuality. Bellagrund commented that during the dance and movement session that there was a lack of sexual energy in the room. If she were dancing in a club, there would be sexual energy present, and that was an important, and enjoyable part of dancing for her. Athena was concerned about sexual boundaries during the dress up session when she was

encouraging all of the co-participants to gather for a group photograph. In being playful and warm, she did not want to be perceived as making sexual advances toward her co-participants. Lupe expressed concern after the completion of the experiential process, that, in wanting to be in the company of women, she may be mistaken for being a lesbian. In the instances of Athena and Lupe, it could be that there was latent sexual energy in the room, but that they did not want to fully acknowledge or explore it. It could also be that they themselves had sexual energy, but did not want to be perceived as putting it out towards a co-participant. There was concern about appearing to be sexual, or as attracted to other females. It is the perception of this researcher, in the instance of Athena, she did not want to violate boundaries of her co-participants, and her behavior was not specific to any fear or concern about appearing to be attracted to her co-participants. As for Lupe, this researcher also concluded that her behavior was also related to the concern about what this researcher intuitively perceives to be a false impression of sexual attraction to other females. Both of these females identified as heterosexual, and Lupe claims to be queer in her gender identity. There is the possibility of these three co-participants being dishonest, lacking awareness around some of their attractions, or homophobic, or of homophobic undercurrent in the group which would inhibit them from totally free gender exploration. However, this researcher, partly through

knowing the co-participants, partly though signs accompanying their self-presentation in the interview exchanges, takes the co-participant's self-identifications at face value. Therefore, I can not infer anything conclusive about some of the co-participant's readings of the group's undercurrent, and am content to leave their testimonies open to interpretation. I see them as concerned about being mistaken for having homoerotic attractions, and having concerns for the boundaries of others; I do not see them as misrepresenting themselves in the group or to the researcher.

Having a variety of body types included as part of the experiential process was validating for the co-participants. In the collage making session, there were several mainstream cultural magazines featured. Even though images of diverse groups were challenging to find, many of the co-participants managed to find images of females of different ages, body types, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds. There was a variety of goddess images featured as part of the altar. The goddess cards were primarily of goddesses from different European traditions. The goddess card of Venus was favored by 1 co-participant, and depicted a curvaceous, Caucasian-looking female. The statues on the altars were of goddesses of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds: Aphrodite was Greco/Roman, Astarte was Middle Eastern, and Oshun was Nigerian. Out of these three statues, the Oshun statue received appreciative comments from 3 of the co-participants. There were no

other comments specific to the other statues, though all of the co-participants appreciated the altar and many of them took time at the end of the sessions to look closely at the statues and read the goddess cards. With the variety of images presented as part of the altar, there was a diversity of body types, ethnicities and cultures represented.

To have imagery from only Greek mythology, and featuring only "blonde, blue-eyed goddesses" (True, 1990, p. 483) would be invalidating and excluding to females from minority backgrounds (Enns, 1994; Lorde, 1983; True, 1990). Images that are ethnically and culturally diverse can be used as role models for females of multicultural backgrounds as validation for their own physical features (Allen, 1989; Kingston, 1976; Lorde, 1983). Diverse images can also be used to contend with the aspects of racism that are part of the dominant culture that promotes European-American standards of beauty (Allen, 1989; Larrington, 1992; Lorde, 1983).

Having images of females from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the form of goddess cards, statues, and select magazine images was validating for co-participants. Not having many images of diverse people from the mainstream media was a cause of distress, and frustration among the co-participants. Out of all of the co-participants, Artemis was the only 1 that did not comment directly about diversity, meaning that 8 out of 9 co-participants did. Out of the co-participants of Caucasian descent,

Athena and Bellagrun both acknowledged the diversity of their groups. They had diversity represented in their collages, and mentioned that diversity was a normal part of their lives and wanted to have that reflected back to them in the imagery presented in mainstream media. Bellagrun made a strong point about diversity being normal for her and displayed anger at there not being more representation.

Athena admitted not having consciously thought about diversity and body image before, but became aware of many issues related to them in the course of the study: how it affected the other co-participants of color, and its relationship to her own body image. Athena had chosen images of Maya Angelou, Michelle Obama, and Queen Latifah, all of whom are African American women in her collage. During the dress up session she had the realization that she was white, and did not fit the diva image that she held in her mind. She wore the afro wig for a large portion of the dress up session, as it helped her to create an empowering persona.

Having imagery from different cultural myths and legends, and spiritual traditions can be a rich source of positive imagery for diverse groups of people (Comas-Diaz, 1994). Amara, Inanna, and Magika all specifically commented on feeling closeness to the goddess Oshun, the statue with the darkest complexion on the altar. This was a validation of their being females of color, of

having a non-white, or in Amara's case, a mixed heritage. Sun-geo closed her interview with speaking about her need for more female role models for her to look up to, especially those that were are of color, and had a similar background, Southeast Asian. This was something that was inspired in her by what Magika had shared in her need to find images of women that looked like her. Inanna spoke on owning and loving her ethnic features, and enjoying the fact that her complexion became darker during the summer months, despite her family's pressure to keep her skin fairer. In doing so, Inanna did not believe in the standards of the dominant culture which upheld Caucasian standards of beauty that devalued her own ethnic features (Greene, 1992). This showed acceptance and celebration of her heritage, rather than conforming to the standards of mainstream media, or the Indian American subculture that she belongs to (which had internalized Caucasian-oriented standards of beauty).

Amara, having a mixed heritage, spoke on diversity in the collage making session. During the body mapping session, she resonated with what Inanna, who is of Indian descent, when she shared about her ethnic features. They related on how their body image issues related to ethnicity, being held to the standards of two cultures. Amara expressed feeling as if she also had two sets of standards to meet, and that she did not fit in with either group that was part of her heritage enough to be fully accepted by

them. Amara is biracial, whereas Inanna is bicultural, yet they both have two different cultural group's beauty standards that are imposed on them. Lupe is also biracial and bicultural, as she is half Caucasian and half Latina, but did not express a dilemma in having two sets of standards imposed on her. The criticisms she received from both cultural groups were the same, such as having saddlebags, or her speaking aloud about menstruation.

According to Comas-Diaz (1994), it is important to help a client to understand the consequences of colonization, in which the standards of the dominant culture are internalized. This was true for all of the co-participants of color, which were 6 out of 9 co-participants. Adelma's story of being teased for having the darkest complexion out of all of her sisters was a poignant example of this. Even for those participants who were born and raised in the United States, the dominant culture here values Caucasian looks, and devalues the natural beauty within minority groups (Comas-Diaz, 1994; Enns, 2004; Hernandez & Rehman, 2002). This is institutionalized racism, and leads to distortions of what beauty is to any number of different groups of people (Enns, 2004; Hernandez & Rehman, 2002). Though beauty standards could vary from group to group, Riley (2002) put it succinctly when she said that there are "different ways in which women of color experience sexism and the unattainable beauty ideals that society sets for women" (p. 363). Many females that are aware of these unattainable

standards may express anger, as was the case with Bellagrun, who is Caucasian, and Magika, who is African American. Magika was particular about when and how she expressed her anger. She shared most of her feelings in the presence of just the researcher, instead of in front of her co-participants. She feared that her anger would be judged and that she would end up affirming negative stereotypes of the angry minority (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994), or of the "angry, volatile, castrating bitches" that black women can often be labeled (Greene, 1992, p. 20). Though some of the beauty standards within minority communities may be different than that of the dominant culture, body dissatisfaction in minority groups should not be dismissed (Comas-Diaz, 1994; Enns, 2004).

Just because women of color are not expressing their body dissatisfaction in the same way as heterosexual, middle-class white women, it doesn't mean that everything is hunky-dory and we should move on. If we are so sure that images of rail-thin fashion models, actresses and video chicks have contributed to white girls' poor body image, why aren't we addressing the half-naked black female bodies that have replaced half-naked white bodies on MTV? Even though young black women slip through the cracks from time to time, I still believe that feminism is about understanding the intersection of all forms of oppression. (Riley, 2002, p. 369)

Beauty standards need to be seen outside of the dominant group. To help the client/participant in creating an identity that is autonomous and integrated, the identity needs to be "independent of the colonizer's idealized white female standard" (Comas-Diaz, 1994, p. 291).

With eight out of nine co-participants speaking about diversity and its importance at some point, this researcher took into consideration her own appearance and identity. Namely, I am a woman of color; that I am an activist in diversity issues may have had something to do with why others were so vocal about it. There are advantages of the therapist/researcher and the client/participant having similar racial/ethnic backgrounds; this is called the ethnospecific approach (Espin, 1994). Hammond (1987) noted that feminist therapists/researchers of color that had also had experiences of multiple forms of oppression often have a heightened sense of awareness about the client/participant's needs, calling it *conscious subjectivity*. This would help the therapist/researcher identify with the client/participant; validate them and their experiences; understand internalized oppression; advocate on the client/participant's behalf; and help by modeling and teaching the client/participant to master skills, and be competent (Enns, 2004). It is useful to aid clients/participants to differentiate between experiences of discrimination and their own internalized negative images that influence their behavior (Comas-Diaz, 1994; Enns, 2004).

People of color need to be heard and understood on their own terms, as their own lived experiences instead of being seen as statistics and generalizations (Enns, 2004). Inanna was the first exit interview that was conducted, and she said that had the

researcher/facilitator not been a person of color, she would not have spoken up about her issues around ethnicity and body image; she would hold those issues as important, but she would not have shared them aloud with the group. Inanna and I have similar backgrounds, as we are both American-born, and of South Asian heritages. When there is racial/ethnic similarity, it can decrease differences between the therapist/researcher and client/participant, and help to establish trust (Enns, 2004). This was found to be true between co-participants as well; when Inanna shared her body image issues related to her ethnicity, Amara was reminded of her own and felt comfortable to share them.

Although I am of South Asian descent, my being a person of color seemed to be enough to introduce a level of closeness and safety for many of the co-participants. Adelma shared very personal and painful stories with me; Sun-geo expressed the need for more role models that were women of color; and Lupe felt comfortable delving into her experience as a biracial and bicultural female. Magika made it very clear that she was not likely to have shared what she did in her exit interview with me had I not been a person of color. I affirmed her experiences, mentioning having been in similar situations as she had been in, helping her to feel safe with me, as well as feel validated. To hear and affirm the experience of anger and pain without becoming

defensive, paralyzed, or guilt ridden is of the utmost importance in working with minorities (Adams, 2000; Enns, 2004).

Both Athena and Bellagrun are of Caucasian descent. They both brought up diversity issues. The question could be posed as to whether or not they brought it up to please the researcher, especially due to the diverse racial/ethnic dynamics of the groups that they were in. However, as the researcher, I take their intentions for bringing up diversity issues as sincere, and specific to their experiences, rather than their speaking on the subject for the sake of looking politically correct. In presenting the collage that I had made that included the image of the interracial couple, Bellagrun reacted with deep emotion. She was able to share her appreciation of love that transcended social, racial, and political boundaries, and her pain of having such love rejected in some of her past experiences. Had I not chosen this image, she and I would not have had this profound bonding experience, and she may not have felt connected to me in the same way. In sharing this image, I became more than her classmate, or a person of color: I also became someone who looked beyond ethnic and cultural color-lines, and chose to love people for who they were, not for what they looked like. This was an experience that she and I had in both of our lives. To share in experiences, and have the willingness to be both powerful and vulnerable with people can add to effectiveness in working with them (Enns, 2004).

Concerning issues with food, awareness around choices in foods increased for all of the co-participants. Adelma, Artemis, and Sun-geo were already very balanced in their approach, eating what was good for them and sampling the sweets. Amara was relatively balanced but had some guilt over her choices. Athena had awareness about her eating habits but did not take steps to change her habits at the time. Lupe saw how she craved sweets but was afraid of eating too much of them, so avoided them. Magika felt no guilt over eating whatever she felt like. Bellagrun and Inanna both displayed significant changes in their eating habits. The increased awareness induced from the experiential process elicited conscious and unconscious changes in how they ate, and they took care of themselves.

Although insecurities came up for many of the co-participants, especially during the body mapping session, what was shared in the groups was received well by the other co-participants. All feedback shared between them was positive and encouraging. The experiential process had a safe container created by the researcher/facilitator that reinforced confidentiality and safety for everyone in the group. There was safety felt by 6 out of 9 of the co-participants in that the group was all female, as it allowed for freedom from prescribed gender roles. It also increased understanding and shared experience between females, and a meaningful factor in women's experiences (Jordan, Kaplan,

Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991), which creates "relational growth" (p. 1). With the sessions often running overtime, most of the co-participants, though they were welcome to leave if they chose to, typically stayed late until everyone had shared, and a group discussion had ensued. Though this may show that the group had solidified as a unit, it could also imply social pressure on each of the individuals to stay late, rather than leave when it was personally convenient for them.

Out of the 9 co-participants, 2 of them, when asked if they sensed the presence of the divine feminine, goddess or spirit, explained feeling part of an atmosphere of openness, compassion, acceptance, and empowerment; they did not tie it to a goddess image, or specifically to a spiritual source, but did not dismiss the possibility or notion of that either. The remaining seven co-participants did report sensing the presence of the divine feminine, goddess, or spirit in some way. Amara and Inanna claimed feeling her throughout the experiential process, and saw her as Oshun, the Nigerian love goddess; Magika felt a connection to Oshun as well. Athena felt an attraction to the goddess card of Venus/Aphrodite, as if she were repeatedly being called by her. She said that after the completion of the study, it seemed to her that the divine feminine was calling her from everywhere. Lupe expressed it as sensing the goddess in her co-participants, and had an experience with the divine masculine during the dance and

movement session, suggesting an integration of genders for her. Magika, and Sun-geo felt the goddess' presence most strongly through dance and movement, as they moved to music and allowed themselves to be open to the divine, feeling inspired in their movements. Magika also felt the goddess during the dress up session as it was also an activity which was creative, which allowed divine inspiration to be part of it. Sun-geo found the creative process of making her collage to include divine inspiration as well.

Limitations and Delimitations. Limitations of this research are that it had a small sample size that was limited in diversity, in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, and age. The participants in this study were recruited from a holistic Bay Area graduate school, and therefore were more open to working on themselves, and accepting of goddess imagery, and spirituality. Should this study have been done in a different area, or with different populations, there may have been some resistance to the spiritual component, and the goddess imagery that was brought in. Some people may have found some of the experiential activities challenging, and may have been less open to engaging in them than these graduate students in programs that heavily combined experiential processes with academic work.

This study was also limited in that it was a 4 week experiential process. Had it been a longer study, it may have

yielded more results. One of the co-participants expressed concern that the work that she had done on herself might not last, that she might slide back into her previous ways of thinking and being. This is a valid concern; whether the co-participants continue to work on their self-images, and whether the changes that they underwent in this experiential process will survive in the long run remains a question.

A fruitful delimitation of this study was that, due to the diversity it had in terms of race, ethnicity and culture, it showed how European-American beauty ideals can affect women of different backgrounds. It further allowed the opportunity for women of color to voice themselves, and included the experiences of numerous racial, ethnic, and multicultural communities in the U.S. that do not descend from European roots. In having diverse groups as part of the experiential; process, it also yielded the opportunity for females of different backgrounds to interact, share, and learn from each other. Despite the discomfort felt by two of the co-participants, it was an opportunity for exposure to different people with various experiences, adding richness to the experiential process, making it diverse, and multicultural.

Future Research

For future research on body image that aims to have a transformative component, this researcher would suggest the further use of creative expression activities, such as those

featured as part of the experiential process. The collage making was a good way to see if and how individuals may conform to sociocultural standards. The body mapping exercise was very effective in bringing awareness about one's own body image, and where messages that are held, be they positive or negative, come from. The dress up and dance and movement sessions were good for transformation and self-awareness, giving participants the opportunity to experiment and play with their body and self-images. Mirror exposure therapy is a current way of working with body image, and it is the hope of this researcher to see wider use of it. As cognitive-behavioral therapies are more frequently being used to address body image, it is the opinion of this researcher that it works to combine some of those techniques with mirror exposure work, and perhaps even some self-reflection and creative expression activities to more effectively address body image for each individual. This would be a more holistic approach, and address more parts of the person. To include positive and diverse images of females would only add to their empowerment, and hopefully have many more ways of addressing body image, so as to empower people of all different backgrounds. This could help others to accept and love themselves just as they are, and decrease the percentages of those that suffer from discontent with their bodies, eating pathologies, or body dysmorphic disorder.

Conclusion

The Goddess of Love is firstly in love with herself (Mascetti, 1990). She honors her body, taking excellent care of herself, having good health practices, being well-groomed, and dressed (Bolen, 1984). She approaches herself with self-love, rather than self-loathing or criticism. This archetype was activated in the co-participants partly by the researcher's encouraging learning to enjoy pleasure, feeling through their bodies, and alerting their senses (Bolen, 1984; Young-Eisendrath, 1999), and partly by engaging the co-participants in activities to face their body images (Delinsky, 2005). The co-participants in this experiential process, whether they had a mere increase in awareness about their body image and self-care practices, or had a dramatic emergence of the lover archetype, all reported having more self-acceptance about their bodies. Therefore, they all had a transformation in their body images. There were varying degrees in transformation specific to each co-participant, as each one had their own process about their body image. For example, Athena did not think much would change for her in this process, but she had made some subtle changes in her appearance and self-care practices, and had begun exploring the divine feminine. In contrast, Bellagrun went from being more masculine identified to reclaiming her feminine, having an experience in which she was spontaneous and connected with nature. She also wanted to make

changes in her appearance, wanting to wear clothes that were of different colors and textures, so that she might look and feel more feminine. Bellagrun also drastically changed her dietary habits, and intended to take more time to think about her self, addressing her own needs and desires.

It can be safely concluded by this researcher that activating the archetype of the lover within adult females did transform their body images, leading to more self-acceptance; better self-care practices; more mindfulness about appearance and self-expression; more experiences of embodiment and sensuality; increased creativity; and openness to divine inspiration. In observing the co-participants during the experiential process, as the researcher, I could attest to some of the changes I saw happen for the co-participants, some of them having marked shifts in their self-images or general approach. For others, however, the transformation they experienced was more subtle, or internal. For both the co-participants that I had known for some time to the co-participants that I got to know in this process, it was fascinating to walk with them on their journeys of self-exploration and transformation. I do not think that what was worked on in this experiential process will end with the completion of this study, but rather that all of the co-participants will continue to have what they worked on, and they will continue to unfold and grow from here.

In facilitating for this experiential process, I saw myself as an example, a vessel for the archetypal lover energy. I allowed myself to be open and share my own journey with my co-participants, which included my personal insecurities and self-celebrations. I believe that this strengthened the experience for the co-participants, creating efficacy validity between us. In this way, I was not a far-removed authority figure running the study, but was a participant, someone who was human, who shared in the struggle of trying to love and accept my own body. The study was also validating for how I held my own body image. I saw how far I had come in my self-acceptance. I received encouragement and validation from the co-participants as well. I do consider myself to be a generally confident and competent person, in spite of some of the body image issues that I have had in my past. In the end, I showed them that I had been triumphant, and I think that in the work that we did together in this experiential process, we were all triumphant.

After having completed this study, I can see the co-participants, the ones that I just met and those that I had known before in a unique way. I can appreciate them as people who chose to face themselves, explore their body images that often included wounding and negative messages, and be dedicated in transforming how they saw, and treated themselves. The first lesson of the lover archetype is self-love (Bolen, 1984; Bonheim, 1997;

Spretnak, 1981; Woolger & Woolger, 1987), and all of the co-participants took the opportunity of this experiential process, and in doing so, invited their inner lover to come out. It has been a rewarding and pleasurable experience for me to have been part of each co-participant's process.

As intuitive inquiry includes the subjective experience of the researcher; what is presented in this study is through my eyes, going through the filter of my experiences, beliefs and impressions. Everyone that reads this dissertation will have his or her own experience of the data. I hope that those reading this will have some resonance with the stories of the co-participants, as well as with my own. And, if anything, I hope that everyone is able, however fleetingly, to reevaluate his or her own body image, and be inspired to greater self-love!

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Appendix A: Consent Form

To the participant in this research,

You are invited to participate in a study exploring the relationship between self-image and activating the archetype of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. You will be asked to share your experiences of having worked with the archetype of Aphrodite, through the experiential exercises that will be done as part of this study.

This research is to reveal the potential transformation in working with archetypes to catalyze change in self-image in adult women. Your participation may also serve as an opportunity for you to engage with the archetype of Aphrodite, potentially activating her within your consciousness, in addition to exploring your self-image. The study consists of four sessions, to be held once a week. Each session has a different activity planned for it, being either collage-making, body-mapping, dressing up in various clothing, or dance and movement. Refreshments will be provided for each of these sessions. Involvement in this study can potentially increase your self-knowledge, as well as induce personal growth.

The study will include four reflection papers, to be turned in after each session of the study. The study also includes a one one-hour interview at the conclusion of the study, at a mutually agreed upon location where a private conversation can be held. I

will be transcribing the data collected from this study myself, therefore there will be no one else seeing them. The interview will be recorded and all material written or taped will be stored securely.

The study is designed to minimize any potential risks to you. Risks in this study in working with body image issues could potentially lead to emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. Should you feel any distress after sharing your experiences, you are welcome to contact me, and I am available to talk with you over your concerns, especially at the end of a session. I am also able to make referrals for therapists/psychologists should you need or request them. Please know that your participation is completely voluntary, and should you choose to, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. This includes protection from penalty in any relationship you may have with the researcher.

For the protection of your privacy, all information received from you will be kept confidential and your identity will be protected. Unless you wish to have your name attached to what you share, a fictitious name will be used to further ensure your privacy. Only I will be have access to the materials.

Confidentiality must also be maintained among participants. You must agree to not share information about another participant's process outside of the study's setting, not even

with the use of pseudonyms. You may only share information with others outside of the study about your own process without revealing any information referring to any other participant, as even the most seemingly insignificant detail could potentially lead to revealing their identity. You will be reminded about confidentiality at the beginning of each session.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may call me at (408) 888-8888, or my Chairperson, Chandra Alexandre, Ph.D. at (415) 505-6840, or Frederick Luskin, Ph.D., the head of the Research Ethics Committee for Research at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology at (650) 493-4430, x256. The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology assumes no responsibility for psychological or physical injury relating to this research.

If you would like to receive a summary of my research findings at the conclusion of this study, please include your email address with your signature below. You will be given the results of the data that you provided, as well as the discussion section of the dissertation. If you would like to receive an email copy of the dissertation upon its completion, please do let me know, and I will be happy to send it to you.

I attest that I have read and understood this form, had any questions about this research answered to my satisfaction, and can withdraw at any time without penalty. My participation in this research is completely voluntary, and there is furthermore, no

pressure being applied in encouraging my participation. My signature indicates my willingness to be a participant in this research.

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

Address (optional) _____

_____ Check here only if you prefer to NOT have a pseudonym used for the information that you provide

Signature of researcher _____

Appendix B: Prescreen Form

Prescreening form:

Name: _____

Age: _____

Sex: _____

1. Do you have, or have you ever had a diagnosable mental or personality disorder?

2. Do you have, or have you ever had an eating disorder? If so, when?

3. Do you have any physical conditions that may hinder you from participating fully in the activities that are part of this study (such as dance and movement)? Are there any special accommodations that you might need?

4. Do you have any food allergies (as there will be refreshments served)?

Personal Data:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Gender Identity: _____

Sexual Orientation: _____

Marital Status: _____

Ethnic Identity: _____

Spiritual/Religious Affiliation: _____

Educational Background: _____

Socioeconomic Status: _____

Appendix C: Flier

*Research Participants
Wanted*

For the exploration of body image in working with the Love Goddess

If you are a woman between the ages of 20-40, you are invited to participate in a study on the transformation of body image by working with the archetype of the Love Goddess.



Artwork by Sharon George

The study includes 4 sessions that meet once a week for 3 hours; refreshments will be provided. You will be doing creative expression, and sharing your work in a group. You will be asked to journal at the end of each session, and an interview will be conducted at the end of the study.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact Sarah Astarte at sacredpriestess1@yahoo.com, or call (408) 888-8888.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. Can you describe your body-image (as you remember it) before you engaged in the experiential processes? How did you used to relate your body-image to your identity?
2. Can you describe your body-image now- after the experiential processes? Is there any change or new perspectives in how you relate your body-image to your identity?
3. If there has been a change or shift in your body-image during the course of the experiential processes? Can you describe them in detail?
 - When did you notice these changes happening (prompt)?
 - Was there a specific incidence that took place that was a turning point for you (prompt)?
 - Was there a particular activity that led to the shift to take place(prompt)?
4. Was there anything poignant and in particular that happened for you during the experiential exercises?
 - Session 1, collage-making?
 - Session 2, body mapping?
 - Session 3, dressing up in various types of clothing and accessories?
 - Session 4, dance and movement?
 - Mirror exposure work done on your own at home?
5. Was there anything of note that came up for you in your choices in food from the refreshments that were featured?
 - Any feelings around what was selected to be served (prompt)?
 - Any feelings around what you chose to eat, such as joy, guilt, shame, for example (prompt)?

6. Were there any issues or experiences related to specific areas in your body that came up for you over the course of the experiential processes?

-Old wounding around certain body parts (prompt)?

-New awareness of body parts (prompt)?

-New understanding and acceptance of body parts (prompt)?

7. Were there any thoughts and behaviors that you had around your self-image as related to your body that came up for you?

-Old thought and behavior patterns (prompt)?

-New thought and behavior patterns (prompt)?

8. How was your experience as being part of a group?

-Did it help you?

-Did it hinder you?

9. What do you think you may take away from this experience in your life?

10. Did you have any experience of the goddess, divine feminine, transpersonal, or spiritual energy during the experiential process?

11. Is there anything that I have not asked you about your experience, or anything that you would like to share with me now?

Appendix E: Adelma

Session 1

1. Red outfit by Michelle Obama
2. Underwear model
3. Freedom to express our being "freedom to being" who we are
4. Chocolate; relaxed, bread; I needed energy

Session 2

1. My ugly feet- my toes with corns; my big legs; my dark knees; big thighs, big/curvy hips' stretch marks; cold hands; pain under my left breast; acne on my skin; oily skin; skin, spots; not balanced skin, not balanced complexion. Issues brought some emotions for me especially when thinking of past; *sadness*; thinking of how I was teased! But I also feel *happy*, content with parts of my body that I feel proud of and love. I love my big legs; my curvy hips; my breasts; flat stomach; my vagina. I love my femininity and my beautiful facial features.
2. When I was growing up I was teased about my legs; my complexion. I was darker than my siblings. My body size, I was fat and bigger than my siblings. I was told that I didn't have a nice figure. I felt very insecure and conscious about my body; these were negative messages.
3. Growing up now as an adult, my body image is generally positive. I feel happy, I love my shape and almost all parts of my body. Although I am generally happy, there are issues mentioned on the 1st question that I still deal with: minor insecurities.
4. Today I ate an apple- I felt comforted, I wanted some fruit to nibble and that is what I picked.

Session 3

1. Fun, I had fun, brought positive memories. I put on a pink dress and scarf, hat; I felt like I was in a spring mood. I brought memories of summer; hat; shiny days of Africa. I felt good. I felt younger and good looking. The process was really fun and playful. I also wore a blue skirt and top- also summer clothes. And lastly, I put on a wig and a long, brown dress. I had fun, and took pictures.

2. I was not consciously thinking of themes. I was mainly wearing what looked attractive. I only realized after dressing up that I went for summer-spring kind of clothes.
3. I ate brownies and bread, it felt good for me to relax and have fun. I also noted that I became energized after eating.

Session 4

1. I felt energetic, it felt as if I were releasing some negative energy from my system. I felt free to be; it reminded me of being a child, without any inhibitions, but being spontaneous. I felt happy, joyful, playful, relaxed and had fun.
2. I feel good about my body. I am aware of my femininity, the way that my curves move, I realize how my breasts, bum and waist were moving. I felt alive.
3. Embodiment was experienced when I went deep into myself while moving to the music. I created a certain rhythm in dancing to the music. I closed my eyes, and inwardly experienced peace and being one with the music.
4. I ate bread; chocolate and pear; mostly to feel good, relaxed and acquire some energy. I started with fruit to refresh my mouth, then I ate bread for energy and as the dancing progressed. I ate some chocolate for more energy. I feel good about my choice of food.

Interview

S: Can you describe your body image before you engaged in this experiential process?

A: I've always felt like I wasn't perfect. That I had big feet, all sorts of things that were not perfect. But of late, before entering this study, I had the feeling that I had started forming a positive body image, feeling that my body's perfect. I can control my weight. I see a shape that I like. I have insecurities but as bad as they used to be. And being in this study it sort of confirmed that I am not as bad as I'm thinking; I'm perfect as I am. I just have to accept myself. I think the biggest thing is that my feet, that came up in the body mapping session. I have ugly feet, masculine feet. Then we got talking about masculine and feminine, and if I said that my feet are like my father's and that they shouldn't be mine; and yet they are my feet. I have to accept them as my own. That was a big shift for me: that I have to accept my feet as my own.

S: How do you relate your body image to your identity?

A: I think it is everything. For myself, my sense of identity encompasses everything about me: how I present myself, how I hold myself in this body that I have. It's really a complete package. The more positive I am with myself in the identity I carry about myself, because usually I know that I am a groomed person. I am presentable, so yes, it is everything. There is a strong correlation between body image and identity. I'm groomed, I'm clean, I'm confident, and in most cases that is how people receive me. I will not go to work in an untidy T-shirt for instance.

S: You mentioned the acceptance around your feet. Could you talk about your body image overall after this experiential process?

A: The key thing is for me to embrace the body that I have, including those ugly feet (laughter).

S: You said it beautifully until you came to "ugly feet."

A: I make sure when I present myself to people, that I carry myself well.

S: If you wear the right shoes, no one will notice (laughter)!

A: (Laughter) I think it's about being self-conscious, because the minute I decided to embrace them, however way, that helps me to be more positive about them. The minute I am self-conscious in a judgmental way, I don't want to embrace them, you know, and I feel like I should hide them. And they are my feet! I have to love them (laughing again after a pause).

S: You mentioned the body mapping being a session where a shift happened for you, how were the other sessions for you?

A: I think also we started off with a collage. I think from looking at the images, what looks like beauty in my eyes. I'm sure that had you asked me that question two or three years ago, you would've gotten a different answer. I think what I realized reflecting now based on that experience is that I'm more at peace being black; I'm more at peace being an African. I'm just proud to appear as such and not be confused as anything else. The type of pictures that I cut there, observing that, I see that I'm more accepting. If I'm in South Africa I could be something else, but if I'm outside, the borders, somewhere in the middle of no where, I am very strong. My sense of identity has become very strong as a black, African female. And it's amazing.

S: You mentioned a difference for your identity, while in South Africa. How is that different?

A: I think that while I am there I take it for granted, there are other things there that represent beauty for me. Maybe I could be obsessed with the latest fashion, or some sort of body type, I could be going to the mainstream fashion. But being here, where I am in the minority, and where I am far away, it is almost like I am reclaiming, I don't want to lose that aspect of myself. Being an African often goes into body shape, a person expects to see some type of a body shape; curvy, not much above average, heavy, not fat but heavy-meat (laughter).

S: So people from outside have this stereotype of what African women are supposed to look like.

A: I think it depends on the situation. If the situation is such that I am in an informal setting, the person would have an expectation of what an African girl is, I can tell. It's in my mind that the person will comment. In some settings where it is formal, I don't expect people to be commenting in that way or holding those stereotypes. I don't expect people to be commenting or holding those stereotypes. I expect them to be more enlightened or more awake.

S: So do you feel that in some settings you have to prove yourself and disclaim those stereotypes?

A: Well, I think some cases, yeah. I think the type of people that would be in that setting could be people may not necessarily know about the world out there; low level of education, carry those sort of stereotypes.

S: I feel you, I share that experience. So, I noticed in your collage you had images of very empowered women, different body types (women of color); pictures of Michelle Obama multiple times. It's interesting that you said earlier that you are aware that you chose images now that you would not have chosen some time ago.

A: Yeah, I think I have a strong identity, and am more self-determined now.

S: How was the dress up session for you?

A: That was fun. I can't think of any motive for choosing what I wore, it was just fun. Dressing up, taking pictures, not being conscious of how I looked. It was fun.

S: Session 4, dance and movement?

A: That was playful. Very, very playful, and some source of release for me. It was a break for me. After the quarter, so many courses that I took, so it was really relaxing for me. I remember getting out of the session, going home, and I slept like a baby. I could not believe it, I went into sleep just like that! So it (the session) was fun, it was playful. It kind of reminded me of how strong I identify with my femininity. I could embrace some parts of me, masculine parts of me, somewhere, somewhat, when it is required of me. But mostly, particularly in that exercise I was just comfortable in my feminine.

S: Was there anything of interest that came up for concerning food?

A: For me it was just to have fun, relax, nibble on something. In some cases when I needed more energy, I would pick up something, more sugar. I chose to eat for pleasure. No Guilt!

S: Were there any other big issues came up for you around parts of your body, other than your feet?

A: No, I think what it reminded me of, especially the body mapping exercise; I shared about my family background, how I would be teased. Big feet, ugly whatever, you know, I will never be perfect as far as my sisters were concerned. I grew up chubby, fat, I was the darkest (complexioned) in my family. I was a misfit so to speak. What came back was that I grew up into this, and I am appreciating it, even though I could have easily hated myself because of the criticism that I grew up under. But I turned around, somewhat, and I appreciated myself. That helps, because then I carry myself with a lot of appreciation. And people say that I appear calm, warm, approachable, all because I have accepted this body who I am working with. It has helped me in creating and maintaining relationships, when I needed to appear a certain way, despite of the trauma.

S: You know I remember the body mapping session and your talking about the experiences with your sisters. You mentioned that now that your sisters are older and have kids, now next to them you look like a model.

A: (laughing) I am a Model! I just keep calm, and everyone says "Oh, you look beautiful." That is also showing a lot of hard work on my side. I had to prove that I belonged to this family, so I had to work to look acceptable. There is a lot of hard work behind it, painfully so.

S: You have sweet revenge now! So moving on, how was experience in being part of the group?

A: That was fun. I think people were more authentic, willing to participate, cooperate with what had to be done. So that felt like I belonged, like I was understood by the group. It was quite a good group.

S: So it helped your process?

A: Definitely. People shared deep thoughts, and shared, which was good.

S: What would you take at from this experience that you would take away and integrate into your life?

A: It is almost like reassurance, that I have what it takes and what I have is valuable and I just have to embrace it and keep moving. I think it was reinforcement of moving away from the doubts, and I am embracing more of what I am struggling with. Like the feet, I am embracing it, it my portion, it is part of me. I have to do it, and no one will do it on my behalf. That helped me, to somewhat resuscitate and beef up my confidence as I present myself. I'm content with how I present myself, being in my body.

S: How long have you been working on my body image?

A: Since 2002, 2001. Basically just losing weight, and started getting into body image. How to present myself, my self-image. What colors to wear, patterns, if I want to accentuate certain parts of my body, how to do that. I am short, I want to appear taller and more trim, because I have big thighs, so what kind of patterns I should wear down there.

S: Well, you've come a long way. Well, my last question is if you felt the presence of the Divine Feminine, or Goddess or however you want to conceptualize it, something more there?

A: I think it was more a feeling of acceptance, compassion, no judgmental attitudes or whatever. That was more the feeling I had in our meetings. It was not in the form of an image, but more as

compassion, that people are with me that are caring, the energy in the room. The study went so fast and was so enjoyable.

Appendix F: Amara

Session 1

1. I noticed that strength shown by Angelina Jolie of the empowered woman. Authentic is beautiful. Yoga in nature feels and looks beautiful. Family and babies-what I want! Nature is a source of beauty to me. Elegance is beauty, art is beauty. Animals, flora and fauna are a given.
2. Beautiful, empowered women, families, motherhood, nature, yoga; things I want and love. Angelina Jolie and her family are a dreamy ideal, strong father figure. Huge lilies growing on still water below a mountain.
3. Nature, natural elegance, women-mother, woman IN HER POWER, naturally, yoga, love.
4. New cookie, I love experimenting, love cardamom; truffle with almond, like that combo; yogurt dipped pineapple; bread, I know I shouldn't eat it but it went well with dip, so fuck it; yum, spicy. No guilt, ok, a bit about bread. All else was yum, fun, hmmmmmm. Love is beautiful.

Session 2

Identity from the world and family and self. I am all 3 in a balancing act. Yes I believe some of them, but mostly just my own striving for balance within so I feel beautiful. Imperfections and all. Negative more so. It's challenging to be in my body, I cloak more than I adorn my being, always hiding my imperfections and choosing to make light of my sadness around it. I chose to eat a bit of everything that appealed to me, yum! Cake and bread were in small amounts, so that's fine.

Session 3

1. Dark makeup, eyes and lips blackish; pink bra choli top, midriff showing; scarf around waist. Sexy, skin showing, everything I won't let myself wear because its too much sexy skin, "Look at me," "I am sexual." I've said before "I don't do sexy." Ahhhh, the legacy of sexual abuse, it never rests, does it?!
2. I like patterns, bright colors, textures, belts; don't like floral (grandma don't like cheap looking clothes-stripes, old, worn out), too cheesy, too hippie or fake looking.
3. Sexy, frumpy but it's reminding me about owning my sexuality
4. and how empowering that can be of my power/Me.
5. A bit of cheese that was yucky; 3 bell pepper, they were

fresh tasting. Chocolate coffee bean wow!!! Chocolate raspberry cookie good, yummy, just one. Half of a crispy pita, yucky so I tossed the other half out. I like to taste many things, it is fun. Not really hungry, more thirsty right now.

Session 4

1. My process in dancing was slow to begin with and I was somatically remembering how nice it was move with my hands in the air, shake it, and seduce boys with my body and play with the music. I felt inspired to enjoy spring/summer and go dancing in San Francisco at the Academy of Science.
2. I felt inspired to get into better shape dance at home, go out dancing and enjoy my life more.
3. Through my eyes, lips and ears, breath and body. I could feel energy pulsing within me; I wanted to sing and thought about creative expression inspirations to do with friends.
4. I ate pears, I love pears! I love Turkish delight, so I tried one of each color. The bread with hummus, 1 slice after dancing that was good. I'm not hugely hungry but it is dinner time. The bread and hummus was okay, not a big deal.

Interview

S: Could you describe your body image before the experiential process?

A: I've always had body issues. One of the things is that I have become more conscious. I was telling my therapist, saying that I actively love my body. I am conscious about wanting to unconditionally loving my body; and I did not do that before, but I am conscious of it now. In the hamster wheel of my mind I had these (negative) messages. But hearing others in the group talk about this or that, brought me more to a place of realizing that my thoughts are not different from others. Everyone has their issues about the package that they are wrapped in.

S: How has your body image changed?

A: I kind of love that I'm fat, marshmallow-like, it's like bumper cars, where I have this cushion between me and the world. I don't take myself so seriously now. When I am fit then I take myself more seriously and fuss more, but when I am like this I can not be so serious and laugh more, like "I'm so soft, haha!" When you give up, you don't have anything to lose; and there is less to worry about. Before the experiential process, I wouldn't have been so

lighthearted. "You can't love yourself because of this or that." Now I see that I have flaws and I can love them anyway. I love myself, and I am healthier and happier because I have a positive attitude.

S: Was there a shift that took place for during the experiential process?

A: The body map was most profound. During the body mapping, one woman talked about having a big, sexy brain. You are only as sexy as your brain. Having a brain is sexy. One woman talked about her breasts and having a belly to go with them, that made me reflect on myself.

The collage was good in that it brought me awareness of what I find beautiful right now. I showed my longing for a family and children. Had I done this project in my twenties, it would have been totally different, more high fashion. Now I would say that family and nature is beautiful.

The dressing up session was a lot of fun. One woman commented on my waist to hip ratio, that if she had my small waist that she would show it off. I've gotten busy cloaking myself rather than adorning myself. I have lots of sets of jewelry, that I have designed, had made in India. I used to wear lots of jewelry, I was known for it. For the past ten years, I haven't really worn it, adorned myself at all. I was depressed, overweight; it was about hiding. Actually, I'm adorning myself now, with some cloaking. Showing off some parts while covering other parts, trying to accentuate what is acceptable. I have plenty of jewelry. I am dressing nicely because in the professional environment. I look presentable, so I can see clients, go in front of the CEO, be high-end. I learned cloaking from my mom, who made lots of negative comments. She wanted me to cover more. She thought it was inappropriate to show cleavage, for example- we're not fucking Amish! One time I was wearing a skirt that was long, ending between my knees and ankles. It was almost to my ankles, and it wasn't long enough for her.

The day we played dress up, I made the comment that I am bringing sexy back. It's a big piece of my personal power! There's more swivel in my hips now!

Session 4 reminded me of how dance is important to me. I had let it go, and now it has been like a reclaiming (of dance). I had danced the weekend before. It was fun. It was a bigger part of my life in my twenties, going out with friends and dancing. I used to

dance bhangra (traditional Punjabi dance) with people from Stanford. I am dancing more now, and I am going out with friends this coming weekend.

My parents came from a shame paradigm: shame around the physical and sexual. I got this from both my parents. I have become more authentic knowing that this shame is not mine, I can give it back to them. That's their choice, and they can live like that, that's fine.

I have a relationship with a male right now, that is showing up to be about love and sensuality, not sexuality. It's very nurturing, satisfying, and actually very healing.

S: Do you see yourself differently in the mirror now?

A: I feel more powerful compared to myself when I was younger and thinner. I'm overweight, and I still feel attractive. I feel that when I am thinner. I am healthier and more athletic, but other than that, I am happy. The hatred that I received from outside sources. The criticism of my parents, never being good enough, I've gotten rid of the majority of it. This (my body) is what I've got, and I'm happy with who I am. Being in relationship with my family is handing them back their garbage. This is a new way of being with my family. And I'm attracting new people, people that blow my mind. The quality of interaction is amazing, and it's become normal to have that. I have raised my vibration. I have two new things I am holding: I love my body; I love men. I realized that I want to shift my relationship with my masculine, and in loving men. My masculine is half of me, and if I'm not in alignment in me, it's not going to be good. There is a connection with my masculine, men, and my sexuality. My masculine is my physical incarnation, my being on this earth; it's what grounds me here.

S: Was there anything that came up for you around the food that was served?

A: It was fun to have different things to nibble on. Some of the things I'd avoid eating, I'd have a piece but not gorge on it.

S: How was experience as being a part of the group?

A: I loved it, it was helpful, it was precious! I love ITP, the people are conscious and working on themselves, are open and self-aware. Being in that particular group was good. It was insightful, interesting, positive. My foundation as a person is very European,

and later in life there was more Indian influence. To have two Caucasian women in the room, I was identifying more with them. My extroverted side is Caucasian, my introverted side is Indian. To have an Indian woman in the group, she was very introverted. Her quiet influence was very powerful. When we did the body maps, what she said about her "ethnic hair" and features reminded me of my own.

I'm in a place where I want to heal my body, this incarnation. I want to own it, honor it.

S: Did you in some way experience the Goddess, Divine Feminine, or some transpersonal shift in consciousness or energy during this study?

A: I felt the Goddess in a grounded form, not airy and light. It was in a earth mother, earthy way. Sweet water, is that Oshun? I experienced the sessions like that, that they flowed really well, nothing was rough; it was like flowing water. Oshun, she is definitely with me. From the African tradition, she is the one I connect with. She helps me to "own it and work it!"

Appendix G: Artemis

Session 1

1. For a collage on beauty, the first thing that came to mind was nature. In flipping through the fashion magazines, I then remembered that I am in a study on body image, and should probably pick images of people too. What quickly arose in me is the split between what I think is beautiful and what society tells us is beautiful. In pulling images, I was drawn to many images of nature, which can be hard to find. Most of what was in the magazines were made up and what society thinks is beautiful. I searched for images that were more natural and evoked a calm feeling in me. I was struck by the amount of advertising of "stuff" in all of the magazines, and actually think most of my imagery come from ads as opposed to from articles.
2. In organizing the collage, I wish I'd had more time to pull images and arrange them. I have 1/3 of the space (on the left) with societal beauty images and words, and the remaining 2/3 for what I consider beautiful. Perhaps with the open space remaining I will add some more images, as I do not consider my collage complete at this point.
3. I ate a piece of bread with hummus because it seemed the most filling and I was hungry. I liked it but wished it was whole grain bread instead of white. Carrots because I like them and wanted to eat some vegetables. I worry I'm chewing loudly when I eat them. Fruit/chocolate, I haven't eaten yet but probably will before I leave.

Session 2

1. I was looking forward to doing my body map. Having dealt with body issues most of my life due to a super skinny and critical mother, this was a way for me to really see what my perspective on my body is. I had a mixture of positive, negative, and neutral thoughts, but overall I think I have good outlook on my body and am thankful for my health. I had most trouble writing about my hip and butt region, as most of what came to mind was negative. The first thing I wrote in the whole exercise was "strong core" and I really feel this is true both physically and mentally, an important part of who I am. I noticed that many things I

- wrote (calves, ears, veins) were things that used to bother me a lot but now I have come to accept those parts of myself and I am okay with them.
2. The comments about my nose being perfect is something I remember my mother saying. It may have been the only bodily compliment I ever got from her. Now that I am reflecting, I remember her saying it when my sister was lamenting her larger "Jewish" nose, and I wonder if my sister internalized feelings of her nose being inadequate.
 3. I ate some vegetables, bread with dip, and half a mini (chocolate) cake. I feel okay with my choices. It is the end of the quarter and I'm not eating very healthy, but I'm okay with that. I'll take better care of myself soon.

Session 3

1. The first thing I picked was a multicolored scarf. I wanted to pick an outfit that matched it. I couldn't find a skirt at first so I went to shirts, where I picked up a cropped halter top. My first thought was that my breasts are too big for it, but trying it on over a sports bra it fit. Moving back to skirts, I found a stretchy, red skirt and tried it on. It fit, so I went with it. I tried on some leg warmers, but felt the skirt was too long and that the proportions were wrong (not enough leg) so I took them off. I picked some big, metal earrings, a sparkly bracelet, and necklace. For makeup I did dark eyes with some silver, and red lips. Dark eyes I am used to wearing when I dress up but I usually don't wear color on my lips. In the dim light of the room I felt it looked good, but under brighter lights I'm not sure.
2. At first I did not want to pick an outfit that showed my belly, but then decided that if I am going to be wearing a bikini over break then I can show my stomach here. Part of it is the context of being in Hawaii, but I also think that the nervousness of the other girls made me more self-conscious. I wanted to wear something that I would not normally wear, so I stayed away from the conservative things and sweaters and long skirts and was drawn to skimpier things. I think I enjoy these items but many times feel I am too old or too large to wear them.
3. I like my look! I would love to wear this to a festival.

4. I ate an apple and string cheese that I brought with me. I also nibbled on pita chips, bell peppers, and am planning on eating a cookie before I leave tonight.

Session 4

1. At first I felt nervous and awkward dancing in a classroom in the middle of the afternoon. After a few songs I loosened up and let myself feel the music. I think that I was aware of not wanting to be the first one to start dancing. I think it was when Shakira came on that I really loosened up and let my body move. A few times I closed my eyes, which helped to center me and get me in touch with my body. It felt good to just move and feel not judged by those around me.
2. I felt good about my body while dancing, though part of me is always self-conscious about what to do with my arms. I like how it feels to move my body to music. At one point I got a glimpse of myself in the mirror and at first didn't want to watch, but I did and it was interesting to see what I looked like while feeling the movement.
3. Maybe I felt embodiment? I felt in touch with my body and could express what I was feeling, but I'm not sure what is meant by the term.
4. I ate pears because I love fresh fruit and a piece of bread because it looked good. I feel good about the fruit but wish I hadn't had the bread.

Interview

S: Could you describe your body image before the experiential process?

A: I would say that I was pretty comfortable with my body before so. Growing up with my mother my body was always a topic of conversation. Now that I'm grown up, I'm in a more comfortable place. I have friends that are very self-conscious about parts of their bodies. For me, I'm grateful that I've been able to get past that; there are minor things that don't bug me as they used to. But I see those things still bothering some of my friends.

S: Very good. So you mentioned your mother and where some of those messages came from, how does your body image relate to your identity.

A: I would say being tall, that is definitely feel is very much part of my identity. I think that it is one of the first things that people notice about me, I'm taller than most women. I don't know, I consider myself to be an average weight right now. I was heavier in college, I was skinnier in high school, and now I'm healthy. Even though I don't feel perfect, I feel comfortable. And maybe healthy is more important than squeezing into those tiny pair of jeans or something!

S: Can you describe your body image now after the study?

A: I would say in terms of going through the different exercises, the body mapping was probably the most meaningful. I could see the things that were both positive and negative. I was glad to see I had a mix of both. After that exercise in particular, it gave me a better, a real positive outlook on my body image.

S: So you mentioned some sort of shift happening for you.

A: Yeah, there has been some shift since I got to our graduate school, so this helped move it along.

S: How did other sessions effect you?

A: The week prior you had us do collages, and I had mentioned to a friend earlier that I had missed it and wanted to get back into doing collages. And then I walked in and you said that we were making collages, and I thought, "Oh, wow." (laughter)

S: Yes, I must have heard your psychic wish.

A: You must have! So I liked doing that, and I have the collage in my room and I plan to add to it. I haven't had the chance to yet, but you remember that I still had some room left on it?

S: Yes, I do.

A: So I plan to do that.

S: It's a wonderful exercise in your self work, in your body image, in accepting what you have, and how to work it!

A: Yeah, I did a lot of collage making in college, and want to get back into it more.

S: How was the dress up session for you?

A: It was fun. It was fun to try on new things, things that I normally wouldn't wear. But in terms of it effecting my perception of my body image, it didn't do that much for me. It was fun for me, but the first two sessions did more for me. The stuff that I tried on you wouldn't find in my closet, but it was stuff that I would try on at a store. It was like being a little kid again and playing dress up.

S: Session 4, dance and movement?

A: I felt that it was a little awkward at first. I enjoyed the music so that helped. There were definitely songs that I was more into than others. I remember the Shakira song coming on and thinking "Oh good!" Somebody else didn't like her, but for me it was great. I like to go dancing with friends on occasion, and you know, we will get hit on by men you don't want to get hit on by. And like the one's that come up from behind you and its like "Where did you come from? Go away!" So its fun to dance without that! I've had that experience happen before, and it's fun to just dance by myself sometimes. I've done that on camping trips and drives and stuff.

S: Did you notice anything interesting in your self perception when you look at yourself in the mirror now?

A: I think I'm appreciative of everything I have, just in general, since coming to graduate school. I'm more grateful for my health, my family, my friends. And when I look in the mirror, I still see a couple things I would change, but they're not my focus. My focus is on more positive things. I'd rather, when I look in the mirror focus on the things that I like.

S: Has what we have done in this study shifted your process on your body image?

A: Maybe. It furthered the changes that I was already working on, so it helped contribute to that.

S: Did anything come up for you in the food choices from the refreshments that were served?

A: I try to pick healthy snacks, generally. So definitely I went for the fruits and veggies, and by the end, I would go for the chocolate or dessert thing that there was (laughter)! Well 'cause for me, if I don't eat it until the end then I just grab one. If I ate one earlier then I can more easily get a second one. So I wait until the end to grab the dessert.

S: That is some good self-discipline that you have there!

A: (laughter) Yeah, and I mean, I don't buy snack foods at home, I don't have cookies or chips, or anything. So if they are around, I enjoy them! But that's specifically why I don't buy them, because I'll just eat them and never make a meal for myself. That's why. But I also like fruits and vegetables. I also like eating them with peanut butter, that is good. I feel good about what I eat. Like, I feel better about eating a handful of carrots than a handful of potato chips, it doesn't weigh me down. Then you feel groggy, you know, a lot of the snack kind of foods do that.

S: Well, you seem to be very in tune with your body to know how what you eat physically effects you.

A: Yeah, thanks. It's been an interest of mine for at least the last few years. And I grew up with my mom, who is a little health nut, and it's rubbed off on me. She talked about moderation. Since I eat healthy most of the time, if I splurge, I don't feel guilty. I just go back to normal the next couple of days.

S: Your mom did a good job.

A: Thanks.

S: Did you have a particularly pleasurable or awful experience with eating at all?

A: Mm, I remember one day that there had been cupcakes in every class, like the end of the quarter. And then at your thing that night you had not cupcakes, but something similar, and I thought "Oh God, more?!" I can't remember if I had any.

S: You'd met your cupcake quota by the end of the day?

A: Yeah! I think I was sugared out by that point.

S: I think it's great that you listened to you body, that you realized that you were done for the day. Coming back to body image: were there any specific areas of your body that issues came up for while in the experiential process?

A: Well, I think that doing the body mapping thing gave me an awareness of all the things I do positively about my body. I think most of the time my awareness is on "Oh I'm too chubby here, this isn't perfect." or whatever. And to have it all on there, the

negative things on there, it also forced me to see all the things I have in a positive way. So in an overall sense it was a good activity, because it showed me all the good things too.

S: So it sounds like it helped you to reframe how you see yourself. It sounds that there is more acceptance about what you look like.

A: Yeah, mm hm.

S: How was your experience to be part of the group?

A: I liked the group. I didn't know anybody coming in. I usually hold back if I don't know people, so there was a little bit of that in the beginning. I think as a whole, having a group there helped the process, because having other people there first encouraged me to open up and do the same. I feel like our group had a good balance. People that were the first to answer, then encouraged me and others that didn't want to be first to then open up. Yeah, I think having a small group was helpful, maybe a couple of other people, but to have a larger group would have been overwhelming.

S: Did you feel supported in the group?

A: I did, yeah. I think it took a couple of sessions, making the collage, yeah. It opened up people's vulnerabilities, and was less exposing than the other ones (activities). So I think the second session after hearing people's collages, hearing what people's issues were, that was a good way to break the ice, since I didn't know these people.

S: What may have you taken away from this experience that you could integrate into your life?

A: I think I touched on it already, that in general I have more acceptance of my positive qualities.

S: This question is a bit transpersonal. Did you feel the presence of the Divine Feminine, or the Goddess, did you feel embodied?

A: I don't know. I like how you had the altar with the different statues on it, once I knew who they were and what they represented. I don't know, I feel that you, to me personally, seemed to exude confidence, and to me represented positivity in body image, which was helpful. For me, if the person running it didn't seem confident, it wouldn't have worked as well.

S: Oh, thank you!

A: (laughter) You're welcome.

So I don't know if I felt like a general, or some sort of spirit around, in the room . . . it was, I don't know what the word is I'm looking for. Just the room, what we did in there generated a feeling of openness, confidence . . . that's not the word I'm looking for but the word isn't coming to me.

S: Safety, comfort, empowerment, positivity

A: All of those . . . being in the room with other women encouraged me to be more confident, be more positive.

S: It seemed to me that there was an intuitive connection between members of the group. I recall in the first session that you had an image of a salad with flowers in it, and another member was looking for the same image, which is an obscure thing, especially in fashion magazines. It seemed to me that you are all on the same frequency with each other early on. And I thought, this is great!

A: I definitely felt a connection to the people my group. And it can't really be explained in words, but there was definitely something going on; like us being on the same page, same wavelength, something.

S: It was very encouraging to see that. Is there anything that you want to mention that we have not touched on yet?

A: No, I think we touched on everything. I think it was good. I remember you're telling me about it at the Sex and Gender panel, after school event, and I thought, "Cool, I want to be in that." I think it has been good for me, good timing, for my growth. I enjoyed being part of it. I wish you luck in the future.

S: Thank you for being part of it!

Appendix H: Athena

Session 1

1. So here I go again. Given fashion magazines I couldn't believe that I was drawn to nature. What is beauty? Beauty is nature. I'm drawn to those pictures and the pictures of animals. The animals don't surprise me given my dissertation topic (human relationship with pets). What surprised me was that I *absolutely* needed to find people who looked connected to each other or to the natural world. The women I chose who are without others in the pictures with them are strong. Queen Latifah never apologizes for her size. She has a "this is me like it or don't" attitude. If you don't like her beauty, it's your problem. Dr. Maya Angelou encourages strength and freedom through her writing. How could these women not be beautiful?
2. Children, nature, strength, connection, and love. Happiness and light. These are the makings of my piece. This is beauty. I want more of it in my life. All of it. So I m seeking it. The fire had to be added for two reasons. First, I love a book (or anything actually) by the fire; second, the fire is symbolic of my spiritual practice. The fire will help me to connect to all the other aspects that I am missing. It will help me connect to the beauty and love in people, animals, and nature. Then, I hope, my eyes will shine as brightly as the mother and daughter in the store. That's what happiness looks like in people.
3. I like chocolate! I'd been wanting sweets all day. It's a comfort thing. I'd eaten dinner so the vegetables just didn't appeal to me. The cookies and chocolate covered cashews sounded good for dessert. Do I feel guilty about it? Not much. Do I know that I *shouldn't* eat that way? Yes, I do. It just adds to the hips and the blood sugar and makes me more unhealthy. It's a hard thing to admit that know better but make the choices I do anyway. It's a long-standing habit. And I, unlike Queen Latifah, haven't gotten to a place where I won't apologize: for me, for my body, my thoughts, for who I am.

Session 2

1. The process of making the map was kind of fun. It was interesting because I didn't care as much about the detail as the person drawing me was. I was overly aware at how judgmental I am about my body. I was also aware that I am (weight-wise) the largest and oldest woman in the room. This made me even more uncomfortable and I spent more time wondering why I volunteered to do this study. I actually considered leaving. That is how strong my negative body image is and how much I am aware of it. Generally I am not in my body. I've never prescribed to the "body as temple" idea. To me, the body is more of a cage. It's only since entering graduate school three and a half years ago that I started looking at my relationship with my body.
2. Where do these ideas come from? Everywhere. I was teased as a child about being overweight. I thought that men wouldn't like me because I'm overweight. This idea was reinforced by my father. I wanted to ask out a boy I didn't know as a teenager. Excited about the idea, I told my father my plan. He told me that the boy wouldn't go out with me because I wasn't pretty enough. Angry, I went to go ask the boy out. I got nervous and I didn't ask the original boy out. I met another boy in the process. And generally, right is how it has worked for me. I think I'm immensely unattractive and that on one will go out with me. Then the universe brings me someone amazing who spends time and effort trying to convince me that I am beautiful. I think it's very interesting that I believe the negative more than the positive. I think I'll take that to therapy.
3. Cashews covered with chocolate and bread. It's all comfort food for me. I think it's a way to deal with body issues.

Session 3

1. Dressing up was fun. I started with the make up because I never wear any. After I did my face, I added jewelry. Jewelry is a very comfortable thing for me to wear. The clothes were a bit of a problem for me. I was really aware of my size. There were many things that I like but know would never fit on my body. I stuck to things that I was confident I could make fit. I absolutely loved the afro. It really helped me get in touch with a wild and fun part of myself. At one point while I had it on I was trying to decide if I should take off

my shirt. I looked at my stomach, having pulled my shirt up a couple of inches and thought "you're a white girl". Like I suddenly remembered that or something and in that moment I didn't want to be white. I don't usually think about my race/color of my skin so it was surprising to me.

2. I totally feel like I got in touch with my inner hippie. I wish I felt more comfortable in my skin. It would be fun to wear and do what I want and feel confident and comfortable with whatever that is.
3. I ate some brownies because they are my favorite. I ate some Turkish delight because I hadn't had any in years. I also ate some of the yogurt which I thought was interesting because I don't like yogurt; tasted good tonight though.

Session 4

1. I'd been resisting attending this group all week. I kept forgetting that it was happening. I made numerous other plans at the same time for Saturday and had to call and cancel and then, something big happened. My mother was diagnosed several months ago with cancer. The day before group my mother called to inform me that her prognosis had been shortened from potential 5 years but most likely 2-3 years to 3-4 months. I spent my Friday and Saturday digesting the information and surrounding myself with friends. On Saturday I showed up for group with the idea that I wanted to be a good participant. Looking at the altar of the goddesses, I have noticed over the past few weeks that I've been attracted to the picture of Venus. I don't remember who she is until I pick up the card and read the back of it. When I picked it this time, I was just aware of how overwhelmed I felt. I'd thought that dancing would be good for me. I think that in general I need to be more embodied. There is no way I am ready to take the information about my mother into my being. I feel like I should dance and celebrate the life I have, but I can't do that yet either. It was too much and I needed to leave. I was very concerned about the study and wanting to help Sarah's dissertation go as smoothly as possible. I have also realized over the last several days that I am feeling very me-oriented, meaning that it's normal for me to want to take care of everyone else. The last few days I feel like I'm not interested in taking care of the people on the outskirts of my life. I am having a hard time taking care of myself, let

alone anyone else. So no matter how much I wanted to be a good participant, I absolutely could not stay for group. I had no interest in celebration and no interest in embodying my grief. There isn't a lot more to say about this.

2. I will add this much. Since finding out about my mother, I have eaten more sweets and generally eaten more than I had been. I know that this is stress-related and my unhealthy coping skills. I know that if I had stayed I would've wanted the cookies. (They looked good!) I'm in therapy so my coping strategies will be addressed there.

Interview

S: How was your body image before you began?

A: It's not overly healthy; I think of myself of fat and unfit, and it stems from childhood, and generally unattractive. That has been my body image for years. It makes self-worth a little challenging, not that I don't have self worth because I do. It's just that it takes me awhile in relationships and things to get to a place where I can think "Wait, I don't need to put up with this," "I don't need to act this way," or do something or think this way. My opinion is that I put up with a lot of stuff before I realize that I can have more: have better than what I have. It effects how I think of myself; how I work in the world; how I dress. It comes from some deep wounding that I haven't addressed enough yet, that have shaped how I function.

The process has been like a pendulum. There have been times where I have not been in touch with "You're not sexy, beautiful...you are not." And then I have swung to thinking that maybe I am those things. I have those moments weakling around the works thinking "Maybe I am." It swings back and forth, the center of the pendulum is not as close to self-acceptance as I would like.

S: How is your body image now?

A: This study brought this more in my face. I haven't thought about these things for awhile to be honest. In that way it a reminder, something else I need to work on. I get caught up and my intellectual self, thinking self is the part of me that I can entertain myself for hours, and am generally not an embodied person. It has been a growing experience at graduate school to get embodied; this study is trying to get embodied. I've been about of classes for a year, so I'm in my own little world. His study was like, oh yeah, remember, here is part of yourself that you are not fully embracing. You've got all this junk that you need to work

on, want to work on. I saw your flier and thought I should get on touch with her. A week went by, and then I thought I should do it, it's stuff I really need to work on. I thought I'd get good dissertation karma, helping out a fellow student.

S: have you noted a shift in your body image since we began?

A: Not really, other than the "what is beauty?" piece is on my wall. I really enjoyed doing it and am in touch with it, it was to remind me of what my view of beauty is. The body map is in the trunk of my car so I can take it to therapy. I've been busy, but when I get there I can take it in and talk about it, like "look how screwed up I am!" In general, I haven't had a lot of shifts yet. I'm okay with that, in terms of not expecting any shifts. The way I view my body originates at such a young age, that I wouldn't expect a four week study to change it; unless I was really open and ready. But I would say that the awareness that I don't pay enough attention to part of me. I need to have a more holistic me. I'm not at the point where I can look in the mirror and say "Oh look at my butt, it's awesome!" But I'm more aware (of my body image). It's a step. It reminded me that I can't ignore it, I can ignore it for awhile but it doesn't go away. It like, oh that's right, here's things I need to work on. Like in dress up, I don't typically wear funky clothes and this is why. It has a lot to do with my self-confidence, how I present myself to the world. For instance, I don't wear short skirts, because I think my legs are fat. I don't feel comfortable in them, I'm not comfortable presenting myself to the world in that way. When I'm in a yucky mood, I try to hide from the world. So being able to play in that way: you could do this, you could do that. It brought it all to the surface, so it was good.

S: How was the dress up session for you?

A: It was good, it was interesting, some of the things it brought up. It brought up undressing in front of others for me. I usually, like at the gym or something, I don't care. But in that situation, I shouldn't subject the poor participants to what I look like nude. If someone was walking by and peeked in, I was going think that they got what they deserved (if they saw me)! Thinking about some of the comments made were about women in their household, the community thing; and I thought, oh yeah. The way I grew up, it was just me and my mom, so there wasn't a lot of sharing the mirror or anything. I've done it wit friends before, but it's been a long time. It showed my something that I didn't have, I haven't had for a long time, with some of the women were sharing about their families. So that was kind of fun.

And the authentic movement session, I just couldn't do. Like unfortunately, I really tried, but I just couldn't do it. I've gotten some disturbing family news. So I'm trying to deal with that information, and loss that's going to happen to the best of my ability. Sometimes I can handle things and sometimes I can't and that was one of those times I couldn't. I had been resistant to the session all week. I had planned for six different things for that evening, then I remembered that I had a commitment. I didn't want to do it, it's because it's challenging. I love to dance, but there's something about that; I haven't danced in a long time. It's challenging. And with the news that I received, that was it, I was toast. There were just too many things that were pushing my limits then.

The body map, I was amazed at how negative I am. Kind of like, "this is good, but . . ." where is this but coming from, can't I just say I like this, full stop? The amount of negativity that came up, that's why it's (the body map) is in my car, because I can take it to therapy, like here's some stuff I have to work on. The collage I enjoyed thoroughly. It's a medium that I'm comfortable with. And I know that the assignment was to make a collage about "what is beauty?" and to think about body image. But my collage was totally not related to physical beauty. It's a reflection of where I am in life in terms of other things going on. Most of it brought up stuff.

S: Do you have anything interesting come up for you when you look in the mirror now?

A: It depends on the day. This morning it was like, where did I get all this gray hair? A couple of days ago I had a pre-doc interview, so I went out and bought some mascara, because I didn't have any. I put it on and thought, wow, it makes a huge difference. I liked what I saw. I've worn it before, it may be this brand, or it's just been so long since I've worn it. It jumped at me, that it makes a big difference. In general it's kind of dependent on the day. I haven't spent a lot of time in front of the mirror, or come up with any revelations that I didn't already know. And there are moments in front of the mirror that I can look in the mirror and think "Oh yeah, that's right, this looks really good;" "the lip gloss looks really good;" "I can see why men are attracted to this part of the body." But lately in the chaos that has been my life I haven't really thought about it.

I had a really interesting experience where the night before we did dress up, I spent with my lover. And one thing that he shared with me was that I had this beautiful, brilliant mind, and this

incredible, sensual body. And I don't think of myself that way, as a tactile, sensual being; it goes against ignoring the fact that we have a body! He said something about being sensual, and I said what do you mean? And he said do I not notice how my body reacts when he touches me, not even sexually. And I thought, no, I don't. So at this same time as I'm doing this study, it's being pointed out to me that I have a body, and I can see that I'm not in touch with it, and it's being brought to my attention. So it is coming up. So have things changed when I look at myself in the mirror, not so much, but are things coming up? Yeah, they are. My lover says many things to me, complimenting my mind, my body, about all women as the Goddess. But that was the first time he said something like that. He says lots of beautiful, healing things, but that's the first time I heard this!

There are lots of things for me that are shifting and transforming, and this is one of them (body image) and I think that is okay.

S: Did anything come up for you around food choices?

A: (laughing) Bread and sweets are my comfort foods, and that is what I gravitated to! I remember picking it up and saying this is my comfort food! So here is my first issue! I was aware of it and I still did it. Being aware that my choices are unhealthy has not changed them. I'm making the choices that I'm comfortable with even if they are not good for me.

I also was writing Chapter 3 of my dissertation while in the last week of the study, so it was a really anxious time for me. So I bought a thing of cookies, and I wrote and ate cookies! I knew it wasn't good for me but I thought you know, it's okay, this is what I do when I write; just don't make it a daily habit. To get this done, if this is the mode that you are switching back to, it's fine. I may be doing it more than someone who is a little healthier, but I thought its fine, Chapter 3 got done. I don't want to get through the dissertation and gain forty pounds. The thing about me, eating and body image, is probably like Athena (the Goddess), is that I know intellectually what's good for me. I can be totally conscious of how I'm eating: like you didn't even taste what you were eating, did you realize what you were doing? Try to be more mindful. The mental part is rarely flowing with actions. Awareness is good and part of my image. And part of my stuff is sort of a self-judgment. I've been aware for this long but I'm still doing stuff I shouldn't do! It's kind of my internal immediate reaction, which is more food for therapy.

The most surprising thing that came up was when I was doing dress up. I was wearing the afro wig, and I lifted up my shirt to see my stomach, and my immediate thought was that I look like such a white girl. I wasn't thinking about race or color, but it came up. Most of the time I like being pale, it doesn't bother me, so it was interesting that it came up. Wearing the afro, I was thinking of Diana Ross and these '70s women that are African American women, to realize that my skin is really pale, I saw that I'm not this '70s diva kind of person. I wore the afro and after others put it on I went and picked it up again: I can wear this. I wouldn't wear it in public, but I loved it. It gave me an image of an African American woman on roller skates, a disco scene. It was unexpected, I didn't expect anything about the color of my skin to come up because I don't think about it, or think about the color of other people's skin.

S: How did you feel about the group?

A: I have mixed feeling about the group. I think that they are a wonderful group of women with great personalities. I just felt really uncomfortable. I joined the group and saw the other women, and I thought that okay, they may have their issues, but I don't see them. Being the biggest woman in the group, "Oh my gosh, what did I agree to come here for?" It was body mapping, it was my first interaction with the group. And you asked me a question about race as it had come up in the conversation. I was in a group I didn't know. When we did the dress up session, Inanna joined us, and that made me more comfortable because I know her, not very well, but I had some interaction with her. The others I did not know them. I had seen a couple of them in the hall, but didn't know their names. So it made me more comfortable. The dress up was really fun. By the time we sat down on the sheet to take a picture, it was like, "Come on girls, let's all be sexy together!" And it wasn't a sexual thing, it was like a way of us being friends or sisters. It's not the kind of intimacy that you have with people that you just met, but I felt like, "Come on, let's pretend that we have this," "Come and take this picture!" I got more comfortable and my little hippie persona, I was probably very comfortable. I was concerned that if I acted wrong with somebody, that they might take it the wrong way. I wanted to act like sisters, and I didn't want anyone to interpret it as acting like lovers. I didn't want anyone to think I was being inappropriate, that I was hitting on them. But I enjoyed getting everyone on the sheet to take the picture.

It was interesting to have race come up. I like to travel, I like to learn about other cultures, so it was interesting to me. So it

(race) didn't really come up, and when it did, it was in the dress up session in which I thought about being white, even though I usually like that I have pale skin. I thought about being a '70s African American woman, and I pulled up my shirt and thought, shoot, I'm a white girl! Diva is Diana Ross, you know, Beyonce, Mariah Carey; who's white and a diva, maybe Madonna. It seems to be more if you are ethnic in our culture. It wasn't so much a conscious thing.

The collage, it wasn't that I intentionally that I didn't look for white people, I wanted to make sure I had people of all different skin colors on my collage. It was important to me.

S: Did you feel the presence of the Goddess?

A: During session, no not so much. Although me and this card of Venus/Aphrodite: you've had this card on the altar the whole time, and I pick it up, read it, and look at it. But there is something about it that I feel the need to pick it up, and read it again. When you walked in today, again I was reading the Venus card. So during the sessions I didn't feel it so much. In the past four weeks, it's been freaking coming from everywhere! And so can I totally discount this study as part of it? I can't. It's all over the place. So with my lover, it always comes up, and it's powerful what came up in the course of this study. Last week, there was an Amma in town, the reincarnation form of the divine mother; so I went and got a blessing form her. Someone invited me to a church of Mary Magdalene, so I went up there. Part of it may be what is physically happening with my mother (her mother's illness), part of it needing to be in this study. To have this come up for when you are with your lover, you need people to invite you to these divine feminine events. This is what the universe has decided I need. I haven't tried to separate it all but it's been interesting in the last week, week and a half. It's all over the freaking place. I don't know what to do with it, but I was raised in a very relaxed Protestant household. My spiritual practice that I've adopted since then has some of the feminine, but I'm not really in touch with it other than to acknowledge that it exists. In the last couple of weeks, I don't know what to do with it. It's like, keep coming. Eventually I will know the right thing, whatever that is. The Tantra practice brings a lot of the feminine stuff up. I have found it to be a very enjoyable way to bring the feminine stuff up. I don't know exactly it will come up in a way that I can integrate it, functionalize it well with more balanced understanding of the divine feminine. I think if I don't get it, it will keep coming until I do. Thank you (I gave her the Venus card that she was so drawn to).

Appendix I: Bellagrun

Session 1

1. I found myself drawn to depictions of connection and harmony. Connections between parents and children, between animals and humans, between nature/earth and beings. I was especially drawn when emotional warmth was displayed in these connections.
2. Depictions of resilience and strength, and joyful connection between beings or elements. I also noticed that I chose a lot of curvy images, round, smooth, fluid. I chose a lot of bright colors, especially green. I was more drawn to images of nature and animals than to humans.
3. Themes- connection, strength and resilience, peacefulness and harmony, comfort.
4. Pineapple, carrots, strawberries; it felt fresh and nourishing; I felt nourished, cared for, refreshed, appreciative.

Session 2

1. Process-reflective, peaceful, accepting, curious. The three strongest negative messages were of my hips being "broken," my skin being flawed by moles and freckles, and of my belly being fat. Aside from those I feel an overall sense of peace and acceptance of my body; in fact, I was surprised by how positively I feel about my body.
2. I would say that about 70% of it came from something other people said at some time in my life. The other 30% comes indirectly from me comparing myself to other people.
3. Mostly strawberries, they were delicious and decadent. I felt loved and nourished by the gift of these strawberries. I also ate a piece of the chocolate cake which tasted amazing, but which I regretted almost immediately afterward. I gave into temptation when I should be taking care of myself by not eating wheat (due to allergy).

Session 3

1. I wore a silk halter dress, big bangles and bright red lipstick.
2. Drawn to soft flowing fabrics, things that felt elegant and romantic. Repelled by: Styles that looked young, hoochie, cheaply made or unrefined.

3. I feel glamorous, I felt more accepting of myself, I felt deliciously comfortable in my own skin! I feel deserving of being loved. I feel wild and free, I feel uninhibited, I feel sexy, I feel strong and empowered. I feel emotionally supported and internally motivated to break out of boxes I was unaware of creating for myself. *I feel deliciously comfortable in my own skin.*
4. I ate a little bit of everything without concern for health, allergies, et cetera. I just felt a strong desire to taste and savor everything; to embrace and enjoy the tastes around me. Mmmm, yummy.

Session 4

1. I was very aware of how little sexuality seemed to be expressed in the room, and I missed it. I really enjoy the sexual aspects of dancing at clubs, and felt that aspect missing in this dancing experience. I `felt a desire to express more Lover/sexual energy, but felt as if that wouldn't be accepted by others in the room.
2. I felt about my own body: sexy, invigorated, energized, connected to the Goddess/Lover archetype, passionate, open.
3. Did I experience embodiment? Absolutely, but I wanted to go more deeply into it, and felt inhibited by the lack of sexual/Lover energy in the room. Embodiment for me is very linked to feeling an openness toward sexual energy.
4. I ate mostly pear slices, I was really enjoying their sweetness, the crunch was really satisfying.

Interview

S: How was your body image?

B: Cold, trapped, stifled; those aren't really physical descriptors but how I felt about my body. I'm learning how to be more open to the feminine aspects of myself. Having grown up in a society that honors and rewards masculine behavior, I've come to learn how to honor the strong masculine side of myself, but not the strong feminine side of myself. And so I feel like my body image as a woman was definitely was trapped and stifled. I feel pretty androgynous about myself, as the masculine thinker, even though I'm a woman.

S: How do you see yourself now?

B: I feel much more open to it, more open, more aware. The biggest piece for me is a willingness to explore the feminine, instead of a cold, trapped fear, there is a curiosity. I have more interest in exploring this Lover archetype you're talking about, goddess energy. I spent years at graduate school neglecting the Goddess. It was a nice experience, I think it was a testament of being ready, and not holding on to control; masculine control on things. I am sad that this study is over, only four weeks. Because I don't think as women in this culture we are given enough time to spend together.

I think an opening towards a healthier perspective on my body, and feeling, less ignoring; I am listening to my body. I am less disassociated from my body. I think it is good for me. After the dance session, I thought that dance and sexuality are such an important part of my life; and I have been completely neglecting them. The we end up with this split in self; it seems sad to me. I never really realized how much of myself I've been neglecting, because I have only been showing parts of myself that I think are culturally accepted. I had no idea that I had subscribed to the norms in that way, it really opened my eyes.

S: Did you notice a shift or change in your body image during the experiential process?

B: I don't how to say this without being cheesy. I feel like there was a point where I looked in to the mirror and I saw the progress I had made with exercise and diet. And it wasn't like I had been exercising more or eating less in these last four weeks. One day I just stood in front of the mirror and noticed the progress, and was feeling good about myself, instead of "Ugh, there is so much more to do." "Ugh, I'm never going to fit into my dress the way I want to." My mom is going to comment on how I should have lost more weight! Instead of feeling on these heavy, negative things, I thought this is good. And if I don't lose any more weight, I'm going to be just fine. This is the most ridiculous thing in the world, but in accepting myself, I am inspired to eat more healthy. It was like a pressure was off. Instead of external pressure, it became internal motivation. Why was I listening to these other people (their criticism), that's about them, that's not about me. And when I do stop and thin about what is it about me that I want to nourish about myself? It's different than what I am hearing. It's different than what I see in magazines, or from patriarchal women in my life; it's different than the messages I'm getting. When I stopped to listen to my body, I was told something else; my team kind of gathered. My brain got aligned with my body. We're a good team! When it's dissociated, it's no wonder we feel separated

from our connection to the earth, and from whatever nourishes us as women. Everything is so patriarchal, and so masculine, I had no idea I had bought into that until I saw how much I was buying into it. I can even see it in my own closet. Minimizing my curves, lots of black and gray, lots of masculine colors. I don't have patterns, I don't have bright colors, or anything flowery and lacy. It's all just simple lines, strong pieces. When I look at my closet, it's a little depressing. It's one of the signs that I was buying into this. You know in the field of psychology, it is strong, masculine women who succeed: administrative qualities, if you want to be a program director; you want to be in charge. It's not very honoring of your goddess, it's about seeing how structured and linear you can be, very masculine.

You don't know you're not whole until you look at it. I didn't know I was neglecting myself until later. I saw it not just in my professional life but my personal life as well, in relation to the kind of partner I have. My partner is very feminine, and I tend to be more masculine, and we fit really well. But I realized that I was stepping up my masculine, and when I realized this, I stopped. I realized that I can embrace my feminine, and my partner stepped up his masculine; it was interesting to watch the ebb and flow. I came home one day, and I realized that I wanted to pick flowers; and run around in the garden; and just hugged a tree at one point. And I thought that I hadn't connected with my garden in a long time. I was in my underwear, I left my suit and heels by the door, and usually I put them away, but just left them there. My partner came home to see my clothes on the floor, and he couldn't find me, and he came out back to see me in my underwear, covered in mud. I told him that I didn't feel like cooking dinner, I just felt like spending some time in the garden! I'm kind of gardening, kind of dancing in my underwear! We had a conversation about it, and I saw myself as being kind of flaky, thought I would like a positive way to reframe that. I was being spontaneous, and he stepped up his masculine. He took charge and said that we were going to do certain things tonight, and usually that's my job we'll do this; we're going to have this for dinner. So on. It was good to see him step up, he was totally flexible. He was sad that our group was ending, he said that I would come home so positive, so energized!

S: How was session 2 for you?

B: I saw how ethnocentric the imagery was and I wanted to consciously rebel against it. I don't want to look at it, like at the grocery store. I wasn't to see in newsstands in popular culture what I see everyday, which is all kinds of people. There are all kinds of easy ways of expressing on beauty. I felt like

there wasn't a lot of beauty in these magazines, like women who were starving themselves for no purpose. I had pictures in my collage of connection, animals, animals with humans, father-son dyads. I had a lot of ethnic people in my collage, more than Caucasian people. I saw so many images of these tiny, tiny Caucasian women, and I thought that that is not beauty to me. It feels like cognitive dissonance, why is this being presented to me when I live in a place that is so rich culturally? Ninety percent of my clients, my friends are not Caucasian. I think that's intentional, I don't want to spend so much time with other people, I know what it means to be white, I've got that down! My parents taught me that, my older sister taught me that, and there's nothing left to learn there. I expose myself to more than that because there is so much more than that, I have curiosity too. There's some any different ways of being, who's to say which way is the right way? That's what I didn't see in those magazines, there were not enough differences. You know those underwear ads with big, little, dark, and light women? That makes me so happy, like this is what life is. Life is differences, and similarities and it doesn't matter which is which, because it's such a . . . I don't know, it's so abstract. But I don't want sameness; sameness is what I grew up with, people in my house that look just like me. And isn't that what growing up is about, getting over the sameness?

In exploring the feminine, I think of the feminine form, and all my mom and I talk about is body, so I wonder if that's a reflection of the Caucasian culture not talking about bodies. It's like I get sexual education, but it's intellectualized. I get information about exercise and nutrition, but it's intellectualized. It's not embodied education, its disassociated education, global education. I've always considered the Caucasian culture to be gender-equal. But the experience that I just had about women not talking about their bodies, not honoring their curviness, at least in my family, goes completely goes against that. It's a whole form of gender stereotyping; it's not just that we honor men and women equally, women are disassociating their femininity to become equal. That's not gender equality, it's gender neutralization. What's weird, I never thought about that before!

I think walking away from session 2, I was surprised by how many positive messages I had about myself despite all the negative messages I had received. And as I walked away, I was feeling really resilient. This is pretty cool, that I didn't count anything positives to negatives. Most of what I wrote was positive, and most of what I've heard from other people about my

body is negative. The fact that I still feel good about myself, it showed me that I'm a resilient human being. I can survive this crap!

S: How about session 3?

B: That was my breakthrough session. I felt really at peace with myself at that session. I know when we started I was nervous and had to have a conversation with you to calm my head. But once I felt my head get quiet, I felt like I could get into things now. I listened to my body, heed it's call. Then I went for the stuff that I don't typically wear, that was the challenge. I'd never do this, but I can do this here. It's a risk I'm taking, but it's a safe space. I put on a silk dress, it was a symmetrical, and I was afraid that I couldn't wear it. It would show all my bumps, but it worked. Why do I withhold? It's a need for control; but I don't need to control, it's a matter of releasing. I just started looking at the little things I was withholding. Right then, I was looking at clothing, but how many other areas of my life am I withholding? Am I holding tight and cold to control when I have to let go of control, for that is when I am actually expressing my true self? I'm manifesting my own fear by controlling things I'm afraid of; that's not good. So I expressed myself with the lipstick, with the bracelets, with the dress, it had a low back it was silk, but it looked and felt great. It was a great experience, I have to do that again! To experience it again, I would want to go someplace where I can't afford anything, so there is no pressure to buy anything. And then bring myself down to places where I can afford things. This would allow for the fantasy and the growth. This is where and opening happens.

S: Do you see yourself differently in the mirror now?

B: I think I have a more overarching positive appreciation for myself and the things that I see as valuable, and also the things that make me unique. I have honored and appreciated homogeneity for so long, that I neglected fostering things that made me unique. So a desire to explore those things, and try new things, and reaching new limits and finding where they are. Just because I've made this compact box doesn't mean that I have to stay in this box. I've worked really hard to make this box to fit inside it, but there's no need to stay in it. I can go out if I want to. I never realized how much pressure I put on myself, to be this hardworking, overachieving . . . I feel like I have all my ducks in a row finally, and suddenly I'm realizing I don't need my ducks.

S: Anything interesting coming up for you around food?

B: It's an interesting parallel that I have with food allergies. I tend to give my body what it is asking for, and it often asks me for things that I'm allergic to. It's an interesting parallel to my mom who doesn't allow herself to have sugar or carbohydrates. For me to keep wheat, garlic, onions out of life, there are parallels. But it was interesting that in the sessions, especially later that the more I let go, and was in tune with my body, it asked for food that was good for me. I was really drawn to the fruit, which is fine. There's a dynamic that I'd like to explore: of once we let go of being so strict with ourselves, that the thing that we should have been doing all along is what becomes natural. So in trying to take care of myself, I've been restrictive with myself, and then was craving things and would comfort eat. My need to take care of myself caused comfort eating!

You should see my grocery lists, they are totally different! I went from chips, processed sugars, lots of salt, lots of carbohydrates, lots of fat to fruits and vegetables, whole wheat. I was looking at two bills, before and after this study and I thought how interesting, comparing the two grocery bills, I am choosing things that are healthier for me; it's great pre- and post-data! And I noticed my portion size changed, I eat less because I don't need as much to comfort myself. Learning how to take care of yourself by honoring part of yourself that doesn't get honored on a daily basis, it all comes together. When you realize that you are calling back in a part of yourself that was disassociated, you invite in all the other parts of yourself. And the best part of it, according to my partner is that fruits and vegetables and whole grains cost a lot less. He wanted to know what the change is, and I said this is the work I'm doing with Sarah.

S: Wow. Operating from more of a pleasure paradigm, rather than deprivation. And see, you're balancing out more in your eating habits. You're having more of a sensual experience with eating, you're sensing what you need, what your body needs, and enjoying it more.

B: I think that's where we go to quality from quantity. In this culture, furniture, and televisions, and food portions! People want satisfaction, and if the portion size grows then the quality goes down. I'd rather have a small piece of chocolate cake that tasted amazing than a piece that's big that's not as good.

S: Are there any other parts of your body that you have some new awareness or understanding of?

B: I feel like I gained the experience of seeing myself in a positive light. I one thing that came up for me was the experience of hearing my mother say that because I have a tummy I'm going to become diabetic. It wasn't a conversation of "If you don't take care of yourself . . . it was you will become this." I've never heard anything like it before, and I felt like I'd been painter by the plague. If I'm going to get diabetes no matter what I do, and die of this disease, then why the fuck should I martyr what I'm eating? It totally backfired on her. I felt that come up for me and I felt a release. Because that's not about me (getting emotional): that's about her and her fear of dying from diabetes because her father did. I let it in and I let it in for a long time, and I'm going to let go of it. It was an integrating of the 4 weeks. I tend not to think about my body very much because I tend to be in my head. And being embodied these last four weeks and thinking about my body, and being encouraged: you did it in a gentle way, to take a look. Both the positive and negative came up, and that was the only piece of negative that caused any distress. And the moment that I started to feel bad about it, I saw that I could let this go; this wasn't for me, it wasn't about me, I can let it go now. Then I remembered our body mapping, about my sister, how I'd never grow into my nose, and that's about her. I struggle with that when I try to buy sunglasses (laughing), if they don't fit my face. But that's about her, there's no reason for me to buy into it! I don't need to see through other people's lenses, they honor them when they look through them. I can honor my own lenses, and don't think I've ever looked through my own lenses, and how they see. But I don't want to rely on other people's lenses, I want to use my own.

S: It sounds like you're developing your own lenses.

B: I think it will come from spending time with other women. I don't think I will get it from them [my family], they are not conscious enough, embodied enough. The men that are my friends, I don't even know if I'd want to . . . see I didn't know any of the women going in, I didn't even know you that well. I could go in representing me instead of who my friends think I should be. It's inspiring to get a group of women together, keep this group together; it's just starting and I don't want to give it up. I don't know what this will look like but maybe the Goddess will show me.

S: How was your experience of being part of the group?

B: I think it helps to have an openness to how others were having that experience. I appreciated how everyone was, we had such different personalities. I have never in my entire life spent four weeks just thinking about me. I think it was a great opportunity. I had me time! I encourage to have me time but when do I do it myself? I need to take more care of myself. To fight gender inequality we're supposed to work, and take care of the house, and keep the husbands happy?! The stronger women are the one's that say enough is enough. I was taught that being strong meant that I could take on more and more "Stick it on my back." But that's not it; you have to set boundaries.

I'm really appreciative of the doors and windows that have been opened. And I'm afraid that they may close and I don't know how to hold on to that. So I'm trying to savor the opening rather than control it, to let it go, that those doors and windows will be there for me to look through when I need to. I'm a big preacher of "You can't take care of other people if you don't take care of yourself," but somehow I think I've managed to think that I'm an exception with that rule. I've been playing with the idea of what would I do if I had an hour of time just to myself; I have no idea what I would do with that time. If someone came up to me and said you don't have to save the world I'll do it, you take an hour for yourself, I wouldn't know what to do. Would I go grocery shopping, or pick up prescriptions? What would I do? I feel so bad, I preach taking care of yourself, but I don't know how to do it for myself.

S: Did you experience the Goddess presence during this time?

B: I definitely felt curiosity, and the need for facilitating there. I think I described an opening earlier, going from cold and closed to really open and warm. You talked about the Lover archetype, I definitely felt that when we were dancing, and I felt that I want to but I don't know how. I don't know where to go with that, I feel kind of like a kindergartner: like here are some blocks, what do I do with them? I have an openness, willingness, curiosity, and I'm not sure what to do with this. So I'm hoping that I can facilitate a situation to continue this in my life, or this will come into my life some other way. But I feel loss of this new Goddess-essence in my life. But I also fear judgment, mostly from myself, but from others too. I've been a left-brained, left-hander for so long. I was into science, and math, and logic. I tend to be such a clinical individual, I think my own worst enemy here is myself. So to answer your question, I did experience something. And I got a taste of it, and I love it, now I don't know what to do with it. I hope that those around me are

supportive of this new side of me, and that it won't be rejected. But often times when there is a shift there can be a collapse, and I don't fear that so much with my partner but with my friends, because they are so used to my being a pillar. But I don't want to be a pillar right now, I want to be jello for awhile.

I really appreciate the [Goddess] images you brought in. I could see why these images developed in the cultures that they did. And why don't these images exist in my culture now? I feel such loss, that maybe its just modernization and the worship of technology, but how can I bring it in way that is . . . maybe selfishly I want this energy in my life? How do I bring it in when it's not in my culture? I don't know. I'm a big religion bouncer, I bounce form church to church. And when I go to a church and they refer to God as Him, I am so turned off. I feel like the monkey in the middle, like I'm not included [as a woman]. I have a little tantrum inside don't go back to that church (we talk about her looking into some of the more Goddess-centered traditions and communities in the Bay Area, and conclude the interview).

Appendix J: Inanna

Session 1

1. Through this exercise, I realized that the way in which I define beauty has changed. A lot more of beauty is internal and reflected through the person's spirit. This is what I see on Oprah's photos. Also, beauty is women being comfortable in themselves. It is the rugged woman in her scarves and cowboy hat.
2. It was difficult to find images that reflected me in the journals. They seemed too shiny, glossy, and Caucasian. This was surprising for me. Where are the beautiful embodied ethnic women who have been inspirational in my life? Motorcycles are sexy, as is the woman in the black sexy dress! I guess this is more of the "wilder side" of me that just feels natural. So in conclusion the collage helped me see (or mirrored) how beauty has changed from an external to a more internal peace.
3. You asked how I felt or how I was treated about my sense of ethnicity . . . right?? On the car ride home it came to me . . . sometimes I feel like "the other". "The other" can be a lot of things. I guess the other can be what is un-integrated in a person . . . or something is so different that it can't be integrated. I am doing my own inner work on being able to integrate, as well . . . but I don't know that the racial dynamics at ITP make it easier. I guess Berkeley feels more natural . . . but that is another topic!! It is a kind of split between what I feel are the wonderful parts about my ITP experience . . . and my isolation. Indian culture, criticized, normal to talk about body/looks in community, nothing in arena to counter criticism, or to reflect what I look like in the mainstream culture.

Session 2

1. Started with criticism first and then found strengths. I felt that I was not "doing it right" or following directions. The strongest messages were about my belly and heart. I also felt strongly about how I am "building my life." I was surprised that seeing my "hairiness as a negative" is so natural for me. This is changing, slowly.

2. The main messages are from my mom "stand straight," "walk straight," "be polite." I still have some comparisons from my older sister, she is "skinny, muscular, successful," et cetera.
3. I wrote the negative first and then balanced with the positive. Internally it is more negative. But today I sat with more acceptance.
4. Chocolate doughnuts . . . even though they make me gassy. I have been craving chocolate. I feel good, for some reason I don't associate chocolate with weight gain.

Session 3

1. I chose clothes that felt sexy and did not feel too off from my identity. I guess I chose the outfit that I would normally see on someone else and say, "Wow, that looks great." I wore a short, colorful dress and black boots. The dress was a new style and felt too cool for how I see myself. But after I wore it, I felt sexy wearing it. And yes, I would wear this dress in public, now. The clothes were more daring than what I normally wear, and it reminds me to wear more of this in public. I usually just dress up for a date, but I guess that I can dress up for "regular days" too.
2. I wore some of the hip clothes that I don't feel that I wear these days. Pre-ITP, I thought it was normal to have a bunch of clothes for going out. Since starting ITP, I have let go of a lot of "fashion stuff." Today, I remembered this other part of me. I am wondering what my inner dialogue should say or remind me of when I feel judged by others.
3. I ate the last piece of the chocolate cake and food from the Persian new year (yogurt dip with pita bread, and Turkish delight).

Session 4

1. I was very self conscious at the beginning of the dance exercise. By the end of it, and right now, I feel like I've feel like a let a weight off my shoulders, and invited more fun into my life. I miss this freedom of me, just being me! There are only a few places where I feel like I can totally be me. And dancing (today) is one of those spaces.
2. My body felt very stiff at first, Later I became more grounded in my hips and could relax within myself. I also

could vaguely feel that "what is beautiful" is coming from a more conscious place. This seems to be one of the first times that I am conscious of this.

3. I ate a cranberry cookie. I really, really wanted to eat while I was dancing, probably because of my anxiety.

Interview

S: How is your body image?

I: You know this morning I was looking at myself in the mirror and I thought, hmm, I have a bit of tummy, but so what? This is my body. I have more acceptance around what I look like. I thought that this is my body and I have to love it as it is, I have to love all of me.

I was surprised during the body mapping session that I had lots of self-judgment: I had lots of negative messages at first. I said something about my arms, and about my shape. Shape was a big part of it. My curves, my curves are different, depending on what I have then. I have these five pounds that I fuss about. If I have these five pounds, I feel like I'm bloated. Without them, I feel good about my self, lighter, healthier. It's often the base of my body image.

S: How is your body image now?

I: I realized that there is a lot to it. It's not even all external, it's also internal. I have different messages in myself, and they are mostly from early criticism. You know, it's amazing how things like that stay with someone. The messages I have come from the inside out, not the other way around so much. I know now that my body is more than what is on the outside. Rather than thinking how is my stomach today, I will think, how is my whole self today?

S: Did anything poignant come up for you around food?

I: I got healthier food today, I went shopping. I now see myself as my body. I know that I can change myself and not just my shape. I want to nourish myself more. I am more accepting of myself now.

S: How were the other sessions for you?

I: Movement was powerful. I could move freely. Something woke up in me from that. I realized that there needs to be more fun brought back into this program.

In the dress up session, it was really fun. I saw that inner messages don't determine how I look. In my early twenties, I lived more with my inner and outer self aligned, I made more fun out of fashion. Now in my thirties, I wear things that are down, I wear things that are comfortable. In the session, it was great to try on different looks, and be with other people. It was a safe and fun space.

S: So they group was helpful to you?

I: Yeah, it helped the process. I didn't know everyone on the group, but it was still good. I saw that we were able to create a container, and it was authentic.

S: Did you feel the Goddess in this study?

I: I did. She was there in some form, I definitely felt something. I appreciated the statues, they were great. It was good to have the altar as part of the room. I especially appreciated the Oshun statue; I saw a presentation about her some time ago, it was good to have her there.

S: Is there anything that you would like to add?

I: I did some shamanic journey work the other day, and this was part of it. The work that I started with you has evolved. It was a shift, like in therapy, though through a different container. I'm working on it, and it's wide open!

Appendix K: Lupe

Session 1

1. I was drawn to faces of familiar people (celebrities). The eyes were of particular interest to me. The thought that came to my head when I was cutting eyes out was that Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Strong colors and serious faces.
2. I first ate a chocolate truffle because it looked good. I was disappointed that it was not crunchy. I hadn't eaten dinner so I was hungry. I ate a cookie, still not crunchy. An orange slice was very good. An apple slice even better, and crunchy! I dipped a red bell pepper into some sauce, I did not like that. I wanted to eat broccoli but didn't because we started working on the at before I could get to it. I didn't feel particularly nourished by the bits and pieces save for the crunchy apple, mmm.

Session 2

1. I was slow to start. All of the superficial things came up first. I remembered all of the comments in Spanish that my mom and tias (aunts) make about me. I got the message that my face was ugly and scary for children (acne). That I was too boyish in the way I carry myself (short hair). I drew my vaginal last and it felt good to drip blood from it. So often people are disgusted when I talk about it and I was happy to share. I was a little embarrassed to talk about my hairy pits and legs For some reason I felt that people would judge that harshly and be grossed out by it.
2. The messages I got from other people are mixed. People often talk about my big butt and I have been compared to cartoon characters. Feeling like a cartoon isn't always fun. My family gave me shit about my face and hair. They always ask why I let my acne get so bad and recommend remedies. All of the men in my family hate my hair and people are always telling me to let it grow. Most days I love my short hair, but recently I have decided I might be prettier if it was long.
3. I happen to be feeling good about my body right now as so the outline made me feel better because it accented my small waist.

4. I ate strawberries and chocolate covered nuts and felt *great* about it. I really wanted to eat the bread, but didn't because I'm trying to lose weight for a ten year reunion that I'm going to. I have a strong will when it comes to food so off-limit bread was not on my mind the *whole* time.

Session 3

1. My process started slow, I felt a bit nervous to start, but once the music started I was excited to try on wigs and hats and to take my clothes off. I wore a slinky, silky dress and a couple of long wigs to contrast to my short hair. I put on some dark lipstick towards the end that was great! I loved the lipstick and hats, I felt cute in them. It was great to get feedback from the other girls.
2. Certainly feminine, long hair was a "theme" at first, but the lipstick made me feel good about my natural hair. I think I was exploring a bit with time periods on different "looks" from the '20s/ '30s to the '70s/'80s.
3. I ate celery because I thought it would be good with the yogurt dip, and it was! I really enjoyed the yogurt. T the end I couldn't keep my hands off the brownies and I felt a bit guilty that I might not be leaving enough for the other girls. There seemed to be enough though and I was able to totally enjoy the decadence of the brownie!!

Session 4

1. I enjoyed being a boy/girl and leading and following. I felt like a child. Dancing puts me in an altered state and I particularly enjoyed the safety in the room. I was able to close my eyes and be free. The one point in the process I felt like I was at a rave. It felt like I wasn't separate from anything or anyone in the room. I thought of Shiva and I could see his blue skin. I'm still bursting with energy. I was moved to do cartwheels and in doing do tore my skirt. It was great jumping and singing and clapping. Words do the experience little justice.
2. My body felt good, great. I am always worried that my sweat will gross people out, I was a little proud of it today though.
3. If embodiment means being fully present in my skin and not separate from it, then that's what I felt .

4. I loved the bread and baba ganoush. I wanted to eat more, but there didn't seem to be enough time. The pears were good to hydrate me after all the sweating.

Interview

S: How was your body image?

L: I know that directly before the process I was generally in a bad place. Disconnected. My skin was breaking out. And I was not really wanting to look in the mirror, because I was psychologically in a bad place and was disconnected from my body almost entirely.

S: How did you relate your body image to your sense of identity?

L: Over the years it's been less and less...I don't solely identify with my body, but the way I look certainly affects my mood. And if other people perceive me as ill put together, it would make me feel like I was kind of shitty.

S: Can you describe your body image now after the experiential process?

L: Right now I feel really good; it occurred to me that it might be related! But right now I feel like I am in a much better place. I lost some weight in the last few weeks, so I feel good. The realization that the last night we were all with women it felt... I didn't feel hyper-feminine, the way I did with men around. So the realization that my sense of femininity and masculinity is altered contextually, that was new. I'd never paid attention to that before.

S: Was there a specific incidence that was poignant for you in the experiential process?

L: When we all got to dress up, sharing space, doing ourselves up, it tapped into a part of me that had not been accessed at all. It was very free, and uninhibited spirit. It made me feel like a kid, without anyone telling me to sit down and be quiet cross your legs; don't wear that; don't put that on your face; so it was nice to be in that space again. It lent (freedom of expression) and company, more than anything it was very magical and supportive company.

S: How were the other sessions for you, session 1?

L: I was feeling really shitty. My collage was darker than I intended it to be. It was supposed to be about beauty, and I had a

dark idea of beauty. I was intimidated by other women's collages, other's collages were more externally oriented. I feel like there was a component that I left out, stereotypical feminine beauty. For me at that moment, I did answer the question of "what is beauty?"

S: Session 2?

L: It was interesting to reconnect with childhood voices because I hadn't really been bothered by them anymore. And then I remembered people's comments. It was a reminder, a wake up call to myself. You know I've got all the women, beautiful women, in my family. I'm a godmother, I have nephews and nieces. And I always am mindful to not treat them the way the older generation treated my generation, and I don't have any criticisms to offer them. And that (the body map) was a reminder that what is said to me sticks, I carry those messages with me. I try not to, and I for the most part I don't let them get me down, but they are there. In tough times I have looked in the mirror and only see the bad, the bad that was told to me not the bad that I discovered myself necessarily.

S: Session 4?

L: I think in retrospect session 4, and session 3 have the same feeling. Even though in session 3 we were in women's clothes, I don't necessarily relate women's clothes and makeup with women. I have male friends that are cross-dressers and drag queens. Having the power to alter the way you look, in a way that suits you no matter your gender... and that day I was unshaved and I didn't have a bra, I came as I was. The last day was good. I feel privileged to have that opportunity.

S: How is it now when you see yourself in the mirror?

L: This morning I was looking at myself in the mirror, like I do every morning when I get ready. And generally for the past week, I've been in high spirits, and when I'm like that I feel good. When I look in the mirror I feel good. And potentially the blemishes and things could make me feel sad and self-conscious; they're just kind of little quirky parts of me that are not so bothersome.

S: Has your body image changes since you began this study?

L: Yes, interestingly enough. It's such a privilege to open up Pandora's box and really have sacred space to work on things with

other women that are willing to be honest. And it feels like maybe that cleared up some space energetically. To bring consciousness to these issues that I rarely have the opportunity to talk about, like hair, body image, femininity, masculinity, all of these things that are so vital! My world is not just shut up to be communicating about these things frequently. Having the opportunity, the space, feels very liberating, very freeing.

S: Anything interesting that came up for you around food choices?

L: When there was anything that was really good and sweet, I felt that I had to stay away from it. I just felt like I didn't want to be greedy, and hog it all, like "Get away from the brownie, I'm going to eat it all!" And I noticed myself being kind of picky about bell peppers. And I thought "what's my problem?" It was good, I was just being a stinker, not wanting to...did you serve them with sweets? I was in a funky mood that day, so nothing tasted how I wanted to.

S: Any specific body parts where things came up?

L: Yeah, to be honest, after the last day of our process, I went home (to the family) and I wore shorts and a tank top. And I hadn't shaved my armpits or my legs the whole time we had this study. And the only other time in my life that I didn't shave for so long is when I went to India and was isolated. I have never exposed my hairy legs and armpits in public. And during our dress up session I allowed myself to say here are my hairy legs and armpits, and was trusting that no one in the group was going to say "Eeew, that's disgusting!" And then experiencing people being, okay, whatever. Some women were curious, like, "Show us your hairy armpits!" But no one recoiled in horror or anything. It wasn't a big deal, I was even kind of digging it! It wasn't a big deal.

S: How was your experience as being part of the group?

L: I loved it. I could not have shown up in the ways that I did had it not been, for the other women there. As a safe container, as support, and they were more than that, they were partners in crime. Their honesty and trust allowed me to be honest and trusting. It was great. I wish there were more opportunities. I'm going to start creating more opportunities; tomorrow there is a naked ladies dress up party! I hadn't realized how important that is (other women), because I grew up with my aunts, and cousins, and sister, and mother. And when it was gone, I just attributed a lot of my funk to other things. And being in that group (in the study) it was like wow, naturally my spirits lifted over the

course, just being in the company of other women. There's something very special, the dynamic about being with others of the same sex. Safety and I guess having, being able to share experiences. There were just experiences that were common for us. Being socialized as women and born anatomically female, so there were a lot of unspoken that bonded us, which was nice.

S: Did you feel the presence of the Goddess?

L: Yeah, of course, the entire time, I was in the presence of Goddesses! It was palpable. And I think that the honest and free energy that was embodied by all of us allowed it to be such a healing, spiritual experience. And it wasn't you know, this foreign entity that I felt unfamiliar with, but definitely a little bit of a mischievous air, being in the presence of Goddesses. The easiest way to understand it is that these other women were glowing, so to speak (seeing the divinity in the other participants).

S: What will you take from this and integrate into your life?

L: There was this word that you used, reclaiming, that I liked. I was reading somewhere about older cultures where women and men were isolated, and all the things that women did together, and it was a place to be together. And I feel that our society is losing touch with that. Maybe when we get our nails and feet done, we come in contact with other women. We pay another woman typically to be in contact with us. But other than paid services, and growing up in a family, I haven't encountered many opportunities to be with other women. I realized that I need to reclaim that, be with other women, and not have to exchange monies and not have to feel guilty; and not have to feel weird, or have people think I'm a lesbian. That's why friends are important, right?

I wouldn't have done this if it wasn't under the umbrella of scientific research; that I'm helping out a fellow student. Otherwise I'd have resistance.

I think I'm still integrating a lot of those experiences. Thank you for the experience.

Appendix L: Magika

Session 1

1. It was difficult for me to find images of beauty in fashion and celebrity magazines. While both types of magazines had many things that are beautiful, I did not want to use them to define my concept of beauty. In terms of images, I'd rather choose images that were personally inspirational, but could not find many. Instead, I chose various words that conveyed my idea of beauty. Another factor in the creation of my piece was how to put it together in an aesthetically pleasing way.
2. I believe the theme of my piece was natural and powerful. Another theme was life satisfaction I guess, what would I need for a life to be beautiful. The background is the ocean, an expansive body of water under the warm glow of the sun. The ocean is one of the most powerful forces in this world, but it also has the gentle capacity to soothe and calm. I think this dichotomy is beautiful. I wanted to choose a woman that looked like me as much as possible. That was difficult. In the glamour magazines, hardly anyone was black. In *Essence*, a black magazine, hardly anyone had kinky hair and a big nose. I finally found one, she looked beautiful and powerful and that is why I chose her.
3. I ate almost all the food choices, veggies, fruit, and sweets. I made my choice based on whatever I happened to be closest to. I feel good because I ate veggies and fruit for the first time today, I usually eat sweets all the time with no issues about it. I could like to eat more veggies and fruit because they are good for me. But they are not as sensually fun as sweets.

Session 2

1. The body map process was interesting. Just today I was looking at myself in the mirror. I see myself naked everyday because it's a full length mirror in my bedroom. But today I really scanned for how I felt. At this point, I generally like my body now. On the map, a theme that came up was my slender physique, I always wished to be a bit thicker and softer. I am lean, tall, and toned all over. Many times I am more toned and taller than men, I am around, So I feel unfeminine at times. I have broad

shoulders, small boobs, and very sadly, barely any ass. On my map I make mention of "man hands" and broad nose which I feel gives my face a masculine appearance. The main piece I'd wish for is a nice, round booty that bubbled out. As a black woman, I tried to be cautious about the areas that I didn't like, fearful that I'd be denouncing black beauty. For instance, for my hair, I disclosed that I'd like it to be longer, as in a bigger fro as well as less kinky and more curly to accentuate the bigness. But hopefully, if my hair was straight, I would be very pleased, as kinky hair is generally seen as less appealing in the dominant and black cultures. I pointed to my eyes as an area that embodies my femininity. On the other hand, in regards to my body, I love, my muscles. As a dancer, I think my body makes the movements look interesting and POWERFUL! Because of dance, I have a love/hate relationship with my feet. I have a have corns on my toes that are white colored, opposite of my brown skin, a and are noticeable. Because of these corns I have worked and trained as a dancer for years. I'm grateful for that experience. My feet allow me to dance . . . one of my reasons for living. I like my smile, it makes me appear inviting and is reflective of the happiness I have inside. I seem to be happy most of the time, I like that. I also pointed out my heart and mind, tow areas that I'm working on developing, making them more open, stronger, and more sensitive.

2. The messages I heard from others were that I was too skinny. My body is this way naturally and doesn't require any work to maintain it. People assume that I sculpt my body intentionally so they have said things like "you need to gain weight," or "you're too skinny," but my feelings were hurt because I'm sensitive about my weight. I've also been made to feel that I wasn't smart so I am sometimes insecure about my intelligence.
3. I ate the chocolate. I felt no guilt and it was delicious as I ate the pieces over and over. I'M PRETTY!

Session 3

1. For the outfits I chose, any intention was to dress up in a way I ordinarily won't do, but also to look good I wanted to look glamorous and flashy in the way they do in fashion shows. They look outlandish and I tried on things that

don't fit in any "real life" context but they still look beautiful, not like a joke. I gravitated to colors, however, that are a little brighter than what I would normally wear, but were still safe.

2. When another participant suggested a brighter colored dress I felt different. I felt upbeat and exuberant. I wouldn't wear those colors in my normal life because it feels too attention grabbing, but the colors really match the way I feel inside. I brought in all the wig selections. I love wigs, they really allow me to embody different personalities. My favorite was the afro wig. I feel really powerful and beautiful in it. That is the same reason for adding tribal marks on my face with makeup. The afro wig and marks connect me to my heritage, but also look contemporary beautiful and fashion forward.
3. I ate the hell out of the brownies because they were yummy. I loved them and loved the way I able to enjoy them.

Session 4

1. I really enjoyed today's session I am slowly regaining confidence in my abilities as a dancer. I used to train with the hopes of becoming a professional dancer. Now that the pressure is gone, I have the freedom to do what feels good. When I was unable to perform steps it decreased my self-esteem. I thought my body literally was unable to move the way I wanted it to. Now I do what I please without caring how it comes out. As a result I dance with more passion and motivation. That really comes through, I love the way it feels and I love the way my body responds to different music.
2. I really like my body when I am dancing. I like to perform and have others witness my body in action. However I wish I had more flexibility so that my legs could kick higher or my back could bend deeper backwards. Flexibility in these areas looks really beautiful.
3. I felt embodied in a sense that I was attended with the music. Music is really important to me. I like to listen for the subtle sounds that make the song rich and I like to punctuate the rhythms with movement. My goal is to make it seem as if the music is coming from my body.

4. I mostly ate apples because I didn't have any water and the apple was refreshing. I also ate chocolate and scones, one each, just to get a taste.

Interview

S: How was your body image?

M: I think generally I have an experience about my body, it's very contextual. In some contexts I like it, in some I don't. In some of the contexts, I am participating in this research, I have a good body image. As a fitness instructor, my body is a plus. I teach dance and my body allows me to do that, which I'm very grateful for. When I was not dancing many years before, I had some mild depression. And now that I'm doing it regularly again that my outlook on life is better! It's my thing but I wish I could just get paid for it. I like to be active and moving, and my body allows me to do that. I need to eat more regularly to sustain my body, that is one part that . . . I'd like to have the discipline to take care of it, I'm just lazy. With the amount of movement that I do, I should be eating six times a day and I don't. And I want to, I don't want to hurt my body by exerting more energy, and give it more efficient fuel. I don't want to abuse my body. In that way it's kind of a harmful act towards myself.

Also being a black American the body type is supposed to be voluptuous, that is still with me. And I'm very muscular, and slim, and not soft, and not very curvy. I feel envious, I do, of women with curves and everything. I can't imagine being any other way; if I just woke up one day with watermelon boobs and a juicy butt, I'd be like, "AAAAAAAAAAAAAH! What the hell happened to my body?!" I'm so used to being in this body, I wouldn't be myself. It kind of like one of those things that is best to stay in the realm of fantasy: I can fantasize about having a soft, curvy body, but if it were to come true, I would probably freak out!

S: How do you relate your body image to your identity?

M: I know that for the average person the average body goes through a lot of changes. As you get older [I'll be thirty next year], but in terms of my body, I haven't gone through many changes at all. When I see pictures of myself as a teenager, when I was young and first entered puberty, my body has pretty much been the same for a long time; for over 10 years. My body is me, and it hasn't changed much, with the exception of my hair, which changes all the time. My hair is part of my body but I definitely see more of my external changes through my hair, not necessarily my body. It's been a constant . . . people can look at me and

recognize me because I haven't changed. I guess that's not a bad thing. My face looks a little older, my face. There's more scars, yeah, from playing rough and things like that.

S: How has your body image changed in this study?

M: The one that made me reflect most was the map. Generally my issues lie in the butt area. I deal with the flatness of the booty. That experience made me think of all the things I want to change. It let me go through all the issues with a fine-toothed comb. I didn't give it much thought, but it was a good thing to go through all the things I'd want to change if I could. But then listening to other people, I saw that we were worrying about these small things, and I realized how stupid it is. I was worrying about these small things, and it was like what, what are you talking about? I don't see these things when I look at you, and you probably don't see those things when you look at me. So I worry over these tiny imperfections that no one is going to notice. In the grand scheme of things, that's something that I don't think about. Sometimes when I do a scan in the mirror, it's like, oh, look at my stretch marks; look at this scar; look at my raisin boobs (laughter); but they are just passive parts. I don't focus on them for long, but I really shouldn't focus on them at all, it's just triggering. I'm the only one thinking about it. It makes it real because it's my experience, but sometimes a general consensus is a good thing from the outside looking in; like here's the birthmark on my back; the corns on my feet. And maybe there is nothing you can do. Sometimes general consensus can be bad, but you can pick the messages that empower you. You can choose the messages to empower you; I choose the ones that empower me.

I still have hang ups like when we took pictures of the dress up. I guess I like myself when I'm not looking at myself. When we did the map, I looked at myself, when we did dress up and took pictures, I looked at my self, you know. Instances where I am prompted to look in the mirror, I get in a negative zone. As a result of this study, I feel more connected in myself; because it was with a group of women. I was part of a group, so there is a nurturing element that allowed me to not focus on my self. Some parts are touchy-feely, and I wanted to be respectful of the women, and not say things that were too touchy. So in that way, it took the focus off of myself.

S: Being in the group was helpful?

M: It hindered me at times. It was such a multicultural group, and I appreciated that. Sometime if I'm the only one though, if I'm

the only women of color, I feel censored. I don't want to be perceived as the representative of my entire race. That happens with people of color, even though everyone else was a person of valor, but there is something about being black. Most of the stereotypes affiliated with being black are negative, otherwise have to do with dancing or singing. I didn't want to have...this project was about body image and women gripe, but I didn't want my gripes to be about every black woman! There's the stereotype of black women being sassy and angry, and I don't want to come across like that. I would confirm some sort of stereotype. I find it interesting, the standard of aesthetics are so different across the races. Everyone wants to be thin, and I want to have a big butt, thunder thighs, and be round, and soft, and luscious. And I think people look at me weird when I say that!

About mainstream culture, in the black community, there is some conformity to it. Most women relax or straighten their hair, and I choose to keep my hair natural, or I might add braids, but I keep my hair nappy. I don't like to say nappy in front of other people, even though I'm happy to be nappy, but in certain circles I wouldn't say it because it would mean it's ugly. So I'll say it's kinky, but it's nappy. In the fashion magazines, the image of curly, black woman hair is flowy, curly, Scary Spice hair. Under the relaxer, women have nappy hair like mine; okay, ain't no Scary Spice hair! Like that's the acceptable "black" hair. But I don't have that, I have short, nappy hair, and that's how I keep it; it's how I like it. And its part of my image, I've had natural hair for a very long time. I don't think if you relax your hair you're trying to look white, but there is a huge pressure in the black community to have straight hair. They're trying to some extent to fit into some standard.

For the protection of others, I feel like I have to censor myself sometimes. I feel like other people do that to me, that they won't say certain things in front of me. Certain things, it's okay if I say it because I'm black but if you say it, it would be bad. If I say it and it's comfortable for me, they might feel like they partook in my attitude in things. I can use interchangeable words to say the same things. Because of that I will censor certain words. In front of some women I feel like say it, if they're Indian or Latina, because they can have similar hair, but the culture is different. In New York, there are a lot of Mexicans, and there are also a lot of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. The Dominicans have hair like mine, so I can speak to them in this way. In the Latina communities, there is also a pressure to conform to the white standards. Not to say all black people have nappy hair, some have hair that is your texture (thick and

coarse), but I think it's one of those standards of beauty that is not accepted. Unless it's someone who is edgy and trendy, with a huge fro, with rough, tough clothes, exaggerating the whole strong, black woman look. I'm not edgy and trendy. I choose to not chemically relax my hair, but I'm bold!

I found the group to be supportive, I know them from outside this context, and it was great. Different perspectives and no one gawked at anyone's perspectives. I think people had a good time and no one was competitive. We were sharing and it felt like we had a very communal vibe.

About feeling censored, it's my own baggage, and I'll just be honest, I'm not trying to be racist, but it was because we had the one white person in the group. I feel that as a counselor and doing multicultural classes and things like that white women have their own body image issues. All women have their own body image issues. Because of the hidden standard in mainstream culture, there are certain things that they do not think about at all. I sometimes feel like I don't want to turn things into teaching moments (not knowing what people in the room already know). I want to just be there and speak, and have people understand me. That happens sometimes, because I have white friends, I have a white boyfriend. Even if I was dating a black person, there would be teaching moments because we come from different backgrounds. Maybe just a group of black or Latina women, I would have just gone on and on (because of shared culture and feeling more comfortable).

Coming to this school has made me more aware of diversity in all sorts of ways: people of different cultures, economic backgrounds, et cetera. Being from New York City, a microcosm of the world, I take for granted all the diversity. There are people in New York and people that move there. The person who moves to New York is different than the person who never leaves the Midwest. New York does things to people, it does! Moving here to Northern California, I see how things are different. I'm no expert, just because I'm black. Working in inner city schools, I saw how different things were for others, I lived in the north Bronx and working in the south Bronx, the kids there were experiencing things I never had growing up. When people see me and know that I'm from New York and I'm black, they assume that I'm from the 'hood: that I'm the exception. Then again, I could also be projecting.

The way I look greatly defines who I am: I am black; I look black. It is a huge part of my identity, more so than being a woman, being a New Yorker, being heterosexual. It's more than just

appearance. It adds to my identity, body image and how I carry myself.

S: How was the collage session?

M: I really like collages; I'm trying to improve my collage making abilities. I like having the colors flow. I'm not going to lie, one of my motivations was to make something that was aesthetically pleasing. I wanted to make something that signified what is beautiful; I wanted it to be a cohesive piece. Because I knew it was a body image project, I wanted to find pictures of me. I think I'm beautiful, and I wanted to really find pictures that reflected what I thought about others and myself. I found a piece that was a background, which was a beach. My introverted side is underdeveloped, and the ocean is one of the few places I feel at peace, like I'm not alone, the ocean has a presence. Then I tried to find women that looked like me, most women were in poses, and I wanted to find someone real.

I have a really challenging time identifying with women that are white. I look at race as a spectrum, it's weird, and I know that not just how it is, but being a black American is like that. There's juxtaposition between black and white in this country. Black and white people have the longest standing history of being in this country, not counting Native Americans. White people came here, and black people were brought as slaves; bother races came here later on their own. So black and white people have a concurring experience, so that's why there is this historical trauma in me and I'm very serene about it. I think a lot of black people don't think about it, I'm a history buff, it's kind of absolutist. That's why I don't want to invalidate anyone else's experience in coming to this country; God knows its hard being in this country. So I see juxtaposition between black and white, and I have a hard time identifying with white women and that's why I chose to put words on my collage instead of images. I found the one *Essence* magazine that had women of color but I didn't identify with them, because I consider myself the average jane and they were high fashion, drop-dead gorgeous, black models with long weaves. I don't see myself that way, and they didn't look real. I was telling my roommate who is white about it. I just love her to death; I call her my-sister-from-another-mister, and was explaining to her that I like to look at health magazines. In there they are action oriented, they're not posing. They look like me, they are muscular and toned. They are smiling, they look normal, they're eating, they're running with a dog, and usually in fashion magazines they look unhappy. Looking at health magazines I feel affirmed. I love gossip magazines, I read those too. So in my

collage I was pleased with what I used; I was pleased with the theme. I liked the woman with a fro that I chose as the main image. I liked ultimately how it came out.

S: Anything interesting come up for you during the dress up session?

M: That was my favorite. I loved the clothes that were brought in, the wigs I brought in. I do feel like a different person with wigs on. I loved the sarongs because you can wrap them up and make them into anything. I like the creativity they allow. I generally don't wear hats because they mess up my hair. I really enjoyed being with the others, dressing putting on make up, it was like we were getting ready to go somewhere. The discussion portion, two of the participants having the feeling of getting ready with their sisters and mothers, and I don't have that growing up, so it was fun to have that with the other ladies. Once we showed off the finished product, it was great. It allowed us to have fun and have humorous moments, I like those. It was silly, and I like being silly. And I like what I had on, I wanted to look pretty, it wasn't all a joke. I enjoyed it very much.

S: Dance and movement session?

M: I really wanted to experiment with movement. Being a trained dancer I have a library of movements I can refer to. I have muscle memory of movements. I was trying to purposefully feel awkward at times. Like during the Michael Jackson song, I know I don't look like him or can move like him, but I tried! With some of the hip-hop movements, those are some of the ones that I was least comfortable with. I still tried them to see if I could see if I feel free. I thought, what would I do with my body, other than the two-step. Since I'm not trained in hip-hop, I don't have a dictionary of moves, so I was making stuff up, and I hope I looked good.

I like the way I feel when I dance. I like my body when I dance; I like how it allows me to speak. There was more freedom here than at the club, where it's crowded! If I have space, I love it, so I can do wide, big movements. I can run across the room, does whatever. I also like to take dance classes, so there is space in the studio to move around. I dance in my living room, or at the club, where the space is small; so I like to be able to move around! I like my body when I dance. I hope it looks good, but if it doesn't . . . I'm not going lie, the aesthetics of dance attract me to it, but I try to go with more of the feeling of it.

S: Do you see yourself differently now in the mirror?

M: When I look in the mirror I find that I want to look at myself in the mirror less. I have large mirrors in my room. My room is small so there is a good chance I will see myself. I do think that upkeep is important, I want to look good, and I want my man to continue to be attracted to me. It's not that I don't care how I look. But I think that not reflecting helps my confidence because it helps me to not nitpick. I give myself a look in the mirror for an overall look to see if I look good, rather than look at my ears; my eyebrows; my booty; and have a reductionist view. After doing the body map, I don't want to have a Gestalt-like view of my body. I'd like to see myself as a whole, all things that I like, all the small things that I don't like, it's still a whole. It was really funny, silly, and then it was annoying to be thinking about all of these small things. That's what the body map brought up for me. I think about these small things that are wrong with me, but I don't think about all the things that are right about me. When you're looking at the mirror, you're looking at yourself. But when you are looking at the floor, it's abstract, and you can get a different view. That's what I got out of it, a different view.

S: Did you feel the Goddess?

M: I recently started writing this paper in embodiment and dance. And the premise of the paper is that dancers can find embodiment and spirituality through technical dance. In dance you are mimicking someone else's movements, and it becomes very cognitive. The story, the meaning it may inspire, but its meaning can get lost. So in embodying the movement, how does that strengthen your spirituality? I had to define spirituality. I found one definition that I added to: spirituality is a non-ordinary state of consciousness or being. Anything that brings you to that point can be sacred. Interacting with others helps me to get to that point, since I am an extrovert. So interacting with other women to me was a reflection of my higher self, because when I am with other people. I am trying to be the best that I can be, I try to tap into my higher self. Of course ego is mixed up in there somewhere, but it was spiritual for me.

The latter two sessions were more spiritual than the first two. I had some sort of element of performance, and when I perform, I have this (divine inspiration).

Appendix M: Sun-geo

Session 1

1. I noticed I used a lot of loving relationship pictures-romantic and platonic/kinship. I also picked pictures that represented qualities: focused, strength, balance, bravery, peace, and calmness. Aesthetically pleasing images, like architecture, art, fashion, were there. Also, Appreciation of difference: skin color, worlds travel. Body images, of waist and legs and some breasts. As for people: Maya Angelou. I put things like choices and word play as beauty.
2. Love, romantic and kin; landscape, ocean; foods, delicacy; positive qualities; aesthetic art. All in all, it seems that the themes were love an exploration of ourselves and the world.
3. I ate at first a lot of broccoli. My body was happy to get it! Then I ate a few bell peppers. It was okay. Didn't care much for it. Next I ate a cookie. I needed the sugar. It felt good. Finally I ate truffles. I was happy to eat it! I ate two of them.

Session 2

1. I was actually finding more negative things to write whereas positive were more real, For some reason, I felt like I should list the negative first, then positive so then I wouldn't be considered "narcissistic" to myself. Overall, I liked reflecting on how I feel about my body. I tend to think these things on a general level, but never focused enough to really think about why I felt it was positive or negative.
2. My messages about my body were pretty much positive. They were sometimes mixed. When the messages were negative, I was able to end talking about them; in a way, more positive. Kind of like "now that I'm an adult/grown up, I feel that this negative ideas about my body are actually defining my beauty and uniqueness."
3. Messages about my body from other people were a lot. My toes, arms, back, were from my family. My hairline, breasts, arms, from myself. My mom made me feel great about my face and hips. My vagina: myself. I used to be very self-conscious about my being too skinny. So, now that I am

more voluptuous, I love it. Except when there is excess and it feels unnatural.

4. Chocolate cake, chocolate covered cashews, because they looked the sweetest and were new. The vegetables didn't look as appealing and I didn't eat any (although they were my first choice). Next choice was bread, but I just remembered that I ate a sandwich (two breads) and so have had enough carbohydrates for the next few hours. I like to eat a variety of protein, carbohydrates, et cetera. I felt free about eating the chocolate. The only thing is I need to brush my teeth because I'm done with cavities and root canals.

Session 3

1. I had a lot of fun not caring about looking how I should look. For example for wear is more conservative. Tonight, I got to play and express myself! I wore skirts, tank tops, and artistic put together. I really liked it when I'd wear a wig and posed. It was fun.
2. I was glad that I didn't care about being "proper." I liked showing my skin and not worrying that men would gawk at me or women would talk behind my back. I feel I wore what looked best on me color-wise and style wise.
3. I was going for the laidback island style. There, skin is shown and body is looked at differently than here in Northern California. I noticed my theme was unique and funky.
4. I ate brownies because I love walnuts. The celery and pita bread didn't look as yummy as the brownies. I didn't care very much as to what was "healthy" because I already ate dinner which was healthy enough.

Session 4

1. I actually embodied the music. Most of the time, I choose what music I will dance to (unless at some club or venue). Here, instead of coming from a judgmental position, I went ahead and shook my body to the rhythm in the moment. It felt great to not think about daily things or planning—instead, all I did was dance. What came up for me was pretty much being the feminine. My body moved in ways that were curvy, shaping my way with my hips, fingers, elbows, and tips. When not dancing, I actually tried to balance

masculine and feminine in myself, but when dancing, I'm all feminine. The vehicle I have now is a woman's body, and I moved it in sensual, fun, funny, smooth and unique ways. I felt so good, I feel that I dance from the soul: I felt I was in an altered state!

2. My body? Oh, I felt my body was perfect. With my tummy sticking out and my body being one with the music, I felt great. I even looked at the mirror after I saw Sarah look; and I looked at my bum shaking from the side. I thought "Wow, move it; yum!" and laughed. It has more silliness than seriousness, but it was great being playful.
3. Embodiment, Yes. Without Judgment, I moved to the music in the way I did. I felt that I became the rhythm and reflections of the rhythm. Melodies and beats became my hands and feet. I think I moved every part of my body I could.
4. I ate pear second, it looked good. I prefer fruit, especially the type that is already cut up. I ate bread and hummus first because I was hungry. However, it didn't taste that good, so I went for the pear. I also ate 1 maltball when first starting to dance, I felt that I needed sugar and a pick me up. I felt good about my food choices, no worries at all. I didn't go for the cookies because I didn't want too much sugar (artificial). I'd rather go for natural sugar in pears, taste better. Better natural.

Interview

SA: How was your body image?

SG: I felt pretty conscious of my body already. I used to go to the gym a lot already before I started grad school. Since then I have been going less, and I think the gym has a lot to do with how I feel about my body, how well I take care of my body. How I am eating, just how much work I've been putting in to it. So I haven't been so much in the last 6 months, since my priority is academics, school, since right now I have a lot of work. I'm conscious of my body but not exceedingly proud. I'm not keeping up with my body and my strength. Going to the gym for me is not about getting skinnier, it's about being more toned. When I walk around being more toned, and more conditioned, I feel stronger, more alive, more appealing, more like a warrior princess!

I'm pretty aware of my shape. Every time I look in the mirror, I like to look at my shape. It changes; my hips change. My breasts

change, depending on the time of the month. And I can see the changes. I'm not really fixated on what it looks like; when I gain weight or lose weight it changes. I like to be somewhere in the middle, and see how it changes on my structure, my natural structure.

SA: How has your body image changed since you began the study?

SG: I feel like I am move in different ways, just in dancing, because I moved so differently during the dance. I felt like I should move my body more, not just be concerned about posture all the time; be more flexible in my movements.

I'm more aware of what I used to know as negative. When we made the body maps, I color coded the messages, I think purple and red, and one color was for positive and one was negative. I wasn't quite conscious of what was more positive and negative, so now I'm aware of that. I'm kind of not caring anymore. It's not a big deal. Who cares if my toes are long, if my back gets chubbier quicker than my legs, or something like that. I'm actually realizing how ridiculous those negative things are, because why should I feel bad about myself if that is the natural way my body changes? Before I felt that about my hands, I would see them less. Now that I look at them I see that they're really nice. Before, my friends and I would joke about my hands being E.T. hands, but now I see that it's ridiculous and same thing about my feet. Once I kind of look at it I see that if I can make a joke out of it, then I can let it go. I can look at it and say that's what makes me unique. I feel like I can play with myself now, like I can laugh at it, like why does it have to be negative? If I were to do the body map now, I would like to think that it would be all positive, or mostly positive. It takes time to accept it, like it doesn't happen right away. I remember you talking that way too, and that helped, I brought that to myself. Like you talked about criticism you had received, then you said, "Who cares?" You showed that there are still things that you are working on.

About my back, that is something that runs in my family, all girls. I hadn't even thought about it until one of my sisters brought it up, "Oh you have the Pham (chubby) back too!" It's ingrained by the people around me sometimes, what matters to me. I have a friend that is gorgeous, and she has pimples on her back so she wouldn't wear anything backless. And I wondered why she would care about something so small? Even with this (discoloration on upper arms) I will still wear something sleeveless, like who cares? I do feel like a minor thing. If I were to wear certain clothes to cover it, it's a bigger issue. It's like in middle

school; it was not wearing certain shirts because I had no boobs! That was a bigger issue, but the bigger thing is the thing on my arms. Another thing is that my skin on my face and neck are different colors! I can wear makeup; it makes it look more unnatural. It's minor, but it's something that I thought about today, when looking in the mirror and putting on make up.

SA: Unless you point some of these differences, no one would notice. Would you say your body image has changed?

SG: Yes I would, in the ways; some are more subtle some are more obvious. Looking at myself more negatively, that was obvious and now I have a change. That was embarrassing that I had some small things, and I felt bad about it: that I made a big deal about something that doesn't matter. It only matters to me, and that's kind of vain? Like who cares about the pimples on my arms? For the dress up, it was more of a subtle change because I dress up all the time. It's not like I completely reinvented myself, though it was fun. I already use clothing to express myself. When I was traveling a lot, and I couldn't do art work I would use my clothing as art work. I didn't challenge myself to dress up like a hip-hop dancer or librarian, because then I wouldn't be expressing myself. That would just be putting on a different image, and how long could I hold it? So I did what I did to express myself. For the collage, I didn't know that I viewed beauty so much in abstract concepts of what life meant. I had pictures of family; relationships; man and woman together; connections; nature. I had a few images of females that I thought were cute, but I didn't have too much concern about culture. When I heard the other participants share about culture, I thought about it. I tried to present my art as my own culture. I didn't have images of people that were Asian (from my background). When Magika said that she couldn't find images of people like her, I realized I wasn't looking for that. My view of beauty is from a more philosophical, life aspect. I like to see beauty in cultures, which is why I like to travel, but I didn't express that in the collage. I also didn't express women idols. One person, Maya (the singer), and I think that's it. I didn't put any other celebrities, not that I don't find them physically beautiful it's just that I don't know them, or their biographies well enough to know if I consider them beautiful. I didn't bother including actors and actresses. For gender, I see men and women to be beautiful. I do like to say men are beautiful too, but I think that women are more naturally beautiful. My collage was very feminine.

During the dance and movement, I didn't care that I was dancing to music that I didn't put on. I was able to transcend my own beliefs

on what was danceable. At first through the person, depending whose music it was, I felt connected to them, and then I would fall into it. I had a personal element to it then would get into the music. The community connection helped me become more inclined to let it all out. Listening to my own CD, I burned it last minute; I danced to what I wouldn't usually. So I was able to let loose and move my body in all different ways. At times I would look around and get out of experience of being completely embodied in the experience, but it was also part of it, seeing different women dance around.

SA: Is there some difference in how you see you're self in the mirror?

SG: I put on make up almost everyday. I wear more at nighttime. I like to play with different colors, mostly lips, different shades. My eye make up stays pretty much the same, the same shades. I'm more aware when I'm putting on make up. I noticed that the group didn't wear make up as much as me. I grew up with it, my mom wears it, and my sisters do. My mom showed us how to do it, so I know if it looks right for my face or not. Sometime I feel a little insecure, that maybe I wear too much if others around me are not wearing it. When I went camping, when I went on retreat with all women, I didn't wear make up. I felt good not wearing it, but I also feel good wearing it. I know that there is this debate going on inside of myself, am I trying to make myself feel better, or is it art? I have to control what it really is. Is it just another art costume glamming [becoming glamorous] things up for the day? So I'm aware of it. Even in indigenous cultures, they use natural things to be made up, it's art. It's also discerning other people's opinions, its like am I masking, or am I concerned with how other people think? Am I expressing myself or do they just see me as masking? We can't other people anyways, so I'll do what I want. If you look a certain way, people assume you are a certain way. I have felt that even here, with a community in which we share a vision. I thought perhaps because I do wear make up and dress like I do that people might assume that it's not artistic, that I'm self-absorbed or something like that. I can feel it when certain people talk to me, but not others, but oh well!

I've started paying attention to my stretch marks, because before I didn't. Somebody talked about it in our session, and I think about them. But they don't bother me, it just kind of looks like a watermelon rind. I was just thinking: I lose weight, I gain weight, and of course I'll have stretch marks. But it doesn't bother me. I feel good about my body. I wish I could be clothed

less more often, I appreciated skin more, because it's actually very beautiful.

One thing I would like to include is that I'm more actively aware of looking out for women icons to look up to and respect not just abstract, philosophical concepts. Not just in people, but in their stories, and what's behind them. And there are a lot of women out there who have struggled, and I respect them. But I've learned to appreciate those who haven't struggled, and appreciate them too, that I can like someone just for their looks, like a celebrity or a model. Like what is behind that, why do I need someone to have substance, like a model? Like a Victoria's Secret model, I have trouble appreciating someone just for their beauty. So I'm on the lookout for women role models. Like how you explained these different goddesses, I would like to learn more about them, like archetypes. I want to learn more about more about these things so I can better understand myself and others too. I had gone to do a project with Magika, and she had all these pictures of women: dancers, singers, all very strong women; Nina Simone; different women, but I didn't know their stories. Then I thought I should find out who these people are. Doing this study emphasized this more that I need to do this more. I went on a women's retreat recently, ages 20 to 65. That was an amazing experience, opening up to experiences of women; even if I haven't had those experiences, to empathize with them. Just feel more womanhood together in the community; in the study to be with all ladies, it was a good experience after my retreat. To move forward and be more grounded in that and understand the experiences of woman, I think it's overall what I've learned. Body image and these other things are parallel experiences to what we have.

I don't think I've ever talked about body image with my girlfriends before. We talk about family stuff, boyfriend stuff, not how do you feel about your changing body? I can be a better friend to my lady friends now. I know somebody that is really dealing with the issues of age; she constantly feels like she's becoming old and crippled, she's over 40. It's kind of sad (that she's upset) but I don't know what to say, that no she's fine. What does she want to do, for her its all about exercise. I don't know how to help her with that, because I come from a different place, I'm almost half her age. It's hard for me to speak from that because she has this envy of age difference. So it's kind if interesting.

SA: How were the food choices for you?

SG: I usually never feel guilt about eating something, unless it's artificial unnatural, bad, dead food. That's the only time. I don't feel bad about eating too much chocolate or bread. And I actually eat some much bread I probably don't get enough protein. My body right now seems to not mind, like I don't feel that my body is saying that I'm eating too much. I tend to go towards fruit first, because it is natural sugars, it tastes better. Then I'll go for the chocolate. And about the food, I also go for what tastes good. So I didn't really feel guilt about anything, except for not eating to overdo anything so that my body would have a balanced amount of nutrition. I tried a little bit of everything.

SA: How was experience in the group?

SG: I think it helped. I really did like hearing what other people's input was. Magika talked about the cultural icons, with skin color being interesting. It awakened a part of me that I tend to not hope for; in mainstream media I do not expect to find a Vietnamese celebrity. If there is an Asian person, they look really plain, like they just came from Vietnam; I don't expect to see someone who is westernized, maybe in some music videos, not really in magazines. There are those differences, like there might be Chinese and Japanese, but Vietnamese. And for Lupe, the experience for feeling genderless, that was interesting. I want the experience of feeling more genderless; like not needing a man for feeling completed, but also want to surrender to union. So in union there is like a man and a woman. And there are different parts that do best, which are how Lupe said things, and it was interesting to hear that. I'd never heard of that, not moving like a female. If I was the blue man (Shiva), or the other half, how would I have danced? I never really thought of that. That was good for me to hear. And also from you, meeting you at school, and hear you talk a little more personal, I liked it. I liked being in the group and being able to respect each other's views and opinions. We were judging to appreciate not to put down. It was very safe, contained, and worry free, just letting go. It felt great to be in the group. If I were to do it alone, I may have been more judgmental about myself. Seeing other people, I could hear them and not judge myself more. The group helped facilitate acceptance and balance.

SA: Did you sense the Goddess?

SG: I felt it most in the dance session. I don't think it had to do with the music but it was letting the music take over. The body

image it was still very like we were judging ourselves from a personality level. In the collage session maybe there was a higher source there in the cutting and pasting; it was there but it wasn't as obvious as the dancing. As an artist, I tend to experiment in different ways. The clothing session, I didn't feel like something took over me it was still coming from the personality level. The next strongest was the collage day. The dancing. It was as though I didn't even . . . I would decorate the movements with what I knew, but the movements came from another source; it was more vibration related, invoking in my body. My personality came through in the style of the dance, but it wasn't the main core of the dance.

I really appreciate this experience; I've been looking forward to it from the beginning of the school year. I'm very impressed with the way that it was, it was organic yet structured. It was a good experience for myself and others.

Appendix N: Notes

This appendix comprises of notes that I took in session with the co-participants. I often wrote down what I saw happening in the room, in addition to quoting what co-participants were saying while sharing or presenting a creative expression piece. I utilized these notes in putting together the narrative portraits. My notes are presented here in their entirety, without any additions or changes after collecting all of the data.

Session 1

(Artemis) The week prior you had us do collages, and I had mentioned to a friend earlier that I had missed it and wanted to get back into doing collages. And then I walked in and you said that we were making collages, and I thought, "Oh, wow."

(Athena) Theme is Intimacy. With every living thing, including self. Nature pictures (thank goodness for Oprah magazine) hard time finding models attractive. Nature, animals, pictures of people in connection (relational), boy and dog, man and woman, looking for happiness (dog with tongue hanging out) eyes shine (woman and child) that's what joy looks like to me.

Women's bodies are beautiful, more pleasing than men (though attracted to men). Like to hear love stories (Obama's first date with Michelle). Maya Angelou, Queen Latifah, powerful women (never apologize for size, body, who she is) look at her and feel that way (confident). "I'm not as apologetic for existing, but as far as body image, I still have some ways to go. It's gotten better over the years... not that way when it comes to sex (with partner). If I'm going to sleep with someone I don't care. No problems walking around asked in front of someone (lover, or at a gym) despite society thing. (It's) not a moment to be ashamed of my body."

Body image issues come up around food, not fashion. Fire is getting in touch with life. Elements, shamanism, intimacy with Spirit.

(Adelma) Beauty expressing who we are. Outer part not real, it's when we are expressing ourselves. Enjoying themselves,

freedom of being who you are. Pictures of people smiling, sharing with one another. Similar shape, size, curvaceousness. Plus size model jumped out, large image. Whatever size, you can show, reveal self (my body is curvy, don't often see models that look like me) I really like it.

Animals, nature, as human beings, we are all part of this. I love images of beautiful things, not just in form of person. Flowers, chair, baskets (woven). "Nothing beats a beautiful shoe for me; it's like a cherry on top, it completes and outfit. Of course, I need to be able to move in them." I love silver jewelry, neutral color.

Lots of women of color, expression, outfits, presentable; beauty in my eyes; Michelle Obama. Not just body structure, skin color, outfit will work for me (looking for self in pictures) looking at art of outfits, color, has to be practical for me. Day to day person, comfortable, not superficial.

I identify with sisterhood, familiarity of images makes me feel like they are someone I know intimately. People in middle are singing, expressing, sharing a song, makes them beautiful, not about gender, it's about performing. Music in my world is an act of love. Music pulls family together, music is used to send messages, politically, to inspire, to be comfortable, to give vision of a brighter future.

Women at peace with what they have (in terms of body) comfortable with body. Thought that breasts, thighs to big as teen, now at peace. "Makes me ME. What I put on is an expression of my (beautiful) self." Moments of conscious of weight, fear for health reasons (family factors, genetic).

"I'm a complete woman. I'm not competing with a man, do I have what it takes? I have what it takes, I'm comfortable, I'm at peace with my sexuality, gender identity, body structure (look after it for health reasons). Just want to know how to put beautiful makeup on?"

(Sun geo) Qualities for beauty: balance, tranquility, enjoyment, relationships (family, platonic, romantic)

different cultures, foods, fashion, architecture, nature, water, diversity. Strength, older couples, people, wisdom throughout the years. Couldn't find pictures of women I looked up to (other than Maya Angelou) other pictures are pretty pictures. Night time, couldn't find. Beauty is word play, poetry. Pregnancy, Curvy women, shapes, growth. Celebration. "For where you are today and where you will be tomorrow." Direction, choices (in life). Sisterhood, father/daughter. The world, people. Mother Earth, since 1999, father passed, put ashes in water, recycle, rebirth of energy. Humbling to be at ocean, ebb and flow. Men too, especially if they are loving to women; masculine as protective and nurturing. Sun.

(Lupe) Beauty is in eye of beholders, pensive faced. Familiar. Jennifer Connelly, childhood star. Women in surrendering pose.

Dreamscape, stairs by ocean (personal dream). Angelina Jolie, Frank Sinatra, Mary J. Blige, Nicole Kidman, Christian bale, Heath Ledger, Salma Hayek, Ellen Degeneres, Johnny Depp. Water, movie director, weird movies. Strength, voice, everything, Mary J. Blige. Robert Downey Jr., Ironman; trickster, Heath, Batman. Men's eyes on women's faces, was going to have them looking through othe's eyes. Resonated with eyes that she chose, blend of perspective.

Classical Freudian couch, surrender to things, work through them.

(Magika) Difficult assignment, resistant to race, didn't feel connected to women's images. Used symbols instead of words. Woman with fro, playful, distant, expression. Connects with water, ebb and flow. Warmth of the sun, scary ocean life (unknown), drawn to power, magnificent, divine. Words in woman's body; what is necessary to make life beautiful? "what does it take to make your best power ever?"

Serial monogamist, love relationships, romance, MENS, the journey of life, shitty, lessons learned are beautiful. Creation beautiful, religion or no; everyone has capacity to create. Glamour is beautiful, Power if ethical and responsible. Love, shitty, but beautiful; intimacy, vulnerable, sex. Happiness loses value in abundance, sad times teach us to appreciate happiness.

Session 2

(Amara) Big, sexy brain, split on ethnicity (mixed heritage). Pear shaped body, abundant boobs, (good mostly) thin, vein-showing skin, stretch marks bad, gummi bear body (positive comments on love of gummi bears and cuteness of them) somatic, emotional belly, "turbo boody" which older sister has song and dance about (which is funny and do not feel demeaned by it) too much of a good thing. Negative features-short, fat, dry skin, getting old. Positive features-Cute feet, lips, teeth, eyes, body split, waist down seen as bad, waist up seen as good. Happy to be in one piece. Have loving heart. Others resonate with emotions in belly. Her sister told her about body, how to do makeup, trying to correct her. Has acceptance around boodie. With time saw family messages that were critical, controlling and condemning rather than relating to her and genuinely trying to be helpful.

(Bellagrun) Strong feet, emotionally walk hard; stand tall, confident, partner is short, won't kiss her when she is wearing heels. Has squishy thighs. Flexible, double jointed. Issues with hips, tore ligaments, was in wheelchair for 6 months until chiropractor helped rehabilitate injuries. Did not believe medical doctor that she would never walk again. Wide, childbearing hips. Some sadness about hips, "but hopeful about successful childbirths, so it will be karmic payoff."

Giant hands, thought it was cool, told not dainty. Long ass, like my mother's. Stress in belly, hard to digest certain foods. Large breasts with big belly, smaller breasts with flat belly. Didn't want to lose breasts, would rather have belly and larger breasts and belly than flat belly and smaller breast, but mother and partner think otherwise. Feels

more like a woman if she can fill her bra. Always had a tummy, keeps people away, was about emotional safety. Long arms, one arm is two inches longer than the other from playing sports. Freckles and moles all over body. Loving heart, protector, caretaker, was adult at young age among childish adults. Sister nags about nose being big (sister's voice in head). Unruly hair. Like eyes, cheekbones. Pale like father, mother has darker complexion. Has lots of positive body image messages, thought there would be more negative ones.

(Artemis) Pretty feet (others said), high arches on feet, toe issues. Tiny calves, out of proportion (doesn't bother any more), strong thighs, rub together. Some cellulite, stretch marks, not issue unless in bathing suit with skinny people around.

Womanly curves versus muffin top, fat that hangs out over pants or bra. Has large breasts, sports bra hides it well. Big wrists, can't wear bracelets often. Knuckles pop out, good finger nails, short fingers, not big issue. Pale skin, freckles, moles. Fine body hair, so that's good. Arms a bit flabby, wide shoulders, not a swimmer people ask that, buying jackets is a challenge.

Heart is warm and caring. Naturally blonde. Dent on head, smart brain. Positive: Long eyelashes, eyes, nose (perfect, because Mom said so, then wondered if sister internalized that since her nose looked different), likes her freckles now.

Overbite, but won't go through surgery, have jaw broken and reset (commended by other participants for that). Ears stick out but not an issue anymore. Doesn't wear heels as it is intimidating to men and women. Compared self to family multiple times. Marked strong core first. Has emotional issues, stress in shoulders.

(Inanna) Hair, rough to nice, without product is rough. Feeling ethnic at ITP, not while growing up in Chicago. Heart in sternum, soul, wisdom. Hair on body unattractive "Softness

in arms but it's okay, not where I'm spending my energy." Toned body is too much time and energy to maintain. Since she chooses not to spend a lot of time in working out to look a certain way (was commended by group members for saying that, that they liked how it was stated, resonated with them).

Like getting tan in summer, feels more natural (considering ethnic heritage). Creating my life right now, with my hands. Exercise versus too many carbs. Don't have time. Critical of wrinkles but accepting of it. "stand up straight, be polite" in mother's voice in own head, but not that relevant to self anymore. Haven't maintained feet, feels sad, but okay. Feet worn, mark of travels, at ITP conscious of feet. "Ethnic, being in my skin, being here or traveling." Didn't have label before, label you don't feel that way about self, was just me, but others saw me in a stereotypical way. ITP has infatuation about other cultures (romanticizing them).

(Athena) Mostly negative in body image, even though she was told by co-participant that she had a bodacious body. Was brave to share most of what she did. Compared self to family, that is also large in their forms, she is the thinnest one. Mentioned love that is tantric that tells her that she is a goddess, which is somewhat validating.

(Magika) Wants thunder thighs, told the rest of us to "Clap those thighs!" and assured Athena and I that we had bodacious bodies. Talked of feet and corns, wearing makeup on them. Having dance training for so long, she has toned body and slender form but wishes to be thicker. She has acceptance around toned form now, though likes thick form and femininity in curves that she doesn't have). Does not like looking androgynous.

(Lupe) Talked of her saddle bags, and being criticized in Spanish by mother's side of family, and compared herself to her sister a lot, who is small and slender, and does not like to be next to her at family gatherings because she will be compared to her. She says that people mistake her for being her sister's mother in public, which is embarrassing. Lupe has an ass that attracts men to follow her into the parking

lot of clubs, asking her to marry them (Magika commends her on this). Menstruation is taboo if she talks about it, but she mentioned it to us. Noted that she is short, and stocky, not a bad thing. Has a few tattoos and loves them.

(Sun-geo) Talked about being questioned if she was anorexic by a teacher in the third grade in front of the whole class, and she wasn't. Noted discoloration on arms, and was told by group that we wouldn't notice unless she mentioned it. Noted her back is thick. Has acceptance around belly, curves. Had thin legs, wanted thighs to touch then felt better about body. Liked her complexion, wanted to be tan, relatives in parent's country of origin discouraged it and prefer fair skin. Likes her feminine curves. Also compared self to sisters, especially growing up.

(Adelma) Has acceptance around big legs, mentioned large sex. Was compared to sisters growing up who had lighter complexions and thinner bodies, and was teased as "looking like a man." Was teased for being fat. Started to wear shorter dresses in late 20s, and was complimented on how her legs looked. Now that her sisters are older and have children, she said she looks like a model next to them. Oily skin, blemishes, different colors on face, wears make up to cover up spots, frustration around this.

Session 3

(Bellagrün) "Everything that made me uncomfortable, I picked up." Feels good, accepting environment. Loves the dress! Would go out in it with us, but not with those that would put her in a (stereotypical) box.

(Lindsay) At school, feels strange, safety of just women in this group, especially while changing, not normally wear, being less conservative here. Feel fun, comfortable would wear this to a festival.

(Amara) "I'm bringing sexy back!" Days I'm not working I can be more free to wear things. Dark make up draws attention. Dark, vibrant colors is what she is wearing. Borrows scarf to wear out that evening.

Baby steps, positive reinforcement to wear new things. Did a lot of processing before activity began to get comfortable and feel safe in doing activity.

It was fun. In changing wigs, it can be really defining, being a different person (4 people said). Bright colors, different moods, different expressions.

(Magika) Didn't like pictures became about perfection. I'd like to do better eye make up. New colors, new looks.

(Adelma) It looks like I take care of myself. Dressing up together brought back memory of women getting ready communally, mother, sisters, and so on.

(Athena) Never wear make up, lazy, screw it up. Negative message from boyfriend many years ago. On/off with make up. Playing here, it doesn't mater if it's messed up. Lip gloss compliments her, doesn't trigger her. Frustrated with make up. Took risks with what she was wearing, but they were comfortable risks. Dressing like a hippie was playful, familiar. "I wanted to take off my shirt, but thought others shouldn't see that!" was embarrassed by what we might see (insecure).

(Inanna) Stopped using make up, feels at a loss, is behind about what is in style; "It's kind of okay because I'm busy . . . but I want to bring that part back." Paid attention to it when in 20s now in 30s. Dressing up together reminded her of doing so with sister. Appreciated safety of group.

(Lupe) Embarrassed by pictures, feeling I shouldn't take them. Loved energy with women dressing up together, like at home with the women of her family, multiple generations getting ready together. Shift in personality in dressing up, sharing with older and younger women.

They dressed according to body type, tall or short. Five out of 6 took some risks in this activity. All of them would go out in public in what they chose to dress up tonight.

Session 4

(Amara) "Shake my ass-ets!" Good to have variety of artists playing. Energized after feeling sleepy all day. Mirror, I wanted to see how I looked. How I look on the outside is not how I look on the inside, vivacious, youthful, svelte, vibrant, athletic. Feeling good while dancing.

(Inanna) Less self-conscious with different kinds of music. Focus off of mind, on body. Different, more room would be good, just free on my own, dancing by window alone.

(Bellagrun) Desire to be intimate, but pull away. Creating my own space. Hot in here, claustrophobic. Certain artists were danceable, others not. Dance as mating ritual, have a mate, so will dance to entice someone only to turn away when they approach. Anonymity in dance club. To dance with another person here would disrupt their process.

Lindsay Dance with people awkward to dance alone, but got used to it. Dancing alone can be empowering, songs helped. I could move how I wanted to, not impacting another person (partner dance). Body loosen up. Me and the energy.

(Inanna) Healing space, I wasn't embodied at all, but with the music at the very end, I was embodied. Has to do with my process. Shakira was grounding. Wanted to explore mirror but didn't.

(Bellagrun) Techno makes me anxious, hip hop calms me down. Shakira is too grounding. Tried to, but didn't dance in front of mirror. Proximity, would be in space of another person. Saw silhouette, felt self-conscious, slowed tempo, closed eyes, had to let go, back into body. Inhibited me to see myself. Will miss this experience, miss bonding with other women.

Dancing with each other, Lupe and Sun-geo, and Sun-geo and I. My being bootylicious and Sun-geo too. Others found mirror self-regulating, self-conscious, so did Sun-geo after 5 minutes, though she took a few minutes to be playful in front of it. "Don't worry, be happy" party like it's 1989. Felt dorky, but warmed up to it after Lupe's encouragement about

laughing. Ardhinarishvara painting in Samadhi had a presence with our group, Lupe commenting on feeling him there, the Shiva aspect especially, "blue man." Sun-geo said that we were the Shakti part. Lupe felt safe, not needing to be confined to role of woman when dancing with a man, or be careful about boundaries and space with men. Could be self, authentic, without gender. Sun-geo and Adelma reported feeling more feminine, aware of body. Safe space. Lupe and Sun-geo both howled afterward. Sun-geo posed in door frame sexily and twirled in chair. Lupe did cartwheels, pogoed and twirled.

Adelma danced with eyes closed, taking small steps, in her own self.

Magika danced with just me, missing the group session. She tried to moonwalk to Michal Jackson, she did wide, leaping movements and twirled, and twirled on a chair through the first song, She took up a lot of space in the room, and though felt a bit self-conscious at times, did her own thing for most of it. We would look at each other now and then, and laugh. She had a great time free flowing.

Appendix O: Consent Form for Photographs

Date _____

To the Research Participant,

You were recently a participant in a study exploring the relationship between self-image and activating the archetype of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. You were asked to share your experiences of having worked with the archetype of Aphrodite, through the experiential exercises that were done as part of this study.

The study consisted of four sessions, held once a week. Each session had a different activity planned for it, being either collage-making, body-mapping, dressing up in various clothing, or dance and movement. The study included photographs of the creative expression projects, as well of the co-participants during the dress up session. If you chose to have photos taken of your projects, or of your person, this was entirely voluntary. Of the photographs that you allowed to be taken, by signing this form, you are giving permission to the researcher to include these photographs in the dissertation, and in the Power-Point presentation of the dissertation.

Please remember that it is your consent that allows the use of the photographs, and it is completely voluntary. Should you choose to, you may withdraw permission to use the photographs at

this time, without penalty or prejudice. This includes protection from penalty in any relationship you may have with the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may call me at (408) 888-8888, or my Chairperson, Chandra Alexandre, Ph.D. at (415) 505-6840, or Frederick Luskin, Ph.D., the head of the Research Ethics Committee for Research at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology at (650) 493-4430, x256. The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology assumes no responsibility for psychological or physical injury relating to this research.

If you would like to receive copies of these photos via email at the conclusion of this study, please include your email address with your signature below.

I attest that I have read and understood this form, had any questions about this research answered to my satisfaction, and can withdraw at any time without penalty. My sharing the photographs of my creative expression projects, or of my person in this research study is completely voluntary, and there is furthermore, no pressure being applied in encouraging it. My signature indicates my willingness to share the photographs of my creative expression projects, and of my person, in this research.

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

E-mail Address (optional) _____

Signature of researcher _____

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