

**Taking the Helm:
The Sacred Feminine, Sailing as a Therapeutic
Spiritual Practice, and Women Survivors of
Domestic Violence**

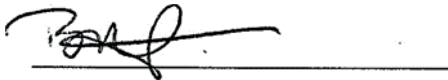
By: Joan Elizabeth Derrig Heacox, M.A.

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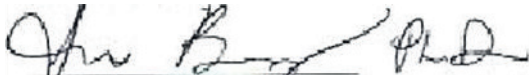
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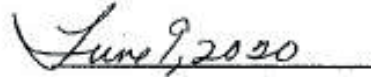
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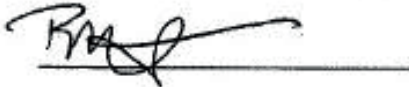
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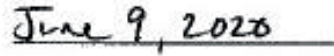
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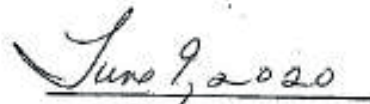
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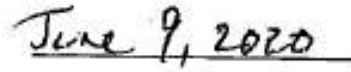
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Abstract

“Taking the Helm” is a practical theological research study of racially and ethnically diverse women survivors of domestic violence, ages 24-60. The intent of this transformative, embedded, multi-phase, mixed method study is to develop the practical theological implications of the changes in women’s experiences of consciousness, embodiment, and empowerment over a period of four distinct phases and experiences. The research builds on feminist research methodology, narrative theory, kinesiology, the myth of the “Handless Maiden,” and three interventions: women as Sacred Feminine, embodied movement, and sailing. This research is grounded in creating sacred space for women survivor’s voice, female body, and practice to be accepted, acknowledged, and attentively engaged as Sacred Feminine, with the hope of interruption, transformative interpretation, and meaning making. Phase I creates awareness and engages women as Sacred Feminine. Phase II engages the participant in a kinesiological movement activity. Phase III is a sailing experience designed for women to learn to literally take the helm and adjust the sails. Phase IV is a follow-up interview to reflection on experiences. New meaning emerges as a result of interpreting the research through a new powerful transformative hermeneutic of women survivors of domestic violence as Sacred Feminine and her experiences through a hermeneutic of transformation of beingness and becomingness. What emerges in this research is women’s consciousness of self and the meaning she makes as empowered and embodied Sacred Feminine that is present as oneness, self-love, creativity, agency, authenticity, power, relatedness, and freedom, that in turn creates space to transform women survivors of domestic abuse and violence into women uniquely flourishing as she sails through life.

Keywords: domestic violence, intimate terrorism, sacred feminine, therapeutic sailing, trauma recovery, women's studies

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I am deeply grateful to so many people who supported me through this academic endeavor of writing practical theology. To Bryan Froehle, my committee chairperson, whose commitment and enthusiastic support of my vision and passion for practical theology as well as support for women theologians has created space for my words to flourish on the page. You are true to your word: we are in this together. Thank you.

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To my children, Paul, Jacob, Andrew, and Sarah Marie, the most sacred creations to have come through my sacred femininity. Thank you. To my parents, Janice and Duane Derrig, who gave me the best gift of all, faith. Thank you. To my family, friends, and fellow sailors for your encouragement and support. Thank you.

To the woman and men whose work to heal the lives of women inspired me to strive for excellence in listening, healing, and writing women's stories. Thank you.

To the water, land, sky, created life, angels, saints, and Divine of All, whose presence and love grounded, supported, and inspired me to live my truth. Thank you.

Dedication

This research is dedicated to the thirteen courageous women that participated in this research study. Their willingness to open their hearts, share their stories, and trust enough to set sail on a journey that I hope transformed their lives as much as it inspired my life. It is with deep appreciation, compassion, and admiration that I dedicate this research study to Katy, Crystal, Aubrey, Jessica, Tara, Deborah, Stella, Sophia, Anna, Barbie, Dana, and Helen. You are Sacred Feminine.

I dedicate this research to my beautiful daughter, Sarah Marie. It was for us that I went in search of the healing power of the Sacred Feminine. May you experience yourself as the powerful Sacred Feminine that you are already.

I dedicate this research to all women who have experienced abuse, violence, pain, and suffering in the hands of trusted men and lifeworlds profoundly distorted by violence and abuse. May the Sacred Feminine transform your lives that you may flourish.

I dedicate this research to all who contribute understanding and insight that breakthroughs and transforms societal customs, familiar habits, and religious beliefs, worship, and communities that harm women, so as to heal the wounds and wombs of women's trauma, and set women free to sail as Sacred Feminine beings in the life of her dreams. May we all experience the power, beauty, and grace in being Sacred Feminine: oneness, creativity, power, love, relatedness, connection, and freedom.

To the transformative power of Sacred Feminine, you are always in our midst.

Thank You.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

The ongoing trauma caused by domestic abuse and intimate partner violence leaves deep wounds and hinders women's ability to live emotionally, physically, mentally, financially, and spiritually fulfilled lives. There exists a historical legacy¹ of philosophy-based ideologies² and Christian doctrines³ that continue to be interpreted into acts of violence against women, particularly in the context of domestic violence and intimate relationships. It is a pedagogy that in many ways continues to de-humanize, dis-embodiment, and dis-empower women for the purpose and intention of subjugating women's bodies, consciousness, and spirit to misogynistic male-father-husband-clergy authority⁴

¹ Phenomenological idealism has caused much of these problematic approaches. They mystify traditions, and practices, progressively distorting understandings over time within various ways, cultures, and contexts.

² Extensive work has been done researching and exposing philosophy-based ideologies and social structures of domination, patriarchy, sexual politics, racism, women's subjugation, women's intellectual capacity, and violence against women. See, for example, the work of Rosemary Agonito on the history of ideas on woman, Gerda Lerner on the history of patriarchy, Estelle Freedman on the history of feminism, Adrienne Rich on motherhood as experience and institution, Simone de Beauvoir on woman as the second sex, Judith Butler on gender, Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Mary D. Pellauer on feminist ethics, Susan Faludi on the socialization and attack on women through social media, advertising, movies, and television programming. See bibliography.

³ Extensive work has been done through hermeneutics, particularly hermeneutics of suspicion, researching, and exposing Christian traditions, doctrines, symbols, and scriptural interpretations of male domination, women's subjugation, and violence against women, particularly in marital relationships. See, for example, the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza on mainstream biblical interpretation, Rosemary Radford Ruether on western religious tradition and violence, Mary Daly on beyond God as the Father, M. Shawn Copeland on black women's bodies, Phyllis Chesler on the death and future of feminism, Joan Chittister on woman strength, the creed, and meaning, Nancy Nason-Clark on Christianity and family violence, Catherine Mowry LaCunga as editor of essays on freeing theology and the feminist perspective, Ann O'Hara Graff's anthropological gathering of essays on feminist theology, Elizabeth A. Johnson on the mystery of God, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz on Hispanic women, liberation, and decolonizing theologies, Diana Hayes on womanist theology, Ivone Gebara on Brazilian women's salvation, Phyllis Trible on biblical texts of terror, Evelyn Parker on critical thinking and resilience for African American girls, and Judith Lorber and Lisa Jean Moore's collection of essays on the feminist perspective on gendered bodies. See bibliography.

⁴ Clarence Edward Macartney, *Great Woman of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 198-207. Describes the ideal woman based on Proverbs as industrious and never resting, loyal to her husband and children, sacrificial, self-denying, and charitable in home and in the world, who praises, thinks not of evil, iniquity, and keeps silent. Her uplifting, preserving, warning, sanctifying, purifying, and comforting influence works on the soul of man. From the New Testament she is bowed to Christ, loves the Church, and whose Eternal Lover is Jesus Christ. Originally written in 1942. Biblical women are often

and obedience.⁵ Violence against women and girls acts as a pedagogical strategy of oppression⁶ creating a habitus⁷ that transmits patriarchal ideologies of male dominance⁸ which is deeply embedded globally⁹ in social, religious, and academic structures cutting across the demographics of race. The problem of dominance plays out in many relationships regardless of gender which has caused great harm to and oppression of women and men, girls and boys, and transsexuals of all races, ethnicities, creeds, class, and cultures.

Not all victims of domestic violence suffer psychological disorders. Many women seek counseling and pastoral care for issues related to the effects of domestic violence such as loss of voice, confusion, and depression while others seek more extreme means of support for coping and survival. It is estimated that between thirty and fifty percent of homeless women are victims of domestic violence.¹⁰

glorified for her obedience, self-sacrifice, subjugation, housewifely duties, and silence in the face of harm. Her sole purpose is to support her husband.

⁵ Dorothee Söelle, "Fatherhood, Power, and Barbarism: Feminist Challenges to Authoritative Religion," *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 327-336.

⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 43-48.

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 159-197. Discusses how *habitus* transmits socially constructed identity, roles, and behaviors based on social interpretation for gender and sexuality. Girls and women are consciously and unconsciously socialized and educated into submission, obedience, support roles, and ways of thinking through symbolic power, social structures, social media, and religious constructs. Creative consciousness of *habitus* is critical for healing, transformation, and empowerment of women survivors of domestic violence.

⁸ Wendy Farley and Emily A. Holmes, eds., *Women, Writing, Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011). discusses fear of women and women's bodies, minds and spirits has resulted in patriarchal ideologies and social, religious, and academic systems of male dominance, power, and authority over women: her mind, body and spirit.

⁹ United Nations Coalition Against Violence Against Women, "The Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women," accessed June 2, 2020. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/ngo-contributions.htm>

¹⁰ Christine Cozard Neuger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative, Pastoral Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 93-126.

The focus of this practical theological¹¹ qualitative research¹² is in its search for a theological pedagogy of re-embodied empowerment for women survivors of domestic violence. The subject of this theological research¹³ is women's experience, awareness, and practice of engaging the transformative action of the power of her sacred feminine being that wells up, in, and through women's bodies as site and source of God's revelation. The context of this work is limited to the experience of women survivors of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, situational partner conflicts, and intimate terrorism occurring in the United States.

Problem Statement

Women survivors of domestic violence and those who love, care for, counsel, and guide them struggle for a pedagogy of transformation that embraces her journey towards re-embodiment and engages a creative transformative action of power incarnate in her

¹¹ This research is practical theology as it begins with a deep description of women's experience, stories, memories, and meanings made of specific events from her past and present situation given the theological problem of domestic violence and abuse. The object of the research is the women's experience of self as sacred and what that means in her own language and imagery. The goal is to understand and gain insights in what theological themes, images, and practices facilitate healing, transformation, and flourishing over time. It is not based on one method, but praxis, reflexivity, and the contributions of Miller-Lemore on expanding the living human web, Browning on deep description, Forrester on practice as *habitus* and the experience of power when living in truth, Van Der Van on empirical-theological design that focuses on intervention, Schreiter and Bevans on context, C. Boff on social-analytical mediation, Isasi-Dias on learning to unlearn, Veiling on the path of thought that leads to transformative action, Groome on pedagogy, Gadamer on hermeneutics, Tillich on courage to be, Tracy on imagination, Lonergan on symbolism and insight as a function of inner conditions, and Hughes on mystagogical reflection on experience. See works consulted. In a private conversation, Bryan Froehle noted that the goal of practical theology is to engage concrete lived realities and the theories embedded in them, theory-laden practices, and the theories outside them to understand what faith is and how it is lived, in and through practice.

¹² Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). Miller-McLemore describes practical theology as multivalent and discusses *phronesis* as a method for studying theology in practice, as critical for an academic curriculum, and as a scholarly discipline.

¹³ Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 21-23; 41. emphasizes the need to study theology in a cultural context to avoid paternalistic and patriarchal attitude and misinterpretation. The cultural context of this research is in the lived experiences and reflection on the lives of women who have experienced domestic and family violence and are seeking healing from their experiences of violence and abuse.

body, consciousness, and spirit for the purpose of healing, recovery, and re-embodiment of her life's purpose. When women connect with "something," labeled spiritual or otherwise, insight, healing, and transformation occurs. What is that "something?" What approaches, symbols, actions, and experiences facilitate women's experience with that "something?"

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this transformative, embedded, multi-phase, mixed method study is to gain understanding and insight and the practical theological implications of the changes in women's experiences of consciousness, embodiment, and empowerment over a period of four distinct experiences. The women engage with the Sacred Feminine, the myth of the "Handless Maiden," a sailing vessel, and an experiential sailing retreat. The research study builds on feminist research methodology, narrative theory, kinesiology, the myth of the "Handless Maiden," and three interventions. The research takes place primarily on a sailing vessel.

Research Questions

In light of women's experience of domestic violence and the stages of recovery, how can women come to know, trust, and engage the creative transformative action of the power of sacred feminine energy welling up, in and through women's experiences and bodies as re-embodiment that is both the site and source of revelation?

Using feminist methodology, narrative theory, and kinesiology, will women experience, articulate, and embody changes in physiology, consciousness, and empowerment through an intervention that attempts to create awareness and a practice of engaging the creative transformative action of the power of Sacred Feminine energy?

By defining and differentiating the concepts of true power versus force, will women recognize in her experiences, attitudes, ideologies, and actions the difference between force, power over, power under, and true power? What is the effect of that knowledge?

Using the myth of the “Handless Maiden” as a metaphor to explore trauma through the lens of force and the creative transformative power of Sacred Feminine energy, will a woman’s reflection on other women’s individual, mythological, and collective experiences facilitate changes in her ways of knowing, embodiment, and empowerment?

What metaphors, activities, language, and experiences, such as sailing, connect with women’s experiences of embodiment and empowerment as part of her journey of recovery and healing?

At the conclusion of the research experience, will women survivors of domestic violence connect with the practice of creative transformative action of the power of sacred feminine energy? How and to what outcome?

At the conclusion of the research experience, will women survivors of domestic violence connect with her body as a site and source of God’s revelation? How and to what outcome?

At the conclusion of the research experience, will women survivors of domestic violence create new understanding of self, grow new hands, and take the helm of her body, story, and life? How and to what outcome?

At the conclusion of the research experience, is recovery from domestic violence understood and experienced as a spiritual journey? How and to what outcome?

Woman Survivors of Domestic Violence Encounter the Sacred Feminine

The research study is designed to create opportunities for women survivors of domestic violence to expand and explore consciousness of herself as sacred, feminine, female body, and Sacred Feminine as an intervention through conversation, an embodied activity, and sailing. Intentionally, the women will not be instructed about Sacred Feminine, nor will Sacred Feminine be defined. The purpose of the research is to validate, understand, and gain insight into her discovery of Sacred Feminine and its meaning for herself as it connects with her life, beliefs, and relationships.

The hope is that experiences of consciousness that honor herself as sacred, feminine, female body, and Sacred Feminine, will transform the pain, suffering, and memory of trauma such that she experiences a sense of relief, clarity of mind, release, and connection with her body. She will experience the power of Sacred Feminine to self-actualize to live the life of her dreams.

CHAPTER TWO. WOMEN'S LIFE EXPERIENCES

Women's Experience as Living Human Matrix

Women's individual and collective experiences are complex intersecting web-like matrixes¹⁴ located in a particular cultural context.¹⁵ Women's intimate and familial experiences of abuse, violence, and violation of her physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual beingness adds an additional complex space as part of her living human matrix of life and the collective of all women and humanity. It is human to experience pain and suffering, however, the site, source, and interpreted meaning made of the pain and suffering determines how one experiences it as part of her matrix of life.

The matrix of individual experiences is a function of the body, including the brain,¹⁶ and all things acting on the body internally and externally, seen and unseen.¹⁷ Included in the matrix of experiences are current relationships, *habitus*, and external

¹⁴ Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*. describes the human experience as a living human web which I have expanded into a matrix to include the historical past and legacy's that influence the present, the near future, and the spiritual realm that interacts with human consciousness.

¹⁵ Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Boston: Beacon, 1976). Judith Lorber and Lisa Jean Moore. *Gendered Bodies: Feminist Perspectives* (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2007). Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton, eds., *Women Out of Order: Risking Change and Creating Care in a Multicultural World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010). Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1995). Nicola Slee, Fran Porter, and Anne Phillips, eds., *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls: Qualitative Research Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁶ Sandra Blakeslee and Matthew Blakeslee, *The Body Has a Mind of Its Own: How Body Maps in Your Brain Help You Do (Almost) Everything Better* (New York: Random House, 2008). Deepak Chopra, *Quantum Healing: Exploring the Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine* (New York: Bantam, 1989). Robert Scaer, *The Body Bears the Burden: Trauma, Dissociation, and Disease* (New York: Haworth, 2001). End Violence Against Women International, "Neurobiology of Sexual Assault 2-Part Webinar Series: Experience and Behaviors, Experience and Memory," last accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.evawintl.org/WebinarArchive.aspx>.

¹⁷ David Bohm, *Quantum Theory* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1989). theory states that there is both a visible and invisible universe. This enfolded universe is connected with consciousness that allows for inspiration to arise in the mind and body. Meaning links mind and matter.

forces influenced by past relationships, social systems, knowledge, and ideologies¹⁸ as well as those of the near future, affected by internal realities, ways of knowing, and *phronesis*. The matrix includes the potential of the subconscious interacting with the collective unconscious, and the spiritual realm of the communion of saints, angels, and a universal God.¹⁹ Unique to women's embodiment is her gynecology; her biological and creative potential for conceiving, gestating, birthing, nourishing, and caring.²⁰ An embodied experience is the interaction and integration between the realms of physiological workings of the body, the thoughts, images, and emotions that are generated in the brain,²¹ and the spiritual innate to one's created being in the image of God.²²

James refers to first-hand, primary, original, powerful religious experience founded in "feelings, acts, and experiences of [individuals] in their solitude, so as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."²³ It

¹⁸ Carroll Saussy, *God Images and Self Esteem: Empowering Women in a Patriarchal Society* (Louisville: Westminster, 1991). defines ideology and how ideology describes a person's general conceptions, implicitly or explicitly, and philosophy about human nature, gender, role assumptions, one's set of ideals and values and how one realizes them. Often one's ideology goes unexamined and one is unaware of the structures of meaning that influence their acceptance of ideologies.

¹⁹ John Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila* (New York: Paulist, 1982), 7-15, 87-107. illustrates how the human person experiences the conscious and unconscious using Jung's psychology in conversation with Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*. It is a powerful example of an exploration and interpretation of psychology, spirituality, creativity, and use of metaphors when interpreting, seeking understanding, and insight of women's spirituality and experience.

²⁰ Kathleen Lennon, "Feminist Perspectives on the Body," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last modified August 2, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/feminist-body/>.

²¹ Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions are Made: The Secret Lives of the Brain* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017). David Hawkins, *Power vs. Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behavior* (New York: Hay House, 2012), xxxvii.

²² Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 113-136. Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule. *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic, 1997). Rebecca Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney, eds., *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition and Norms* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

²³ Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revised*. (Cambridge: Harvard, 2002), 31. Changed "individual men" to "individuals" to maintain a sense of inclusive language.

is the first hand, original, primary, powerful religious experience, that apprehend women in such a way that she may stand, embody, in relation to the divine. In spite of the pervasiveness and effects of fear, James still argues that the “great central fact in human life is the coming into conscious vital realization of our oneness with this infinite Life, and the opening of ourselves fully to this divine flow.”²⁴

This realization begins with the capacity for critical consciousness or critical thinking.²⁵ In the case of traumatic experience, women’s religious experience, consciousness, and sense of “oneness with this infinite Life” may be severely fragmented, constricted, and altered inhibiting her from opening herself to this divine flow.

Naming Women’s Experience

The struggle to name women’s experience continues to challenge as it recognizes that there exists no general universal abstract claim to describe “woman,” or women’s experience. The turn to the subject gives rise to human reason and experience as primary interpretation of reality. Women, as subjects, began a movement to name women’s experience.²⁶ The movement to name women’s experience began with the awakening to what was determined as normative, white European males located in positions of power

²⁴ William James, *Writings 1902-1910: The Varieties of Religious Experience, Pragmatism, A Pluralistic Universe, The Meaning of Truth, Some Problems of Philosophy, Essays* (New York: The Library of America, 1987), 96-97. Refer James’ work exploring and validating individual experiences as a source for understanding religion, truth, and meaning and what he calls primary religious experience through the lens of philosophy and psychology. Interestingly, James uses a great deal of his own personal experience to explain and explore phenomenon.

²⁵ Evelyn L. Parker, ed, *The Sacred Lives of Adolescent Girl: Hard stories of race, class and Gender* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010) discusses the need for critical thinking within the four aspects of formation for adolescent girls: realization, resistance, resilience, and ritual.

²⁶ Ann O’Hara Graff, “The Struggle to Name Women’s Experience,” in *In The Embrace of God*, ed. Ann O’Hara Graff (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 71-89.

in the academy, church, and society, and all others as “other.” Patriarchy defines and transmits “the cult of womanhood,” particularly for women in the dominant culture.²⁷

Naming experience is a fundamental need and way of knowing that produces meaning-making, consciousness, power, and subjectivity.²⁸ Situations such as domestic and family violence and abuse where silencing, oppression, and false naming occur illustrate attempts to negate women’s experience and meaning.²⁹ In women’s struggles to come to voice,³⁰ “the very act of naming becomes revolutionary, the fundamental act which at once breaks the silence of oppression and breaks open a new power of being in women’s souls.”³¹ What needs further articulating is women’s experience of a new power of being. How does it feel? What is happening in her body and consciousness? Is this acknowledged as a spiritual experience? How might specifically acknowledging and engaging in the moment of this new power happening, as sacred feminine energy and deep knowing, facilitate re-embodiment and empowerment in the recovery process of domestic violence?

²⁷ Nueger, *Counseling Women*, 106. discusses the “Cult of womanhood.” It is a reference to gender training that results in an expectation of women to focus on others, maintain, and support important relationships, provide care-giving, and be empathetic and sensitively responsive to others with an expectation of being protected and provided for by “their men.”

²⁸ Nicola Slee, *Women’s Faith Development: Patterns and Processes* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004). addresses the processes of women’s faith development and the patterns of faith development; alienation, awakening, and relationality.

²⁹ Susan Forward and Joan Torres. *Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them: When Loving Hurts and You Don’t Know Why* (New York: Bantam, 1996). Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, *The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance-What Women Should Know* (New York: Harper, 2014). Debbie Then, *Women Who Stay with Men Who Stray: What Every Women Needs to Know About Men and Infidelity* (New York: Hyperion, 1999).

³⁰ Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 125-167.

³¹ Slee, *Women’s Faith Development*, 67.

Women's Experience of Exclusion

A significant aspect of women's experience is her experience of exclusion, what she is not and what is negated, diminished, and silenced.³² Feminists, womanists, *mujeristas*, women of other cultures and sexual preferences began to explore ideologies, social structures, and theological doctrines, particularly around issues of body, gender, and sexuality.³³ Violence rooted in patriarchy, sexism, scripture interpretation, racism portrayed through social constructs and media is internalized by women.³⁴ "When the father's command is what must be obeyed, rather than the child's instinct, then authority and language have replaced the knowing of oneself and one's needs."³⁵ This results in loss of soul.³⁶ The result of commands for obedience and absolute authority create constructs and illusions that influence women's experience of consciousness, spirituality, and physicality may cause insidious trauma. The imposition of ideologies that do not

³² Rebecca Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Horizons in Feminist Theology*. For discussion of women's experiences of exclusion, identity, spirituality, and consciousness. Slee, *Women's Faith Development*, discusses how women's faith development begins with women's experience of alienation.

³³ Elizabeth Shussler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001). Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998). Carol P. Christ, "A New Definition of Patriarchy; Control over Women's Sexuality, Private Property, and War," *Feminist Theology* 24, no. 3 (2016): 214-225. Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Sheila Briggs, *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology* (Oxford: Oxford, 2012). Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002). Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1982). Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-first Century* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003). Nyasha Junior, *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015).

³⁴ Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 42-60. discusses stereotype-bearing myths about women in culture through the portrayal of images of women in media. Jody Raphael, *Rape is Rape: How Denial, Distortion, and Victim Blaming are Fueling a Hidden Acquaintance Rape Crisis* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 2013), 19-40. Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are used Against Women* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002).

³⁵ Eligio Stephen Gallegos, *Animals of the Four Windows: Integrating, Thinking, Sensing, Felling, and Imagery* (Santa Fe, Moon Bear Press, 1992), 74-75. states that when the father's command is what must be obeyed, rather than the child's instinct, then authority and language have replaced the knowing of oneself and one's needs. We become separated from our soul.

³⁶ Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, 57.

reflect or honor women's experience can result in a woman being frozen in a false self, becoming "the projected individual someone else values."³⁷ When the culturally conditioned voice or narrative voice in the head is oppressing, then strategies to identify, separate, resist, and re-narrate the voice to be the one of the women is critical for healing.³⁸

Women's experiences must have both epistemic and moral primacy and authority, narrated with feelings and emotions, believed by supportive listeners and communities, and affirmed as meaningful and as meaning making. Furthermore, women and women's experiences must be understood as morally ambiguous, with the capacity for agency for good and evil, never totally free or inhibited.³⁹ Engaging women's experience as particular, contextual, historical, spiritual, conscious, and embodied empowers women to speak, act, reflect, and gather in a way that breaks through constricting illusions, heals, and unites through the commonality of love.

Correlation Between Body, Consciousness, and Spirit

There exists a correlation between the realms of the body, specifically muscle strength, consciousness, and spirit such that an individual experiences either empowerment or disempowerment.⁴⁰ Pedagogy of empowerment arises from the praxis of the intersection, intercommunication, and interworking of a power, in and through the body, consciousness, and spirit for the revelation of truth.⁴¹ Women have historically

³⁷ Saussy, *God Images and Self Esteem*, 87.

³⁸ Richard Cook and Irene Alexander, eds., *Interweaving's: Conversations between Narrative Therapy and Christian Faith* (North Charleston: CreateSpace Books, 2008), 55-57.

³⁹ Paula Cooley, "Bad Women: The Limits of Theory and Theology" in *Horizons in Feminist Theology*, eds. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 137-153.

⁴⁰ Hawkins, *Power vs. Force*, 153-163.

⁴¹ Hawkins, 153-163. emphasizes understanding the difference between true power and force or power over another is a critical as it relates to women's experience of violence.

struggled with the language, implications, and issues of power over, force, violence, external power, and empowerment.

True Power verses Power Over as Force

Hawkins defines and clarifies the differences between power and force. These definitions are foundational for this research. Power is the transformative action or energy that arises from meaning based on motives and principles that unify, uplift, ennoble, and dignify life through compassion and humility resulting in increased muscle strength. “True power emanates from the consciousness itself; what we see is a manifestation of the invisible.”⁴² According to Hawkins, power “is.” It motivates endlessly with vigor, inspiration, and joy. True power changes the perception and meaning of the context that transforms into healing rather than relieving the symptoms. Inspiration is derived from things that symbolize concepts and principles that have powerful meanings. The source of power is something greater than the individual. True power raises human spiritual evolution from its lowest expression of shame to its highest expression of enlightenment.⁴³

Hawkins states that force is judgmental, creates conflict, defensiveness, and sets up a win/lose dichotomy of losers and enemies resulting in a decrease in muscle strength.⁴⁴ The use of force over another through forcible means such as violence and fear results in a weakening of physical body, a consciousness expressed as shame and anger, constricted and destructive thinking processing, and a God-view and life-view of

⁴² Hawkins, 155.

⁴³ Hawkins, xxxvi.; 291-305. Hawkins claims that the level of truth originally professed by Jesus Christ was at the highest level of human spiritual evolution. Hawkins states that it has since diminished due to misinterpretation, translations, and religious groups. He claims this is true of all the spiritual practices, religious groups, and scriptural writings. According to his research, fundamentalist groups calibrate towards the lowest levels of human spiritual evolution.

⁴⁴ Hawkins, 154-157.

harm, hopelessness, and evil. Force diminishes human spiritual evolution, lowers consciousness, disembodies, and disempowers.⁴⁵

Patriarchy: Systematic Pattern of Violence against Women

Male power over women and violence against women is a complex issue that is deeply embedded and sustained.⁴⁶ Since the creation of patriarchy and the movement away from egalitarian communities, society has legalized and legitimized male dominance over females, father's authority over daughters, and husband's rights over wives.⁴⁷ Ideologies of domination, androcentric thinking, and religious doctrines naming women as deviant and evil generated cultures of oppression and the dehumanizing of women as property, chattel, goods, and services, including women's body's and reproductive system.

Throughout history women's bodies were murdered, beaten, enslaved, and sexually violated as a right of men granted by the laws and customs of the times and places particularly when women lived outside or challenged the social norms. Over time, this complex process of constructing a social system, based on specific laws, practices, ideologies, and acculturation, is transmitted through a series of durable, transposable dispositions that form and predispose an individual's perception and appreciation of experience, individually, and collectively. This social system, once constructed, becomes a communal way of being, thinking, and acting, a *habitus*, that is pedagogical, self-

⁴⁵ Hawkins, 90-91; 167-171. discusses the mapping of consciousness and power patterns of human attitudes.

⁴⁶ Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, 31-32.

⁴⁷ Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, Louise Lamphere, and Joan Bamberger, eds., *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford: Stanford, 1974). explores the lives of women in response to early claims made by the women's movement through the lens of anthropology.

maintaining with minimal force, and exists without reflection, question, or consciousness.⁴⁸

The use and justification of violence against women to maintain social order is universal in the context of women's experience, though the particulars are unique to individual women and cultures. Violence against women continues to be challenged by feminist movements⁴⁹ such as suffragists for the right to vote in 1880's, the feminist movement for equality in the 1970's, and womanist movements to include racism; all resulting in changes in legislation for the safety and protection of women's inalienable rights and dignity in the United States. The accumulation of violence against women exists in some form in the collective unconscious, as a legacy,⁵⁰ and as memories in the tissues of the body, influencing women's ways of knowing and being known.⁵¹

Domestic Violence: Systematic Pattern of Force

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, "domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another."⁵² Some women's bodies are forcible and forever

⁴⁸ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence- From Domestic Violence to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 7-32. discusses the forgotten history of the study of hysteria, perverted acts against children, and Freud in France.

⁴⁹ Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991). Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine, 2002). Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and Social Systems: Historical Constructions and Ethic Challenges* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

⁵⁰ Private conversation concerning embodied legacy with Emmanuel Lartey at the Society of Pastoral Theology conference, Atlanta, GA 2018.

⁵¹ Scaer, *The Body Bears the Burden*. Diana Hayes, *Standing in the Shoes of My Mother: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011). M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

⁵² "What is Domestic Violence," The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.ncadv.org/learn-more>.

altered physically, physiologically, mentally, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually as a result of domestic abuse and intimate partner violence.⁵³

Violence in relationships occur when one person feels entitled to power and control over their partner and chooses to use abuse to gain and maintain that control. In relationships where domestic violence exists, violence is not equal.”⁵⁴ ⁵⁵ Every sixteen hours a woman is murdered by her intimate partner.⁵⁶ Even with the criminalization⁵⁷ of domestic violence and services,⁵⁸ coalitions, foundations, education, funding, and training to create awareness and advocacy, domestic violence against women often goes

⁵³ “National Statistics,” The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.ncadv.org/statistics>. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence is the grass roots voice of victims and survivors of domestic violence providing extensive education, statistics, conferences, programs, and training to change society’s public policy and understanding of the impact of domestic violence. It is the mission of NCADV to change society to have a zero tolerance of domestic violence.

⁵⁴ “What is Domestic Violence,” The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, last accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.ncadv.org/learn-more>.

⁵⁵ Michael Johnson, Interviewed by Theodore Ooms. “A Sociologist’s Perspective on Domestic Violence: A Conversation with Michael Johnson,” May 2006, last accessed June 2, 2020, <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/states/0314.pdf>. Johnson describes the three types of domestic violence: intimate terrorism, resistance violence, and situational couple violence. Resistance violence by the victim against the perpetrator, often in self-defense, is not equal to the violence inflicted on the victim by the perpetrator of intimate terrorism who feels entitled to power and control over his partner.

⁵⁶ “National Statistics.”

⁵⁷ “Violence Against Women Act,” National Network to End Domestic Violence, last accessed June 5, 2020, <https://nnedv.org/content/violence-against-women-act/>. In 1994, Congress passed the Violence Against Woman Act, (VAWA) with additional acts recognizing domestic violence as a crime and naming the rights of victims under 42 U. S. C. Section 10606. Most domestic violence laws are state laws. WomensLaw.org provides access to all state, federal and tribal statues related to domestic violence and victim’s protection and rights. There currently exists an Office on Violence Against Women in the U. S. Department of Justice. WomensLaw.org, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.womenslaw.org/laws/general/state-vs-federal-law/>.

⁵⁸ Women in Distress of Broward County, last accessed May 19, 2017, <http://www.womenindistress.org>. Women in Distress announced the statistics for free services provided to women in distress. Over 20,500 calls were answered in 2016 by the Domestic Violence 24 Hour Hotline, up by 91%. Nearly 30,000 safe shelter nights were provided to over 700 women, men and children in 2016. Women in Distress provided over 10,000 hours of advocacy and counseling at the Family center and over 11,500 hours in outreach centers. Women in Distress of Broward County helped survivors create 5,159 plans in 2016.

unchallenged, accepted, and ignored in plain sight. The morbidity and mortality of domestic violence has not been reduced.⁵⁹

Domestic Violence and Trauma

Domestic violence attempts to extinguish the existence of the true power potential embodied in women.⁶⁰ For women victims of domestic violence becoming “oneself,” speaking her truth with power, coming to voice, individuation, awakening, or living out her full potential is severely compromised without some form of intervention. Women’s experience of her body, consciousness, and spirit as a result of violence are physiological, psychological, and spiritually altered. Domestic violence often results in trauma.⁶¹

Domestic violence creates a way of being, thinking, and acting that is deeply embedded in the mind, body, and spirit of women, though particular to each woman. Women who have experienced domestic violence may have an altered physiology as a result of the embodied memory of the trauma.⁶² This trauma can result in post-traumatic stress disorder.⁶³ Trauma leaves women alternating between feeling numb and reliving

⁵⁹ Catherine Cerulli Rhodes and Nadine Kaslow, “Stages of Change as a Correlate of Mental Health Symptoms in Abused, Low-Income African American Women,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 62(12), (2006), 1533.

⁶⁰ Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Post-Traumatic Stress*. (London: Penguin, 2015).

⁶¹ Marie P. P. Root, “Reconstructing the Impact of Trauma on Personality,” in *Personality and Psychopathology: Feminist Reappraisals*, edited by Laura S Brown and Mary Ballou (New York: Guilford, 1992), 229-266. Root discusses trauma as direct, indirect, and insidious. Insidious trauma is a result of experiences of bias against the person for reasons of gender, social status, or identity, which is not valued by the dominant culture. Domestic violence includes all three types of trauma.

⁶² End Violence Against Women International, “Neurobiology of Sexual Assault 2-Part Webinar Series: Experience and Behaviors, Experience and Memory.” Domestic abuse, intimate terrorism, threatening of physical and sexual assault and battery entails a higher degree of trauma involving the neurobiology of the brain affecting the victim’s memory, long-term emotional health, and cognitive skills. During trauma, the brain shifts from the prefrontal cortex where reason and cognition take place to an altered state and place in the brain. The brain’s fear circuitry takes over during intimate terrorism and the threatening of physical, sexual assault, and battery. Automatically, survival reflexes in the brain are triggered causing the victim to “freeze,” space out, pass out, feel paralyzed, and become unable to move or speak. Trauma affects the memory whereby the victim is unable to remember or recall explicitly the traumatic experience, especially sequentially.

⁶³ Herman, *Trauma and Recover*, 121. Complex post-traumatic stress disorder chart.

the event, from denial, repression, and dissociation of the horrific events to recalling the events in highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manners. The result of domestic violence may result in dissociation and disembodiment, a forcible destruction of the connection between the body, consciousness, and spirit.⁶⁴

Domestic Violence and the Process of Recovery

There are many theories and research studies surrounding the issue of domestic violence and theories articulating the process of healing and stages of recovery. The most prominent is based on the work of Judith Herman.⁶⁵ Herman notes that the pathway of recovery from trauma, particularly domestic violence, has common features that involve three stages: establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community. Herman makes a significant but brief and unexplored to an activity within the recovery process that involves a “privileged moment of insight when repressed ideas, feelings, and memories surface into consciousness . . . and the moment of creative energy that is released when the barriers of denial and repression are lifted.”⁶⁶ Herman does not connect this to a religious or spiritual evolution. If this privileged moment of insight is negated, unacknowledged, or undermined then true healing at the deepest level is limited regardless of the construction of safety at each stage of the recovery process.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Herman, *Trauma and Recover*, 33; 52-56. discusses trauma, damaged self, and disconnection.

⁶⁵ Herman, 135-236.

⁶⁶ Herman, 2.

⁶⁷ Herman, 162-166. emphasizes the establishment of safety requires both the establishment of a safe space for the victim as well as a social context of safety where the story can unfold; be held, honored, and heard. Only in a social and public context that challenges, confronts and breaks through the illusion embedded in social norm and the *habitus* of male domination and violence against women can women feel safe to tell her story. In the social context that transmits and maintains male dominance and violence against women as a *habitus*, women’s experience, bodies, minds and spirits will be discredited, silenced, and made invisible, thereby re-traumatizing the women.

The work of Caroline Myss and James Finley attribute the transforming of trauma to axial moments and spontaneous spiritual experiences of awakening that transcends suffering.⁶⁸ Finley describes how the axial moment results in one's awakening to the preciousness of the Self, the encounter with the True Self, and "that in you that belongs to God," yet fails to connect back to the preciousness and dignity of the physical body and embodiment as the site and source of revelation in the axial moment. Finley claims that the root of suffering is estrangement from spiritual experience and the root of happiness is in spiritual experience. He argues for the practice of meditation and contemplation.

His dualistic thinking of body and spiritual experience treats the kinetic energy and physiology of the body as a distraction, an object that must be static, inhibited, controlled, and silenced, are all too like women's bodily experiences of domestic violence. Finley contributes to the importance of *theologia* in the process of healing, however, misses the correlation between dynamic physiological movement of energy in the body that results in increased muscle strength that leads to spiritual evolution, consciousness, re-embodiment, and empowerment.

The dynamics of domestic violence complicate issues of women's loss of voice, language, and credibility.⁶⁹ Central to human life is the language of primary-process thinking; emotion-laden wishes, images and values. There exists an unconscious voice within us from the moment of birth from which primary speech emerges into words, language, and voice. Ulanov calls this prayer.⁷⁰ Prayer, or primary speech is the direct

⁶⁸ Caroline M. Myss and James Finley, *Transforming Trauma: A Seven-Step Process for Spiritual Healing* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2009). Refer to the third CD. I attended the *Transforming Trauma* training workshop lead by Finley in 2012.

⁶⁹ Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 115-126.

⁷⁰ Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1982), 1-12.

line of communication to one's inner reality. Ulanov states that prayer makes a place for fear and fear makes a place for prayer." It is in this primal place where humans ask their deepest questions, not for the answer but for God, for encountering the divine. There is a pivotal event in the trauma recovery process when one asks the deep painfully necessary question, "Why? Why me?"⁷¹

In the reconstructing phase of recovery, Herman argues that the narrative must include the traumatic imagery and bodily sensations, in a sense reliving the event, stating that recollection without affect will not result in healing.⁷² The search for meaning, evaluation of beliefs and values, and confrontation of evil are essential in the therapeutic process of reconstructing a new belief system, sense of worth, and public stance.⁷³ What Herman does not explore or acknowledge is the presence of any spirit, spiritual essence, presence or quest, religious connection, God, higher power, or the power of the sacred feminine energy welling up, in and through, and surround the woman survivor. Herman states that the survivor must find a way, restore her own sense of dignity, and sustain it with the validation.

What is lacking is the connection between the process of coming to consciousness on a conscious level and the embodied physiological experience of coming to consciousness that involves the experience of a transformative presence of a divine source interacting in the experience of recovery. The concept of courage is not directly

⁷¹ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 178. discussion on recovery and the essential event of asking, Why? Why me?

⁷² Herman, 177.

⁷³ Nancy Qualls-Corbett, *Awakening Woman: Dreams and Individuation* (Toronto; Inner City Books, 2002), 12. Says the basic question in the path of individuation is, "What are the imposed boundaries, imagined limitations, or unrealistic fears that prevent me from experiencing life to the fullest?" Her work is an excellent reference for interpretation and articulation of meaningful symbols.

addressed.⁷⁴ Herman affirms that the survivor must acquire “something” that gives her the strength that will enable her to move through each step of recovery but does not articulate what that “something” is. Herman does not address the female body as the site and source of strength; spiritual or physiological. Neither does Herman identify specific states nor levels of consciousness that move the survivor through the recovery process, hinder the process, or return the survivor to an abusive situation. Herman mentions hope, but only briefly as something future oriented. In the research presented in Herman’s work, the question of faith, divine sources or resources, God, or a power that wells up from within the survivor was not acknowledged or presented in the body of her work. The therapeutic task did not reflect questions of faith, spirituality, or religion.

Domestic Violence and the Church

It is no surprise that care providers of domestic violence victims resist or fail to engage spiritual, religious, or faith-based resources for recovery. It is the silence and betrayal of the church leadership that favors marriage over abuse, blames or holds women accountable for the abusive behaviors of her husband, and silences or negates women’s narratives of abuse that contributes to the perpetuation and justification of domestic violence.⁷⁵ Church preaching, teaching, and practices of theological doctrines that uphold patriarchal power, primary images of God as male/father, Christ as male/husband/Bridegroom, and a ‘theology of ownership,’⁷⁶ the glorification of

⁷⁴ Hawkins, *Power vs. Force*, 105-106, states that the level of consciousness of courage is a necessary for the positive change. Courage implies the willingness to try something new, face fears, and cope with results.

⁷⁵ Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 93-126.

⁷⁶ Carole R. Bohn, “Dominion to Rule: The Roots and Consequences of a Theology of Ownership,” in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 107.

suffering,⁷⁷ biblical values, and messages that link women to submission, obedience, forgiveness, and sexual sin contribute to the victimization of women.⁷⁸

An anti-female or subjugated female culture; be it theological, political or academic, that trains and indoctrinates women as appropriate victims of violence and sexist behavior results in women experiencing insidious trauma.⁷⁹ Insidious trauma shapes a worldview rather than shattering assumptions, leaving women with “fewer resources with which to resist the fragmenting effect of this kind of traumatic betrayal.”⁸⁰ Attempts have been made for the re-interpretation of scripture⁸¹ and doctrine that addresses violence and offers hope, justice, and hospitality, upholding the dignity of women as created in the image of God.⁸²

Theologia, Sapiential Personal Knowledge of God

The loss of theology, *theologia*,⁸³ as phronesis, wisdom, a way of life, or sapiential and personal knowledge of God in its original and most authentic sense has resulted in a loss of pastoral care and clergy able to engage authentic human spiritual

⁷⁷ Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 98. Glorification of suffering and the “theology of atonement” lead to messages such that there is divine meaning in experiences of abuse, abuse is salvific or a means to a deeper spirituality for both the victim and the perpetrator.

⁷⁸ Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, “Incarnational Theology: Reconstructing Developmental Theory,” in *In Her Own Time: Women and Developmental Issues in Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 1-18. Stevenson-Moessner discusses violence against women is violence against God.

⁷⁹ Root, “Reconstructing the Impact of Trauma on Personality,” 229. Root names three types of trauma, direct (observable experience of harm), indirect (witness of harm), and insidious trauma which can permanently change a victim’s personal construction of reality.

⁸⁰ Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 107.

⁸¹ Carol J. Adams, *Woman-Battering* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994). Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune, *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook* (New York: Continuum, 1995). Linda H. Hollies, *Sister Save Yourself: Direct Talk about Domestic Violence* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2006). Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁸²“When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response To Domestic Violence Against Women,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/domestic-violence/when-i-call-for-help.cfm>.

⁸³ Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001), xi.

experiences. The primary function and view of theology is based on a scientific paradigm of systematizing of data yielding knowledge in the various fields for the purpose of educating the leadership of the church.⁸⁴

The result is that many clergy are pastoring at an underdeveloped, immature, or lower level of spiritual evolution, therefore unable to express, share, or transmit *theologia* at a higher level of consciousness that courageously empowers, inspires, and reveals. Clergy are often poorly trained, impatient, and insensitive to needs and issues of women in general and domestic violence, in particular.

What is transmitted is standard doctrine, an intellectualizing of the experience, and interpretations that are fear or shame-based, anxiety driven, and lowering the level of consciousness for both the clergy and the victim of trauma. Women survivors of domestic violence need *theologia* that facilitates a spiritual evolution, higher level of consciousness, and body awareness for re-embodiment and empowerment.

Local Healing for Hurting Women

Women survivors of domestic violence experiencing on-going trauma are often at a loss as to what to do with emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that feel out of control. According to Schwartz, “trauma cannot be destroyed, but it can be dissolved in a sea of resourcefulness.” He continues, “The problem with trauma is . . . it is the indirect impact of disconnecting a person from his or her resources that does the real damage.”⁸⁵ What resources are needed for woman to reconnect to herself so as to experience herself as resourceful in a multitude of ways?

⁸⁴ Farley, *Theologia*, 104.

⁸⁵ Robert Schwartz, *Tools for Transforming Trauma* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), 211.

Traditional Counseling and Pastoral Care

Counseling services and pastoral care is available and provided by trained therapists locally. In the holistic community, social workers and therapists have retired from traditional counseling and set up practices using theta healing and past lives archaeology practices. Freidman makes the claim to her hurting clients, “You are both the archaeologist and architect of your soul’s journey.”⁸⁶ Theta healing is a brain and prayer intuitive healing practice using the Creator of All to alter brain waves.⁸⁷ The local domestic violence agency, Abuse and Counseling Treatment (ACT), provides free counseling services, escape plans, housing, hotline, and legal advice for women in crisis or leaving abusive partners and environments.⁸⁸ However, they do offer assistance or services for long term care for women once the crisis has passed.

The Catholic Dioceses in South Florida do not offer services to women experiencing domestic violence, nor are services or suggestions made available on the website. The National Council of Catholic Women (CCW), is an organization of Catholic women gathering at the parish level and send representatives to the meet with Bishops on a regional and national level.⁸⁹ As an organization, in general, they raise funds by hosting an annual fashion show to donate to the local domestic abuse shelters, various women’s services, and Catholic school tuition scholarships. The women as an organization do not provide services for women in the parish that are struggling with domestic violence.

⁸⁶ Cheryl Friedman, “Past Lives Archeology,” accessed June 2, 2020. <https://cherylfreedman.com/about-me/>. Cheryl left her social work practice of “talk therapy” to use past lives archaeology practice for spiritual healing.

⁸⁷ Theta Healing, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.thetahealing.com/thetahealing-questions.html>.

⁸⁸ Abuse Counseling and Treatment, accessed June 2, 2020. <http://www.actabuse.com/>.

⁸⁹ National Council of Catholic Women, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.nccw.org/>.

A local non-denominational church holds a weekly women's ministry and bible study meeting, Helping Hurting Women.⁹⁰ The women's ministry is referred to as "His Women." This meeting is led by a woman pastor with the support of a team of women volunteers and has been meeting for twenty-five years. It is scripture-based, emphasizing woman's roles as women and wives subordinate to male/husband authority and Jesus, as Lord and Savior. The delivery of the message empathizes turning one's life over to a male God authority in the name of God, the Father and Jesus.

Sacred Feminine and Goddess

Women are seeking healing, understanding, and insight from a variety of non-traditionally religious sources. Images of sacred feminine include the many images, icons, and statues of Mary, women saints, and Goddess. Many of the stories of saints glorify sacrifice, isolation, denial of Self as authority, submission to clergy, and extremely poor health. New interpretations of Mary,⁹¹ biblical women,⁹² and female saints,⁹³ such as Teresa of Avila,⁹⁴ are increasing consciousness of the power of the Sacred Feminine and acting as resources for women to connect with her own resourcefulness.

⁹⁰ Women's Ministry, First Assembly of God, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.famfm.com/women.php>. "Helping Hurting Women" is one of the women's ministry activities.

⁹¹ Charlene Spretnak, *Missing Mary: The Queen of Heaven and Her Re-emergence in the Modern Church* (New York: Palgrave, 2004). Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Untie the Strong Woman: Blessed Mother's Immaculate Love for the Wild Soul* (Moorhead: First River Wolf, 2017).

⁹² Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁹³ Emilie Griffin, ed., *Hildegard of Bingen: Selections from Her Writings*, trans. by Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: HarperOne, 2005). Julian of Norwich. *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (New York: Penguin, 1999). Robert Ellsberg, *All Saints: Daily Reflections of Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time* (New York: Crossroads, 1997). Ursula King, *Christian Mystics: Their Lives and Legacies Throughout the Ages* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1998).

⁹⁴ Mirabai Starr, ed., *Teresa of Avila: The Book of My Life*, trans. by Mirabai Starr (Boston: New Seeds, 2008).

Goddess images and archetypes,⁹⁵ Greek mythological characters,⁹⁶ tarot cards, and angel cards act as resources for connection with Self as sacred feminine. Women mediums, shamans, tarot readers, psychics, hypnotists, and witches are offering spiritual healing sessions, readings, and clearings to help women heal from trauma and connect with her embodied womanhood. Women circles such as *Red Tents*, retreats such as *Infinite Magnificence*, and conferences are available for women to gather, celebrate, and support each other. Facebook is filled with sacred Goddess groups offering ways of connection, inspiration, and self-help opportunities.

Woman are seeking woman for support, connection, and spirituality. There exist many websites on Sacred Feminine and Goddess offering conferences, services, inspiration, spiritual practices, books, images, and quotes.⁹⁷ In communities of wholistic healers, retreats such as the *Infinite Magnificent*⁹⁸ are held to honor women's voices, connect with oils, create art, teach healthy lifestyle and food choices, and create connection among women. "Spiritual Day,"⁹⁹ a monthly event in south Florida located at an art boutique and gift shop, connects women in need of spiritual care with various

⁹⁵ Lynn V. Andrews, *Shakkai: Woman of the Sacred Garden* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

⁹⁶ Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Goddess in Everywoman: Powerful Archetypes in Women's Lives* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).

⁹⁷ Goddess Institute, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.goddessinstitute.co/experience-goddess.last>, offers classes. Sofia Sundari, assessed June 2, 2020, <https://sofiasundari.com/about/>. Sofia left her law career to become an international transformation speaker and healer in sacred sexuality, opening a Serpent Mystery School, Priestess School, and Goddess workshops. "Gabrielle Bernstein," Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, last accessed June 2, 2020, <https://kripalu.org/presenters-programs/presenters/gabrielle-bernstein#>. described by Oprah Winfrey as the next generation thought leader, is an author and transformational speaker who is located at the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health near Boston. These are just of the few options listed on the internet to guide, heal, and transform women's lives.

⁹⁸ Terressena Martien Bakens and Lainie Sevante Wulkan, Infinite Magnificence Retreat, Bokelia, FL. Researcher attended the retreat facilitated by Terressena Martien Bakens and Lainie Sevante Wulkan. Terressena is an artist and the designer of a two sets of Tarot cards. She leads classes and facilitates Mayan Journeys for expanding consciousness. Terressena Martien Bakens and Lainie Sevante Wulkan. Infinite Magnificence Retreat. <http://beaconsoflove.com>.

⁹⁹ "Spiritual Day," Karma and Coconuts, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/events/karma-coconuts/spiritual-day-11am-to-4pm/1369359523205874/>. Offers women space to connect with spiritual healers for a fee of \$25.00 per twenty-five minutes.

spiritual healers such as hypnotherapists, life coaches, vibrational crystal healer, reiki therapist, psychic mediums, intuitive tarot card readers, oracle card readers, and astrologists.

“Mama Gena of the School of Womanly Arts” teaches woman how to embrace her sexuality and use it to serve her needs.¹⁰⁰ Women flock to conferences such as “The Sacred Feminine: Workshop for Women” offered by Gratitude Training in southern Florida.¹⁰¹ The women attendees dress in white for three days. Together they celebrate their femininity, mourn their embodied and sexual wounds, offer support, and learn to embrace her Sacred Feminine, Goddess, and Queen, receiver of the gifts of men.

Myth of the Handless Maiden

In the myth of the “Handless Maiden,”¹⁰² the maiden submits herself to the force of evil and the mutilation of her body, the dismembering of her hands by her father and the imposition of artificial hands by her husband, the King. The king identifies her as both spirit and human. In recent pastoral care work with women experiencing domestic violence, the women connected empathetically with the myth of the Handless Maiden.

¹⁰⁰ Regena Thomashauer, “The Pleasure Revolution,” filmed December 1, 2011 in San Francisco, CA, Video, 19:01, https://www.ted.com/talks/thomashauer_regina_the_pleasure_revolution. known as “Mama Gena,” Regena Thomashauer, Facebook, April 22, 2020, [Facebook.com/mamagena/](https://www.facebook.com/mamagena/) April 22, 2020. She is a relationship expert, educator, and author that teaches the lost “womanly arts” of identifying your desires and knowing sensual pleasure because making pleasure a priority can help you reach your goals.

¹⁰¹ “Sacred Feminine: Workshop for Women,” Gratitude Training, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.gratitude.training.com>. Researcher attended three-day workshop, October 2019.

¹⁰² Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run with Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. (First River Wolf E-Book/Digital Edition, 2017). The maiden submits herself to the force of evil and the mutilation of her body: the sacrificial cutting off of her hands by her father is the exchange demanded as the result of a barter made with the devil for family wealth. After the handless maiden’s hands are cut off, she goes on a journey accompanied by her spirit. She encounters a king who asks of her, “What is she, spirit or human?” The magician replied, “She is both spirit and human.” She is given artificial silver hands made by the king who professes his love for her and marries her. His love is later communicated as a threat of harm and ultimately death. Throughout the maiden’s journey from innocence, evil, violence, threat of death, and finally healing, her spirit protects, embraces, nourishes, guides, and empowers her. Estes uses this metaphor to explore the masculine and feminine aspects of the psyche.

They looked to their hands as the location of woundedness and disembodiment, a severing of self, body, work, and consciousness.

The women connected with the spirit as a part of herself, previously unrecognized. The spirit offered a potential source of power for re-embodiment, breaking through ideologies, meaning making, and clarification of consciousness. The myth of the “Handless Maiden” is a symbolic journey for the work involved in the process of recovery. The handless maiden’s journey, retreat, and self-care in a supportive loving sanctuary created space for her to gain confidence, experience healthy relationships, and grow new hands.

Women seek various methods and support for healing the wounds of domestic violence and other harm from counseling, storytelling, women’s circles, yoga, exercise, and chakra healing. Some woman experience healing and relief from her suffering. Yet, others continue to suffer, experiencing unexplained confusing, disassociation, and disconnection. For those women, the empowering and full embodied experience of sailing creates a potential for creative transformation.

Sailing, Sailing Vessels, and the Feminine

Sailors, in general, are great story tellers: telling tales of adventure, life-threatening moments of peril, survival, and the incredible peacefulness of being on the

water under full sail at dusk as the moon rises.¹⁰³ Sailors are also truth-tellers.¹⁰⁴ They will be the first share their knowledge, provide support, give warning of danger, and offer advice about boat repairs, safe passages, and navigational hazards. Experienced sailors are often independent, creative, and self-reliant because they know that once the boat leaves the dock, whatever happens is up to them to analyze the situation, find the problem, create a solution, and execute. This is not a linear process as much as it is a way of thinking; reflection on the results of the action taken.

Sailing Vessel

The sailing vessel itself has historically been associated with the feminine using language, relationship, and ownership. Captains and owners of sailing vessels often refer to the sailing vessel as a ‘she’ with the belief that a female figure like a mother or goddess would guide and protect the ship and crew.¹⁰⁵ Often a female torso with the face of a beautiful, long haired young woman and one or both breasts exposed was carved into the bow of a sailing vessel. However, “sailors’ superstitions viewed women on board ship as unlucky, but a semi-naked sculpted female form was believed to calm storms at sea.”¹⁰⁶ There still exists such a belief in local sailing clubs with certain captains that do not permit women to crew for races and long hauls.

¹⁰³ See sailing adventures told by sailors Tania Aebi with Bernadette Brennan, *Maiden Voyage* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), Bernard Moitessier, *The Longest Way*, trans. William Rodarmor (Dobbs Ferry: Sheridan House, 2003) and Rebecca Burg, *Sail with Me* (Charleston: Small Talk, 2014). These are just a few of the stories published about sailing. Visit any yacht club, marina, or salty sailor bar and many a sailor will gladly share their adventures on the water.

¹⁰⁴ Captain Liz Clark, *Swell: A Sailing Surfer’s Voyage of Awakening* (Ventura: Patagonia, 2018). Aebi with Brennan, *Maiden Voyage*, and Mary South, *The Cure for Anything is Saltwater: How I Through My Life Overboard and Found Happiness at Sea* (New York: HaperCollins, 2007) and Hal Roth, *How to Sail Around the World: Advice and Ideas for Voyaging Under Sail* (New York: International Marine, 2004).

¹⁰⁵ “Why Do Ships Have A Gender?” *Imperial War Museum*, last modified April 24, 2019, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/why-do-ships-have-a-gender>.

¹⁰⁶ “A Brief History of Ships’ Figureheads,” *Heritage Calling*, last modified January 31, 2019, <https://heritagecalling.com/2019/01/31/a-brief-history-of-ships-figureheads/>.

A sailboat is a vessel, carrying the captain, crew, and cargo across unpredictable bodies of water using the natural power of wind. Historically, sailors used celestial navigation as a means of navigating their course by aligning the location of the vessel with the location of land marks, sun, and stars.¹⁰⁷ There are three types of navigation: celestial, GPS, and maps and charts.¹⁰⁸ Knowledge and navigation skills are critical on long passages as well as local or coastal channels with markers indicating shallows and dangerous waterways.

Sailing vessel's generally have an inboard or outboard gasoline or diesel engine to motor the vessel through water, both when under sail and not under sail. The primary purpose and source of power on a sailing vessel is sail configuration, rigging, and sails.¹⁰⁹ A sailing vessel has a multitude of standing and running rigging options and sail arrangements, each specifically designed to move the sailing vessel purposefully through the water: racing, cruising, and day-sailing. Adjusting or trimming the sails for maximum speed is geometry, aerodynamics, physics, and an artful practice of reflection on action: trial, error, and results.¹¹⁰

The sailing vessel's hull slices through the waves. Its tall mast holds the sails aloft allowing the force of the wind to pull the hull along its course. Its enclosed cabin protects its precious cargo from the elements, providing all the necessary parts and parcels for

¹⁰⁷ Bobby Schenk, *The Complete Yachtsman: A Cruising Manual*, trans. by Desmond Cook-Radmore (New York: Ziff-Davis, 1978), 191-249.

¹⁰⁸ "Three Types of Navigation – Barbara Bemis," High Trails, last accessed June 2, 2020, <https://dirtyclassroom.com/3-types-of-navigation-barbara-bemis>. See Ivar Dedekam, *Illustrated Navigation* (Warwickshire: Fernhurst, 2017). Provides in depth instructions on navigation directly related to sailing vessels, waterways, and ocean passages using traditional, electronic, and celestial methods of navigation. Having the skills to navigate without electronic means is crucial in case electrical systems fail when underway.

¹⁰⁹ Dennis Conner and Michael Levitt, *Learn to Sail: A Beginner's Guide to the Art, Equipment, and Language of Sailing on a Lake or Ocean* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 8-23.

¹¹⁰ Ivar Dedekam, *Illustrated Sailing Rigging and Tuning* (Warwickshire: Fernhurst, 2017), 3-60.

survival. Sailing is intimate connection with the forces of nature and the intimate power of the captain, crew, and sailing vessel.

Sailing

Sailing is as much an experience as it is a vessel. Sailing is metaphorically a human vessel interacting with a sailing vessel located in a body of water. The vessel being the mind or way of thinking of the sailor. Sailing is as much a way of being as it is a way of thinking and doing. Sailing is located in a particular environmental context, a large vessel of space per say, which is aggregate of environmental and atmospheric weather conditions that occur for a place or region over some relatively long period of time.¹¹¹ The old adage “Climate is what you expect, weather is what you get”¹¹² is about the difference between weather over a long period of time and weather at the moment or within the near future.

Weather, and its interaction with environment is often referred to as “mother nature.” Mother Nature was credited for dazzling sunsets, enchanting cloud formations, and gale force winds. Sailors are often gazing up at the night sky’s for celestial guidance, into the clouds for shifts in weather, and over the water for clues of wind speeds.¹¹³

Responsible sailors are keen observers, highly skilled in situational awareness as a way of thinking, knowing, and decision making critical for the safety of the sailing vessel and her crew. Weather and water observers are knowledgeable about the weather, water,

¹¹¹ Ronald H. Kessel, *Weather* (Raleigh: United States Power Squadron, 2012.), 1. Weather is a manual used by the United States Power Squadron for the ten-week course for teaching sailors the basics for understanding weather and weather patterns critical for safe boating.

¹¹² Kessel, *Weather*, 13.

¹¹³ Kessel, 34-35. The Beaufort Scale, scale of wind speeds based on a correlation between the motion of trees, smoke, flags, and sea conditions, serves as a sailor’s guide for adjusting, trimming, or reefing the sails and altering course.

and surroundings of mother nature, otherwise known as “climate,” which is the power of the wind, the water, and the weather.

Sailing takes place in a vessel which is both a dynamic mechanical system for harnessing the power of the external forces acting on it and a well-balanced functional container for safely holding and transporting captain, crew, and cargo. A sailing vessel, according to design, always turns toward the wind, naturally. It is the sailor that must adjust the sails, take the helm, and command the vessel in such a way as to propel the sailboat forward.

Sailing is a “way of being” where the mind/body experience of instinct, intuition, sensations, observations, experience, and intellectual knowledge are integrated into authoritative embodied knowing. Sailing is an interpretive reflective practice that teaches and trains the mind and the body to pay attention to one’s self, one’s surroundings, and to act accordingly with discipline and authority. Sailing is intuitive, instinctual, and intellectual as well as an experiential, sensual, and physically embodied, integrating practice. Sailing is a practice such that a sailor is always learning, no matter how many years, knots traveled, or races won.

Helmswoman

It is this interpretive reflective practice of mind, body, and environmental conditions that generated this metaphor of “helmswoman” as the context, embodiment, and transformative power of the Sacred Feminine. Helmswoman, as metaphor for woman authority at the helm of a sailing vessel, represents the action of woman being present and

attending to the safety of the vessel and crew, power and control of a vessel and crew, agency and authority to hold her position as captain.¹¹⁴

Sailing as a Way of Being

Sailors heard the call of the sea and longed for the freedom, adventure, and universal oneness of being on the water. The pleasure, freedom, and uncertainty of being but a speck on a boat surrounded by distant horizons, an eternal sky of wispy towering clouds, and the depth of darkness, elements swirling and churning beneath the sea. It is in this continuous spaciousness of the vast sea, which is often free, available, and unoccupied where all things exist in the eternal now of the natural universe spacetime dimension.

Everything else, not in the moment, cease to exist outside the workings of the mind. The past and future have no merit in the moment of being. And yet the conscious beingness experienced in the moment of all alone oneness are felt, sensed, created, and known by, in and through the body. Beingness is marked only by the changes in wind, water, weather, and light. It is in this spacetime existence on the water that one can experience oneself as completely and totally alone and at the same time completely and totally at all one with the divine and the universe.

¹¹⁴ On December 1, 2018, the researcher docked her 38' sailboat in small marina in front of a group of Cuban American sailors gathered on the docks. As the story was shared, partly in English and Spanish, the Cuban American women were greatly impressed that a woman was able to successfully own, captain, and dock her sailing vessel with great skill. The Cuban American men believed that she would crash her boat or struggle with great difficulty as women were not traditionally allowed at the helm. After docking, the Cuban American group welcomed the new arrival, congratulated her on her success, and offered her a cigar and a plate of food. They named the researcher "Helmswoman," changing "timonel" for helmsman to "timonela" for helmswoman. They proudly announced that they created a new word. There does not exist a feminine form of "timonel" in Spanish, according to my new Cuban American sailor friends. This experience created the metaphor of Helmswoman for the research study.

The sailor in her aloneness at sea with only her sailboat and crew has the potential to transcend memory, suffering, and imprisonment to become the sanctuary, the narrative of beingness, and the temple of holiness. It is the Eden on earth at sea.

Women Who Sail

For some women who are sailors, captains, mates, cruisers, day sailors, liveaboard, local racers, world-class racers,¹¹⁵ single-handed, and adventure seekers, be it on a small lake or transatlantic crossing, sailing is freedom, independence, autonomy, and relationship.¹¹⁶ It takes courage, curiosity, and creativity. It takes a willingness to shift from the known, security, and stability of land, to the unpredictability and ever-changing dynamic that are the forces of nature. It takes a shift in knowing as literal, certitude, and rational to a dynamic of curiosity. It takes expanding and relying on one's ways of knowing through bodily sensations, attentiveness in the present, and situational awareness. It takes a willingness to shift from an inner experience of an isolated self as thoughts, emotions, intuition, physiology, and relatedness to an experience of a relational self in relationship with all other external forces, outwards to the horizon.

¹¹⁵ Alex Andrejev, "Her Mom Broke Barriers with An All-female Crew. She is About to Set Sail on The Same Yacht." *The Washington Post*, July 4, 2019. Accessed May 14, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2019/07/04/her-mom-broke-barriers-with-an-all-female-crew-shes-about-set-sail-same-yacht/>. World class sailing racer Tracy Edwards found a sponsor to purchase a vessel badly in need of repair. Tracy "Maiden," a fifty-eight' sailing yacht, around the world with the first all-female crew in the 1989-1990 Whitbread Round the World Race. The yacht was lost and recently rediscovered, restored, and has set sail with Tracy's daughter on an around the world promotional tour to raise money to fund girls' education.

¹¹⁶ There are a variety of women and organizations involved in women sailing at all levels. Women's Sailing Association, A few of the most famous women in sailing are Tracy Edwards, Laura Dekker, Tania Aebi, and Jeanne Sorenson. There are Facebook groups dedicated to women and sailing called Women Who Sail, Women Who Own Boats Solely (Without Men), and Women Captains that provides encouragement, support and connection for women who are active sailors to women who yearn for the wind in her hair, but have not stepped foot on a sailboat. #shecaptain is a for women who are captains and face the struggles of being female and licensed as boat captains of various credentials.

Sailing clears space, alters time, shifts perspective, relinquishes dominating influences, and frees the mind to experience, interpret, and integrate a continuum of dynamic changes. It is in the attending of one's way of being and doing and one's cognitive operations of thinking, feeling, sensing, and creating that informs knowing to intuitively alter the course and adjust the sails. No true experienced sailor would ever admit being an expert sailor as every sailor knows that every sailing experience is uniquely different, requiring a beingness of presence, attentive knowing, situational awareness, and creativity to the far edges of the horizon and back.

As a sailor, what experience one may have of past sailing has no bearing on the outcome of the present moment, particularly when overtaken by a squall, torrential rain, hurricane force winds, or left to drift in the windless doldrums. It is easy to be lulled into an experience of freedom, a peaceful knowingness of the divine by the infinite magnificence of the world at sea. Sailing is a dynamic continuum of each moment of knowledge experienced as the eternal now through praxis, reflection-upon action, and action-upon reflection that transcends all things of the past and not yet future.

Women's Lives That Changed Through Sailing

Tania Aebi. Tania Aebi¹¹⁷ is the first American woman and youngest person to single-handedly sailed a thirty-foot sailboat around the world at the age of nineteen. Struggling to find meaning in her life within a troubled family life, Tania's father gives her a sailboat and tells her to sail the world. It is not Tania's idea, but the act of living out her father's dream. Tania sets off to the sail the world in a sailboat not yet proven seaworthy. She struggles with the isolation of long days at sea, the constant watch that leaves her tired, hurt, and exasperated changing sails and keeping dry. She learns of self-sufficiency, friendships among sailors, and her tenacity to stay the course. Tania learns to love her boat and care for it as her home. She is courageous and lonely, alone and mesmerized, confident and exasperated as she circumnavigates the world.

Captain Liz Clark. Liz Clark¹¹⁸ is a surfer and college graduate with no desire to work in an office. She is supported by a benefactor to sail the world, write, and share her adventures. She sets sail on a forty-foot sailboat with the wind at her back. She sails and surfs along the way, sharing the passages with friends who join her expedition. She loves the sea, grows in experience, gains confidence, and eventually let's go of the need to have another hand on board. Liz single-handedly sails to the Asian pacific across the Pacific Ocean.

During her journey she meets many fellow surfers and makes deep friendships. She also meets several male sailors for whom she falls in love. Liz shares her story of grief, betrayal, lost love, and limiting beliefs that cause her great pain and suffering. In

¹¹⁷ Aebi with Brennan, *Maiden Voyage*, tells the tales of her adventure as the youngest woman ever to circumnavigate the world solo.

¹¹⁸ Clark, *Swell*. Clark reflects on her journey sailing and surfing as a single woman single-handedly sailing the seas in fulfillment of her dream.

the case of an Asian boyfriend, she experiences intimate partner violence. She finds herself threatened at gun point, forced into submission, and isolated from her friends. After months of terror, they sail back to mainland where she seeks support and separates from him. Traumatized by her experience she returns to the states for support.

She misses the sea and the sanctuary of her sailing vessel, so she returns to Asia. She finds safety and solace in her friends, her vessel, and the beauty of the sea. She is still sailing single-handedly and writing about her experiences.

Jeanne Socrates. Jeanne Socrates is a British yachtswoman. Jeanne Socrates¹¹⁹ and her husband purchased a sailboat to enjoy together in their retirement. He fell ill with cancer and died. Everyone expected Jeanne to sell the boat and return to land. Jeanne chose a life at sea on their sailing vessel. She climbs her mast, changes the sails, and handles the maintenance on her beloved sailboat.

At the age of seventy-seven, Jeanne has raced in three Round the World solo unassisted Ocean Cruising Club sanctioned races. During her second attempt, Jeanne fell and broke her neck and ribs. That did not stop Jeanne. While racing in her third attempt, Jeanne experiences a knockdown and hurricane winds. She repairs her sailboat at sea and continues. In September 2019, she completed the Round the World solo, nonstop, and unassisted. She earned the title as the oldest person to sail solo around the world. She finds peace and joy at sea.

¹¹⁹ Kelly MaCarthy, "Women Sets Record as the Oldest Person to Sail Solo Around the World: Jeanne Socrates, 77, became the oldest solo round-the-world sailor," *ABC News*, last modified September 19, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/woman-sets-record-oldest-person-sail-solo-world/story?id=65484034>.

Laura Dekker. Laura Dekker¹²⁰ started off as a child living aboard her parent's sailboat. When they moved ashore and divorced, Laura lived with her father near the water. Frustrated by her life and her parent's struggles, Laura decides, at thirteen, to leave home and solo sail her sailboat around the world. She learned to single hand small sailboats at an early age, sailing to England and back unaccompanied.

The Holland courts try to assume legal custody of Laura to prevent her from leaving. She wins her freedom and with the help of her father, prepares her boat and she sets sail. She shares her story of feeling freedom at sea: independence, responsibility, and the feeling of oneness that comes over her. She handles her sails, repairs her boat, and joins other sailing families as her own.

There are many women sailing as couples, with friends, and single handed as cruisers, liveaboards, and day sailors. One thing that is common for many of the women is the feeling of freedom, accomplishment, and power as she sails, gliding through the beauty of clear skies and battens down to weather the storms.

Sailing as an Experiential and Spiritual Journey

The process of recovery that results in healing, re-embodiment, and empowerment is non-linear. It is a journey of spiraling, tacking, and facing the fears. It is praxis, reflection on the practice of living, thinking, being, and doing in a body that engages both external forces and internal power. It is reflexivity, reflection on the inner thoughts, prior experiences, preconditions, memories, and beliefs that influence the practice of life.

¹²⁰ *Maidentrip*, Directed by Jillian Schlesinger (New York: FilmBuff, 2014), DVD. *Maidenhead* is the documentary that tells the story of Laura Dekker's two-year journey solo around the world on her forty-foot sailboat at the age of fourteen. Laura sails across three oceans and around the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa in a storm, feeling focused, and through doldrums with no wind, where time becomes timeless. She learns to love the quiet space. Laura sailed 27,000 nautical miles in 519 days.

Sailing is literally and symbolically a spiritual journey: a new beginning, a deepening of consciousness, engagement with external forces and embodied power, and finding balance towards flow, freedom, and flourishing.

The sailboat is a vessel, a cavernous body with a darkened inner sanctuary and an outer deck for which to navigate the forces of life using sails and a compass to direct one's journey. A sailing vessel is symbolic of the power of sacred feminine energy.¹²¹

Water is a symbol of healing, cleansing, and life, as well as death. It is sometimes calm and healing while other times challenging, invigorating, and exciting. Water also acts as a barrier of protection: creating, expanding, and separating space. Once the sailing vessel leaves the dock, a moat is created. Created is an enlarging expanse of water that separates the sailing vessel from land, normal life, and the site and source of human acts of abuse and violence. Separated from the site and source of human acts of abuse and violence, the inner, powerful, creative, sacred, feminine Self as Sacred Feminine sets sail on a journey of discovery into the sacred elements of the created natural world.

The practice of sailing is a journey where the destination is the journey itself. Sailing involves tacking and jibing, using the wind and the waves to move in a forward zig-zag fashion to make its way. The weather influences the wind and the waves, acting as external forces pulling, pushing, and sliding the boat through the water. It is the wind that fills the sails, like the breath of life, giving the journey power, direction, and speed. The art of sailing is knowing when and how to change course, either by taking the helm or adjusting the sails.

¹²¹ Sailing and the sailing vessel represent the handless maiden's escape and journey away from what was known into a realm of the fecund unknown for integration of the self, the falling away of false ideologies, the growth of new hands as re-embodiment and empowerment. The third phase of the research study involves a sailing retreat for women survivors of domestic violence.

Regardless of experience and knowledge, the creative practice of sailing comes from a deep inner connection, integration, and knowing of the body, consciousness, and spirit. Under the command of the power of the Sacred Feminine, a perfectly balanced sailing vessel sails itself, with the sails trimmed and the helm holding its course: effortlessly, powerfully, and gracefully. Learning to sail, practicing the art of sailing, and taking the helm has the potential to be part of a life-giving process of re-embodiment, empowerment, and recovery for women survivors of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Power over women through acts of violence diminish women's consciousness. Finding ways to heal her wounds, support her recovery, and guide her to experience the power of the divine is critical, now more than ever. How do we support her to come to know her creative powers? How do we support her body, mind, spirit, and experience of herself as the site and source of the power of sacred feminine welling up, in and through her female body as truth, the revelation of God, capable of embodied creative transformative action in the church, society, and the academy. Until women, individually and collectively, come to know and embody her "Self" at a deep inner spiritual dimension, as "I Am," the embodied site and source of truth, women will continue to suffer, individually and collectively, the power of violence, subjugation, and negation. Sailing has the potential to transform women survivors of domestic violence.

Lonergan states that it is not the answer but that the human spirit questions. As long as the human spirit questions, there is life, an orientation to God.¹²² Connecting, questioning, and engaging the spiritual part of one's humanness has the potential for

¹²² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 103.

greater transformative action. For true recovery from trauma and domestic violence, it is not enough for women to come to voice, be resilient, hear feminist interpretation of scripture, remember, and reconnect with community without re-embodiment and a spiritual transformation. In the myth of the “Handless Maiden,” the handless maiden must go forth on a journey into an unknown realm with her spirit, the power of sacred feminine energy, as constant companion and creative transformative action in her experience of surviving, birthing, creating, working, living, and growing new hands.

The journey is symbolic of her spiritual transformation as Sacred Feminine that results in embodiment, empowerment, and revelation. This research seeks to awaken and engage women survivors of domestic violence in a journey and spiritual practice of interacting with the creative transformative action of the power of sacred feminine energy in her experience of recovery, re-embodiment, and empowerment.

CHAPTER THREE. RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The practical theological project¹²³ will create interventions and research the transformation of consciousness and potentiality for freedom, fulfillment, and happiness through the metaphors of the handless maiden and sailing helmswoman. Handless maiden and helmswoman will act as metaphors for the transformative power of the Sacred Feminine among women survivors of domestic violence for the purpose of healing.

The research will include views of body, mind, and spirit over the course of a six-month period. It will address the issues of woman beingness as Sacred Feminine as the women relate to critical thinking, spirituality, power, and embodiment from a theological anthropological and pastoral care perspective, with special attention to consciousness of experiences of enlightenment, embodiment, and empowerment.

Research Design

The research method is a transformative, embedded, multi-phase, mixed method approach to a research of women survivors of domestic violence.¹²⁴ It is founded on feminist research methodology that is grounded in women's experience, attentive to

¹²³ This research study is a practical theological project as it begins with a deep description of women's experience, stories, memories, and meanings made of specific events from her past and present situation given the theological problem of domestic violence and abuse. The object of the study is the women's experience of self as sacred and what that means in her own language and imagery. The goal is to understand and gain insights in what theological themes, images, and practices facilitate healing, transformation and flourishing over time. It is not based on one method, but praxis, reflexivity, and the contributions of Miller-Lemore on expanding the living human web, Browning on deep description, Forrester on practice as *habitus* and the experience of power when living in truth, Van Der Van on empirical-theological design that focuses on intervention, Schreier and Bevans on context, C. Boff on social-analytical mediation, Isasi-Dias on learning to unlearn, Veiling on the path of thought that leads to transformative action, Groome on pedagogy, Gadamer on hermeneutics, Tillich on courage to be, Tracy on imagination, Lonergan on symbolism and insight as a function of inner conditions, and Hughes on mystagogical reflection on experience. See bibliography.

¹²⁴ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), 9-21. Creswell describes the design and framework for a transformative, embedded, multiphase, and mixed-method approach to research.

differences, non-oppressive, committed to empowerment, and a practice of reflexivity.¹²⁵

The research method takes into serious consideration suggestions and methods detailed in *Researching Violence against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists*.¹²⁶

The overall agenda is transformative with the intent to affect, document, and interpret changes in women's experience of the body as a site and source of dis-embodied suffering towards a consciousness of experiences of the body, mind, and spirit as a site and source of God's revelation; re-embodied and empowered with a consciousness that brings about transformative actions and ways of being.

Transformative, Embedded, and Multi-phase

The purpose of this method is to create interventions¹²⁷ in consciousness, narratives, and embodied actions that result in the transformation of the women as Sacred Feminine over time. This method involves intervention as the primary action of the Sacred Feminine and is embedded in every aspect of the research questions, reflections, and activities.

At each phase, the researcher interjects the concept of the transformative action of the power of Sacred Feminine as an intervention in women's experience utilizing the myth of the "Handless Maiden." In each phase, various actions, words, and ways of being of the Handless Maiden are placed in question as to how it relates as Sacred Feminine.

¹²⁵ Slee, *Women's Faith Development*, 43-60.

¹²⁶ Mary Ellsberg and Lori Heise, *Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists* (Washington, DC: PATH, 2005), 1-24. This publication addresses the special considerations and ethical challenges when researching violence against women the need for rigorous methodologies and methods. It provides practical strategies and quantitative and qualitative approaches to research involving sampling, tools for collection, and analysis of data. This publication will act as a guide for the development and implication of the research method.

¹²⁷ The design of the method is intervention. Throughout the research, the intervention acted as an interruption which proved to be significantly more effective in creating consciousness than intervention.

The purpose is to create an intervention in women’s conscious and unconscious thinking, feeling, and reflection patterns about what it means to be Sacred Feminine, how one thinks and acts as Sacred Feminine, and who is Sacred Feminine. They are invited to reflect on themselves as Sacred Feminine. Reflecting on herself as Sacred Feminine in her life narrative is designed to create an opportunity of consciousness on how she is experiencing herself.

Participants will be invited to offer reflections and insights that occur in the moment of the intervention and between each phase of the study as a result of the research experience. The data collected in each interview at each sequential phase will be reintroduced in the next phase as a means of deepening the participant’s consciousness, narratives, and experiences.

The research method engages women in a journey of pedagogical praxis using a variety of modalities that engage consciousness. These modalities include storytelling,¹²⁸ metaphors,¹²⁹ kinesiological embodied acting¹³⁰ activity,¹³¹ narrative inquiry,¹³² levels of

¹²⁸ Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 115-126.

¹²⁹ George W. Burns, *101 Healing Stories Using Metaphors in Therapy* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2004). Burns emphasizes the use of metaphors as a means for healing through storytelling.

¹³⁰ Jaco Hamman, “Playing,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 42-50. Playfulness acts as an intervention that diminishes self-consciousness, stimulates imagination, and connects with one’s spirit.

¹³¹ Victoria Rue, *Acting Religious: Theater as Pedagogy in Religious Studies* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 7-23. Following Rue, the concept of kinesiological embodied acting activity involves the creation of bubble space surrounding the body, rocking motion, and spontaneous creative playful movement. It is developed from the concept of theater, body movement, and the release of energy that lead to breakthroughs in consciousness and new insight that I observed at the Association of Practical Theology pre-conference program (2018) that explored the work of Victoria Rue and religious learning.

¹³² D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco: Wiley, 2000). Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008). Riessman offers insight and theory on narrative inquiry and method for use in research.

overall consciousness questions,¹³³ and kinesiological muscle strength testing¹³⁴ through four sequential interviews over the course of six months.

Mixed-Method Procedures and Data Collection

The study uses mixed-method procedures.¹³⁵ The mixed-method procedures involve a preliminary open-ended interview to select participants for the study, qualitative open-ended interviews, and consciousness word and phrase responses for each of the four different sequential phases of data collection.¹³⁶ At the beginning and end of each interview, the women will respond with words or phrases to a series of words designed to evaluate women's level of consciousness.

Data collection will involve the use of audio/video technology, handwritten notes, and text messages. Data is collected using audio/video technology to record, assimilate, and transcribe open-ended qualitative narrative driven interview responses at each of the four sequential phases using a transcription service. Through the use of transcription services, transcribed responses will enable the researcher to collect, compare, connect, contrast, correlate, and interpret specific ideologies, words, phrases, and metaphors embedded in the responses, individually and collectively, at each phase, and over the course of the study. Audio/video allows for the researcher to connect body language and tone with transcribed responses for a richer interpretation of data.

¹³³ Hawkins, *Power vs. Force*, 90-91; 97-116. Consciousness word association responses are based on Hawkins map of consciousness that measures levels consciousness based on God-view, life-view, emotional state, and thinking process.

¹³⁴ Hawkins, 73; 78-88. Kinesiological testing procedures for muscle strength testing.

¹³⁵ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2013), 73-98.

¹³⁶ Allen Ivey and Mary Bradford Ivey, *Intentional Interviewing and Counseling: Facilitating Client Development in a Multicultural Society* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole, 2003). Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Cambridge, MA.: Cowley, 1992). Norman Wakefield, *Between the Words: The Art of Perceptive Listening* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2002).

Research Multi-Phase Protocol

The research follows a multi-phase protocol. The research design involves a preliminary participant selection interview to determine if the woman qualifies for the research study. Once the women are selected as research participants, the study involves four phases of interviews over a six-month period.

Interview Protocol

The protocol of the interviews is to research woman's consciousness of experience of embodiment, empowerment, and spirituality utilizing storytelling, metaphors, and sailing.¹³⁷ Each phase is a reflective spiritual practice in a journey towards the integration of consciousness of experience of embodiment, empowerment, and revelation. Throughout each phase, the myth of the "Handless Maiden" will sequentially unfold.¹³⁸ A reference to a spiritual aspect of the myth, particularly the sacredness of the handless maiden's beingness, including rituals, body, words, relationships, and insights, is the springboard from which the research questions are framed.

The interview is not about the graphic details of harm as much as it is in search of women's stories, consciousness of experiences, and connections to her sacredness, power, and choices as they relate to her body, mind, and spirit. The questions explore and attempt to facilitate women's spiritual experiences, particularly the power of sacred feminine energy welling up, in, and through her body as the site and source of God's revelation.

¹³⁷ Slee, *Women's Faith Development*, 68. Slee identified the use of narrative and story as a fundamental way of reflecting on her faith journey and present experiences.

¹³⁸ Estes, *Women Who Run with Wolves*, 390-394.

Interviews are audio/video recorded and transcribed for interpretation. Each phase will include kinesiological muscle strength testing¹³⁹ using a series of questions to reveal the potential correlation of body strength and responses at the end of each interview.¹⁴⁰ Each phase includes a series of questions to measure overall level of and changes in consciousness. The series of questions are repeated at the beginning and end of each interview.¹⁴¹ The goal of the research is both data collection and the transformation of women's consciousness of experiences of her embodied Self as sacred and empowered during the research process.

Preliminary Phase: Participant Selection

The research study begins with a preliminary participant selection interview. Individual's involved in local women's and domestic violence advocacy programs and agency will be involved in the selection process, recommending potential participants, knowing the participant eligibility requirements. The researcher will facilitate the final selection interview and confirm participants for research study.

Phase I: Enlightenment and Handless Maiden as Sacred Feminine

The first phase of research is an individual interview lasting one and one-half hours. Prior to beginning the interview process, the researcher confirms her willingness to participate, reviews expectations, and secures signatures on consent forms. The first interview determines a baseline for her overall level consciousness.¹⁴² The interviewer

¹³⁹ Hawkins, *Power vs. Force*, 73; 78-88. Kinesiological testing procedures.

¹⁴⁰ Hawkins, xv; 73;77-88; 328.

¹⁴¹ Hawkins, 90-91; 168-169.

¹⁴² Hawkins, 90-91; 168-169. Map of consciousness and power patterns in human attitudes.

facilitates the telling of the first segment of the myth of the “Handless Maiden.”¹⁴³ The woman reflects on the story.

The researcher creates a moment of intervention, based on the participant’s story, during a moment of strength. The researcher draws attention to the Handless Maiden, as Sacred Feminine, as she engages in a ritual of bathing, dressing in white, and drawing a circle around her body thus creating sacred space. The Handless Maiden then weeps cleansing tears which save her from evil. After the violence of dismemberment, the Handless Maiden is accompanied by Spirit as she chooses to go forth into an unknown world. The Handless Maiden, disheveled, dirty, and wounded, is seen by the king, magician, and gardener in the king’s garden. She is declared both human and spirit by the magician. The King chooses her as his wife, Queen.

The women reflect, as is important and relevant for her, on the sacred rituals and actions of creating sacred space, cleansing tears, and spiritual journey by the Handless Maiden as sacred, feminine, and Sacred Feminine. The researcher will present the participant with the concept of the “power of Sacred Feminine energy circling, welling up, in, and through her body, embodying, empowering, and enlightening.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Estes, *Women Who Run with Wolves*, 390-394. The story will stop at the point when the King says that the maiden is both human and spirit. In the *Myth of the Handless Maiden*, the father appears to have traded her life for all the wealth in the world. The maiden is obedient, submissive and silent as she confronts the violence from an external evil force, degradation and humiliation, and from the violent force of cutting off her hands by her father, witnessed by her mother. The powerful take away in this story and the inspiration for this research study is the power of spirit that envelops, protects, nourishes, and guides her. It is this spirit, the power of sacred feminine energy, that honors, envelopes, and protects creating thoughts of dignity, courage, and inspiration in the site of women’s bodies.

¹⁴⁴ The purpose of the research is transformative; creating the possibility of awareness that may lead to a spiritual transformation, rising of consciousness, and increased physical strength resulting in an experience of enlightenment, re-embodiment, and empowerment.

The interview is based on a combination of closed and open-ended interview questions, kinesiological muscle strength testing, and overall consciousness questions. Data is collected using hand-written notes and audio video recordings.

Phase II: Embodiment and Embodied Creativity

The second phase of research involves a two-hour gathering that includes a group interview ¹⁴⁵and group activity involving a kinesiological embodied acting activity. ¹⁴⁶ Its purpose is to understand if women experiences her body as constricted, numb, and disassociated. The women reflect on and explore briefly experiences of harm, imposed ideologies, and “man-made hands”¹⁴⁷ that are currently inhibiting them from the life they desire. The “Myth of the Handless Maiden” begins with the maiden being identified as both human and spirit. This section of the story describes the life of the Maiden as she is fitted with new silver hands, married, named Queen, relates with her mother-in-law, and gives birth to a child. The threat of death prevails until she is forced to leave the castle.

¹⁴⁵ The woman entered the study at different times. The first two women are sisters and met together for Phase II. The next two women met together as a group. All the other women met individually with the researcher approximately one month after Phase I interview. The researcher altered the embodiment activity with the women meeting individually. The women in the group acted out the experience simultaneously and were more willing in a group setting. The women individually appeared self-conscious and resistant acting out the activity, so the researcher engaged them in a mirroring activity with the researcher also participating.

¹⁴⁶ Rue, *Acting Religious*, 7-23. discusses the body and the use of acting to engage story, create meaning, and facilitate meaning-making. Researcher attended the 2018 Association of Practical Theology pre-conference workshop on pedagogy, practical theology, and the arts. It was based on the theater of the oppressed. Attendees used the body to create sculptures of ideas as a method for meaning-making, embodying, empowerment, and revelation. Following Rue, this activity involves a woman imaging something that she would like to explore or do but feels inhibited or constricted. Using a process of engaging the body through movement, the hope will be to facilitate an experience of the power of the sacred feminine welling up in the body as transformative action, creating a physiological and psychological change towards a change in consciousness, a break-through that leads to expansion, a revelatory moment of enlightenment, empowerment, and embodiment. This idea is a creative expansion of the concept of acting religious by Victoria Rue and the theater of the oppressed.

¹⁴⁷ In the myth of the “Handless Maiden,” the maiden is fitted with silver hands by the king who professes to love her, marry her, and make her his queen. The maiden moves into the castle with the king. She is properly fitted with silver, “man-made” hands to do her work. In the myth of the Handless Maiden,

The intervention is locating the Handless Maiden as Sacred Feminine in the myth. How and what is meaningful and sacred. The women are invited to reflect on what it is that they would like to create in their life. As Sacred Feminine, the female body is scared and feminine. It can act sacred and create sacred life. The women are invited to image their bodies capacity to create new life¹⁴⁸ and engage in a spiritual practice of acting and moving to connect with their bodies, life force, and the Sacred Feminine that is embedded in her body.

The gathering will be audio/video taped with attention to the kinesiological embodied acting activity. The interview will involve open-ended questions allowing for individual expression and group dialogue. The interview will conclude with kinesiological muscle strength testing and overall consciousness questions. Data is collected using hand-written notes and audio video recordings.

Phase III: Empowerment as Sailing, Taking the Helm, and Adjusting the Sails

The third phase of the research study is a one-day sailing experience.¹⁴⁹ The sailing retreat will consist of three participants and the researcher, along with a female captain and crew, as needed.¹⁵⁰ The purpose of this phase is an intervention to retreat from women's normal environment. The intervention is not a passive retreat into

¹⁴⁸ The maiden, now a young queen with artificial hands, creates new life with the guidance and support of a wisdom woman. After giving birth, creating new life, the young queen's life is threatened with violence and death. With the help of the wisdom women, the young queen escapes with her newly created life, far away into the deep woods, guided by her spirit, until she arrives at a secret place where she can live safely with her spirit.

¹⁴⁹ Sailing is an experience that takes one away from what is normative, engages the spiritual and natural world, and empowers one's mind, body, and spirit in the practice of encountering, being, and knowing. When the captain and the sailboat are perfectly balanced, the sailboat sails itself and everything becomes one, the perfect balance of embodiment and empowerment.

¹⁵⁰ Due to time constraints and scheduling issues, the researcher and the women individually participated in the sailing retreat.

mindfulness. The intervention is designed to create a sense of journey into the unknown with a trusted guide.

In the myth of the “Handless Maiden,” the maiden leaves the castle due to the threat of violence and goes out into the unknown, again accompanied by her Spirit.¹⁵¹ In her new home far away from the castle, safely protected, the Handless Maiden grows new hands. In the sailing retreat, the women grow new hands through her experiences raising sails, helming, and navigating as Helmswomen. The women are invited to reflect on safety and sacred space. What is sacred space? What is it to feel safe?

The purpose of the sailing retreat is to create an active experience of training women in the experience of a brain-body responsiveness and integration necessary in sailing. It is an experience of embodiment: powerful physical actions, peaked conscious, and creative thinking, feeling, and being while integrating oneself with the oneness of the sailing vessel and the sacredness of nature. The intervention is designed to empower women through competence success to “take the helm” and “adjust the sails” as a metaphor and experience of embodiment, empowerment, and enlightenment. Phase III is designed to support the woman in her process of releasing her silver, man-made hands, obstacles, and barriers to her life, and grow new hands, sacred, powerful, and creative.

Learning to sail creates the potential for a new transformative way of thinking, being, and doing as the women experience the interacting power of Sacred Feminine in the function of the sailing vessel, the natural environment, and the power within themselves as it rises up, in and through their body, mind, and spirit as Helmswomen.

¹⁵¹ In the myth of the handless maiden, the queen escapes with her new created life to a sacred protected space, retreating to nourish her new created life, engage her spiritual self, let go of her old ways, reconnect with her body, and grow new hands.

Sailing is an encounter with the Sacred Feminine as embodied women, embodied sailing vessel, and a body of water. Sailing is a profoundly sacred experience of attentive oneness, balance, and silence. Sailing is a sacramental experience of God in nature.

The event will be documented using audio/video equipment with the capability for transcription. Data is collected from the participant's comments, narratives, and experiences on the sailboat such as learning the art of sailing, raising the sails, and taking the helm. Throughout the sailing experience, the interviewer will facilitate open-ended questions. The interview will conclude with kinesiological muscle strength testing and overall consciousness questions. Data is collected using hand-written notes and audio video recordings.

Phase IV: Woman Being as Transformation

The final phase of the research is a follow-up individual interview with each participant reflecting on her overall experience as a participant in the research. The participants are asked to reflect on each phase of the study, particularly looking for changes in attitudes, awareness, muscle strength, and consciousness around body, embodiment, true power verses force, empowerment, spirituality, and of the concept of the power of sacred feminine energy welling up in her beingness.

The interview will invite the participant to reflect on the practices of engaging the power of sacred feminine energy, kinesiological testing, kinesiological movement, and sailing to determine if the practices yielded transformative action and were incorporated as personal practices in everyday life. The interview will include questions from prior research phases as a means of comparison, particularly God-view, life-view, general

emotional state, thinking process, and level of consciousness. The interview will conclude with kinesiological muscle strength testing and overall consciousness questions.

Research Participants: Women Survivors of Domestic Violence

The Search for Women Survivors of Domestic Violence

The search for women survivors of domestic violence open to participate in the research proved challenging. Women survivors are everywhere, often hidden in plain sight. Not all women survivors of domestic violence self-identify as survivors and not all women survivors need support.

When the researcher sought volunteers in inclusive public places, such as marches and public venues, women did not volunteer. When the researcher attended events specific to woman and primarily attended by woman, the researcher was able to meet with woman more privately, share the benefits of the research study, and screen potential volunteers.

Local Domestic Violence Service Agencies

The expectation is to connect with the local domestic violence services agencies for referrals for the study. The researcher was not a known and trusted member of the community with limited connection to the local authorities and service agencies which prevented access to potential women survivors through the agencies. Most of the women receiving services are recently removed from environments of violence, in crisis, in transition, or still in abusive relationships which excluded them as participants. Due to the high degree of privacy and protection provided to the women seeking assistance, the agency was unable to give referrals.

Local Women’s March for Life and Martin Luther King March

The researcher participated in the local Women’s March and the Martin Luther King March for Peace, handing out fliers, and carrying a large poster with contact information. March participants inquired about the research study and thanked the researcher for her work, however, no one volunteered to participate or followed up. Several of the supporters and marchers took flyers to hang in offices or hand out to family, clients, or friends.

Praying for Inspiration

After experiencing frustration and confusion, the researcher paused, prayed for direction, inspiration, and referrals. The researcher experienced a sensation and thought, “Go where women gather. What is it that they hope for? What are they experiencing?” Following that inspiration, the researcher created new flyers.¹⁵² The title of the flyer stated “*Women, Have You Ever Dreamed . . .*” The responses included: being on the water at the helm of a sailboat, feeling free in your own body, and thinking clearly, confidently, and courageously. The flyer asks if they have experienced an intimate partner who criticizes you and puts down what you say, think, do, and feel. Does he say things that make you feel confused, crazy, or stupid? Does he look at you with disgust or dislike, blames you and refuses to take responsibility for his behavior, and or behaves in a way that intimidates, threatens, or hurts you or others? This flyer successfully generated interest.

¹⁵² See handout format in Appendix B. The actual flyers are printed on colorful paper.

Places Where Women Gather

The researcher handed out flyers at beauty salons, clothing stores, restaurants, museums, and local markets. The researcher attended local women's conferences, woman's organizations, and women's church groups. The researcher asked the program directors and was welcomed to present the research and handout flyers.

Women took the flyers, and several contacted the researcher immediately and others called a few weeks later. Several women called for help and the researcher inquired about her safety, offered verbal support, and directed them to the local domestic violence shelter. One woman spoke with the researcher at a museum, photographed the flyer, and later called the researcher to say that after reading the flyer, she got on a plane and flew to the safety of her family out of state. Several women qualified for the study but chose not to participate, including a Latin American woman that withdrew fifteen minutes prior to the first interview. One woman began the study, participated in two phases, and withdrew. After reviewing her interviews, the researcher decided not to include her data as her issues were not related to intimate partner abuse or violence.

The women participants are courageous and generous. Their enthusiasm and willingness to participate is commendable. There is no one woman that is representative of "women in general," nor of the group. Each woman's context is different, and her experiences, the content of each story, is relative to her context. Each woman is presented in her context and interpreted through the lens of her experiences, her consciousness, and her transformation.

Research Participants: Call Her by Her Name¹⁵³

The total number of women to arrive at the boat, complete the consent forms, and complete Phase I interview is thirteen. Each woman is described in detail, including her reason for participating in the study, current living situation, significant life events, and a brief history of their childhood and family of origin.¹⁵⁴ The details of her life are presented, however, not everything shared is included in the data presented in this research, only the parts that the researcher deemed relevant. Each of the woman shared what they choose to share about her life, some women shared extensively while other women spoke in generalizations. Details related to her abuse or her abuser, plural abusers in many cases, was not required, nor expected, as the abuse itself was not the focus of the study.

The women are listed in order of age, from youngest to oldest. Thirteen women completed Phase I, ten women completed Phase II, nine women completed Phase III, and seven women completed Phase IV. The names and some of the details have been altered to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants.

¹⁵³ The researcher's commitment to each of the women is to create space for her voice to be heard and for her presence to be experienced through her story and the words and structure from which she speaks. The researcher is intentional to honor, respect, and represent her voice using her words, grammar, and sentence structure. Throughout the document, where her name is in bold and her story or experience is represented, the intention of research's writing style is to make her voice present in her own words, as much as possible. It is the hope of the researcher that the reader will experience the presence of each woman.

¹⁵⁴ The names, ages, and specifics of each research participant has been changed to protect her identity; however, the changes do not alter the nature of her circumstances and experiences. Each participant is described in detail based on information provided by the participant in the initial interview.

Katy, Age 24

Katy's Connection with Research Study

Katy met researcher at a Christian church meeting for women helping women heal.

Katy's Reason for Participating in Study

Heal emotional pain and suffering.

Katy's Current Living Situation

Katy is twenty-four years old, slender at approximately 5'7" tall, one hundred pounds, and a prepubescent body shape. She is Caucasian, wearing blue jeans, loose-fitting plain casual top, no make-up, a casual top, and a short pixie blonde hairstyle. Katy stated that she cut off all her long hair when she quit modeling and moved home, stating that she did not want to live up to beauty expectations. Katy does not have tattoos. Katy sits, with perfect posture, often wrapping her arms around her upper body. Katy speaks articulately, quietly, with precision to her words, thinking carefully before speaking. She states that she is very uncomfortable being touched. Katy is not married, has never been married, and does not have any children.

Katy recently quit her job as an international fashion model with a respected modeling agency. She says she feels old and mature from living and working nationally and internationally since the age of 15, unaccompanied by a parent. She describes her life as living an unhealthy and unchristian lifestyle of work, sex, drugs, and alcohol. Katy experienced intimate partner violence and rape. She often feels unprotected and unsafe.

Katy is financially stable as a result of managing the money she earned while modeling. Katy purchased her own home near her family where she resides at the start of

the study. Katy has never been married and does not have children. Katy is not in a romantic, intimate partner relationship.

Katy states that she is close to her older sister, Crystal, and is reconnecting with her father who is married with younger children from his current wife. Katy is supportive of her mother who currently lives alone, divorced for the fourth time, and suffers from depression. They talk frequently. Katy invited her mother to participate in the study. Her mother declined. She has three stepfathers, one stepmother, three sisters, and several younger step siblings.

Katy recently became interested in God and religion. She identifies as a Christian, attends a nondenominational church periodically, and is seeking a relationship with Jesus. She describes God as a Father. Katy was considering going to school for ministry. During the time of the study, Katy is baptized in a non-denominational church having experienced the love of God, an invisible Father.

Katy's Family of Origin, Childhood, and Significant Live Events

Katy was born in Georgia. She is the youngest of three sisters and has younger step siblings. Katy did not have formal religious education nor connection with a church during her childhood. Her parents divorced at the age of thirteen. Katy describes her father as always working, distant, and unavailable. He remarried shortly after the divorce and had several more children. Katy's mother instilled, at an early age, the importance of being thin, well-groomed, docile, submissive, attentive, and attractive to men. She and her sisters were taught by their mother to see and value themselves through the eyes of men, to attract, and please men through their beauty, silence, and attentive behavior. Katy

strived for years to be perfect, beautiful, beholden, and a good girl to meet the approval of mother. Her mother has been divorced four times.

Katy participated in beauty pageants. At the age of fourteen, she was offered a modeling contract at which time she left home alone to live in California and New York. She lived in model housing around the world for extended periods of time arranged by the modeling agency with little or no adult supervision. Katy was required to audition for jobs with limited support. She says that she grew up fast. Katy completed her high school education as arranged by the modeling agency.

Eventually Katy moved overseas to work in Europe and Asia. Katy describes herself as being very sexually active with other models. Katy used her beauty and sexuality to have power over people, especially men. Katy worked as an escort as something to do and to earn extra money between modeling jobs. Katy was assaulted and raped.

At the time Katy started participation in the research study, Katy reconnected via social media with a high school friend who is currently in the military. Katy informs the researcher of her marriage during the phase two interview. She put her house up for sale and is preparing to move out of state to be with her new husband on his military base. They reconnected and married within six weeks. She hopes to return to Florida to complete phase three of the study. Katy kept in touch with the researcher for a short time. Katy did not complete phase three.

Crystal, Age 25

Crystal's Connection with Research Study

Crystal found out about research study through her younger sister, Katy. Crystal gave Katy permission to give researcher Crystal's contact information. Researcher made initial contact.

Crystal's Reasons for Participating in the Research Study

Crystal wants to be heard and heal.

Crystal's Current Living Situation

Crystal is Katy's older sister, age 25. Crystal is slender, 5'8", Caucasian, with long hair in dreadlocks, unshaven armpits and legs, multiple tattoos over her body, no make-up, and no bra. Crystal describes herself has a free spirit, "hippie vibe." Crystal is currently living in her van which she is fixing up with the help of her father. She parks her van at her dad's house at night, while hanging out with his children, which she adores. Crystal has a high school education. She currently works various jobs in restaurants. Crystal has never been married and has no children. Crystal is not currently in a romantic, intimate partner relationship. Crystal is honorably discharged from the military with a disability. Crystal states that she had an "epiphany" recently, "I have a voice and I am my own companion."

Crystal enlisted in a branch of the military after high school. She experienced and reported gender-related sexual assault, physical, and emotional abuse from her superior officer. She states clearly that is was not raped. She reported the abuse, he was charged, and they went through a military trial. She feels disappointed and unsupported by her military unit and the people she surrounded herself with after the assault.

At the time same time, Crystal was dating an officer in the military and experienced emotional intimidation and abuse in the form of power, control, and domination. She says that he had to “always be the one on top.” She states that dating between an officer and enlisted is discouraged.

Following the sexual assault by her superior officer, Crystal experienced extreme pain from cysts in her vaginal area. She had several surgeries to remove the cysts, but they reappeared. The cysts resulted in her inability to perform her duties, engage in routine daily activities, and participate in social relationships. Crystal was placed on medical leave and on suicide watch. She became very sad and isolated, felt unsupported by her unit, and threatened by her dominating officer boyfriend. Crystal was discharged with disabilities from the military.

Crystal returned to Georgia, to be close to her family, particularly her younger stepbrother and stepsisters.

Crystal identifies herself as spiritual and ethereal; she connects with energy and the universe as her source of power. She is the “hippy one.” She desires to live off the grid, refusing to conform with society’s rules, especially cultural definitions of beauty.

Crystal’s Family of Origin, Childhood and Significant Life Events

Crystal was born in Georgia. Crystal was not raised with any connection to a religious or spiritual tradition or education. She is the older sister of the three sisters close in age. She has another sister much older. Crystal is the older sister of Katy. They are thirteen months apart in age and says that they fit together, “practically twins.” Crystal says that there are “walls” around her childhood, meaning that she doesn’t remember

much of her childhood. Crystal and Katy did not speak about their perspectives, experiences, or memories about their childhood until Katy started the research study.

Crystal describes her mother as emotionally removed. She states that her mother's generational narrative is "demons." Crystal's dad is on a power trip: business and work oriented. He set emotions aside. If her father is not interested, she says that he shuts down and removes himself from us.

Her parents divorced at the age of 14. Her father remarried shortly after the divorce and had several more children. When Crystal was young, her father made her take basic sailing lessons for a week one summer where she was primarily a passenger on a small sailboat. She said it was fun, but she didn't learn how to sail.

Aubrey, Age 30

Aubrey's Connection to the Research Study

Aubrey attended a women's empowerment presentation where she was introduced to the researcher and research study. She contacted researcher two months later, asking to participate.

Aubrey's Reasons for Participation in the Research Study

Aubrey wants to heal from her childhood and from being molested by a pedophile for four years. At the time of the relationship, she related to the man, twenty years older, as a boyfriend.

Aubrey's Current Living Situation

Aubrey is a twenty-eight-year-old, Asian American, 5'4' tall, petite, slender, athletic, dark brown-haired woman. Aubrey wears athletic clothing or classic business casual well-fitting dresses. She works out strenuously at a local gym weightlifting and

doing cardio at least once and often twice a day, to the point of physical injury. Her trainer asks her to slow down, rest, and take time off from the gym. She refuses and keeps going to the gym as often as possible, whenever she feels stressed or bored. Her workouts have resulted in injuries that are preventing her from working out.

Aubrey was in a secret pedophile relationship, where she was molested and abused, with a forty-two-year-old man from the age of fourteen until seventeen. He was arrested and is currently serving fifteen years in prison. Aubrey feels resentful, emotionally abused from her childhood, to the point of acting like a “bitch.” Aubrey states, “I don’t like people.”

Aubrey is inspired by high performance business and life coaches, particularly Brendon Burchard, his daughter Rachel Cruse, David Ramsey, Brené Brown, and Marie Forleo. She identifies life coaches as the new spiritual leaders of our time. She states that people are either “caged,” “comfortable,” or “charged.” Aubrey says she used to be “caged,” and now is “comfortable.” She is trying to be “charged” so she can create the life that she wants.

Aubrey and her husband attend life coach seminars for ongoing inspiration. They have a marriage coach to help with their relationship and business coach to help them build a business and life that they love. Aubrey is currently taking a course to get certified as a parenting life coach.

She states that her marriage and children are very important to her. Aubrey has been married for nine years. She is married to a man ten years older and is the mother of two young children. Aubrey married at the age of twenty-one. Aubrey has a full-time

nanny for her children. Her husband is in business. Aubrey helps him with the business, though she hates being in retail. Aubrey wants to leave a legacy for her children.

Aubrey admits that they are struggling financially since her husband started his own business. Aubrey is living in south Atlanta in her dream house. They are currently living off her savings to live her dream affluent lifestyle: large house, new cars, nanny, and coaches. Aubrey worked in construction, which she says that she loves, until she quit to have her children. She says that she is not a stay at home mom and doesn't want a job.

Aubrey commented several times that her husband's ex-business partner did not want her involved in their business. She is often referred to as a bitch by colleagues and other people with whom she has contact. She says she doesn't mind because she claims it is true.

Aubrey has a relationship with her mother and siblings. She is close to her sister and it bounces between good and not good. She says that only sometimes she claims to be a daughter to her mother. She has very little tolerance for their struggles and is afraid that they want her to "take care" of them. Aubrey had no contact with her birth father until he appeared in her life when she was a young adult.

Family of Origin, Childhood, and Significant Events

Aubrey grew up in Georgia. Her maternal grandmother is Asian who married an Irish-Scottish military man. Her mother was a wild child "army brat" and her birth father left before she was two years old, after her younger sister was born. Aubrey has two half younger brothers, four and thirteen years younger, from two stepfathers.

Aubrey's mother was a single woman with no high school diploma who she describes as a hard worker and financially insecure. When she was young, Aubrey

remembers living in their truck and motels, moving frequently while her mother tried to work, leaving Aubrey responsible for her younger sister.

Aubrey's mother married Leo, who physically abused her brother and mother. Leo made good money and Aubrey was in competitive dance, pageants, modeling, and acting until the age of nine when he left. After Leo left, Aubrey became responsible for her three siblings while her mother went to work. They moved frequently with no real home.

At age thirteen, Aubrey's mother married a drug addict, "Dad," and they had a child. He was kind except he often went on benders, disappearing, and Aubrey's mother would go look for him. Aubrey was independent and depended upon. She was left alone frequently to care for her four younger siblings, one of them being an infant.

Aubrey's mother took them to the Mormon church where she was involved in church youth activities. Aubrey's mother was raised Mormon. When the Church elder would not let his son hang out with her because of her family circumstances, she turned away from the church, feeling deeply hurt.

At the age of fourteen, Aubrey met a family friend, Joe. Joe was forty-two years old and married to a younger woman, age twenty-three. Joe developed a secret, abusive sexual relationship with Aubrey. Aubrey states that he "abused and molested me." Aubrey remembers how she loved him, sneaking out to meet him, and believed that he loved her. Aubrey assumes full responsibility for her actions. She wanted desperately to be with him. He was mature, showered her with gifts, and treated her like an adult. Aubrey ran away at sixteen to be with him. She dropped out of trade school where she

was studying architecture. When Aubrey's mother found out about the relationship, she had him arrested. He went to jail for fifteen years.

Aubrey attended eighteen different schools during her childhood. Aubrey was often very sick and suffered from asthma. Aubrey earned her high school diploma while attending a college. She earned her bachelor's degree and went into banking. Aubrey married at twenty-one to her current husband who is ten years older. Aubrey had a successful career in banking and quit three years ago when she gave birth to her first child.

Jessica, Age 37

Jessica's Connection to the Research Study

Jessica was watching a Facebook video talk about relationships and she saw the flyer posted on the wall behind the speaker. She stopped the video, read the flyer, and was able to get the phone number.

Jessica's Reason for Participating in Research Study

Jessica wants to feel better and understand what is going on with her since her fiancé broke up with her after eight years.

Jessica's Current Living Situation

Jessica is a thirty-seven-year-old Caucasian, 5'5" tall, full-figured woman. She has not been married and does not have children. Jessica has a twelve-year-old dog who is sick. Jessica has shared custody with her ex-fiancé over the dog. Jessica is currently renting a room from an acquaintance since moving out of the apartment she shared with her fiancé. Jessica's and her fiancé, Randy, have been together for the past eight years.

Approximately six months ago, Randy broke-off the engagement as he had “hooked-up” with another woman.

Jessica does not believe he was faithful to their relationship. She feels betrayed as she was working, going to school, paying bills, taking care of her fiancé, and their apartment. She did everything for him. He refused to take her out with him and did not spend time with her. He claimed to love her and want to marry her. She said she was doing everything he asked, and yet it was never enough. She experienced gaslighting, denial of her reality, and a lessening of confidence over the last few years.

Jessica says that she “loves hard.” She claims to still love him and does not understand why he broke up with her. She hopes that they will get back together.

Jessica admitted that she is drinking, getting drunk, and doing drugs to forget about the pain of the break-up. She is confused, sad, and unable to concentrate on her college studies and her job. Jessica nearly failed her class and almost lost her job since the break-up. Jessica is studying healthcare management in college. Jessica feels frustrated because she doesn’t dance anymore. She lacks confidence and her body is not like it was when she was younger. Jessica says that she was raised Catholic but considers herself more Christian now.

Jessica’s Family of Origin, Childhood, and Significant Life Events

Jessica was born in up-state New York. She states that she had a great childhood. They traveled and her parents worked hard. Jessica describes her parents as alcoholics, and that they adored her. Jessica was raised Catholic.

Jessica began dancing at the age of three. She danced tap, ballet, jazz, and hip hop. Jessica described herself as athletic and that she loved sports.

Jessica's father was raised by a single mom. She died of colon cancer. She states that her mother's father beat her mother and molested her uncles. Jessica's mother is a four-time cancer survivor. Her mother was in charge and her dad was not a "dad."

Jessica has two older brothers. Her oldest brother is a type one diabetic. It was Jessica's responsibility to take care of him when he had lows. Jessica's other brother was physically and verbally abusive to her. He beat her up from the age of nine until she was sixteen. Jessica's parents did not stop the abuse. They ignored the abuse. Jessica said her brothers made her feel scared, like *Freddie Kruger*.

Jessica was scared to sleep alone. She slept with her abusive brother, massaging his back until he fell asleep, hoping he would not beat her up as much. Jessica would also sleep with her parents.

Jessica was sexually molested in her early teens by a woman who is a family friend. When she told her mother, the abuse ended, but the woman remained a family friend, visiting often. Jessica said it was weird that they didn't do anything and that she had to see and be around the woman in her house.

Tara, Age 38

Tara's Connection with the Research Study

Tara attended a woman's networking workshop and met the researcher. Tara attended another panel workshop on trauma and approached the researcher, inquiring about the research study. She asked to participate in the research.

Tara's Reason for Participating in the Research Study

Tara is in a difficult relationship with her ex-boyfriend and father of her daughter. Her ex-boyfriend is emotionally and mentally abusive. She feels very confused by his behavior. She describes him as a narcissist.

Tara's Current Living Situation

Tara is a voluptuous, bi-racial, light skinned African American, 5'3" tall woman with short, dyed red hair. Tara's red hair, red lips, thick eye-liner cat eyes, big glasses, and red business casual dress is her signature look. Tara is out-going, charismatic, and enjoys networking, attending conferences, and building relationships with other woman in business. Tara refers to herself as the networking Queen. She focuses on empowering others to be successful. Tara is active on Facebook, often posting videos and photos of herself with important people, particularly successful African American women, that she meets at networking conferences.

Tara is a Christian woman and integrates her faith in God, Christian church friends, and the bible into her language, her way of thinking, and relating. Faith in God and the bible are integral in Tara's life and relationships.

Tara has a business designing websites, creating marketing plans, and outlining strategies for their businesses. She struggles to get paid for her work, often being expected to do the work for free as a friend. They claim they don't have the money to pay.

Tara is the mother of a three-year-old daughter. Tara enjoys being a mother, teaching her daughter about life. Tara helps at her daughter's preschool. Tara has not been married before. Tara lived with her boyfriend until they separated six months ago.

Tara was in a long-term relationship with the father of her daughter that recently ended. Tara refers to the man as “her daughter’s father.” Her daughter’s father is a very successful local African American businessman. He has many friends in the community that support him. Tara feels that she has no legal or financial resources since everyone is a friend of her “daughter’s father.” He has them in his “pocket.” He and his mother were emotionally abusive towards her. Tara describes the relationship between him and his mother as incestual.

During the time that she was in an intimate relationship with him, her body became covered with strange boils and a painful rash. She was unable to find relief and the doctors could not explain it. Tara describes the boils as “the evil that was coming out of him into her.” He was cheating on her so that evil was transferred to her. It came out of her body because she is a good person. Tara makes a reference to the bible and the boils. After they broke up and Tara moved into her own apartment, the rash went away.

She is confused and uncertain about what happened in the relationship after living with him for several years. She worked for him for many years without pay. When she left, she had no money to support herself. She has shared custody with the father. She is struggling to get her life back after giving everything up for him, working for him, and helping him develop his business without pay.

Tara’s Family of Origin, Childhood, and Significant Life Events

Tara was born on a military base and grew up in southern Georgia. Tara’s parents, both in the military, met while working in Europe. Tara’s father is African American and worked as a chef and musician. Tara’s mother is Hispanic, from the Dominican Republic, and worked in the school system. Tara has one younger sister and one younger brother.

Tara's parent's divorced when she was twelve. Tara's mother moved the children with her to New York for one year. Tara's mother was not attentive to her children and Tara made the decision to move back to Georgia and live with her father. She had a close relationship with her both her father and her grandmother, both now deceased.

Tara describes her childhood as good. Her father would give her an allowance and she would hide it in her room. Eventually, her father, who was a drinker and a gambler, would ask her for the money back. Tara learned to save her money from her jobs and then give it to her father to help pay the bills. Tara's sister would immediately spend the money on a new hair style and a manicure so her sister could not give her money to her father. Tara took care of the house, taking on the role of housewife.

She grew up as a Christian, active in the Methodist Episcopal Church. She described the women in the church as devoted to the bible. They were always encouraging Tara to get married, "get herself a man." Tara watched as the women came to church, dressed up all proper, while their husbands were fooling around with another woman. She was confused and choose not to marry, which led to Tara moving in with her boyfriend, the father of her daughter.

Deborah, Age 42

Deborah's Connection with the Research Study

Deborah's mother and stepfather heard of the study and contacted researcher to find out if Deborah would qualify. Deborah's mother arranged for researcher to meet Deborah and present the opportunity. Deborah enthusiastically agreed to participate.

Deborah's Reason for Participating in the Research Study

Stop feeling guilty that her husband has a felony for domestic violence. She claims that she does not remember the assault and battery incident where the police stopped him from strangling her. She refused to press charges. He was charged, found guilty, and imprisoned. Currently, there is a no-contact, three-year restraining order which will terminate within the next few months.

Deborah's Current Living Situation

Deborah is in her early-forties, Caucasian, 5'4", mid length hair, some make-up, neatly dressed, and medium weight. Deborah is married to her husband of nearly thirty years who is ten years older than her. Deborah's husband has physically, mentally, and emotionally abused her throughout her marriage. For the past three years, they have not been living together due to his felony assault conviction and a three-year restraining order against him made on Deborah's behalf. Deborah refused to press charges and the attorney pressed charges and convicted him against her will. She still loves her husband and is not convinced that she should divorce him. She feels guilty that he has a felony record. Her mother has been trying to get her to file for divorce. Deborah states that her mother doesn't understand what it feels like being alone, going through everything alone, and not having the comfort of someone to curl up and sleep with at night.

Deborah has a noticeable healed scar on her face and forehead due to surgeries for head trauma. In addition, Deborah's arm is deeply scared from skin grafts and surgeries to reattach her severed arm. Her injuries healed well. Deborah is ambulatory and physically able-bodied with some limitations, mostly related to memory loss. Deborah is legally disabled and receives a monthly disability check. As a result of the accident,

Deborah is afraid to drive and has not driven since the accident. Deborah still has a driver's license.

Deborah's injuries were the result of a car accident at age twenty-two. Deborah denies making the statement to police that her husband, in a fit of rage, grabbed her arm causing her to turn the wheel and drive off the road, resulting in a near fatal car accident. Even after hearing her voice on the recorded police statement, Deborah says that she must be lying because she does not remember the event, nor her statement. Her husband was not charged. Deborah moved back home with her mother to undergo extensive physical therapy to recover from her injuries before returning to her marital home half-way across the country.

With great pride, Deborah shares how she struggled to regain strength in her arms so that she could carry multiple two-liter bottles of soda pop. When asked why, Deborah explained that her husband acted out rituals involving drinking entire bottles of soda pop and burping without throwing up. If he was unable to complete the ritual perfectly, he would repeat the ritual. Often, the rituals would go on for many hours. Deborah was forced to help him, sitting in the bathroom. She was not permitted to take a break, urinate, nor refuse to assist him with his rituals. She explained that it was her duty as his wife to help him, explaining that she felt sorry for him because he could not help himself since was diagnosed as OCD.

As soon as Deborah healed, Deborah returned to her husband. She says she loves him and feels bad for him. She blames his mother for his behavior because it started when he was young. Deborah stated that his mother wants them to get a divorce before he

kills her. They have no children because Deborah did not want children growing up in that environment.

Deborah claims that the reason for his behavior is that he is OCD. Deborah admitted that she would sneak out to walk the dog, buy a bottle of vodka at the corner store, and get drunk so she would not feel the pain when he beat her. She said that she knew when he woke up in the morning if he would beat her that day so she would get drunk and pass out. At one point in the marriage, Deborah was studying for her GED. Just before she was to complete it, the funds ran out and she says she had to quit so she never finished it.

Five years ago, Deborah's husband was charged, convicted, and served a felony prison sentence for strangling Deborah. Deborah's mother knew about the abuse and had been speaking to Deborah on the phone when Deborah's husband attacked her. Deborah's mother called the police and they arrived in time to stop her husband from strangling Deborah. The police witnessed the event, recorded her statement, and pressed charges against Deborah's will. Deborah still wanted to stay with her husband, however she was encouraged by the attorney to leave otherwise her husband would go back to jail if she contacted him. The three-year restraining order will terminate in a few months.

Deborah wants to return to her husband and has secretly been contacting him. Deborah refers often to her memory loss; stating that she does not remember the things she said in the past concerning her husband's abusive behavior. She does not believe that her husband should be blamed for choking and abusing her.

Deborah's mother is fearful that she will return to her marital home and marriage. She is hopeful that Deborah's participation in the study will sway Deborah from going

back to her husband. Deborah's mother tends to answer for Deborah, creating doubt, criticizing in the sweetest voice, and denying Deborah's interpretation of her experience. Deborah's mother's house is a dry home, no alcohol, and complains if Deborah has a drink. Deborah says she only drank excessively so she would not feel the pain from the beatings. She says she only has a glass of wine when having a girl's night out with the neighbor ladies in their condo.

Deborah's mother showed up at one of the interviews and was constantly correcting, negating, questioning, and making demeaning comments in a very sweet, kind voice. Deborah states that she is powerless against her mother's constant criticism to the point that they get in fights. Deborah's mother appears to be mentally and emotionally abusive with a very sweet, caring, and kind voice and behavior. Deborah says she loves her mother and appreciates her but can't stand the way that her mother treats her. They get in fights all the time when Deborah tries to make a decision or state an opinion. Deborah says that her mother follows her around the house, questions her every move, and does not respect her privacy.

Deborah has two small emotional support dogs that generally accompany her. She did not bring them to the boat for her interview. She is currently living with her mother, stepfather, infirmed maternal grandfather, and an older man who is handicapped for whom the mother is his care giver. They are snowbirds and in Georgia for the winter months. They live up north for half of the year.

Deborah considers herself Christian, however she does not attend church services. She says that she prays occasionally and believes in God and Jesus.

Deborah's Family of Origin, Childhood and Significant Life Events

Deborah was frequently physically beaten with a belt by her father, whose word was the authority, and demanded obedience. Deborah has an older brother who is married with children. The family lived by a strict Christian rule. Deborah was sheltered, not allowed to attend public events, and isolated from any interaction with others, except for attending school. Deborah did not have any friends, nor did she have any interaction with boys her age. Deborah's mother criticized, and questioned Deborah's actions, decisions, and thoughts.

At the age of seventeen, Deborah's mother brought home a colleague from work, saying he is a lonely guy who needs friends. Deborah was asked to talk to him, keep him company, ride in the car with him, and be his friend. Having never dated, Deborah said she fell in love and quickly married him against her families wishes. Deborah did not graduate from high school.

Deborah was in a near-fatal car accident at the age of twenty-two that caused a serious head trauma and nearly severed her dominant left arm. Deborah told the police that her husband grabbed the wheel of the car in a fit of rage related to his OCD and caused the car to run off the road. She described his behavior in the car and his abusive behavior at home. The police audio taped her story. The police wanted to press charges; however, Deborah rescinded her story, claiming loss of memory. No charges were brought against her husband at that time.

Deborah went to live with her mother for rehabilitation. She states that she was determined to get strong and return to her husband. She practiced until she was able to

carry five two-liter bottles of pop, which meant she was strong enough to move back out west with her husband.

Deborah's husband is diagnosed as OCD which Deborah blames for the physical, emotional, and mental abusive, explaining. "It's not his fault. He can't help it." Deborah began to drink excessively to pass out on the days that he would beat her.

Sophia, Age 45

Sophia's Connection with Research Study

Sophia attended a holistic networking gathering where the research study was presented. Following the meeting, Sophia asked to participate in the study.

Sophia's Reason for Participating in the Research Study

I don't fucking care what people think of me and I need to figure this out.

Sophia's Current Living Situation

Sophia is in her mid-forties, 5'7" tall, athletic build, slender, Caucasian, eastern European, no make-up, short bob cut hair style, dressed in jeans and t-shirt. Sophia speaks several languages and speaks loudly, hands flying in the air, engaging her entire body in movement. Sophia speaks quickly, often changing the subject, easily distracted. Sophia is a runner and loves being in nature. Sophia is philosophical. Sophia considers herself spiritual.

Sophia is college-educated with a degree in business and a certification in personal life coaching. Finances are limited. Sophia identifies herself as personal life coach, however the company she recently worked for changed its way of working with clients and it is no longer a fit. Sophia has a connection with the local coalition to stop human trafficking. Sophia did not disclose that she is cleaning houses for income.

Sophia has never been married and does not have children. Sophia is in an intimate relationship with a man who is like a protective force, but often travels for work as a private security expert. She is currently living with her boyfriend.

Sophia's Family of Origin, Childhood, and Significant Life Events

Sophia was born in eastern Europe where her parents and brother currently reside. Sophia's parents both worked. Sophia describes her mother as depressed. Sophia's father was unpredictable, not sure what kind of mood he would be in when he got home. Sophia was unhappy at home. Sophia was very close to her brother growing up. She still feels guilty that she left him behind when she left home.

While in high school, Sophia needed money. She got a job at a nightclub in the next town over as a dancer. Sophia said it was great because she loves to dance. It was cool and glamorous. She was dating a guy at the time that was older and got her the job.

When Sophia was eighteen, Sophia was given an opportunity to move to the United States with two men. They arranged for her to travel. Two men met her at the airport when she arrived in the United States. They got her a job in a strip club working as a dancer and decided for her to live with them. She went to work, and they collected her paycheck and tips. She totally trusted them to take care of her and didn't think about the fact that they were taking her paycheck and tips. They were setting her up into trafficking ring. The strip club owner noticed what was going on and helped her escape from the two men. Sophia is deeply grateful for the help of the stripe club owner. She has gone back to thank him.

Sophia was later in a relationship with a boyfriend that physically beat her and emotionally abused her for five years. Sophia does not speak about that relationship.

Stella, Age 47

Stella's Connection to the Research Study

Stella heard about the research when organizing a new non-profit event related to human trafficking.

Stella's Reason for Participating in Research Study

Share her experience and help with the research.

Stella's Current Living Situation

Stella is a full bodied, curvaceous, 5'6' tall, "Mediterranean" olive skin, dark wavy haired, woman wearing little make-up. She is in her mid-forties. She is dressed in business casual. Stella is currently developing a non-profit organization to empower woman who have experienced human trafficking. Stella was married at the age of twenty-one and divorced after thirteen years due to abuse. She describes her ex-husband as the embodiment of her adopted mom. She has two daughters in their early twenties from her first marriage who live in Georgia with her. She describes herself as having been "twisted sexually." Stella is currently not married; however, she is living with a man whom she identifies as her boyfriend. He has recently been released from prison.

Stella states that she "operates" from the statement, "I don't have a family." Stella states that she has no relationship with her siblings. Stella describes herself as having "embodied all abuses, physical anger, and psychic attacks." Stella states. "I have been controlling myself." Stella is currently working with a personal life coach who is also an ordained minister.

Stella's Family of Origin, Childhood and Significant Life Events

Stella was born in the Midwest and adopted at four months. It was thought that Stella's birth mother was retarded because she had a flat head. Stella's birth mother was sexually abused and put in a children's home. Stella's birth father is unknown, except that he was "Mediterranean," Greek or Italian and white.

Stella refers to her mom as her adopted mom. She states that on the outside, her home was "picture perfect." However, on the inside it was "not a happy home; chaotic, unnerving, and turbulent." Stella refers to her mother as a domestic engineer; angry, domineering, "sensitive," very OCD with many "rules," and frequently threw "temper tantrums." Stella was raised as a Southern Baptist, and her mother fostered a dependency on the "Savior."

Stella's father was an engineer; passive, her saving grace, and allowed her to express herself. It was with him that she had a spiritual connection. Stella has three adopted siblings: two biological sisters, five and ten years younger, and a brother fifteen years younger. At ten years old, Stella "dreamed" that she was pregnant. At the age of eighteen, Stella received a "moving truck" as a high school graduation gift. She was directed to move out.

Stella states that there were no boundaries in her family, and she was never taught boundaries. Stella married at the age of twenty-one and had two daughters. She worked in her husband's family restaurant. She states that he embodies the same characteristics as her mom. She was divorced after thirteen years due to abuse and that he was "twisted sexually." Stella moved to Georgia approximately fifteen years ago.

Anna, Age 53

Anna's Connecting with the Research Study

Anna attended a local holistic health networking meeting where the research study was presented. Following the meeting, Anna stated that she had been in a domestic violent relationship and asked to participate in the research study.

Ann's Reason for Participating in the Research Study

Share her story of how she survived and “help me” with the research.

Anna's Current Living Situation

Anna is in her early fifties, Caucasian, approximately 5'3” in height with an athletic build. Anna graduated from high school. Anna is a recovering alcoholic with eight years of sobriety. She attends meetings daily, is active as a sponsor, and considers her sobriety the most important thing in her life. Anna states that she has had years of counseling and various stays in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers. Anna describes herself as having an alcoholic brain which she believes causes her to be forgetful, have difficulty making decisions, thinking clearly, and learning. Anna is not married, but currently living in a rental home with her ex-husband, Tom, and their young adult son in southern Georgia. She and her ex-husband are in an intimate relationship. Anna has been living in Georgia for six months.

Anna wanted to move to Georgia, so she found a job for her ex-husband and arranged for him to move here. She followed later with her son. Both her ex-husband and son are “sometimes” emotionally and verbally abusive now, but “not like they were before when they were physically abusive in the past.”

Anna does not have a driver's license as it was revoked ten years ago due to multiple DUIs. It is her hope to get her license back in the next few months. Her ex-husband is also a recovering alcoholic, attends AA meetings regularly, actively sponsors, and considers his sobriety very important. Anna is currently unemployed, partially due to not having a license and not being able to find a suitable job while focusing on helping her son and ex-husband adjust.

She is a Reiki master and wants to help people as well as earn a living with Reiki. She does not have clients. Anna loves a health product that she purchases from a multi-level marketing business and plans to become an associate in Georgia. She was an associate on a team in New Jersey which did not prove to be financially successful. She claims that her lack of success was a result of being on a dead team. She is waiting for six months to pass so she can change teams to a successful team and start selling the product. She claims it helped her to lose weight, feel good, and support her athletic lifestyle. Anna is a runner and runs several miles per day several days per week.

Anna's Family of Origin, Childhood, and Significant Life Events

Anna was born in New Jersey. She is of Scottish, Irish, German, and Eastern European descent. Her parents are first generation Americans. Anna states that she was frequently severely beaten with a belt and verbally abused throughout her childhood by her father and mother. Her father beat her, her mother, and her stepsister. He did not beat her stepbrother. She states that her parents neglected her, and her father was cheap, although he had a good job. She went to school dirty, and the kids made fun of her. Anna started roaming the streets and drinking at seven, doing drugs at eleven. She describes herself as rebellious, sneaking out at night, drinking, and sexually active. She became an

alcoholic at a very young age. Her parents were also alcoholics. Anna's mother was diagnosed as schizophrenic.

Her parents divorced at the age of twelve and her father left her with her grandparents. They were stable and loving. Anna's father married a family friend and her mother married the family friend's husband. The couples swapped spouses. Anna's father died at age sixty-six of pancreatic cancer and her mother died of cancer at age fifty-nine.

Anna married Tom after high school and they later had one son. Tom had a good job for many years and was able to support himself and their son. Anna describes her husband as physically, verbally, mentally, and emotionally abusive during her marriage and her son also became abusive as he matured into adolescents.

Anna's alcoholism increased to the point of passing out on a bench while walking to the store with her son, age nine. Anna and Tom divorced, and Anna lost custody of her son for excessive drinking and neglect. Anna lost her driver's license after multiple DUI's.

Anna stopped drinking and began attending AA meetings eight years ago, at the age of forty-six. She has been sober ever since and is proud of her accomplishment, yet fully aware of the challenges and potential of losing her sobriety. After Anna got back on her feet, she secured a good job, and worked to get back custody of her son, starting with supervised visits. She had to constantly ask people for rides to work which was embarrassing and difficult at sometimes. Anna learned to take care of herself, became an avid runner, got certified as a Reiki master, and was awarded shared custody of her son. Anna had non-abusive relationships with men that treated her like a "queen." She describes the men as being nice, financially successful, but boring.

Tom wooed her back into a relationship with him. He is charming and exciting to be with, yet abusive. She refused to move in with him because he didn't treat her right. She wanted to become financially independent and eventually bought her own home. Anna's son became physically and verbally abusive as he got older. Her ex-husband eventually moved into her home and they lived together.

Her ex-husband lost his job. He went to AA and stopped drinking. Anna helped him find a job in Georgia, so he moved to Georgia first. Anna became fearful and desperate when her son hit her during a fight. She realized that her son needed to be with his father because she could not handle him. Anna sold her house and they moved to Georgia.

Barbie, Age 54

Barbie's Connection with the Research Study

Barbie attended a woman's empowerment event and heard the research study presentation. Barbie asked for a flyer and called a week later, offering to participate.

Barbie's Reason for Participating in Research Study

Get help, suddenly remembering things that she had forgotten related to abuse.

Barbie's Current Living Situation

Barbie is a 5'5" tall, blonde, full figured, slim waisted, colorfully and expensively Floridian-dressed Caucasian woman in her mid-fifties. Barbie has two adult children with whom she has a good relationship. Barbie is recently widowed within the past six months and financially comfortable. Barbie is frequently smiling, chatting away with the high-pitched voice of an adolescent girl. Barbie's calendar was so full of lunches, events, and dates that it was two weeks before she would have time to meet.

Barbie's stated that her husband had passed away four months ago, and it was "very horrific," a "struggle" for the last two months of his illness as it was not the best relationship. Barbie's husband died from pancreatic cancer within five months of his diagnosis.

Before Barbie's husband, "My Kenny," was diagnosed with cancer, he physically, sexually, financially, mentally, and emotionally abused her for the seven years of their relationship. Barbie refers to the abuse as "nonsense." Prior to his death, she described herself as a powerless, voiceless, mouse-like person. He called their relationship a "spiritual marriage" and he claimed that he is a "spiritual" man. He sexually assaulted her such that Barbie had to go to the gynecologist for medical care. Barbie will not discuss the details of that trauma. Barbie never reported the abuse, even when she went to the hospital for medical treatment.

After Kenny's prognosis, Barbie said that they were having a disagreement and she threw a fork at him from across the room. He was on the phone with a nursing service and they asked if he needed help. The police were sent to the house and Barbie was arrested for "elder abuse." She went to the police station and was put in a jail cell in her baby doll nightgown for the weekend.

After she was arraigned, Barbie called a friend to pick her up and take her to their house. They had to give her clothes, food, and a place to live because she was penniless. Barbie had no credit cards nor money of her own. Her friends tried to keep her from returning to Kenny. She remained separated for a few weeks.

Kenny begged her to come back and stay with him until he died, promising to marry her and give her his money and estate. Kenny stated that he wanted them to be

husband and wife forever. Barbie and Kenny were married in the hospital one month before he died. Barbie purchased her wedding dress at Salvation Army for less than \$50 the day before the wedding. Barbie explained that she was broke, she had no personal money, because he controlled all the money. Just before he died, he signed all the papers leaving his estate to her, "His Wife."

Since Kenny's death, Barbie has been carrying around his ashes. Barbie explained that she has his ashes in his house and wanted to get jewelry made with the ashes so she could keep him close, just like she promised him. At night she places his ashes next to the bed on the nightstand. In the morning, Barbie carries the ashes to a special alter like shrine next to their wedding photograph in the family room. Barbie claimed that "My Kenny" made me promise that I would carry him to bed with me at night and into the family room during the day and talk to him. Barbie has her wedding dress hanging on her closet door so she can remember how beautiful she felt when she put it on, like a princess. Barbie says she misses him very much and loves him. Barbie says that she cries all the time when she is home alone.

Barbie describes her situation, "So... I'm waiting for... my husband, I call him "my Kenny." I'm just waiting, I keep waiting for him to appear and he will not. And it makes me mad. He died a very painful and fast death from cancer. I need to know he is ok and where he hangs out (tearful.) I do miss him. I don't miss the crap. Just the comfort. I helped him pass onto the next life. I'm not trying to be big headed, but I did what I promised him. I did it. They couldn't get the pain under control and I got in bed with him and caressed him. I told him I loved him and that he was going to go where there was no more pain and it would be beautiful. I played his favorite music. When he

was journeying (dying) the James Taylor song “When Will I see You Again?” came on. The hospice nurse said that that had to be the most beautiful passing. I never prayed so much from May until he passed. There is a God, He does help, and I am there.

“My Kenny” put me to the test in so many ways. I am in a good spot. I just miss him. Like, how do you get them to come to you? I don’t get it? I helped my mom journey the last five weeks and she choose me to go out with. I see her in dreams. I can’t, I can’t get him in. I went to a medium a few weeks ago and he would not come out. He doesn’t want to make my life easy for me.”

We called it our spiritual marriage and when he got the prognosis he said, “Baby, we need to get married. I need to know you are my wife.”

Barbie met her husband seven years ago on a dating App. She quit her job and moved to Georgia to be with him, a dream come true. He promised to take care of her and treat her like a princess. He is approximately twenty years older than her. He left her financially secure, however, Barbie does not know much about managing the money. She loves shopping now that she has money, she can choose her own clothes. She lives in their marital home, which is large, beautiful, on a canal with powerboat in the back.

Barbie began dating shortly after her husband died and is in a new intimate relationship with Roger. She describes him as someone that drinks socially and treats me “unbelievably.” “I feel like I am at the best point in my life. I am very happy. I love him.”

Since his death, Barbie has been experiencing “triggers” over the last few months, remembering things that she says she cannot believe that she forgot. She said she thinks she blacked them out for some reason to protect her mind. Barbie has not received any therapy at this point.

Barbie's Family of Origin, Childhood, and Significant Life Events

Barbie was born in the New Jersey area. She is the youngest child with four significantly older brothers. She claims that they "saved the best for last." She describes her childhood as spoiled. At the age of five, Barbie's brother died in an accident. Barbie remembers that his spirit was sitting on the couch with her and he was putting on his socks. He kissed her and said, "Be a good girl for mommy and daddy." Barbie never, never told anyone. She didn't know what to do.

Barbie was raised Methodist. Her father died from lung cancer at the age of 50 when she was in elementary school and her mother cried every night, never getting over the loss of her husband. Her mom worked three jobs to make ends meet financially.

Barbie married very young to a man nine years older, separating after seven years, however, not divorcing until she married her recently deceased husband. She sought counseling after the separation. Her therapist said she since her father died when she was young, she was always looking for a father figure. Barbie says she has always dated older men.

Barbie was in an eleven year "domestic terrible relationship." That relationship was physically abusive, mentally abusive, and emotionally awful. Barbie's family helped her get out two different times, but she went back. Finally, her supervisor called her into the office when she noticed that Barbie was limping and had a bruise. She said, "Are you going to wait until he kills you or puts you in the hospital? We all know things are "going on."

It's like a light went off. I got out. It was always about how I love that man and he was always about the gifts and saying I'm sorry and I don't know why I did that, and I'll never do it again. I fell for those trips. I got out. It took me a while, but I got out.

Barbie met a man at a conference and fell in love instantly. She moved to another state to be with him and found out he was married. She stayed in the Midwest and loved her job. Barbie lived on match.com for seven years until she met My Kenny. I got to retire at fifty.

Barbie admits to having bad picks when it comes to men. She says that alcohol is an issue with them, not her. She says that alcohol is part of the attraction for her. Barbie calls the abuse "NONSENSE." Barbie has two children who are married with children. She rarely visited them while she was with Kenny because she didn't have any money and Kenny would not give her any money for anything.

Stephanie, Age 55

Stephanie's Connection with the Research Study

Stephanie saw the research flyer on a notice board at a sobriety bar in her area. She was attracted to the idea of being free and called the number immediately.

Stephanie's Reason for Participating in the Research Study

Stephanie wants to learn how to be more normal. Stephanie describes her decision to call as completely out of character and very scary for her. All kinds of crazy exaggerated thoughts, fears, suspicions, and questions took over her mind. Once she decided to do it, she claims that she was going to complete it, "No matter what." Stephanie demanded that we meet as soon as possible; get it started and finished as soon as possible. She was not going to wait around.

Stephanie's Currently Living Situation

Stephanie is a married, fifty-five-year-old, Caucasian woman currently living in Georgia. She is approximately 5'5 in height, medium-size frame, and dresses modestly, preferring not to draw attention to herself. She has an eighth-grade education. Stephanie has been out of an abusive relationship and lifestyle for twenty-five years.

She has six adult children, from her first husband, who are married with children and with whom she does not have much of a relationship. She describes them as being very angry with her. Stephanie's first husband met her when she was seventeen and he was her customer. She was trafficked into prostitution at the age of fourteen. They married and he was excessively abusive.

She is happily married and deeply committed to her second husband, Bob, of twenty-five years. Stephanie claims that he takes good care of her, constantly comforts, assures, and understands when she is angry, defensive, and disconnects. He makes no demands upon her. He tells Stephanie, "I am just here to love you and take care of you." She claims that she loves her husband and that he loves her but says that she doesn't really know what love is because she is always living in fear.

She strives and focuses on doing it right, being in control, and learning, yet, is confused about what is normative, safe, and right. She states that she does not know how to behave normally nor engage in "small talk." Stephanie constantly saying how she wants to "learn" how to be, think, and act normally.

She is financially well off such that she does not have to work and enjoys volunteering. Stephanie hands out a business card with a blade of grass breaking through

a crack in the concrete.¹⁵⁵ She helps women escape from domestic violence as a volunteer for a local domestic violence services agency. Stephanie is a non-denominational Christian, occasionally attends church services, and is a member of a Christian organization that ministers to girls and women.

She believes that people, especially woman are trying to manipulate her. She is constantly anxious, distrustful, unsettled, demanding, forcing, controlling, and never feels at peace. She frequently insults herself. Stephanie does not appear to trust herself, people, or her judgement. Stephanie communicates with sarcasm, often accusatory, insulting, and demanding. However, she believes herself to be thoughtful, helpful, and kind. Stephanie is extremely suspicious. She feels uncomfortable being touched, complimented, and approached, even by the women in her church and ministry organization.

Stephanie's Family of Origin, Childhood and Significant Life Events

Stephanie was born in a rural town in the Midwest. Her mother physically beat her with an electrical cord and tortured her from a very young age. Her birth father sexually molested her at the age of five. Stephanie remembers missing over fifty days of school in kindergarten because she was in the hospital. She has memories of being scared, sick, and alone in a hospital crib that encaged her with cold steel bars. Stephanie has a memory of standing up in the crib, holding onto the bars and crying. Her parents divorced around that time.

She went to school, often unwashed, under nourished, and wearing dirty clothing. She returned home immediately after school. Stephanie remembers her stepfather's cruelty, threats, and harsh punishment. At the age of nine, Stephanie's mother was

¹⁵⁵ See Appendix D for Stephanie's image of blade of grass.

admitted by her stepfather to a mental hospital. Her mother received electroshock therapy and returned home numb; unable to speak, function, nor feel. She was instructed to tell no one and lived in constant fear. Stephanie was beaten severely on the one occasion when she told someone about her family. Child services visited her home periodically. Stephanie was beaten and tortured until the age of fourteen by her mother and her stepfather.

At the age of fourteen, Stephanie saved enough money for a bus ticket to the big city to get away from her family. She believed that the world was safer than her family. Immediately upon exiting the bus, she was befriended by a handsome young man who offered to help her. She trusted him and was immediately transported across state lines to Chicago where he became her pimp. She was raped, assaulted, prostituted, trafficked, and controlled with drugs, alcohol, threats, and violence. Her living and working conditions were deplorable. At the age of nineteen, she was hit by a car while working the streets.

Stephanie experienced brutal, degrading, and violent sexual encounters, physical assaults, and battery with men and women customers as well as those around and controlling her world. She learned to use anger, disassociation, and rage concealed behind charm, sarcasm, wit, and manipulation to protect and defend herself from the streets, her pimp, and her customers.

At the age of nineteen, a regular customer, John, offered to marry her, care for her, and take her away from her situation. She agreed, believing that he would take care of her. After they married and moved away from Chicago, he continued to beat, assault, humiliate, and rape her. She had six children with John. She says her children grew up in an abusive and alcoholic household.

Stephanie went to work cleaning and built a financially successful residential and commercial business. When this happened is unclear.

In her mid-thirties, Stephanie met a financially successful, kind, and loving man named Bob. He offered to marry her and promised to take care of her. He said, "I am just here to love you and take care of you. That's all I want." She has been married to Bob for over twenty-five years and he has kept his word to love and care for her. He has never harmed nor abused her in any way since they met. He helped her with her children and eventually moved to Georgia as a couple.

Stephanie's relationship with her children appears to vary from child to child and moment to moment as antagonistic, non-existent, angry, resentful, controlling, and tolerated. A few years ago, Stephanie's thirteen-year old granddaughter came to visit. Stephanie remembers the experience has terrible; so much so that she sent her granddaughter home early. Stephanie quotes her granddaughters last words to her, "I hate you and I hope you die, grandma." "Oh well, so be it. That's just the way it is. I can't do nothing about it," is Stephanie's response to her children and grandchildren.

Stephanie has had some therapy, works as an advocate for women, and became a Christian in order to heal. She says she has cried, claiming she has no tears left and feels nothing, numb. A few years ago, Stephanie returned to Chicago to revisit the actual buildings and walk the streets where she was prostituted, raped, beaten, drugged, trafficked, and even hit by a car. She walked down the streets and specifically went into the rooms of certain buildings where the "really terrible things happened," remembering, and forgiving herself. Stephanie claims that it helped her to make peace. She said it was ok and that she is glad that she did it.

When her first husband, John, became terminally ill, she went to him and took care of him until he died. When Stephanie's mother died, she went to her and stayed with her until she died, trying to understand, comfort, and forgive. She wanted to show to herself that she was the better person. She claims that she did this to prove to herself that she had forgiven them, risen above their violence, and they had no control over her. Neither one acknowledged or apologized for what they did. There was no remorse.

Dana, Age 59

Dana's Connection with Research Study

Dana attended a women's business networking workshop and was introduced to the study. She asked enthusiastically to participate in the study.

Dana's Reason for Participating in the Research Study

Dana stated that she would like "to help me" with the study and tell her story. Dana stated that she was married and that her husband of two years was "abusive."

Dana's Current Living Situation

Dana is an "almost sixty" year old woman with an average build, 5'5' in height, make-up, blonde frosted hair modernly styled, fashionably dressed, and well-manicured nails. She is divorced for the past eighteen years, no children, and both her parents are deceased. Dana lives in southern Georgia and is semi-retired and developing a business as a personal life coach. Dana does not prescribe to any religious beliefs but does believe, rather hopes, there is God. Dana married at forty-two and was divorced after two years due to abuse. When asked about Dana's life, she stated, as foundational, her childhood belief, "My purpose on earth is to absorb the insanity in my family."

Dana's Family of Origin, Childhood and Significant Life Events

Dana's father came to the U.S. from Germany at the age of eight in 1930. He didn't believe in God, stating, "God is gone. If God existed than the Holocaust would not have happened." Dana's mother was born in Brooklyn and was "Americanized." Dana was born in Brooklyn and grew up on Long Island. Dana has one sister who was "ignored" in her family. Dana states that she was verbally, psychologically, spiritually, sexually, and emotionally abused throughout her childhood by her mother and a father's client.

At the age of ten, Dana's mother became obsessed with Dana's body, her weight, and her sexual development, particularly her breast. Her mother would be screaming, yelling, and humiliating Dana at home, in front of friends, and in social situations. Dana's mother would point at Dana's breasts, and yell "Breasts, look at her breasts," referring to their growing size.

At the age of eleven, Dana's mother insisted she go to the gynecologist where she felt "violated" after a rectal and vaginal exam. Dana remembers deciding at the age of ten that she would never have children because of the family cycle of violence. She remembers her mother yelling, "You are forcing me to do this."

At the age of twelve, Dana states, "I intentionally walked in front of a car." She was hospitalized with a broken pelvis. After the accident, Dana's mother had a "nervous breakdown" and everyone saw a therapist. Dana's mother said, "Yes, there is a God. God kept you alive." Her father's response to her mother's behavior was to take her mother's side. Her father said to Dana, "You are going to have to change because Mother can't."

Dana said she never felt protected. The family referred to her as “Poor Dana,” and calling her “fat” when she weighed 95 pounds at 5’5”. Dana was bulimic and anorexic until she went to college and became “obese.” Dana stated that she was valued for her silence and as a “mistress.” At the age of forty, Dana, describing herself as damaged, married. Her husband was abusive, and they lived together only two years before divorcing.

After the divorce, Dana asked, “What the f. do you want from me, God?” She states that there is another part of her that wants to believe it [God]. Dana maintained a close relationship with her mother until her death. After her mother’s death in 2013, Dana had a nervous breakdown that she attributes to the fact that she stopped taking her thyroid medication. At the time Dana said, “I didn’t believe I should live; I didn’t believe I had a reason to live. I didn’t have a right to be here on this earth.”

Helen, Age 60

Helen’s Connection with the Research Study

Helen met researcher at a social gathering and asked to share her story.

Helen’s Reason for Participating in the Research Study

Share her story.

Helen’s Current Living Situation

Helen is a trim figured, 5’6” tall, elegantly dressed, blonde, sixty-year old woman. Helen wears a full face of make-up with red lipstick and hair professionally colored, cut, and styled, as is true of her mother. She and her mother look like sisters. Helen is always smiling. She recently purchased a home with her mother where they live together. She is

best friends with her mother, and they do many things together, although Helen's mother suffers with COPD with oxygen to assist.

Helen is retired from a good paying administrative job and living in Georgia full time. She is Catholic, attending mass on occasion and holidays. She enjoys listening to Christian speaker and minister, Joyce Meyers. Helen enjoys crafts and is currently painting dwarf yard ornaments to set around the exterior of her new home. Helen and her mother are active in a local newcomer's club, meeting new people, and attending local events. They enjoy a few glasses of wine with dinner. Helen's father is "alive but distant."

Helen "battles with back pain" from a back injury that occurred at work in a stockroom about ten years ago. Helen had surgery and has screws in her lower back. She was instructed by her supervisor to move a heavy box or lose her job, "Move it or lose your job." It is possible that Helen has a pain prescription addiction problem.

Helen has a married son, age 40, and grandchildren with whom she has a "good" relationship, although she does struggle with her relationship with her daughter-in-law. She is excitedly planning a trip to California to visit with her son and his family.

Helen's Family of Origin, Childhood, and Significant Life Events

Helen was born in the Midwest. She is the oldest of three children with two younger brothers. Helen describes her childhood as "full of fun." Helen enjoyed playing in the forest, sledding, Barbies, and girlfriends. Helen recalled the movie, *The Birds*, as the scariest thing ever. Helen's mother was a stay at home mom. She was very loving. Helen states that mom always dressed impeccably, especially when dad came home. Dad was a traveling salesman and gone quite often. When dad came home, everyone had to be

there. Helen said everyone had to “look good for dad.” There had barbeques with other families. They would visit grandma at Christmas.

Helen remembers her parent’s arguing a lot and that they got a divorce when she was seventeen. She retreated and her mother had to go to work, leaving Helen to care for her younger siblings. When Helen was seventeen years old, she discovered she was pregnant. Her boyfriend, age nineteen, freaked out. They do not have a relationship. Helen had her baby. With the help of her mom and grandma she was able to finish high school. Helen raised her son and her younger brothers.

Before describing her abuse, Helen said that the researcher probably had not heard of abuse as bad as her experience.

Helen’s first marriage was at age forty-two. She was married only a few years before divorcing him due to alcohol and abuse. Helen states that he was a heavy drinker, and went out boating with his buddies, entertaining other women when she refused to go along. Helen states that when he was home and drinking excessively, he would yell at her, threatening, and frightening her. She called the domestic violence hotline for assistance and support.

When her husband was raging, Helen went to the cottage in the backyard where she would make jewelry and express herself creatively. It was in the quiet cottage in the backyard where Helen felt safe, made jewelry, and plans for a divorce. Helen’s mother was very supportive.

Helen’s mother lived on a sailboat in the West Indies with her second husband who was kind and an alcoholic. He is deceased. Helen’s brother is an alcoholic who has been arrested for DUI’s, lost his driver’s license, and spent time in jail. He, his wife, and

their adult son recently purchased a sailboat and are cruising from Europe to the United States and Caribbean.

Women and Completion of Research Study Phases

Research Study Phase I

Thirteen women completed Phase I.

Research Study Phase II

Ten women completed Phase II. Helen called to withdraw from the research study a week after the first interview. Helen stated that she was happy that she participated and encouraged the researcher to use her story in the study. Immediately following the interview, Stella texted an image to share with the research, sharing her insight. A few weeks later, Stella did not respond to calls, texts, nor attempts to schedule Phase II. Stella's phone is disconnected. Dana did not respond to calls and texts to schedule Phase II.

Research Study Phase III

Nine woman completed Phase III. Katy stated that she reconnected, dated, and married a previous high school friend between Phase I and Phase II. He is military so they are moving out of state to his military base within a week. Katy stated that she hoped to return to Georgia to participate in the study, if possible.

Research Study Phase IV

Seven woman completed Phase IV. Deborah completed her interview using Zoom since she had returned to her home up north. Jessica's interview took place in her home, given her limited time between college and work. Aubrey completed the interview in the

researcher's office. Sophia, Anna, Barbie, and Stephanie completed the finally interview on the sailboat.

Crystal moved out of state and "off the grid" with a boyfriend that she met just after starting the study. Katy, Crystal's sister, informed the researcher of Crystal's situation, saying that the family does not hear from Crystal very often.

Tara and researcher attempted to schedule a Phase IV interview; however, Tara's mother is in town for an extended visit. Researcher was unable to connect with Tara for Phase IV. Tara's phone is disconnected.

Data Collection

Data Analysis Procedures

The data was collected from phone conversations, interviews, and text messages exchanged between the woman and the researcher. The data was formulated as handwritten notes, audio video recordings, and text message exchanges with participants.

Audio video recordings were recorded primarily using Zoom on researcher's password protected computer. Due to instability of the internet, the researcher recorded using audio voice on her password protected iPhone and iPad on three occasions. The files were transferred to a separate password protected file storage unit. The interviews were uploaded to otter.ai and downloaded to researcher's password protected files.

Limitations of the Research Design

The limitations of this study include women survivors of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships of violence who are available to participate in English, meet four times over a six-month period, and be physically able-bodied, willing, and excited to go sailing. The study is limited to women survivors of domestic violence in heterosexual

relationships where the male is the primary perpetrator of violence. The research is open to women of all ethnicities and nationalities. The research participant is limited to women that are Christian, were raised Christian, or have some relationship with God. Atheists would not be included in this research study.

The researcher acknowledges that women that are lesbian, transsexual, and bisexual also experience domestic violence in her relationships, including relationships with men. Her experiences, though similar, have differences that are beyond the scope of this study. The researcher hopes to create a research study specifically for women who are lesbian.

The researcher acknowledges that men experience domestic violence in relationships with women where the women are the perpetrator of violence. The research for such situations is beyond the scope of this research study. The research also acknowledges that women and men experience violence in many types of relationship outside intimate partnerships. Those issues are different and are beyond the scope of this research.

The research is limited to women who are able-bodied, excited, and willing to sail, to how to sail, and engaging in the embodied act of sailing. Women that are afraid of the water, afraid of boats, sailing vessels, and being on open water were not included in this research.

The research does not include discussions directly related to religion, church participation, nor the life of a church, such as sacraments, doctrine, dogmas, biblical references, saints, and religious rituals performed in the name of Jesus, Mary, saints, Goddess, or God.

The research does not define Sacred Feminine in religious terms nor use religious icons, symbols, nor saints to define, symbolize, nor identify Sacred Feminine. If research participants initiate such topics, they will be welcomed and included. However, the researcher will not initiate conversations directly related to a doctrine, scripture, or tradition.

The research is limited to explorations, understandings, and insights related to consciousness, female embodiment, and empowerment as anthropological and spiritual.

A limitation to the research is the researcher acting as participant observer, facilitator, and documenter of data. The amount of data collected is enormous. The researcher determined what stories and themes to emphasize and what to leave for further consideration and study.

Technology proved to be a limitation. Recording during the sailing experience was not possible without more advanced technology. Internet stability, both at the dock and in the office space, proved to be unreliable and unstable. Conversations were difficult to hear on the recordings and the method of using artificial intelligence for translations proved to be inaccurate and ineffective in several of the recordings.

The researcher herself is a limitation in this research study. Many important understandings and insights occurred during unrecorded conversations and had to be recalled during the collection and evaluation of data. Attention to detail was a significant aspect and the limitation of the human mind to gather, hold, and interpret proved to be exhausting, overwhelming, and time consuming. Choosing what data, stories and events not to interpret and present proved to be a major limitation. Many themes are worthy of researching such as sacramentality must be set aside for further evaluation.

The primary limitation is the sailing experience. The research design is dependent of the researcher's ability to facilitate a sailing retreat experience. It requires that the weather and conditions support a safe, calm, and competence success experience of sailing. The time involved to sail is a limitation as most women do not have a full day to spare. It requires that women are willing to participate fully in a sailing experience, not as passengers on a chartered sailing cruise.

The limitations of the research study included a limitation of research participants, the researcher, sailing, technology, and selection of the themes to explore.

Expected Findings of Research Study

Researcher expects to observe marked changes over time in women's consciousness of her body image, power, and thinking process as a result of the reflection and reflexivity practice embedded in the research design. The changes in consciousness are expected to bring about healing of trauma through her connection with the Sacred Feminine. The Sacred Feminine, as a construct, is expected to facilitate interventions for transformations, especially in the embodiment activity.

The sailing vessel itself is expected to be experienced by the women as a safe space, sacred retreat from daily life, and a sacred space for truth-telling. The experience of embodying strength, agency, and authority through the practice of learning to sail and taking the helm is expected to create an experience of empowerment. The experience of being on open water while sailing is expected to bring about a sense of peace and spiritual connection with God through the vastness and forces of nature while at sea.

The overall expectation is that by creating opportunities for women to become conscious of her thoughts, emotions, beliefs, power, and actions, she will be transformed from survivor to empowered woman flourishing.

Ethical Issues

The ethical issues of researching human subjects requires careful considerations for her well-being mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The research study has received approval from the Institutional Review Board¹⁵⁶ at St. Thomas University. A copy of the review boards letter of approval is in the appendix.

Summary: Research Design

The research design is a transformative, embedded, multi-phase, mixed-method research study of women survivors of domestic, intimate partner, dating, and family violence. It is a complex research project with many levels of integration over a six-month period understanding women's changes in consciousness. The use of storytelling, Sacred Feminine as an interventions, embodiment, reflection, and sailing are platforms to explore women's beingness and transformation.

Creating a closed social system of two women sailing a large sailing vessel, interdependently and creatively forming, supporting, and empowering each other as Sacred Feminine, is a unique way for woman to experience and imagine a world with women as leaders: strong, brave, beautiful, and authoritative. It is a profoundly different experience from her male dominated and violent world. It is different experience than being on a sailing vessel with men as captain or crew.

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix A for the letter of approval from the Institutional Review Board of St. Thomas University.

The research design is attentive to the needs of women, traumatized by violence, to provide support, care, and understanding of women and her struggles when exploring women's narratives of pain, suffering, healing, and transformation. The goal of the research study is not to reinforce narratives of violence, helplessness, and voice-lessness, but to give space, freedom, and voice to women to express herself in stories and experience consciousness of her transformation. The goal is to facilitate transformative thinking, actions, and belief systems in her encounter with herself as Sacred Feminine.

CHAPTER FOUR. SACRED FEMININE BEING, A WAY OF EXPERIENCING WOMAN SELF

Coming to Consciousness: Woman Being as Sacred

Women's experiences of violence often permeate certain aspects of her thinking and feeling that are reflected in her behaviors, language, and relationships. Fundamental to healing is creating a sense of safety. The women in this study, as survivors, are no longer in imminent danger. They are somewhat settled with relatively secure places to live and work, supportive friends and family with whom to connect. They have created, out of the chaos of violence, reasonably comfortable lifestyles.

It appears that the women in the study are participating for several basic reasons or combination of reasons. Some of the women want to "help" the researcher because they are helpers. Others want the opportunity to tell her story in the hope that it will help other women and increase academic knowledge and understanding about domestic violence. Some of the women want the opportunity to talk openly about the violence and the overall effect it has had on her life. Some of the women want to heal from her experiences and change. The intention for participating in the research study may or may not affect her openness to the interventions and her willingness to reflect on her practices.

All the women expressed excitement at the opportunity to meet on the sailboat. They identified the sailboat and sailing as freeing and fun. Only one woman had been on a small open cockpit sailboat when she was younger. None of the women have been on or inside the cabin of a boat of any type as large as *La Bon Vie*.

Women's Consciousness Responses at the Start of the Interview

Katy, "I am frail"

Katy's female body: Katie¹⁵⁷ described her overall view of her body as "frail."

Katy's thinking and emotions: Katy said her emotional state is "balanced, at a level 7." Katy views her way of thinking as "introspective."

Katy's power and life: Katy stated that power is "control" and her sense of her power is "decreasing" while her sense of empowerment is that she "leans on her body."

Katie's view of life, in general, is "important, but not the end." Her view of her life is, "I'm old inside," and the world is "dark."

Katy and spirituality: Katie's defines spirit as "ever present and a connecting force." In general, Katy says "God is loving, gentle."

Katy and sacred feminine: Katy is "unaware" of the Sacred Feminine.

Crystal, "I am beautiful"

Crystal's female body: Crystal¹⁵⁸ describes herself as "positive and critical." "I am beautiful." Crystal says that the "female body is imperfect, not whole" and "my body is learning to love." Crystal states that "female hands transfer energy" and "my hands are powerful."

Crystal's thoughts and emotions: Crystal states that emotions are "sensory" and "I am currently exploring my emotions, level four." Crystal describes "thinking to be fast" and her way of thinking is "chaos." Crystal states that "knowing is heavy" and her way of

¹⁵⁷ Audio video file RP1PHI Phase I interview. Katy was the first woman to participate in the research study. Following her Phase I interview, researcher expanded the words and phrases used to explore participants state of consciousness and experience of self.

¹⁵⁸ Audio video file Phase I interview RP3PHI.

knowing is “all or nothing.” Crystal claims that “truth is hard to speak” and “my truth is blocked.”

Crystal and power: Crystal describes power as “free” and Crystal’s power is to be “explored.” Crystal states that empowerment is “independence.”

Crystal’s world and life: Crystal says the “world is magic, reflective of who we are” and her world is “expanding,” while “life is interesting” and states, “my life is burdened.”

Crystal and spirituality: Crystal states that “the Spirit is light” and her spirit is “blocked.” Crystal states that God is “all or nothing” and her God is “self.”

Crystal and sacred feminine: Crystal states that the Sacred Feminine is “divine” and herself as Sacred Feminine is “sacred.”

Aubrey, “I am going to kick some ass in this world”

Aubrey’s female body: Aubrey¹⁵⁹ describes herself as “strong, woman, wife, professional, ambitious, driven.” I am going to kick some ass in this world.” Aubrey states that the female body is “beautiful,” and her female body is “beautiful, strong, dynamic.” Hands “reach” and Aubrey’s hands “craft.”¹⁶⁰

Aubrey’s thoughts and emotions: Emotions “complicate it.” Aubrey’s emotion is “curious, level 5.5.” Aubrey says that thinking is “necessary,” and her way of thinking is “to empower.” Knowing is “learning” and Aubrey’s way of knowing is “seeking clarity, growth.”

Aubrey and power: Power is “ambivalent,” and Aubrey’s power is “strong for good.” Empowerment is “basic, important for everything.” Aubrey’s says about

¹⁵⁹ Audio video file Phase I interview PH13PHI.

¹⁶⁰ Aubrey gave each answer with a tonal lift as though it was a question.

empowerment, “I have the power to take back my power and authority.” Aubrey’s world and life. The world is “complicated,” and Aubrey’s wants to “keep her world small, with trusted, known, ‘certain’ people.” Life is “opportunity” and Aubrey’s life is, “a roller coaster.”

Aubrey and love: Aubrey says that “love is everything, the solution” and for her, love is “trust.”

Aubrey and spirituality: The spirit is “the universe’ and Aubrey’s spirit is “strong-willed. Spirituality, in general, and Aubrey’s spirituality is “Godliness.” Aubrey says that God is “question mark” and her God is “unknown, unsure, something out there, tradition, question mark.”

Aubrey and sacred feminine: Aubrey says that the Sacred Feminine is “women” and herself as the Sacred Feminine is “a powerful woman.”

Jessica, “I am strong”

Jessica’s female body: Jessica¹⁶¹ describes herself as “loving, positive, charismatic, outgoing, carefree, humble, genuine, nurturing, caring, deep knowing, forgetful.” “I am strong.” The female body is “a temple” and Jessica’s female body is “a warrior, strong.” Hands, “talk a lot with hands,” and Jessica’s hands “help her, her hands carry a lot of burden and problems.”

Jessica’s thoughts and emotions: Emotions are “hard,” and Jessica is emotionally “numb, at a level of seven.” Thinking is “controlling,” and Jessica’s way of thinking is “to overthink constantly.” Knowing is “assuring” and Jessica’s way of knowing is

¹⁶¹ Audio video file Phase I interview RP12PHI.

“experience, try new things.” Truth is “very important” and Jessica’s truth is “truthful.”
Voice is “important to be heard” and Jessica’s voice is “misunderstood.”

Jessica and power: Power is “strength to get through life” and Jessica’s sense of power “was higher, used to think I was a badass, living proof, now-powerless.”
Empowerment is “having courage and strength” and Jessica’s self as empowerment is “woman empowering woman.”

Jessica’s world and life: The world is “yours” and Jessica’s world is “complicated.” Life is “tough,” and Jessica’s life is “hard.”

Jessica and love: Love is “warm,” and Jessica’s way of love is “hard, passionate, loose self.”

Jessica and spirituality: Spirit is “energy” and Jessica’s spirit is “deep.”
Spirituality is “enlightenment” and Jessica’s spirituality is “high, hopeful, faith.” God is “great” and Jessica’s God, “He tests me.”

Jessica and sacred feminine: The Sacred Feminine, “don’t know.” Jessica’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “masculine, juggling, too much.”

Tara, “I am awakening”

Tara’s female body: Tara¹⁶² described herself as “becoming more conscious.” “I am awakening.” The female body is “mishandled” and Tara’s female body is “precious.”
Hands are “a roadmap” and Tara’s hands are “powerful.”

Tara’s thoughts and emotions: Emotions are “dangerous” and Tara is “becoming more conscious of her emotions, peace, level seven.” Thinking is “overwhelming,” and

¹⁶² Audio video file Phase I interview RP9PHI.

Tara's way of thinking is "cleansing." Knowing is "only one part" and Tara's way of knowing "can be overwhelming." Truth is "scary," and Tara's truth is "overwhelming."

Tara and power: Power is "not as used as it could be, underestimated" and Tara's sense of power is "underused." Empowerment is "food" and Tara's sense of empowerment is "fulfilling."

Tara's world and life: The world is "more toxic, evil" and Tara's world is becoming "more clear." Life is a "test" and Tara's life is "a journey that I plan to live to the fullest."

Tara and love: Love "involves action" and Tara's love "has different levels."

Tara and Spirituality: Spirit is "beautiful," and Tara's spirit is "contagious." Spirituality is "still unknown" and Tara's spirituality is "in transition." God is "the I am" and Tara's God is "within."

Tara and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "consciousness of the womb" and Tara's Self as Sacred Feminine is "respect for the womb."

Deborah, "I am ok"

Deborah's Female Body: Deborah¹⁶³ describes herself as "nice, caring." Deborah says, "I am ok." The female body is "pretty cool, we can carry a human baby" and Deborah's female body is "ok." Hands are "fine," and Deborah's hands are "fine."

Deborah Thoughts and Emotions: Deborah's emotions are "ok today, level five." Thinking is "using your brain." Deborah's way of thinking "ok, depends." Knowing is "knowing" and Deborah's way of thinking is "a gut feeling, and you know." Truth is "being honest."

¹⁶³ Audio video file Phase I interview RP2PHI.

Deborah and Power: Power is “to try to control lives,” and power for Deborah, “if it is used for my benefit, it is good.” Empowerment is “being able to change the bad to good” and Deborah’s sense of empowerment is “better today.”

Deborah’s World and Life: The world is “round,” and Deborah’s world is “fine.” Life is “good, good to be alive.” Deborah says, “I’m very happy to be alive.”

Deborah and Love: Love is a “beautiful thing,” and Deborah’s way of loving is “by never hurting people or things.”

Deborah and Spirituality: Spirit is “inside you, your inner you” and Deborah’s spirit is her “inner spirit.” God is “awesome,” and Deborah’s God is “Jesus.”

Deborah and Sacred Feminine: Deborah states that she has “no clue” about the Sacred Feminine and herself as Sacred Feminine, “no clue.”

Sophia, “I am magnificent”

Sophia’s Female Body: Sophia¹⁶⁴ describes herself as “open-minded, easy going.” The female body is “beautiful,” and Sophia’s female body is “going through a transition.” Hands are “magical,” and Sophia’s hands are “strong.”

Sophia Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “misunderstood,” and Sophia’s emotions are her “best guiding system, level 9.5” Thinking is “empowering,” and Sophia’s way of thinking is “disabling.” Knowing is “trusting,” and Sophia’s way of knowing is “trusting in my own guidance.” Truth is “what we make of it,” and Sophia’s truth is “my purpose.”

¹⁶⁴ Audio video file Phase I interview RP6PHI.

Sophia and Power: Power is “misunderstood,” and Sophia’s power is “my presence.” Empowerment is “lifting others up,” and Sophia’s sense of empowerment is “self-compassion.”

Sophia’s World and Love: The world is “magical,” and Sophia’s world is “exciting.” Life is “like a roller coaster,” and Sophia’s life is “exciting.”

Sophia and Spirituality: Spirit is “beautiful,” and Sophia’s spirit is “her best friend” Spirituality is “uprising,” and Sophia’s spirituality is “my life.” God is “everywhere,” and Sophia’s says that “my God is your God.”

Sophia and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “misguided,” and Sophia’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “awakening.”

Stella, “I am empowered”

Stella’s Female Body: Stella¹⁶⁵ describes herself as “resourceful, self-reliant, assertive, connected, loving, kind, and strong.” “I am empowered.” Stella states that the female body is “divine,” her female body is “curvaceous,” hands are “tools,” and her hands are “talented.”

Stella Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “complicated, layered, and complex,” and her emotion is “strong,” at a level 10. Stella states that “thinking is the biggest way we fuck ourselves.” Her way of thinking is “strategic.” Knowing is “empowerment.” Stella’s way of knowing, “it’s how I’ve gotten to this point in the journey.” Stella states that truth is “relative,” and her truth is “carefully discerned.”

¹⁶⁵ Audio video file Phase I interview RP10PHI.

Stella and Power: Stella states that power is “abundant,” her power is “light source,” empowerment is “a tool for humanity,” and herself as empowered is “divinely imparted.”

Stella’s World and Life: Stella describes the world as “dark,” her world is “light, life is a wild ride,” and her life is “anything, but pretty.”

Stella and Love: Love is “simple,” and her way of loving is “unconditional.”

Stella and Spirituality: Spirit is “the first part of manifestation.” Stella’s spirit is “free.” Spirituality is “tainted,” and Stella’s spirituality is her “journey towards wholeness.” God is “energy” and her God is “energy in me.”

Stella and Sacred Feminine: Sacred Feminine is the “missing puzzle piece” and herself as Sacred Feminine is “a connection.”

Anna, “I am on a boat”

Anna’s Female Body: Anna¹⁶⁶ described herself as “positive, giving, and athletic.” She stated, “I am on a boat.” She stated that the female body is “magnificent,” and her body is “in construction,” hands are for “healing” and her hands are for “healing,” and emotions, including her emotions are “like the ocean.”

Anna’s Thoughts and Emotions: Anna stated that she is emotionally “ok,” at a level seven, and sometimes feels “depressed.” Anna stated that thinking is “in the head.” She described her way of thinking as “forgetful due to middle age and alcohol.” When asked about knowing, Anna responded that knowing is “having the answers,” while her way of knowing is “finding out the answer.” She stated that truth and her truth is “important.”

¹⁶⁶ Audio video file Phase I interview RP6PHI.

Anna's World and Life: Anna described the world as "in trouble" and her world is "in transition," while life is "good," and her life is also "good."

Anna and Power: Power is "God," Anna's power is "God." Anna states that empowerment is "the universe." Anna's empowerment is "God."

Anna and Spirituality: Spirit is "God." Anna's spirit is "God." Anna states that spirituality and her spirituality is "everything." When asked about God, in general, and her God, she replied "everything."

Anna and Sacred Feminine: Anna stated that the Sacred Feminine is "Mary" and when asked about herself as Sacred Feminine, she stated "me."

Barbie, "I am beautiful"

Barbie's Female Body: Barbie¹⁶⁷ describes herself as "happy." Barbie states "I am beautiful. Oh, Lord, how is that?" The female body is "magnificent, and Barbie's female body is "fabulous." Barbie says that "hands tell a story" and "her hands help her tell her story."

Barbie's Thoughts and Emotions: Barbie describes emotions as "up and down," saying that her emotional state is "very content, good, at a level 10." Barbie states that "thinking is required, I think too much" and that her way of thinking is "right." For Barbie, knowing is "official" and her way of knowing is "that I don't always know what is right." Barbie states that "truth is a way of life" and her truth is to "be honest with herself."

Barbie and Power: When it comes to power, Barbie pauses for a long time and states that "power is not necessary in life." When asked what her first thought was about

¹⁶⁷ Audio video file Phase I interview RP7PHI.

power, Barbie says, “men needing power.” Barbie’s power is “necessary for living.” Barbie appears confused when she states, “I think empowerment is learned.” and “she is still learning about her own sense of empowerment.”

Barbie’s World and Life: Barbie states, “the world is wild,” and Barbie’s world is “very calm right now.” Barbie says that “life is happy” and her life is “very happy.”

Barbie and Spirituality: Barbie’s mood appears to shift with the question about spirit. Spirit is “questionable,” and Barbie’s spirit is a “good spirit.” Spirituality is “all in the eyes of the beholder” and Barbie’s spirituality, “I have one of no other.” God is “great.” Barbie’s God is “fabulous.”

Barbie and Sacred Feminine: Barbie states, “Sacred Feminine? I have no idea” and as for her sense of Self as Sacred Feminine, “no idea.”

Stephanie, “I am loved”

Stephanie’s Female Body: Stephanie¹⁶⁸ describes herself as “courageous, strong, giving, compassionate, gentle, and merciful.” She states, “I am loved.” The female body is “good” and Stephanie’s female body is “powerful.” Hands are “helping,” and Stephanie’s hands are “giving.”

Stephanie Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “many” and Stephanie says she “has not checked in, level eight.” Thinking is “much,” and Stephanie’s way of thinking is “unlimited.” Knowing is “God” and Stephanie’s way of knowing is “truth.”

Stephanie and Power: Stephanie says that power is “mine” and her power is “God’s power.” Empowerment is “the Holy Spirit” and Stephanie’s sense of empowerment is “freedom.”

¹⁶⁸ Audio video file Phase I interview RP14PHI.

Stephanie's World and life: The world is "lame and large" and Stephanie's world is "open." Life is "good, what I make it" and Stephanie's life is "unknown, thinking too hard on that."

Stephanie and Spirituality: Spirit is "God" and Stephanie's spirit is "God." Spirituality is "Jesus" and Stephanie's spirituality is "righteousness." God is "everything" and Stephanie's God is "Stephanie's one and only."

Stephanie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "no clue." Stephanie's Self as Sacred Feminine is "not really thought of that."

Dana, "I am LOST"

Dana's Female Body: Dana¹⁶⁹ described herself as a "split personality, vivacious and scared and depressed." "I am lost." Dana believes that the female body is "beautiful on everyone else" and that her body is "filled with shame, bad, damaged, ugly, and fat." Dana stated that, in general, "I like hands, big male hands" and that "she loves her hands and that she is proud of her fingers, especially that her nails are real."

Dana's Thoughts and Emotions: Dana stated that "emotions get us into trouble" and "my emotions are all over the place at a level 8/9, I have no control over my emotions." Dana described thinking as "important" and her way of thinking is "totally Catabolic, continual, has to change." Dana says that knowing is "knowing the Truth, capital T" and her way of knowing is "based on everything that was ingrained from birth." Dana states that truth is "true, joy, purity, belief system, it is God, energetic force that connects us to happiness and peace." Dana states, "My truth is embedded in me to hurt myself; I will do anything to hurt myself, falling deeper, and rise like the Phoenix."

¹⁶⁹ Audio video file Phase I interview RP11PHI.

Dana and Power: When asked about power, Dana responded that she had a “choking vision, very intense, power over me.” Dana stated, “I don’t have power over myself or others.” Dana believes that empowerment is “really a blessing and a gift” and she is “not allowed to have power or be empowered.” Dana describes the world as “dangerous” and her world is “very small.” Dana believes that, in general, “life is painful” and “my life is a waste, I have wasted it, I wasted my talents.”

Dana and Love: When asked about love, Dana states that she “never experienced love, it is a hallmark movie.” When asked about her way of loving, Dana stated, “I don’t.”

Dana and Spirituality: Dana states, “Spirit is the healer, wish, promise, feel it” and “I am completely disassociated with the Spirit.” Dana states that God is “somewhere” and her family “didn’t believe God existed.” Dana states about her God, “God is waiting for me to say I’m sorry.”

Dana and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine, “it’s a façade.” Dana states that she has been “disconnected from the Sacred Feminine since 2008 after being involved in Mama Gena’s School of Womanly Arts,¹⁷⁰ pussy power, and tap into Goddess.” When asked about herself as Sacred Feminine, Dana stated, “No, I was shamed about my body.”

Helen, “I am a divorced woman with a story”

Helen’s Female Body: Helen¹⁷¹ describes herself as “loving, giving, peaceful person who likes animals.” “I am a divorced woman with a story to tell.” The female

¹⁷⁰ Mama Gena is Regena Thomashauer. Facebook.com/mamagena/April 22, 2020. She is a relationship expert, educator, and author that teaches the lost “womanly arts” of identifying your desires and knowing sensual pleasure because making pleasure a priority can help you reach your goals.

¹⁷¹ Audio video file Phase I interview RP8PHI.

body is a “temple” and her female body is “a temple of love, wisdom.” Hands “create things, give, and share” and Helen’s hands are “my life.”

Helen’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “an expression.” Helen’s emotions are an “expression of self, feeling wonderment, level seven.” Thinking is “everything, creating” and Helen’s way of thinking is “positive, pretty good, light.” Knowing is “power” and Helen’s way of knowing is “very powerful, searching for truth.” Truth is “ultimately who you are” and Helen’s truth is “life, always waking up on my truth.”

Helen and Power: Power is “wisdom” and Helen’s power is “delightful.” Empowerment is “to do what you need and want to do” and Helen’s sense of empowerment “has been belittled, working on a lot of it.”

Helen’s World and Life: The world is “fast,” and Helen’s world is “small.” Life is a “wonderful thing” and Helen’s life is a “progress and work.”

Helen and Spirituality: Spirit is “who you are, self” and Helen’s spirit is “great, glowing, bright light” and her spirit is “work in progress, love.” Spirituality is “basis of who we are” and Helen’s spirituality is “work in progress, love, who am I.” God is “love” and her God is “love, happiness.”

Helen and Sacred Feminine: For Sacred Feminine, Helen states, “I haven’t thought of that before.” And for herself as Sacred Feminine, Helen says, “guarded,” than adds, “Sacred Feminine, that’s a wonderful thing.”

Woman’s Encounter with the Handless Maiden and Sacred Feminine

The researcher engages women in a reflective practice through storytelling and introduces the concept of the Sacred Feminine as an intervention. The researcher meets with each woman individually in Phase I. The researcher shares a brief history of the

myth of the “Handless Maiden” and the use of storytelling in women’s circles to share wisdom and understanding as it relates to a women’s journey, particularly as it relates to violence.

After the story is read from start to the section where the handless maiden meets the king, the women are invited to comment on the story. After some discussion, the researcher invites the women to reflect on the parts of the story where the maiden demonstrates agency, speaks, and responds.

It is at this point where the concept of Sacred Feminine is introduced. The women are not given a description or model for the Sacred Feminine. The concept of the Sacred Feminine is illustrated only by the ritual actions, emotional responses, and words of the Handless Maiden, emphasizing her way of being. The researcher focuses on four specific events in the story; initial spiritual ritual of washing creating a sacred space of protection, the cleansing tears, the spirit that emerges, accompanies, and supports her journey into the world, and when she is named human and spirit.

Each event creates an opportunity for women to experience and imagine the possibility that she is innately Sacred Feminine which is fundamental to her createdness. The woman is invited to be in the question of herself as innately Sacred Feminine.

Women’s Consciousness Responses after Discussion

Katy, “I am enlightened”

Katy’s Female Body: Katy describes her overall view of herself as “enlightened” and her body as “sacred.”

Katy’s Thoughts and Emotions: Katy said her emotional state is “happy, at a level 9.” Katy views her way of thinking as “introspective.”

Katy and Power: Katy stated that “power is natural” and her sense of her power is “good” while her sense of empowerment is that she feels “strong, empowered.”

Katy’s World and Life: Katy’s view of life, in general, is “complex, beautifully introspective.” Her life is “worthwhile, meaningful,” and the world is “beautiful.”

Katy and Spirituality: Spirituality for Katy is “in me and part of me.” Katy’s spirit is “beautiful,” and ever present.” In general, Katy says, “God is genderless” and for her, “God is loving, gentle.”

Katy and Sacred Feminine: Katy states that the Sacred Feminine is “grace.”

Crystal, “I am powerful”

Crystal’s Female Body: Crystal describes herself as “positive.” “I am powerful.” Crystal describes the female body as “beautiful” and her body as “temple.” Female hands are “power” and Crystal’s hands are “magic.”

Crystal’s Thoughts and Emotions: Crystal believes that emotions are “sacred,” and her emotions are “peaceful, level 9.”¹⁷² Crystal describes thinking as “happy” and her way of thinking is “smooth and clear.” Knowing is “trust” and her way of knowing, “just is, being present.” For Crystal, “Truth is power” and “my truth is powerful.”

Crystal and Power: Crystal describes power as “flowing”¹⁷³ and “my power is expanding.” Empowerment is “deep.”

Crystal’s World and Life: For Crystal, “the world is stunning” and her world is “better than I could ever imagine.” “Life is clear” and my “life is manifesting.”

Crystal and Spirituality: Crystal describes the spirit as “everywhere” and “my spirit is beaming.” Crystal describes God as everywhere and her God is “calm.”

¹⁷² Muscle test read as weak, no arm strength.

¹⁷³ Muscle test read as weak, no arm strength.

Crystal and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “goddess” and herself as Sacred Feminine is “trustworthy.”

Aubrey, “I am still strong”

Aubrey’s Female Body: Aubrey¹⁷⁴ describes herself as “learning and growing.” “I am still strong.” Aubrey states that the female body is “beautiful,” and her female body is “incredible, awesome, been put through a lot.”¹⁷⁵ Hands “create” and Aubrey’s hands “care.”

Aubrey’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions “feelings, abundant.” Aubrey’s emotion is “still working on them, be in touch, feel, level seven.” Thinking is “knowledge, clarity, journaling” and Aubrey’s way of thinking is “self-discovery.” Knowing is “knowledge is power” and Aubrey’s way of knowing is “seeking truth.”

Aubrey and Power: Power is “taking power” and Aubrey’s power is “ambivalent, self-power, past power.”¹⁷⁶ Empowerment is “positive direction, growth, encouragement, support, clarity” and Aubrey’s empowerment, “I feel empowered, ability, different, thoughts, ideas, and background.”

Aubrey’s World and Life: The world is “crazy, complicated” and Aubrey’s world is “small, comfortable, tight knit,¹⁷⁷ closed, I need to make it bigger, let people in.” Life is “flower, lily, blooming” and Aubrey’s life is “progress, path, journey.”

¹⁷⁴ Aubrey gave each answer with a tonal lift as though it was a question.

¹⁷⁵ Aubrey tested low strength on the muscle test. She responded, “been through a lot” which tested stronger.

¹⁷⁶ Aubrey tested zero strength on the muscle test. She responded, “self-power,” which tested as middle strength. Aubrey stated, “past power” which tested stronger.

¹⁷⁷ Aubrey tested zero strength on the muscle test. She changed her response to “closed, I need to make it bigger, let people in.” which tested middle strength on the muscle test.

Aubrey and Love: Love is “happiness, solution” and Audrey’s love is “my family, the kids, keeping them close, empowerment.”¹⁷⁸

Aubrey and Spirituality: The spirit is “free spirit” and Aubrey’s spirit is “journey, growth.”¹⁷⁹ Spirituality is “universe, peace.” Aubrey’s spirituality is “clarity, boob job.”¹⁸⁰ Aubrey says that God is “power, creator, universe” and her God is “still a question, blank.”

Aubrey and Sacred Feminine: Aubrey says that the Sacred Feminine is “empathetic, caring, better leaders, empowerment, sensing, woman, sisterhood.” and Aubrey’s Self as the Sacred Feminine is “love, self-care.”

Jessica, “I am confused”

Jessica’s Female Body: Jessica describes herself as “weak.”¹⁸¹ “I am confused.” The female body is “your temple” and Jessica’s female body is “my temple.”¹⁸² Hands are “healing,” and Jessica’s hands “are trying to figure it out.”

Jessica’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “controlling” and Jessica’s “emotions can overpower her mind, at a level of seven.” Thinking is “endless thoughts, sleepless nights” and Jessica’s way of thinking “has a huge impact on what happens and change.” Jessica says that with knowing, “you never truly know” and Jessica’s way of knowing is “life, things, the hard way.” Truth is “forgiving and healing, rewarding and living” and Jessica’s truth “sets her free.”

¹⁷⁸ Aubrey tested zero strength on the muscle test. She changed her response to “empowerment” which tested strong.

¹⁷⁹ Aubrey tested weak strength on the muscle test. She changed her answer to “learning” which tested strong.

¹⁸⁰ Aubrey tested strong for “clarity” and zero for “boob job” on the muscle test.

¹⁸¹ Jessica’s muscle test for “weak” is very weak.

¹⁸² Jessica’s muscle test on female body is a “temple” is very weak.

Jessica and Power: Power is “a thankless job, reworking if you utilize it” and Jessica’s sense of power “is to get her power back, transition.” Empowerment is “an essential part of life, do and feel good” and Jessica’s self as empowerment is “is inspiring to others, get them through.” Voice is “to be heard” and Jessica’s voice is “loud, never heard.”¹⁸³

Jessica’s World and Life: The world is “yours, how you perceive it” and Jessica’s world is “gonna get better.” Life is “hard right now, pointless” and Jessica’s life is “thankful, don’t know purpose.”

Jessica and Love: Love is “best feeling ever” and Jessica’s way of love is “hard, too much.”

Jessica and Spirituality: Spirit is “awakening,” and Jessica’s spirit is “deep.” Spirituality is “guide” and Jessica’s spirituality is “I am.” God is “great” and Jessica’s God is “good to me, divine timing.”

Jessica and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “empowering.” Jessica’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “doesn’t respect Self as Sacred Feminine.”

Tara, “I am better than I thought”

Tara’s Female Body: Tara described herself as “clearer.” “I am better than I thought.” The female body is “sacred” and Tara’s female body is “sacred, powerful.” Hands are “a symbol” and Tara’s hands are “powerful.”

Tara’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions “need to be explained”¹⁸⁴ and Tara’s emotions are “heightened, level ten.” Thinking, “don’t overthink” and Tara’s way of thinking is “to limit over thinking process.” Knowing is “valuable” and Tara’s way of

¹⁸³ Jessica’s muscle test for my voice is “loud and not heard” is weak.

¹⁸⁴ Tara’s muscle test read weak.

knowing “is necessary to use her power.”¹⁸⁵ Truth is “powerful” and Tara’s truth “will give her more strength.”

Tara and Power: Power is “unlimited,” and Tara’s sense of power is “waiting to be used.” Empowerment is “needed,” and Tara’s sense of empowerment is “a necessity.”

Tara’s World and Life: The world is “vulnerable”¹⁸⁶ and Tara’s world is “starting to make sense.” Life is a “journey” and Tara’s life is “going to get better.”

Tara and Love: Love “still needs to be explained”¹⁸⁷ and Tara’s love is “cautious.”¹⁸⁸

Tara and Spirituality: Spirit is “friend” and Tara’s spirit is “ready.” Spirituality is “a gift” and Tara’s spirituality is “very powerful.” God is “everywhere,” and Tara’s God is “within.”¹⁸⁹

Tara and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “the ultimate power” and Tara’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “is ready to be cleansed.”

Deborah, “I’m good”

Deborah’s Female Body: Deborah describes herself as “nice.” Deborah says, “I am ok.” The female body is “pretty cool, we can carry a human baby” and Deborah’s female body is “ok.” Hands are “fine,” and Deborah’s hands are “fine.”

Deborah Thoughts and Emotions: Deborah’s emotions are “good, level five.” Thinking is “using your brain.” Deborah’s way of thinking “ok.” Knowing is “knowing” and Deborah’s way of thinking is “a gut feeling.” Truth is “being honest.”

¹⁸⁵ Tara’s muscle test read weak.

¹⁸⁶ Tara’s muscle test read weak.

¹⁸⁷ Tara’s muscle test read weak.

¹⁸⁸ Tara’s muscle test read weak.

¹⁸⁹ Tara’s muscle test read weak.

Deborah and Power: Power is “to try to control lives” and power for Deborah, “if it is used for my benefit, it is good.” Empowerment is “being able to change the bad to good” and Deborah’s sense of empowerment is “better today.”

Deborah World and Life: The world is “round,” and Deborah’s world is “fine.” Life is “good, good to be alive” and Deborah says, “I’m very happy to be alive.”

Deborah and Love: Love is a “beautiful thing” and Deborah’s way of loving is “by never hurting people or things.”

Deborah and Spirituality: Spirit is “inside you, your inner you” and Deborah’s spirit is her “inner spirit.” God is “awesome,” and Deborah’s God is “Jesus.”

Deborah and Sacred Feminine: Deborah states that she has “no clue” about the Sacred Feminine and herself as Sacred Feminine.

Sophia, “I am at peace”

Sophia’s Female Body: Sophia describes herself as “tired.” The female body is “fragile” and Sophia’s female body is “strong.” Hands are “significant,” and Sophia’s hands are “are blessing.”

Sophia’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “fleeting” and Sophia’s emotions are her “surprised, level seven.” Thinking is “necessary,” and Sophia’s way of thinking is “a curse sometimes.” Knowing is “connecting” and Sophia’s way of knowing is “connection.” Truth is “what I believe” and Sophia’s truth is “my light.”

Sophia and Power: Power is “what we make of it” and Sophia’s power is “my presence.” Empowerment is “letting go” and Sophia’s sense of empowerment is “honesty.”

Sophia's World and Life: The world is "magnificent"¹⁹⁰ and Sophia's world is "more magnificent." Life is "a gift" and Sophia's life is "is even more of a gift."

Sophia and Spirituality: Spirit is "fun," and Sophia's spirit is "a lot of fun."¹⁹¹ Spirituality is "an adventure" and Sophia's spirituality is "my life." God is "my best friend"¹⁹² and Sophia's says that "God is in everyone."

Sophia and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "powerful" and Sophia's Self as Sacred Feminine is "awakening."

Stella, "I am in power"

Stella's Female Body: Stella describes herself as "powerful in body and mind." and "flip the script." "I am in power." The female body is "creation" and her female body is "the essence of woman." Hands are "magical" and Stella's hands are "magical."¹⁹³

Stella's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "cleansing" and her emotional state is "releasing," at a level 10. Thinking is a "point of reference" and Stella's way of thinking is "deep." Knowing is "expansion" and Stella stated way of knowing, "I am in the right place in order to expand for deeper healing." Truth is "freedom" and Stella's truth is "owning her freedom."

Stella and Power: Power is "neutral," and Stella's power is "inspired by a light source, creator." Empowerment is "in power" and Stella's sense of her empowerment is "realizing my true potential."

Stella's World and Life: Stella describes the world as "lite up" and her world as "lite up with fire, blazing." Life is "amazing," and Stella's life is "sacred."

¹⁹⁰ Muscle tested weak

¹⁹¹ Muscle tested weak

¹⁹² Muscle tested weak.

¹⁹³ Stella's muscle tested weak or very weak, no muscle strength, on nearly every response.

Stella and Love: Love is “unconditional,” and her way of loving is “healing.”

Stella and Spirituality: Spirit is “inspired” and herself as “spirit is “free, white bird.” Spirituality is the “key, connect” and her spirituality is “the key to my freedom and realizing my power.” God is “co-creator” and Stella’s God is “I am.”

Stella and Sacred Feminine: Stella described an image for sacred feminine. The image is an “infinity symbol with a heart” which she has tattooed to her wrist. Stella stated that herself as sacred feminine is “esteemed.”

Anna, “I am the Sacred Feminine”

Anna’s Female Body: Anna described herself as “powerful in this moment, my reiki self, and a Reiki master.” She shouted, “I am the Sacred Feminine.” Female body as beautiful and that her body is “still in transition.” Hands are “power, independence” and her hands are “healing.”¹⁹⁴

Anna’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “like the ocean” and her emotion is “happy, level 10.” Thinking is “in my head” and her way of thinking “needs to empower myself.” Knowing is “in your gut” and her way of knowing is “in your instincts.” Truth is still “important,” and Anna’s truth is ‘Mine.’

Anna and Power: Power is “me” and Anna’s power is “reiki.” Empowerment is God and her sense of empowerment is “my sobriety.”

Anna’s World and Life: World is “still in trouble” and Anna’s world is “full of potential.” Life is “good,” and her life is “good and in transition.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Anna muscle tested weak.

¹⁹⁵ Anna Muscle tested weak for her answer good. She changed her answer to “in Transition” which tested strong.

Anna and Spirituality: Spirit and her sense of spirit is “everything,” spirituality is “the spirit in me” and her spirituality is “from within me.” God is “within me” and her God is “a being inside of me.”

Anna and Sacred Feminine: Anna states that the sacred feminine is “me” and her sense of the sacred feminine is “growing.”

Barbie, "I am my own Sacred Feminine"

Barbie’s Female Body: Barbie describes herself as “more aware.” Barbie states “I am my own sacred feminine.” The female body is “beautiful.” Barbie’s female body is “beautiful.”¹⁹⁶ Hands “have power.” Barbie’s hands “show my power.”

Barbie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “true.” Barbie’s emotions are “balanced, level ten.” Thinking is “good.” Barbie’s way of thinking is “still learning.”¹⁹⁷ Knowing is “helpful.”¹⁹⁸ Barbie’s way of knowing is “my awareness.”

Barbie and Power: Power is “good, you have to keep your own power.”¹⁹⁹ Barbie’s power is “for myself, my own goodness.”²⁰⁰ Empowerment is “happiness”²⁰¹ and Barbie’s sense of her empowerment is “contentment.” Truth is “power.” Barbie’s truth is “to myself.”

Barbie’s World and Life: The world is “wild.” Barbie’s world is “getting resolved.” Life is “happy.”²⁰² Barbie’s life is “happy, content.”

¹⁹⁶ Barbie muscle tested weak for her female body is “beautiful.”

¹⁹⁷ Muscle tested weak.

¹⁹⁸ Muscle tested weak.

¹⁹⁹ Barbie muscle tested weak for power is “good.” She changed her response and tested strong for power is “you have to keep your own power.”

²⁰⁰ Barbie muscle tested weak and changed her response to my own goodness and tested strong.

²⁰¹ Muscle tested weak.

²⁰² Muscle tested weak.

Barbie and Spirituality: Spirit is “good to have.” Barbie’s spirit is “a happy spirit.”²⁰³ Spirituality is “a must.” Barbie’s spirituality is “trying to get figured out.” God is “good.” Barbie’s God is “true.”

Barbie and Sacred Feminine: The sacred Feminine is “new.” Barbie’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “just starting to figure out.”²⁰⁴

Stephanie, “I am pleased”

Stephanie’s Female Body: Stephanie²⁰⁵ describes herself as “content.” She states, I am pleased.” The female body is “sacred” and Stephanie’s female body is “precious.” Hands are “holy,” and Stephanie’s hands are “receiving.”

Stephanie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “here,” and Stephanie’s emotion is “happy, level nine. Thinking is “overload” and Stephanie’s way of thinking is” to be ok, vulnerable, use what I have.” Knowing is “peace” and Stephanie’s way of knowing is “peace.”

Stephanie and Power: Stephanie says that “power is mine and God’s” and her power is “His.” Empowerment is “for everyone, share” and Stephanie’s sense of empowerment is “good.”

Stephanie’s World and Life: The world is “I don’t know, large” and Stephanie’s world is “open.” Life is “good,” and Stephanie’s life is “happy.”

²⁰³ Muscle tested weak.

²⁰⁴ Barbie Muscle tested weak.

²⁰⁵ Researcher chose not to muscle test Stephanie.

Stephanie and Spirituality: Spirit is “free,” and Stephanie’s spirit is “free.” Spirituality is “that feminine thing, sacred feminine” and Stephanie’s spirituality is “gonna be fun.” God is “my friend” and Stephanie’s God is “holy.”

Stephanie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “me” and Stephanie’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “fun.”

Dana, “I am me”

Dana’s Female Body: Dana described herself as a “powerful, lite-up.” “I am me.” Dana believes that the female body is “fabulous” and that her body is “pretty fucking hot for almost sixty.” Dana stated that, in general, “hands are for stroking, caressing” and that her hands “are fucking fabulous.”

Dana’s Thoughts and Emotions: Dana stated that “emotions are to be managed” and “my emotions don’t have to determine my actions, at a level 6/7.” Dana stated, “thinking can lead to change” and her way of thinking is “has to change.” Dana says that knowing is “conviction” and her way of knowing is “is allowing.” Dana states that “truth is all there is.” Dana states, “My truth is seeking to emerge.”

Dana and Power: When asked about power, Dana responded, “power is to be cultivated” and “my power is evolving.” Dana believes that empowerment is “is a good thing” and her “sense of empowerment is rising.”

Dana’s World and Life: Dana says, “the world can be a pretty nice place” and her world is “expanding.” Dana believes that, in general, “Life ain’t so bad” and “my life has possibilities.”

Dana and Love: When asked about love, Dana states that “love is all there is.” When asked about her way of loving, Dana stated, “I would like to experience love.”

Dana and Spirituality: Dana states that the Spirit and her spirit is “within me and us.” Dana states that “God is equalizer, balance.” Dana states about her God, “God is somebody I’d like to get to know better.”

Dana and Sacred Feminine: Dana states, “the Sacred Feminine is really the Truth” and herself as Sacred Feminine is “seeking to energize.”

Helen, “I am comfortable, well-received, and speaking of deep self”

Helen’s Female Body: Helen describes herself as “opening up to new ideas.” “I am comfortable, well received, and speaking of deep self.” The female body is “sacred,” and my female body is “sacred, very important, and personal.” Hands are “life” and Helen’s hands are “life-sustaining.”

Helen’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “high,” and her emotions are “tearful, at a level of ten plus.” Thinking is “provocative,” and her way of thinking is “analytical.” Knowing is “getting to know your inner girl” and your way of knowing is “investigating.” Truth is seeking “knowledge” and Helen’s truth is “finding knowledge, learning is powerful.”

Helen and Power: Power is “everything, important” and Helen’s sense of power is “light, getting brighter.” Empowerment is “bright light” and Helen’s sense of empowerment is “very important, nurture and find my little girl.”

Helen’s World and Life: The world “can be a harsh place” and Helen’s world is “comfortable, safe.” Life is “scary,” and Helen’s life is “guarded.”

Helen and Spirituality: Spirit is “warm, dim, and cold” and Helen’s spirit is “bright, happy.” Spirituality is “no answer” and Helen’s spirituality is “more searching.” God is “all knowing” and Helen’s God is “love, my truth.”

Helen and Sacred Feminine: Sacred Feminine is “to be desired” and Helen’s Self as Sacred Feminine is to “improve on my sacred.”

Transformation: From Woman Survivors to Sacred Feminine

Women’s Experiences of Childhood Abuses

Childhood physical, sexual, and emotional abuse is a common theme in many of the women’s childhood experiences. Mental illness and alcoholism appeared to be contributing factors in many of the households where abuse, sexual assault, and neglect were denied, condoned, and perpetrated.

Stephanie experienced physical torture, isolation, and sexual molestation at the age of five along with verbal, emotional abuse. She was forced into prostitution, drugs, and trafficking at the age of fourteen. Jessica, Deborah, Anna, and Stella experienced physical beatings and emotional violence.

While Deborah is isolated in her home with a physically abusive father and an obsessively controlling mother, Anna is unsupervised, running the streets, and drinking alcohol by the age of nine. Stella’s experience of abuse was from her mother. Jessica was beaten by her brother with whom she slept with and sought comfort. Jessica was also molested by a woman family friend in adolescence who remained a family friend even after exposure. Aubrey was molested and involved in a dating relationship for four years with a pedophile and family friend twenty-five years older.

Emotional abuse, absentee parents, conforming to cultural beauty standards, and body shaming is another form of abuse that is experienced as painfully as physical abuse. Dana experience extreme forms of body shaming from her mother at a very young age

and sexual violation. Katy and Crystal were expected to meet standards of beauty determined by their mother to attract and elicit male attention.

Tara became the head of her father's home, caring for her siblings, when her mother left at twelve. Aubrey was caring for her younger siblings while her mother was working and involved with other men. Barbie's father and brother died when she was young, leaving her alone with a deeply depressed and emotionally absent mother. Sophia, whose parents were emotionally unavailable, sought attention with older men dancing in nightclubs.

Not all childhoods are abusive that result in domestic violence. Helen described her childhood as fun. Her father was mostly absent, but her mother was present and fun. Helen became pregnant in high school and with the support of her mother and grandmother, Helen had her baby, graduated from school, and raised her son into adulthood.

Women's Experiences of Objectification of Herself and "Others"

The women survivors of violence appear to be primarily object and "other" focused. They spoke almost exclusively about the "other" in her life. Even when asked about herself specifically, her response was focused on the "other" in her life. She told stories about the "other" as the main character in her life. The researcher listened attentively, realizing that the researcher knew little about the women herself and knew extensively about the details of the "others" in her life.

When the object of her attention is another person, "other," her focus is on her doing for "other:" helping, loving, caring, and empowering, for example. Most of the women happily self-identified as helpers and care takers. The "other" is the object for

which she is attempting to have some level of control in order to get her desired response: love, approval, and security, for example. Her power lies in being the doer, the “helper,” for the “other” who is helpless, powerless, and unable to do for themselves.

When she feels helpless or powerless in her own subjectivity, she finds relief and power in her ability to help “others.” When the “other” negates or diminishes her “help,” she feels confused, helpless, and powerless. This is a common theme embedded in the stories shared by most of the woman.

When she experiences herself as the object of the “other,” then her focus is on forming herself into the object of the “others” perceived desire in order to get her desired response. Barbie, Crystal, and Katy were raised to view themselves through the eyes of men. Stephanie, as a child sex worker, knew her survival depended on attracting “Johns” and “Janes.” Her power lies in her ability to conform and attract the “other.” When the “other” is not attracted, she feels powerless and helpless. Her life is endangered. Confusion, emotional turbulence, and chaos is the result, especially when the response is abuse, violence, and degradation.

When the woman survivor is both the “object” of the focus of the “other” and the “other” is the object of her focus, than herself as a subject with subjectivity is distorted. In other words, her sense of self is a reflection of the “other” and not as a result of herself seeing herself through her own eyes. This reflection of the “other” of herself and desire to conform appears to constrict and imprison the women in a way of being, thinking, and acting that recycles the trauma of objectification throughout her brain and body.

Confusion, emotional turbulence, and chaos is the result of the objectification oneself and “others,” especially when the response to being objectified is abuse, violence,

and degradation. Trauma appears to be the result of the objectification of oneself and “others.”

Sacred Feminine as Interruption and Consciousness

Interruption of the cycle of objectification is critical for halting the recycling of trauma from objectification and for healing her brain-body through her consciousness of herself as sacred, as a subject with subjectivity, and subjective action. Trauma is the result of the objectification of oneself and others. It is the belief that one’s beingness is an object formed, constrained, and imprisoned by external forces. Healing is the process of interruption and consciousness of oneself as a sacred being, a subject with subjectivity, and subjective action.

The Sacred Feminine is the interruption that creates an opportunity to halt recycling the trauma of objectification. The Sacred Feminine construct creates an interruption and space for consciousness. The Sacred Feminine is the interruption of one’s objectification of self to allow for the subject of self to emerge and expand, not only as a conscious being, but as a sacred embodied conscious woman being in the world. Her sacred embodied woman beingness’ worth and dignity is innate by her created nature as imaged in the Divine. The Sacred Feminine construct creates an opportunity for reflection and reflexivity of consciousness of one’s innate divinity, both as human and spirit.

The interruption of the Sacred Feminine creates space for women to reflect on herself as Sacred Feminine. The researcher as Sacred Feminine acted as the interruption and the creator of space for consciousness. The Handless Maiden as Sacred Feminine acted as an interruption and created space for reflection. Intentionally, the researcher did

not define nor identify specifically the characteristics of the Sacred Feminine. By not defining Sacred Feminine, the woman is able to reflect and image herself as Sacred Feminine.

Her first interruption is responding to conscious raising questions and inquiries about herself. The use of consciousness raising questions creates opportunity for women to explore her beliefs about herself and the world she lives in. Her second interruption is the researcher halting her story in places of strength, agency, and authority in order to draw the focus back to herself. It was not uncommon in the interview process to for the researcher to gently interrupt multiple times and return the woman's attention to herself as the center of focus of her experience.

Just as important as the responses she gives is a conscious reflection on her responses. When the researcher repeated the responses and compared her initial responses to her concluding response, the consciousness of herself as a subject expanded even further.

Women Survivor's Initial Response to the Sacred Feminine

The concept of Sacred Feminine as a spiritual construct, resource, or theological theme is unknown to most of the women. Six of the women had never heard of Sacred Feminine prior to the interview. The other woman had vague concepts or ideas about the Sacred Feminine. None of the woman has a concrete definition or meaning associated with the Sacred Feminine. When asked about themselves as Sacred Feminine, most of the women were confused, uncertain, and paused to reflect on the idea of herself as Sacred Feminine.

Katy, Jessica, Deborah, Barbie, Stephanie, and Helen had never heard of the concept nor the words, Sacred Feminine, before the interview. Crystal named the Sacred Feminine as divine. Anna identified the Sacred Feminine as Mary. Both Aubrey and Tara, mothers of young children, connected the Sacred Feminine with women's physical bodies, womb, childbirth, and a consciousness of women's ways of being woman. Sophia and Stella, both involved with human trafficking, shared that there is something not yet known in their understanding of Sacred Feminine. For Sophia, the Sacred Feminine is misguided and for Stella, the Sacred Feminine is the missing piece of the puzzle. Dana has a negative association with the Sacred Feminine as Mama Gena's School of Womanly Arts.

Engaging the Sacred Feminine

Engaging the Sacred Feminine as a spirit, spiritual way of woman being, and spiritual space of protection created powerful experiences of creativity, shifts in consciousness, and transformation. Three major themes emerged from the women's experience with the Sacred Feminine. Helen, who's experience was slightly different, will be presented separately. The three major themes are: I am the Sacred Feminine, the Sacred Feminine is Power, and the Sacred Feminine as a Symbol.

I am the Sacred Feminine

Three of the women, Anna, Barbie, and Stephanie, self-identified with the image of the Sacred Feminine. All three women are approximately the same age, in their mid-fifties. Anna initially self-identified with the Sacred Feminine and Mary as the Sacred Feminine. They appear to connect with the Handless Maiden and her experience of family violence. The women experienced severe physical abuse by her spouses and stated

that physical abuse is normal. The Handless Maiden can protect herself from evil but sacrificed herself to family abuse. The Handless Maiden is supported by a Spirit that guides her and nourishes her. The Sacred Feminine is the site and source of her power to survive.

Sacred Feminine and the fabulous princess. Barbie's body-image construct as Sacred Feminine appears to be Fabulous Princess. The Sacred Feminine possibly aligns with her current internal construct of self as beautiful, negating the feel and effects of abuse on her body. Barbie has not considered woman as sacred, stating that she never heard of that. Barbie's power appears to be in her strong sense of beauty and her devotion to men. Barbie's prefers not to do much thinking, though it is required. Despite her history of abuse, Barbie's world view is essentially positive, though wild and crazy. There is something about wild and crazy that appeals to Barbie. Her new way of being the Sacred Feminine is that thinking is good, and she is learning to think for herself. It is her connection with the way of being of the Sacred Feminine that begins her process of thinking clearly and freeing herself from the abusive powerful princes have over fabulous princesses in the name of love.

Since childhood, Barbie stated that she is the best, like a fabulous princess. She didn't want to work hard and be sad like her mother after her father died. She wants a princess life with a prince to love and care for her, happily ever after.

Barbie admits that she is beginning to remember the severe abuse committed by her deceased husband, wondering how she forgot it. When asked, Barbie admits to not feeling her body, except to say that she loves sex. Barbie admits being attracted to men who end up being abusive, brushing her deceased husband's abuses off with the flick of

her hand, as “craziness” and “nonsense.” During Barbie’s relationship with her recently deceased husband, who abused her in many, even unspeakable, ways in the name of unconditional love and their spiritual marriage, Barbie says she became unrecognizable as a timid, fearful mouse.

Barbie’s deceased husband married her only one month before he died if she promised to stay with him and be his wife forever. Barbie is moving her husband’s urn, as promised, from her bedroom nightstand to his shrine in the great room. Barbie is waiting for his spirit to appear to her. She is still under his power, being the dutiful loving wife.

A few months after her husband died, Barbie started to dress beautifully again, went in search of her next prince charming, falling instantly in love with a new abuser. It’s possible that Barbie, as the Sacred Feminine, can guide Barbie into a new life, free from abuse?

Sacred Feminine and God. Both Stephanie and Anna body-image construct appears to support a spiritual Sacred Feminine construct that is related to God as the source of their power. This is a major shift in consciousness for Stephanie. Both Stephanie and Anna are devoted to their Christian God as the source of their recovery and on-going life. Stephanie and Anna refer to God almost as a scripted response to questions that involve complex thinking, reflection, and introspection.

Anna’s connection to God is through Alcoholics Anonymous. Stephanie attends occasionally non-denomination services and is involved in a women’s group that shares the love of Jesus. Stephanie appears to embrace her body as feminine. Anna experiences herself as a female and sacred, with Reiki energy, and as a healer. Anna attributes her

sobriety, being alive, and life to God. Anna is literal in her way of thinking and admits to confusion and forgetfulness, attributing it to age and alcoholism. She states that she has alcoholic thinking.

Stephanie is easily overwhelmed by thoughts that are constantly assessing her environment and safety. Stephanie describes herself as loved by a deeply committed husband of twenty-five years. She is in a safe and comfortable home with a loving and committed relationship yet continues to live out of her abuse daily.

Anna's home environment is tense, argumentative, and in transition. Anna is struggling to defend her personal space against her ex-husband and son. Anna's home life is still turbulent as she is living intimately with her ex-husband again. They fight frequently. Anna says she loves him, but she doesn't know why. She spends all her time helping them to her personal detriment.

It appears that Stephanie is open to experiencing the love of God through the spiritual construct of the Sacred Feminine. Is this body-image connection with the Sacred Feminine sustainable given their world view as being in trouble and lame? The Sacred Feminine and power. The Sacred Feminine appears as a potential for a spiritual construct for women asserting their body-images of power, warrior, strong, and womb. The Sacred Feminine spiritual construct as embodied power appears to connect with a shift in consciousness and body-image for Aubrey, Jessica, Tara, and Sophia.

Sacred Feminine as powerful woman body. Aubrey's current strong beautiful body-image construct appears to conflict with her past body-image as weak and frail. Aubrey appears to be in a struggle with her new way of thinking and the influence of multiple coaches, motherhood, and fitness experiences around power and her desire to be free of the burden of working, helping, caring, and people. Aubrey is in awe of the power and strength of the female body to carry a child and give birth. The spiritual construct of the Sacred Feminine that creates space for women to honor and embody her power supports Aubrey's new way of being in the world.

Sacred Feminine as empowering. Although Jessica knew nothing of the Sacred Feminine, Jessica's shift in consciousness from a body-image construct as hard, masculine, warrior, and strong to connect creatively with a spiritual construct of the Sacred Feminine is encouraging. Jessica felt empowered as a dancer when she was young. Jessica's connection to the Sacred Feminine as empowering may be her connection to her past experiences as a dancer and her current image of herself as a fun body.

Jessica's world view shifted from complicated to getting better is encouraging. Conversations revolved around her ex-fiancé. It is difficult to get Jessica to talk about anything other than how hard she worked to take care of her ex-fiancé and the loss of herself as a bride, wife, and a potential mother. She feels she wasted many years with him. She still would go back to him if he asked her to get back together.

Jessica's identification to her body as a temple appeared scripted. Jessica appears to have covered and protected her femininity with layers of hardness, including body

weight, that inhibit her from expressing her sensuality, sexuality, and sensitivity. Yet, her clothing is tight fitting, dressing her body as would an athlete or dancer.

In general, Jessica is hard on herself and speaks negatively about herself. Jessica's connection with the Sacred Feminine as empowered reflects a potential way of being that will support Jessica in her journey of healing. Jessica is honest and direct. Admitting that she disrespects herself as Sacred Feminine indicates the possibility exists that she believes herself to be Sacred Feminine. She appears to be open to experience herself and her body as the Sacred Feminine.

Sacred Feminine as ultimate power. Tara appears to have shifted her consciousness of her body-image construct from precious to sacred and powerful through the spiritual construct of the Sacred Feminine as Ultimate Power. Initially, Tara sees the world as toxic and evil, thinking is over-whelming, and emotions are dangerous. Engaging the Sacred Feminine appears to have transformed Tara's consciousness to reflect a potentially new way of thinking and relating with her emotions. Tara's world is starting to make sense and she is better than she thought.

Tara's professional and Facebook image is bright red hair, red lips, and red dress. She eyes are made up with eyeliner like Cleopatra. She refers to herself as a queen in her circle of networking friends. Queen for Tara is ultimate power.

Sacred Feminine as power. Sophia's body-image construct appears to be in transition, awakening from beautiful and misguided to powerful, creating peace, and emotional surprise. Sophia struggles with her way of thinking that is disabling and cursing her life, relying on her emotions to guide and surprise her. Sophia appears to have

pent up, restless energy, which appears to run Sophia off course in her need to help others.

As a certified life coach, Sophia appears to be projecting positivity and confidence outward, yet being guided by emotions and thoughts that are disabling her life. Sophia's world view is magical, and hands are magical. Sophia's power is her presence. Sophia's appears to be stuck between conflicting thoughts and feelings, perhaps arising from her personal experience of trafficking and later, abuse that are inhibiting her from helping others and being a powerful presence. Sophia appears to be open to being in the question, struggling with the discomfort and uncertainty.

Sacred Feminine as Grace, Goddess, Infinite Heart, and Truth

The spiritual construct of the Sacred Feminine appears as symbols of Grace, Goddess, infinite heart and for Katy, Crystal, Stella, and Dana, respectively.

Sacred Feminine as grace. Katy connects to Sacred Feminine as Grace. She has no religious education except her recent acceptance of Jesus and God in her life. Katy recently attended a Christian women's gathering, Women Helping Women Heal. She refused go back as she felt that the women presented blamed the women for being prideful and self-centered. The focus of the gathering was to get the women to accept Jesus as her Lord and Savior. Katy is searching for a father figure and is comforted by a God image as Father. Her powerful reflection was a tearful cry, "Why didn't my father protect me?"

Her reflection on the Handless Maiden as bathing and creating safe space around her body appeared to resonate with Katy. Katy is stiff and wraps her arms around her own body protectively. A model usually flows in her body, graceful in her movements.

Perhaps Katy's connection with the Sacred Feminine is connected to her experience of herself modeling when she may have flowed gracefully. Grace is beauty and flow.

Sacred Feminine as goddess. Crystal's experience of herself is "hippie." Herself as Sacred Feminine appears to be connected to Crystal's experience of herself as ethereal. Crystal stated that the Sacred Feminine is divine and herself as Sacred Feminine as sacred. Crystal describes the female body is imperfect, not whole, her spirit and truth is blocked, and her way of thinking is chaos. Crystal's earthen light faerie, counter beauty culture, hippie vibe way of being appears to be her way of self-protection in a world and body that may have betrayed her. To understand more fully, it is necessary for the researcher not to assume a what the image of Goddess means to Crystal and to be in the image of Goddess as the embodiment of Crystal. Goddess reflects Crystal and Crystal reflects Goddess. To know what Goddess means is to look at Crystal.

Sacred Feminine as infinite heart. Tattooed on Stella's wrist is a heart and infinity sign overlapping. Stella has physically marked her body with an image that supports her experience of herself. Most of Stella's consciousness responses tested zero muscle strength. Stella is marked and embodies her symbol of the Sacred Feminine. Stella's responses appear to be both honest, insightful, and definitive while also being scripted. They don't appear to match her experiences and story. Stella stated the Sacred Feminine is the missing puzzle piece and herself as Sacred Feminine is connection.

Stella is currently making connections with women who have been trafficked and with organizations that provide support. Stella's world view is dark, as she appears to be aware of the dark side of humanity's behaviors and attitudes based on her own experience

and the experience of the women who have been trafficked. Stella describes her life as anything but pretty.

Stella shares that she experienced a time seven years prior when her hands were cut off. Stella shared an image²⁰⁶ with the researcher that a friend designed to represent her spirit. It is a spade symbol of flames behind pink and black stripes. Stella appears to be projecting a lightness and hope that blinds us or imprisons her fire and darkness. Connecting the Sacred Feminine with the tattoo on her body appears to signify a depth that is beyond words.

Sacred Feminine as truth. Dana's description of herself as a split personality is perhaps her greatest Truth. Dana as Sacred Feminine tells her truth. The struggle to live and experience connection after a lifetime spent in close contact with an abusive mother is her truth. Dana is truth-telling in her interview. She admits to her conflict with living now that she no longer serves the purpose, she believes, that is her reason to live. Her reason to live, she states, is to absorb the insanity of her family. With her mother and father gone, she struggles to find meaning and purpose. That is her Truth.

Shamed for her body both by her mother and then by Mama Gena after her mother's death appears to have reinforced her mother's abusive, shaming words. Although she claims to be disconnected from the Sacred Feminine as defined by Mama Gena, she is deeply connected with the Sacred Feminine of Dana, Truth. Dana as Sacred Feminine is her Truth.

²⁰⁶ See Stella's image in Appendix.

Sacred Feminine as “Find and Nurture My Inner Little Girl”

Helen’s body-image construct appears to be related to creativity. Helen stated that the Sacred Feminine is to be desired. Helen wants to improve on herself as sacred and find and nurture her little girl. It appears that this experience connected Helen’s consciousness with something sacred within her. Helen tearfully identifies this sacred consciousness construct within as an inner girl, as something lost, forgotten, or unknown. This came up through tears as Helen talked about her father and his absence in her life as a child. Even now, he is still distant, with little communication. For Helen, it appears, that empowerment is connected to finding and nurturing Helen’s inner little girl, creating space for her in her life.

Helen’s thinking, power, and well-being is connected to creativity. When she was experiencing domestic violence, Helen removed herself to a private safe space and engaged in creative activities such as jewelry making. She said that the creative process helped her calm down and focus. As she was creating, she was able to open up to other possibilities; seek support, create an escape plan, and leave the relationship.

Although Helen’s initial responses were light and positive, it appears that Helen may be projecting a fairy tale lifestyle where she is the princess, her mother is the queen, and they live in a castle. Helen is currently painting twenty-three one-foot tall Gnomes yard ornaments. It is important to note that Helen’s life view shifted from life is a wonderful thing, progress, and work to life is scary and she is guarded. Helen’s world is comfortable and safe. Creativity is fundamental to Helen’s way of being.

Sacred Feminine as No Clue

Deborah's body-image construct of the Sacred Feminine is non-existent in her mind. She states she has no idea what the Sacred Feminine is or means. It never crossed Deborah's mind to think of a woman as being sacred. "What's that?" she asks jokingly. Deborah's responses to questions about her body and things directly related to herself were minimal, "ok." It is as though her body she is completely disconnected from her body. It's there but she doesn't think about it.

Deborah's responses appear scripted concerning God and Jesus. She doesn't think about it and doesn't seem interested in reflecting on the deeper meaning of God or Jesus. She was raised Christian, reading the bible, and praying to Jesus. Deborah has not yet questioned her faith or her beliefs. Her mother talks about Jesus and how she is a good Christian. Deborah does pray and she identifies as Christian.

Deborah repeated stated that she wants to "let go of the guilt." Most of Deborah's reflection is centered around her guilt over her husband's imprisonment for his abuse, her loss of memory²⁰⁷ around the abusive events, and her insistence that she lied to the police about the events in the moment of abuse. Deborah stated many times, "I'm a liar, I don't remember. I feel guilty." Deborah states many times that she is undecided but wants to go back to her husband when the restraining order terminates in a few months.

²⁰⁷ In a later interview, Deborah stated that she would get black out drunk on the days she anticipated that he would beat her. The researcher, focusing on the descriptions of abuse, failed to inquire as to why Deborah would return to the marriage and failed to inquire more closely about the relationship between Deborah and her sweet, kind, helpful mother. The relational dynamic between mother and daughter appeared in the third phase. Researcher is making this note intentionally as a reminder that abuse is obvious in situations of physical violence and covertly concealed under the disguise of kindness.

Deborah appears to feel conflicted; she says she is glad to be alive and isn't happy. She feels guilty that she isn't happy since she lives in a nice place and gets to go to Georgia. She feels lonely, especially at night.

Deborah loves being on the sailboat. She enjoys the movement and being on the water. It helps her relax and feel happy. Mostly, it's fun. Deborah is always smiling, even when she says she isn't happy. Deborah appears to use her accident, brain injury, and disability as a way of disconnecting and not accepting responsibility for her life nor the process of self-actualization. The concept of self-actualizing appears to be completely foreign to Deborah. When discussing the present or things not related to the accident or the abuse, Deborah is cognizant, clear thinking, focused, funny, and articulate.

Summary of Women's Initial Engagement with The Sacred Feminine

The woman participants are survivors of multiple experiences of abuse, violence, trafficking, pedophilia, and sexual assault. The violence and abuses occurred in intimate relationships, familiar, friend, and acquaintance relationships. Their trauma and recycling of trauma is a result of her objectification of herself and "others." As an object, she is constrained by external forces acting on her embodied space. The result of objectification is confusion, emotional turmoil, and chaos which are experienced as trauma recycling within her brain-body system. Missing is consciousness of herself as a subject, with subjectivity, and capable of subjective action. The Sacred Feminine construct acts as an interrupter of the objectification of self. The Sacred Feminine creates an interruption that creates space for the creative expansion of embodied consciousness. Consciousness is expanded with reflection and reflexivity of herself in relationship with herself and the world. The effect of consciousness in these women is transformation from herself as an

object in the world to herself as subject, as Sacred Feminine in her inner world and in the world.

Initially, over half of the woman had not heard of the Sacred Feminine. The others had vague ideas about the Sacred Feminine. The researcher as Sacred Feminine acted as the interruption and the creator of space for consciousness. The Handless Maiden as Sacred Feminine acted as an interruption and created space for reflection. By not intentionally defining and identifying the characteristics of the Sacred Feminine, the woman images herself as Sacred Feminine.

She, as Sacred Feminine, is not limited, constrained, nor objectified by an external definition or characteristic. There are no right answers, no script to parrot, and no image for them to conform. The Sacred Feminine is subjective to her experience of herself, her imagination, and her reflection on her way of being, thinking, and acting.

The responses of the woman as Sacred Feminine exceeded the expectation of the researcher. Several of women as Sacred Feminine declares herself, "I am Sacred Feminine." Other women connect with Sacred Feminine as power: powerful woman body, empowering, ultimate power, and power. Several of the women as Sacred Feminine identified with symbols, Grace, Goddess, Infinite heart, and Truth. One woman as Sacred Feminine identifies tearfully as Sacred Feminine in her inner little girl. Only one woman of thirteen concluded Phase I with no clue to herself as Sacred Feminine. However, that same woman consciously experienced herself as connecting with the sailing vessel as a space where she can relax. Perhaps Deborah, as Sacred Feminine experienced herself in the Sacred Feminine of the sailing vessel.

Transformation of embodied consciousness requires interruption. The Sacred Feminine is the interrupter and the interruption for creative expansion of space for woman to consciously explore and expand herself as Sacred Feminine in her inner world and in the world.

CHAPTER FIVE. SACRED FEMININE AS EMBODIED CONSCIOUSNESS

Embodied Consciousness of Woman Being-Space

The spiritual construct, the Sacred Feminine, acts as an intervention for creative expansion and exploration of embodied consciousness of body-image constructs as it relates to the female body and each women's unique body. Connecting with the Sacred Feminine construct transformed embodied consciousness of ways of thinking, ways of experiencing emotions, and descriptions of self as more positive, creative, and affirmative.

Previously, three of the women declared, "I am the Sacred Feminine," Four women connected Sacred Feminine with power stating, "The Sacred Feminine is Power, Ultimate Power, and Empowerment." Four women imagined symbols for the Sacred Feminine: Grace, Goddess, Infinite Heart, and Truth. Out of the chaos of women's experiences of violence and reflection on a mythological Handless Maiden, the integration of the Sacred Feminine construct, women's shifts in consciousness resulted in new ways of creatively imaging herself, calming her emotions, thinking, and improving her view of the world.

Women Who Withdrew from the Study

Three women participating in the research study did not participate in Phase II. Helen withdrew without explanation from the study with a text message, thanking researcher for the opportunity. She stated that she wanted her story included in the study and hoped it was helpful. Helen continued friendly communication with researcher for a few months after her withdrawal. Stella sent researcher a symbolic image of herself following the Phase I interview with the text, "live enthusiastically." Stella corresponded

a few times and then communication stopped. Stella's phone number is disconnected. Dana did not continue in the research study and did not return phone calls.

Consciousness of Embodied Space Through Creative Action

Phase II of the study involves women experiencing embodiment through creative physical movement and shifts in consciousness related to spatial orientation and the physical body. Based on Phase I, the women experienced space and her body in space in unique ways. Phase II explores women's experience of her body relative to herself, others, and the world. The researcher has identified several types of spaces in relationship to the women's experience of her body in space: self-space, body-space, creative space, sacred-space, protective-space, and world-space.

Self-space is personal space for which an individual has power and believes is her own space. Body-space is the space that contains her physical body. Creativity-space is the space that is open and available for her to consciously create, grow, and inhabit. Sacred-space is the space that contains God, spirit, or the sacred. Protective-space is the space where the women experience safety and security. World-space is the space that is of the world and encounters self-space.

Women's experiences of herself as a being and her body relative to her inner world and to her external world presented as embodied space. Her body stance and structure appeared as embodied objects relative to her experience of herself and her experience of trauma, sexual assault, violence, and abuse. Embodied space as embodied objects and how that is transformed is the focus of this phase of the research.

Women's Consciousness Responses Before Engagement with Sacred Feminine

Katy, "I am learning, growing"

Katy's Female Body: Katy²⁰⁸ describes herself as "strong, empowered. "I am learning and growing." The female body is "a beautiful machine" and Katy's female body is "healing." Hands are for "holding" and Katy's hands are "strong."

Katy's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "healing, comforting" and Katy's emotions are "thoughtful, level seven." Thinking and Katy's way of thinking is "life-giving and productive." Knowing is "difficult to be certain" and Katy's way of knowing is "striving to know." Truth is "comforting" and Katy's truth is "relieving."

Katy and Power: Power is "still scary" and Katy's power is "hard to control." Empowerment is "freeing and life-giving." Katy's sense of her empowerment is "still being developed."

Katy's World and Life: The world is "scary and unknown" and Katy's world is "becoming safer." Life is "an adventure" and Katy's life is "ever-changing and mean." Voice is to be "used" and Katy's voice "can be heard now."

Katy and Love: Love is "beautiful and healing." Katy's way of loving is "exceptional, special, and unique to me." Katy's way of being loved "requires a lot of energy and care."

Katy and Spirituality: Spirit is "ever-present," and Katy's spirit is "growing brighter." Spirituality is "complicated," and Katy's spirituality is "in flux." God is "all powerful, loving, and healing. Katy's God is "all powerful, loving, and healing."

²⁰⁸ Audio video file Phase II interview RP1PHII.

Katy and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “mystical, distant.” Katy’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “hard to relate.”

Crystal, “I am incredible”

Crystal’s Female Body: Crystal²⁰⁹ describes herself as “strong, empowered.” “I am incredible.” The female body is “stunning” and Crystal’s female body is “beautiful.” Hands are “healing” and Crystals hands are “powerful, full of energy.”

Crystal’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “welcome” and Crystals emotion is “peaceful, level eight.” Thinking is “calm” and Crystal’s way of thinking is “sporadic.” Knowing is “changing and growing” and Crystal’s way of knowing is “shifting.” Truth is “powerful when spoken” and Crystal’s truth is “rising.”

Crystal and Power: Power is “magic and energy” and Crystal’s power is “blooming.” Empowerment is “precious” and Crystals sense of empowerment is “powerful.” The world is a “reflection” and Crystal’s world is “beautiful.” Life is “sacred,” and Crystal’s life is “sacred.”

Crystal and Love: Love is “sacred” Crystal’s way of loving is “gentle” and her way of being loved is “being heard.”

Crystal and Spirituality: Spirit “moves and flows” and Crystal’s spirit is “resilient, can’t be broken.” Spirituality is “sacred” and Crystal’s spirituality “needs connection.” God is “source” and Crystal’s God is “gracious.”

Crystal and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “divine” and Crystal’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “balanced.”

²⁰⁹ Audio video file Phase II interview RP3PHII.

Aubrey, “I am mom, wife, woman, sister, and someday, mother’s daughter”

Aubrey’s Female Body: Aubrey²¹⁰ describes herself as “strong, focused, ambitions.” “I am mom, wife, woman, sister, and, someday, mother’s daughter.” The female body is “capable, strong” and Aubrey’s female body is “capable, stuffed from food, back hurts from working out at gym.” Hands “do, tell tales, bankers watch tellers’ hands for theft, tell tales of the type of work and the type of life, beauty, ease, and affluence.” Aubrey’s hands are “getting older, look rough.”

Aubrey’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “abundant, fluid, roller coaster, triggers” and Aubrey’s emotions are “calm, imitated, frustrated, level seven.” Thinking is “logic, concrete, tactical, reason, not feeling” and Aubrey’s way of thinking is “detective, dig deep, reason, instead of feeling.” Knowing is “knowing, certainty, investigation” and Aubrey’s way of knowing is “mom, women’s intuition, incredibly accurate, go with her gut.”

Aubrey and Power: Power is “ability, meant to be shared” and Aubrey’s sense of power is “strong, don’t give up, don’t give up power.” Empowerment is “courage, action, going after, make mistakes and learn” and Aubrey’s sense of empowerment “is mine, do anything that I want, and no one can take it away.”

Aubrey’s World and Life: The world is “big, small, merry, mixed” and Aubrey “keeps her world small, working on making it wider, letting more in, getting more comfortable with women and relationships.” Life is “adventure, taking risks, having courage” and Aubrey’s life is “growing, journey to be more and live more open.”

²¹⁰ Audio video file Phase I interview RP13PHII

Aubrey and Love: Love is “everything, important, caring, compassion, giving, receiving.” Aubrey’s way of loving is “working to make it more compassionate, understanding, patient, sometimes too tough, so easy to snap and dismiss feelings, connection.” Aubrey’s way of being loved is “patience, time, touch.”

Aubrey and Spirituality: Spirit is “light, feeling” and Aubrey’s spirit is “all freaking all over the place, intentions are good, want to be better, head, resists people and change.” Spirituality is “what people use to center themselves, God, nature, belief in spirits.” Aubrey’s spirituality is “good, wants, intentions, head.” God is “whatever you want it to be, each his own.” Aubrey “doesn’t necessarily believe in God and rejects religion.” Aubrey’s “ideal God, not her experience, is love, care, leadership, servant, beauty, nature.” For Aubrey, “centering herself is self-care, music, nap, journaling, center, and workout.”

Aubrey and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “the power of being a woman, it’s different for men” and Aubrey’s sense of herself as Sacred Feminine is “chess piece, king queen dual, with woman as the strong half of dual, both together are magical.”

Jessica, “I am great, still learning about myself”

Jessica’s Female Body: Jessica²¹¹ describes herself as “intellectual, compassionate, genuine, caring, loving.” “I am great, still learning about myself.” The female body is “a story line, so many things” and Jessica’s female body is “fragile, holds a lot of battle wounds.” Hands “can tell a lot of stories,” and Jessica’s hands “are hardworking.”

²¹¹ Audio video file Phase II RP12PHII

Jessica's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "controlling" and Jessica's emotions "run wild, tell me something that is not true, level five." Thinking is "a lot of time" and Jessica's way of thinking is "sometimes negative, positive, controls me, talks myself down, and disables me." Jessica says that with knowing, "you can't know everything, rewarding, still learning," and Jessica's way of knowing is "knowing that I don't know everything, accepting, still learning, and making mistakes."

Jessica and Power: Power "can be egotistical and rewarding" and Jessica's sense of power is "being heard and understood at the same time, listening to self." Empowerment is "woman, power through each other" and Jessica's self as empowerment "seems to inspire people, confusing, needs to inspire herself."

Jessica's World and Life: The world is "divided" and Jessica's world is "confusing." Life is "hard," and Jessica's life is "hard."

Jessica and Love: Love "should be pure but I feel like it is exhausting" and Jessica's way of love is "hard, I love hard."

Jessica and Spirituality: Spirit is "very powerful, present, aligned, universal, written in the stars" and Jessica's spirit is "physically present, high energy, knowing, seeing, and feeling things." Spirituality is "overall feeling of a presence" and Jessica's spirituality is "protective, guarded, high faith, gives feeling of hope." God is "great" and Jessica's God "tests her, and He pushes me, not settling." As to God, "This can't be as good as my life gets. Seeking a higher high, what's next."

Jessica and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "empowering." Jessica's Self as Sacred Feminine is "doesn't respect Self as Sacred Feminine."

Tara, “I am moving”

Tara’s Female Body: Tara²¹² described herself as “peaceful.” “I am moving.” The female body is “pure” and Tara’s female body is “flowing.” Hands are “clenched,” and Tara’s hands are “mine.”

Tara’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions “are running” and Tara is “learning her emotions, level seven.” Thinking is “overthinking” and Tara’s way of thinking is “connect the dots, fix it, need to do it less.” Knowing “feels good” and Tara’s way of knowing “is signs, constant confirmation, synchronicity.”

Tara and Power: Power is “red hair and black, tough” and Tara’s sense of power is “changing.” Empowerment is “fluid” and Tara’s sense of empowerment is “scary.”

Tara’s World and Life: The world is “cold and cruel” and Tara’s world is “opening up.” Life is a “good, better than most” and Tara’s life is “surprising and scary, like entering a double Dutch jump rope game, disciplined.”

Tara and Love: Love “is misdirected, addiction to a story” and Tara’s love is “serving.”

Tara and Spirituality: Spirit is “unknown,” and Tara’s spirit is “becoming.” Spirituality is “beautiful,” and Tara’s spirituality is “open.” God is “surrounding,” and Tara’s God is “within.”

Tara and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “power” and Tara’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “happy to hear it again.”

²¹² Audio Video file Phase II RP9PHII

Deborah, “I am kind”

Deborah’s Female Body: Deborah²¹³ describes herself as “nice, caring, and I don’t judge.” Deborah says, “I am kind.” The female body is “pretty cool, we can carry a human baby” and Deborah’s female body is “ok.” Hands are “fine,” and Deborah’s hands are “fine.”

Deborah’s Thoughts and Emotions: Deborah’s emotions are “ok today, level five. Thinking is “using your brain, duh, lol” and Deborah’s way of thinking “depends on her situation, don’t you think.” Knowing is “knowing, I guess” and Deborah’s way of thinking is “she just gets a gut feeling and you know.” Truth is “being honest, very important.” Deborah says, “I know my truth and it hurt a lot of people.”

Deborah and Power: Power is “to try to control lives.” Power for Deborah, “if it is used for my benefit, it is good.” Empowerment is “being able to change the bad to good” and Deborah’s sense of empowerment is “better today.”

Deborah’s World and Life: The world is “overall, I don’t know, round’ and Deborah’s world is “fine.” Life is “good, good to be alive” and Deborah says, “I’m very happy to be alive.”

Deborah and Love: Love is a “beautiful thing” and Deborah’s way of loving is “by never hurting people or things.”

Deborah and Spirituality: Spirit is “inside you, your inner you” and Deborah’s spirit is her inner spirit.” God is “awesome,” and Deborah’s God is “Jesus.”

Deborah and Sacred Feminine: Deborah states that she has “no clue” about the Sacred Feminine and herself as Sacred Feminine.

²¹³ Audio video file Phase II interview RP2PHII

Sophia, “I am a work in progress”

Sophia’s Female Body: Sophia²¹⁴ describes herself as “relieved, scared, indecisive, in need of more information.” The female body is “magnificent” and Sophia’s female body is “healthy.” Hands are “great tools” and Sophia’s hands are “healing.”

Sophia’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions “can be draining” and Sophia’s emotions are “a blessing and a curse, anxious, level seven.” Thinking is “dangerous, overthinking” and Sophia’s way of thinking is “dangerous.” Knowing is “sensation” and Sophia’s way of knowing is “peaceful sensation.”

Sophia and Power: Power “can be misused” and Sophia’s power is “growing, scaring me.” Empowerment is “important,” and Sophia’s sense of empowerment is “confusing.”

Sophia’s World and Life: The world is “about to be surprised” and Sophia’s world is “crazy right now.” Life is “full of adventure” and Sophia’s life is “full of adventure.”

Sophia and Spirituality: Spirit is “in everything” and Sophia’s spirit is “in me.” Spirituality “can be misunderstood” and Sophia’s spirituality is “my foundation.” God “can piss me off sometimes” and Sophia’s says that “God can piss me off sometimes, he is a control freak.”

Sophia and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “awakening” and Sophia’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “very awakened, becoming safer to show it, be it and in it.”

²¹⁴ Audio video file Phase II interview RP6PHII. Sophia was driving to Phase II interview and decided to withdraw from the research study based on her gut feeling that it was not right for her. Two months later, researcher and Sophia had a chance encounter at a conference. Sophia stated that her muscle test, “God is my best friend,” challenged her thinking. Sophia asked if she could participate in the research study again.

Anna, “I am alive”

Anna’s Female Body: Anna²¹⁵ describes herself as “spiritual.” Anna states, “I am alive.” The female body is “wonderful.” Anna’s female body is “so great, glad to be in menopause.” Hands are “powerful and healing.” Anna’s hands are “powerful and healing.”

Anna’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “fluctuating.” Anna’s emotions are “peaceful, level eight.” Thinking is “in my head.” Anna’s way of thinking is “positively.” Knowing is “in your gut.” Anna’s way of knowing is “head, heart, gut.” Truth is “very important.” Anna’s truth is “my word.”

Anna and Power: Power is “inside me.” Anna’s power is “inside me and wheels.” Empowerment is “God.” Anna’s empowerment is “God in me.”

Anna’s World and Life: The world is “God’s playground.” Anna’s world is “in transition.” Life is “great.” Anna’s life is “great.” Love is “important.”

Anna and Spirituality: Spirit is “God, in me.” Anna’s spirit is “God, in me.” God is “loving and healing.” Anna’s God is “loving and healing.”

Anna and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “Mary.”²¹⁶ Anna’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “me as sacred and feminine.”

Barbie, “I am comfortable”

Barbie’s Female Body: Barbie²¹⁷ describes herself as happy, content.” Barbie states, “I am comfortable.” The female body is “beautiful.” Barbie’s female body is

²¹⁵ Audio video file Phase II interview RP5PHII

²¹⁶ Mary as mother of Jesus. Anna is Catholic.

²¹⁷ Audio video file Phase II interview RP7RPII

“fabulous.” Hands “say a lot about a person.” Barbie’s hands “use hands to describe myself.”

Barbie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “very strong.” Barbie’s emotions are “ok, level ten.” Thinking is “important.” Barbie’s way of thinking “gets me into trouble sometimes, overthink, analyze.” Knowing is “healthy.” Barbie’s way of knowing is “still learning, knowing the right way.” Truth is “important.” Barbie’s truth is “I’m very true to myself.”

Barbie and Power: Power “can be a struggle.” Barbie’s power “I struggle with it, am I doing the right thing?” Empowerment is “awesome.” Barbie’s empowerment is “I help other people, I hope.”

Barbie’s World and Life: The world is “crazy.” Barbie’s world is “ups and downs.” Life is “wild, happy and fall apart in a split second.” Voice is “strong.” Barbie’s voice is “I like to have it heard.”

Barbie and Love: Love is “a fabulous thing.” Barbie’s way of loving is “show, many ways, affection, physical, too much is a wrong thing.” Barbie’s way of being loved is “attention, I am the world to somebody, their everything.”

Barbie and Spirituality: Spirit is “still learning that.” Barbie’s spirit is “okay.” Spirituality is “I struggle with that.” Barbie’s spirituality is “like no other, not open about my spirituality,²¹⁸ struggle with that.” God is “good.” Barbie’s God is “real, I love my God, He follows me, holds me, helps me, gotten closer over the past year with my husband being sick.”

²¹⁸ Barbie talked about how her recently deceased husband said he is spiritual, his spirituality is right and refused to discuss, saying she would not talk about it. It is somehow tied to how he abused her. Barbie also stated that she was waiting for his spirit to visit him so she could know that he is okay.

Barbie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “unknown still.” Barbie’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “no idea.”

Stephanie, “I am loved, locked up”

Stephanie’s Female Body: Stephanie²¹⁹ describes herself as “a lot of knowledge, person able to accept and receive in relationships.” She states, “I am loved, locked up.”²²⁰ The female body is “elegant” and Stephanie’s female body is “beautiful, accepting.” Hands are “useful,” and Stephanie’s hands are “helpful.”

Stephanie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “many, in the body, connected” and Stephanie’s emotions are “full, blooming, level eight.” Thinking is “creativity” and Stephanie’s way of thinking is “unlimited.” Knowing is “when I have peace, I know” and Stephanie’s way of knowing is “content, peace, something’s off.”

Stephanie and Power: Stephanie says that “ability” and her power is “fullness, my field is getting full of flowers, more than one blade of grass.”²²¹ Empowerment is “ability” and Stephanie’s sense of empowerment is “to use or not use her ability or power.” The world is “unknown,” and Stephanie’s world is “friendly.” Life is “intriguing,” and Stephanie’s life is “blessed.”

Stephanie and Love: Love is “gift” and Stephanie’s way of loving “unknown, to give” and being loved is “unknown, doesn’t matter, don’t care.”

²¹⁹ Audio video file Phase II interview RP14PHII

²²⁰ See Stephanie’s warrior image in appendix. Stephanie shared an image of herself as a spiritual and prayer warrior, covered in armor. This image is her screen shot on her cell phone. It is the image that Stephanie has of herself. Stephanie sent image to researcher to use in research study.

²²¹ See Stephanie blade of grass image in appendix. Stephanie shares an image on her cell phone that she has of herself as a warrior. She identifies with a warrior wearing full mental armor in battle against evil. The illustration is provided in the appendix.

Stephanie and Spirituality: Spirit is “God’s spirit, there is but one” and Stephanie’s spirit is “God’s spirit.” Spirituality is “script, mine and everyone” and Stephanie’s spirituality is “God’s and my freedom.” God is “He, unlimited access” and Stephanie’s God, “He is my friend, need a Father, male in my life.”

Stephanie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “pure female” and Stephanie’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “overload, so much pressure, boiling point.”

Engaging the Body Activity Experience

Phase II does not meet on the sailboat. It is held in the researcher’s therapeutic office space. Phase II is designed to be a large group activity. Research participants did not volunteer simultaneously so it became necessary to meet in two small groups and then individually based on timing between phases as the woman volunteered for the study. Katy and Crystal met together as they are sisters and thought it would be fun. Anna and Deborah met as a group. The other women met individually with the researcher.

First Consciousness Embodiment Activity: Sacred Space

Phase II involves two activities. The first activity involves training the women to experience her self-space as the space that envelopes her entire body just past her fingertips like a big bubble that moves with her body movement. She stands and extends her arms outward and then moves her extended arms all around her body as she stretches, turns, and bends. This space is identified as her personal, sacred, safe, creative space that no one can enter without her consent. It has a permeable boundary. What is important is not the boundary, but the space itself. She embodies this space. It is the location of her being of which she is becoming conscious.

Myth of the handless maiden. Between activities the researcher reads the *Myth of the Handless Maiden* from her marriage to the King until the part when she leaves the castle due to a communicated threat of violence. Before marrying the king, the handless Maiden is fitted with silver arms made by the king as a gift to his bride. While living in the castle, the Handless Maiden gives birth to a child.

Second Embodiment Activity: Fluid Movement

The second activity involves moving the body to create energy flowing through the body. Playfully moving while standing in place. The intention is for the women to experience play with her body, acting out, and putting words to the thoughts, images, and emotions that arise during the experience. They reflection asks the woman, “What new life is ready to be birthed or communicated to you through your body?”

Women’s Consciousness Responses After Embodiment Activities

Katy, “I am ever changing and ever hopeful”

Katy’s Female Body: Katy describes herself as “a flower, radiant, beautiful.” “I am ever-changing and ever-hopeful.” The female body is “glorious, strong, and majestic.” and Katy’s female body is “sacred, mine, and safe.” Hands are for “creating” and Katy’s hands “create beauty in the world.”

Katy’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “real but not everything” and Katy’s emotions are “peace, loved, and accepted, level nine.” Thinking “helps me heal and understand.” Katy’s way of thinking is “beneficial.” Knowing “gives me tools” and Katy’s way of knowing “helps her move forward.” Truth is “beautiful, is love” and Katy’s truth “comforts her.”

Katy and Power: Power is “still complicated but can be good” and Katy’s power is “growing and learning to use it for good.” Empowerment is “life-giving, necessary.” Katy’s sense of her empowerment “continues to heal her and grow.”

Katy’s World and Life: The world is “complicated and mysterious” and Katy’s world is “peaceful and full of love.” Life is “worth living well” and Katy’s life is “getting better.” Voice is “meant to be used” and Katy’s voice is “getting louder and stronger.”

Katy and Love: Love is “everything and something I can give myself.” Katy’s way of loving is “beautiful and life-giving.” Katy’s way of being loved “is ok, not ready yet.”

Katy and Spirituality: Spirit is “always with me” and Katy’s spirit is “always with me.” Spirituality “saves me and guides me” and Katy’s spirituality “smooths me.” God is “love.” Katy’s God “loves her unconditionally.”

Katy and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “getting clearer.” Katy’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “starting to identify with this.”

Crystal, “I am whole”

Crystal’s Female Body: Crystal describes herself as “elated, overjoyed, full of love.” “I am whole.” The female body is “powerful, nurturing, and strong” and Crystal’s female body is “powerful, nurturing, and strong.” Hands “transfer energies” and Crystal’s hands “heal, love.”

Crystal’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “all encompassing” and Crystal’s emotion is “empowered, level ten.” Thinking is “clear,” and Crystal’s way of thinking is “clear.” Knowing is “powerful” and Crystal’s way of knowing is “growing.” Truth “comes to light” and Crystal’s truth is “ready to be spoken.”

Crystal and Power: Power is “strong,” and Crystal’s power is “intentional.”
Empowerment is “a choice” and Crystals sense of empowerment is “full.”

Crystal’s World and Life: The world is a “reflection” and Crystal’s world is “stunning.” Life is “full of opportunity” and Crystal’s life is “full of choices.” Voice “speaks,” and Crystal’s voice is “loud.”

Crystal and Love: Love is “warm” Crystal’s way of loving is “unconditional” and her way of being loved is “being reflected.”

Crystal and Spirituality: Spirit is “fluid” and Crystal’s spirit is “strong.” Spirituality is “powerful,” and Crystal’s spirituality is “vast.” God is “simultaneous” and Crystal’s God is “reflected.”

Crystal and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “nurturing” and Crystal’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “divine and nurturing.”

Aubrey,²²² “I am learning, still strong”

Aubrey’s Female Body: Aubrey describes herself as “lighter, tired, nap, overwhelmed.” “I am learning, still strong.” The female body is “powerful, capable, strong, self-serving.” Aubrey’s female body is “strong, capable, growing, learning to use, be open, feelings, everything I did to take care, self-conscious.” Hands “still do, care for, serve” and Aubrey’s hands “control, care for.” Emotions are “a lot, overwhelming” and Aubrey’s emotions are “relaxing into it, allow, being ok and comfortable with it, level nine.”

Aubrey’s Thoughts and Emotions: Thinking is “overthinking, rationalizing, need to get out of your head.” Aubrey’s way of thinking is “kindness, caring, supportive,

²²² Audio video file RP13PH2.2019.6.20.

rationalizing.” “Knowledge can be power.” Aubrey’s way of knowing is “the gut, instincts, seeking truth, asking, looking for answers.”

Aubrey and Power: Power is “strength, feelings are power, emotionally, thoughts, action” and Aubrey’s sense of power is “a lot of it, give and keep for herself.” Empowerment is “support, love, care for, encourage someone else’s power” and Aubrey’s sense of empowerment is “for self, self-care, action, time.”

Aubrey’s World and Life: The world is “big, abundant, messy” and Aubrey’s “world is a lock, home, circle of friends.” Life is “universe, journey, learning, growing” and Aubrey’s life is “growing, journey, learning universe.”

Aubrey and Love: Love is “everything, healing, compassion, joy, kindness.” Aubrey’s way of loving is “serving, caring, trying to be more patient” Aubrey’s way of being loved is “patience, kind, quiet.”

Aubrey and Spirituality: Spirit is “inner life” and Aubrey’s spirit is “a little torn, caged.” Spirituality is “belief” and Aubrey’s spirituality is “graciousness, loving, caring, kindness, honesty, loyalty.” God is “religion.” Aubrey’s “ideal God, not her experience, is loving, caring, kindness, compassion, empathy.”

Aubrey and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “woman power.” Aubrey’s sense of herself as Sacred Feminine is “mom, wife, friend, sister.”

Jessica,²²³ “I am trying to feel the things that I am experiencing”

Jessica’s Female Body: Jessica describes herself as “tired, mentally drained, trying to understand, still learning.” “I am trying to feel the things that I am experiencing.” The female body is “sacred” and Jessica’s female body is “wounded and

²²³ Audio video file RP12.2019.5.23.

sacred.” Hands “carry a lot of emotions, express feelings,” and Jessica’s hands “heavy from holding all the emotions.”

Jessica’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions “can tell a story” and Jessica’s emotions “are getting there, above water, level five.” Thinking is “time, controlling” and Jessica’s way of thinking is “jaded, detaching, slowly sinking, letting emotions out.” Jessica says that with knowing, “things feel good” and Jessica’s way of knowing is “feel it, strong intuition.”

Jessica and Power: Power “is meaningful.” Jessica’s sense of power, “I don’t think I own my power enough, underestimate my power.” Empowerment is “nourishing the soul” and Jessica’s self as empowerment is “not good at feeling, meaning for herself.”

Jessica’s World and Life: The world “could be more loving, less cruel” and Jessica’s world is “sometimes cloudy and feels liberated.” Life is “funny” and Jessica’s life “is a movie, I’m never bored with myself.”

Jessica and Love: Love “should feel good and kind” and Jessica’s way of love is “I love having something to love.”

Jessica and Spirituality: Spirit “has intention” and Jessica’s spirit is “greater than me.” Spirituality is “a humble feeling to know that spirit is greater than me” and Jessica’s spirituality is “runs deep.” God is “great, He is awesome” and Jessica’s God “is creating a better future for me.”

Jessica and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “being wholehearted all the way around” and Jessica’s Self as Sacred Feminine “needs to realize my worth.”

Tara,²²⁴ “I am better than I thought I was, stronger”

Tara’s Female Body: Tara described herself as “more courageous.” “I am better than I thought I was, stronger.” The female body is “complex” and Tara’s female body is “ravishing.” Hands are “a gift” and Tara’s hands are “more receptive.”

Tara’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions “are dangerous, not understanding them” and Tara is “clearer, level 9.5.” Thinking “is ok, allow myself” and Tara’s way of thinking “has shifted, taking on my thoughts.” Knowing “is powerful, gut, womb is trauma and power” and Tara’s way of knowing “is signs that give me permission.”

Tara and Power: Power is “strength, ability” and Tara’s sense of power is “growing, source of confirmation and permission.” Empowerment is “growing others” and Tara’s sense of empowerment is “taking action on what I know.”

Tara’s World and Life: The world is “open to change” and Tara’s world is “ready to change more.” Life is a “opportunity, making sense” and Tara’s life is “making more sense.”

Tara and Love: Love “is still being determined” and Tara’s love is “respect, loving Self first.”

Tara’s Spirituality: Spirit is “a part of you” and Tara’s spirit is “eager to take more of a part of me.” Spirituality is “universal,” and Tara’s spirituality is “evolving.” God is “everywhere” and Tara’s God “shines through me.”

Tara and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “within” and Tara’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “all powerful.” Did not facilitate the muscle strength test due to time constraints.

²²⁴ Audio file RP9PH2.2019.6.19.

Deborah,²²⁵ “I am refreshed”

Deborah’s Female Body: Deborah describes herself as “relaxed.” Deborah says, “I am refreshed.” The female body is “ok” and Deborah’s female body is “ok.” Hands are “ok,” and Deborah’s hands are “warm.”

Deborah’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “feelings” and Deborah’s emotions are “happy, level ten. Thinking is “happy” and Deborah’s way of thinking “smile more, feel more.” Knowing is “it just is” and Deborah’s way of thinking is “gut, instincts.” Truth is “being honest” and Deborah says, “I just know my truth.”

Deborah and Power: Power is “strong” and power for Deborah is “strong.” Empowerment is “being able to change how you feel” and Deborah’s sense of empowerment is “strong.”

Deborah’s World and Life: The world is “easy, hard” and Deborah’s world is “all the above.” Life is “to be alive” and Deborah says, “again, glad to be alive.”

Deborah and Love: Love is “great,” and Deborah’s way of loving is “be kind” and her way of being loved is “let your heart be loved.”

Deborah and Spirituality: Spirit is “inside you” and Deborah’s spirit is “in you.” God is “Jesus” and Deborah’s God is “Jesus, Holy Ghost, father.”

Deborah and Sacred Feminine: Deborah states that she has “no clue” about the Sacred Feminine and herself as Sacred Feminine.

²²⁵ Audio video file RP2PH2.2019.

Sophia,²²⁶ “I am hopeful”

Sophia’s Female Body: Sophia describes herself as “relieved, tired, hopeful.” The female body is “deserves respect” and Sophia’s female body “deserves respect, reminder that I am not so present to it as I thought.” Hands are “great tools” and Sophia’s hands are “genuine.”

Sophia’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions “can be deflating” and Sophia’s emotion is “hopeful, level nine.” Thinking “can be balanced” and Sophia’s way of thinking is “can be balanced.” Knowing is “not always necessary” and Sophia’s way of knowing is “through God.”

Sophia and Power: Power “can be used for a lot of good” and Sophia’s power is “very valuable.” Empowerment is “necessary” and Sophia’s sense of empowerment “can come in many forms.”

Sophia’s World and Life: The world is “a beautiful place” and Sophia’s world is “growing.” Life is “a blessing” and Sophia’s life is “definitely a blessing.”

Sophia and Spirituality: Spirit is “me” and Sophia’s spirit is “a huge part of me.” Spirituality “is my foundation” and Sophia’s spirituality is “deep.” God “is what I make it” and Sophia says, “God is always with me.”

Sophia and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “inspiring” and Sophia’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “pure.”

²²⁶ Audio video File RP6PH2.2019.7.17.

Anna,²²⁷ “I am strong”

Anna’s Female Body: Anna describes herself as “strong.” Annas states, “I am strong.” The female body is “life-giving.” Anna’s female body is “life-giving.” Hands are “powerful and healing.” Anna’s hands are “powerful and healing.”

Anna’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “changeable.” Anna’s emotions are “happy, level nine.” Thinking is “my thoughts.” Anna’s way of thinking is “positive.” Knowing is “I am always ok.” Anna’s way of knowing is “trust in God, gut.” Truth is “important.” Anna’s truth is “important.”

Anna and Power: Power is “in me.” Anna’s power is “my car.” Empowerment is “being my own person.” Anna’s empowerment is “being free.”

Anna’s World and Life: The world is “where we live.” Anna’s world is “great.” Life is “great.” Anna’s life is “great.”

Anna and Love: Love is “essential.” Spirit is “in me.” Anna’s spirit is “in me.” God is “everywhere.” Anna’s God is “in me.”

Anna and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “me.” Anna’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “feeling great in my own skin.”

Barbie, “I am woman, hear me roar”

Barbie’s Female Body: Barbie describes herself as “happy, shiny, content.” Barbie states, “I am woman, hear me roar.” The female body is “amazing.” Barbie’s female body is “fabulous.” Hands “are power.” Barbie’s hands “say it all, I am woman, I shine.”

²²⁷ Audio video file RP5PH2.2019.4.3

Barbie's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "very strong." Barbie's emotions are "high on life, level ten." Thinking is "important." Barbie's way of thinking "is the right way of thinking." Knowing is "strong." Barbie's way of knowing is "going to take me to where I am going, to shine." Truth is "important." Barbie's truth is "good, right."

Barbie and Power: Power "is good." Barbie's power "is getting stronger so I can shine." Empowerment is "strong." Barbie's empowerment is "healthy so I can change my life."

Barbie's World and Life: The world is "crazy." Barbie's world is "changing to much happier days, contentment." Life is "good." Barbie's life is "on the right track for me." Voice is "important." Barbie's voice is "going to be heard, I need to listen to my voice."

Barbie and Love: Love is "wonderful." Barbie's way of loving is "the right way, how I want it." Barbie's way of being loved is "helps me shine."

Barbie and Spirituality: Spirit is "I struggle." Barbie's spirit is "getting figured out in my head." Spirituality is "don't like it." Barbie's spirituality is "cringe, spiritual manipulation." God is "good, real." Barbie's God is "awesome."

Barbie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "very becoming." Barbie's Self as Sacred Feminine is "developing into a big shine."

Stephanie,²²⁸ "I am ok, thankful, grateful"

Stephanie's Female Body: Stephanie describes herself as "peaceful." She states, "I am ok, thankful, grateful." The female body is "elegant, glorious, tough" and

²²⁸ Audio video file RP14PH2.2019.8.8.

Stephanie's female body is "used, connected." Hands are "movement, graceful" and Stephanie's hands are "movement, graceful."

Stephanie's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "good," and Stephanie's emotions are "content, level 13." Thinking is "always, growing, more courage" and Stephanie's way of thinking is "unlimited, acceptable to say yes, you can and will." Knowing is "peace, gut" and Stephanie's way of knowing is "feeling peace."

Stephanie and Power: Stephanie says that "everyone can have their own power" and her power is "mine." Empowerment is "work" and Stephanie's sense of empowerment is "full grown."

Stephanie's World and Life: The world is "illuminating," and Stephanie's world is "an open door." Life is "access" and Stephanie's life is "totally fun."

Stephanie and Love: Love is "me" and Stephanie's way of loving "loving completely" and being loved is "limited, communication."

Stephanie and Spirituality: Spirit is "God's" and Stephanie's spirit is "God's spirit, we are one." Spirituality is "a free gift, for anybody to open it, take root." and Stephanie's spirituality is "connected with God." God is "everything" and Stephanie's God is "always."

Stephanie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "holy people, character of people." Stephanie's Self as Sacred Feminine is "oneness, in line with God."

Embodied Consciousness and Embodied Creativity

Engaging Her Body

Engaging women's bodies in movement is the more difficult phase of the study. Most of the women appeared resistant to movement, sitting rigidly in her seat with arms

pressed against her body, either hugging herself or grasping her arm, body muscles contracted. The two exceptions are Crystal who appeared to be fluid in her seat, almost levitating, arms flowing around her as she spoke. Anna appeared slightly more relaxed as a reiki master able to connect through her hand the power of the divine; the embodiment activity appeared to interest her. Overall, supporting women's conscious engagement with her body and its location in the world is a necessary step to healing trauma from recycling in and through the body.

Several of the women experienced significant changes in her life between Phase I and Phase II. It is important to note these changes. Since Phase I, a six-week span of time, Katy became reacquainted and married a high school friend who is currently enlisted in the military. Katy is in the process of moving onto a military base out of state. Crystal has a new boyfriend with him she feels beautiful, accepted, and loved in her body. Jessica became conscious of the abusive behavior of her roommate and is moving into a new space. She is completing her academic work successfully. Aubrey is increasing her gym time to the point of physical injury in response to the breakdown of her financially insecure queendom. Tara is consciously questioning her daughter's father's behaviors and reflecting on their relationship. Deborah is a little more glad to be alive. Sophia is creating a platform to help women get her power back after being prostituted and trafficked. Anna got her driver's license back after being suspended for ten years. Barbie is no longer carrying her husband's ashes from the bedroom to the great room. His ashes stay in the great room, near his office. Stephanie is engaging in dialogue with women in her worship group, practicing giving and receiving compliments, being conscious of it as friendly, not the manipulative exchange of a sex worker.

In Phase I, most of the women did not want to be touched, hugged, and made a point of not making body contact in the confined space on the sailboat. The researcher made a point not to involve direct physical contact with the women.

Women as Survivors

Women survivors of domestic, relational, and family violence live in a state of survivorship. No longer victims of violence, they are stuck in a way of being that remembers, reenacts, and recycles the violence through the brain-body feedback communication loop. Survivorship can last years and decades depending on each women's circumstances, opportunities for healing, and connection with past trauma. Women as survivors appeared to create survival spaces relative to her body based on her body-image and brain-body communication feedback loop.

Woman's survivor-space reflects her body-image, her power source, and her center of attention. Survivorship is uncomfortable, conflictual, and transitional as appears her survivor-space. It can appear as a state of confusion, emotional unpredictability, powerlessness, and helplessness.

Woman and Survivor-Space as Survivorship

There is no one woman-space for all women as each one is unique to each woman and shifts and changes through life experiences. Noticing the differences between each of the women in terms of body-image, power, and the orientation of her attention relative to it is insightful. Her power or lack of power related to her body-image, the focus of her attention, and her influence in the world offered insight into women's experience of embodiment. They appear to live from a survivor-space within her brain disconnected

from her body and embodied experiences. When asked if they felt their bodies, they said, no or not really.

Woman Embodying Survivor-Space

Within this group of women survivors, there appears several body survivor-space constructs. The survivor-space constructs are Masculine Body Armor, Female Body-Builder, Female Body-Beautiful, Female Body-Reappearing, and Sacred Body-Floating.

Masculine Body-Armor

Stephanie, Sophia, and Jessica appear to have a body-image of body armor, like a warrior. They appear rigid, stilted in her actions and movement, defensive and protective. Jessica described herself in Phase I as strong, hard, a warrior. Her power is in her warrior stance. She describes herself as hard. Everything about her presence is hard: love hard, feel hard, and work hard. She talks of working hard, caring hard for her fiancé, studying hard, taking care of an old dog, and working hard at her part-time job. The center of her attention is “other.” In her confusion and frustration, she asks, “Why doesn’t he love me. I love him so hard?”

Sophia is also a hard worker, doing many things for many people. Her focus is “other” oriented, denying herself in sacrifice and service for others. Her power is from God and God’s presence in her life. Sophia shows researcher an image of a warrior spirit, a masculine figure covered in gray metal-like body armor with an iron mask. The image is a side view of the warrior. Her image of herself is a spirit warrior with a sword, bowed down in reverence.²²⁹

²²⁹ Sophia’s image of self as a spirit warrior. See Appendix.

Stephanie, defensive and distrusting to the point of accusatory, suspiciously gazing about, securing knowledge of exits, and positioning herself to leap into action appeared to have a body-image of body-armor. She believes strongly in the power of Jesus as the source of her power. Stephanie shared her screen shot, representing an image of self and the location of her power. The image is a side view of a spirit warrior, a masculine shaped body, dressed in gray metal armor, wearing an iron mask, carrying a shield and a sword.²³⁰ The spirit warrior is leaping in the air. Stephanie has a prayer space that she calls her war room where she prays, fighting a spiritual war against evil.

Body-images of masculine figures wearing metal armor, iron masks, swords, and shields appear to be these women's survivor-space and location of her power, source of her protection, and focus of her attention. Her woman-space as sacred feminine appears to be hidden under the masculine power of spirit warrior, masculine body-armor. Both Stephanie and Sophia were trafficked; Stephanie was prostituted and severely beaten. Jessica was beaten by her brother and molested by a female friend.

Female Bodybuilder

Both Anna and Aubrey are engaged in physical fitness and their body-image appears to be female bodybuilder. They are focused on building up body strength. Anna is an avid runner and feels strong in her female body. She enjoys feeling muscular and wants to have six-pack abdominals. Her source of power is God, who is out there and within. Anna experiences God's healing energy passing through her body in reiki. She is clear that she, meaning her body, is not the source of power. Her body is a vessel.

²³⁰ Stephanie's image of self as a spirit warrior. See Appendix.

Anna's focus of attention is on both her sobriety and helping "others." She experiences power as a helper, to the detriment of her well-being. She is in this study to "help." Anna is in a state of transition, claiming that soon God will work everything out if she is just patient. Her woman survivor-space is the muscular structure of her sober body. She identifies Mary as the Sacred Feminine and herself as sacred and feminine. Anna does not describe Mary. Anna believes she is sacred, and appears to accept that the sacred is beaten, assaulted, and abused. Defacing the sacred body, including her, is normal and acceptable.

Aubrey is excessively engaged in developing her body-image as female bitch bodybuilder. Aubrey's body-image is in transition from weak, sickly, molested girl to physically strong, powerful, child-bearing woman. She is injured from overexerting herself at the gym, stating that she doesn't feel her body and is surprised when she is injured. Her power is in her body as a woman, in awe of the power of the female body to create and birth babies. Her woman survivor-space is her female body and her many female roles and relationships. Aubrey is in constant conflict between being taken care of by her spouse and having to take care of her children and family. She is conflicted in her desire to be self-centered, focus on self-care, and her needs, and having to appear and assert herself in the world and care for her family. She refers to herself as bitch. Aubrey's focus of attention shifts between resentment and care of "other" and the guilt of self-care. Nearly every statement Aubrey makes ends with a question mark.

Deborah, though not a bodybuilder through an exercise regime, is strong by her determination to heal her body after the accident and be a good wife. She needs a strong body to carry the burden of her husband's OCD rituals and his beatings. Being beaten is

the accepted sacrifice of women and love. In her marriage, Deborah is the strong one, helping her husband who is helplessly OCD. “He can’t help himself,” Deborah explains. At home with her mother, Deborah is the helpless one, incompetent and infantized. Her adult physical body and marital contract are her only proof that she is not a helpless child.

Female Body-Beautiful

The location of woman survivor--space and power for Barbie and Tara is beauty and the use of her female body-beautiful to achieve desired results. Barbie’s power is located in her body-beautiful as a fabulous princess, whereas Tara’s power is located in her body-beautiful as networking queen. Both Barbie and Tara are helpers, with the center of their attention on those with whom she wants to help. Barbie’s woman survivor-space is the beautiful, sexy helper of her boyfriend. Tara’s woman survivor-space is the biblical queen who reigns over all those with whom she helps.

Female Body-Reappearing

Katy’s survivor-space is that of the body-reappearing now that she is married to a soldier, a strong man that will protect, respect, and love her. Katy, who’s embodied sexual power once controlled others, disappeared into a shell of a young child-like woman, suffering quietly in her power of powerlessness until her recent marriage to a soldier. Katy’s world is still scary, but her body is now beginning to flourish. The center of her attention is on healing her wounds and achieving security for her body from the love and power of her husband warrior. The center of Katy’s attention is her woundedness. Her woman survivor-space is body-reappearing.

Sacred Body-Floating

Crystal's woman-space is her sacred body-floating freely, unfeeling, above ground. Her attention is on the love of the universe and her source of power is light energy. She is unattached to the social and beauty constructs expected of her, as instilled in her childhood. Her beauty and strength did not protect her in the military. Crystal cannot find safe ground, so she appears to live in a constant state of fluidity, higher consciousness, floating in thin air. Her woman survivor-space appears to be the divine female body in her natural unadorned and unaltered form, sacred body-floating.

These woman-spaces of body-image, power, and attention are unique to each woman, her experiences of violence, beliefs about women, and her methods for coping, being safe, and relating to the world. Each woman is the embodied Sacred Feminine coming into consciousness of herself, transforming, through consciousness, her woman-space from survivor-space to woman-being, embodying the Sacred Feminine.

Embodying the Sacred Feminine

Embodying the Sacred Feminine, unique to each woman, is a spiritual practice of woman coming into consciousness of the sacredness that is innate to her embodied being. Embodying the Sacred Feminine is a conscious spiritual practice of being in her body, creating sacred woman-being space, experiencing the flow of energy, and being present to the thoughts, emotions, and images that arise. As a spiritual practice, the Sacred Feminine appears in women's consciousness as oneness, creativity, and relatedness.

The spiritual practice of conscious embodiment, of creating sacred woman-being space, moving, flowing, and connecting resulted in unique images, revelations, and emotions for each woman. The researcher observed and bared witness to the divine

transformational power of the Sacred Feminine being embodied in each of the women. Some women were open and conscious of the experience while others resisted, and yet transformation happened. Each woman appeared to embody the Sacred Feminine as oneness with oneself, creativity, and relatedness.

The Sacred Feminine as Oneness with Oneself

Anna, “I feel great in my own skin”

Anna’s experience of herself as the Sacred Feminine was an experience of oneness with oneself, autonomy. As Anna moved in her sacred space, she experienced the image of colors, like a rainbow, arise into her consciousness. She shared that she felt calmer, though unsure of the meaning that color has for her. With her hands, Anna clears and creates sacred space. She pauses, holding her hand up. She uses her hand to image telling her ex-husband to stop, to stay out of her space. She talks of how he constantly invades her personal space in the house. Anna’s states about herself as the Sacred Feminine, “I feel great in my own skin.”

Jessica, “I need to realize my own worth”

Jessica’s center of attention focuses from “other” to herself as she reconnected with her feminine body through movement, flow, and dance. The consciousness shift from other to self, to claiming her wounds, naming her pain, and admitting to carrying the burdens that were not her own, appears visible as her eyes brighten. Her face began to glow as she remembered her body as a dancer. The Sacred Feminine arose in her body as a dancer, reconnecting her to the oneness of her body, trying to feel the things that she is experiencing. As she moves and plays, in her child’s eye, she dances, sacred and worthy, letting go of the armor of protection. In the presence of herself as Sacred Feminine,

Jessica becomes conscious of the need for her to realize her worth. Jessica's world, though sometimes cloudy, feels liberated.

Barbie, "I am woman, hear me roar"

Barbie's practice of embodying the Sacred Feminine through movement brought out the shine in her face and in her eyes. Barbie is glowing as she reconnects with her body in a new powerful way, not related to attracting nor helping men. Barbie is glowing as she shouts, "I am woman, hear me roar." For Barbie, being centered within herself, feeling less and less under the power of her deceased husband and finding her voice is a very new and exciting experience. The feel of power, described as shine, is helping her overcome her fear of taking charge of her own life. The Sacred Feminine is shining through as she comes to love herself more. The next step, as Sacred Feminine, Barbie says trembling is to courageously move her abuser's ashes into the office. It appears that Barbie, as Sacred Feminine, has transformed from frightened mouse to roaring lioness.

The Sacred Feminine as Creativity

Katy, "I am creating beauty in the world"

Katy, having never heard of the Sacred Feminine, made a remarkable connection between her embodied experience of creating sacred embodied space and her interpretation of the Sacred Feminine as Grace from Phase I. Katy has no theological or religious education. She is an analytical and introspective thinker and articulate speaker. Katy experienced her hands as creating beauty in the world. She described herself as a flower, radiant, beautiful. She says that love is something that she can give herself. Katy is re-imagining her body as sacred, mine, and safe as she is reimagining the female body as glorious, strong, and majestic. It is as though Katy's consciousness is revealing grace,

experiencing the divine presence of grace, and becoming the embodiment of Grace, her vision of the Sacred Feminine, herself as Sacred Feminine.

Deborah, “I want to stand up and speak”

Deborah’s resistance to transformation is obvious as she sticks to her script. Her friendly smile and kind way appear to be a mask for the anger imprisoned within her body. When asked as to why she held her arm so tightly to her body she replied, “so I don’t reach out and bunch someone in the face.” And then she laughed, not an evil laugh, but a laugh that says I can laugh at myself. The Sacred Feminine that she is not yet willing to consciously know, appears as humor, as a way of giving voice to her conflicted experiences. Deborah stated that what came up for her in the body exercise was that she wanted to be like the comedian *Roseanne*. Deborah wants to stand up and speak, say what she wants to say, and make people laugh.

Stephanie, “She is the dance and the dance is her”

Stephanie’s experience of the sacred embodying space movement exercise awakened a creative spirit within from rigid body-armor. Stephanie began waving her arms, explaining that she is a flag waver in her worship group. She says that she stands in the back where no one can see her. As she waved her body, imitating her flag dance, she said, “She is the dance and the dance is her.” Stephanie shared that she is practicing small talk and receiving compliments from the ladies in her worship service. Standing with her hands open, she says, “Once I receive it, then what do I do?” Stephanie brings her hands to her heart and says, “I accept it in my heart.” Stephanie’s self identifies with the Sacred Feminine and says that herself as Sacred Feminine is “oneness, in a line with God.” Her

final comment, “Sometimes your mind needs more time to accept what your heart already knows,” expressed a powerful consciousness of Stephanie as Sacred Feminine.

The Sacred Feminine as Relatedness

Crystal, “I am balanced”

Crystal’s experience of creating embodied sacred space, for her a spiritual practice, was experiencing herself as balanced. Crystal is at ease with her body flowing and moving as though weightless and effortless. She walks as though her feet don’t touch the ground. The embodiment activity, for Crystal, appears to create a rigor or structure in her movement of rocking, feeling the physicality of her muscles in her movements. It is as though her experience of self as ethereal, incomplete, not whole, somewhat disheveled and untethered, is beginning to reconnect with the part of her body that is powerful and strong. What came up for Crystal was nurturing herself. Crystal appears to be accepting herself as powerful and strong in a new way. Crystal identifies her body and the Sacred Feminine as nurturing. Crystal appears to be experiencing a new way to relate to herself, nurturing herself, as she gives voice to her truth with all parts of her body. For Crystal, the Sacred Feminine is divine and she is balanced.

Aubrey, “I am lighter”

Aubrey’s relationship with religion, God, and people is conflicted. As Aubrey participates in her experience of creating sacred space and feeling a flowing of her body movement, Aubrey maintained an intellectual dialogue and resistance to the experience. Her resistance to spirituality and the sacred is reflected in her statement that her world is locked, and her spirit is torn, caged. Aubrey’s connection to the Sacred Feminine is in her

identity through her roles and relationships. Aubrey is mom, wife, friend, sister, and sometimes daughter.

Her greatest resistance is expanding her relationships for fear of taking on the responsibility of others as was expected of her in her childhood. Aubrey embodies and resists the Sacred Feminine through the power and importance of women relationships in her life. After experiencing the flow, interdependent, and mirroring embodied activity with the researcher, Aubrey experienced “lightness.” Aubrey experienced a way of relating and connecting with another that is non-evasive, not controlling, and non-threatening and still hold her own space of being. Aubrey’s ideal God is a God who is loving, caring, kindness, compassion, and empathy, all relational characteristics of the Sacred Feminine.

Tara, “Love is respect, loving Self first”

Tara’s encounter with the Sacred Feminine through the spiritual practice of embodying sacred space emerged as she appeared to make the conscious shift from relationship with “other” to relationship with self. In her words, “love is respect, loving Self first.” The love that came up for Tara in her movement is the love of Self that is in being Sacred Feminine. The Sacred Feminine is within, like the consciousness of her womb is within her body. Her womb knows trauma and her womb knows power. Tara, engaging the power of the Sacred Feminine, is claiming herself as Sacred Feminine, all powerful.

Sophia, “My female body deserves respect”

Sophia’s experience of the practice of sacred embodied space appeared to be resistant. Sophia had withdrawn from the study because her gut told her it didn’t feel

right. Three months later, Sophia decides that her way of getting things done is not working. She states, “Apparently, Jesus is NOT my best friend.” Sophia asks to return to the study.

Sophia is high energy in her movements and dialogue. She recalls that she was a dancer in a nightclub. Sophia has not discussed the details of her past. The effort to settle her and allow the effect of the experience to wash over her takes priority. Her exhaustion, emotions, and fast-paced thinking, which she states is dangerous, keeps her from relating to her body. Sophia as Sacred Feminine appears to be creating within herself safe space to break through the illusion of who she is and the freedom to be true to herself. Sophia states, the female body deserves respect and her female body deserves respect. It is in this experience that Sophia relates authentically to herself.²³¹

Summary: Embodying the Sacred Feminine by Embodying Creativity

Engaging women’s bodies in reflective and reflexive movement is the more difficult phase of the study. Most of the women appeared resistant to movement, sitting rigidly in her seat with arms pressed against her body, either hugging herself or grasping her arm, body muscles contracted. There are many activities that women often participate in that physically stimulate her body such as yoga, running, weightlifting, dance, and sailing. It is not the physical activity itself that is significant, but the conscious reflexivity

²³¹ A few weeks after this experience, Sophia allowed her mind and body to remember her rape, something she has been in denial about for a very long time. Sophia had not informed the researcher of her rape. She used the sacred embodying space spiritual practice to calm herself and allow the emotions and body sensations to flow through her body. She called a trusted friend who stayed on the phone with her during the experience. Sophia was not retraumatized by her experience but in fact was released and freed from the fear of remembering her rape. Sophia called the researcher the following day to celebrate and thank the researcher. She requested that this experience be included in the study. Sophia was able to relate to herself as Sacred Feminine during the remembering of her rape and reunite with her body.

on women's embodied experience of herself and reflection of her embodied presence in relationship to the world.

Creating conscious awareness of thoughts, images, emotions, and sensations flowing in and through her body create awareness of embodied memories of trauma, power, suffering, and joy. Consciously creating a bubble of sacred space, the location of herself as Sacred Feminine, trains women how to create her own safe space, therefore not seeking external sources to secure her space. She can feel safe in her own imaged bubble space. Conscious exploration of trauma memories in one's created safe and sacred space allow for re-interpretation of the experience and creative re-integration of it as knowledge into her consciousness.

Consciousness of embodied memories thoughts, feelings, images, and sensations, both pleasurable and painful, when creatively engaged through the beingness of Sacred Feminine resulted in experiences of the Sacred Feminine as oneness with oneself, creativity, and relatedness to oneself, others, and her world. In each women's experience, the researcher identified one main experience of Sacred Feminine, however, all three were occurring at the same time.

Noticing how women unconsciously embodied herself in survivor-space was illuminating and offered insight for understanding and supporting women in transition. Women in survivor-space are often living out of an unconscious or limited consciousness of herself as Sacred Feminine. Of the women in the study, five survivor-space body-images were identified: Masculine Body-Armor, Female Bodybuilder, Female Body-Beautiful, Female Body-Reappearing, and Sacred Body-Floating

Training women in self-reflexive and practice-reflection practices that can easily be duplicated offer increased opportunities for embodied healing, self-love, and the creation of safe space. Consciously naming women's bodies as Sacred Feminine and reflections of the divine in the world. The more that women consciously identify her beingness as Sacred Feminine and share that consciousness of beingness of Sacred Feminine in other women, especially young women, then the entire consciousness of the world will transform from patriarchy and domination to the reflection of the divine as Sacred Feminine oneness, creativity, and relatedness.

CHAPTER SIX. WOMEN TAKE THE HELM

Introduction

Women participants arrive at the sailing vessel, *La Bon Vie*, with enthusiasm, anticipation, and hope. Most of the woman expect to be a passenger on the sailboat, help the researcher, as needed. Much to her surprise, passenger she is not. Each woman, as helmswoman, takes the helm, raises the sails, and navigates her course. Sacred Feminine is at the helm. The helmswoman, the sailing vessel, and the sailing experience are Sacred Feminine.

Updates on the Women since Phase II

Katy is not able to participate as she is living out of state with her new husband. Crystal exchanged her iPhone to a flip phone to disconnect from the social media and communication networks. Aubrey is exercising more than ever and loving how powerful she feels in her body. Jessica has moved to a new apartment that just so happens to have a ballet bar. Tara is attending woman empowerment conferences, declaring herself the spiritual awakening queen. Deborah is glad to be alive. Anna is happily driving around town with her new driver's license. Barbie is in love with her new boyfriend. Sophia is creating a platform for support of women who have been trafficked. Stephanie's teenage granddaughter is flying in for a visit and she is connecting in less antagonistic ways with her children.

Women's Consciousness Responses Before Sailing Experience

Crystal, "I am light"

Crystal's Female Body: Crystal²³² describes herself as "calm." "I am light." The female body is "beautiful" and Crystal's female body is "strong." Hands "touch" and Crystals hands "transfer."

Crystal's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "beautiful," and Crystal's emotion is "content, level nine." Thinking is "a lot" and Crystal's way of thinking is "spatial." Knowing is "soul" and Crystal's way of knowing is "channeled."

Crystal and Power: Power is "focused," and Crystal's power is "strong." Empowerment is "foundational" and Crystals sense of empowerment is "growing."

Crystal's World and Life: The world is a "simplicity, intricate, what I see it to be" and Crystal's world is "spatial." Life is "within" and Crystal's life is "meaningful."

Crystal and Love: Love is "everywhere." Crystal's way of loving is "a lot" and her way of being loved is "being seen."

Crystal and Spirituality: Spirit is "everywhere," and Crystal's spirit is "free." Spirituality is "complex," and Crystal's spirituality is "mine." God is "everywhere," and Crystal's God is "Self."

Crystal and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "divine" and Crystal's Self as Sacred Feminine is "channeling."

Crystal and Sailing: Water is "peaceful." Wind is "strong." Sailboat is "open." Sailing is "freeing."

²³² Audio video file Phase III interview RP3PHIII

Aubrey, “I am woman, create life, make babies”

Aubrey’s Female Body: Aubrey²³³ describes herself as “daughter, sister, wife, mom, strong, striving to be kind.” “I am woman, create life, make babies.” The female body is “powerful, beautiful, strong, amazing” and Aubrey’s female body is “strong, tired, amazing.” Hands “still do, create” and Aubrey’s hands “do, create, do all the things.”

Aubrey’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “abundant, ever changing, complicated” and Aubrey’s emotions are “abundant, ever changing, complicated, little anxiety with kids, level seven.” Thinking is “knowledge, thoughts” and Aubrey’s way of thinking is “support, creation, creating, my gut instinct.” Knowing is “research, gut instinct.” Aubrey’s way of knowing is “research, gut, instincts.”

Aubrey and Power: Power is “being able to be good or bad, empower, giving power rather than taking it” and Aubrey’s sense of power is “none with my kids, excited to be on the water, my happy place, empowered.” Empowerment is “support, encouragement, giving” and Aubrey’s sense of empowerment is “being a woman, role as being mom, my strength, willingness, from my husband and kids.”

Aubrey’s World and Life: The world is “big, complicated” and Aubrey’s world is “not letting me grow, kids, contribution, work, I like to keep it small, comfortable.” Life is “vast, a journey” and Aubrey’s life is “definitely a journey, changing, growing, challenging self.”

²³³ Audio video file Phase III interview RP13PHIII

Aubrey and Love: Love is “everything, lesson to be learned, purpose.” Aubrey’s way of loving is “empowering, teaching, caring for, I’ve been rejecting it lately.”

Aubrey’s way of being loved is “care, time, attention.”

Aubrey and Spirituality: Spirit is “internal, universe, connection” and Aubrey’s spirit is “not very connected apparently.” Spirituality is “connection, universe, feelings” and Aubrey’s spirituality is “always questionable, family, friends, love, connection, relationships.” God is “love, universe, spirit, all that.” Aubrey’s “God is questionable, uncertain, complicated world always trying to push their forms of God on Good Christians.”

Aubrey and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “woman beauty and strength.” Aubrey’s sense of herself as Sacred Feminine is “everything that comes from being a woman, mom, wife, friend, sister.” Water is “life-giving, essential.” Wind is “relaxing, cooling, potentially scary.” Ocean is “big, life, vast, calming.” Sailboat is “freedom.” Sailing is “fun, relaxing from passenger perspective.”

Jessica, “I am confused, fear of the unknown, going against the fantasy, grow into something new”

Jessica’s Female Body: Jessica²³⁴ describes herself as “getting stronger, believing in myself, starting to take my power back, learning.” “I am confused, going against the fantasy, grow into something new.” The female body is “a beautiful thing” and Jessica’s female body is “a work in progress.” Hands are “vessels” and Jessica’s hands are “busy, doing a lot.”

²³⁴ Audio video file Phase III interview RP12PHIII

Jessica's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "powerful," and Jessica's emotions are "content, level six." Thinking is "I don't like to think, overthink" and Jessica's way of thinking is "smart, sometimes naïve." Knowing is "feeling, listening to your intuition, universe" and Jessica's way of knowing is "listening to your intuition and not ignoring the red flags, fear of the unknown."

Jessica and Power: Power is "rewarding," and Jessica's power is "mine." Empowerment is "energy, feeling good, helping self and others." Jessica's empowerment is "strong."

Jessica's World and Life: The world is "has a lot of wisdom, knowledge" and Jessica's world is "career, the world has not seen me yet, explore the world, good." Life is "complicated, doesn't need to be" and Jessica's life is "starting to become less complicated."

Jessica and Love: Love is a "good feeling." Jessica's way of loving is "giving." Jessica's way of being loved is "respecting yourself enough to be loved."

Jessica and Spirituality: Spirit is "alter ego, speaks for you when you cannot speak for yourself" and Jessica's spirit is "empathetic, feels a lot." Spirituality is "having a belief in power, something, higher power." God is "I gotta believe He knows what He is doing." Jessica's God is "preparing me for something better."

Jessica and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "your protector, belief, value in Self" and Jessica's Self as Sacred Feminine is "precious, never said to Self, your safe place."

Tara, “I am awakening”

Tara’s Female Body: Tara²³⁵ described herself as “mixed little girl, peaceful, lovable, outgoing.” Tara said, “I am awakening.” The female body is “ahhh, that body thing, precious, overwhelming” and Tara’s female body is “working on it, trying to lose weight, trying to like myself and my body, feeling better, acceptable, discipline.” Hands are “builders” and Tara’s hands are “powerful.”

Tara’s Thoughts and Emotions: Thinking is “thinking pose, the world trying to think” and Tara’s way of thinking is “becoming clear.” Knowing is “books, pages, what you know” and Tara’s way of knowing is “not enough, utilize, you just know it.”

Tara and Power: Power is “greedy, leaders” and Tara’s sense of power is “needed, self, hurting for other people, myself is good, peaceful, happier place.” Empowerment is “circulating,” and Tara’s sense of empowerment is “developing.”

Tara’s World and Life: The world is “evolving,” and Tara’s world is “definite, perception is changing.” Life is “starting to make sense.”

Tara and Love: Love is “has more definition, fully love yourself.” Tara’s way of loving is “love Self first.” Tara’s way of being loved is “people that are conscious of what I love.”

Tara and Spirituality: Spirit is “within” and Tara’s spirit is “being worked on, my inner self.” Spirituality is “joy” and Tara’s spirituality is “the ability to connect with the unseen, I love it, free, consciousness, piece of you, not physical.” God is “universal, all surrounding” and Tara’s God is “always there.”

²³⁵ Audio video file Phase III interview RP9PHIII

Tara and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “your inner power.” Tara’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “clearing the path.”

Tara and Sailing: Water is “needed.” Wind is “a gust of clarity, clear, breath.” Ocean is “abundance.” Sailboat is “freedom.” Sailing is “a journey.”

Deborah, “I am strong, life-giving”

Deborah’s Female Body: Deborah²³⁶ describes herself as “friendly, outgoing, people person, affirms, spectacularly creative thinking, and honors peoples need.”

Deborah says, “I am strong, life-giving.” The female body is amazing, creates kids, give life” and Deborah’s female body, “I am amazed at what I can do after the accident.”

Hands are “useful” and as for Deborah’s hands, she is “thankful that she has them.”

Deborah’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are crazy, roller coaster ride, up to you to decide” and Deborah said, “I am calmer all over, relaxed, level 3-4.” Thinking “goes on all the time” and Deborah thinks “a lot.” Knowing is “what are we knowing” and Deborah’s way of knowing is “when you know, you know.”

Deborah and Power: Power is “being able to take back control, go your own way, keep everything in perspective.” Deborah’s sense of power is that she is “getting it back, working on it, that’s all you need.” Deborah’s “mind is in prison.” Empowerment is “I don’t know so I looked it up, Captain of your own ship.” Deborah’s sense of empowerment is “within, make your own choices, decisions, control your own way.”

Deborah’s World and Life: The world is “I’m alive today” and Deborah’s world is “chaotic, mixed emotions.” Life is “overwhelming and good” and Deborah’s life is “stuck in emotions and chaotic.”

²³⁶ Audio video file Phase III interview RP2PHIII

Deborah and Love: Love is “good, family, marriage.” Deborah loves “with her heart” and her way of being loved is “respect, not yelling at one another.”

Deborah and Spirituality: Spirit is “inside you, gives you control on how you feel” and Deborah’s spirit is “within, conversations, to cheer self, keeps me from going ape.” Spirituality “makes a person whole” and Deborah’s spirituality is “her relationship with God, working on it, through this.” God is “awesome, true friend, everything you need.” Deborah’s God is wonderful, Father, counselor, peaceful.”

Deborah and Sailing: Water is “refreshing, awesome, can’t survive.” Deborah says, “I love the wind, good in a lot of ways, breeze, body dies, not your spirit.” Sailboat is “like boating.”

Sophia, “I got nothing but space to create”

Sophia’s Female Body: Sophia²³⁷ describes herself as “hungry, wobbly, drained, confused.” “I got nothing but space to create.” The female body is “unpredictable.” Sophia’s female body is “very fucking unpredictable.” Hands are “soft” Sophia’s hands are “strong, holding spaces, hiding.”

Sophia’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “fun,” and Sophia’s emotions are “annoying, level five.” Power is “cooler,” and Sophia’s power is “cooler.” Empowerment

²³⁷ Audio video file Phase III interview RP6PHIII. Sophia arrives more than one hour late with an excuse. Sophia habitually reschedules her interviews, often at the last minute. Sophia arrives in a state of anger, frustration, and outrage. Unable to focus on sailing, researcher invited Sophia to explore her experience. Sophia explained how she is organizing a conference and the people involved in the conference did not follow through as expected, where late with funding, uncommitted, and requiring a tremendous amount of energy, support, and time from Sophia. Sophia explained that she is always helping people, rescuing them, giving them another chance, doing everything for everyone, and angry when they do not meet her expectations nor value her. Upon reflection, Sophia recognized that she herself is often behaving in a similar manner with her commitments. Sophia reflected on her childhood experiences. Going deeper, Sophia encounters her child self, hiding in a dark corner, trembling, fearful of the anger and outrage. She spoke to her child self, asking about her needs, fears, and experience. Sophia tells her child Self that she loves her and promises to protect and honor her. Sophia invites her child Self to come out of the dark, waits patiently, and allows her child self to step out of hiding. Sophia says she feels better and is ready to start.

is “exhausting,” and Sophia’s empowerment is “exhausting.” Thinking is “dangerous, overthink.” And Sophia’s way of thinking is “draining.” Knowing is “not necessary.” Sophia’s way of knowing is “subtle.”

Sophia’s World and Life: The world is “on fire.” And Sophia’s world is “changing.” Life is “changing,” and Sophia’s life is “crazy.”

Sophia and Love: Love is a “four letter word.” Sophia’s way of loving “can be destructive.” Sophia’s way of being loved is “through presence.”

Sophia and Spirituality: Spirit is “driving me crazy” and Sophia’s spirit is “tired.” Spirituality is “what you make of it” and Sophia’s spirituality is “changing.” God is “guy, what are you doing?” Sophia’s God is “quiet.”

Sophia and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine “needs to grow some balls.” Sophia’s Self as Sacred feminine “is growing some balls.”

Sophia and Sailing: Water is “nurturing.” Ocean is “abundant.” Wind is “calming.” Sailboat is “rocking.” Sailing is “new.”

Anna, “I am an alcoholic, on a boat, taking a journey”

Anna’s Female Body: Anna²³⁸ describes herself as “open.” Anna states “I am an alcoholic, on a boat, taking a journey.” The female body is “magnificent.” Anna’s female body is “magnificent in menopause.” Hands are “important.” Anna’s hands are “healing.” Emotions are “temporary.”

Anna’s Thoughts and Emotions: Anna’s emotions are “temporary, excited, level ten.” Thinking is “different from feeling.” Anna’s way of thinking is “alcoholic, skewed, double check.” Knowing is “in your heart.” Anna’s way of knowing is “heart and gut.”

²³⁸ Audio video file Phase III interviewRP5PHIII

Anna and Power: Power is “attainable.” Anna’s power is “growing.”

Empowerment is “not exactly sure.” Anna’s empowerment is my own strength.”

Anna’s World and Life: The world is “amazing.” Anna’s world is “amazing, gratitude.” Life is “what we make of it,” Anna’s life is “great and challenging.”

Anna and Love: Love is “very important, needed.” Anna’s way of loving is “telling, hugging, being there.” Anna’s way of being loved is “to be open to it.”

Anna and Spirituality: Spirit is “a part of me.” Anna’s spirit is “God in me.” Spirituality is “my connection to God.” Anna’s spirituality is “everything.”

Anna and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “female power and strength.” Anna’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “honor and respect myself.”

Anna and Sailing: Water is “going to be around me all day.” Wind “blows.” Sailboat “scares me a little.” Sailing is “my journey today.”

Barbie, “I am happy”

Barbie’s Female Body: Barbie²³⁹ describes herself as “beautiful.” “I am happy.” The female body is “amazing” and Barbie’s female body is “beautiful.” Hands “tell a story” and Barbie’s hands are “pretty.”

Barbie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Barbie’s emotions are “crying all the time” and she feels “excited, level ten.” Thinking is “good,” and Barbie’s way of thinking is “the right way, I was always wrong before.” Knowing is “all” and Barbie’s way of knowing is “my guide.”

Barbie and Power: Power is “strong,” and Barbie’s sense of Power is “getting there.” Empowerment is “important,” and Barbie’s sense of empowerment is “learning.”

²³⁹ Audio video file Phase III interviewRP7PHIII

Barbie's World and Life: The world is "crazy," and Barbie's world is "happy."
Life is "amazing," and Barbie's life is "good."

Barbie and Love: Love is "happy." Barbie's way of loving is "many ways."
Barbie's way of being loved is "affection."

Barbie and Spirituality: Spirit is "good." Barbie's spirit is "holy." Spirituality is
"don't like that word." Barbie's spirituality is "learning, one of no other." God is "good."
Barbie's God is "the best." The Sacred Feminine is "within."

Barbie and Sacred Feminine: Barbie's Self as Sacred Feminine is "good to
know."

Barbie and Sailing: Water is "needed." Ocean is "salty." Wind is "free." Sailboat
is "fun." Sailing is "new."

Stephanie, "I am inquiring"

Stephanie's Female Body: Stephanie²⁴⁰ describes herself as "unknown." She
states, "I am inquiring." The female body is "good" and Stephanie's female body is
"good." Hands are "helping," and Stephanie's hands are "sore, arthritic, working,
gardening, and moving."

Stephanie's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "balanced," and Stephanie's
emotions are "neutral, level 5." Thinking is "unending," and Stephanie's way of thinking
is "possibilities." Knowing is "wisdom" and Stephanie's way of knowing is "freedom."

Stephanie and Power: Power is "explosive" and Stephanie's power is "mighty,
slipping up to explosive." Empowerment is "unlimited access" and Stephanie's sense of
empowerment is "God's."

²⁴⁰ Audio video file Phase III interview RP14PHIII

Stephanie's World and Life: The world is "painful," and Stephanie's world is "fun." Life is "interesting," and Stephanie's life is "gifted."

Stephanie and Love: Love is "unlimited" and Stephanie's way of loving "unconditional" and being loved is "unknown."

Stephanie and Spirituality: Spirit is "one" and Stephanie's spirit is "God's spirit, we are one." Spirituality is "Yesuha, Jesus." and Stephanie's spirituality is "God." God is "mighty," and Stephanie's God is "Jesus."

Stephanie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "learning." Stephanie's Self as Sacred Feminine is "receiving."

Stephanie and Sailing: Water is "body, own body is developed, lived, and moved by, in water." Wind is "holy." Ocean is "mine." Sailing is "fun." Sailboat is "beautiful."

Sailing Experience²⁴¹

Preparing to Embark

The sailing experience²⁴² involves the researcher, captaining her personal sailing vessel, and one woman at a time. Sailing is always weather dependent, and interviews are scheduled a few days ahead, confirming the evening prior. Tara arrived for her sailing experience and due to a change in weather, had to be rescheduled.

²⁴¹ This research study is not designed to make sailors out of the research participants, only to engage them in a new way of being, thinking, doing, and experiencing themselves, the natural elements, and the space in which they exist. Learning to sail involves training the mind and body to be present and know what to do and apply that to life. Details of the practice and each woman's experience sailing are not included in this study as the study is limited to the data collected from her consciousness responses. The researcher was unable to record the conversations. The specific details for the practice of sailing, reflection, spirituality, and connecting life to sailing will be developed as a therapeutic spiritual practice in future work.

²⁴² Conner and Levitt, *Learn to Sail*. The authors explain the art and process of learning to sail with clarity and simplicity. His way of teaching is to train the mind and the body to think and act like a sailor. His belief that drives his teaching method is such that a person can learn the basic skills to sail in a day. There are many other books on how to sail that explain the theory of sailing in greater detail.

Prior to leaving the dock, the women were given basic safety instructions, informed of safety gear, first aid, and location of fire extinguishers as would be expected of a captain. All the women followed the instructions to dress in cool, comfortable athletic type clothing, closed-toed shoes, and bring water, snacks, and easily eaten and digestible food.

The researcher instructs, with a calm confident voice, what the women will do throughout the sailing experience and asks her how her experiences connect with her life experiences. Every aspect of the sailing experience is an intentional practice. Setting each woman up for success and to articulate the experience; self-awareness, sailboat awareness, surroundings and situational awareness, critical thinking, decision making, actions, results, reflection on the action, results, thought process, and ways of being.

Leaving the Dock

The researcher instructs the woman on leaving the dock, drawing attention to the forces acting on the sailboat: dock lines, wind, and current. The researcher steers the boat off the dock with the woman throwing off the lines as instructed. The researcher steers the boat out of the marina.

Taking the Helm

Once out of the marina, the woman is asked to stand in front of the helm, place hands on the helm, take the helm and steer the boat, allowing time in between for her to feel calm, gain confidence, and expertise. All the woman commented that their expectation was to experience sailing as a passenger. Within a few minutes, the woman is steering the helm alone with the captain standing a few feet away. The women all feel a

little nervous and excited. All the woman remained at the helm, steering the sailboat, and navigating the channel as directed until instructed otherwise.

Raising the Main Sail

Raising the main is a collaborative effort between the helmswoman and the crew, the person pulling the halyard that raises the main sail. The main sail is a triangle forty feet tall and fifteen feet long. The researcher gave instructions and prepared the sail to be raised. The researcher took over the helm and pointed the sailboat into the wind; the woman pulled the halyard, placed the halyard on the winch, cranking it until it was fully raised. Every woman was successful at raising the main. It is a chaotic, noisy, and physically demanding experience with the sail flapping wildly in the wind and the woman focused only getting the sail up as quickly and safely as possible.

Navigating the Channel

Once the sail is raised the woman returns to the helm, steering, and navigating the channel as instructed. The woman is instructed that her primary sacred space is the area within arms-length around her body and her secondary sacred space that she is responsible for and accountable to is the area surrounding the boat. The sailing vessel as sacred space includes the sailboat from the top of the mast to below the keel and from bow to stern. The woman imagined a giant hula hoop and to alternate her focus from sailboat, immediate surroundings, and the horizons. The rules of the road, boating safety, and navigation is explained in simple clear terms. The first rule of the road in boating is safety, avoid any type of collision. The second rule of boating safety is to avoid all collisions even if you have the right of way.

Tacking and Changing Directions

Once out of the channel and sailing into the gulf, the woman pulls out the second sail, the jib, and learn to tack, change the direction of the boat. The woman learns to feel body sensations, movement under her feet, and wind on her check. The woman is instructed to recognize the different forces acting on the sailboat, wind direction, and wave action. The woman learns to read the wind, fill the sails, and propel forward. Tacking is a collaborative effort of intuition, timing, steering, letting go, and pulling in the sails between the helmswoman and the woman.

Stuck in Irons

Getting stuck “in irons,” is part of sailing. It happens when the sailboat points directly into the wind, which is a nosy, chaotic, and often frustrating experience. “In irons” is often caused by the helmswoman steering off course, change in sails, poor tack, trying to sail a straight line, and shifts in wind speed or direction. The sailboat stops moving forward, and begins to slip backward, with a total loss of steering capability. The only way to recover is to adjust the sails.

Getting Out of Irons

Once stuck “in irons,” getting out of “irons” requires creative thinking, situational awareness, discipline, collaboration, and self-awareness. When “in irons,” adjusting the sail is the only solution, except to turn on the engine. Getting out of “irons” requires a few simple steps: pause, feel the wind, assess the situation, adjust the sails, and the boat will accelerate forward.

Sailing Perfectly Balance

Sailing perfectly balanced is achieved when the course is determined, the steering wheel is set, and the sails are adjusted. The peacefulness and quiet of sailing replace the physical labor and critical thinking of sailing. The sailboat essentially sails itself with slight adjustments at the wheel by the helmswoman. Both the researcher and the woman sit in silence, present to the moment, taking a drink, eating lunch, and sharing a few thoughts.

Myth of the handless maiden. While sailing perfectly balance or when the woman is at the helm, the researcher reads the myth of the “Handless Maiden,” from the part of the story where the Handless Maiden leaves the castle and goes off with the spirit guide into the forest to live. It is in her home in the forest where the Handless Maiden grows new hands and lives into her true power, creativity, and identity.

Returning to the Dock

While sailing, the woman relaxes, steers the sailing vessel in the water and reflects on the sailing vessel that is her life for the day. She notices a new way of being, thinking, doing, connecting with herself, her life, and the natural elements. She connects with her own physical power at the helm, raising the sails, and her mental and emotional power to be present, think creatively, reflect, adjust, and to know intuitively, experientially, creativity, and by guided instruction. Each woman’s sailing experience is different, and the individual lessons learned from each woman’s experience is unique and is uniquely applicable to her life.

Women's Consciousness Response's After Sailing Experience

Crystal, "I am supported by everything and me"

Crystal's Female Body: Crystal describes herself as "elated." "I am supported by everything and me." The female body is "all encompassing" and Crystal's female body is "life-giving." Hands "heal" and Crystal's hands "are energetic."

Crystal's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "powerful," and Crystal's emotion is "present, giddy, elated, level ten." Thinking is "clear," and Crystal's way of thinking is "focused." Knowing is "innate" and Crystal's way of knowing is "experience."

Crystal and Power: Power is "everywhere, everyone" and Crystal's power is "transmutable, energy power." Empowerment is "feminine" and Crystal's sense of empowerment is "alignment, strong, channel, focused."

Crystal's World and Life: The world is a "round" and Crystal's world is "all encompassing." Life is "joy" and Crystal's life is "blooming."

Crystal and Love: Love is "warm." Crystal's way of loving is "learning" and her way of being loved is "being looked in the eye, truly."

Crystal and Spirituality: Spirit is "within" and Crystal's spirit is "radiant." Spirituality is "everywhere," and Crystal's spirituality is "unique because it is mine." God is "source" and Crystal's God is "Self, not in a prideful way."

Crystal and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "Goddess" and Crystal's Self as Sacred Feminine is "whole."

Crystal and Sailing: Water is "cool." Wind is "light." Sailboat is "fun." Sailing is "freedom."

Aubrey, “I am strong, smart, capable, making progress and fighting progress”

Aubrey’s Female Body: Aubrey describes herself as “tired, on a journey, prestige and trust, I don’t like change, I like red, stability.” “I am strong, smart, capable, making progress and fighting progress.” The female body is “strong, wants to connect” and Aubrey’s female body is “high, sea salt air, relaxing.” Hands “do” and Aubrey’s hands “sailed a boat.”

Aubrey’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are all over the place, fleeting, endless, complicated. Aubrey’s emotions are “anxiety, little more direction, level seven.” Thinking is “subconscious, it’s crazy.” Aubrey’s way of thinking is “selfish, not selfish, protective, letting guard down.” Knowing is “gut, reminding” Aubrey’s way of knowing is “trigger reactions, below struggle.”

Aubrey and Power: Power is “give it up” and Aubrey’s sense of power is “intention, driver, dominating, subconscious.” Empowerment is “selflessness, supportive, authenticity, encouragement” and Aubrey’s empowerment is “let people, not caring more than they care, confidence in my ability to lead, take the ropes, doing something new.”

Aubrey’s World and Life: The world is “big, too many people, complicated” and Aubrey’s world is “revolves around me, apparently.” Life is “complicated” and Aubrey’s life is “way too complicated.”

Aubrey and Love: Love is “everything, get to know me, see the love.” Aubrey’s way of loving is “time, attention, getting to know you-maybe.” Aubrey’s way of being loved is “trying to let people in.”

Aubrey and Spirituality: Spirit is “Godliness, universe, internal, external” and Aubrey’s spirit is “stubborn.” Spirituality is “being, connect with your spirit, intimate

with spirit” and Aubrey’s spirituality is “sometimes connected and not superficial.” God is “universe, earth, wind, fire.” Aubrey’s God is “life and love connection.”

Aubrey and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “connection from within.” Aubrey’s self as Sacred Feminine is “complicated, lack and being connection.”

Aubrey and Sailing: Water is “life-giving, blue.” Wind is “free, freedom, power sometimes disastrous.” Ocean is “big, full of life, whole world on the world.” Sailboat is “connection, relaxation.” Sailing is “connection, relaxation.”

Jessica, “I am enough”

Jessica’s Female Body: Jessica describes herself as “authentic, genuine, real, loving.” “I am enough.” The female body is “I don’t think we give ourselves credit, act down on ourselves” and Jessica’s female body is “happy with it and at the same time, not.” Hands are “non-verbal, tell stories without words” and Jessica’s hands “hold a lot of emotions, hurt or heal.”

Jessica’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “draining,” and Jessica’s emotions are “tired of caring about a lot of things, level six.” Thinking is “need to think in life.” Jessica’s way of thinking is “is another form of abuse, self-abuse, why should I talk to myself that way.” Knowing is “I feel I should be ok, never know everything, be happy with what I know, that way so I know better for next time.” Jessica’s way of knowing is “confusing.”

Jessica and Power: Power is “a controlling thing, having doesn’t mean you’re better, knowing what to do with it” and Jessica’s power is “used incorrectly.” Empowerment is “rewarding, see strangers bonding over something in common.” Jessica’s empowerment is “nice to know, as one person, believing each other.”

Jessica's World and Life: The world is "setting me up for success, I need to go out there and take advantage of all the things it has to offer." Jessica's world is "getting simpler, one day at a time." Life is "life is a precious thing, shouldn't be taken for granted" and Jessica's life is "life is a precious thing, shouldn't be taken for granted."

Jessica and Love: Love is a "selfless, doesn't mean that I unlove myself in the process, that's part of love, self-love." Jessica's way of loving is "too hard, love hard, expect it in return." Jessica's way of being loved is "just feeling like I'm wanted and do something for me without expecting something in return."

Jessica and Spirituality: Spirit is "extension of yourself." and Jessica's spirit is "my protector, save me, heightens senses, aware of things, unaware of before." Spirituality is "another form of having hope." Jessica's spirituality is "deep, hope for brighter, consistent, good days." God is "I have faith." Jessica's God "knows what He is doing, take extra-long time because it is extra special."

Jessica and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "should be cherished, not looked at as a bad thing." Jessica's Self as Sacred Feminine "needs to be appreciated, she is not a bad thing."

Jessica and Sailing: Water is "free therapy, washing or cleansing yourself." Sailboat is "another aid to help you free yourself." Sailing is "nice, forces you to focus and think in silence." Wind is "a liberating feeling."

Tara, "I am better"

Tara's Female Body: Tara described herself as "little rushing but overwhelmed, daughter's father contacted me, co-parenting." Tara said, "I am better." The female body

is “is healthy, full body, curves, unique” and Tara’s female body is “healthy.” Hands are “creative,” and Tara’s hands are “open.”

Tara’s Thoughts: Thinking is “gift and curse” and Tara’s way of thinking is “transforming, taking it and moving.” Knowing is “just the Being” and Tara’s way of knowing is “healing, awareness, myself, emotions, healing not others before self.”

Tara and Power: Power is “universal,” and Tara’s sense of power is “unraveling, more conscious of it and of believing in it.” Empowerment is “overused, been going to conferences for years and didn’t understand.” Tara’s sense of empowerment is “action.”

Tara’s World and Life: The world is “unknown,” and Tara’s world is “shifting.” Life is “a space” and Tara’s life is “better off than many.”

Tara and Love: Love is “a powerful weapon.” Tara’s way of loving is “transforming Self first.” Tara’s way of being loved is “supporting my goals and dreams.”

Tara and Spirituality: Spirit is “all around and within” and Tara’s spirit is “becoming stronger.” Spirituality is “form of power” and Tara’s spirituality is “consciousness, you know of it.” God is “everything” and Tara’s God is “everything.”

Tara and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “your gut power.” Tara’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “arising.”

Tara and Sailing: Water is “precious commodity.” Wind is “support.” Ocean is “all around us.” Sailboat is “strength.” Sailing is “peaceful.”

Deborah, “I found myself, mind, heart, body, soul”

Deborah’s Female Body: Deborah describes herself as “seeing a way to get ahead in life.” Deborah says, “I am free to make my own choices.” The female body is

“beautiful, gives life, more powerful than people give it credit for” and Deborah’s female body, “I am happy to be female.” Hands are “tools, many things, powerful” and Deborah’s hands are “powerful.”

Deborah’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “good, need to feel to be a person.” and Deborah said, “I am very happy, over the moon.” Thinking “stuck sometimes, able to focus” and Deborah’s way of thinking is “calm, focused.” Knowing is “I am me inside” and Deborah’s way of knowing is “learning, exploring, focus.”

Deborah and Power: Power is “a good thing.” Deborah’s sense of power, “experienced power, wow, I can do stuff, I have options.” Deborah says, “I love that word, control of inner self.” Empowerment is “captain of your own ship.” Deborah’s sense of empowerment is “ignites self, awesome, I do, use it to my benefit.”

Deborah’s World and Life: The world is “happy, do stuff, ups and downs, get your way through it” and Deborah’s world is “hope all over it, You can do it, can, can, can, will, will.” Life is “spectacular,” and Deborah’s life is “good, accept divorce.”

Deborah and Love: Love is “love yourself, kindness, compassion.” Deborah loves “herself, friendly, respect herself” and her way of being loved is “that home is a sanctuary.”

Deborah and Spirituality: Spirit is “in me, life” and Deborah’s spirit is “is my life, activate it.” Spirituality is “needed to survive” and Deborah’s spirituality “makes her more alive.” God is “wonderful.” Deborah’s God is “love, peaceful, kind, very at peace.”

Deborah and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “inner self, peace, connection to making yourself whole.” Deborah’s Self as Sacred Feminine, “I found myself, mind, heart, body, soul.”

Deborah and Sailing: Water is “hydrate, relaxing.” Wind is “good, comfortable.” “I love the wind, good in a lot of ways, breeze, body dies, not your spirit.” Sailboat is “magical, relaxation, calmness, safe.” Sailing is “a magical place, rewarding place.”

Sophia, “I am calm”

Sophia’s Female Body: Sophia describes herself as “tired, at ease.” “I am calm.” The female body is “strong.” Sophia’s female body is “healing.” Hands are “blessing.” Sophia’s hands are “capable.”

Sophia’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “awesome,” and Sophia’s emotions are “neutral, at ease, relaxed, level five.”

Sophia and Power: Power is “presence” and Sophia’s power is “my presence.” Empowerment is “doesn’t have to be complicated” and Sophia’s empowerment is “creative.” Thinking is “exhausting.” And Sophia’s way of thinking is “changing, simplifying.” Knowing is “questionable.” Sophia’s way of knowing is “doesn’t have to be complicated.”

Sophia’s World and Life: The world is “chaotic.” And Sophia’s world is “expanding.” Life is “full of surprises” and Sophia’s life is “abundant.”

Sophia and Love: Love is a “four letter word.” Sophia’s way of loving “letting go.” Sophia’s way of being loved is “letting go.”

Sophia and Spirituality: Spirit is “never leaves you hanging” and Sophia’s spirit is “never leaves me hanging.” Spirituality is “piece of the puzzle” and Sophia’s spirituality is “foundational, piece of the puzzle.” God is “is a pain in my ass.” Sophia’s God’s “got bigger plans than I do.”

Sophia and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine “everywhere.” Sophia’s Self as Sacred feminine “is strong.”

Sophia and Sailing: Water is “healing.” Ocean is “comforting.” Wind is “empowering.” Sailboat is “fun.” Sailing is “just like life.”

Anna, “I am Queen”

Anna’s Female Body: Anna describes herself as “empowered.” Anna states, I am my own Queen.” The female body “tells me my truth.” Anna’s female body “tells me my truth, speaks to me.” Hands are “healing, powerful.” Anna’s hands are “healing and powerful.”

Anna’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are for “changing.” Anna’s emotions are “ever changing, excited, happy, level ten.” Thinking is “Captain of a cruise ship, not feelings.” Anna’s way of thinking is “open.” Knowing is “in your gut.” Anna’s way of knowing is “feelings, gut, body, heart.

Anna and Power: Power is “strength.” Anna’s power is “powerful, I’m in control.”

Anna’s World and Life: The world is “amazing.” Anna’s world is “in transition.” Life is “good, gratitude.” Anna’s life is “very happy, blessed.”

Anna and Love: Love is “everything.” Anna’s way of loving is “caring in your heart.” Anna’s way of being loved is “make me important, care about me.”

Anna and Spirituality: Spirit is “in me.” Anna’s spirit is “God is a part of me, don’t forget- sober.” Spirituality is “connecting to a higher power.” Anna’s spirituality “keeps me sober, connection to God in me, acceptance.” God “saved my life.” Anna’s God “saved my life.”

Anna and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “inner power, being a woman.” Anna’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “I am the Queen, steer my own ship, be self-sufficient.”

Anna and Sailing: Water is “peaceful, means of transformation.” Wind is “powerful, new appreciation.” Sailboat is “freedom, safe, fun.” Sailing is “free, on the road, traveling.”

Barbie, “I am woman, good to take care of myself”

Barbie’s Female Body: Barbie describes herself as “I am woman.” “I am woman, good to take care of myself.” The female body is “beautiful” and Barbie’s female body is “strong.” Hands “tell a story” and Barbie’s hands are “have grown, still growing.”

Barbie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Barbie’s emotions are “signs of where you are.” Barbie’s emotions are “drained, level seven.” Thinking “helps you grow and get stronger.” Barbie’s way of thinking “has been tweaked.” Knowing is “empowerment” and Barbie’s way of knowing is “experience tells all, has been by chance in the past.”

Barbie and Power: Power “makes you stronger.” Barbie’s power is “growing.” Empowerment is “a great handle on life.” Barbie’s empowerment is “doing much better.”

Barbie’s World and Life: The world is “still crazy” and Barbie’s world is “getting figured out in my head.” Life is “good, chaotic” and Barbie’s life is “getting better, hula hoop.”

Barbie and Love: Love is “happiness.” Barbie’s way of loving is “awesome to somebody that appreciates it.” Barbie’s way of being loved is “affection.”

Barbie and Spirituality: Spirit is “sometimes a struggle.” Barbie’s spirit is “sometimes good and bad.” Spirituality is “Kenny, unconditional love.” Barbie’s spirituality is “I don’t have a clue.” God is “important.” Barbie’s God is “by your side.”

Barbie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “new to me, situations, experiences, comfortable, handle, big dreams.” Barbie’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “have within, haven’t found it.”

Barbie and Sailing: Water is “fun.” Ocean is “a happy place.” Wind is “strong.” Sailboat is “amazing piece of equipment.” Sailing is “hard work.”

Stephanie, “I am content”

Stephanie’s Female Body: Stephanie describes herself as “a blank slate, trying to stay in the moment, a door opening.” She states, “I am content.” The female body is “elegant” and Stephanie’s female body is “powerful.” Hands are “helping,” and Stephanie’s hands are “tender.”

Stephanie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “thermostat, safety zone” and Stephanie’s emotions are “content, level 9.” Thinking is “usable,” and Stephanie’s way of thinking is “focused.” Knowing is “bygone, in the moment, no nothing” and Stephanie’s way of knowing is “being content, I don’t have to make something up.”

Stephanie and Power: Power is “strength, what you need, it’s there” and Stephanie’s power is “unlimited.” Empowerment is “charge, in control, content, not being, not falling in” and Stephanie’s sense of empowerment is “none.”

Stephanie’s World and Life: The world is “in front of me” and Stephanie’s world is “just ok.” Life is “fun,” and Stephanie’s life is “unexplainable for the moment.”

Stephanie and Love: Love is “unlimited” and Stephanie’s way of loving “unconditional” and being loved is “unknown.”

Stephanie and Spirituality: Spirit is “holy,” and Stephanie’s spirit is “Jesus.” Spirituality is “God.” and Stephanie’s spirituality is “open.” God is “my friend” and Stephanie’s God is “Jesus.”

Stephanie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “me.” Stephanie’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “complete, find it.”

Stephanie and Sailing: Water, “love it.” Wind is “good.” Ocean is “deep.” Sailing is “fun.” Sailboat is “La Bon Vie, the good life.”

Transformation through Sailing as Freedom-Space

The women appear to experience significant transformational experiences and changes in consciousness responses. Sailing appeared to shift descriptions of self and her identity from a role, doingness, or relationship to a way of being. The focus, though it began as an experience of sailing and learning to sail, transformed beyond a reflection on the practice of sailing to an experience of freedom-space.

Sailing Vessel as Freedom-Space

Symbolically, the woman imagined and anticipated the experience of sailing and the sailing vessel as a new, freeing, fun, and life-giving experience. Only Anna stated that the sailing vessel is a little scary. The women associated the sailing vessel with openness, movement, beauty, fun, and freedom. The sailing experience is a new freeing journey experience.

Anticipation of Freedom and Fun

The success of the sailing experience is based on the women's anticipation of a sailing vessel and sailing as being fun and freeing. The women imaged the natural environment of sailing in terms of wind and water as calming, clarity, relaxing, refreshing, nurturing, peaceful, free, and holy. The brain-body conversation overall interpreted the experience of sailing as freedom; a life-giving safe embodied space where one can relax, have fun, feel nurtured and free while being on a journey. Stephanie made the connection with the ocean as being a body of water and the human body is a body of water and the boat is in a body of water. The sailing vessel is freedom-space; space for the body to be free. The sailing vessel as the Sacred Feminine is embodied creativity.

Brain-Body Communication Loop

Understanding the possibility of a brain-body communication connection between thinking about being free and safe and the body's response to thinking about being free and safe appears to have resulted in an anticipated or predicted embodied experience of calm, peacefulness, and fun. Freedom and fun appear to go hand in hand in a brain-body response of creative transformation. Imaging and anticipating sailing as freedom and freedom as embodied creativity; body within a body of space open for creation. Sailing creates a consciousness of freedom, embodied creativity, and a body within a space open to creator, creativity, and creation.

Sailing as Embodied Creativity

The anticipation of sailing created an anticipation or prediction in the brain-body to being open to embodied creativity. In other words, the women stepped onto the sailing vessel open to embodied creativity and the possibility of breakthrough and

transformation. Profound experiences of breakthrough and transformation appeared to have occurred in Phase III aboard the sailing vessel that were resistant, imprisoned, or blocked in the earlier phases.

Sailing as an Interruption of Normalcy

The experience of sailing creates an interruption of unconsciousness habits of day to day thoughts, beliefs, and actions. The sailing experience is an interruption in the normal and creates space for embodied consciousness and transformation. The experience of being empowered in a society made up of two women on a sailing vessel out at sea with no male counterpart to support, save, or otherwise take power is an interruption in the lives of these women.

Sailing Vessel as a Unique Society and Social Order of Women

The sailing vessel created an isolated society and a social structure uniquely different from the women's normal social structure. The sailing vessel is complete, self-sufficient, and independent from the society and the social structure on land. It offers a unique opportunity for socialization, retraining, and empowerment of women. The women in this study are largely shaped and controlled unconsciously by the current culture, childhood social systems, and experiences of abuse, sexual assault, and violence. Her experiences of being unsafe in her own body and unprotected by intimate relationships and society at large create confusion, anxiety, and fears that diminish and disconnect her from her inner power, body power, and intellectual power.

Sailing creates an opportunity for women to experience and engage in a new society and social order consisting of two cooperative women and a large sailing vessel surrounded by water. There are no outside forces, other than the wind, influencing the

social system or order. There is no one, especially a man, to rescue or save them except themselves.

The two women together create a new social order and create a new way of interacting that is experienced as choice, freedom, and empowerment. Sailing is physically and mentally challenging and potentially dangerous which creates an element of discomfort and uncertainty. Freedom of sailing comes from interdependence, cooperation, and respect for the other. The woman retrain herself to be present, powerful, conscious, and safe in her own body.

Sailing as Transformational-Space for the Sacred Feminine

Several of the women appeared to have experienced powerful breakthroughs and transformation within the space of the sailing vessel during Phase III. Transformations occurred in moments of insight that arouse through the brain-body memory while onboard the sailing vessel. Critical for experiences to be transformative is one's consciousness, presence, and reflexivity at the time of the breakthrough. Breakthroughs occurred in a single consciousness to a word or memory and through reflection of her practice of relating to herself and the world. Deborah made the most remarkable succession of breakthroughs as each breakthrough brought on consciousness and rolling transformative experiences throughout her time on the sailing vessel, both at the dock and while sailing.

Consciousness of Brain-body Interpretations

Consciousness of one's presence and ways of being present and not present through consciousness of the brain-body interpretation of the experience brought forth opportunities for breakthroughs that led to transformation. The result of consciousness,

reflection on practice and reflexivity together brought about transformation in her way of knowing, creating, and relating to her experiences on the sailing vessel. Her transformational experiences transformed her interpretation of herself as Sacred Feminine. Consciousness to one's interpretation resulted in a transformed way of being Sacred Feminine and imaging the Sacred Feminine in relationship to the divine.

Sailing Vessel as Transformational-Space at Dock Prior to Sailing

Tara, "How is my mixed little girl going to fit in, become something"

Tara, excited to sail, sits down in the interior cabin. She looks up at the researcher and says in awe, "mixed little girl, bright skinned girl, too lighted skinned." In a flash, Tara remembers the pain of the names, not fitting in, and not understanding why. Tara remembers being punished for giving voice to her pain. Tara recognizes, within her, the brain-body behavior to constantly give; give her money to her father without ever being repaid, give her business talents to daughter's father without being compensated, and give her marketing ideas away to her friends without being compensated. Tara gives away her creativity because she does not value it in herself.

While sailing, Tara reflects on all the ways she names herself queen: high school prom queen, networking queen, and her most recent Facebook page as spiritual awakening queen. Tara becomes conscious of her fantasy thinking. Tara recognizes her fantasy of trying to make nightmares into fairy tales as though she is Cinderella and Snow White. Tara reflects on how many times she has trained herself, as queen, to see the good in men, love men, and believe that she can't live without men. As for men, Tara says, "Love is not glue."

Tara is awakening to self-love, the love of Sacred Feminine. Conscious love that heals women's wombs and wounds. Tara's way of loving is transforming herself first and supporting her goals and dreams.

Sophia, "My little girl self is hiding inside me in a dark corner"

Sophia arrives late and completely exhausted and frustrated. She flops down in the sailing vessel's cabin, curls up in a corner, pulls out a yogurt, and begins to talk rapidly about her life. She tells of how she is doing everything for everyone else and how they don't respond, show up late, and don't keep their commitments. Sophia is not calm enough nor focused enough to sail so the researcher listens attentively. Sophia looks like a little girl curled up on a couch.

The researcher asks Sophia about how she experiences herself as a little girl. Sophia pauses for a long time, with barely a whisper, Sophia says, "She's hiding inside me in a dark corner. She's afraid to come out." Sophia speaks to her little girl and invites her to come out, promising to keep her safe. It is a tender moment.

Sophia is now ready to sail, saying, "I got nothing but space to create." She says, "the Sacred Feminine and herself as Sacred Feminine needs to grow some balls." Enthusiastically Sophia takes the helm. She sees a boat, isolated and floating out of the channel. She asks if we need to go over and help the boat. It appears that Sophia's need to help has the potential to jeopardize her own progress. The researcher explains that if we go to the boat, we will hit ground, potentially damage the boat, and certainly terminate the sailing experience. Sophia reflects on her need to rescue the other boaters. Sophia is instructed to stay the course, make slight adjusts with the helm and the sails, and maintain her heading. Sophia repeats to herself, "Stay the course, slight adjustments, do not

deviate from the channel, keep your heading,” every time she gets distracted. “Stay the course” becomes Sophia’s conscious mantra, keeping her focusing and present. Sophia’s self as Sacred Feminine is a strong presence, supporting Sophia as she stays the course, makes slight adjusts, and keeps her heading.

Sailing Vessel as Transformational-Space while Sailing

Crystal, “The world is round”

Crystal’s appears to be fluid in her world of light and energy. There is joy in the fluidity of her, but it appears to be ungrounded, not in her body, not in a home, and not on land. When Crystal arrives to sail, she shares the she is thinking about land, a plot of land to buy with her boyfriend. She says the world is round.

As Crystal’s consciousness of herself increases while sailing, Crystal appears to experience the sailing vessel and her body as being grounded in the water, a weightiness that feels safe, supports her way of being, a place to land. She says, “I am supported by everything.” Her power, that she says is growing, she experiences in her own body as becoming strong, energizing as her hands pull with all her power to raise the main sail. She is surprised by her own physical strength. Crystal is not a passenger while sailing, but powerful, focused, and aligned in her strong life-giving female body. Crystal says empowerment is feminine. Crystal’s power is transmutable, she is changing her body from an incomplete, light, beautiful, sacred, temple space into herself as Sacred Feminine; whole, embodied, grounded in the power of her feminine body.

Aubrey, “Connection with caring more than they care”

Aubrey experiences a breakthrough around her conflict with the meaning and female expectation to care. Repeatedly, Aubrey talks about how she to avoids connection

with other people and feels resentful towards people who she feels need her to take care of them. Because she doesn't want to care and has stated repeatedly in her interviews, "I don't care," with a question mark, Aubrey avoids caring about people.

While at the helm, relaxed but focusing on navigating, Aubrey tells of her most recent breakdown. She feels powerless with her children. Her son is pooping on the floor and she refuses to clean it up, waiting for her husband to come home. While gliding through the water under sail, perfectly balance, Aubrey remembers her childhood family dog pooping all around the house and no one seeming to care, waiting for Aubrey to get home and clean up the mess. Aubrey was a teenager and had been taking care of her younger siblings and the house while her mother was out looking for her addicted boyfriend. Aubrey remembers the expectation of her mother and sister for her to clean up everyone's messes. In that childhood moment, Aubrey declared herself done. Instantaneously, Aubrey makes a connection between the dog poop, her child's behavior, and her frustration.

What came up was the question, "Why is it that I'm the only one that cares?" Power for Aubrey is subconscious, to drive and dominate situations including her husband, family, and children. Her brain-body interpretation is that people can't take care of themselves and she is expected to step in, fix it, and clean up the mess. This memory triggers reactions of anger, frustration, and disconnection. In her moment of clarity, she realizes her pattern as it comes into consciousness. Aubrey's self as Sacred Feminine takes the ropes, to do something new, and let other people take care of themselves. "By the way," Aubrey declares, "I hate real-estate and I like the color red."

Jessica, “Love is self-love”

Jessica is in a state of embodied confusion. She appears to be struggling with the fantasies that she created and believes about men, herself, and life. Jessica appears to be realizing that her hard work for others is not getting the desired results: love, protection, and value. As Jessica hears her self-talk while learning to sail: criticizing herself, putting herself down, and distrusting her decisions. Jessica becomes conscious of the way she abuses herself: abusive thinking and abusive behaviors. Jessica shares the story of being molested, while an adolescent, by a trusted adult female family friend. Jessica speaks of her confusion that the woman remained a family friend, “Why is ok for her to do that to me and still be able to hang out at our house?”

Jessica talks about how she would massage her brothers back so she could sleep with him and he wouldn't beat her. Jessica begins to recognize how her way of being in abusive relationships and pleasing the abuser. Courageously Jessica confronts her thoughts.

Jessica says that sailing helps you find out how strong you are when strong is the only option you have. Jessica raises the main sail in a brisk breeze. Jessica tells the water her thoughts and lets them go. They don't follow her. Jessica says sailing forces you to think in silence. It is while sailing that Jessica appears to become conscious that it is Jessica that creates safe, protected space for Jessica. It is Jessica that appreciates and values Jessica. Jessica is strong for Jessica.

Jessica becomes conscious of herself bonding with the researcher and conscious of the researcher's belief in her. Jessica becomes conscious of what it feels like to be set up for success by a stranger, the female researcher. Jessica's self as Sacred Feminine

bonds with another Sacred Feminine. Reflecting on the Sacred Feminine, Jessica herself, and the female researcher, Jessica comes to consciousness that “she” is not a bad thing. Jessica’s self as Sacred Feminine realizes, “I am enough.”

Deborah, “I’m a prisoner in my own mind and I’m the warden”

Prior to sailing, Deborah maintained a script around being happy to be alive while wanting to punch someone in the face. Deborah arrives at the dock with her mother chiding her in tow, taking pictures, and relentlessly helping Deborah like a child heading off to summer camp. When the researcher speaks to Deborah, mother immediately answers, interrupting, and correcting Deborah.

We quickly leave the dock and the researcher immediately hands the helm over to Deborah. Deborah takes the helm, listens carefully to directions, and confidently steers the sailing vessel, successfully navigating the course and the other boats effortlessly.

When it’s time to raise the main, the researcher asks about Deborah’s arm strength. Deborah has a nearly severed arm that has healed well. Deborah grabs the halyard and on command, hoists the main sail forty feet in the air without assistance. Deborah turns to the researcher with a huge grin, “Wow, I just did that, I can do stuff, I have options.” Deborah returns to the helm, calm, focused, navigating through the narrow channel confidently, making appropriate choices without instructions or assistance from the researcher. Deborah explains that she occasionally rides on her stepfather’s power boat, but she is never allowed to touch or do anything. Deborah is now conscious of her own strength and the power of her brain-body connection to think and respond powerfully with focus, clarity, and calm.

Deborah turns to the researcher and says, “I looked up empowerment. I love that word. Inner control of self. Empowerment means to be captain of your own ship.” While sailing Deborah experienced love as self-love, compassion, and kindness. Sailing is so magical and rewarding for Deborah that she experiences a powerful transformation while at the helm as Sacred Feminine. Deborah admits that she really had no clue about the Sacred Feminine. Filled with hope, Deborah says that she is no longer in prison. She is free now to make her own choices. The Sacred Feminine is “inner self, peace, connection, and making yourself whole.” “Now,” she exclaims in reference to herself as the Sacred Feminine, “I found myself, mind, heart, body, and soul.”

Sailing Vessel as Transformational-Space at the Dock After Sailing

Anna, “I have power over me, I can steer my own ship”

Anna’s sailing experience demonstrated her clear, powerful, and competent mind. Anna follows directions, navigates appropriately, and asks appropriate questions. While Anna navigates the channel, Anna begins to panic, saying that we are going to hit an island if we keep going. The researcher reassures and instructs Anna to trust herself, maintain her course, and keep an eye on the island ahead. Eventually Anna steers past the island, laughing at herself at thinking we would crash.

The research consciously comments on Anna’s successful choices, appropriate decisions, and clear thinking. Anna remains unconscious to the affirmations. During the interview after the sail, Anna brings up her issue of being confused all the time, blaming it on her “alcoholic brain.” The researcher states affirmatively, “Anna, you do not have an alcoholic brain. You successfully sailed and helmed the boat.” After a long thoughtful pause, Anna states, “I did, didn’t I.” Then, as recognition rises through her body and her

eyes become bright, Anna exclaims, “I did! I steered the ship, like a big cruise ship. I can do that.”

This inner recognition of Anna’s competence, clear thinking, and emotional response was visceral. Anna is conscious of her body telling her conscious self her truth. As Sacred Feminine, Anna states, “I am the Queen. I can steer my own ship. I’m self-sufficient.” Anna identifies the Sacred Feminine, not as Mary, but as the inner power of being a woman, herself, a woman.

Barbie, “I can do the hard stuff”

Barbie, connecting again to her physical beauty as a woman, connects with physical strength as a woman to do hard things through sailing. Barbie laughingly announces, after the sailing experience, “sailing is hard work.” By doing the hard work of sailing and experiencing the joy and thrill, not sadness and tears, of accomplishment, Barbie appears to be consciousness of her new power, both in her hands and in her thinking. She is conscious of herself as Sacred Feminine through her beauty. She is beginning to become conscious of herself as Sacred Feminine through powerful thinking, doing, and self-care. Barbie says, “It feels good to take care of myself.”

Many times, Barbie refers to her mother’s depression and hard work. Taking care of herself, as interpreted through her childhood lens, is sad, tearful, and depressing. Since Barbie’s husband’s death a few months ago, Barbie is now responsible for handling all the assets that are now hers; banking, investments, house, cars, and a boat. Barbie has no experience with finances, taxes, contracts, nor paying bills. For Barbie, this is the hard stuff, making decisions, and taking care of herself. Barbie as the Sacred Feminine is

taking care of herself, doing the hard stuff. With her newfound consciousness and experiences as Sacred Feminine, Barbie gets to handle things and have big dreams.

Stephanie, “Red-headed twins, Rage and Anger, in a room full of doors”

Prior to sailing, Stephanie sent the researcher a text asking to know exactly where the researcher will be taking her, stating that it is a request of her husband. The researcher responded to the Stephanie’s text by saying that having a float plan is good and requested that her husband not share the information with Stephanie so that she is able to fully engage in the sailing experience without prior knowledge. Researcher included float plan.

When Stephanie arrives for the sail, the researcher asks Stephanie about the float plan. Stephanie admits that she did not read it and her husband did not request it. She stated that she was feeling unsafe and was upset that her husband was not worried about her. Stephanie shares that when she is feeling scared about sailing and her husband seems not concerned, she feels angry, like no one cares about her. She remembers feeling that no one cared about her when she was young. When she left home at fourteen, no one looked for her. She admits it’s irrational and it comes up a lot. In that moment, Stephanie became conscious of herself trusting and being honest.

Stephanie’s experience of consciousness while sailing is becoming aware of herself as unconsciousness. Stephanie is both hyper aware and unaware at the same time. She is hyper alert for signs of attack. She is hyper focused on getting “it” right and “learning.” Asking frequently, “did I get it right? I gotta learn this.” She is unaware of the feel of the wind, the movement of the boat under her feet, and the beauty that surrounds her. Stephanie got everything right, constantly asking questions, doing all the tasks

enthusiastically, but with a constrained intensity. When the boat sailed perfectly balance, Stephanie was able to relax and be silent.

Back at the dock, Stephanie stated that in her mind she is in a room full of doors. For many years she has had the image and feels stuck. Frantically asking, “What do I do! What do I do?!” The other image that came up is her red-headed twins driving in circles in a golf cart. She calls them Rage and Anger. She says they are her constant companions and follow her everywhere. Rage and Anger are in the room full of doors. The researcher asks her what she wants to do. Stephanie replies, “Open a door, but I can’t decide which one.” The researcher replies, “So, open a door.”

Courageously, Stephanie imagines herself standing in front of the door directly in front of her, with Rage and Anger by her side. She doesn’t want Rage and Anger to come with her. After a long process of fixing things in her imagination, Stephanie opens the door. Stephanie steps through the doorway. She finds herself in a large empty room filled with bright white light. The door closes behind her. She stands in the bright white light with Peace and Joy standing by her side. When asked how she feels, Stephanie says, “Content.”

Stephanie struggles all the time feeling like she must know everything, have an answer, and be right. And now, in the empty room, she says, “I am a blank slate...I don’t have to make anything up.” As Sacred Feminine, Stephanie is “me, complete, free, a blank slate.” As Sacred Feminine, Stephanie gets to find herself.

The Transformation of Women as Sacred Feminine

The women experienced incredible breakthroughs and transformations. Their transformations brought about changes in the women’s experience of herself as Sacred

Feminine and her understanding of what the Sacred Feminine is as an ideal. Through the experience of sailing, the woman experienced themselves as Sacred Feminine as agency, captain of her own ship, choices, and the inner power of herself as a woman.

Sacred Feminine as Agency: Captain of Her Own Ship

Barbie, Deborah, and Anna experienced herself as having agency. Both Deborah and Anna had profound experiences of self as “Captain of her own Ship.” Deborah and Anna both struggled with perceived cognition deficiency. They attributed their perceived inadequacies, incompetence, and confusion with brain injury and alcohol, which became established as a brain-body feedback loop. Once they consciously experienced cognitive success with immediate verifiable results, they both recognized their cognitive and physical competence. This cognitive and physical competence created a sense of agency, creativity, and power.

Anna experienced herself as “Captain of her own ship” through the interruptive statement made by the researcher. The researcher interrupts, “Anna, you do not have an alcoholic brain!” Upon reflection, Anna remembered her success and competence at the helm and adjusting the sails. Anna experienced herself as Sacred Feminine as her inner power as a woman. She announces, “I am powerful. I can do this.”

Through sailing, Deborah experienced herself making appropriate choices that were affirmed and verified as successful. Deborah experienced the power of agency. Deborah recognized and owned her responsibility, as “Warden,” for her brain being in a prison. Deborah learned and experienced empowerment as being “Captain of your own ship.”

Barbie experienced herself in a new way as being able to take care of herself, without a man, as joyful, fun, and physically exhilarating. It was her hands that did the hard work and accomplished a goal. Now, Barbie can handle things that she never thought she wanted to handle before. With her new hands, Barbie can create her big dreams.

Sacred Feminine as Connection Within

Aubrey had previously experienced herself as Sacred Feminine through her relationships with others and her roles as a woman and her physical ability to give birth. Now Aubrey is experiencing relationships and roles as connection. The Sacred Feminine wants to connect. Aubrey wants to connect. Aubrey is experiencing connection within herself and how her past influences her present. Her struggle continues as she becomes conscious of how she connects with others. It's complicated.

Deborah admits that she had no clue nor connection with the Sacred Feminine until sailing. Deborah's experience of herself, her competence, and authentic happiness connected within in a profound way. Deborah as Sacred Feminine, "I found myself, mind, body, heart, and soul."

Sacred Feminine as Whole

Crystal experiences herself as Sacred Feminine as whole through sailing. From the female body being incomplete, Crystal is whole, and her body is life-giving. The wound to her womb is healing. Womb, for Crystal, is her womanhood.

Deborah experienced herself as whole as the Sacred Feminine. For the first time, Deborah acknowledges herself as female, "I am happy to be female and the female body is beautiful." Deborah is at peace and now willing to accept her inevitable divorce.

Sacred Feminine as Inner Child

Tara and Sophia experiences herself as Sacred Feminine in her experience of her inner child. Tara and Sophia had profound encounters with their inner child's that were in hiding and hurting. By engaging in their inner child, they experience a connection with their inner self as presence and transformation. Tara realizes that love, through the love offered to her mixed little girl, is about transforming self-first. Sophia experiences the power of presence as she patiently creates safe space and love for her little girl self to emerge from hiding.

Sacred Feminine as Enough

Jessica experiences herself as Sacred Feminine as enough. Jessica knows there is protection and safety as Sacred Feminine. She recognizes that love is about self-love and her need to be wanted. Jessica is not yet whole. Her negativity towards herself prevents her from seeing her own beauty. "She," meaning the Sacred Feminine, in general, and as herself, is not so bad. "She" she needs to be cherished, appreciated and valued. Jessica as Sacred Feminine is precious. For the first time in her life, Jessica experiences herself as precious. Jessica calls herself precious for the first time.

Sacred Feminine as Peace and Joy

Stephanie engaged in a creative process that freed her from Rage, Anger, and a room full of doors. Many times, Stephanie talked of feeling overwhelmed with her inability to choose the right "answers," know what to do, or choose a door. Frequently frantic, Stephanie struggle to make a choice unless she knew the outcome or was given explicit directions. Stephanie felt rage, anger, and frustration either with herself or directed towards others. Courageously, Stephanie opens a door to find a room of light,

Peace, and Joy. Instead of getting an “answer,” she got wide open space with infinite possibilities for her to explore. Stephanie said, “What am I supposed to do now.”

Sacred Feminine as Authenticity

The beauty of sailing is when the sailing vessel is perfectly balanced, it sails itself. The sailing vessel glides effortlessly through the water with just the whistle of the wind and the gurgling of the water. It is authentically itself, free to be what it was created to be. Like the sailing vessel, each of the women experiences a time of being authentically herself, free to be the Sacred Feminine she is and was created to be. The experience of being authentic created possibilities for breakthrough and transformation.

Sacred Feminine as Goddess and Queen

Crystal identifies with the Goddess and the Divine. For her, the Sacred Feminine is the beauty of being woman, womanhood, and womb. Goddess is a space of power and authority in the universe. The Goddess is spiritual and represents creativity.

Anna experienced herself as Queen and the inner power of woman. As Queen, Anna stepped into her power, not from her sobriety, or an external Higher Power, but from the inner power of her being a woman.

Summary: Empowered and Embodied Woman as Sacred Feminine

The ways that women experience and identify as Sacred Feminine are uniquely hers. This list just breaks the surface of what it is as a woman to experience her beingness as the Sacred Feminine. The women in this study are just a small group of women so this is just a window into the possibilities. Like Stephanie who opened the door and entered a room of bright light accompanied by Joy and Peace.

Every woman claimed herself as the empowered and embodied woman as Sacred Feminine. The empowered and embodied woman is beautiful, strong, powerful, nurturing, everywhere, and divine. The Sacred Feminine is woman's beauty and strength. She is protection and safety. She is all the roles and identities of woman. She creates life, she is life, and she is the creator of life. She is creativity herself.

CHAPTER SEVEN. SAILING AND THE SACRED FEMININE

Introduction

Phase IV of the study is a follow-up interview to evaluate each woman since sailing. The question in the mind of the researcher is sustainability. Are the women sustaining their new consciousness of wholeness, freedom, inner power, and choice? Is she still feeling safe in her body? The intention of the researcher is to meet with the women on the sailing vessel. It was interesting to notice that the women had become more active and focused on her life and made requests to meet in ways that were more convenient for her instead of meeting the needs of the researcher.

Update on the Women since Phase III

As expected, the women's lives had altered since Phase III. Crystal and Tara did not participate in Phase IV. Tara is busy with her mother who is visiting for an undetermined amount of time. Tara is not able to schedule a time to meet. Researcher made additional calls. Tara's phone is disconnected.²⁴³

Researcher is unable to contact with Crystal, so researcher calls Katy. According to Katy, Crystal and her boyfriend moved to a remote area in one of the northeastern states. Katy says they are happy, and she rarely talks to her due to limited cellphone service.

²⁴³ In March 2020, Tara made a public video on her Facebook page. In the video, Tara told her Facebook friends that she had broken her phone, lost all her contacts, and finally lost the phone. She stated that God told her to take a break, to get off Facebook, stop "being seen," stop going to networking and conference meetings, and to go inside. Tara says that she had to do so much work to do on herself to become more conscious over the last three months. Tara stated that God, just now, put it on her heart to "awaken the masses," reach out to people, and tell them to "wake up."

Katy is happily married, experiencing a loving and respectful relationship with her husband. She says she is aware of herself and her body healing from her assault. She can communicate her needs to her husband and is slowly able to experience physical pleasure in her relationship. Katy hopes to sail with the researcher next time she is in town.

Women's Consciousness Responses at the Start of Interview

Aubrey, "I am tired, here, getting shit, called a bitch"

Aubrey's Female Body: Aubrey²⁴⁴ describes herself as "learning, growing, strong woman, daughter, sister, wife, mom, and all that fun stuff." "I am tired, here, getting shit, called a bitch."²⁴⁵ The female body is "powerful, beautiful, strong, capable, adaptable" and Aubrey's female body is "torn, tired, capable." Hands "do, care, accomplish" and Aubrey's hands "hurt from pullups on bar at gym, accomplish."

Aubrey's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "abundant, roller coaster" and Aubrey's emotions are "sailing right through, chugging along, even gliding, lacking, overwhelming, level four." Thinking is "reflection, processing, knowledgeable" and Aubrey's way of thinking is "light as in good, empowered, seeking understanding." Knowing is "confirming, gut instinct, having sought information." Aubrey's way of knowing is "confirming having sought information and gut, instincts, both."

Aubrey's and Power: Power is "influence, good or bad person, energy, momentum" and Aubrey's sense of power is "momentum, intentions for good."

²⁴⁴ Audio video file Phase IV interview RP13PHIV

²⁴⁵ Aubrey walked into interview after having just read an anonymous email sent to her business account calling her a bitch. Aubrey was very upset.

Empowerment is “support, encourage” and Aubrey’s sense of empowerment is “coming from within, both internal and external, necessary, family, motivation.”

Aubrey’s World and Life: The world is “big, complicated” and Aubrey “wants her world small, needs to get bigger.” Life is “growing, learning, journey” and Aubrey’s life is “definitely a journey, constantly changing, highs and lows.”

Aubrey and Love: Love is “powerful, joyful.” Aubrey’s way of loving is “presence, connection, support.” Aubrey’s way of being loved is “kindness, support, time, attention.”

Aubrey’s Spirituality: Spirit is “within, all around” and Aubrey’s spirit is “a little voice, good, gut.” Spirituality is “connection, presence” and Aubrey’s spirituality is “internal connection, nature, water, relaxing, calm, beach, alive.” God is “creator.” Aubrey’s God is “creator, wonky.”

Aubrey and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “womanhood.” Aubrey’s sense of herself as Sacred Feminine is “I am woman, hear me roar.”

Aubrey and Sailing: Water is “Aquarius, life-sustaining, life-giving, necessary.” Wind is “external force you can use, power on the sailboat.” Ocean is “most of planet, life, potentiality, beautiful and destruction.” Sailboat “needs to be driven, guided, sailed, potentially safe haven, body, idea, vessel.” Sailing is “calming, peaceful, relaxing, salty air, feel breeze, feel the sun.”

Jessica, “I am destined to be greater than I am now”

Jessica’s Female Body: Jessica²⁴⁶ describes herself as “positive, energetic, hard-working, complimentary, happy when and love to help people, hard on me, intuitive,

²⁴⁶ Audio video file Phase IV interview RP12PHIV

unique.” “I am destined to be greater than I am now.” The female body is “criticized by society, hard on self, stretch marks, battle wounds, unheard, conquering, not understood.” Jessica’s female body is “strong, bold, hits and survived them all.” Hands are “an outer extension of one’s emotions.” Jessica’s hands are “hot, holding, protecting self, feel vulnerable, longing and hands are my shield, they tell a story without words.”

Jessica’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “there for a reason, filter process and move you.” Jessica’s emotions “take over me, so emotional for the wrong reasons.” Thinking is “knowledge and power.” Jessica’s way of thinking is “focus, thinking too much.” Knowing is “recognizing right and wrong, turning weakness into strength.” Jessica’s way of knowing is “clearly that I like to find things out the hard way, explorer.”

Jessica’s Power: Power is “within.” Jessica’s power is “that I take for granted the power I have.” Empowerment is “believe in yourself, not just meant to motivate and get them to agree.” Jessica’s empowerment is “use words in validation of others, use words to empower without their agreeing.”

Jessica’s World and Life: Jessica’s world “holds all brothers and sisters in one community together, figure out how to get out alive.” Jessica’s world is “layers, learning to leave layers behind that don’t serve.”

Jessica and Love: Love is “a pretty word, takes all the emotions and put in one word, feeling of contentment.” Jessica’s way of loving is “passionate, hard, suffocating.” Jessica’s way of being loved is “high expectations, words of affirmation, appreciation and actions.”

Jessica and Spirituality: Spirit is “representing your aura.” Jessica’s spirit is “what helps me believe there is a higher purpose, watching over yourself.” Spirituality is “believing in something else greater than you.” Jessica’s spirituality is “what protects and guards you.” God is “him, putting you through.” Jessica’s God is “my spiritual power.”

Jessica and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “divine feminine, masculine, feminine, compassion, understanding, hormones. Jessica’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “drive, overtakes us.”

Jessica and Sailing: Water is “very therapeutic, cleansing, power to wash away guilt.” Ocean is “sad, more to live than on land, happiness, cleansing.” Wind is “I’m present to myself, I love to feel the wind on my face and skin.” Sailboat is “a liberating way to use your body as a vehicle that it represents.” Sailing is a “whirlwind of emotion, helps be present, release frustration even.”

Deborah, “I am feeling good”

Deborah’s Female Body: Deborah²⁴⁷ describes herself as “doing really good, a lot of release.” Deborah refers to the song, “*Good to Be Alive Today*.” Deborah says, “I am feeling good.” The female body is “protectors, good, a lot of stuff” and Deborah’s female body is “soft and gentle, better, changed, no prison, lighter and free.” Hands are “protection, power, authority, healer” and Deborah’s hands are “healing, protect myself better.”

Deborah’s Thoughts: Thinking is “good,” and Deborah’s way of thinking is “clearer, quicker.” Knowing is “you know you know good and bad” and Deborah’s way

²⁴⁷ Audio video file Phase IV interview RP2PHIV

of knowing is “I just know.” Power is “good and bad, overpower, mom overpowers, use it the right way.” Deborah’s sense of power is “make decisions, do things on my own.” Empowerment is “belief in self, captain of your own ship.” Deborah’s sense of empowerment is “to take control of my life, weakness strengthens self.”

Deborah’s World and Life: The world is “I like it” and Deborah’s world is “good, great, happy.” Life is “wonderful,” and Deborah’s life is “wonderful for the last three years.”

Deborah and Love: Love is “be your first true love, belief, love yourself.” Deborah way of loving is to “be friendly, not judge, talk it out” and her way of being loved is “appreciated.”

Deborah and Spirituality: Spirit is “connected to inner self, inside you” and Deborah’s spirit is “happy, thankful, calm, being.” Spirituality is “calm within you” and Deborah’s spirituality “alive, happy, joyful.” God is “perfect, wonderful, must need.” Deborah’s God is “savior, protector, healer.”

Deborah and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “how at peace you are within yourself.” Deborah’s Self as Sacred Feminine, “yes, inner peace.”

Deborah and Sailing: Water is “calming on a boat ride and scary.” Wind is “hair blowing in the wind, relaxing.” Ocean is “beautiful, no fear of the water.” Sailboat is “good fun, involved, two women in control.” Sailing is “two women doing it, going through a storm.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Deborah experienced sailing through a brief rain shower when sailing in Phase III. The dark cloud and cool sun shower is meaningful to her experience and survival in life.

Anna, “I am in transition, find myself, grow up”

Anna’s Female Body: Anna²⁴⁹ describes herself as “happy, hopeful, I’m on a boat to finish your study.” Anna states, “I am in transition, find myself, grow up.” The female body is beautiful, reproducing, having a baby.” Anna’s female body is “beautiful, reproducing, having a baby.” Hands are “strength.” Anna’s hands are “old looking, need to do my nails, pretty them up, like roses, roses make me happy.”

Anna’s Thoughts: Thinking is “mind, not heart.” Anna’s way of thinking is “care, positively, bright way.” Knowing is “being sure.” Anna’s way of knowing is “being sure, gut, right decision, don’t have doubt.”

Anna and Power: Power is “within, strength.” Anna’s power is “within me, personal choices.” Empower is “I don’t know.” Anna’s sense of empowerment is “making my own decisions.”

Anna’s World and Life: The world is “energy, black moon tonight, good, transition.” Anna’s world is “in transition, not a picket fence.” Life is “good.” Anna’s life is “good, better than drinking, challenges.”

Anna and Love: Love is “what makes the world goes around, sending out into the universe.” Anna’s way of love is “sharing joy, reiki energy, intention.” Anna’s way of being loved is “be open to it, receiving, kindness.”

Anna’s Spirituality: Spirit is “God.” Anna’s spirit is “my God in me. Spirituality is “direct contact with God.” Anna’s spirituality is “not important for me.” God is “all creator, helping people, joy.” Anna’s God is “in me.”

²⁴⁹ Audio video file Phase IV interview RP5PHIV

Anna and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “Handless Maiden, following her female journey, understanding her as a woman, inside and out.” Anna’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “as a woman to do good deeds, helpful to others, do God’s will.”

Anna and Sailing: Water is” crucial, staying alive, peace at the beach.” Ocean is “peaceful.” Wind is “powerful, for sails.” Sailboat is “fun, empowered, trusted.” Sailing is “freedom.”

Sophia, “Holy crap, I drove this thing, wow, big boat”

Sophia’s Female Body: Sophia²⁵⁰ describes herself as “hungry for, taste the meal I created, delayed saying yes too. Sophia stated, “It’s a big boat, I love it. Holy crap, I drove this thing, wow. Verses, what was I thinking? questioning.”

Sophia’s Thoughts and Emotions: Sophia’s emotions are “confident, outrage -that was then, this is now.” Sophia states about power, “I have my power back. I don’t have to agree.” Thinking is “heightened awareness” and Sophia’s way of thinking is “is my truth, heightened awareness, balance.” Knowing is “higher good, not who, what, where.” Sophia’s way of knowing is “foundation of everything, balance, mind, body, spirit, connection with my truth, helpful.”

Sophia and Power: Sophia’s power is “from my presence, awareness, sound choices.” Empowerment is “a safe container, tell you how to do it.” Sophia’s empowerment is “self-love is a priority, to nurture, to show up, to helm.”

Sophia’s World and Life: The world is “how I know, nurturing.” Sophia’s world is “subtle knowing, not emotional, not adrenalin.” Life is “perception, no emotions, no

²⁵⁰ Audio video file Phase IV interview RP6PHIV.

reason or rhythm.” Sophia’s life is “quiet, subtle, clear, matter of fact, direct, not always knowing, plenty of options, creative, opportunities, not limiting.”

Sophia and Love: Love is “neutral.”

Sophia and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine “heals.” The Sacred Feminine is “like a sailboat, it’s a cool place, big, a multi-functional platform, unpredictable but safe, private but not isolated, minimalistic but multi-functional, mechanically designed, intriguing, floating, alive, travels. Sophia’s Self as the Sacred Feminine is “creative, diversity, not limiting, perceptions, not knowing what is going to happen in the next moment and knowing I have options, choices.”

Sophia and Sailing: Sophia states, “the keel grounds us, balances you out, keeps you in harmony, heavy, like an anchor, below.” Sophia states, “when things are questionable, shit comes up with things, like projects when I hit a wall, I think next marker, I got the tools I need; it’s going to be ok. Oh crap, there’s the bridge, but that’s ok, I got this. Navigate. I don’t have the tools I need. I keep trying to link, flow, feeling frustrated. What do I need to make this work? Upgrade.” Sophia states, “I think of sailing experience, marker by marker, things work out if I just stay on course. Do the best I can with what I had. I had to adjust here and there. Stay on course, even if I have to make a little detour. Check each element one at a time. Let go of what it looks like, perfection, give and receive. Let the wind to the work and adjust the sails.” Water is “balance, 70% female and 30% male.” Ocean “respect it.” Wind is “good force, move forward, runner, value.” Sailing and the sailboat is “just like life.”

Barbie, “I am loving life”

Barbie²⁵¹ describes herself as “as loving life, happy place, energy, I can’t wait until the next day to help others.”²⁵²

Stephanie, “I AM”

Stephanie’s Female Body: Stephanie describes herself as “tense, facing the white space, in it, in the process.” She states, “I AM.” The female body is “unlimited” and Stephanie’s female body is “tense.” Hands “helping,” and Stephanie’s hands are “stop, create sacred boundaries, defines where the outline is, sharing.”

Stephanie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “guidelines” and Stephanie tries to “shut out emotions, many, level four.” Thinking is “busy times three” and Stephanie’s way of thinking is “unsecured, permission to feel and think without judgment.” Knowing is “what” and Stephanie’s way of knowing is “open.”

Stephanie and Power: Power is “mine” and Stephanie’s power is “unlimited.” Empowerment is “access” and Stephanie’s sense of empowerment is “righteous, I get to do what I believe is right, not what others think.”

Stephanie’s World and Life: The world is “jacked up, animals marrying” and Stephanie’s world is “pretty wide, unlimited, going and going.” Life is “questionable” and Stephanie’s life is “interesting, ever day an adventure.”

Stephanie and Love: Love, “interesting, not God” and Stephanie’s way of loving “unconditional” and being loved is “life, respect, communication, words, not affirmation.”

²⁵¹ Audio video file Phase IV interview RP7PHIV.

²⁵² Barbie was so excited when she started the interview to share her new life experiences and decisions that she is making. We did not complete the initial consciousness questions and responses. We were able to complete the end responses.

Stephanie and Spirituality: Spirit is “holy, God’s spirit, one spirit” and Stephanie’s spirit is “God’s, I’m spiritual, not religious.” Spirituality is “covenant, committed, mine.” and Stephanie’s spirituality is “holy, righteous, what I believe in.” God is “almighty, beginning and end” and Stephanie’s God is “my best friend.”

Stephanie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “me.” Stephanie’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “in the present.”

Stephanie and Sailing: Water, “necessity.” Wind is “holy, complicated.” Ocean is “deep and wide.” Sailing is “freedom.” Sailboat is “empowering, mighty, sweet, gentle.”

Reflection on Women’s Experiences of Self

Phase IV completes the research study with open-ended questions to understand women’s experiences of herself and as Sacred Feminine in the world. She is asked to reflect on the changes she is experiencing within herself, her relationships, and in her doingness.

Myth of the handless maiden. The Handless Maiden, as Queen, having grown new hands, reunites with the King and returns to the Castle. How have the women experienced herself as Queen in her world?

Women’s Consciousness Responses After Reflection

Aubrey, “I am chugging along”

Aubrey’s Female Body: Aubrey describes herself as “more awake, present.” “I am chugging along.” The female body is “beautiful, femininity, appreciation, awe, power, body, reverence, giving birth.” Aubrey’s female body is “awe and reverence, in tune with feelings and body.” Hands “do, express” and Aubrey’s hands “speak, comfort myself, fidget, hold close to my body.”

Aubrey's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "abundant, overwhelming, warning check lights" and Aubrey's emotions are "learning from, all over, antsy to finish, level five." Thinking is "thought, form of power, knowledge seeking to understand" and Aubrey's way of thinking is "powerful." Knowing is "confirming, understanding, instinctual." Aubrey's way of knowing is "confirming, understanding, instinctual."

Aubrey and Power: Power is "strength from within" and Aubrey's sense of power is "runs deep, a lot to tap." Empowerment is "support, taking from definition" and Aubrey's sense of empowerment is "alignment with definition, use resources."²⁵³

Aubrey's World and Life: The world is "complicated, full of people with varying opinions" and Aubrey's world is "protective." Life is "experiencing living" and Aubrey's life is "achieving, just getting started."

Aubrey and Love: Love is "everything, solution, seeking to understand, care and allowing." Aubrey's way of loving is "time, attraction, energy, vulnerability." Aubrey's way of being loved is "time, seeking and earning respect and trust."

Aubrey's and Spirituality: Spirit is "connection" and Aubrey's spirit is "closed, seeking to connect." Spirituality is "feeling connected" and Aubrey's spirituality is "waves, journey." God is "creator." Aubrey's God is "creator, wonky."

Aubrey's and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "womanhood." Aubrey's sense of herself as Sacred Feminine is "I am woman, hear me roar." Water is "nature, connection, relief."

²⁵³ Aubrey looked up the definitions of empowerment on her cell phone, stating that empowerment is the process of gaining freedom, autonomy, and power to do what you want and to control one's life. Aubrey did not indicate website and combined several definitions.

Aubrey and Sailing: Wind is “obstacles, external forces, make adjustments.” Ocean is “nature, connection.” Sailboat “journey, life.” Sailing is “journey, the pathway, making your way.”

Jessica, “I am able, learning to accept that things that are weaknesses are actually my strengths”

Jessica’s Female Body: Jessica describes herself as “not giving herself enough credit.” “I am able, learning to accept that things that are weaknesses are actually my strengths.” The female body is “strong, beautiful” Jessica’s female body is “strong, beautiful.” Hands are “powerful, body language, non-verbal communication.” Jessica’s hands “hold me up, make me feel safe when I vulnerable.”

Jessica’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “draining.” Jessica’s emotions “overpower me, ready to break free of them.” Thinking is “stretching, helps emotions flow, clear minded.” Jessica’s way of thinking is “stretching, false perspective, narrow, learning to apply what I know.” Knowing is “ok if we don’t know everything.” Jessica’s way of knowing is “not always right, that’s ok, set boundaries, respect others.”

Jessica and Power: Power is “rewarding feeling.” Jessica’s power is “I don’t use my power enough, should be used.” Empowerment is “motivation, inspiration.” Jessica’s empowerment is “believe, feeling it, brings to me clear mindedness.”

Jessica’s World and Life: The world is “an oyster, absorb amenities.” Jessica’s world “complicated, trying to figure it out, not complex, not hard.”

Jessica and Love: Love is “powerful, meaningful, only as meaningful as the love you feel within.” Jessica’s way of loving is “with intention to be loved back, innocent, no

boundaries, not critical.” Jessica’s way of being loved is “reflects that I don’t need to be loved back, protecting, mask, taking care of my needs.”

Jessica and Spirituality: Spirit is “nonjudgment, just present.” Jessica’s spirit is “I need to realize it, for reason, layers of protection.” Spirituality is “really deep, connection.” Jessica’s spirituality is “really deep, connection.” God is “has it figured out, need to trust.” Jessica’s God is “my guide, reason, to keep going.”

Jessica and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “recognizing the different versions of self and applying them.” Jessica’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “being kind to Sacred Feminine, different versions of me, not pressure, being just me.”

Jessica and Sailing: Water is “purifying, holy, therapeutic, raindrop, my way to be cleansing, a way that is ok.” Ocean is “therapy.” Wind is “freeing.” Sailboat is “another way of life, life lessons and leadership, same plan, different directions.” Sailing is a “inspiring, freedom.”

Deborah, “I am relieved”

Deborah’s Female Body: Deborah describes herself as “good.” Deborah says, “I am relieved.” The female body is “protector, safe if you let it be” and Deborah’s female body is “safe, happy, warm.” Hands are “protector, guidance, heal you or anybody” and Deborah’s hands are “comforting me, self-care, massaging my arm.”

Deborah’s Thinking and Emotions: Thinking is “good,” and Deborah’s way of thinking is “more good than bad.” Knowing is “is just knowing” and Deborah’s way of knowing is “when you feel it right or wrong, gut.”

Deborah and Power: Deborah says, “it takes power to control my own self.” Deborah’s sense of power is “to go where I want to go.” Empowerment is “self-being,

knowing, you get to choose.” Deborah’s sense of empowerment is “to take control of my life, guide my destiny.”

Deborah’s World and Life: The world is “round, good and bad” and Deborah’s world is “good, great, wonderful, still round.” Life is “what you make of it” and Deborah’s life is “good, getting better, alive still.”

Deborah and Love: Love is “peace, kindness, love.” Deborah way of loving is to “let you know you can feel safe around me” and her way of being loved is “hugs, joy, no tension.”

Deborah and Spirituality: Spirit is “connect, inner self” and Deborah’s spirit is “be in a good place with self, know, learn.” Spirituality is “happy, kind, relax” and Deborah’s spirituality “inner self, loving, honest with self.” God is “perfect, wonderful, must, need in your life.” Deborah’s God is “savior, protector, healer.”

Deborah and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “forgive yourself, be honest with yourself.” Deborah’s Self as Sacred Feminine, “be your own friend, make friends with yourself, secure, trusting, believing, and understanding.”

Deborah and Sailing: Water is “beautiful, need to hydrate.” Wind is “earth’s broom, cool you off when you are super-hot.” Ocean is “beautiful, love it, stare at the waves, calm, relaxing.” Sailboat is “fun and relaxing.” Sailing is “enjoyable with the right person.”

Sophia, “I am in my own space, expansion of my full power, grateful for this moment”

Sophia’s Female Body: Sophia describes herself as transitioning, feminine, present, curious, aware of old way of thinking; no power over me, not interfering.”

Sophia states, “I am in my own space, expansion of my full power, grateful for this moment.” The female body is a vessel, home” and Sophia’s female body is asking for nurturing, kindness, more awareness.” Hands are “an extension of my power and my truth.” Sophia’s hands are “an extension of my desires, energy, divine energy, tools.”

Sophia’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “safe.” Sophia says of her emotions, “They have been a blessing, safe to feel and express, not my identity. They deserve to be honored and respected, level five.” Thinking is “helpful if done with intentionality, present moment, creative thinking.” Sophia’s way of thinking is “creative, empowering, clarifying.” Knowing “comes from divine energy, important, non-physical divine energy, got my back.” Sophia’s way of thinking is “body and reactions, feelings, and emotions.”

Sophia and Power: Power is perception, choice on how to use it.” Sophia’s power “presence, has not been tapped into fully, scares me, little dual masculine/feminine, being present, supposed to be safe, space, expands.” Empowerment is “very masculine, controlling, needs to be addressed.” Sophia’s says, “I feel empowered, keep on course, true to self, also serve others and my own needs.”

Sophia’s World and Life: The world is “full of opportunities, huge playground for life.” Sophia’s world is “expanding, growing, becoming more exciting, adventurous, fun.” Life is ‘awesome, blessing.” Sophia’s life is ‘gift, every morning again and again, knowing, I love you, affirmations, flow.”

Sophia and Love: Love is “divine, powerful.” Sophia’s way of loving is “being.” Sophia’s way of being loved is “presence.”

Sophia and Spirituality: Spirit is “I don’t know, flowing, mind, body, spirit.” Sophia’s spirit is “sacred, free, flowing” Spirituality is “unique” and Sophia’s spirituality is “the foundation of my freedom.” God and Sophia’s God is “awesome.” Water is “healthy, refreshing, nurturing, 70%of body and planet. Ocean is “beautiful, magical, powerful.” Wind is “refreshing, awesome, guiding.” Sailing is “fun, empowering and power.” Sailboat is magnificent, diverse, platform, limitless, yet a space, open, movement.”

Anna, “I am responsible to find my own happiness”

Anna’s Female Body: Anna describes herself as “in transition, woman, love self, surrender self, enough to set boundaries, make myself happy.” Anna stated, “I am responsible for my own happiness.” The female body is “great.” Anna’s female body, “I feel better than I have in a long time, taking care of myself.” Hands are “power, helping me set boundaries.” Anna’s hands “help me set boundaries, healing, reiki.”

Anna’s Thoughts: Thinking is “making a decision, in my mind with clarity.” Anna’s way of thinking is “strength, self-love, care, acceptance, lack of denial.” Knowing is “my clarity.” Anna’s way of knowing is “can’t be in denial.”

Anna and Power: Power is “within me with action.” Anna’s power is “foot down, set boundaries, constantly.” Empowerment is “being in your own being.” Anna’s empowerment is “self-identity, me in my own being.”

Anna’s World and Life: The world “has potential.” Anna’s world “has the potential to be great.” Life is “good.” Anna’s life is “happy, sober, better than ever.”

Anna and Love: Love is “give and take, sending and receiving, root is romantic love.” Anna’s way of loving is “making people feel good.”

Anna and Spirituality: Spirit is “love.” Anna’s spirit is “in me.” Anna’s spirituality is “my connection with spirit, God’s energy.” God is “energy.” Anna’s God is “healing energy in me.” The Sacred Feminine is “me.”

Anna and Sacred Feminine: Anna’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “self-love, responsibility for happiness.”

Anna and Sailing: Water “keeps us alive, peace, get around.” Ocean is “wide, lots of activity underneath, turtle, nature.” Wind is “power.” Sailboat is “free, strong.” Sailing is fun, challenging.”

Barbie, “I am in a good place, the Queen”

Barbie’s Female Body: Barbie describes herself as “tired, feel like I have a lot to sort out, not scared, excited, journey won’t be easy, outcome will be health.” I am in a good place, the Queen.” The female body is “beautiful, healthy, colorful” and Barbie’s female body is “awesome, growing in a happy way.” Hands “tell a story” and Barbie’s hands “have developed.”

Barbie’s Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are “good, necessary, cleansing” and Barbie’s emotions are “tired and happy, level ten.” Thinking is “I use to over think and get me in trouble.” Barbie’s way of thinking is “thank you Barbie, putting Barbie first.” Knowing is “what I want.” Barbie’s way of knowing is “doing what I have always wanted to do.”

Barbie and Power: Power is “strong” and Barbie “has gained power, can be difficult, power for my life, happiness, to move on, future.” Empowerment is “sanity, I gave self the strength,” Barbie’s experience of empowerment is “intuition, heart within, happiness, safety, contentment.”

Barbie's World and Life: The world is "a crazy place." Barbie's world is "a happy place." Life "can be difficult" and Barbie's life "is going in the right direction, right road."

Barbie and Love: Love is "security." Barbie's way of loving is "awesome for someone who appreciates it." Barbie's way of being loved is "security and happiness."

Barbie and Spirituality: Spirit "evolves when recognized." Barbie's spirit "helps me get through the day and find true happiness." As for spirituality, Barbie states, "I don't think about it." God is "good to me, power." Barbie's God "helps me in every way, gotten me to where I am today, is real, I need him."

Barbie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is "the Queen." Barbie's Self as Sacred Feminine is "evolved, helped me make some great decisions."

Barbie and Sailing: Water is "free." Wind "bothers me, controlling." Sailboat is "hard work, enjoyed it, felt free as the wind." Sailing experience is "fabulous, enjoyed it."

Stephanie, "I am thankful, facing my challenges"

Stephanie's Female Body: Stephanie describes herself as "grateful." She states, "I'm thankful, facing my challenges." The female body is "honorable" and Stephanie's female body is "deliberate." Hands are "giving," and Stephanie's hands are "gifted, accepting my own gifts."

Stephanie's Thoughts and Emotions: Emotions are "guidelines, barometer, life, your everything" and Stephanie's emotion is "content, level 10." Thinking is "open access" and Stephanie's way of thinking is "quite fun." Knowing is "peaceful" and Stephanie's way of knowing is "contentment, acceptance, take it to heart."

Stephanie and Power: Power is “mindful,” and Stephanie’s power is “unique, need and want.” Empowerment is “acceptance of oneself” and Stephanie’s sense of empowerment is “unlimited.”

Stephanie’s World and Life: The world is “possibilities” and Stephanie’s world is “creative.” Life is “adventure” and Stephanie’s life is “intriguing.”

Stephanie and Love: Love is “acceptance” and Stephanie’s way of loving is “communication” and being loved is “patience.”

Stephanie and Spirituality: Spirit is “holy,” and Stephanie’s spirit is “God’s, holy and sacred.” Spirituality is “tenderness” and Stephanie’s spirituality is “powerful, Eliot and Penelope.” God is “everything, loving, forgiving, peaceful, unexplainable, unimaginable, powerful” and Stephanie’s God is “everything, loving, forgiving, peaceful, unexplainable, unimaginable, powerful, my best friend.”

Stephanie and Sacred Feminine: The Sacred Feminine is “freedom, experience, receiving, engage in the process.” Stephanie’s Self as Sacred Feminine is “all me.”

Stephanie and Sailing: Water is a “necessity.” Wind is “holy.” Ocean is “deep and wide, deep fear, fun, good.” Sailing is “freedom.” Sailboat is “adventure, fun.”

Sailing Through Trauma: Summary of the Results

The women that participated in the final interview shared how their lives have been transformed since their sailing experience. Consciously remembering her sailing experience appeared to reinforce its effect. Several spoke about her way of being, thinking, and responding in the world using the language she learned sailing.

The Power of Woman Being-Space

Women's experience of the sailing vessel resulted in women experiencing themselves in a new way as women being-space, autonomous in her own space. In her being-space she is free to love and honor herself, she is free to make choices for herself, and to discover herself. Through the embodied experience of sailing, the women became conscious of her own power: her power to think clearly, create appropriate boundaries, and take appropriate action that supports the lifestyle that she wants for herself.

Two Women Beings and a Sailing Vessel at Sea

Removing women from a cultural of disempowerment that socializes women to conform to the norms of male domination, violence, and control creates space for women to experience women being-space: women in power, women's inner power, and the power of collaborative women. The sailing vessel created a unique space to retreat from the world. Instead of being reactive, controlled, and confused by the forces of society, the women created powerful new ways of being, knowing, responding, and feeling in a new woman based social system aboard her sailing vessel.

The conscious reflexive memory of her sailing experience of inner power and being in power transforms disembodied women into woman-beings in a space of her own. In her memory of sailing, the woman remembers herself consciously feeling the forces acting on her body and the body of the sailing vessel. She remembers experiencing herself in control of her body and the sailing vessel. She remembers making appropriate decisions that create forward motion for herself and her sailing vessel. She remembers acting on her decisions and being immediately conscious of the results. She remembers

making mistakes and making the necessary changes. The woman remembers how she and the sailing vessel become one body, perfectly balanced.

She remembers the confidence and trust of the other woman: guiding, affirming, and supporting her. She remembers how powerful she felt, two women beings and the sailing vessel, as the beingness of Sacred Feminine, individually and collectively.

Woman Being-Space as Embodiment, Enlightenment, and Empowerment

The question of the final phase of the research is sustainability. Where the woman able to sustain herself in her “Woman Being-Space” and as Sacred Feminine after the sailing retreat? Woman Being-Space is about embodiment, not just the physical body, but the bubble of space that surrounds her body in which she is able to creatively express herself and transform her environment. When she is conscious of the space that she embodies, she is empowered to transform, respond, and create the world that she desires.

Woman Being-Space is about enlightenment, not the unconscious brain-body reactive emotion-laden thinking, but a consciousness of clarity about oneself as a unique woman being. Enlightenment opens space for creativity, choice, and self-love.

Woman Being-Space is about empowerment, not power over or for others, but the inner power of a woman to know herself, be in control of her choices, and to transform her world. The women experience empowerment as spiritual, self-love, creativity, freedom, and the power to say no.

Empowerment as Spirituality

Aubrey, “Power and empowerment is strength from within”

Power and connection are Aubrey’s two main focuses. Aubrey is taking a more active space in the business using her banking and marketing gifts, feeling a sense of

achievement, and trying to connect with others. At the start of the interview, Aubrey is experiencing a variety of emotions from having just received an anonymous business email calling her a “bitch.” She is surprised that even though it is hurtful, she is not highly emotional about the situation, stating that she is at a level four. In previous interviews, Aubrey reported her emotional level to be seven and above. She stated that she imagines herself sailing through and chugging along.

Aubrey asked the researcher to define empowerment. After considering various definitions from the internet, Aubrey settled on a definition of empowerment as “the process of gaining freedom, power, and confidence to control her life and what happens to her, do what she wants, and to claim her rights.” Aubrey struggles between connecting with her inner power, being powerful, overpowering, and feeling over-powered by the needs of others with whom she relates. She says she is becoming more conscious of herself and her experiences of power in relationships.

For Aubrey, spirit is connection. Spirituality is feeling connected. Aubrey’s spirit is seeking to connect. Aubrey’s spirituality is waves, like the water which connects. It is a life journey, like sailing, making her way. Aubrey is on a journey of connection, consciously taking small steps to connect and initiate friendships with women that she sees are empowered and are empowering of her.

For the first time, Aubrey is expressing a connection with God as creator. She connects to God through womanhood and power of women to create life within her body.

Empowerment as Self-Love

Jessica, “Love is powerful, only as meaningful as the love you feel within”

Jessica continues to struggle with self-love and the power of it to heal her wounds. Loving hard is not about others. Her power is reflected in the powerful love she has for herself. Jessica remembers her love of dancing and how liberated she felt using her hands and body to tell a story and express herself freely. She now has a ballet bar in her apartment. Jessica has reconnected with a dance girlfriend. Together they attended a hip-hop dance event. She is hoping to start dancing again, feeling free, and unjudged in her body.

By focusing on her spirit and spirituality as acceptance, non-judgment, and connection, Jessica is learning to protect and take care of her needs first. She said sailing created a liberating experience for her body, releasing frustration. Through sailing, she learned life lessons and leadership skills. She realized that her weaknesses are her strengths. She realized that the power she is seeking, she has had all along.

Jessica is still negotiating her relationship with her ex-fiancé and confronting the illusions she has about herself and men. Her fantasy runs deep. Her final words, “Now if only I could find a man to complete me.”

Deborah, “Be your own first true love”

Deborah excitedly shares the many ways that she is the captain of her life. She is feeling inner peace, contentment, and happiness most of the time now. She says that her brain is no longer in prison and her thinking is clearer and quicker. Deborah is very proud of herself for figuring out the meaning of empowerment. She smiles with joy and humor as she calls herself a captain, describing how she is taking control of her life.

Deborah has stopped fighting with her mother for her right to be an adult. Now she uses humor to laugh it off when her mother overpowers her, consciously accepting that that is the way of her mother. It doesn't always work, but it is getting much better.

With tremendous insight she says, "Love is being your own first love and believing in yourself." She expresses love for her body as she caresses her once severed arm. Her female body is soft, gentle, and free. She is using her hands to protect and heal herself.

The one thing she admits that has not changed is the guilt she feels about her husband. Deborah honestly states, "I still feel guilty, it was my fault he went to prison." The researcher remembers how Deborah talked about how she and the researcher weathered the storm while sailing. Deborah talks with great pride about her sailing experience, "Two women captains in control, doing it, sailing a boat, going through a storm." Deborah is weathering the storm of guilt. Deborah has literally no experience with forgiving, compassionate, and empowered women. The researcher looks Deborah in her eyes and says, "Deborah, I forgive you for whatever you did. You are forgiven." Deborah pauses, then sighs with relief, "Thanks, I feel better." The Sacred Feminine for Deborah is forgiveness and honesty. In the interruption of forgiveness comes relief and peace. Deborah as Sacred Feminine is her capacity to trust and believe in herself.

Anna, "Empowerment is self-identity, me in my own being"

Ann's greatest accomplishment since sailing is her newfound power to set boundaries with her ex-husband and son. Anna holds her hand up like a stop sign, and says, "Stop. That's my space. You can't go in there." She is so proud that she is giggling. Anna is interrupting the narrative and creating new experiences. Her hands represent her

power and literally demonstrate her power. In the past, she expected others to set and respect boundaries for her. In her early childhood, Anna remembers that she had no boundaries and had no concept of boundaries. She is learning to express herself, set boundaries, and hold her boundaries.

Anna says that she has been in denial, pretending to be happy when she is not. She wants to be happy and tries to be happy, but she is not. All along she thought that if she helped other people be happy and acted positive, then they would do things to make her happy. She states with directness, “I need to grow up.” In that statement, Anna accepts responsibility for her happiness and commits to taking care of herself first. Power for Anna is within her with action. Anna is ready to “take action.”²⁵⁴

Empowerment as Creativity

Sophia, “My way of thinking is creativity, empowering, and clarifying”

Sophia uses metaphors to relate to life. She integrated the language and imagery of sailing into her way of thinking and self-expression. Sophia experiences herself as Sacred Feminine as power beyond her wildest imagination. It is her imagination that helps her think, relate, and expand into her beingness. Sophia lives in an energetic state of creative expression, be it her language or her body movement. Creativity is her connection to herself as Sacred Feminine. Her spirituality is sacred, flowing, and free. It is in her creativity that she experiences freedom.

One of her ongoing struggles is her tendency to be very masculine in her way of asserting herself. She envisions her power with the masculine, which she says is scary

²⁵⁴ At the conclusion of the writing of this research, Anna called to say that she and her ex-husband have agreed to separate and remain friends. She realizes that he will not change, and she doesn't want that life anymore.

and controlling. She is working on changing that. In the past, her masculine stance helped her feel safe, but it created frustration and disconnection with others. She is learning to be present in her Sacred Feminine. Sophia states that the divine energy has her back.

Stephanie, “My spirituality is powerful, Elliot and Penelope”

Stephanie entered this research study with a script, parroting the right words and phrases as was taught to her to get by. Stephanie has a vivid imagination that she kept hidden, following the script in order to get “it” right. Stephanie started the interview, “All I got is a big white space. I don’t know what to do with it. What now?” Stephanie is always a demand for the answer so she can learn her script.

Stephanie shares her visit with her teenage granddaughter, describing how she taught her granddaughter about her sacred space while drawing a big circle around her body. Stephanie experienced herself as Sacred Feminine as she taught her granddaughter to be Sacred Feminine. She said they had a wonderful visit and is relieved when they connected. She is proud at how she stayed in her “sacred space,” not being overbearing.

She says she is coming to accept herself and feels content. Much to her surprise, she says, “Love is not God, love is acceptance.” She is becoming conscious of the times when she berates herself and is learning to say to herself, “I’m sorry. That was not nice.”

Stephanie asks the researcher about the white room. The researcher invites her to image herself in the white space and to draw with her mind. Stephanie says, “I see a purple dragon. His name is Elliot. There is a little girl, too. Her name is Penelope. They are friends.” Stephanie begins to image a dialogue between Elliot and Penelope. The researcher asks, “Are you Penelope?” Stephanie replies, “No, I’m Elliot.”

When asked about Spirituality, Stephanie replies, “Spirituality is powerful. It’s Elliot and Penelope.” In the past, Stephanie’s response to spirituality was scripted, “God, Jesus, Holy, Mine.” For the first time, Stephanie describes her God, “everything, love, forgiving, peaceful, unexplainable, unimaginable, powerful, my best friend.” Stephanie’s self as Sacred Feminine, “All me.”

A few weeks after the interview, Stephanie sends the researcher her new screen shot. It is an image of a beautiful smiling women in a flowing white gown walking arm and arm with Jesus.²⁵⁵ She says, “That’s me now.” Using her creativity, Stephanie is able to transform her experience of herself from an embattled masculine body covered in gray armor to a smiling woman in a white flowing gown walking with Jesus.

Empowerment and the Power to Say “No”

Barbie, “I’m not afraid to say NO”

Barbie, always pleasing, helping, and smiling said, “I have shifted from helping others and pleasing others verses pleasing self.” Barbie says that this experience has given her a ton of strength and helped her realize what she thought. She says, “What I went through, the abuse, was real.” She says, “I get my voice, I get my life under control and going in the right direction.”

Barbie says that she really didn’t get it until we went down in the cabin after sailing. After sailing, Barbie says, “I started taking control over my life.” Thinking used to get Barbie in trouble and now Barbie’s way of thinking is “Thank you, Barbie.”

Barbie says that hands tell a story and her hands are evolving. Spirit evolves when it is recognized. Barbie is trying to be conscious of her spirit. Barbie as Sacred Feminine

²⁵⁵ See Stephanie’s Image of herself walking with Jesus in the Appendix.

is evolving. The idea of Sacred Feminine is still new for Barbie as is embodying the Sacred Feminine as something more than beauty. She is conscious of her strength as it is evolving and growing, recognizing that it is very hard sometimes. Barbie says it is hard to be strong, difficult to make choices, and sometimes she feels anxious, but she is not scared. Barbie says, "I can say no. No. No, that's not for me."

Barbie talked about breaking up with her controlling boyfriend and dating a nice guy. She is proud that she told him, "no." She is excited that she can recognize the signs of a bad guy. Barbie is making decisions, buying things that she likes, rearranging the house a little, going on vacations, and visiting her children. She is doing all the things she could not do for the past five years while living with Kenny, her deceased abusive husband. Barbie says, "Notice I didn't say My Kenny. He is not my Kenny. I put his ashes in the office up on a shelf. That was a big step for me."

A few weeks after the interview, Barbie asks the researcher to help her bury her husband's ashes in the side yard next to his dog. Barbie insists that the date of his burial be the date of their first wedding anniversary. Barbie invites a few close friends. A hole is dug in the yard. Together the researcher and Barbie sit on the ground with her box of precious objects. With tears flowing, Barbie sets the box of ashes into the ground. She says good-bye. She mourns and cries over her love for him. With deep despair, Barbie looks up at the researcher and says, "Why did he do that to me? It was awful. I didn't do anything to deserve that." Then, suddenly, her anger surfaces. Sobbing, Barbie yells at his ashes telling him how awful he was to her. She says that their relationship was not spiritual. Angrily she shouts, "We are not married anymore."

Barbie takes the wedding topper that says *Mr. and Mrs.* and breaks it in half. She drops it in the hole. Tearfully, Barbie tells the researcher the significance of each object and why it is going in the hole. She talks about the release, the sadness, and the strength she is feeling as she buries the objects that once had power over her. With strength and fortitude, she drops the wedding photo, the flowers, and his wedding ring in the hole. Finally, with her beautiful hands, she shoves the dirt into the hole. We, as witnesses, join her covering the hole with dirt. Someone grabs a shovel and finishes the job. Barbie stands up, face raw with emotion, and says, “Let’s celebrate. Time for champagne.” It is finished. Barbie as Sacred Feminine is “a big shine.”

Empowerment as Freedom

All the women referred to feeling a new sense of freedom. They talked about feeling free to think and express themselves. Freedom was the foundation of what it meant for them to live in new ways. They spoke of their freedom to make choices and to be true to themselves. They felt free to be honest and to speak their truth as Sacred Feminine women in the world. They admitted that it isn’t easy to be free, but it is worth it. It was in their experience of feeling free, sailing as freedom, that they felt empowered to be woman.

Sailing and Life Lessons

Several of the women spoke of sailing as life. They expressed how they learned new ways of approaching life and leadership through sailing. Many of the women used her new sailing and nautical language to describe her new way of being in her world.

Aubrey described her emotions and spirituality using the language of sailing. She stated that her emotions are “sailing right through, chugging along, gliding, tacking, and

over helming.” Aubrey over helmed often when sailing. Aubrey’s spirituality is “waves,” like the water which is nature and connection. Her spirituality is a “life journey, like sailing, the pathway” as she is making her way in life.

Deborah refers to herself as the captain of her destiny. She talks about the anchors in her life as the things that weigh her down. For Deborah, weathering a storm was her way of experiencing guilt. Deborah has weathered the storm of abuse and is refreshed in her new life.

Anna sees herself as a captain and as captain, is responsible for her life, not the lives of others. Anna earned a *Coast Guard Certification in Boating Safety*. She is working at a marina. With tremendous pride, she sent a copy of her certification to the researcher.

Sophia compares the Sacred Feminine to a sailing vessel. She says, “The Sacred Feminine is like a sailboat, it’s a cool place, big, a multi-functional platform, unpredictable but safe, private but not isolated, minimalistic but multi-functional, mechanically designed, intriguing, floating, alive, travels.” Sophia states, “the keel grounds us, balances you out, keeps you in harmony. It’s heavy, like an anchor, below.” Sophia states, “When things are questionable, shit comes up with things, like projects. When I hit a wall, I think next marker. I got the tools I need; it’s going to be ok. Oh crap, there’s the bridge, but that’s ok, I got this. Navigate.”

Sophia states, “I think of the sailing experience, marker by marker. I think, things work out if I just stay on course. Do the best I can with what I have. I had to adjust here and there. Stay on course, even if I have to make a little detour. Check each element one

at a time. Let go of what it looks like, perfection, give and receive. Let the wind to the work and adjust the sails.”

Sailing teaches many life lessons on how to navigate through life. The experience of sailing translated directly to life lessons for Sophia and several of the others. Sailing helped them understand how to respond calmly to challenges, threats, and uncertainty.

Summary: Sacred Feminine as Empowerment and Sailing

Sailing and the women’s experiences of sailing facilitated transformational experiences in the lives of the women. The women experienced clarity of thought, connection with her inner power, and utilized her memory of herself as Sacred Feminine and sailing to empower her in life. The new ways of being from the women’s experiences were sustained in each of her lives.

Critical to sustainability of consciousness as empowering is reflection on action and reflexivity on self. Each opportunity that she takes to consciously reflect on her actions and to reflect on and acknowledge the powerful changes she has made, reinforces herself as a conscious, empowered, and embodied woman being in her woman being-space. Empowerment creates space to be, love, and create.

Empowerment showed up in a variety of ways. Empowerment showed up as a newfound spirituality and connection with God as Creator. Empowerment was experienced as Self-love. Self-love was the primary experience of self that has been lacking or diminished in the women’s lives. Their focus on love as being helper of others, distracted them from self-love and being helper for oneself. While sailing, there was no one to help except herself.

With self-love comes inner power. With inner power comes agency and authority. She became the author of her life, first on the sailing vessel and then in her day to day experiences. She experienced her world as confusing, constricted, and imposing. Sailing created a new way of being conscious in her woman being-space as oneness with the sailing vessel, oneness with the body of water outwards to the horizon, and oneness with herself. She was transformed as she expanded in her woman being-space to expand outwards in the world.

Empowerment was experienced as creativity, opening doors, and imagining new ways of being and relating. Empowerment was experienced as the power to say “No.” Without the “No,” there is no definitive yes, no boundary, and no safe space. In the “no” comes the “yes” to self-love, creativity, and sacred space. It is in the “no” as Sacred Feminine that creates space for the sacred, embodied in the female body, to emerge into consciousness.

The experience deepened and enriched the women’s spirituality. God took on new meaning as creator and as Sacred Feminine in the women’s description of God using words typically associated with feminine characteristics and behaviors. Most of the women grew up in families with religious traditions. This experience did not return them to church. Their conscious experience of herself as agency, love, empowerment, and creativity is the very essence of what Jesus is as the way, truth, and life. It is the Sacred Feminine as empowered, embodied, and imaged creativity that brings forth and enhances life, joy, and connection.

CHAPTER EIGHT. THE EMBODIED POWER OF THE SACRED FEMININE AND WOMEN SAILING

The Embodied Power of the Sacred Feminine

The power of Sacred Feminine is embodiment. Conscious or not, Sacred Feminine is innately present in the bodies and beingness of women. The embodied power of the Sacred Feminine is her presence: interrupting destructive forces, creating powerful and meaningful solutions, connecting and healing Self, other, and nature, and transforming the world through her creative cycle of life. The power of Sacred Feminine is oneness with oneself in the world.

The power of Sacred Feminine is embodied interruption, creativity, wholeness, and empowerment. The power of Sacred Feminine is spatial: the void, the chaos, and the expansion of embodied space. The power of Sacred Feminine is beauty, infinite love, presence, and truth. The power of Sacred Feminine is the silence of the wind and the noise of the confused mind.

The power of Sacred Feminine is reflected in the violence, insults, and degradation inflicted upon her mind, heart, spirit, and body by a fearful society. The power of Sacred Feminine is embodied in the victims, the survivors, and the healers. The power of Sacred Feminine is her armor of protection. The power of the Sacred Feminine is unconditional love of self as first true love. The power of the Sacred Feminine is acceptance and forgiveness. The power of Sacred Feminine is consciousness. The power of the Sacred Feminine is the word "NO."

The power of Sacred Feminine is embodied in womanhood as daughter, sister, mother, aunt, grandmother, friend, stranger, wisdom woman. The power of Sacred

Feminine is woman-being creating beauty, safe space, home space, nurturing space, workspace, creative space, spiritual space, community space, church space, healing space, and flourishing space for all women, children, and men in the world.

The power of the Sacred Feminine is embodied in the research, the researcher, the women research participants, and the sailing vessel. The power of Sacred Feminine is two interdependent women alone on a sailing vessel: doing it, feeling the wind, raising the main sail, navigating the course, adjusting the sails, taking the helm, and sailing through open water. The power of Sacred Feminine is journey, aliveness, and embodiment. The power of Sacred Feminine is freeing and freedom. The power of Sacred Feminine is in the gentle swaying of the body and the rocking of an enwombed body floating in a rolling body of water.

The power of Sacred Feminine is agency and authority, connection within, self-love, inner child, enough, wholeness, authenticity, peace and joy, love of other, Goddess, Queen, Grace, and Divine. The power of Sacred Feminine is consciousness, respect, appreciation, and valuing of her as Self, the womb, and all created life. The power of Sacred Feminine is her humanness and spirit. The power of Sacred Feminine, conscious or not, flows with the universe and creates with the Divine.

Sacred Feminine as Truth

The design of this research study is based on the researcher having some knowledge of Sacred Feminine in order to transform and heal the lives of the women survivors of domestic violence. Sacred Feminine as Truth, thanks to Dana, interrupts the conclusion and creates sacred space for the researcher to embody her truth about Sacred

Feminine. The researcher, silenced by fear, publicly and privately described the research as a study of women survivors of domestic violence and sailing, not Sacred Feminine.

At the start of the research, the researcher did not research Sacred Feminine. It would appear to be a huge oversight, but it was not. The researcher was afraid to research Sacred Feminine for fear of religious excommunication, familial rejection, and societal repercussions. The researcher, in her heart, knew that there is something divine, healing, transformative, and powerful about the Sacred Feminine, but denied her pre-emptive presence, hiding from the visible and invisible masculine threat of violence, abuse, and subjugation. Truth be told, Sacred Feminine began as a void, a construct without definition, substance, or meaning. How perfectly Divine.

Sacred Feminine as Construct

The Sacred Feminine began as an empty construct: a void, a womb, and a space for creation. The void created space for interruption, consciousness, and creativity. The beauty of not knowing Sacred Feminine as an identity, image, and power much beyond Sacred Feminine as Mary and Goddess created open space. In the open space, Sacred Feminine creates consciousness in the experiences and reflections of the women in the study and the researcher.

The researcher intentionally, as a consequence of fear, limited her conscious understanding of the construct of Sacred Feminine to sacred, feminine body, and connection to the Divine through one's createdness.

From Construct to Self as Sacred Feminine

At the beginning and end of each interview, the researcher asked each woman to respond to the words "Sacred Feminine." In the first initial interviews, as the word

responses flowed from spirit, your spirit, God, your God, Sacred Feminine, Self as Sacred Feminine flowed naturally and unexpectedly from the creative process of reflection. Self as Sacred Feminine was not part of the original research design. Sacred Feminine is originally imagined as an energy or external force acting on the body, not as an embodied powerful presence.

The construct of Self as Sacred Feminine interrupted and created itself from the void of unknowing into a space of being known differently than originally imagined. The interruption of the Self as Sacred Feminine transformed the research, the researcher, and the women participating in the research. The question, Self as Sacred Feminine, created space for the transformation of women's consciousness of her embodied-self and the meaning of her embodied-self as sacred being, feminine body, and Sacred Feminine.

Initial Responses to Sacred Feminine as Embodied Beingness

The Sacred Feminine went from an initial conceptual construct of a void into embodied beingness, from an unknown void into women, divine, consciousness of the womb, missing puzzle piece, misguided, Goddess, Mary, and womanly arts. Women survivors of domestic violence initially identified with Self as Sacred Feminine as sacred, a powerful woman, masculine, juggling too much, respect for the woman, no clue, awakening, connection, me, not thought about, guarded, and that's a wonderful thing.

Responses After Initial Reflection on Sacred Feminine

After the women's first reflection on herself, the Handless Maiden, and the Sacred Feminine, the women's responses reflected Sacred Feminine differently as Grace, Goddess, empathetic, better leaders, empowerment, sensing, sisterhood, woman, ultimate power, powerful, infinity symbol with a heart, me, new, really the truth, and to be

desired. The women's responses to Self as Sacred Feminine changed to trustworthy, love, self-love, awareness of not respecting herself as Sacred Feminine, ready to be cleansed, awakening, esteemed, growing, figuring it out, fun, seeking to energize, and improving on being sacred.

The women went from not knowing about the Sacred Feminine to self-identifying as Sacred Feminine with Self, Power, Ultimate Power, Empowering, Powerful Woman, Goddess, Grace, Infinite Love, Truth, and Sacred. Consciousness of Self as Sacred Feminine has the potential to interrupt the chaos, confusion, emotional turmoil, and trauma in women's lives. In the space of interruption emerges a creativity that expands consciousness as acceptance over judgment, acknowledgment over order, and meaningful understanding and insight. It is in the conscious creative embodied beingness of Sacred Feminine that the divine heals and transforms.

Responses to Sacred Feminine after Sailing Retreat

The women experienced profound changes in anticipation, during, and after the sailing experience of Phase III. Deborah, who had no clue and resisted thinking about Sacred Feminine experienced herself for the first time as Sacred Feminine. Deborah, as Self as Sacred Feminine, states, "I found myself, mind, heart, body, spirit." She states that the Sacred Feminine is inner self, peace, connection to making yourself whole.

After reflection over the course of the research study the women identified with the Sacred Feminine as connection within, should be cherished, appreciated, not seen as a bad thing, inner power of a woman, captain of her own ship, holy, respect for women, beauty, strength, feminine power, peace, contentment, following her journey, helpful, understanding self as a woman, creativity, diversity, unlimited, options, and uncertainty.

The women that completed the research study moved forward in their lives, seeking forgiveness, rebuilding familiar relationships, breaking away from abusive spouses and boyfriends, returning to the things she loves, taking control over herself, making powerful decisions, saying no and yes, feeling truly happy and content, organizing and facilitating a conference on woman and power, and most of all, loving herself. Her anxiety diminished, her way of thinking became clear and creative, and her emotions are now accepted and acknowledged.

Power of The Sacred Feminine

The power of the Sacred Feminine interrupted the chaos and created consciousness of the sacred to emerge naturally and uniquely in each of the women's lives. Sacred Feminine embodied and empowered women to imagine, reflect, and experience herself as Sacred Feminine. As she experiences the true power of Self. She aligns with her true beingness as sacred, feminine, embodied, and Sacred Feminine with the Creator Divine. She incarnates the Divine in her body, family, community, and world.

Sacred Feminine as Creator, Creativity, and Creation, Not Helper

Many of the women self-identified as "helper." What is quickly apparent in Phase I interviews is the women's overidentification, objectification, and focus on "other" and her role as helper. The over identification as "helper" and over identification and objectification of herself or "other" with whom they are focused is problematic for women survivors of violence to free herself from the powerful cycle of abuse. Most survivors of violence are highly sensitive and conscious of the needs of the abuser and others, in general, as a way and means of survival while being highly insensitive and

unconscious of her own needs, values, beliefs, desires, and dreams. Helper is a survival skill and coping mechanism as well as a way of thinking, feeling, and being.

The act of helping and feelings of compassion appears to calm the brain-body communication system. It also appears to override consciousness and submerge feelings and thoughts of anger, injustice, and abuse as a means of protection. The role of helper can be very supportive in the early stages of recover to move women out of isolation and forward into the world of healthy relationships. It becomes problematic when she is overly focused on helping others create a life for themselves and forgets to create a life for herself.

This suggests further inquiry. It would merit further study to invite women “helpers” to consciously call themselves “creators” instead of “helpers.” The invitation is to create opportunities for women to consciously experience herself as the site and source of creativity and creations as creator. It is the language itself that might transform women’s experience of her creative embodied power as Sacred Feminine to name herself creator.

Women named by patriarchy and sources of power as “helpers” perpetuates the subjugation and abuse of women. Theologies of hierarchy, order, and judgment set up systems of unbalanced power and potential for abuse. Thinking of consciousness as higher and lower also sets up an ordering and judgment of “other.” Thinking of consciousness as expansive and expanding reminds us that we, as embodied beings, are never fully unconscious. Research into theology, interpretation of sacred documents, and worship that undermines women’s consciousness merit ongoing future study and continuous reflection from theologians.

Sacred Feminine as Interruption for Transformation

As Sacred Feminine interrupts and enters into the chaos of her female embodied experiences as consciousness, then Sacred Feminine creativity can transform her experiences into power, protection, creativity, balance, competence, self-love, wholeness, balance, understanding, insight, and healing. Sacred Feminine as interruption has the potential to halt the traumatic recycling of memories, thoughts, and emotions that perpetuates trauma. Rather than judging denying, or ordering, Sacred Feminine accepts and acknowledges her pain and suffering as real. She accepts and acknowledges her chaos and turmoil as normal. The Sacred Feminine creates meaning within the chaos.

Healing and transformation happen in her conscious, creative, embodied, and empowered reflection of herself as Sacred Feminine, not necessarily in contemplative stillness, denial, or order.

Understanding, insight, healing, and transformation happens in the gentle floating, swaying, and rocking of her sacred feminine body into consciousness, balance, and wholeness. It happens in the creative reflection and expansion of her conscious embodied Self as Sacred Feminine in her inner and outer world. It happens in her consciousness and subjective creativity that expands understanding, insight, and healing to her memories, actions, thoughts, and emotions. The Sacred Feminine interrupts traumatic experiences of pain, suffering, objectification, and overidentification with “other” and creates sacred space for consciousness of woman-being embodied by the Divine.

The Presence of Sacred Feminine to Transform the World

As women consciously embody and empower Self as Sacred Feminine, her presence illuminates and transforms both her inner world and outer. As the Sacred Feminine grows, illuminates, and transforms her life, her Sacred Feminine presence becomes a light for other women. Imperative to the incarnational ministry of Jesus, is the healing and transformation of woman as Sacred Feminine in the world. It is fundamental that woman create space for the encounter of Sacred Feminine through her presence, friendship, and acquaintances. Not as a hierarchy, but as an ever-widening embodied space of powerful women nurturing women into their consciousness of Self as Sacred Feminine. The power of Sacred Feminine is interrupting, creating, and transforming, not just in the ordinary space where women gather, but in the extraordinary space of women sailing.

Women Sailing as Empowered Sacred Feminine

Sailing Vessel as Sacred Feminine Woman Being

Sailing vessel, by its structure and nature, is the embodiment of the Sacred Feminine. It is freedom and freeing as it floats and glides effortlessly, perfectly balanced, through the water. She stands upright, strong, multi-functional in her rigging and tall mast. Her mast reaches to the sky, holding the sails aloft, capturing the forces of nature in a pull and push of forward motion. Her sleek, round, belly-like hull interrupts and separates the force of the sea creating space for her to gracefully dance through the water.

The sailing vessel is grounded by the weight of her keel to hold her upright, even in the fiercest storms. The hull of the sailing vessel is an embodied cabin, like a womb, complete, and whole while providing all the comforts of home. The sailing vessel

supports, relaxes, and challenges women while at the same time rocking and rolling her into oneness with herself, her sailing vessel, the sea, and the Divine. The sailing vessel as Sacred Feminine is the embodiment of woman-being: powerful, creative, whole, and balanced.

The Gentle Swaying of Kinesiological Transformation

The gentle swaying, rolling, and rocking of the sailing vessel, both at dock and sailing, facilitated a kinesiological experience of healing and transformation simply in the motion while engaging in a reflective practice. Many women participate in physical activities that engage the body such as yoga, however, the necessary element for transformation is the conscious reflection on the experience of images, words, emotions, and thoughts that bubble up during the kinesiological experience.

As the boat and body sways, the body naturally adjusts to create balance and wholeness. On the sailing vessel, that is equivalent to adjusting the sail or turning the helm to balance the boat and ease forward motion through the water. This motion reconnects the body image, body mapping, and body schema²⁵⁶ that are disconnected due to trauma. Conscious body movement and reflection can potentially heal disassociation caused by trauma. It merits further study as a neurological and psychological study.

What is particularly interesting to note about the women's transformation is that it occurred relatively easily, like a release, when rocking on the sailing vessel during Phase I, rocking and swaying in the office in Phase II, and sailing in Phase III. The researcher observed a brain-body communication experience of physical calm and release that occurred when consciousness, motion, and reflection occurred simultaneously. The

²⁵⁶ Blakeslee and Blakeslee, *The Body Has a Mind of Its Own*, 28-53.

experience of consciousness, motion, and reflection creates embodied consciousness to see, feel, think, and experience old memories and current experiences in fresh new ways. It interrupted the predictive memory. It merits future study of a theological, anthropological, psychological, and neurological nature to discover how body image, brain mapping, and brain schema as brain-body communication can facilitate healing and transformation through body movement.

Women Sailing as a Spiritual Therapeutic Practice

Sailing and sailing vessel as Sacred Feminine creates sacred embodied space as a spiritual therapeutic practice. The embodied act of sailing, learning to sail, and being present while sailing is a spiritual therapeutic practice of the Sacred Feminine and the transformation of women. Sailing develops and trains women's ways of being, thinking, and embodying for self-empowerment and the empowerment of others. Sailing teaches life lessons and leaderships skills. Sailing is as much about freedom, peace, and relaxation as it is about journey, survival, and the creative power of engaging the forces of nature to sail her vessel forward through life.

The spiritual therapeutic practice of sailing is a conscious practice of integrating the brain-body woman-being with a sailing vessel and the forces of nature to powerfully glide through the water in a state of perfect balance. It is a practice of conscious centering and integration between the woman sailor, the sailing vessel as an extension of herself, and the forces of nature for the purpose of transformative action that sets the woman and sailing vessel free from its constraints, gliding powerful forward through the water and her life.

From Survivor to Helmswoman and Woman Sailor

Sailing as a spiritual therapeutic practice engages women at whatever space she is in. Survivorship is about being in a state of transition. The women in this study arrived in a state of survivorship. Being a “survivor” feels anywhere from uncomfortable to downright frightening, vaguely confusing to significant memory loss, and feeling numb to riding a roller coaster of uncontrollable and unexplainable emotions. For the women open to the spiritual therapeutic practice of sailing, it is helpful if she anticipated sailing as freeing, fun, and freedom.

The experience of being a survivor is like the experiences of women learning to sail. Her unconscious way of thinking, emoting, and reacting formed by her past experiences are still actuating in her present thoughts, environment, and relationships as she learns to sail. She feels confused. Her environment has changed but her land and abused brain-body way of being, thinking, emoting, and reacting has not changed. In sailing, this is called sailing “in irons.”

Women and Sailing “In Irons”

Sailing “in irons” feels chaotic, confusing, and confrontational. The sailing vessel is pointed directedly into the force of the wind, the sails are noisily flapping, and steering has no power as the sailboat begins to move backwards. Women survivors of domestic violence are women “in irons.” Like the inexperienced sailor “in irons,” women are “in irons” when she lives in a state of survivorship. Sailing teaches how to pause, feel, asses, adjust, and helm to get out of irons both on the sailing vessel and in life.

Creating Sacred Safe Personal Space on a Sailing Vessel

Consciously creating a bubble of sacred space, especially on a sailing vessel, as the location of herself as Sacred Feminine, trains women how to create her own safe space, therefore not immediately seeking external forces for survival and security. It is within her space that she learns to be responsible and accountable. Self-awareness, safety, and responsibility for self are foundational for survival and success in sailing.

As women experience herself as safe, the bubble space of safety extends to just beyond the hull of the sailing vessel in all directions. It is within this space where she experiences herself as authority, responsible, and accountable. It is within her personal bubble and sailing vessel bubble space where the woman learns and is trained to be the captain of her own ship. The sailing vessel becomes an extension of herself as Sacred Feminine. Women learn situational awareness, discipline, and self-awareness.

Consciousness within Sacred Space

Conscious exploration of trauma memories in one's created safe and sacred personal space allows for re-interpretation of the experience and creative re-integration of it as new knowledge into her consciousness. Consciousness of embodied memories thoughts, feelings, images, and sensations, both pleasurable and painful, when creatively engaged through the spiritual therapeutic practice of sailing have the potential to heal, experiencing oneness with oneself, creativity, and relatedness to oneself, others, and her sailing environment.

Sailing Out of Irons: Pause, Feel, Assess, Adjust, Steer

How do we get women out of the “irons” of survivorship and trauma? When “in irons,” steering is useless. As in life, women survivors often seek help from external sources like turning on the engine.

First, Adjust your Sails

Sailing trains women survivors to adjust her sails first. Sailing out of “irons” is the simple yet courageous act of consciousness: pause, feel, assess, adjust, steer. Sailing trains women to pause, feel the wind, assess the situation, adjust her sails, and then steer her sailing vessel. Sailing, as a spiritual therapeutic practice and as a way of being, has the potential to train women to connect with themselves, their vessel, and the natural elements at their deepest levels and their essential powerful Sacred Feminine beingness.

Women as Sacred Feminine Sailors Solely Sailing

Creating a closed society and social order of women sailing transforms women’s experiences into conscious understanding and insight into herself as agency, authority, protector, creativity, and power. Training solely with women as Sacred Feminine creates new experiences of women collaborating, communicating, and creating a powerful, safe, and transformative experience. Engaging women in conscious reflection and reflexivity during the powerful and physical act of sailing, engaging the forces of nature, and creating competence and success is empowering, healing, and transformative.

Sailing as Reflective Practice

Training women in self-reflexive and practice reflection practices that can easily be duplicated off the sailing vessel increases opportunities for embodied healing, self-love, and the creation of safe space. Consciously naming women’s bodies as sacred,

feminine, female body, and Sacred Feminine as reflections of the Divine in the world changes women's self-understanding. The more that women consciously identify her beingness as Sacred Feminine and share that consciousness of beingness of Sacred Feminine in other women, especially young women, then the entire consciousness of the world will shift as a reflection of the Divine as Sacred Feminine, oneness, creativity, and relatedness.

Sailing a Balanced Life

Reflecting on the practice of sailing quickly develops the inexperienced woman into an accomplished sailor. Learning to sail perfectly balanced teaches what balance feels like and trains one on how to achieve it, not by force but by feel, creativity, and small adjustments. Sailing perfectly balanced is not about perfection, only a metaphor for integrating the sailing vessel, sails, steering, and wind in such a way that a sailboat essentially sails itself with only minor adjustments, until the wind shifts. It isn't so much the balance but the thinking, feeling, and handling that results in balance that is important. Once one has consciously trained for and experienced perfect balance on a sailing vessel, one can consciously use the same skills to achieve healthy balance in other areas of life. Sailing perfectly balanced becomes the goal of both sailing and life.

Limitations to Sailing as a Spiritual Therapeutic Practice

There are limitations to sailing as a spiritual therapeutic practice. Women's specific trauma experiences, scheduling around weather conditions, physical limitations, safety, boat maintenance and reliability, and a therapist's ability to provide therapy, teach sailing, and captain the vessel safely simultaneously are a few of the limitations to sailing as a spiritual therapeutic practice.

The most significant limitation to sailing as a spiritual therapeutic practice is the therapist. A therapist that is skilled in trauma, experienced in sailing with a captain's license, gifted as a calm sailing instructor, has access to a well-maintained sailboat, and is flexible to work around weather conditions is a unique person. The therapist would need to live near a body of water or have the time to travel. If the therapist has a captain or crew on board, that adds to the cost of a therapeutic session and shifts the dynamic of a therapist client relationship and issues around confidentiality. Safety must be the highest priority and the captain must be able to handle a medical emergency while under way.

As a spiritual therapeutic practice, the full sailing experience may not be appropriate, nor necessary for an initial visit or as a regular appointment. Designing a practice could be a limitation as each sailing experience is as unique as each woman that sails. The length of time for sailing as a spiritual therapeutic practice is more than the standard hour session. However, meeting on a sailing vessel is a significantly unique experience and may be enough. The experience of being aboard a sailboat and experiencing the movement can offer an alternative to a full day sail or ocean sailing.

Sailing vessels require frequent maintenance and can be unpredictable if not sailed and inspected often. Time must be allowed for preparing the vessel for sailing and cleaning her following the sailing experience. Sailing, by its nature, is a challenging, physically demanding, and a somewhat dangerous activity. Injuries occur and medical care must be considered.

Weather conditions must be considered prior to sailing. Sailing in fair weather is strongly encouraged. Scheduling around weather conditions can prove to be problematic.

Weather is constantly changing, and the therapist must be able to handle the sailboat independently in foul weather.

There are limitations as to the needs of a woman that would benefit from sailing as a spiritual therapeutic practice. Severe physical handicaps would take special consideration as would mental health stability, comorbid, and medical history. Fear of the water, water related trauma, and a woman's attitude about water and physical labor might be a limitation.

Retraumatizing women is always a major risk and must be considered. Love for the water and trust in the therapist usually overcomes the fears and anticipation. Women willing to engage in a full-bodied sailing retreat, like the women in the research study, are at the stage in the healing process that would benefit greatly.

Sailing as a therapeutic practice has incredible benefits for healing trauma, overcoming feelings of incompetence, and connecting with her body, her sensations, and creativity. The benefits out way the limitations. It is an experience that transforms lives in ways that are different than other embodied experiences. It is a profound connection with God in the oneness of the silence, the movement, and the beingness that is powerful, enlightening, and embodying. It is a conscious, empowered, embodied encounter with the Divine as Sacred Feminine.

Reflection on Method

The research design is followed as outlined in the chapter on method except for muscle strength testing. The researcher allowed space for adjusts due to time constraints, needs of women participants, and flow of interviews.

Locating and assessing woman participants is initially challenging and personal communication of the research study by the researcher proved to be the most effective. The original design calls for group interviews in Phase II and Phase III. The researcher determined individual interviews to be in the best interest of the researcher and for the woman participants to benefit more fully in the research study. The interviews are significantly longer for several of the women. As they shared their stories, some for the first time, attentive listening, pastoral care, and requests for more time lengthened the interviews.

Documenting interviews using audio video recording devices, transcription services, and internet proved challenging for the researcher as a result of her deficiency in technological skills.

Sailing proved to be the most effective and rewarding experience of the research study for both the women and the researcher. Only one interview is rescheduled due to weather. The heat of Florida summers is cause for concern and the researcher provided ample water and beverages for hydration.

Kinesiological Muscle Strength Testing

It was the intention of this research study to facilitate kinesiological muscle strength testing at the end of each interview to evaluate the strength and weaknesses of the woman's responses based on muscle strength. However, limitations to the muscle strength test became immediately apparent.

The success of the test is based on the careful and thoughtful formation of each question. Poorly worded questions created a potential for misunderstandings, additional follow-up questions, and attention to the woman's emotional response to an unexpected

test result. The muscle strength test requires careful formation of questions, interpretation of the responses, and thoughtful follow-up questions when the muscle response indicated something contrary to the woman's expectations. Weak muscle tests to woman's responses created the potential for an experience of deep reflection or negation of women's voice and embodied knowing.

The primary limitation is timing. The muscle testing activity was at the end of the interview. The interviews ran longer than anticipated, and both the researcher and the woman participant were tired, thus rushing the test, yielding potentially inauthentic results.

Interpreting the results of the muscle strength test when the response is affirmative is reassuring to the woman. However, when the muscle test result was weak to an important statement of belief about oneself, there existed the potential for reinforcing women's misunderstanding, disconnection, or negation of an embodied experience of knowing. Carefully worded follow-up questions, retesting, and reflection became important in the process of authentically interpreting the results and reassuring the women of her embodied knowing.

Documenting the questions, statements, and results of the muscle strength test is extensive and proved to be beyond the scope of time and skill of the researcher. The researcher made the determination to discontinue facilitating the muscle test. However, in a few situations, the muscle test result proved to be significant for a some of the women. Those results are noted in the data, where appropriate. The researcher is disappointed that the muscle testing part of the research is discontinued. Kinesiological muscle testing merits further study in the areas of kinesiology, theology. and anthropological studies.

Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher reflected frequently on her presence and influence on the women participants as a researcher, a pastoral care provider, survivor, and helmswoman. The researcher reflected on preconceived ideas about women as victims and survivors of domestic violence, familiar abuse, and human trafficking. The researcher reflected on herself as a victim of domestic emotional abuse and how it influenced her ability to be present, facilitate the research study, and interpret stories and data.

During the interpretative phase of the research study, the university suspended the doctoral program in early 2020 and immediately following the Spring 2020 semester terminated the female professors, causing great angst and disappointment for the researcher. The power of male authoritative leaders in universities and churches to terminate theological studies and dismiss women theologians triggered life-long memories of the researcher of being silenced, dismissed, negated, and insulted for speaking, asserting, writing, and dreaming.

The researcher went into theological hiding. As a woman living, doing, and writing theology, the threat of excommunication, familial rejection, and social repercussions became real again. Every attempt of the researcher to interpret, understand, and gain insight from the research data was through a hermeneutic of judgment, ordering, and critiquing.

The researcher temporarily walked away from the data, but not the women. After a period of reflective self-care, the researcher came to realize she had not made the connection of her own Self as Sacred Feminine and her need for healing and

transformation. Experiencing her own Self as Sacred Feminine, the researcher returned to the research data with a new hermeneutic.

The researcher approached the research as sacred feminine female embodied texts with a powerful transformational hermeneutic of women as Sacred Feminine. The researcher approached the research anew with a hermeneutic of transformation of beingness and becomingness: curiosity, courage, commitment, compassion, connection, and creativity.

The researcher, as Sacred Feminine, created space for the data and memory of the woman participants as Sacred Feminine to interrupt, create, relate, and become whole through creative interpretation, understanding, insight, and writing. The researcher created space for the power of Sacred Feminine and the data to speak for herself.

Conclusion

Taking the Helm researches the transformation of women survivors of domestic violence through four phases of experiences over a period of six-months, involving Sacred Feminine, embodied movement, and sailing a vessel.

The ongoing trauma caused by women survivor's embodied experiences of family, social, and domestic violence have left deep wounds and continue to hinder these women survivor's ability to trust in her own thoughts, connect with her body, make meaning from her experiences, and to live emotionally, physically, and spiritually fulfilled lives.

This research is grounded in creating sacred space for women survivor's voice, female body, and practice to be accepted, acknowledged, and attentively engaged as

Sacred Feminine, with the hope of transformative interpretation and meaning making.

The Sacred Feminine began as an empty construct: a void, a womb, a sacred space for interruption, consciousness, and transformation. Connection with self as Sacred Feminine interrupts the woman survivor's unconscious storied memory and creates space for her transformation through her experience as Sacred Feminine. Sacred Feminine acts as interrupter and the interruption for a creative openness to sacred space for woman to consciously imagine, explore, and expand herself as Sacred Feminine in her inner and outer world and with the Divine. The women survivor's conscious engagement and experience as Sacred Feminine transformed and gave new meaning to their lives as "I am," self-love, power, and "creativity."

Conscious exploration of trauma memories in one's created, sacred space allows for re-interpretation of the experience and creative re-integration of it into her consciousness. In Phase 2, embodied movement, and Phase 3, sailing, the women survivors train to consciously create a sphere of safe, sacred space surrounding, grounding, and locating herself within this space as Sacred Feminine. She begins to feel safe in her own expanding sphere of safe space.

This experience becomes a resource for women to create her own safe space, diminishing her need to seek external sources for security. It is not the physical activity itself that is significant, but the conscious reflexivity on women's embodied experience of herself and reflection of her embodied presence and practices in relationship to the world that creates powerful embodied meaning.

Sailing and sailing vessel as Sacred Feminine creates sacred embodied space as a spiritual therapeutic practice. The embodied art of sailing, learning to sail, and being

present is a spiritual therapeutic practice for the transformation and empowerment of women. Sailing develops and trains women's ways of being, thinking, and embodying for self-empowerment and the empowerment of others. Sailing teaches life lessons and leadership skills. Sailing is as much about freedom, peace, and encountering the Divine as it is about journey, survival, and the creative power of engaging external forces in life.

The spiritual therapeutic practice of sailing is a conscious practice of integrating the brain-body woman-being with a sailing vessel and the forces of nature to powerfully glide over the water perfectly balanced. It is a practice of consciousness, intuitiveness, and integration between the woman sailor, the sailing vessel as an extension of herself, and the forces of nature for the purpose of transformative action that sets the woman and sailing vessel free from its constraints: perfectly balanced, effortless, powerful, moving through the waves of life.

Through her conscious reflections on Self as Sacred Feminine, sailing, and body movement, several of the women were able to transform their pain, suffering, and memory of trauma such that she was able to experience clarity of mind, release, creativity, forgiveness, and connection with her body and the Divine and make new meaning for which to ground, empower, and free herself.

Reflexivity and reflection brought forth new hermeneutics. By approaching the research and the storied lives of the women survivors as sacred female embodied texts, a powerful transformational hermeneutic of women as Sacred Feminine emerged as a new method of interpretation. From the powerful transformative interpretive hermeneutic of women as Sacred Feminine emerged a new hermeneutic of transformation of beingness and becomingness: curiosity, courage, commitment, compassion, connection, and

creativity. A hermeneutic of transformation of beingness and becomingness creates space for the power of Sacred Feminine to interrupt and for the woman-being to transform, emerge whole, and to speak for herself.

Through this pastoral and practical theological research emerged new meaning, understanding and insight of a powerful transformative hermeneutic of women survivors of domestic violence as Sacred Feminine and to interpret her experiences through a hermeneutic of transformation of beingness and becomingness. What emerges in this research is women's consciousness of self and the meaning she makes as empowered and embodied Sacred Feminine that is present as oneness, self-love, creativity, agency, authenticity, power, relatedness, and freedom, that in turn creates space to transform women survivors of domestic abuse and violence into women uniquely flourishing as she sails through life.

This research is deeply grateful to the women participants of this research who shared their experiences for new meaning, interpretation, methods, and insight that might inspire changes in pastoral care, public advocacy and abuse services for women, and methods of practical theological research to heal the wounds and wombs of women survivors of abuse and violence. It is their voices, experiences, and trust that teach us how to live courageously as Sacred Feminine, create sacred space, and sail through trauma into a life of oneness, creativity, and relatedness.

The entirety of this research is imaged, created, facilitated, interpreted, inspired, and written while the researcher lives aboard, loves, and sails, *La Bon Vie*, a 1985 Beneteau *Idylle* 1150.

Epilogue: The Researcher's Dream

Since childhood, the researcher dreamed of sailing, living on a sailing vessel, and sailing the world. Having grown up around power boats and earning her coast guard auxiliary certificate at the age of twelve, the researcher had a passion and attraction for the water as sacred, safe, and serene.

At the age of fifteen, an ancient man came to her in a dream. He handed her an old wooden box containing a sacred manuscript. The researcher dared not open the box. The ancient shaman says, "This manuscript contains powerful secrets about women and the church. They will change the world. It is upon you to open the box and share what's inside." Terrified by the dream, the researcher denied her femininity, emulated the masculine, and forgot about the old wooden box. Always in a state of conflict and filled with a love for the Divine, the researcher went through life struggling to be at peace with herself in the world.

Comfort came with the birth and raising of her four children, the spiritual presence of God, and the ability to travel, study, and create. Fifteen years ago, the researcher again dreamed of sailing and teaching women to sail as a way of healing trauma. At the time, the researcher knew not how to sail.

As her long marriage was coming to a painful end, Jesus said, "You entered into the covenant of marriage, as did I, he did not. I set you free." Her prayers sprang forth with three calls: rebuild my church, heal my people, and break what needs to be broken.

When her youngest grew up, spread her wings, and left the nest, the researcher learned to sail, bought her boat, and began sailing into her dreams.

Tragedy struck the researcher in a terrible accident aboard a large motor vessel she was working on as a steward. In a terrible storm offshore, the researcher was thrown and landed on her back, crushing her vertebrae, and damaging her hip and pelvis. Barely able to function, unable to sit, stand, or walk, the researcher continued to study through surgeries and therapies.

Her dream to sail remained in her heart along with her passion to heal the wounds of women. Slowly she reclaimed her body racked with pain and moved back aboard.

The breaking of her back broke through her dream and the seal on the old wooden box. Thirteen women came forth to show her how to take the helm, confront her fears, and adjust the sails. Three years it took to find the courage to write the words written on her heart.

The power of Sacred Feminine interrupted her life to create life, joy, and beauty. Today, the researcher has healed and loves her life aboard sailing vessel, *La Bon Vie*.

The entirety of this research was imaged, created, facilitated, interpreted, inspired, and written while the researcher lives aboard and sails, *La Bon Vie*, a 1985 Beneteau *Idylle* 1150. When the researcher found her, she said, "I've been waiting for you."

Appendix A

IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board

16400 N.W. 32nd Ave., Miami, Florida 33054
Proposal Approval Form
St. Thomas University

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S) Dr. Bryan Froehle supervising Doctoral Candidate

Joan Derrig-Heacox

PROJECT TITLE:

Taking the Helm: A Practical Theology of Women Survivors of Domestic Violence
Experience of Re-embodiment, Engaging the Myth of the “Handless Maiden,” the Power
of Sacred Feminine Energy, and the Practice of Sailing

in accordance with St. Thomas University policy and national guidelines governing the
ethical use of human participants in research, the university Institutional Review Board
certifies that the above stated project:

_____ being exempt from full review was peer reviewed by the IRB under the
expedited review process and in its original form was
X_____ was revised according to suggestions made by the IRB to the investigators
and was
_____ being subject to a full review by the IRB was

REVISION REQUESTED ON _____

APPROVED ON 1/10/2019

DISAPPROVED ON _____

Investigators may request continuation of a project using the IRB project submittal form
and procedure.

Human Subjects are adequately informed of any risks:

Gary Feinberg, Ph.D.
Gary Feinberg, Ph.D.
Chair, St. Thomas University IRB
Date: 1/10/2019

Appendix B

Research Study Volunteer Flyer

**WOMEN
HAVE YOU EVER DREAMED**

Of Being on the Water at The Helm of a Sailboat?

Of Feeling Free in Your Own Body?

Of Thinking Clearly, Confidently, and Courageously?

If you answered Yes to these questions, Continue...

**Have You Recently Been in an
Intimate Relationship with a Man:**

- ❖ Who criticizes you and puts down what you say, think, do, and feel?
- ❖ Who says things that make you feel confused, crazy, or stupid?
- ❖ Who looks at you with disgust or dislike?
- ❖ Who blames you and refuses to take responsibility for his behavior?
- ❖ Who behaves in a way that intimidates, threatens, or hurts you or others?

If you answered Yes to these questions, Continue...

Would you like to participate in a Local Research Study for Women Only?

I am presenting and researching a program for the transformation of women who have experienced controlling, abusive, and confusing behaviors in dating, marital, or “significant other” relationships. This program reflects on views of body, mind, and spirit while addressing women’s issues with special attention to consciousness of experiences of embodiment, empowerment, and enlightenment. It includes 4 voluntary interviews, activities, and experiences; one of which involves a sailing retreat, in the Lee County Area.

Contact Joan E Derrig-Heacox, M.M., Ph.D. candidate

Text or call [REDACTED] or email: joanederrigheacox@gmail.com

This research study is approved by a primary investigator at St. Thomas University, Miami Gardens, FL.

If you need help now or are in danger,
contact Domestic Violence Hotline: ACT 239-939-3112

Appendix C

Sailing Vessel La Bon Vie

Phase I, III, IV

(No research participants are on the vessel in photograph)



Appendix D

Stephanie's Image I Blade of Grass

Image on Stephanie's Business Card

Presented to researcher at the start of Phase I



Appendix E

Stephanie's Image II Spirit Warrior

Stephanie's screen shot on her phone

At the start of phase I



Appendix F

Stephanie's Image III Flowing Woman with Jesus

Stephanie's image of Self and Jesus after Phase IV

Sent as a follow-up four months after last interview

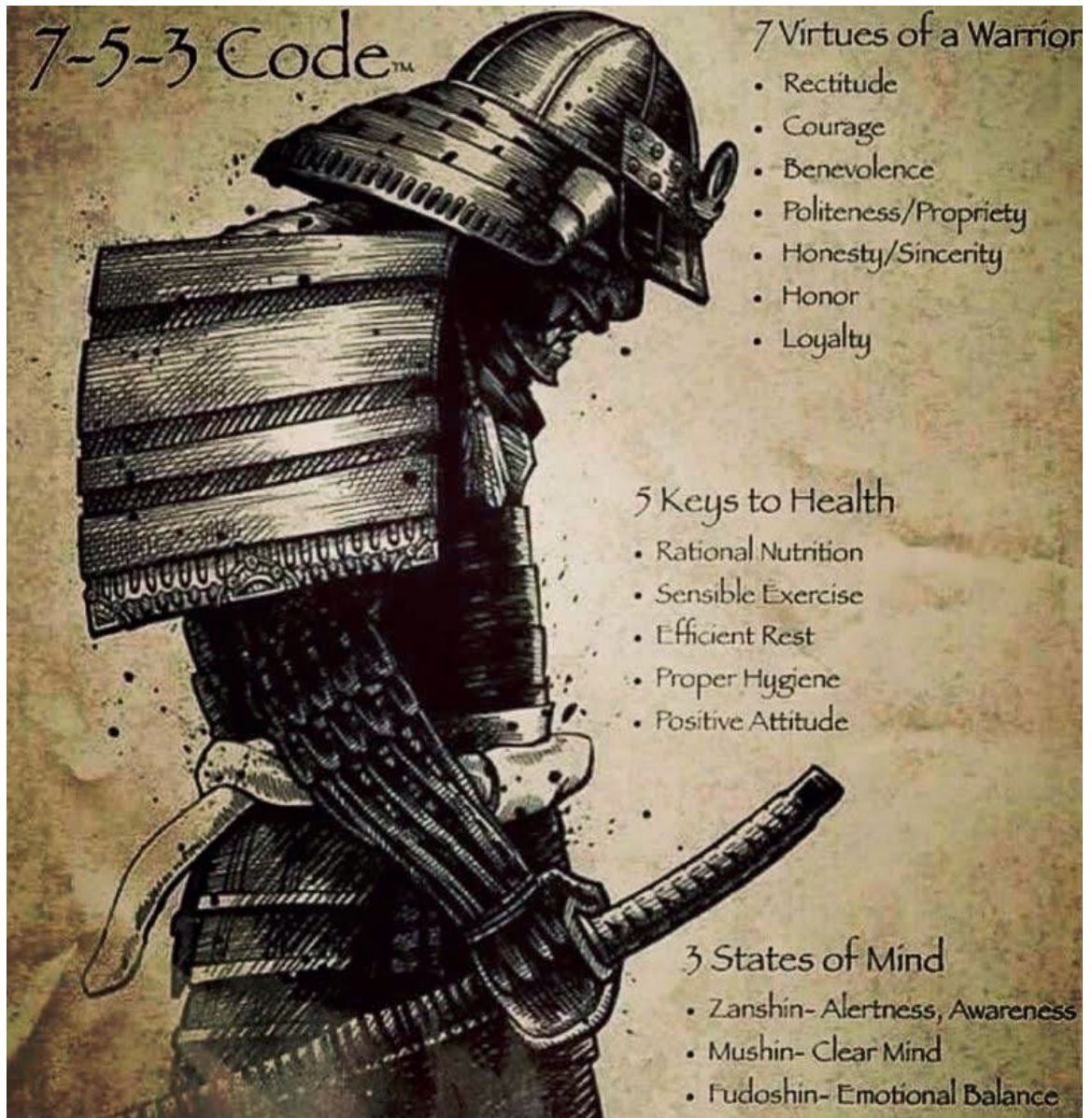


Appendix G

Sophia's Image of Herself Phase II

Sophia's Image of Herself

Sent to researcher the day after Phase II



Appendix H

Stella's Image of Herself

Stella

Image sent to researcher the day after Phase I interview.

“The Keys to Our Freedom”

Graphic designed for Stella six years ago

“When my hands were cut off.”



Today is a new day.

Live Enthusiastically

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