Learning through stories: An investigation into how Tracks Rites of Passage Programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education in the University of Canterbury by Jamie Robert Howell University of Canterbury 2012
I was really very moved, touched and relieved. Really that is the feeling I have most of all. Relief he has found a place [Tracks] where he is totally seen and totally accepted - and totally challenged, and, actually to be more than he currently is. That the best that any of us can hope for as humans. And I can't give him that because I am a woman and I'm his mum.

(Julie, Interviews, May, 2011).

Autopoiesis describes a very different universe, one in which all organisms are capable of creating a “self” through their intimate engagement with all others in their system. This is not a fragile, fragmented world that needs us to hold it together. This is a world rich in processes that support growth and coherence through paradoxes that we need to contemplate.”

(Wheatley, 1999, p. 20).

I had explained the myths of peoples of the past; I had written a book about the hero, the myth in which man has always lived in. But in what myth does man live nowadays? In the Christian myth the answer might be, “do you live it?” I asked myself. To be honest, the answer was no. For me, it is not what I live by. “Then do we no longer have any myth?” “No, evidently we no longer have any myth.” “But then at what is your myth—the myth in which you do live?” At this point the dialogue with myself became uncomfortable, and I stopped thinking. I had reached a dead end.

(Jung, 1963, p. 171).
Abstract

The Tracks rites of passage are processes that mark the adolescent transition, for the participant, the family and the community, between the two life stages of childhood and adulthood. Adolescent initiation rites offer a community led journey of separation, transition and integration as a way to work meaningfully with adolescents as they move between the life stages of childhood into adulthood. In Aotearoa/New Zealand the Tracks programme provides a five day contemporary rite of passage for adolescents and, where possible, their fathers. The rite of passage is based on the assumption that adolescents need opportunities to find their voices and make meaning if they are to become more aware of who they are and where they belong.

The methodology recognises that I, as researcher and insider in the Tracks organisation, needed to develop a holistic approach to insider research so that I could call on my understandings of the organisation and also guard against bias. The holistic approach involves the four interpenetrating strategies of appreciative inquiry, narrative inquiry, a blend of approaches to self-study that include meditation and critical reflection, and most importantly organic inquiry. The four strategies are based on coherence theories that describe learning as being organic, interconnected and emergent. Data were gathered from interviews and cycles of critical self-reflection in the form of a learning journal.

Data comes from interviews with the mother or fathers and young men of six families who have participated in the Tracks rite of passage programme. I have also discussed this work with a number of professionals in the field of youth work. The project found that Tracks had created conditions that empowered these young men with an increased capacity to make sense of their lives. Fathers expressed how challenging and rewarding they had found it to speak in honest terms with their sons, and that they were supported to do the inner work necessary to be able to speak in such ways. All of the family members expressed a need to have more support after the event.

The findings suggest a need to explore further the nature of the work happening at Tracks. It validates Lashlie’s (2005) theory that adolescents need their fathers and other men to be involved in their lives at the time of transition. Tracks also helps fathers to get to grips with the inner work of developing emotional maturity. The work happening at Tracks invites further research into and debate on the value of emotional intelligence. The Tracks rite of passage offers an alternative perspective to understand the unacceptably high rates of adolescent morbidity and mortality happening in New Zealand.
Figure 2 Mask of the boy's face made before his initiation
Acknowledgements

This research journey includes many events; earthquakes, three amputated fingers, a house build and a proposal of marriage to name a few. Thanks to the staff at the University of Canterbury for the help through the hard times, particularly the friendly and always helpful college of education library staff.

Thanks to Suzy and Bettina for the financial support to get the project off the ground.

Thanks to Jim, Maria, Adge and the rest of the Tracks team for the inspiration, and the dedication you hold for the work of building community. Thanks also to the generations of men, near and far, who have given of themselves in the deepest ways to the re-emergence of a community led rite of passage event in Aoteroa/New Zealand.

Thanks to families who invited me into their homes and whom shared their stories with such integrity.

Immeasurable thanks to Bonni, Chime and Tarchin for the tools and the inspiration to question.

Thanks to Peter for the big picture and humour. A special thanks to Elaine who has been committed to the work of keeping me honest and on track for over two years, your patience and passion for learning is a gift to the world.

Thanks to Graham, a great friend/mentor/father. The seeds of this thesis were born in the fires of our talks over fifteen years ago.

Thanks and love to Emma and Yasmina for being a steady flow of support and wonderment throughout this time.

Figure 3 Author as researcher heading off to an interview with the Tracks talking stick 2011.
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Chapter One - Exploring Theoretical Foundations

This thesis explores questions about the perceptions of young men who have become engaged in the Tracks programme, and the perceptions of some of their key family members of the impact of the programme.

This chapter explains the value of a dynamic, living-systems approach to learning as a theoretical framework to help understand holistic learning. Mechanistic approaches to learning are useful but inadequate when it comes to preparing young men for a life with meaning. I position myself in the research as a volunteer facilitator for Tracks.

Theoretical Framework – A Dynamic Living Systems Approach

An inquiry into how human beings know is a prerequisite to understanding how organisations like Tracks address the problems young people are facing. A living system approach to education and research challenges assumptions that humans know and learn in a mechanistic way. This process is not lineal or easily articulated, but is intimately connected with how they construct reality. The research represents a learning journey that continues to raise questions, uncertainties and insights. I argue that complexity theorists such as Wheatley, learning theorists such as Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler, and biologists such as Maturana and Varela contribute answers to the question of how humans learn and research in a complex world, where everything lives in relationship to everything else.

The Opportunities of a Living Systems Perspective

Wheatley (1999) argues that the new sciences enable fresh ways of understanding complex systems of human organization and challenges the idea that thinking operates like a complicated machine. Complicated machines, like cars, can be understood in terms of cause and effect dynamics. Machines can be understood by pulling them apart and understanding their complicated components. Complex systems on the other hand cannot be
understood in this way: when we look at the component parts of complex systems they are just as complex as the original (Davis & Sumara, 2008). Jansen, Cammock and Conner (2011) refer to Plsek’s (2001) analogy of bricks and birds where, if you throw a brick then it can be generally predicated where it will land whereas if a bird is thrown at a target, the outcome is complex. Jansen et al. (2011) explain that the brick perspective brings predictability and repeatability, whereas the bird perspective promotes diversity, responsiveness, adaptation and innovation (p. 5). The critical point is that learners are living systems like birds, they do not function according to predictable, machine like principles and this needs to be contemplated deeply.

Wheatley believes that the new sciences, such as complexity thinking, systems thinking and quantum theory offer valuable ways to deconstruct and challenge the deeply held assumption that learning is a mechanistic process. She quotes geneticist Lewontin (1991) to explain that a mechanistic view fails to understand that organisms do not experience environments, they create them (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998, p. 18). The idea that organisms create their environments is an example of how knowing is complex. Complexity, as I construct the term, implies a willingness to continually question assumptions in terms of how the world appears to us. Being open to complexity within this research process means striving to become conscious of the habitual conditioning to look for a right answer, because the idea of something being right corresponds to an assumption that there is an objective reality that can be right or wrong. Wheatley (1999) believes that researchers must engage with one another as co-explorers and co-discoverers (p. 173). She argues persuasively that new science is creating new perspectives for the social sciences and education. The implications are that now is a challenging time because, while the old ways are dissolving, the new ways have not yet fully emerged.

The theories of correspondence and coherence (Davis Sumara, Luce-Kapler, 2008) explore the implications of what Wheatley refers to as a challenging time in terms of learning. The learning theories of correspondence and coherence helped to facilitate a critical shift in my understanding from the
unconscious assumption of an objective reality existing independently of a knower towards the realization that it is more useful, and potentially transformative to view learning in terms of the ability to adjust existing knowledge in the light of new experiences in order to maintain some kind of internal coherence.

Correspondence Theories
Two assumptions underpin correspondence theories, firstly that learning is mechanical and therefore is predictable and easily manipulated, Davis et al. (2008) refer to this as behaviourism. The second assumption is that all learning happens in the heads of individuals, they call this mentalism. Both of these perspectives assume that learning is the correspondence between subjective and objective reality (p. 92). Davis et al. (2008) explain that, “When it comes to formal education, the major issue with behaviourist theories of learning is not that they are inaccurate, it’s that they’re inadequate” p. 92.)

Coherence Theories
Coherence theories, on the other hand, reject the assumption that separation exists between mind and body, self and other, knower and knowing. Davis et al. (2008) identify a range of learning theories that belong within this category such as constructivism, constructionism, critical theory and ecological theory. These theories focus on adaptation and evolution rather than cause and effect and on coherence rather than correspondence. The major difference is that coherence theories do not assume there is an existing objective reality; rather they suggest that learning is about creating conditions to make and remake internal coherence (Davis et al. 2008, p.99). The implication of coherence theories, and the challenge to theories of correspondence is that every act of knowing is partial “in the twofold sense of ‘incomplete’ and ‘biased.’”(ibid, 2008, p. 7).

Autopoiesis, Self-organisation and Emergence.
Autopoiesis is a concept that attempts to describe how living systems know and learn. The exploration of autopoiesis is an attempt to understand learning
and researching as a dynamic, interconnected activity. “[K]nowing cannot be taken as though there were facts or objects out there that we grasp and store in our head” (Maturana & Varela 1987, p. 25). Maturana and Varela (1987) explore autopoiesis as a biological basis of knowledge, cognition and interconnectedness amongst living entities. Their exploration led them from the cellular level, to multi-cellular systems to the biological foundations of social systems.

The concept of autopoiesis refers to the self-organizing nature of living systems and applies to a single cell, a butterfly, a transitioning adolescent and a research process. Maturana and Varela (1987) explain that all living systems are involved in a process of self-making, where auto means “self” and poiesis means “making” (p. 42). Every self creates an identity that feels coherent to the organism itself. It does this through a sense making process of perception and response (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998, p. 90). Maturana & Varela describe this self-making as the on-going response to the perturbations of both an inner system of knowing (according to the structural history of the organism) and the outer system (the environment which is itself in a state of constant responsive self creation). This progression of ideas leads to the understanding that both living being and environment are in a state of continually creating each other. Maturana and Varela illustrate this proposition using Escher’s “Drawing Hands”.

![Figure 4 Escher's "Drawing Hands" found in Maturana and Varela (1987, p. 25).](image)

Figure 4 Escher’s "Drawing Hands" found in Maturana and Varela (1987, p. 25).
This circularity and inseparability between the act of knowing a world and an experience of it lead to the idea that “every act of knowing brings forth a world” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 26). From this complex and dynamic interaction knowledge arises. There is no simple division between subject and object, both subject and object are affecting each other in an unfathomably complex interaction. An implication of autopoiesis is that a living system that produces itself will change in order to preserve that self. Change is prompted only “when an organism decides that changing is the only way to maintain itself” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 20). The theory of autopoiesis is an example of a coherence theory that suggests learning is an incredibly complex phenomenon. Autopoiesis provides a way to understand change and, if self-making is the primary task of all organisms, then autopoiesis raises the question of how to create environments that support a self-making organism to change for the better.

**Emergence**

The concept of emergence is a defining characteristic of self-organising systems. I use the term emergence to refer to the creation of higher-level structures that arise from the complex interactions of agents that make up that system. Pascale, Millemann and Gioja (2000) explain self-organization in terms of:

> the tendency for certain systems to operate far from equilibrium and then shift to a new state where constituent elements generate unlikely combinations. Emergence is the outcome of this, a new state or condition (p. 113).

Wheatley (1999) explains that researchers can trust emergence because concepts like autopoiesis describe a different universe that is not fragile and fragmented, but “is a world rich in processes that support growth and coherence through paradoxes that we need to contemplate” (p. 20). The concept of emergence, as it continues to develop in my understanding has become a key feature of the research process. It represents a leap of faith to
trust and explore in ways that are coherent with a living systems view, despite the reality that many of my assumptions about learning have been conditioned by the correspondence view that there is something to get right based on an external objective reality. As such this research journey involved abandoning the safety of the known, to venture into the unknown. Concepts like coherence, self organisation and emergence have helped with recognising that what matters in terms of learning is being less concerned about getting things right and more willing to create processes that really question. In this manner, process is more important than outcome because outcomes cannot be known in a universe in which life exists in a continual state of creation.

Interpreting the Relevance of these Learning Theories

A major difficulty in this thesis is developing an ability to articulate the implications of correspondence theories that create unconscious divisions in the mind; the following journal entry was an attempt to reflect on the unconscious divisions.

The assumption that the world works according to mechanistic principles is thoroughly accepted in the life I live. People benefit everyday from the science of breaking things into their smaller parts to learn how they function. The assumption has become so compelling that for the most part it is unquestioned. Despite how convincing the mechanistic assumptions are, concepts like autopoiesis question the existence of a world out there independent of a knower. They suggest that every knower brings forth a unique and changing world in an unfathomably complex dance between subject and object. The challenge that I seek to highlight and revisit throughout this thesis is that these epistemological questions have their origins in the conscious and unconscious and the implications of these assumptions create subtle divisions in the mind. This is not just an interesting speculation about learning, but is about the nature of the way people construct reality and how that affects their identity, values and beliefs. Wheatley (1999) explains that learning to think beyond the mechanical image is difficult and our traditional analytical skills will not help us (1999, p. 140). These ideas are about coming to terms with the extent that mechanistic images create divisions in the mind that affect the way people see, think, feel and act in the world (My Journal Notes, April, 2012).

The failure to explore these epistemological issues contributes to the problems young people are facing. I have found merit in the argument put
forward by Davis et al. (2008) who state that it is essential to challenge the “untenable” assumption that humans carry “internal models or representation of an external reality” (p.108). Coherence learning theories are useful because unlike the correspondence theories, they acknowledge the complexity of living systems and it is within such interconnected systems that young people are experiencing difficulties.

Coherence theories create opportunities for transformation. I have witnessed and shared with others the stories of cancer patients who have fundamentally shifted the way the world appears to them as a result of a moment’s coherence. As opposed to the assumption that young people need filling up with knowledge. Opportunities to make coherence align with the understanding that young people are inherently wise and knowledgeable (Jansen & Pawson, 2011, p. 9). Davis et al. (2008) explain that the empowering theories of Freire (1998) are examples of coherence making that can lead to the development of critical consciousness. In terms of learning what matters is the trustworthiness of the inquiry and the degree to which it helps a learner make sense of themselves and the world around them.

Assumptions about knowledge affect the way the world appears and the implications of this realisation continue to impact on how I see things and how I think about the needs of young men and their fathers. Because these investigations into the nature of knowledge are in process, it is challenging to explain them clearly to readers of the thesis. The researcher is in a process of change and the research instrument is this mind as it moves through a process of chaos (breaking up of old views) toward an unknown, emerging outcome. The intention is a willingness to be open to the insights and inconsistencies of the learning journey. (My Journal Notes, April, 2012).

Challenging the Deeply Embedded Mechanistic Metaphor

Mechanistic images continue to influence both the researcher and the traditional school system. The following two journal reflections describe the challenges of making the shift from mechanistic thinking (the untenable assumptions of correspondence theories) toward an increased ability to think and write from a perspective of coherence. The first example describes the
struggle to shift my thinking into practice. The second example describes the structure of the school.

I came to this thesis with a self-deception. While I was writing about learning in terms of internal coherence, on another level I was unconsciously adhering to the assumption that the right answer existed out there. The supervisor used the story of Don Quixote to highlight to me just how entrenched I was in creating positions. Rather than valuing inconsistencies as an invitation to inquire more deeply and more critically, I was intent on creating binary positions that I was then forced to defend. I was unconscious of a conditioned thinking pattern in which I continued to believe that there was an objective reality. This thesis tracks some of the changes in my thinking as I have grappled with what Wheatley refers to as deeply embedded mechanistic images (1999, p. 29).

Figure 5 A photograph of the doodles the supervisor and I generated in this conversation.
The left hand side of the page identified some of the assumptions in terms of words and processes that were controlling my thinking. Control is a very appropriate word because it led me to realise that a major barrier preventing me from shifting my thinking is fear, that is fear of being willing to live in an uncertain world. The right hand side of the page is a collection of the words and processes that were opening up my thinking. The pages represent an important time in the development of criticality and the willingness to trust and move beyond the security of what I thought I knew. It showed me the difference between conceptual knowledge and integrated thinking and the self-deceptions and the unhelpful debates that can occur when one aims for a perfect understanding of a concept that has been constructed in the social world.

I convinced myself that I was living and researching in harmony with the coherence perspective and believed my thinking was in tune with the dynamic, interconnected, complex way of the world. In truth my supervisors helped me to see several times that while I thought I knew it, my behaviour indicated otherwise. Here is a journal entry from that time.

*Fighting windmills - caught between two worlds.* I am becoming aware of my own disorientation and it feels vulnerable...I feel a sense of right and wrong, the wrong is the mainstream media, the adults who have lost their way and are serving themselves... I don’t know how to separate who I am finding myself to be from how I write. I am unconsciously making positions that I then have to defend, while all the time talking as if I am living as a system, part of a chaotic and interconnected world where the concept of right or wrong has less meaning (My Journal Notes, August 2010).

The crucial learning for me during this process was that a reliance on conceptual knowledge alone creates the illusion that I think I know something when I do not. This discovery was applicable to being a husband, a teacher and most importantly, a father and has meant that I now am more suspicious about what I think I know and suspicious about what I think other people know. The implications of the mechanistic metaphors are that they are deeply embedded in how humans construct reality, as such I acknowledge that new
ideas take time to integrate and that learning involves a willingness to question everything.

The second reflection describes the extent to which a mechanistic metaphor of learning was deeply established in the secondary school system where I taught health to adolescents in transition. The following list is a record of observation that I now believe helped foster the unquestioned mechanistic assumption about how living systems learn.

- The school system was controlled and structured.
- There was a hierarchy of knowledge and control.
- The discipline system rewarded students for getting things right.
- Students were separated in terms of ages and abilities.
- Knowledge was partitioned in subjects.
- Days were broken into one-hour classes.
- All emphasis was on achieving external outcomes. This created an environment of competition.
- There was a little emphasis on making inner (subjective) meaning.
- Despite New Zealand’s poor outcomes in terms of adolescent health, health education was a small part of the curriculum and that was taught in terms of achieving outcomes as opposed to making meaning.

The key characteristics are hierarchy of control and the assumption that young people if provided with the correct knowledge will make good choices. These reflect an assumption that, much like the bird and brick analogy, learners develop in predictable, linear pathways. It raises the question of whether this school structure is an oversimplification of how living systems learn. Chapter two presents statistics that state New Zealand has some of the highest rates of youth mortality and morbidity in the developed world. Although one must not oversimplify a very complex situation, the mechanistic framework happening in school raises questions about the conditions young people require for learning. Despite a health curriculum that recognizes the need to teach a holistic approach, in many classrooms, health is taught within a competitive separated mechanistic framework of knowledge, I think that this explains to some degree why despite excellent health programmes across
the country, many teenagers experience difficulties throughout their adolescence.

**Positioning Myself within the Research**

Living two lives as a facilitator of rites of passage and teaching health education in schools has provided a useful lens to explore the effects of adolescent education. For eight years I have taught health education in the New Zealand secondary school system. For the last six years I have also facilitated the Tracks programme. Out of these two different approaches I became interested in the potential of the Tracks rites of passage to affect boys positively, in developmental ways the school curriculum had been unable to achieve. On that basis, I began the work of designing a research process to understand better the active principles of the adolescent rite of passage. My position is therefore an insider of both approaches. The methodology I seek aims to maximise the insights gathered through these years of experience while managing the potential for bias.

**Tracks Operates from a Holistic Perspective of Making Coherences**

Tracks provides an initiation process that defines and affirms a moment in the boy’s life course in which he begins the journey of becoming a man. The programme offers a five-day rite of passage event for teenage boys. The process includes new boys, young leaders who have been through their rite of passage, fathers and mothers of the new boys and older men. Set in the natural environment, it is a proactive approach to address the particular challenges and potential of a significant life stage transition from child toward functioning adulthood. The programme is holistic, non-hierarchical, organic in its processes and emergent in the sense that no one person knows the outcome of any particular talking circle. The following assumptions about learning can be made from the summary of features of the programme listed below;

- Learning happens in talking circles; this is the primary method of learning and assumes that what matters in terms of learning is making meaning based on the ability to speak and listen.
• Ritual and story telling are valued tools. Rituals develop intensity and clarify intent.
• There are no divisions between the ages of the boys and men. Often the men appear to learn as much as the boys about what it means to be a man. The circle knows no hierarchy.
• The setting for the week is immersed in the natural outdoors. Open tents and the removal of technology play a part in the conscious development of awareness to experience the four interconnected elements of water, earth, air and fire.
• While there is structure, the outcomes of each session are alive and organic. What matters in terms of Tracks is self and group empowerment. The boys and men are given the conditions (through building trust, the presence of elders and a commitment to confidentiality) to share the real stories of their lives.

Tracks is based on the learning assumptions that are consistent with dynamic living systems. Understanding of self-organization, emergence and coherence offer meaningful ways of talking about the holistic learning that surfaces during the spiritual and ritualistic elements of the Tracks programme.

Research Questions

This thesis explores questions about the perceptions of young men who have become engaged in the Tracks programme and the perceptions of key family members about the impact of the programme. Anecdotal evidence is clear: the Tracks programme has been life changing for some young men. Tracks has made important contributions to the knowledge of how to prepare young people for the transition into adulthood. The research process is driven by the desire to understand what is happening in Tracks that is giving rise to the appearance of transformation. The question was how to find a researchable position, given my insider position and my experience of the value of Tracks.

Some important questions that shaped the emergence of my researchable questions were: How do humans learn in complex modern times? Are the troubles that young people are facing a new phenomenon, or are they reflections of a need to understand more about the needs of an adolescent psyche? What can educators in the modern world learn from the cultures that place great value on the need for rites of passage to facilitate a transition into
adult psychology? What is the function of a rite of passage and is it valuable for the youth and the families living in a multi cultural modern New Zealand? This thesis reports on an investigation into the question:

- How do young men who have been involved in the Tracks programme on more than one occasion and their families perceive the impact of the Tracks programme on their development?

The questions that guide the data gathering are:

- What stories do the young men tell about the impact of the Tracks programme?
- What stories do the adults living with the young man share about the impact of the Tracks process on the development of the young man and the family?
Figure 6 An adolescent on his rite of passage. The participant has given his permission for the image to be used.
Chapter Two - Rites of Passage

This chapter begins by discussing transitions between childhood and adulthood in New Zealand. This discussion sets the scene for exploring how the concept of rites of passage might foster holistic learning for young people as they move from childhood to adulthood. Rites of passage can be thought of as symbolic points of transition where young people are involved in a social ritual that marks the end of childhood and the beginning of fresh responsibilities and status in the adult world. Rites of passage are processes that provide young people with opportunities to construct holistic meaning about themselves and their place in the world. They involve the family, friends and the community of the young person, so that the transition is recognised and celebrated in ways that build status and respect and strengthen relationships.

The tradition of a twenty-first birthday party, where the young person is given the key of the door, is an example of a ceremony, but ceremonies are not the same as rites of passage. Where ceremonies tend to re-enforce the status quo, the rituals involved in rites of passage catalyse individual and social change. This chapter explores these different perspectives and their implications for adolescent development and argues that the loss of rites of passage contributes to the transitional difficulties experienced by many young people.

Transitions in New Zealand: The Gluckman Report

There is a problem with traditional education as it attempts to prepare young people to transition from childhood into adulthood. The OECD report released in 2009 entitled “Doing Better for Children” states that young New Zealanders are at a greater risk than those of virtually any other nation with which we would wish to compare ourselves (Gluckman, 2011, p. 4). The Gluckman Report “Improving the Transition: Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity During Adolescence” (2011) is a comprehensive government funded inquiry into the state of adolescent health in New Zealand.
and suggests that New Zealand has a problem with supporting its young people in the transition to adulthood.

High rates of youth morbidity and suicide are indicators that adolescents in New Zealand are not making a successful transition into adulthood. Skegg, (found in Gluckman, 2011) argues that youth suicide represents the ultimate failure to transition from child to adulthood (p. 208). New Zealand experiences poor outcomes for young people in terms in teenage pregnancy, sexual infections abortion, crime, mental health, drug and alcohol use and suicide (Gluckman, 2011, pp. 1-17). Approximately one third of all marriages result in divorce in New Zealand (ibid, p. 181) and there is an increased risk of harm in terms of the social, psychological, and physical development of children whose parents split up (ibid, p. 177). The report questions why a significant number of young people are not making a happy and healthy transition into adulthood in spite of the opportunities provided by our unique natural heritage and moderately prosperous economy (ibid, p. 4).

Research into brain development suggests that adolescent brains do not become functionally mature until the third decade of life (Gluckman, 2011, p. 6). Task initiation and management, self-image, impulse control, judgment, strategizing pathways and abilities to manage strong emotions only mature in the second decade of life. The incomplete development of the teenage brain contributes to poor decision making, risk taking and the likelihood of indulgence in reward inducing stimuli such as peer pressure, drugs and alcohol (p. 24). These findings lead me to question the efficacy of traditional educational practices that assume adolescents will make good choices if shown the logical consequences. Later in the thesis I will argue that one of the strengths of more holistic education is that it develops emotional intelligence, and that it is at the level of emotions that adolescents tend to make their choices.

Gluckman suggests that social structures need to be engineered to ease the transition from child to adult (2011). He suggests that “the seeds of many adolescent problems are sown very early in development” (p. 8) and
consequently educational practices need to be developed that incorporate a "life course" approach. Gluckman explains that the problems of adolescent transition need to be explored as part of the larger systems perspectives of socioeconomic circumstances, family structure, school, community and peer group (p. 8). The life course perspective, described by Gluckman, acknowledges that preparing an adolescent for the transition between life stages is complex and interconnected. I would extend the interpretation of a life course approach to include more understanding of the development of the adolescent psyche. The remainder of this chapter explores the function of rites of passage in these terms, suggesting that there is a need to understand more about the inner worlds and educational processes that shift perceptions of belonging and self identity. A life course from this perspective involves working the depth mind, the mind of core emotions and archetypal intent. A life course approach recognizes that the time between the life stages of childhood and adulthood is both vulnerable and opportunistic. The opportunity is the possibility that a liminal experience can transcend the limitations of the child and open the mind towards being in relationship with an expanded view of the world.

Transitions in New Zealand: Celia Lashlie

Lashlie (2005) explains that for boys to transition successfully into adulthood they have to cross the bridge to adolescence. To do so requires that they hear and take part in a process of authentic inquiry with men about what it means to be a good man. Lashlie’s bridge is one example of a holistic process of education that assumes adolescents will be better resourced to make decisions if they are given opportunities to make meaning for themselves in terms of who they are and where they fit in the world.

The bridge to adolescence is a metaphor that maps out a number of the developmental changes boys move through on the way to becoming men. It is an attempt to help mothers, fathers and people who work with teenagers learn more about what boys need at these times to successfully navigate the changes. As a mother, she explains that as her son approached the bridge, she knew she would not be able to understand parts of the journey he was about to
undertake (p. 75). The point that she is emphatic to make is that mothers cannot go onto the bridge. She states that fathers and men need to be involved in the lives of boys at this crucial time of transition (p. 73). These two movements, mothers stepping aside and the fathers stepping up, have to happen together; mothers cannot let go unless there are men there to take their boys into manhood.

Lashlie believes boys need opportunities to reflect on who they are and where they fit in the world. She argues that a failure to experience this can result in suicide. “Young men end their lives because they can’t find the words to say what they want to the important people in their lives” (p. 214). Functioning adulthood, according to Lashlie, is about a boy being given the tools to come to terms with who he is and who he wants to be (p. 80). She relates the ability for a boy to know where he fits in the world with the development of emotional confidence and defines the term as the “ability for boys to ask and answer reflection questions, the ability to think about the world and their part in it and the ability to find language to describe how they see that world” (p. 214).

Improving the transition from boy to young man, Lashlie suggests, involves men getting together to tell the ordinary stories of what it is to be a good man. These stories must then find their ways into the fabric of our society (p. 203). She argues that men need to think about “what a good man is, develop abilities to define it; live it; and communicate it to boys moving towards manhood” (p. 184). The answer to suicide, youth imprisonment and the high road toll as she sees it, “lies in strengthening boys’ links to the good men in their immediate circle, their heroes, and in helping fathers to remain heroes and positive influences in the lives of their sons” (p. 203). For Lashlie, improving the transition for boys is about fathers and other older men stepping up to form communities of men who are willing to share real life stories about what it means to be a good man.
Transitions in New Zealand: Adventure-based Educational Programmes

Many young people in New Zealand do make successful transitions into adulthood. The Gluckman Report states that an unacceptable number of young people struggle through adolescence, but this is not the case for a great many. Before exploring the topic of rites of passage, I look at the young men and their families who do appear to make successful transitions. There are numerous activities that help young people grow into responsible adults including adventure based education programmes, extended family parenting and involvement in sport. I question if these process are mainstream and if they achieve the same outcomes as a rite of passage.

Adventure-based education programmes contribute to the psychological development of youth. Programmes that take place at Outward Bound and Whenua Iti Outdoor Education Centre offer beneficial outcomes that help young people. Jansen and Pawson (2011) explain that adventure programmes are typically focused on finding solutions and helping young people to realise the consequences of their actions (p. 3). They suggest that young people learn new things about themselves that help them move from dependence to independence and on to interdependence (p. 2).

While both take place in the outdoors, outdoor education programmes differ from rites of passage programmes, such as Tracks in significant ways. Tracks uses story telling as the main vehicle of learning and the ratios at Tracks are 31 adults to 9 new boys. Rites of passage use rituals to implement a three-stage initiation process described by Gennep (1960) of separation, transition and incorporation. While there are similarities in terms of objectives, the process and outcomes are different from the kind of outdoor education programmes described by Jansen and Pawson. The focus here is not to assess whether one method is better than another but rather to understand more about what helps young people function well at difficult times between life stages. In my experience both approaches are powerful. They both share the healing potential of time spent immersed in nature and the potential for transcendent peak experiences. The outcomes however of outdoor education
programmes, such as those in which I have been involved at Whenua Iti and Motueka High School, do not compare with the intensity and developmental changes that are taking place within the rite of passage process discussed in this thesis.

Transitions in New Zealand: the Role of Extended Families, Sports and the Wilderness.

Extended families that collaborate with schools present another possibility for successful adolescent transition. New Zealand is a multi-cultural society and different cultures have different approaches to developing boys into good men. I worked closely with the Maori teacher at Motueka High School and witnessed how the marae served as a meeting place for extended family to be involved in the development of the young boys and girls. Similarly, I observed other families of European descent provide hunting and wilderness adventures with uncles and extended family members to impart core values to their teenagers. “A kid in sport is a kid out of court” is the slogan touted by Sport Tasman in the Nelson region. There are lots of examples of young people whose dedication to sporting success has taken them through the challenges of adolescence. Being able to quantify these practices is beyond the scope of this project, but it is enough to acknowledge their benefits while at the same time observing that these processes are haphazard. Outdoor education initiatives, extended family practices, mentoring programmes, and sports clubs all help boys transition, but in my view, do not perform the same function as a well constructed rite of passage.
Perspectives of Traditional Rites of Passage

Non-Western cultures offer insights and alternative constructions of reality that may offer fresh perspectives about the problems youth in New Zealand are experiencing.

Rites of passage: Indigenous Cultures

Rites of passage have been practised for thousands of years by almost every indigenous culture. Davis (2009) argues that the societies of the developed West can learn from indigenous cultural practices. He refers to aspects of indigenous knowledge as unique expressions of the human imagination (p. 19), and explains that these cultures offer insights into and understanding of the question of how to function well as a part of a living system. Davis believes a broader view of knowledge is essential because, as a global community, we risk losing a catalogue of imagination, “the artistic, intellectual, and spiritual expression of the full complexity and diversity of the human experience (p. 34).” In the absence of any absolute truth, Davis argues that indigenous cultures offer alternative constructions of reality and understands that the transitions between life stages are essential to the future of the community.

A growing number of practitioners and academics are turning to other cultural models to look for holistic ways of working with adolescents. Tucker (2011) (Appendix A) explains that where once there stood a myriad of traditions serving as intentional rites of passage for the young, there is now a gap; hence the birth of contemporary initiatives that seek to remember and reinvent processes for their young, within their culture. Tucker (2011), identifies three strands: traditional indigenous groups still practising their rites; indigenous cultures like Maori, no longer practising but still carrying the knowledge of their traditions and working hard to reinstate them, and lastly, those whose traditions and heritage are so broken and distant that they are having to reinvent culture and process from scratch through research, compassion and
intuition (p. 1). The three strands have much to offer one another in the development of the knowledge about rites of passage.

As Tucker (2011) points out, Maori carry the knowledge of their traditions but are no longer practising them as before. The Hei Tikitiki (Caddie & Ross, 2011) research project found that the current generation are no longer reliant on the older generation for transitional processes and the authors believe there is a gap in knowledge of the practice of rites of passage. The Hei Tikitiki (2011) research project interviewed thirty kaumatua (respected tribal elders of either gender in a Māori community) /kuia (respected woman elder) and found that while the processes of rites of passage were considered valuable, there is a knowledge gap. Within Maoridom the functions of rites of passage are about the intergenerational transmission of essential values, knowledge related to sacred places, genealogy, food sources etc., and essential skills such as cultivating/collecting, preparing food, creative arts and caring for the environment (Caddie & Ross, 2011, p. 8-9). Only a few interviewees were able to share stories of how they participated in particular rituals (ibid, p. 68). The primary function of rites of passage involves connecting people with their ancestors and to the cycles of life. They are designed to build intergenerational connections; however, according to the report, current generations are no longer reliant on the older generation for advice to transition (ibid, p. 67). The initial survey of traditional Maori rites of passage has identified a “significant gap in literature and popular knowledge about this subject” (ibid, p. 68).

Functions of Traditional Rites of Passage

The function of a teenage rite of passage is to confront the initiate with a symbolic experience of mortality that serves to open the narrowness of the mind (Prechtel, 1999). Prechtel was born on an Indian reservation in New Mexico and moved to Guatemala where he became the initiating chief for a Mayan community. He explains that the initiation process from child to adult is essential to the functioning of the community and that it is the responsibility of the whole community to initiate the young. Prechtel (1999) interprets his experiences while telling his story.
My summary of Prechtel’s (1999) story as it relates to rites of passage

It took years to become human. [I think Prechtel is referring to becoming a human adult]. This was accomplished by the efforts of one’s family and, later, the extended family and, later still, at adolescence by the village as a whole, who came and removed you from the family nest to cook you out of your raw, unripe state into “mature fruit,” as they called it. Initiation was mandatory in those days and constituted the beginning of Adulthood. This rite of passage, however, was not what made you into an adult. This first initiation only made you ripe enough to continue on in a lifelong pursuit of turning yourself into an adult, on through the next three layers of service to the village (p. 5). To the Tzutujil, the initiation in and out of adolescence was absolutely essential; the uninitiated adolescent had a lot in common with the aggressive, freedom orientated inhabitants of our modern cities (p. 7).

The Tzutujil Maya called adolescence the “great swelling of the Earth” or the “holy illness” (p. 87). They consider this normal, not a sickness, nothing to cure, just an irritating blessing. It was part of the unfolding of one’s life. When a boy or girl began that era of their lives they became moody, lovesick, single-minded, beautiful, and easily hurt...they passed through a period of vulnerability before the hard shells and strong feathers of young adults had sprouted and grew over their tender hearts. The young are so easily crushed and killed at this time called adolescence. As all the initiated people know, in adolescence death steals your soul and only teenage heroism can drive adolescents toward life and give them courage enough to face death in order to retrieve their hearts. Making love and babies without the maturation of initiation was too dangerous for the young and unhealthy for the village. Initiation could only begin the moment one sexually mature adolescent began to yearn for another. This is a movement away from one’s parents and was always felt as a subversion by one’s relatives, no matter how well they might understand the naturalness of it. In order to protect the youth from their parents, and the people and parents from the disruption of the youth, and in order to ferry the young people through the churning rivers of adolescence, the village took it upon themselves to gather up the teenagers and begin initiating them into a bigger family, the village (p. 88).

The purpose of initiation is to navigate past the narrow-mindedness, prejudices, and survival opinions taught to them by their families. It gave boys and girls hope that they would eventually be received into the welcoming arms of the tribe as a whole, into the community and away from the weight of family. But they had to work really hard for this. It wasn’t a lazy thing or an easy thing. It wasn’t just given to them: they were put inside of initiation and under the guidance of their elders; they worked their way into the community (p. 88).

One of the greatest anxieties for the Mayans was to make sure their teenagers confronted death in a controlled way before they married. If
they didn’t confront death as teenagers, they would remain dependent children throughout their lives, or confront death arbitrarily, in an uncontrolled way. This was the all-consuming theme of initiation (p. 90).

The key ideas to emerge from Prechtel’s account of rites of passage within Mayan traditions are that:

- It was the village’s responsibility to transform a child into an adult and that this took years;
- Puberty is a blessing not a problem to be solved;
- Puberty is a vulnerable and opportunistic time for a human;
- Initiation begins at the time of sexual maturation;
- Teenage pregnancy was not considered helpful for the village;
- The purpose of the rite of passage is to navigate past the narrow mindedness taught to them by their families;
- Confrontation with one’s own sense of mortality was essential;
- Rites of passage gave boys and girls hope that they would belong to a meaningful community.

Emerging Rites of Passage – Self Initiations

A rite of passage is a conscious attempt to create markers that validate the changes the adolescent is moving through, both for themselves and for the community. Don Bowak is an elder and developer of the Pathways rite of passage programme for boys and men in Australia and his book, *Marking Life’s Stages* (2008) is the facilitator’s guide book for Tracks. In it he suggests that one of the requirements of a rite of passage is the need for the adolescent to be recognised as powerful and independent. From the perspective of the adolescent, the sentiments are: “I am no longer a child, I am powerful. I am independent and I will do as I wish rather than what I am told to do” (Bowak, 2008, p. 1). Human beings of every culture have sought to mark the great changes in life with ceremony and rituals. Bowak (2008) explains that where there are no socially sanctioned markers provided, young people will create their own (p. 1). Grimes (2000) explains that initiation in western society often involves peer driven forms of compulsive, unconscious and violent initiation. Such initiation is detached from family and community
and has little resemblance to the practices of traditional initiation conducted by elders who represent a lineage (p. 94). The recovery of rites of passage is a conscious attempt to address the inner needs of young people in our modern industrial societies.

There are no markers in New Zealand society that signify the developmental characteristics of becoming a healthy adult. Lashlie (2004) asked a collection of male principals: “When did you become a man and how did you know?” She concluded that for most men there is no mainstream marker, education, ritual, affirmation or honouring. Bowak says that in the West the eldership has been broken and he suggests there is no initiation for boys if the men have lost touch with their inner knowledge. Men have lost the knowledge of the maps that guide a human through the labyrinth of life stages. No modern Western rite of passage has approached the levels of social support and confirmation that were achieved by ancient tribal rights (Bowak, 2008, p. 22.). Telling a boy he is becoming a man is very different from guiding him through a well constructed rite of passage to enter into what he calls “the journey into human maturity, surrounded by the support and care of their elders and peers” (p. 21).

The primary function of an adolescent rite of passage is to validate a young man’s growing ability to contribute meaningfully and, in the absence of rites, boys will look to their peers to prove themselves to be independent and powerful, often with drastic consequence.

**Features of Contemporary Rites of Passage**

A contemporary rite of passage depends on three ideas: the human life course, the phases of passage, and the experience of ritual transformation (Grimes, 2000, p. 6). Life stage theorists suggest that human lives follow a relatively uniform path. These are stages of human development intersected by a series of turning points that divide into predictable phases. Grimes explains that each turning point is both a crisis and an opportunity.
Gennep (1960) relates effective rites of passage to three primary markers: *Severance, transition and incorporation*. *Severance* is a stage characterised by separation from society, community, mother, father and peers. Its purpose is to sever the cords that bind us (Foster & Little, 1998, p. 126). *Incorporation* refers to the process of returning and integrating back into the family and community. Families and communities gather to witness the transformation and to honour the change. A successful right of passage is one in which the critical first step on the path to adulthood has been taken.

The second stage of *transition* describes the intention to achieve a shift in the social psychology of the individual from one stage of life development to another (Bowak, p. 6). It is a threshold experience in the form of a significant challenge that creates the experience of liminal space, which is described as a place where pretences are dropped. Foster and Little (1989) explain that, unmasked by fear, the student will become genuine, unique, mortal and fragile. This vulnerability is fertile soil (p. 35). This process refers to the climax of the initiation process where the adolescent can move beyond the realms of what has been taught to him by his family, education and culture.

Transformation is a term synonymous with ritual initiation. Described by Neel (1958), initiation refers to a process of becoming paradoxically aware of the hidden aspects of consciousness because the initiate has not been capable of perceiving it. Where ceremony confirms the status quo, ritual transforms it. For Turner, ritual is a hotbed of cultural creativity, its work is to evoke creativity and change (Grimes, 2000, p. 121). Turner argues that a powerful but temporary kind of community emerges during the memorable moments in ritual. He referred to it as *communitas* and regarded it as the *fons et origo* (fountainhead and origin) of social structure (p. 122). The generative effects of liminality, then, are not limited to artistic or ritualistic creativity; they include new and adaptive social forms” (p. 122). Turner called these powerful processes ‘zones of creativity’ because they are a crucible in which culture is reduced to its fundamental elements.

*Rituals* are an essential part of the rite of passage. Grimes (2000) believes that rituals are spiritual technologies that are essential to human survival.
They can involve the imaginative aspects of the psyche and as a consequence have real impacts on reality (Grimes, p. 34). He believes that knowledge can become dangerous without the container of appropriate rituals. For Grimes: “it matters greatly not only that we birth and die but how we birth and die” (p. 13). It is the ritual that brings the power to the process to affect what he calls an “irreversible transformation” (p. 98) from an old state to a new one. Similarly to Turner’s, my interpretation is that rituals are educational tools that can be used to expand awareness of self and other. Used this way, they represent the heart of the transformative process happening within a rite of passage.

Transformations that shift perceptions and fundamental ideas about self-identity and belonging do occur naturally throughout the life cycle and the significant idea here is that ritual transitions are different because they are intentional. Bowak identifies ‘natural or traumatic’ transitions that occur as part of life, suggesting that there is a third category, that of chosen transition (p. 8). If supported by elders and appropriate rituals, the transition phase creates the conditions for empowerment and expansion of consciousness.

Elders play an important role in the rite of passage process. To be an elder is to have successfully navigated the terrain of adolescence into the realm of emotional maturity. In the context of Tracks, elders are initiated men. This means that they have participated in the training programme and, more importantly, they have developed a measure of inner wisdom and capacities of service. Elders support the work in many ways; they provide council for the fathers and they develop the functional knowledge of rituals that develop sacred space. They watch over the entire process with both the inner and outer knowledge of paying attention to life’s stages and transitions.

Having acknowledged the function of the rituals, the three primary markers, and the role of elders, Bowak (2008) describes the additional key components of a contemporary rite of passage. These are: building trust between generations, exploring masculinity, establishing cooperative groups with a purpose and affirming the positive.
Exploring masculinity is about sharing the real stories of men’s lives with boys. This is about creating opportunities to hear their fathers and other men speaking the truth about some of the hidden challenges of growing up which men go through, including, separation, loss and changing relationships with their children (Bowak, 2008, p. 13). A recurrent theme for Lashlie (2005) is that she believes men need to begin the conversation with boys, with; “What does it mean to be a good man?” A function of a rite of passage is to explore masculinity across the life span, together.

Establishing cooperating groups with a purpose is described by Bowak (2008) as a need to help our young experience achievement in the context of a group. The value for a young man is to experience a co-operative group being greater than the sum of its parts (p. 13). The function of the group process is to displace the ego: a process of challenging the child to recognise that independence and responsibility mean not having to be the centre of attention. This is not about humiliating the young person. The catalyst for this process is the sense of purpose and communion of being a part of a much bigger manhood project. As presented to the young man, he is responsible, with other men, to carry on this work. They have to do it for the benefit of the children to come.

Affirming the positive is about helping young men experience positivity in their lives. Bowak explains that people in the West live in a society of bad news and media that focus on problems and pathologies. He describes his experiences among young people that they feel cursed rather than blessed (p. 16). The implication in the western approach to problem solving is that people have become conditioned to approach transitions, such as puberty, as problems to be solved as opposed to opportunities to see the gifts. In western culture, Bowak says that it is essential that young men receive a blessing, a validation (p. 16). Blessing occurs when an older person sees and reflects back to the young person their gifts. This is the essence of affirming the positive.
Traditional rites of passage contribute knowledge to holistic models of education. They are practices designed to open the minds of the initiate to a greater vision of who they are and how they fit in the world. From the perspective of contemporary rites of passage, adolescents are inherently wise and knowledgeable. Rites take place in the natural environment because of the belief that human consciousness is inseparable from the environment. In rites of passage, rituals create windows of altered states of consciousness that can lead to increased realisations of inter-dependence and empowerment.

Jungian Heritage - The Needs of the Adolescent Psyche

According to Jung (1953) beneath human consciousness a deeper intelligence is at work. He considered the process of individuation necessary for a person to become whole. This is a psychological process of integrating the opposites including the conscious with the unconscious while still maintaining their relative autonomy. For Jung (1953) “Every civilised human being, however high his conscious development, is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche” (p. 3).

The manifestation and function of the collective unconscious for Jung refers to the existence of a second psychic system of a universal and impersonal nature that exists in addition to the personal unconscious generally accepted by medical psychology.

This collective unconscious is considered to consist of pre-existent thought forms, called archetypes, which give form to certain psychic material that then enters the conscious. Archetypes are likened to instinctual behaviour patterns. Jung felt that there are as many archetypes as there are recurring situations in life, that when a situation occurs that corresponds to a particular archetype, the archetype presses for completion like an instinctual drive; resistance to its expression may result in neurosis (Jung, 1968, p.42-53).

Stevens (1993) suggests that many of our psychic ills are due to the frustration of archetypal intentions by the circumstances in which we now
live. As with Jung he identifies that the recipe for psychological maturity lies in meeting the needs of a two million-year-old man or woman inside.

Life is not determined mainly by personal histories, it is also fundamentally guided by the collective history of the human species as a whole. This collective history is biologically encoded in the collective unconscious, and the code owes its origins to a past so remote as to be shrouded in the primordial mists of evolutionary time.

Stevens, 1993, p. 15.

A programme of sequence stages, each mediated by a new set of archetypal imperatives, seeks fulfilment in the development of characteristic patterns of personality and behaviour. Each set of imperatives makes its own demands on the environment. Should the environment fail to meet them, the result is the frustration of archetypal intent.

Campbell elaborated the ideas of Jung in his analysis of the world’s mythologies to recognize that the power of myth has an ability to communicate with the deeper layers of the mind. In Campbell’s view mythology is vitally important because myths are “clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life” (Gerber, 2001, p. 104). Campbell (1988) expressed the idea that the whole of the human race could be seen as reciting a single story of great spiritual importance. He called this The Hero’s Journey. From the perspective of the psyche, The Hero’s Journey is a map. The journey begins when the end of the golden weather (childhood’s safety) occurs at about 9 or 10 yrs. Children begin to see themselves as “I”s. The ego differentiates from the unconscious of the mother, and the individual begins to see that he is an individual with the possibility of loss of parent approval, and the reality check that life is bigger and more dangerous than they know. The Hero’s Journey is relevant because it explains that:

The stages of human development are the same today as they were in ancient times. As a child, you were brought up in a world of discipline, of obedience, and you are dependent on others. All this has to be
transcended when you come to maturity, so that you can live not in dependency but with self responsible authority. If you cannot cross that threshold, you have the basis for neuroses.

Campbell, 1988, p. 70.

Living myths connect the young person with the archetype of *The Hero’s Journey* and these inner potentialities move the initiate towards integration.

Myths, like all cultural narratives, evolve and every generation has to discover for itself the living myth that mobilises this transition. The demands the environment makes on the human psyche are so complex and rigorous that the work of adaptation requires more than a single lifetime: the cultural work must be passed from generation to generation, and the living myth sustains the work (Bond, 1993, p. 39). Thus, a functional myth is a living myth, it represents the human achievement of external adaptation, filling the work of many generations. I apply Bond’s hypothesis to the problems young people are experiencing to suggest that young people will be more likely to construct meaning if they are able to connect with their cultural heritage in the forms of stories and myths that resonate with their inner drives.

A living myth allows our participation in the process of our own development. Living myths are the lifelines to the two million year psyche within. An example of an evolving hero’s myth can be seen the heroic character of Frodo in *Lord of the Rings* or Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*. These images would resonate far more to a 17-year-old in Christchurch than Odysseus or Hamlet. Myths have to evolve in order to live. The myth is seen as a turbine enabling the energy to shape the culture. The symbol is the turbine and Bond gives the example of a myth that serves the function of providing meaning. “The Sundance and the Maypole might be thought of as ‘revving up’ the cultural engine to the rhythm of summer in order to survive the rhythm of coming winter” (Bond, 1993, p. 36). The idea is that in order for the myth to be the turbine, people need processes that capture the imaginations of their deepest drives. Young people need to connect to their capacities for making meaning.
The Hero’s Journey is a pattern of mythology common to all cultures that guides the seeker through the labyrinth of the inner world to complete the initiation.

The hero who completes the journey receives the boon. Cammock (2009) describes four aspects of the boon as: personal achievement, the development of character and capacity, the boon of awakening, integration and expanded vision and the boon of connection and oneness. (pp. 69-71). In the context of rite of passage, empowerment occurs when the young person realises that they have skills that the world needs. Cammock explains that for Campbell The Hero’s Journey is not just an artefact, but a universal and relevant path for those wishing to integrate the energies of soul into their lives (p. 74).

Living myths are what connect young people to their inner drives. Adolescents who are connected to the needs of the two million old psyche within are arguably developing an ability to relate to the core emotions of the transitioning organism. The Hero’s Journey and the accompanying process of the rite of passage are antidotes to the needs of a psyche pushing for integration and maturity. It is what might lie underneath the on-going struggle of the young people to validate themselves in the world.

The Challenges of Developing Rites of Passage in the West

There are a number of challenges that need to be acknowledged when assessing the value of rites of passage in the modern world. Ritual is treated with suspicion in the West and Bowak (2008) explains that for those in the West, generally, ritual carries negative connotations, either as empty ritual or superstitious nonsense (p. 18). He suggests that people in the West know few authentic and compelling rites (p. 90 – 91.) The result is that modern people, according to Grimes (2000), treat ritual structures and authorities as suspect.

People living in the developed world are uncomfortable acting out rituals. It has been argued that the mechanical image as it relates to learning, dominates how and what people think. Whitmont (1987) explains the consequence of the
Young people are immersed in a culture that undervalues getting old. Grimes (2000) argues that we live in a society in which elders are no longer considered wise and in which initiates are defiant (p. 95). The problem facing the reinvention of rites of passage is how to go about re-establishing the trust between the generations.

It is a challenge to communicate society’s expectations to the generation coming forward when there is a lack of agreement about what and when one becomes an adult. Shore (2011) explained that a rite of passage must create expectations that the young men understand, but I suggest that this is not possible in a culture that has become dislocated from its mythological and spiritual inheritance, or what Prechtel (2000) calls the “life tethering roots of any peoples” (p. 360).

There can be no question: the psychological dangers through which earlier generations were guided by the symbols and spiritual exercises of their mythological and religious inheritance, we today (in so far as we are unbelievers, or, if believers, in so far as our inherited beliefs fail to represent the real problems of contemporary life) must face alone, or at best, with only tentative, impromptu, and not often very effective guidance.

Campbell, 1993, p.104.

It is a challenge for adults to validate young men with responsibilities when the ancestral knowledge has been lost.

Rituals that affect a participant’s perception of reality require careful implementation, especially when working with young people. Failure to offer the necessary support after an event can be damaging and harmful.
I know of many people initiated at a weekend retreat to end up beached like whales unable to flop back into the deep waters. In my view this is the most intractable dilemma facing the re-inventors of rites.

Grimes, 2000, p.124.

Educational processes that provide peak experiences require support before, during and after the event. Despite these challenges Bowak (2008) points out that never before, in human history, has such a wealth of symbolic and ritual thought been available to us through anthropological and ethnological research. He explains that many rituals have become available and have been shared by their practitioners in workshops run in Australia (p. 19-20). To use them requires doing so with care and respect.

Conclusion

One of the significant problems that young people face in New Zealand is that the process of bringing them under the influence of living myths has atrophied and died. With the disappearance of a living myth comes the disappearance of the knowledge of ritual and myth making.

Young people are unable to participate in society in a creative manner because societal structures no longer consider it their responsibility to intentionally establish the necessary marks of passing from one age-related social role to another.

Grimes, 2000, p.91.

Rites of passage address the gap in the knowledge of knowing how to connect a vulnerable and opportunistic adolescent with the archetypal energies within. The function of a well-constructed rite of passage is to provide the conditions that mark life’s stages. Emblematic of the archetypal Hero’s Journey, these ritualistic processes empower young people with the self-knowledge and belief that they are vital to the future of the world and its communities. Understanding the deeper, more complex function of rites of passage involves broadening the view of knowledge to encompass the inner curriculum of archetypal forces and inner drives that require integration. It is this broader
view that contributes meaningfully to the question of why so many youth are engaging in self-destructive patterns.
Figure 7 An elder taking part in a ritual.
Chapter Three - An Emergent Research Methodology

This chapter explains my search for a research methodology congruent with the holistic educational processes within Tracks and for methods of gathering, analysing and reporting on data that address ideas that are deeply meaningful and personal to both the participants and the researcher. I needed to find research questions that would maximize the strengths of my insider research and existing knowledge about Tracks, but I worried about bias and about how to ensure that I was acting as an ethical and trustworthy researcher. This chapter shows that, as in all other parts of this thesis, key ideas continued to change and evolve as the thesis was written. The seven years of working toward a master’s degree, and a longer time exploring consciousness through the rigorous practice of meditation have opened up deep questions for me about the nature of research and the kinds of claims that can be made.

I have come to think of research as being similar to individual learning where the individual makes sense of new experiences by integrating them with pre-existing ones in some kind of holistic way. The researcher is seeking new knowledge that can be integrated into a shared collective knowledge base. Where the researcher is an insider it is not possible to predict the best strategies in detail in advance of doing the research. The researcher needs to not only identify sound existing research practices and use them to guide the planning and action, but also to allow for flexibility in what actually happens. Theorists who have helped me develop an understanding that holistic forms of insider research sit comfortably within this research include: Brookfield (1995) who focuses on critically reflective practice and the need for a practitioner to seek out the assumptions that underpin a practitioner’s thinking; Maturana and Varela (1997) whose concept of autopoiesis implies that learning and researching are dynamic, interconnected activities; Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2008) with their discussion of complexity thinking as it relates to education and the importance they place on coherent forms of
knowledge construction, and Wheatley (1992) through her description of how
the new sciences have undermined many powerful assumptions about the
nature of knowledge and research.

This research is guided by four approaches that I have blended what I am
calling a holistic approach to insider research. I did not consider action
research as appropriate because, even though I was involved with the
programme, I was not seeking to work within it to bring about change. I was
trying to find out what stories people who had been much involved in the
programme would tell about their experiences and the impact of Tracks on
their lives.

A Holistic Approach to Insider Research
A holistic approach to research would generate meaningful outcomes for the
participants, the Tracks organization and the researcher. I was sceptical of
forms of semi-structured interview where questions about specific aspects of
the Tracks programme would shape the conversation. The whole is more than
the sum of its parts and if I chose questions about the parts of the programme
then those questions would shape the stories the participants told. A more
holistic approach was needed. The four research approaches that have most
influenced the holistic approach to insider research within this thesis are
appreciative inquiry, which guided my thinking about what questions to ask
of my participants, narrative inquiry which resonated with the story telling
approaches within Tracks, critically reflective self study, which helped
address my concerns about bias and organic inquiry that provided a model of
research that is taking place, including transcendent educational experiences.

Appreciative Inquiry
Appreciative inquiry is based on the idea that there is societal gain from
processes that encourage appreciation as opposed to research methods that
focus on the problems. It is a research strategy appropriate to organisational
development and Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) explain that traditional
problem solving approaches, typical of action research can lead to an
exaggerated emphasis on the weaknesses of the organization. Appreciative
inquiry sets out to identify what is going well and to report on success. It has its foundations in the premise that language, knowledge and action are linked (Grant & Humphries, 2006, p. 403). The argument for appreciative inquiry is based on the assumption that knowledge is not absolute and as a consequence, it is more useful to look at the ways people socially construct their world (Reed, 2007, p. 39). Appreciative research designs often develop organically so it is difficult to show the type of “knowledgeable planning” that would demonstrate methodological competence (Reed, 2007, p. 17).

Appreciative inquiry helped me to understand that insider research can enable insightful and subtle forms of knowledge to emerge because the researcher is aware of nuances that outsiders would not detect. One of the critiques of appreciative inquiry is based on the idea that the researcher will not gain the whole story because he/she is focusing only on the positive. Grant and Humphries (2006) explain how critical theory may be applied to appreciative inquiry to bridge the apparent paradox between the negativity of critical theory and the positive focus of the appreciative inquiry (p 401). They explain that Critical Appreciative Inquiry can be developed with criticality that would not “deflect attention from the engagement with complex ideas, particularly those that might express/manifest ‘the shadow’ of human consciousness” (p. 414.) I have tried to develop a productive tension using critical theory (in the form of the critical self reflective journal) and appreciative inquiry to suggest that it is possible to inquire appreciatively and still be open to instances of challenge and dilemma.

The principles of appreciative inquiry were used to develop a variety of open questions that would invite the participant to tell their stories about the impacts of Tracks with as much authenticity as possible. I acknowledged that some of the participants were young men and I was careful to design an interview process that was primarily focused on positive experiences. The positive energy that accompanied their stories provided a strong enough amount of trust for me to be able to inquire critically about instances of challenge and dilemma. In the event that a participant disclosed an
unexpected instance of serious challenge I was prepared to handle that, but it didn't happen. After each interview I used the critically reflective journal to review what had just taken place (Appendix B) and thought about the kinds of questions and conditions that had led the participants into a state of authentic story sharing. Appreciative inquiry provided strategies to recognize that language, knowledge and action are inextricably linked and as such, positive language created an interview that many of the participants described as transformative.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is based on the assumption that people make sense of their experiences through story. Stories offer a way to explore how humans construct knowledge regarding their experience. Witherell and Noddings (1991) explain that people can learn from stories and stories can help people to interpret life. “Through stories we enter the meaning making of others” (p. 2–4). As a tool for research, narrative inquiry listens to participants’ stories about their lives and engages with them in reflective dialogue in order to interpret the meaning of the chosen area of research (Bruce, 2008, p. 323). In narrative inquiry subjectivity is considered to be a source of knowledge. Bruce states that the act of telling one’s story can be empowering (p. 332).

Narrative inquiry offers a way to research subjective experiences of psycho-spiritual growth and transformation and is “a spiritual and liberating research methodology that may offer a research practice aligned with the values of researchers in the field of religion and education” (Bruce, 2008, p .1). The theoretical assumptions of narrative inquiry are that stories are living processes, situated in time, place and in a context (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). As a research method it is about creating new meaning, rather than claiming to field new knowledge.

Bruce explains that the challenge when using narrative inquiry is to become self-conscious because it is a subjective research strategy. (2008, p. 329). The implication is that narratives are multifaceted and complex to work with because knowledge is ever changing and the researcher is woven into the story telling process. Narrative inquiry runs the risk of misinterpreting data
through unconscious bias and unquestioned assumptions. Green, Camilil and Elmore (2006) identify that narrative inquirers have to work between two places. They risk being unethical if they neglect their participants and, if they write only for participants, they risk being unable to answer the questions: “Who cares and so what?” (p. 485).

Chase (2005) explains that what make people’s life experiences interesting may also produce narrative difficulties (p. 13). I could relate to this because I was facing the challenge of how to invite the young men in the interviews to articulate experiences that took place in altered states of consciousness and discover the conditions that would enable these young men to speak from the heart. The strength of narrative inquiry, according to Bruce (2008), is that researchers can name their position within the research rather than hide behind the guise of neutrality (p. 328). Narrative inquiry enables the researcher working from within an organisation to draw on the wealth of knowledge and experience to inform the research process.

Narrative inquiry provided a strategy to work with the subjective accounts of personal growth and empowerment and provided the young men and their families with a way to explore new meanings about their experiences in the process of the interview. The strategy provided a way for me to contemplate (hear, think, feel, intuit) their stories within a larger framework of stories: my own experiences written in the critically reflective journal and the stories from the wider world. The process enabled me to ask questions about deeper, more complex aspects of the programme, such as the relationship between sacred space and the stories of empowerment that I was hearing. Narrative inquiry gave me a method to explore writing stories from different perspectives as I was able to hear different versions of the same story as experienced by a mother, father and a young man. Removed from the position of attempting to state objective truths, the narratives, although different, created opportunities to interpret deeper meanings. The process of living, telling, retelling and reliving was insightful and helped me appreciate that stories enable humans to make coherences.
I was able to use narrative inquiry to maximize the strengths of inside knowledge of what takes place during the rites and rituals. Narrative inquiry values the authentic story in much the same way that telling one’s story is valued at Tracks. This resonance between Tracks and the interview process helped develop conditions that enabled interviewees to go deep into their experiences.

**Meditative Awareness, Critically Reflective Practice and Self-study Research**

Any form of insider research requires the researcher to be trustworthy and self-aware. The researcher needs to be aware of the impact of her/his actions on the participants and be able to discuss issues that affect perceptions and the social setting. Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton (2001) explain that the trustworthiness of the research is inherent in every stage of the research process. They consider the possibilities and obligations of reciprocity in terms of framing research questions, access and rapport, insider-outsider status, passionate participation, data production, data analysis, and authorizing accounts (p. 324). My thinking about myself as researcher has been affected by three approaches to understanding the self: meditation, critically reflective practice and self study research.

In this context, meditation refers to the training and development of awareness through observation of breathing. This has involved both the daily commitment and sustained periods of intensive non-conceptual inquiry. Formal meditation, involves the cultivation of awareness while sitting, walking, standing and lying. Informal practice refers to living in a state of continual inquiry and mindfulness of what is happening in the mind and body. Sustained periods refer to the intensive work that takes place at an established retreat centre, where qualified teachers guide initiates through prolonged (weeks, months and years) silent inquiry into the nature of mind. The practice involves the cultivating of conditions (silence) that allow a mind to turn back on itself: the consequence is a progressive apprehension of the nature of reality, an expansion of self to include all living systems. The modern interpretation of the Anapanasati Sutta has been developed Hearn (2005) and is the guide for meditative insight work.
Brookfield (1995) has provided me with reflective tools to uncover embedded assumptions and work towards the discovery of an authentic voice within the research through the analysis of autobiography, critical comments from colleagues and contact with theory. I used these tools to stay aware of the inconsistencies in my thinking, as a teacher, a learner and as a researcher. Reflection according to Lyons (2010) is an intentional act, a systematic enquiry of interrogating the learning situation. In the service of understanding a meaning that will shape action, it looks both backwards and in the future. It is likely to involve narrative because stories convey meaning (p. 387). These reflective tools, of which meditative inquiry is another facet, are essential to help manage the bias of insider research.

The self-study strategy involved a commitment to epistemological curiosity and the continued development of self-awareness. I used a self-study journal to record instances of learning and dilemmas concerning Tracks, learning about the research process and the concentrated efforts to know more about how living systems know from an experiential perspective. Ortlipp (2008) explains that using a reflective journal helped her to make her thoughts, experiences, and feelings transparent. Like Ortlipp, I found that the journal has revealed the movements between chaos and order. The messiness of the research process is visible, instances of tension, paradox and struggle are there for all to see and, as such, the attempts to present a neat and linear progression have been renounced.

These ways of thinking about research addressed concerns about bias, because I came to realise that the notion applies to forms of research where the researcher is objective. Instead, my need was to be authentic and self-critical and to check out my assumptions and ideas with other participants. I came to realise that my own journal was a source of data and that I needed to capture fleeting thoughts so that I could analyse my own writing and seek patterns and notice uncomfortable ideas and questions that I might overlook if I concentrated only on my enthusiasms. In combination the three themes of meditative awareness, theories about reflection and the use
of a self-study journal helped me remember that knowing is partial, incomplete and biased (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008, p.7). The implications of the three themes as a whole are that I have developed more tools to question and become acclimatized to the two worlds of conventional reality and ultimate reality. It has been very helpful to acknowledge both, the duality of a sense of self living in a world and equally have the reflective tools to acknowledge the non-dual experiences that resonate with the new sciences of evolutionary biology and quantum physics where there is a dissolution of separateness between knower and known. These experiences have enabled the development of new meanings in the service of understanding more about the therapeutic implications of transcendent experiences such as liminal space.

**Organic Inquiry**

Organic inquiry provides a framework for researching events that involve transformative experiences. While the three approaches discussed above have helped in clarifying some aspects of a holistic approach, organic inquiry is even more important because it not only uses an organic growth metaphor to describe the role of the researcher, it also calls on language that recognises holistic ways of knowing and being. Intuitive, spiritual, emotional elements of the self are not excluded or overlooked.

Organic inquiry is an approach that is especially meaningful for people and topics related to psycho-spiritual growth (Clements, 2004, p. 27). An organic inquiry approach encourages researchers be open to a variety of ways of knowing such as intuiting, sensing, feeling and thinking. Braud (1998) describes organic inquiry as a transpersonal approach to research where data can be treated by trans-rational, emotional, intuitive and bodily ways and adds: “Exploring one's data and topic in various states of consciousness, using imagery, noting mythic/archetypal content that the data might provoke in one's own experiences” (p. 7). Clements (2004) points out that organic inquiry has been influenced by the theories of analytic psychologist Carl Jung and anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner and “invites and incorporates archetypal experiences, both transcendent and immanent,
spontaneous and intentional, liminal and spiritual–experiences that are beyond ego.” (Clements, 2004, p.29).

Clements (2004) describes five characteristics of organic inquiry: sacred, personal, chthonic, related and transformative (p. 29-30). The sacred or “preparing the soil” involves digging up one’s old habits and expectations to cultivate a sacred fresh perspective. The personal or “planting the seed” suggests that the best topic for a researcher to pursue is one that has passionate meaning because it has been the occasion for the researcher’s own psycho-spiritual growth. The chthonic is where “the roots emerge” and is related to the assumption that the research process has an underground/unconscious life of its own because of its subjective and spiritual sources. The related or “growing the tree” refers to a process whereby the participants’ stories are like branches that join to and inform the trunk story of the research itself. The transformative or “harvesting the fruit” suggests that the fruits of organic inquiry are the transformative changes it offers for the participants, the researcher and the readers.

The ability to research liminal experiences requires specific research tools. Organic inquiry works well with narrative inquiry because they share the medium of using stories to interpret meaning. The organic inquirer, according to Braud in Clements (2003), seeks to communicate her or his understandings and findings through the use of stories—those of the researcher and of the research participants (p. 7-8).

The limitations of organic inquiry involve managing the potential for self-deception. To use the strategy requires a sustained commitment to critical self-awareness. Clements (2004) explains that “researchers must be able to determine the differences in the data between subjective and objective, spiritual and material, self and other. They must have healthy egos in order to step beyond them and equally strong intellects to assess the validity of the organic process as it progresses (p.28). Those who use organic inquiry must have worked on their own processes of psycho-spiritual development in a substantial way.
I have continually reflected on the metaphor for organic inquiry of the growing tree (Clements, 2004), to evolve the research process. Preparing the soil relates to the digging up of my assumptions, the commitment to epistemological inquiry and a willingness to descend into the chaos of not knowing, with the faith that new meanings and fresh perspectives would emerge. “Planting the seed” fitted with the opportunity that unfolded as I moved between Tracks and mainstream education. The question of what was happening at Tracks was the motivation for the study and it was connected to my psycho-spiritual growth. The “chthonic roots” involved the realization that the research process was taking place on many levels. In one instance I had a dream that invited me to learn to write with my feet. I interpreted that at a time of intellectual confusion to find ways of writing with a grounded awareness in my body. “The roots emerge,” reflected the process of analysis as I came face to face with the powerful stories being told. There was a sense that both this chapter and the discussion wrote themselves as I become more joined to the nested stories. The tree was growing and the stories were like branches that join to and inform the trunk story of the research itself. The “harvesting,” continues as I grapple with the implications and attempt to communicate them to others. I realise that the fruits are not only about the impacts of the Tracks programme, but they are also about the development of research procedures that offer fresh coherences with the changing structures of knowledge identified by Wheatley (1999) in Chapter One.

Organic inquiry provided me with a sense of confidence that I could engage with the research as an explorer. I learned it is useful to integrate the forms of knowing such as feelings, intuition and sensing with the intellect, under the careful eye of critical self study. These lenses helped me to develop an authentic interview process that enabled the participants to share their stories authentically. Organic inquiry provided the research with more ways to be involved with the data and in the process I have come to respect the potential this strategy has to create bias and coherence.
Methods – gathering and analysing the data, telling the stories and checking their validity

Sampling

The population of this study consists of six families. These were families who met the criteria outlined below and expressed a willingness to be involved in the research process. In order to maintain confidentiality, the Tracks organisation did not release the contact details of these families to me. Instead, I developed a set of criteria in consultation with the organisation. They then used those criteria to select the families they would invite to take part in the study. The criteria that were considered by the Tracks organisation in selecting who to invite included:

1) Families who lived at a reachable distance from Nelson to reduce travel costs
2) Adults who lived with the young men around the time that they had participated in Tracks and needed to have attended at least one event.
3) A range of young men of different ages who had completed their rites and returned in the role of a young leader.
4) Young men who had had different lengths of time to integrate the experience.

The families selected were sent an email from Tracks inviting them to take part. The email included the information about the research project (Appendix C) and the families were asked to contact me directly if they were willing to take part. Six of the families that were invited accepted the invitation and I interviewed the young man and one parent in each of those families. Each participant has been given a pseudonym within this thesis. Details of the young men and adults who were interviewed appear in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

This sampling strategy is appropriate because the aim of this research was to hear from people who have valued their experiences with Tracks. The sample includes people who have given time to the Tracks programme and who were willing to discuss their experiences.
Table 3.1 The young men who were interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of interview</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Month of Rite</th>
<th>Number of events attended at Tracks at the time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2011</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>April 2010</td>
<td>Rite + once as a young leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2011</td>
<td>Rory</td>
<td>April 2006</td>
<td>Rite + more than 4 times as a young leader and other Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Isra</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>Rite + twice as a young leader and other Tracks courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Bradley</td>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>Rite + twice as a young leader and other Tracks courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>October 2005</td>
<td>Rite + twice as a young leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Rite + once as a young leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 The mothers and fathers who were interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of interview</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Relationship to young man</th>
<th>Number of events attended at Tracks at the time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2011</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Son’s rite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2011</td>
<td>Harold</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Son’s rite + more than 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Son’s rite + more than 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Farewell and return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Son’s rite + once more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Farewell and return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Sources

The data gathered for this project included:

• Twelve interviews with young men and parents were recorded and transcribed.

• A conversation with Chime Shore was recorded and notes taken about his work with youth. (Appendix D) Shore works as a community developer with youth at risk in Perth Australia.

• A number of significant conversations that were recorded with the directors of Tracks and Mellissa Michaels, a director of a rite of passage event in America.

• A recorded group discussion that took place at Tracks as young men were invited to talk openly with older men about the challenges of growing up
as men in New Zealand. Although not planned, permission was obtained to record the discussion and I made notes about the findings (Appendix E).

- A reflective journal that includes notes about my thinking throughout the research process. It includes notes made from contact with theory, reflections as a facilitator working on the rite of passage, instances of dilemmas, conversations with leaders at Tracks to name a few.

![Figure 8 Screen shot of reflective journal entries.](image)

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Human Ethics Committee, reference HEC 2010/141. All participants were given assurances that their information would be treated as confidential and that they would be given pseudonyms.
At a deeper level, my primary ethical consideration was for the safety and wellbeing of the participants: I wondered how I going to keep adolescents safe when inviting them to articulate their potentially transformative experiences. As a leader within Tracks, I was a trusted person and even though I was focusing on the positive, I also wanted to hear stories of challenge and dilemma.

I was also concerned about my skill as an interviewer. I wanted to go deep into their experiences and to try to generate the conditions that would enable the stories to be told without interruption. I aspired to mirror the talking culture that happens at Tracks. As I discuss below, I aspired to engineer a process that was safe and as much as possible, transformative for both the participant and the researcher. The description of the interview process shows how my skill as an interviewer developed.

The Interview Process

The guiding theme for the interview process was curiosity in action. Paley (1986) in Clandinin (2007) explains curiosity in the way that it influenced my thinking. “When my intention was limited to announcing my own point of view, communication came to a halt my voice drowned out the children’s…I now wanted to hear the answers I could not myself invent…indeed the inventions tumbled out as if they simply had been waiting for me to stop talking and begin listening” (p. 263). The interviews became the realization of the emerging holistic research methodology described above. The process involved cycles of action and reflection and incorporation. Over a number of interviews a significant interview process emerged. The intention was to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and to manifest the conditions for an authentic story to appear.

An understanding of organic inquiry enabled me to prepare my mind and focus on the intention to allow the interview go where it needed to. The strategies enabled me to trust the process and let go of the fear of needing to have a specific outcome. Increasing self awareness enabled the process of thinking, intuiting, feeling and sensing into what was being said and how. The
development of self awareness through meditation helped to tune into the aliveness taking place in the interview, which affected positively what I would say and when. I discovered silences did not mean that a person had finished talking. Organic inquiry helped me to develop an authentic ritual to begin each interview that incorporated the Tracks talking stick. My experience of this is that is brought the participants into a much deeper space and helped to connect with their experiences at Tracks. An understanding of appreciative inquiry shaped the appreciative questions that enabled the participants to re-connect to their experiences. As a result everyone I interviewed told a story of personal transformation that also included instances of challenge and dilemma. Understanding of narrative inquiry gave me the tools to record the data in terms of a changing, personal story set in a specific time and place. This helped me to avoid making big claims about absolute truths as I knew that this is how people talk about these experiences at the time. Throughout the interview process I used critical self-reflection to notice and think about the effects of the decisions I was making. I developed a recursive design where I watched out for new discoveries and challenges and these then affected how I did things. The notes helped me to reach a position of being authentically responsive to the needs of each unique interview.

I used my journal to record how well the holistic research processes were working for this insider research. Knowing about organic inquiry enabled me to invite deeper issues of living into the conversations of deep personal meaning, soul, spirit, and the love a son and father have for each other pitched against the struggle to communicate clearly in a busy world. I realized I did not need to worry about what questions to ask or sticking to an order or a structure, because my role as an insider within the Tracks organization and the knowledge and skills that have been acquired over years of working in this way were the guide to knowing where the stories that matter might be found. Matthew, a father commented several times that he appreciated having an opportunity to reflect and talk about the implications of their Tracks experience. He explained how his upbringing had not encouraged
this kind of openhearted dialogue and yet it was something he wanted to be able to do more of in terms of relating with his son about important issues.

**Analysis of Data - Turning Transcripts into Stories**

I transcribed the twelve interviews, each of which lasted about one hour, in full. Next I listened to the stories on MP3 while reading the transcripts. Organic inquiry explains that sensing, feeling, thinking and intuiting are valid methods to hear the whole. “With each separate listening…one prepares to…observe feeling, intuition, sensation, or thinking in order to choose which words vividly re-create the experience of the participant” (Clements, 2004, p. 41).

Re-listening to the interviews gave me a sense of where the real impacts were according to the aliveness that was present. I could hear the changes in pitch, notice and feel the pauses where the person was experiencing deep emotion. I used my journal to reflect on my own experiences of the programme. This was the first learning cycle in terms of analysis.

At this point I was aware that the final two participant interviews, Julie’s and John’s had gone particularly well – they told holistic, authentic stories and I wondered if I could present them in their entirety in this thesis.

The research plan had been that I would seek out anecdotes that would illustrate the key ideas that emerged from the data. I began grouping the stories around any instances where participants described the impacts of the rite of passage. I found a number of stories were coherent with other conversations that had taken place in my role as a facilitator. I used the main research question as a reminder to be interested in all the impacts, and not just the ones that I was aware of, or thought were life enhancing.

I explored telling the story of the interviews according to the principles of narrative inquiry and began by identifying the anecdotes. I wrote the story of each anecdote, situated it in time and place, and identified my relationship to the participant. The process was chaotic, I got confused and overwhelmed
with the amount of data I had to deal with. There were so many impacts and so many possible causes. The final two interviews had flowed very well.

Having strongly suggested an intention to research using a holistic research method, I was uncomfortable breaking the interviews into pieces based on emerging themes. I wrote two full stories this way and noticed that, when I cut up the interviews into themes, the sense of wholeness was lost. These stories were powerful, they had integrity and the emotions of what was said could be experienced from shorter anecdotal narratives. I tried to write Julie’s story by focusing only on the utterly key pieces and reduced the interview from 25 pages to eight. In a second edit I worked on tidying the punctuation and condensing the interview to five pages that summarised the key points from Julie’s story in a continuous way.

I sent the narrated interview and the key words to Julie for her to comment on. This provided a means of guarding against misinterpretation and Julie has agreed that I may report her words in this thesis.

_I want to tell you how deeply moved I was to read your work – in fact I cried a lot. I have read your chapter again – in fact twice – and I am really happy with how you have portrayed and used what I said. It has been a moving and emotional process for me to read these words – and it has been an important part of letting go of yet another layer of grief. So thank you for that._ (Julie, March 2012).

The time from Julie’s interview to final participant check was over 12 months. Meantime I continued to grapple with trying to find the themes that might be emerging from the data. I set up a table that identified the data sources down the side of the page. I recorded the issues that were being talked about along the horizontal axis. I listened to all of the interviews again and recorded the impacts. Out of this table of issues and stories, I received a better sense of the emerging themes.

The final cycle of analysis used Julie’s five page story to establish key ideas and produce themes. I had found that the interview with Julie had been a peak
experience for me as a researcher. She had been open, intuitive and articulate about the impact of the Tracks rite of passage on her and her son. Her story would be the starting point of my findings chapter but I still grappled with how to move from that into an efficient way of telling the stories of all the other participants. Eventually I decided to gather the key ideas and themes from her story and call them findings. I then used these findings to report on the stories from the men who attended the rite of passage and look for further evidence and for gaps – Julie, after all, had seen only the departure and return of her son – she had seen no other ritual.

Throughout the process I used my knowledge as an insider within the organization as a way of identifying and seeking authenticity. Where ideas were novel to me I inquired further and sought more information and other perspectives from other people in the organisation.

Reviewing Findings by Participants March 2012

The final measure to guard against misinterpretation and bias involved sending out the draft findings chapter back to the participants for their comments. As with Julie’s story, I had edited their words so that their stories could emerge in coherent ways rather than as isolated phrases from an interview. Each interviewee received a copy of Chapter Four. The instructions were to alert me to any instances where they felt misrepresented and to share their comments about what had been written. New knowledge emerging from this cycle of reflection was added to the thesis. A copy of the letter sent to the participants to check the validity of the narrations is in Appendix F.

I heard back from four of the families. These participants were satisfied that the findings chapter that contained their stories was a true representation of the interview. A number of comments were made, the following two are from one of the young men and a father.

I’m cool with everything you said about me and the quotes you used. ... Some of it was a bit emotional to read, but I think you’ve done a great job (Jacob, March 2012).
Hi Jamie, congratulations! Wonderful, wonderful work – this is a big undertaking and I thank you for the love, appreciation and reverence you so obviously have for your data. I have read through the chapter several times, and each time brings more tears. Each time also brings new reflections, and I have jotted these down as they have emerged. (John, March 2012).

The final step came, not in analysis, but in editing. I needed to shorten my massive findings chapter into something concise enough, yet convincing enough, to serve the purposes of a thesis. John’s entire story has been omitted and only a few of the anecdotes from many of the participants appear in full.

Avoiding Bias and Becoming Trustworthy

Throughout the research process I have been aware of the need to reflect on my assumptions about the function of rite of passage work. A question I asked myself was: “What if I was not seeing the whole picture?” At this time an opportunity arose to interview Chime Shore. A wise elder and leader in education I interviewed him about the function of rites of passage. The data from the interview provided me with some reassurance that the analysis was making meaningful contributions to the topic and challenged me to think more critically about the support needed after the event. This interview provided an insightful “a ha” moment. Chime described that creative intelligent arts educate the core brain stem emotions. This idea provided new ways to investigate the impacts the Tracks rituals were having on the young men and their fathers.

The emerging methodology has caused my thinking to evolve in terms of holistic research. I came to realise that the notion of bias, which troubled me initially is neither relevant nor helpful in insider research. It is far more important to consider issues of trustworthiness and honesty on the part of the researcher. By talking about the emerging findings with your participants and other people who are knowledgeable about Tracks and the underpinning
theories that support the Tracks movement I have been able to produce a holistic description of some of the impacts of Tracks on the some of the people who have been influenced by it.

Figure 9 An elder speaking in the circle. This image is only included for the examiners as an example of the speaking circle, it will be removed before publishing.
Chapter Four - A Week in the Life of Tracks

Contemporary rites of passage programmes, like Pathways in Australia and Tracks in New Zealand, are attempts by communities of men to work with questions of how to help other men live fulfilling lives and how to help boys cross a vulnerable life transition safely into mature, independent manhood. Rites of passage as they are taking place in New Zealand are not copying indigenous cultural practices; rather, the knowledge from indigenous practices has been used to inform the development of a contemporary model, suitable to the context and culture of modern youth.

Men involved in the men’s movements in Australia, New Zealand and America have become aware of the need to re-invent rites of passage. Bowak (2008) describes that it is men’s work to confront boys with their freedom and invite them to become positive members of society, and to offer support as they face the inevitable responsibilities that come with that freedom (2008, p. 1). The primary purposes of the men’s work, “is to create rites and rituals to mark the transitions” (Bowak, 2008, p. 8). The primary task of the men’s movement “is to articulate and model mature, non violent, creative varieties of the masculine and make these visible and acceptable to the whole community” (ibid, p. 9). Bowak argues that western societies are on a threshold of being able to provide this learning consciously.

In a newsletter to the Tracks community Jim Horton, who is the director of Tracks in New Zealand, describes stumbling across the emergence of rites of passage from within the context of a men’s movement.

I wanted to know what went on in other men’s lives. Was it OK to have stories like I had? Some were dark and I suppressed them…. What was a good man, a good father? Like a drowning man I reached out to friends and I found and became passionately involved with men's events. Outdoors, round the fire, isolated, for a few days together – no women
or kids, no TV, no beer, no distractions. Just men and wilderness and space and time to talk and do what we might do. [Rites of passage are opportunities] to tell of the fun of being a man with so much energy and exuberance; the power and the fear and the amazing experience of being a good man or at least trying to be! Of the horror and the courage, the doubt and the pride. There is the uplifting feeling of creating, for a short time, a magical environment uninvaded by the mundane flat line of social put-downs, TV, harsh language, alcohol and laying aside everyday responsibilities; safe and held with determined confidentiality; and lots of fun and laughter, tears and emotions. In our travels we came across other men who wanted to re-member and hold initiation processes for boys. We discovered community groups that were doing it, had been doing it as part of their culture for hundreds, even thousands of years. Africans and American Indians, Australians and Polynesians. There was a deep and very old energy...to the work of the men involved in bringing through the next generation. It affected us on a primal, a genetic level. Somehow even the most urban city dwellers understood. Something deep down was re-membered and enlivened. On some level it feels very old and natural, men working with men towards a common shared goal – the growth and nurturing of good men. Men focused on outcomes beyond themselves – one of the most powerful forces for good on the planet.” (Horton, 2011, p.1) Appendix G.

The Tracks Rite of Passage Event
The Tracks programme runs for seven days, although the fathers and sons only participate in five. The first two days involve only people who have already attended a rites of passage event - the focus is on creating the team that will lead the event. Each of the seven days has a significant theme and these are:

- Day one Cultivating the Space
- Day two Blessing and Building
- Day three Welcoming and Severance
- Day four Building Community
Day five  Pushing Boundaries – Transition
Day six  Assimilation, Honouring & Celebration
Day seven  The Return.

Using my experiences as a volunteer facilitator I will explain what happens in the week. I use observations recorded in my reflective learning journal to provide narratives of some of the learning spaces.

Days One and Two – Cultivating the Space
The function of this time is to cultivate the connections and intentions for the event amongst the community of men who facilitate the event. This includes the young leaders who are young men who have completed their own rite of passage and are choosing to return in service as young leaders and elders, men typically over fifty who exhibit maturity and life experience.

One important activity that takes place is the request for a blessing. The group travels with permission from the local Iwi to Taupo Point. This is a significant place in Maori history. The function of the walk is to respect the multi-cultural nature of this land, to value the oral stories of the ancestors and to ask for a blessing for the event in the form of a karakia (or prayer).

After the walk the men divide into four home groups. Three of these will work with the new boys. Each group consists of a home group leader and a young leader for each new boy. The remaining home group comprises the elders and any other men who are in training to be elders or mentors. Men become mentors once they have completed an introductory weekend course prior to the event. The fathers will join the men’s home group. These home groups work together, sleep together and do many learning activities together over the week.

Day Three - Welcoming and Severance
The families arrive at a site away from the Tracks venue. Young leaders meet and greet the new boys and the families. At some point all the families and facilitators gather into a circle and are invited to sing and share in
acknowledgement of the separation that is about to happen. A ritual to mark the separation begins which serves to create a moment in time when the new boys can chose to leave their mothers and go with the men. The ritual provides an opportunity for a Tracks facilitator to talk with the mothers about the process of transition and changing roles that are taking place within the family.

**A ritual to mark the separation.** The warrior men come running, they circle the mothers and boys. The mothers have formed a protective circle around the new boys symbolising their role as carers. The banging drums slow and finally stop. The men gather and announce that, “It is time for the boys to come with the men!” “They are not ready,” a mother replies. “It's time!” the men say. With the boys are two young leaders, if it is not happening naturally they provide some encouragement to say, “Yes we are ready to join the men.” At a certain time the boys break through the circle of their mothers’ arms to join the men. The men with the boys head off in silence for a long walk to the camp. The fathers head to the camp in cars to begin their own process. (My Journal Notes, January 2011).

At this point in the programme the facilitation team has two functions. The role of the Trackers (young leaders) and home group leaders is to successfully lead the new boys on a five hour wilderness walk to arrive at the camp in darkness. Their journey will include many activities to help the boys to get to know one another, although nothing is said of where they are going and what awaits them. The other function involves the fathers. They are driven back to the venue with the directors to form the men’s group. On arrival they are briefed about the week ahead, the nature of the challenges and how it all works. The men including the fathers then begin their first ritual. Each man is invited to talk about such questions as: “What do fathers want or need? What was their relationship like with their father? What is the father shadow? What relationship do the fathers want with theirs sons and other young men? The fathers and men are then given the task of creating a ritual to welcome the boys back from their walk.

**Arriving at the camp.** As the group of boys and young leaders near the camp they hear the heart beat of a drum in the distance. They are asked to be silent. The fathers have crafted a ritual to welcome the boys, they meet the group with this ritual at the entrance of the camp. One by one
the boys are blindfolded and led to the main circle. No words are spoken till everyone is gathered in a circle. The boys, tired and trusting, are finally asked to take off their blindfolds. As they open their eyes they become aware of a large circle of men and a fire that is burning in the centre. There is silence as they adjust to the scene in front of them. As their eyes take in the faces of the thirty men or so, an elder stands, picks up the talking stick and addresses the new boys. “All of us... are gathered here for you...this is your time...take hold of it.” (My Journal Notes, January 2011).

Day Four - Building Community

This focus of this day is community building. The protocols of the talking circle are introduced as well as the various ritual tools that enable the oral culture to work. Similar to a marae, this is a place where real listening and authentic and organic speaking take place. The event takes place within the supportive presence of the natural earth and the myths (wisdom stories) that stir the contemplative aspects of the mind. Rituals are used to create sacred space. Examples of the rituals developed at Tracks include the use of silence; the singing of songs specific to the work happening at Tracks and the use of symbolic gestures like the piece of woven flax that symbolises the connection prior to the father son transition. Music, theatre and games are used to balance the deep inquiry spaces with spaces to have fun. The relationship between the sacred and profane is a fruitful union that leads to insight and self-discovery.

Archetypes

Each home group is given an archetype to explore. These capacities of consciousness are discussed by the men and the young leaders. The knowledge of archetypes is guided by the psychological work of Carl Jung and the four archetypes include the King, Warrior, Magician and Lover. They are offered as concepts to explore and they help the boys and the men become aware of the power of inner drives. Practical examples of these energies are explored through movies such as Star Wars and Lord of the Rings. Examples include the characters of Merlin and Yoda that represent mature magician energy. Gandhi or an All Black may represent warrior energy and so on. Each archetype has particular attributes. Each home group has to create a play that demonstrates both the light and shadow qualities of each energy. Throughout
the day, time is allocated to prepare the skit, which is a source of frustration, bonding and ultimately great fun as the young men share themselves and their understanding.

The archetypal performances foster deep play and develop trust. It is an incredible thing to be apart of the bonding that happens on this day. The same boys who hours earlier had trembled when they shared their first words in the sacred circle are now showing themselves in a glorious feast of colour and imagination. Some of their fathers explain that they were not aware of their son’s talents and I perceive that many of the boys had not seen their fathers making fun of themselves either. These experiences are powerful demonstrations of the trust that can be generated through the medium of deep play. As the connections go deeper through the fun, more trust develops that allows the learning to go deeper in the sacred space.

This day the boys also choose a mentor from the older men and each of the men, except the home group leaders and directors, offers himself as a mentor to one of the new boys (with the exception of his son) for the duration of the event.

Day Five - Pushing Boundaries – Transition

Day five involves a number of intensive rituals that lead to the initiation rite itself. The main phases of the day involve a relationship circle, mask making, the father and son transition and the main initiation.

The relationship circle carefully presents new boys with the real stories of men about growing up. The circle moves sequentially through the topics of masturbation; courtship; first girl friends; break ups; first sexual experiences; contraception/abortion; love, sexuality and relationships. Prior to the circle the young men and boys are given an opportunity to ask anonymous questions about anything related to the topic of sex, sexuality and relationships. These questions are used to facilitate the stories. The circle involves sharing appropriate experiences that relate to the topics mentioned above. This is an example of when the experience of the elders is used to monitor the
appropriateness of the stories being shared. The new boys are not allowed to share stories, their job is to listen. The relationship circle creates an opportunity for all ages and all kinds of experiences to be heard. Young men speak from the fresh perspectives of going through their puberty while older men share experiences from other perspectives. Here is an example of the kind of learning that can take place:

_The power of an authentic story._ An elderly man told his story about the challenges he went through in terms of his sexuality; he described through his life stages, his struggles to fit in and the eventual deep self-acceptance that emerged. The story was told with sincerity, with tears, hesitations, feelings. As a consequence it triggered emotions that I assume were felt by everyone. It appeared to me that everyone present was deeply affected. Reflecting on this story helped me to question the power of the authentic story to affect change at the level of personal values and beliefs. This man did not tell any boy or father in that circle what is right or wrong and yet I got the impression that some deep learning took place about prejudice and the problems with stereotypes. (My Journal Notes, October, 2010).

Following the relationship circle the fathers make plaster casts of the boys’ faces. This evening the boys will go through their initiation rite; the mask represents the last image of the boy and will become a gift for his mother at the return ceremony.

The father son transition is a significant ritual that takes place prior to the boy’s initiation. The function of the transition ritual is manifold and I have seen it used by fathers and sons to communicate the triumphs and/or the hidden struggles. It is an opportunity for fathers to become aware of their projections and bless their sons as changing, independent young men, and I have seen boys use the ritual to voice their deep down grief at a father’s absence.

The ritual involves both father and son being facilitated to talk from the heart in the witnessed, supportive company of the community. On a day marked with an atmosphere of challenge, this is an opportunity to give the boy the sense of support and validation he needs to succeed in his initiation rite.
The work happening here lies at the heart of the initiation process and relates directly to the findings of Lashlie’s (2005) work when she points out that a functioning father-son relationship is important for a man’s future relationships.

If he doesn't get the information he needs to begin putting the pieces of his life together he’ll just go on looking and he’ll be 55, with a string of broken relationships behind him, before he has any sense that the real issue is whether his father did or didn't love him. (Lashlie, 2005, p. 175.)

The issues that connect a father and son are complex. The following is a personal reflection on the importance of this ritual:

My father died was I was in my twenties. His cancer gave us time to talk together and heal the misunderstandings that had painfully caused a rift in my adolescence. The father son transition is an opportunity to communicate what is really going on between a father and son without the incentive of an impending illness. Studying thinkers like Carl Jung, working in schools with adolescents, and the reflecting on the times spent at Tracks observing this father and son ritual, leads to me to question the significance of the father and son relationship. It appears to me as one of the most significant determinants of health and well being for boys. Tracks presents the guided opportunity for fathers and sons to reconnect in helpful ways at difficult times. I have witnessed boys stand courageously in the abyss of grief at the absence of their fathers, they have been given the tools to voice this grief. In my reflections these learning situations carry an extraordinarily rare and healing potential (My Journal Notes, July, 2010)

The father son transition leads to the main initiation. In keeping with traditional rites of passage practices, the initiation is kept a secret. I am not going to write about it here except to say the ritual involves a significant psychological, emotional and physical challenge both for the boys and the fathers, although for different reasons. The fathers are not allowed to accompany the boys, they often describe the difficulty they face not being able to help their sons through the challenge. For some fathers this is tough, the elders and experienced men have been through this and offer the support of the men’s group both on that night and throughout the following days. The process is thoroughly debriefed the following day where a common story
describes fathers coming to terms with a need to change their relationship, not only with their sons, but with the instinctual drive that has helped them to protect and care for their children. They are invited to recognize a change in their relationship with their son, to acknowledge the son is getting older and requires an affirmation of his independence. The father transition in union with the main initiation signifies the beginning of a journey for the boy into manhood. It is up to the father and son to begin the redefining of responsibilities and freedom to acknowledge the son’s independence from his father and the family.

Day Six - Assimilation, Honouring and Celebration

The group respects a noble silence after the main initiation until the ritual is formally debriefed. The debrief provides a place to talk about what happened with people who have been through the experience.

The honouring circle is about creating a process to acknowledge and validate the gifts and strengths the men and young leaders see in the new young men. For the man receiving the honour, it is a chance to look into a mirror and see things they may not have been aware of about themselves. At the end of the honouring the young man is given an opportunity to make a witnessed intention. He may use a sword to cut away things that have held him back, or make a statement in the present tense of what it is he wants to bring forth in his life. A personal reflection on the honouring circle is as follows:

*It takes courage to stand up in front of a group of people and acknowledge a person’s gifts without planning. The process is undirected, non hierarchical and organic. I recall an instance where the director encouraged the men to speak from a place of heartfelt authenticity, unprepared and trusting that the words will emerge if there is a willingness to step up. The circle is about appreciation. One leader put it this way, “This is how we change the world.” Perhaps this is why it is challenging for a lot of men? It is much easier to see the faults in a person as opposed to seeing and then telling them about their gifts.* (My Journal Notes, January, 2011)

The day closes with a celebration and performance night where everyone is encouraged to take part. The time is special because of the work that has been
done. The men have been to deep places in themselves. There is a sense of celebration and support. The performance is about sharing, in an intergenerational way, the gifts men have.

**Day Seven - The Return**

The final day involves a visioning exercise and the ritual return of the new boys to the community and their families. The visioning circle involves the group being guided through a process of speaking their intentions. They have the opportunity to craft a vision of their future life. After the speaking, the group is given time to record their vision. These are collected and posted to the young men after the event as a reminder.

The return ceremony represents the final stage of the rite of passage called *incorporation*, Gennep (1960). It involves the entire community; siblings, mothers, grandparents, friends gather to welcome back the new young men and acknowledge the change. The return is the opportunity for the whole community, but especially the family system to integrate through seeing, hearing and feeling what has taken place for the young men.

The ceremony involves the new young men speaking to his family and wider community about what he has found at Tracks. It is an emotional time for families because, commonly, the intensity of the journey is revealed in the speaking. Before crossing the threshold that symbolises their return, each of the family members is given the opportunity to speak. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the change. The event is closed when all of the men return to the community.

In this chapter I have used my knowledge as an insider working as a volunteer within the Tracks rite of passage to describe and reflect on the seven days.
Figure 10 A mentor chosen by the boy makes a plaster cast of his face before his initiation. The mentor has given permission for the image to be used.
Chapter Five - Themes emerge

This chapter presents an analysis of the story of a mother (Julie) whose son attended Tracks. The second part explores the men’s stories – the stories of the fathers and sons who participated in the rituals and the talking circles. In the process of meeting the requirements of the word limit, the stories from the boys and men had to be summarized. This has been difficult to do because these stories describe transformational experiences that need to be heard.

This chapter weaves together Julie’s story of the impacts of the Tracks experience with my own thinking as I interviewed her and, later, when I worked with her story. Reed (2007) explains that appreciative research designs often develop organically. Thus it is difficult to show the type of “knowledgeable planning” that would demonstrate methodological competence (Reed, 2007, p. 17). The story is told in a layered way that is in harmony with the nature of living systems.

Julie’s story is about how Tracks impacted on both her son (Jacob) and herself. As I listened to the story I tried to understand what had worked well for her and Jacob. The interview with Julie had a big impact on me. It encapsulated the kinds of stories I had been hearing over the years as I worked in Tracks and which were emblematic of all of the other interviews. As I worked with her words I became aware that I was calling on all of the four research approaches discussed in Chapter 4. I had the experience that the strategies I had been working with came together as a living interview process.

As I worked with the data and wrote the paragraphs of Julie’s story, keywords and ideas emerged and it will be shown at the end of this section how key words and ideas guided the findings toward themes that are the findings from this research.
Part One- Julie’s story.

Julie came across to me as being intuitive and articulate. At the time of the interview she was in her mid-fifties and worked in early childhood education. She had had experience of working with groups, had introduced a nationally recognised approach to home-based childcare and was deeply linked to Steiner education. It is clear from the depth of insight in Julie’s story that she is not a typical parent as her life experience, her concern for her son and her understanding of education have given her an understanding of the nature of the Tracks programme.

Julie’s son, Jacob, went through the Tracks programme in 2009-2010. In September 2009 he attended his first Tracks retreat, the rite of passage. I met him in January 2010 when I was a facilitator and he returned to Tracks as a young leader. I met Julie for the first time when I interviewed her in her Christchurch house in May 2011.

i) The Background and Hearing about Tracks

I began the interview by asking questions about Jacob’s background and how he came to go to Tracks. The story that follows is a summary of the material from the interview. Julie has read it and agreed that it is a fair representation of her words.

Julie: My son and I live here together. This is my mother’s house - we moved here just over 2 years ago when my husband was ill. He’d been diagnosed and had had an operation for cancer in the March of 2009. It has been very much a holding place: it feels like a place Jacob and I will be in for the next few years until we move on and out into our lives. My husband died here - he died in this room. So I guess it holds all of that for me, but very much for my son because he was there, right there. So you know that’s a big part of his story.

Julie: My son was having a difficult time at school: “School sucked.” He was grieving, feeling very isolated, because of this enormous thing that had happened to him. It was never talked about - he had this huge thing that was going on - there was no place for it. The health teacher at school spoke to me saying that he
saw so much strength in [Jacob], asking the question, “How can we help him find it? Have you thought about the Tracks programme?”

**Key words/Ideas:** Grief; challenges at school; lack of support; seeing potential in the youth; teacher’s role; youth isolation/loneliness; mother’s worry.

**ii) Arriving at the Welcoming Ceremony**

As Julie began to tell the story I felt as if she was reliving the experience at Totaranui. I focused my attention on listening with an open awareness to all modes of knowing such as feeling, sensing, and intuiting. The welcome and separation is a big event for the mothers. Everyone is invited; parents, caregivers, grandparents, siblings and community members may join the farewell to the boys who are undertaking their rite of passage. The fathers come on the rite of passage but the mothers do not. The mothers are asked to attend the separation and return to welcome their young men back to the community at the end. The atmosphere is charged, something is going to happen but no one knows exactly what. After sharing some food, games and introductions the whole community gathers into a circle. A karakia and song are offered for the journey and then the ritual separation occurs.

*Julie:* I was the only mum there to send them off, which I was amazed about. I can really understand that people have jobs and that, but I would just shut up shop. There was no way that I was not going to be there. And he really wanted me to be there.

*So to watch him go off, oh man, I was just weeping....It was really interesting. I didn’t feel like I could ask any of the men in my whanau to go with him - they are really loving, but they don’t speak this kind of language. I asked my brother-in-law in Nelson to write something, a letter and a gift from a male figure within the family. He really took it to heart. He spoke with another brother-in-law - they asked the question, “What did it mean?” He really thought about it. I was really touched by that, and he came with me to Totaranui, the sending off.*
Keywords/Ideas: Absent mothers; strong emotions of letting go; men in her whanau who do not speak the language – caring and keen to learn - but ignorant of the things Julie understands; the importance placed on having a connection with a male figure in the family.

iii) Experiencing the Separation

As Julie retells the story I was totally present. Julie was speaking with the Tracks talking stick. I could feel her relief as she spoke about Jacob breaking free and going with the men. The interview highlighted a feature of organic inquiry to work with the spiritual sources beyond the ego (Clements, 2004, p. 29). The talking stick is a symbol used in the rituals at Tracks, for some it creates the conditions to speak in a deeper, more authentic way.

From Julie’s perspective, the entrance of the warriors would have been a surprise.

Julie: *There were a couple of woman who had done this before, they were saying, “No they are not ready,” but actually I was not feeling that. I could totally understand what the ritual was about, but I didn’t feel that. I SO [emphasis in the speech] wanted him to go. Do you know what I mean? Because I just knew that was just what he needed to do. So we are here and the boys are there. My son was the first to say, “Oh damn it, or oh fuck it….let’s go.” And he pushed through the arms of the mothers, that were not exactly that tight and my heart just sang. I just thought YES. And so off they went, around the corner. He turned around one last look - that was big for him - letting go into something so unknown in such a time when he was still pretty raw and vulnerable, it was huge. It was huge for both of us, although it was so totally right, but I was really moved - yep. I had such a strong sense of those men - the team of men - there was just such an obvious sense of heart. Strong men, gutsy men with heart - my heart sings with it, because that is what manhood is. Yeah, so he went.*

Keywords/Ideas: A mother ready to trust her son and the men; a mother who knows her son needs to go but it is hard; breaking free, a son is letting go and
stepping into the unknown despite his vulnerability; the men are strong gutsy men with heart.

iv) The Return

Julie took a pause and returned to the story in a softer voice. She told me how things were at the return ceremony. As she told the story, it was clear to me, that her feelings of relief were very strong. It was as though she was reliving the emotional experience by retelling it. The return ritual is an emotional time for the mothers. The men arrive singing their song and one by one, each mother is invited to stand at the threshold across from her son in front of the community.

Julie: I was feeling curious about how it had gone for him. I was there to really welcome him back - aware that even though I didn’t know what Tracks was about. I’ve done enough circles and experienced sacred spaces during the last 30 years. I could imagine the kind of powerful places that he might have been…The young men lined up, the men at the back. I can’t recall the order, but when it was his turn and I stood up on this side of the threshold, I just looked at him and I just knew that whatever had happened was huge. He just looked at me and he said, “This has been the most awesome experience of my life.” I think he used, of my life! And I was just weeping quietly. The person who touched me most was his mentor, the older man. I was just blown away by what he said. He said, “This young man has taught us all, his courage, his ability to go places in himself, his willingness to be challenged, his quiet leadership and his huge compassion.” I was just blown away. It was not that I did not know about these things in him, it was that other people could see them. My son as a child was very intuitive and quite sensitive - not that he didn’t like rough and tumble. He had an ability to think profoundly - perhaps this is a legacy from his father, but it is also him. I was really very moved, touched and relieved. Really that is the feeling I have most of all. Relief he has found a place where he is totally seen and totally accepted - and totally challenged, and, actually to be more than he currently is. That the best that any of us can hope for as humans. And I can’t give him that because I am a woman and I’m his mum.
**Keywords/Ideas:** Sacred spaces are powerful places; the most awesome experience of his life; moved and very relieved; relief that he had found a place to be really seen, challenged and inspired; recognition that as a mother she could not give him this.

v) Relief to Connect

Julie began reflecting on the impacts and the event, it was as if she was working out a theory as she spoke. The interview process gave Julie the opportunity to construct new meaning about what had happened. Julie refers to Jacob’s thirst for something he did not know he was thirsty for. Her words helped me to understand more about the impact of Tracks in terms of giving boys and the men, the opportunity to make meaning.

This section of the interview provided a context to reflect further on the possible interpretations of terms like heart, soul, sacredness and spirituality. Julie described the importance of these qualities. She provoked an interest to question further the importance of the father son relationship, whether the father is in the young man’s life or not.

Julie: *The other thing in terms of relief; I have a hunch that he also experienced relief. It was almost as if he didn’t know what he was yearning for until he had experienced it. The kind of connection he has had on his rites and subsequent times is the kind of soul heart connection he had with his dad - that is who his father was. It was almost as if he was…[struggling to find the words] a connection he had with his father but it had been unconscious, because it was just a part of how we were and how his father was. Going to Tracks he became conscious of it, it seemed like he was drinking in something that he didn’t even know he had a thirst for, but having had it, he realized he was thirsty. Does that make sense?*

Julie: *I think that the experiences that my son has had in Tracks have had a profound influence on him - I see it in all sorts of ways...I think they have helped him around strong feelings and anger...I think the other thing I love*
about Tracks is that my son has got secrets from me, and I totally respect that. I think it’s really, really important. He has had experiences that I haven’t had with him and that and I applaud that - that is part of him individuating from me, and for him to begin to be his own person. He really has to have those differences.

Keywords/Ideas: Unknown yearning; soul heart connection; relationships to the father; feeding the hunger; helped with strong feelings and anger; individuation involves separation from the mother.

vi) The Challenges of Integration
The integration of the four research strategies created opportunities to investigate moments of challenge and dilemma arising during or after the event. In Chapter One Wheatley (1998) refers to the value of chaos as opportunities that can lead to new understandings (p. 61). I wanted to inquire appreciatively but be open to the instances of struggle, both my own and those that may have been experienced by the participants.

Julie reflects about the coming home with her son after his transformational week at Tracks.

Julie: I think one of the things that is difficult - I don’t think it is such a criticism of Tracks - is that I think the transition back into ordinary life is really, really tough. And I see he would almost like to be in that place all the time, as indeed I’m sure a lot of people would, and that’s actually not possible. He knows it is not that many months before he can go again and yet there is a stark contrast with the kinds of connections he has in those areas of school. It is wonderful that his friend has been, but then they don’t hang out a lot together out of school. I think my reading of it is that it has made a huge difference to my son because it is like someone knows him and has really seen him and really understands him and somehow that makes… [Missing words]. My son is at the Steiner school so one would hope that, [sigh], there was more awareness, but I don’t think the culture in his class - especially among the young men is that conducive to a true kind of seeing each other. Whether that will change I don’t know, I hope it is…
Julie: …There was a long time when Jacob hated the alarm clock. Well, he still hates the alarm clock, and he said, “Why don’t you wake me up because it’s a much gentler way to wake up?” And I went along with that for a while, but after the rites, I think that was one of the things that he said, “Actually as a young man I need to actually do that differently, and actually a young man wouldn’t have his mother waking him up, a young man would take the responsibility of waking himself up.” That kind of phrase, a boy might do that but a young man would do this. I was rapt to hear that. Yes! [laughs]

Julie: That would be my only feedback. Is it possible to find some way of continuing the contact after more strongly? People do not maintain change unless they have on-going support…I just think that it can be lonely I think, having glimpsed something that is so magical and so warm and so real and gutsy, to then come back, I think that is tough, I think it’s really, really tough.

**Keywords/Ideas:** Really tough transition/integration back home; stark contrast in the different cultures; school not conducive to the real kind of seeing each other; attempts to integrate the change, to take responsibility as a man; how can there be on going support? It is really, really tough.

vii) Big Picture: Thinking about Transition and the Place of Ritual

In the interview Julie talked about the problems of educating boys to become men. She uses the term “bridge to manhood,” a metaphor Lashlie (2005) developed to express her idea that there is a transitional process that needs to happen.

In this section of the interview Julie explored the value of inner wisdom. She shared a definition of ritual as a holistic teaching tool that can connect people to the bigger cycles of life and with the wonder that children have but adults lose.

Julie: I think rites of passage are absolutely crucial…I think there is an African saying that if you don’t initiate the young men, they will burn the
village down. I'm sure that that is so. I'm sure that is what is happening for so many young men out there who aren't encouraged to cross that bridge to manhood in a positive way - that they have to find really dangerous adrenalin filled ways of doing it that are potentially really, really damaging for them and other people. So I think it's really, really important. I actually think it's more important for young men than young women, I don't know why I think that. I think a lot of young men are really lost, that is the sense I had. So no, I think it's crucial. I think it would be wonderful if it was more widely available. It is a long way to go to Golden Bay and a lot of people wouldn't do that, and on the other hand, it is partially being in such an amazing place that makes it magical - so I am sure there are other places that you could find up in the Mountains, or down in Central Otago or Wanaka.

Julie: I think people are hungry actually for things that reconnect us - you know with the earth and with the seasons and with those big cycles which actually connect us with mystery - because we don't understand how the seasons - even though we don't understand them, with our pea brains as I call them, but we do understand them - or we can connect to them with our hearts and our heart intelligence which is different from our brain intelligence. Ritual is actually a tool to bring more beauty into the world: it is a tool to reconnect people with something bigger than themselves, which is non-material. So it is to reconnect people with that sense of awe and wonder, which little children have naturally but which most children have lost a huge amount of by the time they are teenagers, because of the way our society works, and most adults have lost it...

Julie: …The sacred space that is created - actually has to come from the sacred space within the person who is holding it...I'm sure my guess it's about the sacred space that [the lead facilitators] and the rest of the core scene actually hold the sense of community and connectedness...that then creates the vessel for the young men to be able to step into and experience something different. I don't think religion for most people - the church numbers continue to drop - I think for most people it doesn't meet that need anymore.
**Key words/Ideas:** Rites of passage are crucial; there is a bridge to manhood; consequences of not understanding transition are serious for boys and others; it’s a problem that Tracks is only in one place; modern people hunger to connect to the bigger cycles if the earth; importance of ritual is its ability to connect; sacred space relates to the sacred space within the individual or community; religion for most people does not meet the modern needs for connection.

viii) Offering Support for Other Mothers

Julie explained how hard the challenge must be for some mothers:

Julie: *I have also been challenged - needing to let go of control and we have had conflicts about that and we continue to...I have been challenged to truly let him go and for him to do or not do what is expected of him and for him to have the consequences and me not to try to protect him from that or whatever. But we also, the two of us, are living as a family and there are some things that we need to figure out how to work together.*

Julie: *I don’t think this is to do with Tracks but I don’t tend to see him as grabbing hold of his future in terms of his education and that’s partially his age...And so I have a sense that I’d like to live to be an old woman, but you know, who knows? You know I could also die. Some of my sense of wanting to really encourage my son is needing him to get to a place in his life where he can really cope.*

Julie: *An observation that I’d record for the tape...if this is the impression of a well integrated, mature woman, saying at times she struggled to embrace the change is that I wonder if there is work to be done for other mothers, you know, perhaps who have not had such a rich education and how hard it...I am just giving an insight into the potential that it’s quite skilful. It’s quite hard to separate and embrace the change. I wonder [about] how other mothers who haven’t had such an opportunity to have [an] education will be getting on with this thing, this peak experience, and the boy - the young man comes back.*
Julie: Perhaps there might be a place for somebody, for a woman who has had a son through Tracks to almost offer a support for the moms? I mean - without any thought about it, I’d be quite happy to have half a dozen people that it was my job to ring up every couple of months and say, “How are you doing? How is it going? What have you noticed? What are the good things, and how can I help?”

Julie: Without some form of nurturing and supporting of the change, both in the young man and in the family, it is almost that Tracks could become like a drug: like you go and get this high and then you come back and you yearn for the next time and you go back. And on one level, there are good drugs and not good drugs - this would come in the good drugs…but it is still kind of like that, and then there is this gradual drifting off and then there is the next time and I don’t know, perhaps that is just how it is, perhaps that is just how life is.

**Keywords/Ideas:** The challenge of letting go of the boy; if an integrated woman finds the return hard, how is it for other mothers? An offer of support; the challenge of integration.

**ix) The Father Son Relationship**

The way Julie spoke convinced me that she was concerned about how Tracks had handled Jacob’s relationship with his father. The father son transition is a major ritual that takes place at Tracks. In the situation when the father is absent, the boy chooses another to represent the missing father. This ritual is an opportunity to speak from the heart.

Julie: From the little he has said, it seems that it’s given him a framework to honour his relationship with his dad. He has also expressed to me that he has expressed some of the real grief and anger and sadness around him dying. I remember asking him, I think it might have been after the January rites when he was at Tracks for the first time and saying to him after this, I think I said something like, “Your dad would be so proud of you.” And he looked at me and said, “I know mom.” “And do the men on Tracks say that to you that your father would be really proud?” Because that felt to me as though - on one level - like I would hoping that that would be because you [referring to Jamie the interviewer]
and facilitator] and the other men are in loco parentis for those young men who don’t have their fathers there, and he said, “Yes they do.” I was so rapt that those links, that the links with his father were honoured and respected and strengthened by not just my son but other people on Tracks. So I think it’s had … [unfinished answer] I can’t see that it has on any level had a neutral or negative effect on his relationship with his dad. He was the only one on his rites on September of last year whose father wasn’t there. So my sense is that yeah, very strongly that the Tracks experience has given him a vehicle to stay very connected with his father in terms of, not only the person, but what he represents and symbolises.

Julie: I don’t know what you are going to do with all this - if you are going to transcribe it or whatever, but I’d be really happy if in terms of any of the pieces that you have pulled out, that I’ve said, that they are you know written, and I’m happy to put my name to them - if they’d be at all useful for Tracks to used as a testimonial for a mother.

Keywords/Ideas: A framework to honour his father; able to express his grief and anger; men who step up into mentor roles; a vehicle to connect with not only the father but what he represents; permission to share this story of a mother.

Key Ideas Arising out of Julie’s Story
The key ideas that emerged from the analysis described in the first part of this chapter were that from Julie’s perspective

• Grief and loss are unavoidable realities of growing up. Adolescence is a stage of life that reveals this harsh reality. Julie’s story revealed this grief and her relief that there was a place where her son could be seen and challenged to be more than he is.

• Young people are hungry for real connection and authentic dialogue in the process of creating new understanding. The hunger could be explored as an innate drive with the maturing organism to expand its awareness.

• Julie (and perhaps other mothers) was worried that there would be no men available and skilled to take her son on to the bridge of manhood. She is
relieved to discover a skilful process and strong gutsy men. She acknowledges she could not provide this knowledge for her son.

- Fathers and other men are important in the lives of boys. As elders, mentors and fathers, they are essential to Tracks to facilitate a psychological transition into manhood.
- The father son transition ritual has a big impact on the boys and the fathers if they are there.
- Rituals that create sacred space are important tools that connect people with the bigger picture of living cycles and deeper parts of themselves.
- There are more ways of knowing than intellect; there is soul/heart knowledge. Not everyone speaks this language.
- Tracks is a place that accepted Jacob exactly as he was and challenged him to become a better young man.
- The transition back to home is very tough and there is a need for more support.
- The Tracks rites of passage event is one way of crossing the bridge to manhood.
- The presence of the extended family system and community play an essential role in acknowledging and adjusting to the changes that have taken place for the young men.

As I worked on Julie’s data I also worked on the data from the men. As I noticed the key ideas emerging from Julie’s story I was able to develop six themes, which I used to orientate myself with the data provided by the interviews with the fathers and sons who attended the event. The themes are;

1) Father son Transition
2) Impacts of the rites of passage
3) A Culture of Appreciation
4) Depth and sacred spaces - The function of ritual and other Tracks’ processes
5) Integration back home
6) Mothers’ relief

My analysis of Julie’s interview provides a way of interpreting the rest of the
interviews. Julie’s interview was not able to contribute directly to a number of the themes because, as a woman, she was excluded from the rites of passage rituals and processes that only males can attend. I discuss the six themes with a focus on the voices of the fathers and sons.

Part Two - the Stories from the Other Parents

x) Father Son Transition.
Fathers describe the separation as a powerful ritual that enabled them to speak honestly about important things with their sons. It is an example of a process that develops the heart’s intelligence to shift and redefine the father son relationship.

“It’s an opportunity for both parties, the father and son to speak to each other in a way that they would like to speak and probably in a way that they have always wanted to speak. That may be good or bad….it was about honouring his growing manliness, his maturity, his vision. It is about acknowledging love and for me it’s about letting him go into the world, separating, standing on his own feet….The transition is very powerful. As a result of it, he and I have become closer, as equals. I have wisdom in my age but he also has talent, and youth. (Harold, February 2011).

In the absence of a father, the ritual provides an opportunity for a boy to explore his feelings about his father.

I was really nervous because my dad wasn’t there….I asked my mentor to stand for my father. When the time to speak came my pre-practice speech totally fell apart… I can’t remember what I said, but I think it basically amounted to “I love you Dad”. It’s very easy to just go on and live your life and not realize how much grief there is inside. And that was kind of a trigger for a lot of it to come out, it was painful but it was good. I can’t imagine any circumstance where I would have had that opportunity to let that out and to have as much time as I needed and to have so many people there to hold that space…if I hadn’t had
that opportunity to let out that first huge wave of sadness then it would have gone that way. I probably would be going slightly off the rails. (Jacob, May 2011).

The ritual creates rare opportunities for the heart to speak. The communication is about issues that lie under the surface between a father and a son. Handled skilfully they can lead to deeper appreciation of each other.

*I don’t think he probably would have said these things another time in his life because the whole context was such that it took you to this place where you spoke from your heart. The things he said to me were the greatest gifts of my life. [Voice breaking] It is difficult to explain how deeply it touches, right to my soul as a father…. As a father I underestimated him. I can’t think of another opportunity since then, out of that ritual and out of that sacred space where he would have said those things to me, possibly on my death bed maybe, and I suspect a lot of these things don’t get said.* (John, May 2011).

Rites of passage create opportunities for fathers to validate their sons. The ritual creates a safe and supportive place for a son to tell his father about his independence.

*I think it’s been hugely important for the guys being able to tell their dads that they want to be their own person because I think quite often they’ve sort of felt like that but not been able to say anything…. New Zealand culture does not encourage men to show emotions ….It can be quite a painful thing to see that your dad has flaws, because you want him to be the greatest. Lots of the fathers have said that it was actually the hardest thing they’ve ever done…. they still really want to look after them [sons] and protect them from harm, which is really a kind of a clash with the wants of the son quite often.* (Bradley, May 2011).
xi) Impacts of the Rites of Passage

The rite of passage has helped young men to make good decisions because they feel more in touch with who they are.

*Both my sons* are more their own people, they aren’t so easily swayed by their peers, they are making conscious choices. I see them as being better equipped to handle what comes up in their lives because they have got a stronger sense of their self-worth. (David, May 2011).

The young men described states of being that resemble Lashlie’s (2005) description of emotional confidence. A consequence of knowing themselves better results in an ability to resist pressure to fit in and the development of altruistic awareness.

*I feel much more myself, I feel I am able to come into who I really am and not what other people want me to be…there have been changes in my relationship with mum, we have more respect for each other now.* (Jacob, May 2011).

Bradley spoke with an expanded awareness of his sense of self. He gives a voice to the initiation process.

*The initiation we do here at Tracks is about pushing, finding the limit of the boy in me, and then going further. When I feel challenged it’s the boy inside me just can’t make it, and I just go through and it burns away all the smaller parts and just leaves the man. I think the learning that most boys take away with it is that they can challenge themselves, that they can pass challenges. I think it’s something that most young men are very keen to find out and is expressed in not always the best ways, the attempts to find your limits. I think for me, one of the things it made me feel was just a sense of oneness or connection… I think it’s made me believe in the magic of the world… It’s really affected me in*
the way that I see every tree, every plant now as part of the big spirit. I’ve always been around nature, the stuff that you wear gumboots to keep out....I think [Tracks] made me have more respect for the natural environment. I’m less likely to discard it. After the main ritual, that’s really one of the few times I’ve felt something in my chest and thought this is tapping into something really old and powerful, not really knowing what it is, but being comfortable with not knowing. So I think that it’s increased my belief in spirituality....I felt like this isn’t just my imagination, it’s actually having and actually feeling it, not just thinking it. (Bradley, May 2011).

Numerous accounts were made by the young men about the development of leadership skills as a consequence of being in service to the new boys. They explained the benefits of being treated like equals with the other men. There is not enough space to share the stories that show these outcomes.

Andrea’s words summarise the impact of the rite of passage:

[Tracks] inspire[s] these young men to recognise that there is something deeper, rich about life, that there is a group of people men who will support them, in so many ways. Every boy and every young girl could go through something like that would give them meaning and make them feel good about themselves. I would like to see it not negotiable, for the health of the child, for the health of the community, for the health of the world really, when you go through it, it just opens you up to this other stuff. (Andrea, May 2011).

xii) The Impacts of a Culture of Appreciation and Support
Change for the better can be explored in terms of the development of a culture of honouring and appreciation. David, a father, explains that the focus at Tracks is on bringing out the positive qualities of people.

What I have found, and still find, is that it is a challenge for me to focus on the positive things and to say what I see is positive in someone else. And when that was done to me, that helped me to
embody some of those positive qualities rather than the negative ones. So it has really been a quite personal growth journey for me. (David, May 2011).

The honouring circle develops an appreciative learning environment. Honouring is about being seen for who you are. The honouring has a lot more to do with who you are rather what you just did....It’s a lot different from what you get outside Tracks. (Matthew, February 2011).

The theme of appreciation was reflected in all of the stories the men told.

xiii) Depth and Sacred Spaces - The Function of Ritual and other Tracks Processes

This theme explores the power of ritual to create sacred space. Rituals create the conditions that enable participants to reflect deeply about themselves, others and the nature of the world. They are opportunities to intuit, feel, sense and think in terms of the whole. They value the light and the shadow, the stories about struggle and strength.

[Sacred space is] a place where participants are able to look into themselves, in a supportive way... to find the truth within themselves, as far as possible and to speak it in a witnessed way.... Sacred place is a really good place to explore shadow, [these are] areas of difficulty that come up, so this place brings all that. [It’s] the joy as well, the music, the laughter...the blokes pushing against each other, playing ball and taking risks together, it’s like boys’ camp really, but this has got another dimension that it is really important, it’s sacred.... There you can just be yourself, absolutely, fully, without fear...I think a lot of the corporate world is completely disassociated from its spiritual connection and the needs of boys growing up are completely disassociated...it’s hard to explain it, how do you explain sacred to people who have no experience of it? (Harold, May 2011).

Sacred space enables fathers to go to difficult places within themselves.
It speaks of something that is very deep. In my life, from my perspective, things that lie deep stay there; they don’t get brought to the surface, only at emotional times, funeral, or a birth…. Whenever I start feeling negative the barriers come up and that whole thing stops being thought about (Matthew, February 2011).

The relationship between the scared and profane is an important movement that affects the young men.

When you’re sitting round the fire circle everything people say seems more meaningful…I think it’s the way that the rituals are held, there’s a referencing back to all these ancient rites with the singing and other languages and stuff (Bradley, May 2011). There is also lots of laughter. Performance night was an absolute riot. Just completely and utterly outrageous [Laughter]. [Trevor] had his bagpipes and all the boys were up dancing up around in a circle, yahooing and carrying on… just total joy and abandonment and celebration. (John, May 2011).

The rituals create environments where sensitive issues can be talked about.

There are some things I wouldn’t feel comfortable asking mum, more personalized questions rather than generalized questions - so I found that being able to ask that group of men who would then, would not just answer the question but share their own stories around it, I found that an amazing experience…. There was definitely no bragging about sex stories; it was really a sharing of information for the young men…. I’m not sure how I compare with my friends for example, from the way they talk, it is pretty clear they have absolutely no respect for the feminine. They talk about porn, disrespectful put downs that are all based on feminine terms that have now come to be negative insults. I found it amazing that going there I had a real feeling of love and respect for women in that circle, just hearing some of the stories of men talking about love and respect…. Being with my peer group is just
a totally different world and so hearing those stories, allowed me to realize that I am not the only one who thinks this way, and it is actually, a much better way to think. (Jacob, May 2011).

Stories teach the whole being because they evoke emotional responses.

I reckon the Tracks one’s a practical education where you’re actually learning about yourself and about other people not in a teaching way though…. The stories help. You hear lots of stories of people’s experiences, at school they go; “Hey, don’t do drugs, don’t do this, don’t do that!” … at Tracks it’s like I did this, and this is what happened…. Everyone learns differently from it because they’re not telling you how to learn. (Isra, May 2011).

xiv) Integration Back Home

The interviewees found that participants experience difficulties integrating back home after the week at Tracks.

I have found it difficult. Once I just came home, went on the computer, and kind of slipped back into my life and went to school, it all just slipped away. Compared to Tracks, being in the normal world doesn’t quite cut it…. I often make all these goals and intentions but find it very hard to stick to them…. So yes I’ve made changes but a lot of the ones I’ve intended to make didn’t happen. (Jacob, May 2011).

Young men experience difficulty coming home because they have changed and that is isolating.

I remember coming back from one – my first one – and not really knowing how I could be friends with some of them again because I just had such a deep connection there and everything here was just so shallow…. I think I just figured out that I just needed a fair bit of personal time once I got back, to have people treat me in a different way. (Bradley, May 2011).
The transformational aspect of liminal space is hard to integrate.

The return is difficult, because it is an altered state, you go through all this ritual and you come out with a sense of euphoria, which is reduced as you talk about it. Coming out is difficult because people want to know, friends mates, how do you go. The altered state, the euphoria, the Juice, needs to be held because it does evaporate over time.... I noticed that that the young ones haven’t moved very far six months later when it comes to relationships with their mothers, sisters. They just fall back into the same patterns; maybe they do the dishes a bit more.... One of the young ones I brought along had a terrible dope habit; he was back in his habit within six hours of getting home. Same flat, same people, same habit.... [Tracks] might increase the networks, the support systems outside. (Harold, February 2011).

Coming home is a challenge for the young men for many reasons. It is tough to integrate a liminal/transcendent experience and there is a shock as the young person experiences the dramatic change from a high peak experience event to the normal everyday world of school and home. It is a challenge for the young people to know what to say and to whom about the event. This was described as an isolating experience as young men described the struggle to stay in touch with their experience.

xv) Mother’s Relief
Andrea was the other mother that I interviewed. Her voice supports the points made by Julie in the first part of the chapter. She describes the value of the rites of passage for her son and a generation of young men.

I remember a man actually talked about [the idea that] once boys who are at that age, it is the mother’s job to wave goodbye as the father takes the boy into becoming a young man across that bridge and it’s not actually my job anymore and it was my last push. Please let there be something meaningful happen at this time.... My nephew turned and
my dad went down and took him out for his first legal drink at the pub and that was their big rite, it was a really big thing and I said to my partner I am so grateful that at 14 our son had this Tracks experience which I think really just brought everything together for him and allowed him to open up to the depth of richer stuff…. I feel a sense of gratitude, a sense of awe, a sense of wonder, that even with all of this other crap that’s out in the world…. I know there is richness in this and I feel like I don’t have to think about it any more for Bradley, he is on that road, he is safely there. (Andrea, May, 2011).

Voices on the Margin

There are a few instances where a person shared a marginal issue or ideas that were different from the overall positive impact of the Tracks work.

Harold talked about a young man whose dope smoking habit did not change after the event. He spoke about the challenges of returning to the same situation. He comments on the limits of the programme to attend to a small number of families in each event in contrast with the numbers of adolescents in the Nelson region alone.

Julie explained that the men in her family do not speak that language. The implications are that New Zealand has many men who will not go to programmes like Tracks because they are unable to cope with the challenge of speaking with the heart. Also there are challenges to market a potentially transformative experience in a culture that is finds the idea of inner work difficult.

Comments were made by a number of young men that they thought they were too young to grasp the purpose of the rite of passage the first time. This is set against the literature that identifies that it is difficult to know exactly when a boy is stepping on to the bridge of adolescence.
Figure 11 The community gathers to begin the rite of passage.
Chapter Six – Discussion

Sometimes a Man Stands Up

Sometimes a man stands up during supper and walks outdoors,
and keeps on walking because of a church that stands somewhere in the East.
And his children say blessings on him as if he were dead.
And another man, who remains inside his own house,
dies there, inside the dishes and in the glasses,
so that his children have to go far out into the world
toward that same church, which he forgot.

Rilke found in (Bly, 1981, p. 49)
This discussion explores the following three propositions which emerged from the research:

1) That fathers are important in the adolescent development of young men and that Tracks presents opportunities for fathers to develop the emotional confidence needed to be on the bridge of adolescence with their sons.

2) That the rituals that take place at Tracks are sacred arts that educate the whole being. These practices connect participants to the inner world that can lead to a life with meaning.

3) That there is a need to understand more about the challenges of integrating the transformational aspects of the initiation process back home.

1) Fathers Who Take Inner Journeys

Adolescent boys benefit from the approval of their fathers, and other adult men. Without prompting, both mothers, Julie and Andrea, referred to Lashlie’s (2005) concept of a bridge of adolescence, expressing that they were aware that they needed to step back and allow the fathers and other men to work with their sons. Lashlie’s concept provides the theory that boys need men to work with them as they grow into men themselves. The first part of this discussion suggests that for men to be in the lives of adolescents they may need help to do the inner work that will enable them to validate their
sons as independent from themselves. I explore the possibility that Tracks helped the fathers to develop emotional confidence. The fact that the fathers spoke so profoundly about their experiences provided a reason to explore the inner journeys these men were taking at Tracks.

The Nature of the Fathers’ Inner Work
Some fathers need help to work with emotions. I use the term emotions to describe both the ability to show love, but also an ability to become aware of the father shadow (things they are unaware of or avoid facing in their relationship with their sons). It is work for some fathers because of two things; firstly that emotions can be threatening and secondly because some fathers are unaware of how to let their boys be different from them. Tracks helped the fathers I interviewed to work with these two aspects of inner work through the help they received from other men, older men who had done the work and knew the pathways.

Why Emotions Might be Challenging for Some Fathers
One reason why the fathers might experience difficulty expressing emotions is because emotions do not follow the principles of the orderly, predictable, machine-like world; a world that may have been taught to them through traditional schooling methods and re-enforced through the organisation of their work places. The findings led me to question whether, for some fathers, emotions are threatening because they can undermine the foundations that their sense of security is built on. Throughout this research I have come to question the extent to which the assumptions people make about knowledge influence the way they think and see the world. From a mechanistic perspective, the inner life could be untrustworthy and this could manifest itself as an inability to love. Thinking along these lines may help to understand why one father described getting real with his son as an extremely difficult thing. “I want to provide the best possible examples I can for my son and part of that is to be able to be real... and that is an extremely difficult thing to do. Its hard enough to do it for yourself but to do it in front of your child, my son inspires me to be a better man and Tracks absolutely brought this home to me” (John, Interview, May, 2011).
The father’s relationship with his son impacts on a young man’s ability to feel secure. Lashlie (2005) states that the real issue for the growing son is whether he feels as if his father does or does not love him (p. 175.) Julie commented that as a mother she could not substitute for the father’s validation. She expressed her relief that there was a capable group of men at Tracks who were prepared to do the work. Julie was aware that her son needed other men to validate his path to manhood. She commented that the men at Tracks were strong, gutsy men with heart, indicating that Tracks is helping fathers to develop their hearts and by that I assume Julie means an ability to work with emotions.

A Father’s Job is More than Just Being There for His Son
Lashlie (2005) explains to fathers that being on the bridge with their sons does not mean learning new skills (p.189). In contrast to this, the fathers spoke about the skills they were learning through the powerful processes taking place at Tracks, work that helped them relate to themselves and their sons. Bradley, a young man, suggested that for a lot of fathers, attending Tracks was the hardest thing they had ever done. These ideas raise the questions; do some fathers struggle to be in the lives of their transitioning sons and does Tracks help, and if so, why? While there are many other possibilities, I am interested in the extent to which Tracks helped these fathers recognise and value their sons as independent from them.

The fathers referred to the inner work in terms of learning to communicate in authentic ways. Harold explained that the rituals at Tracks were opportunities for father and son to speak to each other in a way that they have always wanted to speak. As a result of this, he and his son had become closer, like equals. Matthew spoke of the support he got at Tracks as he became aware of the challenge he faced in letting go of his son. He talked about his hidden grief as a “dark place” that lived in a black hole of suppressed emotion, he referred to this as the biggest thing of the whole Tracks event. Tracks helped these fathers and sons communicate in authentic ways while a shift in their relationship was taking place. Tracks helped these dads find their own voices.
to say what they need to say to their sons and in doing so some of the dads were questioning the assumptions taught to them by society. “The whole context [the Tracks event] was such that it took you to this place where you spoke from your heart” (John, Interview, May, 2011).

Being able to communicate in this way has helped these fathers and sons develop a functioning relationship. Trevor, John’s son, explained that the father and son relationship is more important than it is given credit for in New Zealand society. “I know that I’ve developed to be a better person. For people to miss out on that, or to see their father as an authority figure rather than a part of you is quite a big thing to miss out on” (Trevor, Interview, May, 2011). His dad, John could not think of another opportunity, other than his deathbed, where these kinds of conversations might have taken place.

Fathers Finding Their Voices

One reason why these kinds of communications may not happen easily is because a father’s power and identity are woven into their ideas about knowledge, and these assumptions are shaped by powerful influences. Bradley thought that New Zealand culture does not encourage men to show emotions. These findings lead me to suggest that some men struggle to express themselves. There are many reasons that could account for this; the impact of movies, advertising, sport stereotypes, mechanical assumptions about the way the world works etc. However I think Rilke’s poem is a clue that the most powerful influencing factor on a young man ability to develop emotional well-being is his father. Unless fathers have the opportunities to develop their inner skills, the inability to work with emotions can be passed on through the generations.

The value of the work happening at Tracks for the fathers is that it brings the fathers to a place where they become willing to explore the assumptions they have made about knowledge. The work is difficult because uncovering these assumptions takes place on the threshold between the conscious and unconscious mind. Bono (1991) explains that humans do not see what they do not see, and what they do not see does not exist (p. 23). The implication is
that fathers do not know what they do not know and because of this they need help to move through the fear when learning new ways of being with their sons. This is a journey to find their authentic voices.

It needs to be better understood that boys need more than men; they need integrated men who have capacities for emotional maturity. Tracks helped these fathers learn skills that enabled them to relate to their sons at a changing time. It has been suggested that fathers need help to validate their sons because of the father shadow. Sons need their father’s validation in order to grow beyond the limits of the way they have been conditioned to think.

As a consequence of the discussion I feel more able to contemplate the wisdom of Rilke’s poem. I think of the word “church” as meaning “inner knowledge to connect with his full humanness” and the word “house” as representing “emotional immaturity” I can therefore read the poem as:

\[ A \] man who does not find that [inner knowledge to connect with his full humanness] remains inside his own [emotional immaturity], dies there...
so that his children have to go far out into the world toward that same [inner knowledge], which he forgot.

(Rilke quoted in Bly, 1981, p. 49)

I speculate on the generations of men who have passed their fears onto their sons. From the outside world, everything could look fine, on the inside the father could be struggling with the patterns of fear and issues of control bestowed on him through his father, and so it carries on back through the generations. Schools do not teach a boy about this. Fathers need the tools to learn how to “find that church”, Tracks offers a map, a way of opening the conversation.

2) The Value of Sacred Arts to Educate the Whole Being

While I was grappling with ideas about education in the modern western world and the need to integrate the capacity for both intellectual and emotional intelligence I had an opportunity to interview Chime Shore, a
respected elder in the field of education and youth work. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the ideas he shared with me in any depth but my summary of the key points he made are as follows:

*Educational processes have to understand how to bring intelligence to the brain stem, the core emotions. Education is bigger than reason alone. Humans are products of evolution. Carl Jung contributed great bodies of knowledge about the power of the unconscious forces that determine wellbeing. The question is how to bring intelligence to these forces. Humans in the West have been blinded by a myth, [At this point Shore was referring to myth as a story that is not true.] Great thinkers like Einstein and Darwin were emblematic of thinking in an old paradigm: the paradigm of “if only we can understand how something works then we can put an end to suffering.” The implications of this are that knowledge will save the world, it has led to an over emphasis on teaching the cortex. This has led people in the West to a state of imbalance where people are assumed to make decisions based on intellect when in a lot of cases it is the older parts of the brain associated with the core emotions that require the education (My notes, July 2011, edited August, 2012).

These ideas provided an important link between the mechanistic assumptions about knowledge that inhibit holistic learning and the problems youth are experiencing. The reason the intellectual method alone is flawed is because the cortex is not the part of the adolescent mind making the decision to drink in excess or drive fast in a car. Shore makes the point that the human organism operates on more than intelligence of the cortex and that processes of education have to be developed to teach this aspect of being. The major vehicle, according to Shore, for teaching these core emotions is artistic creative intelligence. This insight gave me a new way to understand why the fathers and the young men spoke so highly of the sacred spaces and arts that take place at Tracks. The value of emotional intelligence developed at Tracks could be that it helps men and boys initiate a conversation with an inner life, and that it is these older parts of the brain that are responsible for decision making. The rational revolution is responsible for a dangerous overemphasis in Western education; however its under emphasis would be catastrophic too.
Schools teach reason, reason is useful but it is not sufficient to educate a whole young person.

Shore’s theory that emotional intelligence is an undeveloped intelligence has had a big impact on this research. The families had indicated in strong ways that they believed that the rituals that develop sacred space were the most significant features of the therapeutic impacts of the Tracks programme. Alongside their views I had spent two years questioning what was taking place at Tracks as an insider through the development of a reflective journal. Shore’s thinking provided a way to think, feel and intuit more deeply about the learning taking place at Tracks. The major focus for the remainder of this discussion chapter is to investigate the idea that young people need to be connected with their core emotions/inner drives and that the sacred arts can achieve this. I use Shore’s hypothesis as an invitation to understand more about the development of sacred space, the functions of rituals, and the function of myth in relation to the value of the Hero’s Journey.

Sacred Space

Sacred space is a term the families used to describe the learning environment at Tracks, Julie said it was a place where the heart can learn. The findings suggest that it is a place where people feel validated as participants in the making of a life with meaning. I explore the extent to which sacred space at Tracks has helped the fathers and younger men realise their potential to act in positive ways and in doing so challenge the idea perpetuated in the media that men are responsible for so many of the world’s problems. I investigate the transformative possibilities of sacred space in terms of the potential for synergy, the theory that the whole can create outcomes beyond the sum of its parts.

Sacred Arts Teach Wholeness

Sacred spaces create holistic learning opportunities that teach the whole being, both the head and the heart. For Gerber (2001) the antidote to a lack of purpose in life, is a sense of wholeness. He uses the term synergy described by Fuller (1979) to explain that people can become optimally effective by
aligning with the whole and its inherent synergy; however this is difficult because the whole is subtle and people lack the conceptual tools to experience it (p 26). Palmer (1998) talks about learning that honours the whole when feelings and thinking are joined (P. 64). The synergistic ideas of Fuller (1979) and Gerber (2001) provide a way to interpret the impact of the sacred arts taking place at Tracks. The participants described being impacted by these rituals in profound ways, and yet not one person could explain exactly how they worked. I explore the rituals in terms of their ability to develop the subtle awareness needed to have an experience of the whole.

Rituals Can Develop Heart Intelligence

Rituals create sacredness; sacredness is the intelligence of the heart to feel connected to something bigger than oneself. Julie suggested that people living in modern cultures are hungry for this connection. She described ritual as the tool that connects people to the beauty and mystery of the world, the awe and wonder which little children have naturally but which adults lose because of the mechanical way society works. “We can connect to it with our hearts and our heart intelligence is different from our brain intelligence” (Julie, Interview, May, 2011). The rituals serve to open the deeper layers of the mind to the complexity and interconnectedness of all life that are essential if the heart is to learn. Heart intelligence is about recognising that there are important ways of knowing other than intellectual such as feeling, intuiting and sensing (Clements 2004; Jung 1953). I question if the rituals help a transitioning adolescent become optimally effective as they enable an individual to connect with the whole and its inherent synergy.

An Interpretation of Sacred Space as it Relates to Building Heart Intelligence

The experience of sacred is created at Tracks through the rituals. Rituals encourage the group to speak and listen with the heart. An agreement of confidentiality assures the group that stories shared will not be repeated. What matters in terms of learning is the integrity of the speaking and the listening and the potential the stories have for making meaning.
The sharing of authentic stories creates opportunities for the participants to learn through emotions and feelings. Bradley, for example, described the positive impacts of feeling connected to something bigger than himself. Jacob talked about the healing that was taking place as he was able to express his grief about his father’s absence. Julie talked about her realisation that her son Jacob was hungry for meaning.

Damasio and Immordino-Yang (2007) suggest that being able to feel is essential to learning. They present neuroscience that suggests emotional well-being determines effective social functioning and decision making. They argue that emotional intelligence has the potential to transform the understanding of education (p. 3). These findings contribute to the theory that heart intelligence is important and that the development of it relates to: (a) the transformative synergistic principles that apply to groups who share a common vision and work in holistic ways and (b) the need to create opportunities for learners to talk honestly in a way that allows coherent sense to be made at the level of the emotions.

**Challenging the Negative Media**

Sacred learning environments might provide antidotes to the negative effect of powerful media stories that lead men and boys to lose faith in the process of becoming a good man. Bowak (2008) says that the negative media causes young people to feel cursed rather than blessed (p. 16), and that one of the functions of the modern rites of passage is to build trust between the generations. I explore the extent that fathers are given opportunities to feel positive about their contribution to society. I then explore how the rituals appear to be helping the young men feel empowered.

The fathers talked about Tracks as a place where trust between the generations was built. The fathers described the work happening at Tracks as helping them to feel positive about the future. The men appeared to feel enriched by the opportunities they had to give their stories to the younger generation. Isra explained how valuable it had been to share the ordinary stories of men. John described the impact of the process as a “restoration of
faith in people, in our future and what we are able to create for ourselves” (John, Interview, May, 2011). Giving the fathers opportunities to share their learning is one way that the men at Tracks speak about becoming an elder. The rite of passage creates pathways for men to become elders and mentors in a culture that frequently portrays the elderly as needing to be removed from society.

The rituals that create sacred spaces at Tracks help young people connect to their inner drives. Some men (Appendix E) argue that young men nowadays grow up in a world without meaning, they believe like Bond (1993) that the living myths (great teaching stories) that serve to connect people with their inner drives have atrophied and died. Julie said that the church had become meaningless to most young people. At the same time as the influence of myths is declining, modern societies bombard young people with powerful media images based on an ideology that consumerism will lead to happiness. In times like these, the development of living myths might help young people connect with their inner drives.

A Function of Myth

Functional myths are stories that create lifelines to the needs of the two million year old psyche within. Young people need to be connected to their abilities to make meaning, to evolve narratives suitable and empowering for the times they are growing into. Luke Skywalker and Jonathon Livingston Seagull are examples of the kinds of myths that animated my consciousness towards the potential for integration. The suggestion that young people benefit from coming into contact with these energies is another way to interpret what is happening at Tracks. Bradley described his initiation as one of the rare times he has felt something in his chest which he described as tapping into something really old and powerful. Talking about the process he said; “I think it’s made me believe in the magic of the world” (Bradley, Interview, May, 2011). Rory explained that through the rituals and stories he had found a sense of purpose. Jacob talked about feeling connected to the source inside. “I always feel much more in touch with my spirituality at Tracks and it has definitely affected my feelings and beliefs around it” (Jacob,
Interview, May, 2011). The value of myth is that it brings the inner world alive and there is evidence to suggest that the processes happening at Tracks are helping young men connect to their deeper selves.

The Hero’s Journey – A map for Young Men to Find Their Voices Through Rites of Passage

The Hero’s Journey is another perspective that helps to interpret the impacts that the rites of passage have had on the young men. The Hero’s Journey can be thought of as a map that describes the pathway through the phases of the initiation process, namely the separation, the challenge of transition, and the return of the successful adventurer with his gifts. The Hero’s Journey is a guide for the inner journey.

From the perspective of the psyche, the Hero’s Journey involves exploring the limits or psychic edges of the ego through confrontation with the ego’s boundaries (death) represented at Tracks by the initiation process. The Hero’s Journey has similarities with Brookfield’s (1995) description of finding one’s authentic voice. Brookfield describes a process of becoming aware of the voices inside that are not our own, the voices that have been assumed or deliberately implanted by outside interests. The expression of an authentic voice is a genuinely transformative experience (pp. 45-46). Finding one’s true voice is an empowering process. The following paragraphs explore the process of initiation taking place at Tracks from the perspective of the Hero’s Journey.

The Initiation Process

The task of the initiation is for the older men to engineer a struggle so that the boys may experience a transformation. The initiation creates conditions for the group, with its synergistic potential, to take an adolescent through their perceived limitations. Prechtel (1999) explains that the objective of the Mayan initiation is to provide an adolescent with an experience of their mortality (p. 90). The boys wrestle the challenge with their newly found voices and the awareness of what Prechtel called the tethering roots of all peoples (p. 360). The process of initiation can lead an adolescent to an
expanded view of one’s self. At Tracks, this is not a confrontation with physical death but a situation of high-perceived risk. Bradley explained what the initiation meant to him: “Tracks is about pushing, finding the limit of the boy in me, and then going further…. I think the learning that most boys take away is that they can challenge themselves, that they can pass challenges. I think it’s something that most young men are very keen to find out and is expressed in not always the best ways.” (Interview, May, 2011). These processes of intentional transition are called liminal experiences.

Exploring the Threshold Experience
The liminal experience is a threshold, a place where pretences are dropped. This vulnerability according to Foster and Little (1989) is the fertile soil where something new can grow (p. 35). Adolescents require such an experience to deconstruct the assumptions taught to them by their parents (Prechtel, 1999, p. 88). The liminal experience creates a profound level of uncertainty that can lead to a state of openness. Turner describes these experiences as fountainheads, hotbeds of cultural creativity that work to create societal change (Grimes, 2000, pp. 121-122). Bowak (2008) describes that transformational shifts can occur intentionally through rites of passage (p. 8). If supported by elders and appropriate rituals the transition phase creates the conditions for psychological growth.

Crossing the threshold is a process that opens the mind of a boy to the bigger world of adulthood. Bradley described this process in terms of oneness and connection with the environment. He explained the realisation that he was a small part of the world. The value of the threshold experience is central to human development according to Campbell (1988) because children are dependent and this has to be transcended if they are come to maturity. “If you cannot cross that threshold, you have the basis for neuroses” (Campbell, 1988, p. 70). These ideas are significant in the context of the Gluckman Report that states that New Zealand youth are struggling with a loss of meaning in their lives.
Emotional Intelligence and the Boon of the Soul’s Knowing

The hero who undertakes the adventure, crosses the threshold of his uncertainty and emerges successful is gifted with the boon. Prechtel calls this the soul’s knowing. Prechtel (1999) explains that the birth of a young man’s “soul’s knowing” is his ability to feed life (p. 360).

The Goddess of Life and the boys Spirit Bride were released to the boy only when he made an agreement with Death to trade his youth and immortality for his Soul Bride. In this way the boy returned to live with his soul knowing, as all initiated people do, that this full feeling in the heart meant he’d signed a lease agreement with Death to die of old age later on. Part of the fine print in the contract was his promise to continue “feeding” Life [his soul]….He stopped following an empty longing and began carrying a worthy fullness. (Prechtel, 1999, p. 360).

A mother, Andrea describes what happening at Tracks in the following terms: “[At Tracks] young men find out stuff about themselves through some sort of inner and outer challenge and then bring back a richness to a society which to me feels almost devoid of … the spiritual…devoid of meaning” (Andrea, Interview, May, 2011). The birth of the soul’s knowing is the successful hero’s boon. Cammock (2009) described this as the boon of integration and expanded vision, the boon of connection and oneness (pp. 69-71). The experience and integration of soul, despite the problematic issue of interpretation, provides a way to think about the magic that Bradley described, his description of feeling connected to something bigger than himself. It is interesting that his mother, Andrea believed that he had returned from Tracks with a richness that was needed by society.

3) The Challenge of Supporting the Change After the Event.

*I think one of the things that is difficult - I don’t think it is such a criticism of Tracks - is that I think the transition back into ordinary life is really, really tough* (Julie, Interview, May, 2011).
In this final section I discuss the challenges of integrating the transformative aspects of the Tracks work into life back at home.

**Integrating the Change**

The inner work taking place at Tracks requires support. The young men spoke of coming home as a challenging process. Jacob explained that the normal world doesn’t quite cut it and that he found it hard to stick to his intentions. Bradley described being irritated with friends for the lack of connection. All the young men explained that they find it hard to integrate their experiences. This might be because other people, their friends, siblings, mothers, have no way of understanding the deep nature of the transformative experience that can happen at Tracks, partly because the nature of the liminal experience is not well understood. Turner (1969) in Grimes (2000) acknowledges the intensity of the work; he describes the powerful but temporary kind of community that emerges during the memorable moments in ritual (p. 122). This helps to understand why the young men find it hard to shift from the peak experience to the normality of home life.

Participants need on-going support to integrate change. Grimes (2000) described in Chapter two that the intractable dilemma facing the inventors of rites of passage is how to manage the risk of leaving people stranded like beached whales unable to get back to the deep (p. 124). The question is what support is offered after the event? Just because the body has moved out of the rite of passage does not necessarily mean the inner work has ceased happening. I wonder how it was for fathers like Matthew who explained that Tracks had taken him to “deep places” within himself, places he did not go except for maybe at funerals. Having taken part, what are the implications of returning to a culture that, for the most part, does not value the inner work? While Tracks continues to run facilitation courses, men’s events and rites of passage events, all of which welcome the participation of these men and boys, the overall feeling I gained from the interviews is that the majority are left alone to put together the next step of their journey to adulthood/fatherhood.
Mothers need training and supportive networks to cope with the changes. Lashlie (2005) explains that mothers have to be encouraged to let go of their sons so that the men can do the work of bringing them across the bridge of adolescence. Letting go of their vulnerable sons is a gigantic act of trust. The letting go confronts them with their need to transition from a role of nurturing protector of their young to something else. Not knowing what happens on the event, these mothers can be confronted with the return of a thirteen-year-old son who thinks and acts as if he is the man of the house. The findings suggested that it is a challenging time for the families to integrate the changes. Jacob found as result of Tracks he had more respect for his mother, for the things she does around the place. However his mother, Julie, was clear that she found it hard. “If this is the impression of a well integrated, mature woman, saying at times, she struggled to embrace the change: I wonder if there is work to be done for other mothers” (Julie, Interview, May, 2011).

The challenge for Tracks, as Julie explained, is to find some way of continuing the contact after the event more strongly. People do not maintain change unless they have on-going support. Julie expressed that she thought it can be lonely “having glimpsed something that is so magical and so warm and so real and gutsy, to then come back. I think that is tough” (Julie, Interview, May 2011). The challenges for the families and particularly the mothers are considerable. If mature educated mothers who use ritual in their lives and appreciate the depth of sacred space struggle to manage the changes then I question the struggles other mothers have faced with their sons who have returned from Tracks.

Attempts to Support the Change

From an acknowledgment of the struggles participants and their families are facing I briefly consider the measures initiated by Tracks to support the families after the event.

Incorporation is one of the three primary markers of an effective rite of passage (Gennep, 1960). After the participant has moved through the stages of separation and transition, integration at Tracks is all about the return ritual.
This process has been described in Chapter four. The important aspect is that
the community and family system gather to witness and, more importantly, participate in his return. The process represents the need to incorporate the change into the community as a whole. The ritual is an opportunity for the young men to articulate the changes they have found in themselves to the community, especially their primary caregivers. It is not just an acknowledgement of change, it is the change acting itself out. The quality of this communication helps to integrate the work. The implications of systems theorists like Wheatley (1999) are that all families exist in a complex state of inter-relationship. In order for change to be maintained, the whole family system has to change. This is possibly why fathers complete the rite with their sons and why mothers, siblings, grandparents and the whole community are invited to the separation and return.

The other supportive aspect of the Tracks programme is the request that the new young men return to another rite of passage event in the role of service for a new boy. Every one of the young men I interviewed had done this and each one of them explained that returning as a young leader had been very important to their development as men. Jacob explained that this was more rewarding than coming through himself. Rory stated that he was too young to absorb what was being offered to him on his first rite, the real growing happened when he returned as a young leader.

Liminal experiences are serious processes that require care. A young mind is a malleable mind and as such big changes can happen quickly. While this can be a very useful thing for both the individual and society, it carries a sense of tremendous responsibility and respect. Rituals in the hands of the inexperienced are dangerous tools. I have come to understand their value and in the process come to appreciate their power. The question arising for the research is how can participants be supported outside of the event, and by that I refer to the whole family. Lasting change is systemic, it requires constant nurture if it is to grow in the consciousness of the family and individual. If Tracks could be compared to the fertile ground that births a new seed, then
coming home to the community is the garden where that seed needs to be supported, nurtured, protected from weeds, watered, and fed.

Conclusions

Preparing adolescents to function well is more than helping them to survive puberty. This thesis finds that the Tracks rite of passage has helped a number of young people to feel that they are worthwhile. These young men appear to have developed a better understanding of themselves and from that have increased confidence in their capacity to contribute meaningfully to the needs of the community. All the young men exhibited a close relationship with their fathers and explained that this has been improved as a result of the Tracks experience. The rituals provide ways for boys without fathers to express their grief and this was found to be particularly helpful for Jacob.

The findings suggest that the development of the mature adult is dependent on a means to connect a young person to their inner drives and that this is about a capacity to develop emotional intelligence at many levels. Because the demands of the world on the psyche are too complex (Bond, 1993), the cultural work needs to be passed from generation to generation and this is in part what could be happening at Tracks. The Hero Myth (Campbell, 1993) is one way to interpret the function of the initiation process taking place at Tracks: it is a process that enables the adolescent to validate himself in the world.

This chapter has shown how the stories shared by the participants in Tracks might be linked to the literature that explores the importance of rites of passage (Grimes 2000; Bowak 2008), ritual, mythology and spirituality (Campbell 1998; Bond 1993; Stevens 1997; Turner 1969). These perspectives offer ways of understanding the positive impacts described by the young men and their families taking place at Tracks and they validate the importance of building relationships between men of different generations (Bowak 2008); (Lashlie 2005). This thesis provides evidence that the rituals at Tracks can develop heart intelligence through the transformative synergies that take place when the groups work in holistic ways. The facilitation of sacred spaces
enables young men and their fathers to express themselves at a time of transition in ways that bring them closer. The processes taking place at Tracks raise questions about the over-emphasis on rational intellect and the value of educational processes that bring intelligence to the core emotions.

The realization of the extent that deeply embedded mechanistic images (Wheatley, 1999, p. 29) shape how people think has been an important insight for me within this research. As a result of this study I have come to question whether mechanical models of education can prepare young people for all the challenges, global and local, that might lie ahead. Wheatley explains that to perceive the world differently requires new perceptual techniques, “We can’t move past analysis by being analytic” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 140). At the same time people living in modern communities are asking big questions about the nature of knowledge; adolescents continue to move through major developmental changes and it is with these thoughts in mind that I consider the work happening at Tracks. The kind of learning experiences taking place at Tracks has helped these fathers, mothers and most importantly young men to enter the chrysalis of not knowing and emerge with gifts suitable for the paradigm shift that is taking place in the way people learn and organize themselves.
Figure 12 The Sacred Fire.
Chapter Seven – Conclusions

This thesis reports on an investigation into the question:

- How do young men who have been involved in the Tracks programme on more than one occasion and their families perceive the impact of the Tracks programme on their development?

The questions that guide the data gathering are:

- What stories do the young men tell about the impact of the Tracks programme?
- What stories do the adults living with the young man share about the impact of the Tracks process on his development and that of the family?

The participants in the Tracks programme who took part in this research are, without exception, supportive of the programme. They have described their experiences in glowing terms. This is not surprising as they are all people who have shown their support for the programme: all the young men who were interviewed have returned to support the programme by acting as young leaders and all the adults have supported their sons in this action. My discussion of the views of the participants has been aimed at identifying some of the underlying aspects of the programme that have contributed to their satisfaction.

- Tracks brings fathers together and gets them involved in the lives of their sons at the important developmental time of transition between the life stages of childhood and adulthood.
- Tracks establishes an intentional process to help mothers let go of their sons.
- At the same time as helping the young men, Tracks helps fathers develop the emotional confidence needed to be on the bridge of adolescence (Lashlie 2005) with their sons. The process brings fathers and sons together in a powerful way.
- Tracks provides a supportive way for young men who do not have fathers in their lives to work with their emotions, providing opportunities for mentoring within the event and beyond.
• The rituals at Tracks have had a positive impact on the young men. The liminal experience was found to be instrumental in the development of an expanded perception of self-identity. Life changing perspectives may be intentionally developed through liminal experiences when supported by community and appropriate rituals. These conditions may enable a dependent child to cross the threshold into the larger perceptive world of independence and interdependence.

• Tracks offers an intentional and organised way to connect to the mythological passages. Based on the ideas that there are unconscious forces at work within the human psyche (Jung 1953; Campbell 1993; Bond 1993; Stevens1997), Tracks provides constructive ways to work with these forces, as another aspect of what has been called emotional intelligence.

• Tracks offers a holistic approach to education. Most of the young men spoke with an increased appreciation of the interconnected nature of living systems. It appears that they have established better connections to themselves, to their families, ancestors and a community of intergenerational men who share a common vision for being good men.

• Transformative outcomes were investigated in terms of the synergistic potentials that exist in groups that share a strong intention and operate from an appreciative perspective.

• Some youth in New Zealand are experiencing difficulties and while many make the transition into adulthood without harm, there is good reason to understand more about the capacity that contemporary rites of passage have for community development.

Limitations of the Thesis

• This thesis has not explored questions about the impact of the Tracks programme on young men who have not returned after their initial experiences. It is not possible, therefore to generalise about the effects of the programme or to argue that the benefits reported in this research will apply to everyone.
• In the course of writing the thesis I have become aware of the many adolescents who do make successful transitions into adulthood and who do not go to Tracks. It is beyond the scope of this project to investigate the causes and conditions that lead to these successful transitions and emotional maturity.

• The scope of the project has not been able to assess the efficacy of the Tracks rite of passage programme for youth at risk.

• The scope of the project placed limitations on the ability to include a more thorough literature review of rites of passage programmes taking place in other areas beyond the New Zealand and Australia.

• While the emerging methodology, which I have called a holistic approach, is grounded in established approaches, the thesis would have been strengthened if there had been more time and space to explore these approaches in more detail.

• Similarly the discussions around correspondence and coherence approaches to learning could be strengthened if there had been more time and space.

• Throughout the research process I have been aware of the need to manage the potential for bias. There is a risk that as a researcher I have been unable to filter out my enthusiasm about the work happening at Tracks. As such, a limitation is the passion I have for the work of education at a time when many young people in New Zealand are struggling to make the healthy transition from adolescent to adulthood (Gluckman, 2011).

Implications and Recommendations for Further Research and Action

• The Tracks organisation might complete research into those young men who do not return after their first event.

• There is a need to understand more about the challenge of integrating the transformational aspects of rites of passage back home. Mothers, fathers and the young men all spoke of the need to feel more supported in their attempts to integrate the Tracks experience into their lives.

• The research may contribute to the discussion of developing transformative educational experiences. Liminal experiences such as the
initiation process at Tracks and the development of meditative awareness are two modes of inquiry that meaningfully deconstruct the deeply embedded implications of mechanistic images. These tools of inquiry could be investigated further.

• The research contributes to the knowledge about the usefulness of what has been called living myths (Bond 1993). Working with these energies is another dimension of the whole and its inherent synergy. Appropriate rituals can connect people to the living myths that help the integration of the inner forces within the human psyche. These processes can lead to the increased capacity to make meaning.

• Acknowledging that children are the future, the work taking place at Tracks may have implications for other agencies working with youth and families.

• The research process may generate more interest about how to research from a living systems perspective. It has been suggested by Wheatley (1999); Maturana and Varela (1987; Davis, Sumara and Luce Kapler (2008) that how we understand knowledge is changing. Concepts like autopoiesis interpreted through illustrations like Escher’s Hands challenge research processes to explore knowing in terms of the principles of emergence and self-organization. As the knowledge of transcendent educational practices develops so must the capacities to research them. The idea that there is separation between subject and object has been questioned. Exciting and chaotic, this challenges researchers to think beyond binaries in search of the razor’s edge (Maturana & Varela, 1997, p. 133) where subject and object, research and researcher are doing each other.
Figure 14 "Polishing the mirror" is a painting by the author created during the research process to illustrate the impact of liminal experience on the construction of reality.
References


Appendices

Appendix A - Rites of Passage Across a World - Recent History Tucker (2011)

For the last thirty years or so rites of passage and young people have seen changing times, for several reasons. Following the civil and human rights movements and steadily growing concerns about the sustainability of postcolonial western societies, there have been those who have sought to review the position of native, indigenous peoples and traditional cultures around the world. Anthropology has looked to examine cultures throughout history and the few remaining indigenous cultures have grown in their intrigue and significance for the West. As the information age has expanded and with that, the birth of a perceivable ‘global society’, some traditional societies have seen people from other cultures wanting to acknowledge their significance, keen to support the safeguarding of their traditions, lands and ways of life.

This increase in study, examination and profiling has created an upsurge in mainstream exposure, causing a rise in awareness of their existence and cultural identity. This has steadily grown to a point now where some indigenous groups have begun to be featured in entertainment and media forums, film, games, art, music etc.

Running parallel to the phenomenon above and particularly following the World Wars, has been an increasing acknowledgment of climbing rates of social disaffection, dysfunction and marginalisation. The West has grappled with these trends over six decades or so and as yet, has struggled to have any substantial lasting impact, sustained gains or improvements.

Acknowledging our recent history of social interventions and recognising it to be largely ineffectual, has caused a growing number of practitioners and academics to seek answers by stepping beyond western social models and constructs for answers and inspiration, looking to other cultural models today and from former times.

Comparisons, contrasting similarities and differences have helped to identify deficits and gaps. One has been to identify a huge glaring hole where once stood a myriad of traditions serving as intentional rites of passage for the young, assisting them to make a transition from child to adult. Here there has been a re-emergence of the concept and application of an intentional rite of passage for the young, birthing contemporary initiatives that seek to remember and reinvent process for their young, within their culture.

Three different strands can be seen, traditional indigenous groups still practising their rites with an unbroken heritage continuing. Indigenous cultures, no longer practising but still carrying the knowledge of their traditions and working hard to reinstate them and lastly those whose traditions and heritage are so broken and distant that they are having to reinvent culture and process from scratch through research, compassion and intuition.

These three strands have much to offer one another in their common unity centring on the necessity for a healthy, supported transition for the young and its bearing on all our futures. A macrocosm of a rite itself, having to embrace
the dialectic of past and future, bringing them through, down and into the present, into the individual, itself. Written by Tucker (2011) Tracks manager.

Appendix B - Learning Journal Reflection Working with Emotions and Liminal Experiences in Interviews.

During the first interview, as was suspected, there were numerous times when the very young man was experiencing powerful emotions.

In particular, these times occurred as he experienced and retold his story of the father-son separation. As a 15-year-old young man it appeared to me that he was struggling to articulate the powerful emotions that were expressing themselves to him. During the interview as these moments arose, I gently and quietly reminded him of his power to not talk about anything that was upsetting him in a harmful way. We discussed that he could shake the talking stick to let me know the difference between a pause that was pregnant with more words that were coming and a pause that was challenging and possibly upsetting because there was no words to describe what he was feeling.

The other time high emotion was experienced was as the young man described or attempted to describe his initiation rite. At this time I observed the uprightness in this posture, the sense of aliveness in his eyes. Even though his words were few and far between there was a definite feeling of potentiality. I sensed that the initiation had been a peak experience for this young man, one that was still potent for him.

Within this methodology I am using feelings and intuitions and sensitivity as a guide to helping the families tell the stories that matter. I am very clear that the intention of the interview is to help the interviewees share the stories that matter. If I have any sense that a story is too painful or will cause harm in the telling, then I have a clear intention to leave that particular issue. On the other side, these times of strong emotions were transcendent. There was little separation between myself as a listener and the speaker. I had no perception of time or of distractions outside of the storytelling.
Appendix C - Ethical Process

January 2011

Dear -

Tracks Trust would like to invite you to take part in a study on the effect our programme is having on the lives of young men and their families and communities. This study is being conducted by Jamie Howell as part of a Masters in Education.

The title of the research is: “Learning through stories: An investigation into how the Tracks rites of passage programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems.”

The research will involve a small number of families participating in an interview lasting approximately one hour for each person. Jamie is looking to interview young men who’ve completed their rite of passage and returned as young leaders. He also wants to interview an adult who has lived with each young man prior to and after his rite of passage; this could be his mother or father or possibly both. He is requesting that the young man have a think about who this might be. It will be valuable to hear perspectives from fathers and mothers and from those who believe they have a story to share.

Attached to this letter is a technical info sheet provided by Jamie, telling you more about the research, the aims, methods, care of participants, potential benefits and practical details about the interview.

If you are willing to be a part of the research and be contacted by Jamie, please let us know by >>>>>>>>>>>>>.

If for whatever reason you don’t wish to be part of this research, we would also like to know so we can invite someone else.

Best wishes and kind regards

Adge Tucker
Tracks Trust
Information Letter to participate in the Tracks research.

This information letter explains what the research is about and how the interview process will work. I outline the safety considerations and provide my details and those of my supervisors in case you would like to clarify anything.

What I would like to do

I want to talk with you about your experiences of the Tracks rites of passage programme, both as a participant in the programme and as a young leader. I am carrying out research into how the Tracks rites of passage programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems and would like to talk with people like yourself about what you think. I am calling the study “Learning through anecdotes: An investigation into how the Tracks rites of passage programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems.”

The research questions are

How do young men and their families perceive the impact of the Tracks programme on their development?

What stories do the young men share about the impact of the Tracks programme?

What stories do the adults living with the young man share about the impact of the Tracks process on the development of the young man and his family?

I am using an interview to gather stories from both young men like yourself and an adult who has been with you as you participated in the rite of passage and your return as a young leader. I am looking for stories of what has been happening, they might be new understandings and or challenges and dilemmas. I will use the stories you share to write anecdotes, instances and experiences that have an impact on Tracks. As I write these anecdotes from the stories I hear I will change your name. I may use two different names for two different stories that you shared in order to keep the focus on the stories and not the participants. Together we will review this anecdote at a later date so you can read what I have written and make any changes. You can withdraw from the research at any stage.

If a story could identify you to other people, we will discuss the possible implications and decide whether or not we should remove the story. Ultimately the well-being of you, the participant, is the priority and no chances will be taken. If there is any possibility that a story could have negative repercussions I will use other stories.

The process involves an interview of approximately one hour at a location to be arranged by us together. This could be at your home or near to where you live. I
will record the interview on a dictaphone and will ask you some questions to help get you thinking and talking about your experiences.

As well as your interview, I would like to talk with an adult who has lived with you before and after your rite of passage. This person needs to be able to talk about what they have seen happening for you. I will probably be restricted to one adult per family. You are invited to pick this person, who should be an adult who has been paying attention in your life, who knew about your rite of passage, such as your mother, father or any other adult living with you.

The purpose of the research is to gather data to stimulate thinking about what makes a healthy adolescent? What things make Tracks successful (if it is found to be successful) and what things could be developed to improve the functioning of the programme?

If at any time you should decide that you no longer wish to participate in this study, please tell me, and I will withdraw all your data from the study. Participation is voluntary and no penalty will occur if you want to leave the study. All files will be kept on my secure personal computer. Recorded audio files will be kept separate from the document that matches your real name to the pseudonym (the fake name that I will give you in my written anecdotes). The data will be kept for five years, after which it will be erased.

I have structured the interview and research process to be of benefit to the participants. The majority of questions are designed to explore the things that have worked well. This will help to ensure safety and facilitate what I hope will be a beneficial process. Near the end of the interview I will provide an opportunity for you to share any challenges or dilemmas that you have experienced in relation to the Tracks process.

The only risk I can see arising from participating in the study could be that you disclose a traumatic difficulty that has arisen since or during the rite of passage. Whilst I am not looking to explore these, if this should occur I will terminate the interview and support you in the way I have been trained as a secondary school teacher and Tracks facilitator. If we need more support I will be happy to facilitate the contact of a local counsellor.

I have worked for Tracks for six years. This gives me an inside knowledge of the kind of work that happens, I know how personal and potentially transformative it might be. I am also aware that my position in the organisation might make people feel they have to say only the good things about Tracks. My goal is to create a kind of interview where participants can share their story with as much honesty and clarity as they can. I am interested in all the stories that might help us to understand what is happening for young people and their families as they participate in the Tracks rite of passage. I am keen to hear what you have to say.

The process may be helpful as you are given an opportunity to clarify, explore, recognize and deepen your understanding. It is hoped that your stories will be read by others who are interested in the topic of building community and preparing young people to function well in the world.
If at any time you have questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to call me. My details are:

Jamie Howell 035402678. Mobile 02102644351. My address is 170c Seaton Valley Rd, RD 1, Upper Moutere Nelson. My e-mail is jamiehow@gmail.com

You can also contact Dr. Elaine Mayo my senior supervisor. Her contact details are:
Telephone 03 3642537. Email elaine.mayo@canterbury.ac.nz

Or Dr Peter Cammock. He is my other supervisor. His details are:
Telephone 03642987 ext 6674. Email peter.cammock@canterbury.ac.nz

If you are willing to take part, please complete the attached informed consent form. You can give this to me when we get together to do the interview or email to me at the above address. Please note that if you are under the age of 18 your legal guardian is required to sign the consent form also. Please keep a copy for your own information.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, Jamie Howell.
Informed Consent form

1) For the young man who attended the rite of passage and returned as a young leader to sign and complete.

I have read the details of the research provided by Jamie Howell and understand it. By signing this I agree to participate in the research.

Printed Name                                           Signature
Date

2) For the adult willing to participate in the interview to sign and complete,

I have read the details of the research provided by Jamie Howell and understand it. By signing this I agree to participate in the research.

Printed Name                                           Signature
Date
Please include contact details

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In the possible event that the young man to be interviewed is under the age of eighteen. I am seeking the permission of a parent/guardian to state that they have read and fully understood the nature of the interview process and are willing to allow their son to take part. It would be very helpful to talk with the young person about the research to check that they have an accurate understanding of what is involved, the aims and implications.

I (parent/guardian, please print name).........................................................
have read and understood the above and give permission for my son to take part in this research process.

Signed.
Date.
Young man who is under the age of eighteen to complete.

I (research participant, please print name your name) ................................................................. have read and understood the above and have talked it over with my parents. I understand what the research is about and am willing to be a part of this research interview.

Signed.

Date.

I note that the project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.
Covering Letter for participant under 18

This version is for young people who are aged under 18.

Dear [young man's name.]

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to talk with me about your experiences of Tracks rites of passage programme, both as a participant in the programme and as a young leader. I am carrying out research into how the Tracks rites of passage programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems and would like to talk with people like yourself about what you think.

I am calling the study “Learning through anecdotes: An investigation into how the Tracks rites of passage programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems.”

The details of what I would ask of you are on the attached information sheet. Please read it and, if you are willing to take part, please let me know by home telephone, mobile, email or by posting the consent form back to me. If you are not willing to take part, please let me know and I will invite someone else. I can collect the consent form when we meet for the interview, but I need to hear from you if you are keen to be involved.

If you are under the age of 18, then I need to make sure you understand what is involved with the interview and request your parents/legal guardian sign the consent form to say they give permission for you to be involved.

I would also like to talk with an adult who lived with you at the time of your rites of passage programme. I would like you to suggest who this might be. I would be interested to gather stories from both the perspectives of a mother and a father but I am restricted to one adult per family. I would like to talk with this adult separately and ask him/her about their experiences related to the Tracks programme and about how it seemed to affect you. Is this possible? If so, please share this letter with your adult and invite them to take part. If there is not a suitable adult in your life I am still interested to interview you so please let me know.

I am carrying out this research as a student at the University of Canterbury. The stories I gather about people’s experiences will be used to write a thesis which is part of a Master of Education degree. My supervisors are Dr Elaine Mayo and Dr Peter Cammock. You are welcome to make contact with them if you have questions about this research (their email addresses are below, or a letter can be sent to them at the university).
Please let me know by the end of next weekend? Date? If you are willing to take part.

Yours sincerely
Jamie’s details
Home Telephone 035402678
Mobile 02102644351
Email jamiehow@gmail.com

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

Covering letter for participant over 18

Dear participant...

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to talk with me about your experiences of Tracks rites of passage programme, both as a participant in the programme and as a young leader. I am carrying out research into how the Tracks rites of passage programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems and would like to talk with people like yourself about what you think.

I am calling the study “Learning through anecdotes: An investigation into how the Tracks rites of passage programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems.”

The details of what I would ask of you are on the attached information sheet. Please read it and, if you are willing to take part, please let me know by home telephone, mobile, email or by posting the consent form back to me. If you are not willing to take part, please let me know and I will invite someone else. I can collect the consent form when we meet for the interview but I need to hear from you if you are keen to be involved.

I would also like to talk with an adult who lived with you at the time of your rites of passage programme. I would like you to suggest who this might be. I would be interested to gather stories from both the perspectives of a mother and a father but I am restricted to one adult per family. I would like to talk with this adult separately and ask him/her about their experiences related to the Tracks programme and about how it seemed to affect you. Is this possible? If so, please share this letter with your adult and invite them to take part. If there is not a
suitable adult in your life I am still interested to interview you so please let me know.

I am carrying out this research as a student at the University of Canterbury. The stories I gather about people’s experiences will be used to write a thesis which is part of a Master of Education degree. My supervisors are Dr Elaine Mayo and Dr Peter Cammock. You are welcome to make contact with them if you have questions about this research (their email addresses are below, or a letter can be sent to them at the university)

Please let me know by the end of next weekend? Date? If you are willing to take part.

Yours sincerely

Jamie’s details
Home Telephone 035402678
Mobile 02102644351
Email jamiehow@gmail.com

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.
Ref: HEC 2010/141

8 December 2010

Jamie Howell
170C Seaton Valley Rd
RD 1
Upper Moutere
NELSON

Dear Jamie

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal “Learning through anecdotes: an investigation into how Tracks rites of passage programme impacts on the development of young men and their family systems” has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have made to the application.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

Dr Michael Grimshaw
Chair, Human Ethics Committee
Appendix D - Notes from the Interview with Chime Shore July 2011

The emergent nature of the research methodology welcomed the spontaneous opportunity to interview an elder from the field of youth work. At this stage in the research process I had familiarized myself with literature, reflected extensively on my experiences of rites of passage in action from the perspective of an insider within Tracks and had completed all the interviews. With all this data I took the opportunity to interview Chime Shore.

The interview proved to be a significant event and I was aware at the time that he said a number of things that really stretched my thinking. He was critical of modern rites of passage and it provided a framework to think about Tracks, the literature. He also spoke of the function of sacred theatre to educate the brain stem, the core emotions of the human being. At this time I became aware that he had just made a very interesting link for me about the function of ritual. It is with these things in mind that I am using the interview to frame the discussion of the findings.

Chime has a life time’s experience working for the development of human consciousness. He has worked with community groups in many different contexts. I discovered his travels had taken him to the rare position of observing traditional rites of passage in Kenya. Residing in Perth he was visiting Nelson giving a talk.

Summary of Key Points and Analysis

I asked him, “What is the function of Initiation?”

The most important ingredient is the one not considered and the reason you have a right of passage, is not so much for our reasons, which may be psychological and spiritual maturity for its own sake, but in order to take responsibility.

A rite of passage is an apprenticeship, a way of learning which teaches the young respect for the kinds of skills, depending on the society, that are needed to support that society.

For example the rite of passage for an Aboriginal youth was followed by a direct responsibility for water, skills that were necessary to be an Aboriginal person. So it was not just an exercise in psychological maturity, it was squarely aimed at the responsibilities a person was going to be faced with. Our difficulty is that sometimes those responsibilities are very ill defined and are not going to be given in any meaningful way until much much later. But in Aboriginal society, much like all farming societies in our own culture, by the time a person is fourteen they should be able to run the farm pretty well. There was a good chance their father would be dead, so they had to be a responsible guild member. I mean life itself depended upon it.
So when you are designing a rite of passage, if there is no bearing on perceived life skills then it is severely weakened. I think this is a very crucial point.

What is the purpose of the rite of passage? To mature a person, to deepen their psyche, their psychology, to be happier? This has to be answered. A child for example doesn’t get that, they’re being asked to mature to fill another person’s notion of what happiness is.

What are the culturally significant things to do which maintain the moral structure, the knowledge required to maintain that culture? Rites of passage for us need to be tied to a purpose and what purpose do you tie them to?

Rites of passage had to with the responsibility of children, and knowledge of plants, the knowledge of the crafts and skills needed to maintain life. So in other words they weren’t messing around, and the child understood that, they were aware of what was ahead of them, they could see other people doing these things, so it wasn’t an abstraction and I don’t think rites of passage should be an abstract, not the basics anyway.

As you are aware, when you turn 14 and 15 you get a hormonal change. The chemistry of the brain, the biorhythms are altered, not just sexually, but in terms of night and day. Teenagers are wired for staying up late, scientists have observed the same behaviour in primates. And so a function of rites of passage is to look after the biological changes, you cannot deny they have a different adrenaline, they have a different hormonal setup, the brain is being soaked in hormones. They have had no experience of how to live with them, so there has to be a way to express that.

The other, meaningful apprenticeship, is one of the oldest Western ones. That at a certain age you had a right to apply to work with someone who was training you in a serious way, for a serious skill

I sometimes think that the rite of passage cannot have anything trivial about it, or have the idea of the adult world tripping the younger world, projecting its own meanings and values in a way in which the person cannot understand, psychological values that they don’t get, because after all they haven’t got the brain structure. You have to have the adult brain structure to understand adult psychology. So it often has to be taught very viscerally, very directly, in a way that people perceive.

A rite of passage is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end. It’s built on a recognition that it only takes a little bit of light to illuminate a lot of darkness. What they hadn’t experienced was domestic responsibility, their arrogance, flippancy towards it, and asked a fear of it. So a central feature was the buying, making, and eating together of food, that’s one.
Time is not the same for a child as for a grown up. A child lives in a more uroboric (self devouring) world, adults live in a different world where they have to structure their relationships with time in order to live a life effectively. I sometimes think that the rites of passage that people are lacking are the very ordinary adult responsibilities.

Any rite of passage has to have a perceived benefit, the rite of passage for no society I know of is an end in itself. And I think there are confusions sometimes. It is not just about creating expectations that we (adults) understand, but they don’t understand. The Aboriginal kid understands because their life is transparent in that way. It is not just a spiritual responsibility they have, it is the actual water hole. It is how the animals live and how the tracks go.

It is being able to be alone. In nature you are anonymous, in the city you are anonymous, that should be understood. You can seek anonymity as a way of avoiding any personal responsibility, out in the wild that ground is not there. If you get lost in nature, you are lost in a true way, not, Where is my mum? So you meet something primal. They have to know that they are very important to the future and I have to convey that somehow. In Aboriginal society you cannot miss that, it is obvious. In an apprenticeship or on a farm it is obvious. They have to understand, “I need you” so that we can help those that come after us. I need you to know that you know how to live so I don’t have to worry about you. I am trying to give you the skills so you can have freedom, right now you do not have this. (His context was youth at risk)

I’ve seen a lot of this kind of work…don’t forget that in the Mayan culture or the native American culture your elder brother would have gone through that, they have done this generation after generation after generation. It was loaded with meaning to belong to society. It was something that everybody did to symbolize the psychological maturing that I spoke of, but it wasn’t in the abstract. I think you cannot abstract it, you cannot take a Mayan ritual and apply it effectively to a kiwi lad. It can work occasionally for some, it can have a negative effect on some. “I’m not a Mayan for God sake” So you have to find its equivalent.

As an insider working within the rite of passage programme I had never experienced any process that felt unauthentic, something borrowed from another culture that did not fit. Reflecting further I interviewed fathers who appeared more conventional than myself, it is clear to me that if Tracks was borrowing from cultures’ practices that did not belong to modern day people there would be a reaction. The impression I am gaining as I listen to the stories is a method that acknowledges the wisdom present in some of the traditional ways but it is embodied in a modern context in service of creating meaning. It seems to me that Tracks was not re-inventing other cultural practices but rather using research to learn the spirit of the work and using that to create new forms that work for modern people.

The psychology needs to be true. You are trying to draw out some understanding that you want, that if you can seed into a developing mind when it is just beginning to be capable of beginning the consequences of death, then yes, yes, you have to that. It is so that you can take your rightful
place, it is not just the initiation that does that, the whole of life is doing that, it is like a “seal”. Now you are going to be a hunter, you have to be able to understand and respect death because now going off hunting, or nature will take your life just like that.

Chime proceeded to tell a story of finding himself present in Kenya at a traditional rite of passage for the young men. He describes the ages of the boys as between 12 and 16. They are invited, they don’t automatically earn the right. For some boys it’s too early, genetically it’s too early. They go out with the traditional shield, spear and a gourd of blood and milk. They, the boys, decide whether or not they want to defend the herd. There is no loss of honour if they don’t want to but if they do, they must bring back the ears of a lion, some evidence of a fight with a lion. As he spoke about this I was riveted, I could sense the authenticity of the story and felt a sense of how courageous and terrifying this must be for a boy. They are painted red, head to foot, traditionally that is blood and mud, there is a context, because without a brave capable warrior to defend the herd, the very centre of their life will be destroyed. In the context of the Masai it makes tremendous good sense. Then away they go, and some will come back and they will have the respect of everybody and get that job. If you decide not to, that is honourable, because you have to be capable of doing it. Everybody has to know how to be alone in the wild in the Masai, because they are nomadic. You might be asked to take a message, you might be left alone with the woman and children, so this illustrated something very much for me.

I have condensed the rest of the interview with Shore that took place in July 2011 into the following statements;

1) Educational processes have to understand how to bring intelligence to the brain stem, the core emotions. Education is bigger than reason alone. Humans are products of evolution. Carl Jung contributed great bodies of knowledge about the power of the unconscious forces that determine wellbeing. The question is how to bring intelligence to these forces.

2) Humans in the West have been blinded by a myth, and by that he, Chime was referring to a story that is not true. Great thinkers like Einstein and Darwin were emblematic of thinking in an old paradigm: the paradigm of “if only we can understand how something works then we can put an end to suffering.”

3) The influence of the myth that knowledge will save the world has led to an emphasis on teaching the cortex. This has led people in the West to a state of imbalance where people are assumed to make decisions based on intellect when in a lot of cases it is the older parts of the brain associated with the core emotions that require the education.

4) People in the West live contradictory lives. “Reason alone doesn’t stop us burning fossil fuels or over consuming” (Chime, July 2011).
Appendix E - Group Discussion About The Challenge of Growing up as a Man in New Zealand.

In 2010 I participated in a discussion about the challenge of growing up as a man in New Zealand. The discussion took place at Tracks and involved older men, fathers and young men who had been through their rites of passage.

I asked if anyone minded me taking notes about the kinds of issues that were being talked about. I had recently read a book called “Banker to the Poor” by Yunus (1998) who described the task of unlearning theory and learning instead from the real world. His experience of the real world was that it was just outside the door of the classrooms. As he explains, it was everywhere except inside the classroom (p. 63). A summary of findings is described below.

There was concern that there were not the processes that educate young men with the responsibilities that come with having open access to increased knowledge. The challenge is how to function well with this increased ability to access knowledge through significant developments in technology.

Older men spoke of the complexity of city life. That there was paradox, more potential for connections, more complexity, yet they see the young people feeling less connected.

All present agreed there was talk of a loss of spiritual guidance. Religion was not something that was useful to a lot of men, young and old. More that this, loss of religion was happening in union with a significant rise of solitary conceptual time in front of the computer. The older men were strongly recognizing there young people were missing out on the awareness of a human body connecting with the living systems that sustain it. The young men said nothing. I don't think they could see this because it is hard to know what you don't know.

Both adults and young people spoke of changing family structures. It is a common story that families split up, there are a lot of single parents and surrogate fathering of mothering.

The adult men acknowledged the needs of the outer world have changed and increased in complexity in this modern world; however they were interested to ask if the needs of the inner psyche had changed all that much. The other observation in brief acknowledged the vast changes in diet for young people and they talked about whether that was one factor involved in the earlier onset of puberty.

The men talked about the difference between a maze and a labyrinth, a maze is bewildering and a labyrinth was an established journey. They asked the question of what maps society provides for young people to navigate the
challenges of becoming a man. The men identified the myth of this culture as a story of progress defined by economic success, rising population, the myth of increasing standards of living and the fear of environmental destruction.

The young men spoke of rejecting the economic pathway while acknowledging that money is necessary. One young man spoke about how he was willing to swap pieces of this jigsaw, that tracks had given him the skills and confidence to replace certain pieces. There was knowledge that money provided choices and that it was a skill to create wealth.

This is a summary of the discussion that took place.

Appendix F - Letter to participants to check validity and open for feedback.

Hello to all,

Hope this finds you all well and happy. I am pleased to say that the research process is coming to a close. What a job it has been, bigger than I thought it could be, more challenging and more rewarding.

I am at the stage where the draft findings chapter is ready for you to have a look at. It is a draft and so there might still be some changes to come. Every single interview was a highlight for me, however it is impossible to use all the data. I had the job of reducing approximately 96,000 words into one chapter of fewer than 10,000 words. All of the interviews were useful, it was a matter of finding a way to represent what I think is happening at Tracks. I noticed that I got better at interviewing as the process developed, so thank you for that opportunity.

What is required?

1) I am asking that you have a read through and that you let me know if you are happy with the quotes I have used. I have given you all false names, but I am sure you will be able to identify yourselves. The first letter of each false name corresponds to your real name.

2) The other request is that you make a comment? What comes up for you when you read the findings? I will do my best to feed this information in. Some things might have changed for you, or, you might have learned something else that you want to share about the impact of the Tracks Programme.

3) I need to hear from you as soon as you can. My deadline for the rough draft is the 1st of April.

My email is jamiehow@gmail.com

Comments can be short or more developed. If I do not hear back from you then I will assume all is well. Please know that the findings have not been shown to Tracks and I would like to keep it this way until the project is finished.

I have pasted the chapter below. Please ignore the yellow highlighting and the comments dotted around the place as it is still a work in progress.

I hope you enjoy reading it and I look forward to hearing some comments and reflections.

Best wishes and thank you, Jamie Howell
Appendix G - Director of Tracks talking about how the work emerged

Jim Horton BDS Chairperson, co-founder of Tracks Trust

This is my story and these are my insights and opinions, this is not necessarily Tracks’ policy or creed.

This writing is intended to assist in developing some perspective on the complex role of being a parent in today’s world and how the re-emergence (re-remembering) of a contemporary Rites of Passage Experience (ROPE) may enable a more informed and productive transition through the teenage years for our children and for us as parents. This is written from the perspective gained developing our Tracks programme. The last 10 years, through research into other programmes of initiation world-wide and thousands of hours spent communicating in person and on the telephone with boys, their parents, other relatives and leaders, an intimate window has been opened on family life. It is from this privileged opportunity that I write. A few clues and reality checks have come also from parenting five - now grown - boys in Tui’s intentional community, where a couple of dozen other boys and girls grew up together at the end of this dirt road in Wainui Bay some 30 kilometres from the small town of Takaka in isolated Golden Bay.

Something was missing from my life until one day I found out it was myself. Myself, my story, I had a story to tell but where could I tell it? And I wanted to know what went on in other men’s lives. Was it OK to have stories like I had? Some were dark and I suppressed them and that part of my life’s experience. Was I normal? What was normal? I guess I wanted to really know how I stacked up, how I compared in a deep way with other men. My experiences with men from sport and drinking and partying and business and work were mixed. Did I tell my full truth to them? ... sometimes. Did they believe me? Did they care? What was a good man, a good father? Mostly I told my intimate stories to women and often those stories were not really true. I avoided the dark thoughts and deeds that had occurred along the way. I was in my late forties, in a new country, a new way of life and I had a wife and two boys, 14 and six years old, it was the early 90s, I was building a house and a dental practice in Takaka.

And then my marriage of 26 years fell apart in what I review now as spectacular way (many people watching), dramatic and painful – like a sandcastle submitting to the incoming tide – beautiful, but inevitable and final. And there was sadness and fear in the process. Like a drowning man I reached out to friends and I found and became passionately involved with men's events. Outdoors, round the fire, isolated, for a few days together – no women or kids, no TV, no beer, no distractions. Just men and wilderness and space and time to talk and do what we might do. I travelled to America, Canada, South Africa and Australia putting on outdoor men's events with other men or attended other similar events put on by other passionate men.
I told my stories as bravely as I could and I listened to other men. It was amazing, it became an important part of my life and still is, although these days we’ve arrived at boys and their fathers – we want them to avoid some of the holes in the road to manhood that are in other stories; in the everyday happenings of today’s world in our families, our communities, our world; in our relationships with men and women and the mothers of our children.

And we want to tell of the fun of being a man with so much energy and exuberance passing through us every day; of the power and the fear and the amazing experience of being a good man or at least trying to be! Of the horror and the courage, the doubt and the pride. There is the uplifting feeling of creating, for a short time, a magical environment uninvaded by the mundane flat line of social put-downs, TV, harsh language, alcohol and laying aside everyday responsibilities; safe and held with determined confidentiality and safety; and lots of fun and laughter, tears and emotions.

Men of all generations from teenage magnificence to older and elder. Powerful men in their thirties and forties – fathers and sons from all walks of life, from bankers and professionals to men down on their luck and boys with desperate heartbreaking stories of broken families.

In our travels we came across other men who wanted to remember and hold initiation processes for boys. We discovered community groups that were doing it, had been doing it as part of their culture for hundreds, even thousands of years. Africans and American Indians, Australians and Polynesians.

There was a deep and very old energy and feeling to the work of the men involved in bringing through the next generation. It affected us on a primal, a genetic level. Somehow even the most urban city dwellers understood. Something deep down was remembered and enlivened.

On some level it feels very old and natural, men working with men towards a common shared goal – the growth and nurturing of good men. A bubble of the idyllic, a pause, a created space full of humour and good conscience – not easy but with a certain important tension created by intent. Men focused on outcomes beyond themselves – one of the most powerful forces for good on the planet.

It must be held, supported, cared for and guarded in a wise and experienced fashion. Everything that happens is new, but in an old way. Primal and mindful sit beside each other in the circle. Humour and angst are evident. Age and wisdom are to hand, the older and the younger. Brilliance shines its light and darkness forms shadow – all must be welcome or the realness fades.