The authors get right to the point in the words “Who are teenage Witches, and what are they really doing? (xiii)” To answer this question the authors interviewed ninety young people (in the US, UK, and Australia) who have practiced witchcraft for at least a year.

In *Teenage Witches* we learn about the commonalities among those who practice. We also meet several practicing teenage witches quite personally. Each chapter begins with one or more vignettes, case studies, which illustrate the real world experiences of these teenagers. The authors are quick to point out that teenage witches generally practice their religion alone or perhaps additionally in collaboration over the internet. Many do not even know personally one other practicing witch in their school or town. They certainly feel no inclination toward interaction and practice with “older” adults who commonly associate in covens.

A typical “entry into witchcraft” story begins with interest sparked through television programs such as “Charmed” or “Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” A teenager can easily gain more information by browsing Barnes and Nobles bookstore or googling the subject. The authors found these youth to be “…deeply involved in the spiritual and self-growth aspects of Witchcraft and only secondarily interested in instrumental magic(p.23).” These youth see their religion as life-organizing and beneficial.

Teenage witchcraft cannot be subsumed under these categories of “new religions” and “cults”: they tend to practice alone, not in groups; there is no leader (charismatic or otherwise) to “lead them astray”. In this sense teenage Witchcraft is diffuse and democratized. Berger and Ezzy provide a brief history neopaganism (with its focus on the motifs of classical paganism such as the sun, moon, and stars). Teenage witches have little interest in Satanism and anything that smacks of hurting someone else. For them, witchcraft is about self improvement and making sense of the world.

Female teenagers who consider themselves witches feel their belief is a source of empowerment as they connect to the Goddess and Mother Earth. This tends to sensitize these girls, and their male counterparts, to being attuned to environmental concerns and treating the earth with love and respect.

Does teenage Witchcraft have any moral compass or moral expectations? In chapters five and six, the authors answer with “not really” or “very little.” These teenagers want to improve themselves and feel free to do whatever falls into that category as long as it does not hurt others. Individuals may sometime cast spells related to money, relationships, employment, or school. Instructions for such spells and magic
rituals are widely available. The materials for “practices” are not expensive: candles, incense, small figurines, and perhaps various spices available at specialty grocery stores.

The final chapter of *Teenage Witches* seeks to provide a conceptually clear answer to any who would wonder why some teenagers would be drawn to Witchcraft. First, there is a cultural orientation that makes it accessible. Watch TV, rent a DVD (The Craft, Harry Potter, etc), browse the bookstore…images of and information about witches are available. Secondly, many people, including parents of teenagers, already are proponents of feminism, environmentalism, and nature-as-sacred. These beliefs are important commonalities among youth who practice.

Thirdly, Witchcraft draws some teenagers in that “…individualistic self discovery or self-reflexivity is central to contemporary culture…(and also) it is non-dogmatic and lacks a central hierarchy…(p.230)” Fourthly, the authors affirm that community these days is more gathered around identity and consumption rather than family and home. Lastly, the authors see the “rootlessness of contemporary society” associated with the decline of traditional religion as a reason for the growth of teenage Witchcraft.

The astute reader will find this final chapter very problematic. For example, the last point above connects the “growth” of teenagers Witchcraft with societal “rootlessness.” Nowhere are we shown in the text that teenage witchcraft has grown numerically. Perhaps it is actually declining. None of the author’s five “this is why teenagers become witches” has been shown to be causal. We have here educated guesses, at best. Perhaps some teenagers become witches because of video games, or because Starbucks has such an intriguing corporate logo, or because some parents read their children a certain genre of storybooks to them when they were four years old. We just don’t know.

*Teenage Witches*, as qualitative research, will be of interest to students of adolescent religiosity, new religious movements, and even those who wish to explorer possible unexpected manifestation of post modernity/technology/consumerism. Some will wish for a stronger connection to sociological theory. The authors acknowledge no one knows how many teenagers practice Witchcraft. Their sample of ninety is therefore in no respect random. One cannot generalize on the basis of the interviews conducted for this book. Having said that, *Teenage Witches* is a fascinating look at a world unknown to most of us. I would not be surprised to see additional research conducted that is inspired by the concepts, stories, and findings in this very readable work.