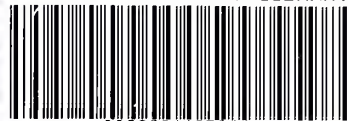


MED
Thesis
T113
+Y12
6811

YALE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



39002011059624

CROSSING OVAH' : A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
EXAMINATION OF HEALING IN AFRICAN
AMERICANS OF THE SOUTHEASTERN
UNITED STATES

— 60 —

LaLisa Alita Anderson

YALE UNIVERSITY

2001

YALE
UNIVERSITY

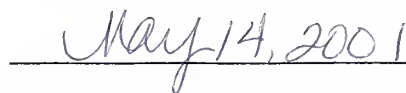


CUSHING/WHITNEY
MEDICAL LIBRARY

Permission to photocopy or microfilm processing of this thesis for the purpose of individual scholarly consultation or reference is hereby granted by the author. This permission is not to be interpreted as affecting publication of this work or otherwise placing it in the public domain, and the author reserves all rights of ownership guaranteed under common law protection of unpublished manuscripts.



Signature of Author



Date



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Arcadia Fund

<https://archive.org/details/crossingovahphen00ande>

Crossing Ovah': A Phenomenological Examination of Healing
in African Americans of the Southeastern United States

LaLisa Alita Anderson

In fulfillment of the requirements for

Doctorate of Medicine

from

Yale University School of Medicine

May 2001

YALE MEDICAL LIBRARY

AUG 24 2001

Med Lib

T113

+Y12

6811

Table of Contents

Literature Review	3
Methods	6
Results	8
Discussion	39
Acknowledgements	52
Works Cited	53

"I know that for a fact, though like the poet says sometimes the facts about a people obscures the truth about them." (21)

Gayl Jones, *The Healing*

Researchers have examined healing from the perspective of the healer and they have explored the structure and function of healing systems (1,2,3,4). However there is a paucity of research that explores healing from the context of those who have experienced it (5).

It has been noted that many mental disorders in the United States remain either untreated or poorly treated, especially in the African-American community (6). The 1999 Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health states that at present the United States mental health system is not equipped to meet the needs of racial and ethnic minority populations and describes a "constellation of barriers" deterring members of such populations from seeking treatment (7). The phenomenon of African-American aversion to mental health care is not new. African-Americans have historically shied away from psychiatric care with utilization rates consistently less than those of Caucasians, even when data are controlled for sociodemographic differences (8). The stigma attached to mental illness in the African-American community (11, 17), the history of racist practices in psychiatry (12, 13, 14, 15, 16), and the fear of institutionalization (9) have been suggested as possible explanations, either individually or

conjoined, to explain why African-Americans do not seek mental health services.

In contrast to mental health services, the importance of the religious community in many African-American lives can not be overstated. The church has historically served as a source of freedom, democracy, belonging, and hope for many African-Americans (19,20,21). In light of the past and present difficulties that African-Americans in particular face, it is not uncommon to find those who agree with author James Baldwin's belief that if it were not for religion and the African American church black folk would have lost their minds (18). In fact, religious coping behaviors are common among African Americans (22). Churches in the African-American community have been recognized as therapeutic systems that provide salient physical and psychological support (23). Moreover, they have been documented as places in which healing actually takes place (24). One aspect in particular that serves as a valuable mediator of the therapeutic value of the African American church is that of testimony (20).

The African American linguist, Geneva Smitherman defines testifyin', the process of giving testimony, as "a concept referring to a ritualized form of black communication in which the speaker gives verbal witness to some experience in which blacks share (25)." Although her definition is secular in nature, Smitherman goes on to say that in the church community testifying is a "spontaneous expression ... of the goodness of God (28)."

Stewart deems testifyin' as important because it continually invokes the power and presence of God as the fount of human activity and creates an ethos wherein mutual sharing of intimate concerns is facilitated (19). Those who speak of the experience of rendering religious testimony have connected it strongly with a sense of the "ineffable" (26). Religious testimony has also been noted to serve the role of rendering praise; satisfying a commitment to God; creating a sense of belonging within the church community; seeking help; building self esteem; serving as a means of oral protest; and likened to Freud's concept of "talking cure," giving testimony within itself has been viewed as a vehicle of healing (19,20,24,25,26).

Moreover, as a research method the experimental phenomenological psychological research process allows for the exploration of individuals' narratives to search for the meaning that lies within their experience. As Karlsson, states: "A phenomenal aspect is the straightforward account of a person's experience of a phenomenon. A phenomenological level traces out the structure or the essential constituents entailed in the experience (27)." Davidson quoting Kohak says, "It is subtle but significant. As lived, reality is the experiencing of an object" (29). Davidson then goes on to say that "through the phenomenological psychological reduction, we abandon our commonsense understanding of reality of as consisting of objects and their causal underpinnings and adopt an appreciation of reality as consisting of the acts of experiencing itself (28)."

It is in this vein that we examine the phenomenon of healing, not in its objectivity, but through the subjective renderings of those who have experienced it. In an effort to disclose some of the truths of the process we explore the structure and meaning of an experience of emotional healing for nine African Americans through examining their oral narratives of religious testimony regarding their experiences with healing. In the pages that follow, the insights that are revealed from these experiences serve a hermeneutical role. We present them as initial clues to understanding how the process of emotional injury and subsequent healing are experienced by these African-Americans. We also examine the role that belief in God plays in that process. It is our hope that understanding of the structures that comprise these experiences may allow for a self examination of the mental health field as we seek to shed more insight into the reasons why, in their attempts to recover from emotional trauma, African-Americans may avoid mental health services.

Methodology:

First, individuals were sought who were willing to share descriptions of their experiences with healing, the circumstances surrounding these experiences, and the function that these experiences served in their lives. These individuals were found through an informal network of communication. The author visited churches, ethnic secular meetings and spoke with individuals of the community about this work and asked them to also share

information with others that they knew. Thus, those who participated, because their experiences were private, were somewhat self selected. Twelve individuals initially volunteered to share their stories nine interviews were completed. It must be said that the initial purposes of collecting the testimonies were so that they may be compiled to form a book outlying individual African American's experiences with healing. That book will be published in Winter 2001(10). After learning more about the phenomenological process and approach it was realized that the testimonies collected were in fact data that could be interpreted through qualitative research mechanisms. And that in fact, the initial collection mechanisms followed the principles of the phenomenological approach and methodology as outlined by Davidson, et al in their work with schizophrenic patients (27,29).

When presented to the participants, healing was initially defined as "the progression from pain to peace." The definition was purposely broad so that the individuals would share the experiences that were most relevant to themselves, and allow for a variety of situations to be revealed. Thus granting a more universal understanding of the essential process. The descriptions were elicited by conducting phenomenological interviews at the participant's leisure and in their preferred environment. Thus, the interviews were open ended and narrative in order to allow the participants to describe their own experiences leading up to, during, and following their healing rather than have them address specific questions or issues that the interviewer deemed relevant (28). Each participant was simply asked to "tell their story" and given the space to share what they deemed relevant.

Second, the attempt was made to understand the participants' experiences in their own terms and from their own perspective. Data analysis sought to reveal the meaningfulness of the experience for the participant, rather than the interviewer. Established qualitative-phenomenological data analytic procedures

were used for this purpose. Initially, all of the open ended narrative interviews were audio taped and then transcribed verbatim. Then the interviews were read repeatedly until the interviewer felt that a "good grasp of the content" of each interview was obtained (28). Themes that were prevalent in each text were identified. Each sentence of the text was then examined for its meaning, separated from the text as a whole and sorted into the thematic category that represented its meaning. Afterwards this data was assembled to create an edited synthesis of the themes and their relevant meaning for the sharer. The edited synthesis, at that point, followed a narrative structure, placing the recurrent and salient themes of the text in the temporal context of the participants' lives. Thus allowing for the retelling of the sharer's story in a thematic way. The nine edited syntheses were then reviewed individually and as a whole, allowing for the identification of themes that were present across the narratives. A structural synthesis of these findings was then developed and is explicated below.

Insights revealed (Results):

Participant Profiles

Kenny B

Mr. B is a middle-aged man who at the prime of a promising athletic career was diagnosed with Myasthenia Gravis. He later suffers, in addition to Myasthenia Gravis, with alcoholism and depression in his adult life. Mr. B speaks of having always carried a great fear of failure that was fostered through childhood interactions with his verbally abusive stepfather. His healing occurs one evening while in church.

Mrs. I

Mrs. I is a middle aged woman who through her abusive husband became involved in a religious cult. She speaks of the physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse that she received as an adult as well as the fear and desire for protection that she had as a child because of her spiritual gift to "see" into the supernatural realm. Mrs. I also speaks about feeling alienated as a child and growing up as a victim of her father's violent nature. Her healing evolves slowly through a realization that she receives while on the cult's monastic grounds.

Mrs. D

Mrs. D is a successful young professional who discloses the events that lead to her forced psychiatric hospitalization. She speaks of the loss of her mother, her childhood molestation, and the alienation and rejection that she experienced as a child. Mrs. D also tells of the alienation and rejection that surrounded the events immediately prior to her psychiatric breakdown. She speaks of her healing being initiated while she was institutionalized. However it was not by the medical staff.

Mrs. R

Mrs. R is an elderly woman who tells of her nervous breakdown and subsequent hospitalization in the context of her teenage pregnancy, rape, and the rejection and alienation that she experienced from her mother and her community. Mrs. R's healing begins at church during her young adulthood and is mediated through the loving relationship with her husband over the course of their lives.

Ms. L

Miss L is a young adult who speaks of her corporate job, childhood molestation, self-esteem, and feelings of being "not

seen," in the context of her clinical depression. Her healing begins while on a retreat and evolves through a series of realizations over time.

Mr. T

Mr. T is a young adult with AIDS who tells of the guilt and insecurity that he experienced while engaging in homosexual behaviors and alludes to the fears and persecution attached to his disease and lifestyle. He speaks of the healing "of his spirit, mind, and body" that begins during one church service.

Miss W

Miss W is a middle-aged woman who tells the story that surrounds her childhood experience with nosebleeds, being a "hyper child," and her relationship with her great-grandmother. Her healing occurs at home in her childhood.

Mr. R

Mr. R is a middle aged Veteran who tells of being drafted to Vietnam and the alcoholism which grew out of that experience. He speaks about experiences with great loss - of control, of loved ones, of self... and the healing occurs one day at his home.

Ms. A

Ms. A is a young honor student whose body was smashed between two cars while on her way from school. She speaks of the faith and determination that fueled her despite her medical prognosis and the healing that occurs after her hospital discharge.

Annotated Structure

They were approached by an eager, awkward stranger and asked to reveal their deepest wounds. The response sometimes unhesitant, other times with marked deliberation, was always "Yes. So that others can learn and heal." We do have much to learn from these participants.

The testimonies like the testifiers were indeed varied; disclosing a cornucopia of circumstances all linked by the common theme "...and I healed." And because it was healing that was sought, its essence, its structure, its meaning to those who knew it intimately, they were asked first, and sometimes only, "tell me your story." With that as if with some gust of narrative wind, they each began. These adults went back to that place in their youth where their joy was disrupted. They told of the fear, the rejection, and the loss that they experienced in their younger years.

They then spoke of more recent pain, emotional pain, that is. Regardless of their physical difficulties, they spoke as if their emotional wounds took precedence. It was the emotional debilitation, either alone or accompanying the physical trauma that was significant. For them, that was the injury. For me, it sounded familiar. However it was not until I, while sifting through typewritten sentences, realized this. For they had spoken of those pains before. The debilitating emotional injury that the

participants spoke of in their later years was actually of the same theme as that first mentioned, well remembered pain of their youth.

After speaking about their second lived pain these participants seemed exhausted. I, as the listener, wondered how they could rise from places that seemed so heavy. Then they told of their healing. They each spoke and as if singing a lyrical round, they all told the same truth. At their point of healing it was either establishing, or reestablishing their relationship with God that mediated the process. It must be said that each of these participants did indeed believe in God. They were of different backgrounds and different traditions of faith, yet they all made reference to a divine being. This, though somewhat anticipated, was a phenomenon within itself; that these self-selected individuals who healed and were willing to share their stories which in fact became as in the tradition of the African American church, testimonies of healing, had a strong belief in God.

Yet we find that it is not solely through a relationship, in general, with God that they are healed. These participants speak of establishing or reestablishing a relationship with God in which they are the recipients of the very aspect of God's nature that touches them at those places where their wounds were incurred. During this portion of their testimony, in response to the salient themes of fear, loss, and rejection that emerged when the participants spoke of their injury, we bear witness to their

healing being facilitated by aspects of God's nature such as his protection, omnipotence, and acceptance/unconditional love.

After telling how God comes into their lives and touches their wounded places, the participants speak of yet another phenomenon; a phenomenon which comprises the essence of their healing experience. These participants reveal that it is not simply connecting with a particular aspect of God's nature that is healing. But that the healing comes because it is through their relationship with God that these participants have in some way been made anew. It is this process of creation that comprises the essence of their healing process. "God changed" them. But the change is not a process of reformation - nor is it a change that is deemed transient. The participants speak about God's omnific presence in their lives that creates within them something anew in the place where they were initially wounded. As previously stated, our participants give precedence to emotional wounds. Rather than focusing on their new muscles or face they speak of having a new identity, a new outlook, or a new approach to dealing with an old problem. Yet oft times this phenomenon borders on the ineffable. They simply say "I'm changed," or "I am different," or they may not articulate it even as explicitly as this.

Illustrated Structure

...With that as if with some gust of narrative wind, they each began. These adults went back to their childhood.

(First line/paragraphs of narratives)

Kenny B

My name is Kenny B. I grew up in a household where there was a lot of fear.

Mrs W

I was a real hyper child.

Mrs I

I always saw things as a child.

Miss L

I have always wanted to be... When I think of myself ideally, I think of myself as a girly girl who likes frilly things... But I remember as a child, one of the distinct memories I have...

Mrs R

Me and Isaiah met way back in 1939 before I had my first child. I guess like anybody else he was just a man looking for a woman but I was not a woman, I really was a sixteen-year-old child.

Mr. R

The type of home that I was brought up in was basically a Christian home.

And then they told about that place in their youth where their joy was disrupted. They told of fear, rejection, and loss that they experienced in their younger years.

Kenny B

I grew up in a household where there was a lot of fear. I had a very abusive stepfather. He was very abusive emotionally to us... I was just really afraid of him. He would just holler and yell and say evil things to me. I remember him telling me. "Boy you ain't shit and you ain't never gonna be shit." Yeah, he used to tell me that all of the time. So I really grew up with a poor self-image. I remember that before I told time, I could feel when he was about to come home. If it was the summer time, I just knew when he was going to come home and I would actually hide under the porch. If it was the wintertime and it was too cold to be outside I would actually hide under my bed. So I grew up being afraid in my own house.

Mrs I

I always saw things as a child. I was always seeing flashes of light or shadows moving about the room. Certain times, I'd be

afraid to be in the room by myself... When I would say to someone "Did you see that face? or Did you see that man that just walked by?" They would tell me that there was no such thing. So I felt scared... I used to have vivid dreams about people that died already. It was the kind of thing where I grew up thinking that I was abnormally normal. Nobody seemed to be having these kind of experiences. I do remember feeling very different from everybody else.

Miss L

I think the authentic me is a feminine ballerina, but somewhere growing up I took on the persona of acting like how people expected me to act... I never felt pretty... When I was younger, I don't remember exactly what age, I was molested by an older cousin... So that didn't make me feel pretty because then, here is someone molesting me. It was secretive. I had to pretend that it didn't happen in the day... I knew that it wasn't right. I could feel that it wasn't right... I just took on the persona that that was just what I was supposed to be. Just an object.

Ms. D

You know, I don't even want to mention the pain that began to grow back when I was in preschool, when I was molested... I was always different. My mom and I had a very special relationship ... and because of that at home I would catch it from my younger brothers and sisters who would always be like "D thinks that

she's all that!"...In elementary school my grades differentiated me a lot from my peers. So there I was, that girl, just different. I got into so many fights trying to be apart of the group. I felt rejected.

Mrs R

I from a child was always trying to please my mom, but I guess she was just tired of children... I suppose that time was the breaking point of my life [when she was sixteen], before that all I ever knew was that you should live a good godly life... It was during that time that I got pregnant with Jameson's son. I had my first son and Jameson left town... I tell you, after I got pregnant and Jameson left, I hurt. It was like an outcast to be pregnant and not have a husband. My mom, she was hurt too. (But) with that first child she really did love me, She loved me so much that she wanted to have my pain.

Mr. R

At that time, I made over ten thousand dollars. That was a lot of money during that time. I was working twelve and thirteen hours a day for the railroad. I worked with my Uncle when I had time on Saturdays. He owned four family flats. My goal was to buy me a flat of my own and rent it out. That is what I was working hard and saving all of my money for. Mind you, at that time I was only eighteen years old. That was my goal. I was in the church and

doing well and boom I got drafted. So when I went to the service, I was bitter.

They then spoke of their recent pain, their emotional pain, that is. Regardless of their physical difficulties, they spoke as if their emotional wounds took precedence. It was the emotional debilitation, either alone or that accompanied the physical trauma that was significant.

Kenny B

The week that I was supposed to go to Dallas to sign with the Cowboys, I got sick with the Myasthenia and had to go to the hospital. My strength was me. That was my identity. When I got sick and I went into the hospital and wasn't able to go to Dallas it just really hurt me.

Mrs. A

Coming out of the coma was hurtful. The way I looked. Really it hurt. All of the surgery I had. I couldn't finish school. I just didn't feel the same. I had to get back to myself.

Mrs W

I was a real hyper child... I was so hyped up and running around all over the place... I got a whopping every night. I did every night... My nose used to bleed all of the time... I was a busy overly

active child and I guess those nosebleeds was one way of my body cooling down at night.

Mrs I

So I went back, and this fist... BAMM... met me at the front door. I fell across the porch, of course I had a huge black eye, and I was just like in a daze. I was just contemplating "What is happening? How did I get myself in this situation? What is happening here?" ... I was too embarrassed... I would always talk about women and say, "I don't see how they could let themselves get in that situation." I never ever thought that I would end up in that situation.

Mr. T

I couldn't walk, I couldn't fix my own food. I had to have someone come up here and cook for me. It was just not being able to be self-sufficient that really bothered me, because I have always been self-sufficient.

However, it was not until I, while sifting through typewritten sentences, realized that they had spoken of those pains before. For the emotional injury that the participants spoke of in their later years was actually of the same theme as that first mentioned, well remembered pain of their youth.

Kenny B (fear - of failure)

I grew up in a household where there was a lot of fear. I had a very abusive stepfather. He was very abusive emotionally to us... I was just really afraid of him. He would just holler and yell and say evil things to me. I remember him telling me. "Boy you ain't shit and you ain't never gonna be shit." Yeah, he used to tell me that all of the time. So I really grew up with a poor self-image. I remember that before I told time, I could feel when he was about to come home. If it was the summer time, I just knew when he was going to come home and I would actually hide under the porch. If it was the wintertime and it was too cold to be outside I would actually hide under my bed. So I grew up being afraid in my own house.

...

Years later, after his diagnosis with Myasthenia Gravis, loss of his athletic career and inability to secure employment Mr. B says:

I was depressed. I felt like a loser. The fear came back. I think that I have lived the majority of my life in fear... In fear that I was not going to make it. Fear that I was not going to live up... When I was losing all of those jobs and I had to quit my jobs my stepfather came back to me saying, "You ain't shit and you ain't never gonna be shit." Instead of hiding under the bed I was hiding under the alcohol.

Mrs. D (alienation, rejection)

You know, I don't even want to mention the pain that began to grow back when I was in preschool, when I was molested... I was always different. My mom and I had a very special relationship... and because of that at home I would catch it from my younger brothers and sisters who would always be like "D thinks that she's all that!"... In elementary school my grades differentiated me a lot from my peers. So there I was, that girl, just different. I got into so many fights trying to be apart of the group. I felt rejected.

...

In relaying the events immediately prior to her psychiatric hospitalization Ms. D tells about her experience at her job.

The turning point for me was when... I became a spectacle they took my name off the next project and announced it in front of the entire team... When you get labeled, like I did in that environment, it is hell on earth. I thought that if you do good then everything will come out right. No, not necessarily. You can do good and do well and get blackballed. You can... I was labeled. With my extrovert personality in an introvert company it was whatever excuse. She's too loud. She's too emotional. She wears... Whatever the reason was, I wasn't going anywhere.

Miss L (rejection, seeking approval)

I think the authentic me is a feminine ballerina, but somewhere growing up I took on the persona of acting like how people expected me to act... I never felt pretty... When I was younger, I don't remember exactly what age, I was molested by an older cousin... So that didn't make me feel pretty because then, here is someone molesting me. It was secretive. I had to pretend that it didn't happen in the day... I knew that it wasn't right. I could feel that it wasn't right...I just took on the persona [of being strong and mature] because that was just what I was supposed to be. Just an object.

...

Later, Miss L talks about her adult experience in Corporate America that preceded her depression.

Things started coming to a head when I graduated from college and had been working in the work world and I guess that I was doing something that just didn't feel like me... I hated putting on a suit to go to work. I was mature. But I think that I wanted to be a child and it was like, yes, I made my parents proud but I hated going to work.

Mrs R (alienation, rejection)

I from a child was always trying to please my mom, but I guess she was just tired of children... I suppose that time was the breaking point of my life [when she was sixteen], before that all

I ever knew was that you should live a good godly life... It was during that time that I got pregnant with Jameson's son. I had my first son and Jameson left town... I tell you, after I got pregnant and Jameson left, I hurt. It was like an outcast to be pregnant and not have a husband. My mom, she was hurt too. *(But) with that first child* she really did love me, She loved me so much that she wanted to have my pain.

...

Some time later Mrs R speaks about her rape and the events immediately prior to her nervous breakdown.

... Me and him we fought and fought. Because I had told God and myself that I wasn't going to have any more dealings with anybody else after Jameson. I knowed what I had done to my mom. Robinson raped me that night. And afterwards left me by the creek. When I went home I didn't say anything to anybody because I actually reasoned it in my mind - "Who is gonna believe you? You've got a baby, whose gonna believe you?" It was like an outcast to be pregnant and not have a husband... I was so desperate that I wanted to kill the baby I really did because I thought that this was too much.

...

Mrs R hid this second pregnancy from her mother as long as possible. After the baby was born she had a nervous breakdown. She says:

When I had the nervous breakdown I was placed in the hospital and the psychologists, I don't know what they were doing, but anyway. It was a very strange thing it was just like in this nervous breakdown, I closed the world out of me... I just let go and there was nothing. Everything was a dream or a nightmare or something. My mom, she didn't visit.

...And then they told of their healing... it was either establishing or reestablishing a relationship with God that mediated the healing process... Yet it is not solely through a relationship with God that they are healed. These participants speak of establishing or reestablishing a relationship with God in which they are the recipients of the very aspect of God's nature that touches them at those particular places where their wounds were incurred.

Kenny B

I grew up in a household where there was a lot of fear... I think that I have lived the majority of my life in fear...

Explaining his healing that occurs at a church service, Kenny B says:

I felt that I was healed that night. That service, the fear went away, because I knew that God would take care of me. I really

knew that... that night I was healed emotionally and that was just as important as the physical healing. I had a lot of fear. I was paranoid in a lot of ways and didn't trust doctors or people in authority and all I know is that all of that went away. When I was healed emotionally, my body got better... I just started getting better, I started feeling strong.

Ms. I

I always saw things as a child. I was always seeing flashes of light and shadows moving about the room. Certain times, I'd be afraid to be in the room by myself... When I would say to someone "Did you see that face? or Did you see that man that just walked by?" They would tell me that there was no such thing. So I felt scared... I used to have vivid dreams about people that died already. It was the kind of thing where I grew up thinking that I was abnormally normal. Nobody seemed to be having these kind of experiences. I do remember feeling very different from everybody else.

...

Later before meeting her husband and becoming involved with the cult she says:

I was always having these issues with being afraid. It was during that time period... where I began to officially embark on a spiritual path. I asked my spiritual teacher what I could do if I

was embarking on this path for protection. I just felt like protection was the main thing. I was always scared.

Through the abuse that she incurs at the monastery and in her home, Mrs. I eventually learns that the protection and acceptance that she sought was to be found with God. She later says:

Essentially, the healing has to start when you recognize the gifts that the creator has already given you, recognizing that so many of the things that we do are already ways in which we protect ourselves... In all of the scriptures, whether it is worded differently or not, they all say "Be still and know that I am God. Know that I dwell within you." You have to be quiet. You have to come to a place of inner peace where you can tap into that infinite source... Spirituality is supposed to be something that is tangible. Something that is real. As long as it is presented as something that is way out there then very few people will get it. The powers that be love that. As long as they can get you from doing something other than making contact with the creator within, you will always be a slave of some other. Always under the whim of someone else, because they will determine your destiny... I am really excited about life and a lot more loving with myself. I am learning how to honor my body... For a long time I sacrificed all of my time and energy to fulfill everybody else's needs that I really didn't do what I needed to do for myself. I feel like my life has a greater sense of purpose.

Miss L

I just took on the persona that that was just what I was supposed to be. Just an object... I guess that I was doing something that just didn't feel like me... I hated putting on a suit to go to work. I was mature. But I think that I wanted to be a child and it was like, yes, I made my parents proud but I hated going to work.

...

While being forced to take some time to be with herself Ms. L realized that she had choice and that she no longer needed to look to others, but to look to herself and God to tell her who she was or what she was to become. She says:

I am more spiritual. I know that all of the blessings that God had in store for me I had blocked. Because I wasn't being true to myself. When you are not being true to yourself, then you are not being true to God because God is in you. So every time that you deny the desires of your heart, whenever you deny those for something someone here on earth wants you to do; you are denying God.. Before I wouldn't say no because it was expected of me to do certain things because I had to prove and live up to this image that was not me... Now I am doing the things that are me. It is just me and God. No one else. I don't have to prove anything to anyone. I just really am much happier. I love life. It is fun. I

laugh out loud and could care less about what other people think I should be doing... I am doing what God leads me to do. I feel better. It is like a good feeling.

Mrs. R

I was always trying to please my mom, but I guess she was just tired of children... It was like an outcast to be pregnant and not have a husband... My mom, she didn't visit.

...

Yet, while hospitalized Ms. R did have one visitor, her future husband, Mr. R. she says:

I stayed in there and Mr. R started visiting me in the hospital... Even though while I was in there I'm sure everybody was talking about my state, Mr. R would always tell me, "Bee, you look the same, to me you haven't changed at all."

Mr. and Mrs R later marry, and they both commit their lives to God. She then speaks about the acceptance, and togetherness they share and how God's love through her husband is healing:

In all of our pains and in all of our sorrows it was always thick love holding me and Isaiah together... Sometimes I believe that kind of love keeps healing, Now that you don't get sick, but it causes healing... I cannot thank God enough for the kind of husband

that he gave me. I think that God gave me the best man on earth. Mr. R loves God. And it is that love that keeps us going. Like that battery, it keeps us going, and going, and going.

Mr. T

Mr. T who dealt with feelings of fear and persecution speaks of God's intercession in his life:

...

The Lord says if you are on his side, he will always be present. He will always watch over you. He will always intercede in case something comes up. For you are his child.. I said to myself, as much pain as Satan may inflict on my body physically, he can never touch me spiritually.. And I just thank God for that. I can go today or tomorrow, and I know that I am happy, because he has given me peace and joy and happiness in my life.. I am not afraid. I do not fear death anymore. Because I know that I am his child and he has given me eternal life.

Ms A

After being smashed between two cars and physically disfigured Mrs A was discouraged by her physicians and told that she would be paralyzed for life. Yet she relies on God's omnipotence. She says:

When I woke up I was in a new world. I really was hurt. My face was disfigured and they said that I would never walk again... I started walking three months later. They thought that I was going to be paralyzed for life. When they told me that I said, "I rebuke it. All things are possible with the creator. You are not God."

Ms D

I was always different... I got into so many fights trying to be apart of the group. I felt rejected.

...

Instead of looking to others for acceptance Ms. D later is able to accept herself as a creation of God. She says:

I am accepting who I am; who God has designed me to be with my opinionated, big-eyed, loud mouth, full of expression, different attitude, different motivation self. You know, I am accepting that. And today, I am okay with me and that has made all of the difference.

After telling of how God comes into their lives and touches their wounded places, the participants speak of yet another phenomenon, a phenomenon which comprises the essence of their healing experience. These participants reveal that it not simply

connecting with a particular aspect of God's nature that is healing, but that the healing comes because it is through their relationship with God that these participants have in some way been made anew... God "changed" them. But the change is not a process of reformation nor is it a change that is deemed transient. The participants speak about God's omnific presence in their lives that creates within them something new in the place where they were initially wounded.

Mrs. R

That was the day that I committed my life back to Christ. It was some change too. [Mr. R] watched me for about a week or two... and he said "Bee, I don't know what it is about you - but whatever it is, I want it because you are a changed person." I always thought that I was a good wife but he watched me and he knew that there was something different about me. He said, "you are different, I want it." So he went about two weeks later and committed his life to Christ, And then our love got stronger. It just began to climb uphill, It was such an awesome change in our life.

Mr. B

I knew that I was going to be healed. I believe I actually heard God say, "You are going to be healed. And I was... That night my whole life changed. It really changed. It changed in the sense that I have stopped being scared... Now the fear still comes, but I

tell it to get behind me. I just don't stay where I used to stay ... People don't change. People are who they are. People are going to be who they are until something happens to make them change. Unless God is there to make them change then they are not going to change. Until you have a spiritual awakening, until you let God- it ain't gonna happen. You can not change. You are going to be who you are.

Mr. T

I am just so thankful for how he has changed my spirit. From bad to good.. They say you are God's child now, baby. You are God's child now... You ain't like them no more, you are different now.

Mr. R

When I got up and looked around at the mess. I just picked up the bottle to pour me a drink... I was going to get so high that I didn't have to deal with reality... I turned on the television and this guy was singing a song. To this day I don't know what song he was singing but whatever it was it seemed to bring everything about the lord back into my remembrance. So, I put the drink down and I started crying, I started crying out to the Lord. I said, "Lord. Save me. I don't want to live the life that I am living. I don't want to be like I am." ... I just began to cry out to God. I began to repent and I asked him to forgive me for everything that I had done. Everything that I could think of that I could repent

of I asked for his forgiveness. I asked for him to come in and cover me and change me because I didn't want to be like that anymore. That was the morning that the lord saved me and changed me. I wasn't in church. I was in an apartment. That day God took the alcohol, the cigarettes, the opium, the hash, away. After I got up off of my knees I never touched any of that again. That was seventeen years ago...

I stopped going around my old friends. One of my buddies came up to me smoking a joint and I told him, "Hey man, I ain't about that anymore."... I had to separate myself... I told them, "I don't do that anymore, I am saved now."

I preach the word now... We have a ministry in our church where we work with drug pushers... We push The Word. People that have been hooked on crack are being saved. They are being set free and delivered.

I just want people to know that if they let their heart speak and ask God to come in and change them then he will do that. Because he is God.

Summary of Results:

	Injury	Injury	Intercession	Creation
--	---------------	---------------	---------------------	-----------------

	First Hit	Second Hit		
Mr. B	<p>Father's words</p> <p>"you ain't shit and you never will be shit."</p> <p>Fear of failure</p> <p>Response: hiding (porch, bed)</p>	<p>Loss of athletic career</p> <p>Reiterates Fathers words</p> <p>Fear of failure</p> <p>Response: hiding (alcohol, social isolation)</p>	<p>God as protector</p> <p>"The fear went away because I knew that God would take care of me."</p>	<p>Moving beyond fears</p> <p>"My whole life changed. It changed in the sense that I have stopped being scared. Now the fear still comes, but I tell it to get behind me. I just don't stay where I used to stay... Every day to me is an adventure. I am going to school in March to get a finance degree. I am real excited about that. A few years ago that old fear would have come up and say 'You are going to start this job and you will get sick. You are going to go to school and you will get sick.'</p> <p>Today I know that God is going to take care of me.</p>
Ms. I	<p>Visions of the supernatural</p> <p>"I always saw things as a child..I'd just be afraid to be in the room by myself. I just felt scared."</p> <p>Fear of physical /spiritual harm.</p> <p>Response: seeking protection from male (father)</p>	<p>Abusive Monastic Cult</p> <p>"The most profound lesson came... when I was at the monastery... (while at the monastery) I was abused psychologically first, and then physically by the spiritual leader). The physical boundaries were overcome. It was the psychological that was a battle."</p> <p>Response: seeking protection from</p>	<p>Spirit of God dwelling within her as protector</p> <p>"Essentially the healing has to start when you recognize the gifts that the creator has already given you recognizing that so many of the things that we do are already ways in which we protect ourselves. In all of the scriptures... they all say, "Be still and know that I am God. Know that I dwell within you." You have to be</p>	<p>Emergence and celebration of self and gifts</p> <p>(ability to "see things" now seen as a gift.)</p> <p>"I am really excited about life and a lot more loving with myself. I am learning how to honor my body... I feel like my life has a greater sense of purpose, in order to help others."</p>

		male (cult leader, husband)	quiet...(and) come to a place of inner peace where you can tap into that inner source."	
Mrs. D	<p>Alienation & Rejection from peers</p> <p>"I was always different...I would catch it from my brothers and sisters... In elementary school my grades differentiated me a lot from my peers. So there I was, that girl, just different. I got into so many fights trying to be a part of the group I felt rejected.</p> <p>Response: seeking the group's acceptance</p>	<p>Alienation & Rejection from peers.</p> <p>"I became a spectacle they took my name off of the project and announced it in front of the entire team. I was labeled."</p> <p>Response: Fighting to be a part of the group - (passivity and dedication at work - ultimately psychotic breakdown.)</p>	<p>God's forgiveness and love.</p> <p>"I started praying. I said, 'Lord, I know that you are real. Save me. Save me. And even if you don't, I know that you are able.' And at that point God forgave me. And I began to see their faces. I could see light.</p>	<p>Acceptance of and caring for self.</p> <p>"I am accepting who I am; who God has designed me to be... You know, I am accepting that. And today, I am okay with me and that has made all of the difference."</p>
Mrs. R	<p>Alienation & Rejection from community</p> <p>"It was like an outcast to be pregnant and not have a husband."</p>	<p>Alienation & Rejection from mother and community</p> <p>"He raped me...I didn't say anything to anybody because I actually reasoned it in my mind, 'Who is going to believe you? You've got a baby...' It was a very strange thing it was just like in this nervous breakdown, I closed the world out of me... I just let go and there was nothing.. My mom, she didn't visit."</p> <p>Response: Shame - to isolate self/experience</p>	<p>God's acceptance and love through her husband Isaiah</p> <p>"This was my time to feel him out - to see if he was not only accepting me, but if he was accepting the children...I knew then that he really loved me. ...I knew he loved me. I really knew he loved me."</p>	<p>The perfecting of that love through committing their lives to God - Ms. R open to loving and companionship</p> <p>"That was the day I committed my life back to Christ. It was some change too... [my husband] went about two weeks later and committed his life back to Christ, and then our love got stronger. It just began to climb uphill. It was such an awesome change in our life... Sometimes I believe that kind of love keeps healing..."</p>

<p>Ms. L</p>	<p>Feeling Objectified/ Rejected</p> <p>"...I took on the persona of acting like how people expected me to act...I took on the persona [of being strong and mature] because that is just what I was supposed to be, just an object... I really didn't feel good about myself."</p> <p>Response: Seeking other's approval</p>	<p>Feeling Objectified/ Rejected</p> <p>"Things started coming to a head when I graduated from college and had been working in the work world and I guess that I was doing something that just didn't feel like me...I was mature. Yes, my parents were proud but I hated going to work. At 29 years old I was still living for them to approve of what I do. "</p> <p>Clinical Depression follows.</p>	<p>God's forgiveness/ approval</p> <p>"I think that the biggest thing that has helped me was once I realized that no matter what, any mistake you make, God has forgotten about it. If you ask for forgiveness, you are forgiven . He is not holding it over your head, so why should we?"</p>	<p>Self acceptance/ Defining life in own terms</p> <p>"I am more spiritual.. I know that all of the blessings that God has in store for me I had blocked. Because I wasn't being true to myself. When you are not being true to yourself, then you are not being true to God because God is in you.. Now I am doing the things that are me. I don't have to prove anything to anyone. I realize now, that I am a spiritual being that was put here for a purpose. I may not know what I want to do, but I definitely know what I don't want to do and that's a start. Now I am enjoying life, where before it was a chore."</p>
<p>Mr. T</p>	<p>Not explicitly stated -</p>	<p>Diagnosis with HIV - inferred fear,</p>	<p>God's protection / acceptance</p>	<p>Celebration of life.</p>

		<p>persecution</p> <p>(also not explicitly stated)</p>	<p>"The Lord says if you are on his side, then he will always be present. He will watch over you. He will always intercede in case something comes up..."</p>	<p>"I am just so thankful for how he has changed my spirit. From bad to good...They say, you are God's child now...I am not afraid. I do not fear death anymore. Because I am his child and he has given me eternal life I can go today or tomorrow, and I know that I am happy, because he has given me peace and joy and happiness in my life."</p>
Miss W	<p>Self concept as "bad"</p> <p>"I was a real hyper child...I was so hyped up and running around all over the place... I got a whopping every night, I did, every night"</p>	<p>Nosebleeds reinforced self concept as "bad"</p> <p>"My nose used to bleed all of the time... I was a busy, overly active child and I guess those nosebleeds was one way of my body cooling down at night."</p>	<p>Divine intervention</p> <p>"[When] they got grandmamma to the hospital on time, my nose stopped bleeding. And it never bled one drop again. Never."</p> <p>(Because of her nosebleeds Ms.W's family attempted to wake her grandmother up one night in the midst of a stroke)</p>	<p>Self as "good"</p> <p>"I helped my grandmother to live. Now that I look back on it, I think me and my grandmamma were kindred spirits. Even thought we never liked each other. Maybe we were too much alike. I was a difficult child. But, that one thing I did do. That night, unbeknownst to me, I saved Grandmamma Lena's life."</p>
Mr. R	<p>Loss of dreams:</p> <p>"My goal was to buy me a flat of my own and rent it out. That is what I was working hard and saving all of my money for. hat was my goal. I was in the church and doing well in the church and boom - I got drafted. So, when I went</p>	<p>Loss of family (people that he was responsible for):</p> <p>"My children were born in 1974 and 1976 and I got divorced from their mother in 1980. That was traumatizing for me, especially from the point of loosing my children. I</p>	<p>God's deliverance</p> <p>"So, I put the drink down and I started crying and I started crying out to the Lord. I said 'Lord. Save Me. I don't want to live the life I am living. I don't want to be like I am. I don't want my children to be</p>	<p>New way of life:</p> <p>"I began to repent and I asked him to forgive me for everything that I had done. Everything that I could think of that I could repent of I asked for his forgiveness. I asked for him to come in and</p>

	<p>to the service I really was bitter... In that short period of time I had turned away from God."</p> <p>Response: Anger/Resentment</p> <p>Loss of men: (people that he was responsible for)</p> <p>"By 1968, I had been promoted to platoon sergeant. We had lost many of our men. As platoon sergeant I was responsible for all four squads. We had quite a few people get killed and quite a few people get injured."</p>	<p>missed them more than anything else.</p> <p>Now, mind you, during this time I was still drinking and doing drugs and living the fast life. After the divorce I continued to drink until I became an alcoholic."</p> <p>Loss of self: "When you come out of a situation like Vietnam you are not the same person that left. My mind set, the way that I carried myself had changed... I had no control and all of these things were piling up on me. It was dealing with my mind and I didn't know what to do. I didn't like myself anymore. I didn't like what I had become."</p>	<p>living like they are living.' And I just began to cry out to God."</p>	<p>cover me and change me because I didn't want to be like that no more. That was the morning that the lord saved me and changed me... That day God took the alcohol, the cigarettes, the opium, the hash, the way. After I got up off of my knees I never touched any of that again. That was seventeen years ago...In this day in time I have been called into the ministry. I preach the word now... I just want people to know that if they let their heart speak and ask God to come in and change them then he will do that. Because he is God."</p>
--	--	---	---	--

Name	Insult	Prior Reference to God and Healing	Recreation
Akanke	<p>"I really was hurt. My face was disfigured and they said that I would never walk again. I couldn't deal with myself in that wheelchair and I was mad at</p>	<p>"Faith in the creator brought me out of the depression. I come from a background of very strong spirits. Sometimes there is a reason, to slow you down.</p>	<p>"I am constantly going, moving forward. I keep the faith. I keep growing because I have a son and I can't just give up... I have been through a cycle of all types of</p>

	my body."	There is a purpose. You must know who is in charge... They told me that I was going to be paralyzed for life. When they told me that I said 'I rebuke it. All things are possible with the creator. You are not God.' I started walking three months later."	things. I can go on and on. Before the accident I had been a battered wife, and I had lost babies - but I am not going to get into all of that because my purpose in life is to be determined. There is a reason that the creator got me here - to fulfill his purpose. He hasn't finished with me yet."
--	-----------	--	--

Discussion:

The participants through their stories, though varied, do reveal a common process. They speak of a process of injury in which emotional debilitation results from being wounded in a particular way in a particular place that had experienced similar wounds before. After being debilitated they seek healing and find it through connection with the divine. They connect with the aspect of God's nature that touches them at their wounded places. They there after explain that through their connection with that particular aspect of God's nature that something completely new is created from those wounded places - in some way they are

"changed" or made anew. This process can be broken into three phases 1) injury, 2) intercession, and 3) creation.

Injury

In the early 1970's Knudson introduced a simple theory that revolutionized thinking around carcinogenesis. Beyond its initial purposes, this theory, referred to as the "two hit hypothesis," appears to have relevance for the field of mental health. Knudson's hypothesis, defined in terms of Retinoblastoma, the initial disease mechanism that led to its discovery, states:

Retinoblastoma is a cancer caused by two mutational events. In the dominantly inherited form, one mutation is inherited via the germinal cells and the second mutation occurs in somatic cells. In the non hereditary form, both mutations occur in the somatic cells (30).

Although in the general population Retinoblastoma is rare, it is the most common malignant eye tumor of childhood and is responsible for approximately 1% of all deaths from cancer in the age group of newborn to 15 years. It occurs in two patterns, familial and sporadic, with patients that have the familial pattern being at risk of developing other soft tissue tumors (31,32). Knudson's theory proposes that in the dominantly inherited form of the cancer, or the familial pattern, a genetic insult on the cellular level has occurred and is passed from parent to child. The child, then exposed to environmental carcinogens is more prone to developing cancer because of this

prior genetic injury. It is as if the first genetic insult weakened the cell, and because of the cell's susceptibility the second, environmental injury, otherwise known as the "second hit" resulted in tumorigenesis. In the sporadic, or non-hereditary, cases both insults are environmental in nature, however the results are the same.

Interestingly enough, by examining the narratives of African-Americans describing their experiences with healing a quite similar phenomenon emerges. It seems as if in reference to their emotional injury, each of the participants had an initial insult that most often occurred in childhood. They however, continued with life and were joyous, at best. The participants did not become debilitated until they had a subsequent emotional injury, "a second hit," in the exact same emotional place that was weakened by the first injury. This phenomenon occurred regardless of any prior or concomitant physical injury. Thus, of those individuals who had physical injuries, it was not the physical injury itself that caused the emotional debilitation, per se, but it was that the physical injury embodied emotional trauma that served as a "second (emotional) hit." Interestingly enough, in their minds, healing of the emotional injury preceded healing of the physical trauma. As one sharer says, "when I was healed emotionally, my body got better."

All narrators were adults. In relaying their stories the trauma that we shall call the "first emotional hit" was usually spoken about in the first paragraph of the narrative. It is as if

on some level the narrators understood the importance of this event in the chronology of their healing. And that the emotional injury that this first hit inured made the narrators more susceptible to debilitation when faced with a very similar injury later in life.

Unlike Ericksonian thinking which suggest that debilitation in adulthood is caused by the reemergence of unresolved conflict. This theory suggest that it is the adult's reexperiencing of emotional pain (the second hit) similar to the emotional pain experienced with some unresolved conflict (the first hit), that results in debilitation.

This distinction, though seemingly subtle, is crucial. For though both involve a return to the childhood conflict, one emphasizes the repairing of the old conflict, i.e. the fixing or mending of old wounds, while the other grants space to allow for the process of creating something new out of that wounded area.

A corollary to this line of thinking emerges upon further examination of Ms. A's narrative. In her narrative she gives no reference to having experienced feelings similar to those that her accident entailed. However, she does later mention that she had "lost children and been a battered wife." Yet, Ms. A says that she had been "through" that and in the time preceding her healing she makes the statement that she "had to get back to herself." This leads one to wonder whether once a person has undergone a significant emotional healing experience, if that

experience of healing serves as a protective means for future harm - if, in fact, it makes them more resilient.

In 1995, Knudson revisited his Second Hit theory and says:

On one hand [this theory's] relative simplicity was useful for the construction of a model; on the other hand, it is too simple a tumor to equate to the common carcinomas. Yet it provides a foundation for the elaborations necessary to understand the complex cancers (38).

The mechanisms involving emotional injury and subsequent debilitation are also undoubtedly complex. However this simple theory may serve as a foundation for future explorations in the process of healing.

The Intercession

Research shows that spirituality has a moderating effect on negative life experiences and levels of depression and anxiety (33). Miller referring to Alcoholics Anonymous, which was founded on Protestant principles, states that spirituality has also been shown to be of importance in the recovery from alcoholism (34). In his article exploring how prayer heals Levin, however warns us against the "scientific conceit" that predisposes us to attempt to define supernatural acts in natural terms (35). In this regard, we honor the role of the supernatural in the healing of

the nine African Americans featured in this work, by asking not, how they were healed by God, but rather by attempting to explore the role that the connection to God had in their healing.

Although undoubtedly multifaceted in nature one salient theme arises when examining the relationship between the spiritual connection and healing in these testimonies. In the healing process, God, or one aspect of his nature, either directly or through another, served as a balm to the exact place where the person was initially and then subsequently re-injured. Thus, it was not simply believing in God in general, but it was believing in the particular aspect of God's nature that touched those wound places; i.e. God as protector, for those with fear or God's unconditional love for those needing acceptance; that was significant.

If we end our discussion here, one may be led to believe that God served as somewhat of a filler of these individuals' preexisting needs. However this is far from true. It is not as if God enters the lives of these participants to serve as the constituent that fills those wounded spaces to make them "whole" again. These participants speak of something remarkably different. Yes, their emotional wounds have created an essential space in their lives, a space that these participants, prior to healing were yearning to be filled. They initially looked to others (Mrs I., Mrs D., Miss L, Miss W), material substances (Mr. B, Mr. R), or sat alone with their longing (Mrs. R, Mr. T), for oft times years. However, upon connecting with the omnipotent,

omnipresent creator, these participants realize one simple truth - that those wounded spaces, the essential gaping holes in their lives were not empty after all, but that they were realms that allowed for the possibilities of a higher force to affect their lives. Thus, instead of attempting to seek protection through alcohol to sate that wound that Mr. B's fears created in his life, he realizes that in that space formed by his wounds dwells the many possibilities created through God's infinite protection. He later says:

Every day to me is an adventure. I am going to school to get my degree. I am real excited about that. A few years ago that old fear would have come up and said 'You are going to start that job and you will get sick. You are going to go to school and you will get sick' Today I know that God is going to take care of me. I am going to go to school even if it takes me years. I am going to get up and go to school even if I have to go in a wheel chair. I know that God is going to take care of me... When I do the next right thing he will always take care of me.

The others speak similarly in regards to their specific wounds.

Therefore this process is not a process of containment in which one's wounded spaces are "filled in," it is process of liberation in which one realizes that they are connected to an infinite source which allows them, through their wounds, to

expand and engage in infinite possibilities. Through this they enter the next phase of the process, the one that embodies the essence of the healing experience, the process of creation.

The Creation

There has been a wealth of research on the role of faith in healing and there has been evidence, as in the case of the American abstract impressionist Walter deKooing, that the creative process within itself may heal (37). However, the mechanics of both have been considered somewhat elusive. In the text of these oral testimonies a theory that may link these two processes is suggested. In relating their experiences with healing, these nine African-Americans reveal that the process of healing is in essence a creative process. Healing, unlike its definition in the medical model, is not repair (36), in which the broken areas are put back together; i.e. fixed. Nor to these African-Americans is healing a process of transformation, in which the wounded areas are remodeled to form a different structure. But from these participant's experiences healing is in essence an act of creativity; an act in which through the Creator's omnific powers something completely new is created in the midst of the wounded areas.

This process can be described most explicitly on the physical level. Imagine a little boy with a broken leg. He goes to the doctor to be healed, the doctor, using the extent of his capabilities, places a cast on the child's leg and "puts it back together again." However, although the fragments of bone are placed, by the doctor, in the same proximity, healing of the shattered structure does not occur until new cells and structures are created; in medicine, a process known as "the initial phase." Afterwards, the matrix that solidifies and connects those new cells to the preexisting healthy cells is formed, a process called remodeling, or "the second phase" (36). Thus, first the injury, then the creation of new structures, and thereafter the combination of those newly formed structures with the previously created healthy ones. We have found that similar processes occur on the emotional level. However, rather than cells, in the case of emotional healing what is being created is a new identity, a new outlook, a new relationship. Thus healing involves not attempting to go back to the "first injury" and repair it - or to try to "fix" what was wrong in that process - but the act is to create something new in that wounded space. It then makes sense that faith, and/or surrenderance to the omnific God, serves as a mediator to that process. As is told by these participants, it is the liberating connection to God that allows for the possibilities for something new to be created in that space. It is the creating, the "being changed," that serves as the essence of their experience.

Application to Mental Health Services

Swantz in his article on health and healing in traditional African thought states:

In its concept of illness and the cause of illness traditional [African] society differs from that of Western understanding ... disease is caused by the action of a spirit or supernatural agency... Health must be understood in relation to the human life-force, or soul power, in which [the individual] is a part. It is understood that it is most important that a person should not be cut off or out of harmony with this life force (39).

Some of these concepts linking the spiritual with health and healing remain present in the thinking of many African-Americans today. It is not uncommon in casual conversation to hear African-Americans say that they avoid mental health services because they "do not treat the whole person;" alluding to the neglect of the spiritual components of injury and healing by mental health professionals. Although it would seem simple to ask that specialists who work with patients who have a belief in God inquire about spiritual matters, if the specialists themselves do not believe in God or the ability of God to mediate healing then this inquiry would, at best, be patronage. However, it is

possible for mental health specialists to form alliances with members of the faith community who may be better able to address the patients spiritual concerns. As one African American psychologist in Atlanta who often recommends spiritual counseling for his clients states:

The only thing that the therapist can do is to help you transform some of the physical self, in terms of how you see it; some of the mental self, in terms of how you think, but what about the spiritual self?... Some people do have spiritual issues and they need somebody that can get them there and help them go through that maze of transformation with their selves. And to do that they have to be on a higher level spiritually (40).

In his article exploring the role of the Black clergy in the process of seeking mental health care, Neighbors finds that African-Americans who used ministers during times of emotional distress were very satisfied with the help that they received (41). He later goes on to explicate the need for mental health providers to develop more contact and exchange with African-American clergy. He says:

It is inappropriate to assume that only Black ministers need to learn more about mental health. Mental health

practitioners need to learn more about the spiritual and religious beliefs of the black clergy (41).

Furthermore, there is a significant population of African-Americans who do not disclose their emotional difficulties to anyone (9). Even among the nine participants presented here, only one sought a mental health professional voluntarily, two were involuntarily admitted to mental health facilities, one voluntarily sought spiritual counseling, and four, while speaking of the church as a place where either their healing occurred or the "remodeling" process was solidified, do not directly seek counseling of any sort. Two of the participants speak of neither psychiatric counseling, spiritual counseling, or church attendance. Thus, by forming alliances with the African-American faith leaders mental health specialists may be able to broaden the discussion of African-American patient help seeking behaviors and healing practices.

In the final chapter of his book, *The Illness Narratives*, Klienman states:

The experience and meaning of illness are at the center of clinical practice... neither the interpretation of illness meanings nor the handling of deeply felt emotions within intimate personal relationships can be dismissed as peripheral tasks. They constitute, rather the point of medicine... These are the activities with which the practitioner should be engaged. The failure to address

these issues is a fundamental flaw in the work of doctoring (4).

Davidson et al. explored the narratives of recidivist psychiatric inpatients to discover how their experience with returning to the community affected their recidivism (41). They later used the insight revealed by these patients to develop a highly successful program that facilitated the reincorporation of hospitalized patients into the community (42,43). It is a fact that regardless of their level of emotional difficulty African-Americans rarely voluntarily seek professional mental health services. It is our hope that the truths revealed from these narratives of African-Americans, who pay tribute to God in their healing process, will stimulate dialogue between mental health and faith leaders so that steps may be taken to develop mechanisms to better address African-Americans emotional needs.

Future Studies

Due to the small population of participants these data are not truly generalizable. It would be interesting to conduct further studies using similar methods with additional participants to ascertain whether or not these data could be generalizable, at least to the African-American population. It would also be interesting to explore African-American slave narratives to discover whether or not this phenomenon is one that

is persistent in structure over time or if the phenomenological structure is a contemporary one. Additionally, if, in fact, healing is a creative process, then what do African-American created works, i.e. African-American literature or art tell us about the process of healing. These questions will be explored in upcoming years as they serve as the focus for my doctoral research.

However, one other question arises. Is this phenomenological structure particular to African Americans, or is it one that extends beyond the boundaries of ethnicity. It would be of great interest to perform cross cultural analysis of qualitative studies such as these to discover whether or not this phenomenon is one that is in fact truly universal.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my primary advisor, Dr. Larry Davidson for introducing me to phenomenology, guiding the way, and having faith in the process that created this work; Dr. Ezra Griffith for serving as my secondary advisor and providing insight on the African-American church and the practice of testimony; Dr. Bruce Rounsaville for reviewing this work's final draft; Drs. Angoff and Duffy for supporting and receiving this work in ways far beyond I initially envisioned; and Dean Cindy

Andrien and Dr. Robert Gifford without whose faith and encouragement this journey would not have been undertaken.

Works Cited:

1. Frank Jerome D, and Julia B. Frank. *Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy*. Third Edition. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore. 1991.
2. Fontenot, Wonda L. *Secret Doctors: Ethnomedicine of African-Americans*. Bergin & Garvey. Westport. 1994.
3. Klienman, Arthur. *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture: An Exploration of the Borderland between Anthropology, Medicine, and Psychiatry*. University of California Press. Berkeley. 1980.
4. Klienman, Arthur. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition*. Basic Books, Inc. New York. 1988.
5. Csordas, Thomas J. *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing*. University of California Press. Berkeley. 1994.
6. Wang Philip S., Patricia Berglund, and Ronald Kessler. Recent Care of Common Mental Disorders in the United States: *Prevalence and Conformance with Evidence Based Recommendations*. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. Vol 15 (5), 284-292.
7. *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. 1999.
8. Snowden, Lonnie R. African American Service Use for Mental Health Problems. *Journal of Community Psychology*. Vol 27(3), May 1999, 303-313.
9. Snowden, Lonnie R. Racial Differences in Informal Help Seeking for Mental Health Problems. *Journal of Community Psychiatry* Vol 26(5), September 1998, 429-438.

10. Anderson, Alita. *On the Other Side: African-Americans Tell of Healing*. Westminster-John Knox Press. Louisville. In Press.
11. Cooper-Patrick, Lisa, et al. Identification of Patient Attitudes and Preferences Regarding Treatment of Depression. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. July 12 1997, 431-438.
12. Szasz, Thomas S. *The Sane Slave: A Historical Note on the Use of Medical Diagnosis as Justificatory Rhetoric*. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*. April 25 1971, 228-39.
13. Sabshin, Melvin et al. Dimensions of Institutionalized Racism in Psychiatry. *American Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol 127(6) December 1970.
14. Szasz, Thomas S. *The Negro in Psychiatry. A historical note on Psychiatric Rhetoric* *American Journal of Psychotherapy*. July 25 1971, 469-471.
15. Poussaint, Alvin F. Racism and Psychiatry. *International Journal of Psychiatry* Vol 8 (6), Dec 1969, 942-944.
16. Butts, Hugh F., *White Racism: Its Origins, Institutions and Implications for Professional Practice in Mental Health*. *International Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol 8 (6), Dec 1969, 914-928.
17. Neighbors, Harold W. Seeking Professional Help for Personal Problems: *Black Americans Use of Health and Mental Health Services*. *Community Health Journal*. Vol 21 (3), Fall 1985, 156-166.
18. Baldwin, James. *Go Tell It On the Mountain*. Dell Publishing Co. New York. 1953.
19. Stewart, Carlyle Felding, III. *Soul Survivors: An African American Spirituality*. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville. 1997.
20. Griffith, Ezra et al. Possession, Prayer, and Testimony: *Therapeutic Aspects of the Wednesday Night Meeting in a Black Church*. *Psychiatry*, Vol. 43, May 1980, 120-128.
21. Milton C. Sernett. *Afro-American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. Duke University Press. Durham. 1985.
22. Stolley, Jacqueline M. & Harold Koenig. Religion Spirituality and Health Among Elderly African Americans and Hispanics. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing*. 1997. Vol 35 (11), 32-37.

23. McCrae, Mary B et al. Black Churches As Therapeutic Systems: A Group Process Perspective. Health Education and Behavior. Vol 25 (6), December 1998, 778-79.
24. Griffith, Ezra, and Marie A Matthewson. Communitas and Charisma in A Black Church Service. Journal of the National Medical Association, Vol 73 (11), 1981, 1023-1027.
25. Smitherman, Geneva. Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America. Wayne State University Press. Detroit. 1977.
26. Griffith, Ezra et al. An Analysis of the Therapeutic Elements in a Black Church Service. Hospital and Community Psychiatry. Vol 35 (5), May 1984. 464-468.
27. Karlsson, Gunnar. Psychological Qualitative Research from a Phenomenological Perspective. Department of Psychiatry. Stockholm University. 1993.
28. Davidson, Larry and Lisa Cosgrove. Psychologism and Phenomenological Psychology Revisited Part I: *The Liberation from Naturalism*. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology. Vol 22(2), Fall 1991, 87-109.
29. Davidson, Larry et al. Phenomenological and Participatory Research on Schizophrenia: *Recovering the Patient in Theory and Practice*. Journal of Social Issues. Vol 53 (4), 1977, 767-784.
30. Knudson, Alfred G. Jr. Mutation and Cancer: *Statistical Study of Retinoblastoma*. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Vol 68 (4), April 1971, 820-823.
31. Cotran, Ramzi S. Robbins Pathologic Basis of Disease. Fifth Edition. W.B. Saunders Company. Philadelphia. 1994.
32. Shreyaskumar R. Patel, and Robert S. Benjamin. Sarcomas of Soft Tissue and Bone. In Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine Fourteenth Edition. Fauci et al. McGraw-Hill. New York. 1998. 611-614.
33. Young, J. Scott, et al. The Moderating Relationship of Spirituality on Negative Life Events and Psychological Adjustment. Counseling and Values. Vol 45 (1), October 2000, 49-58.
34. Miller, William R. Researching the Spiritual Dimensions of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems. Addiction. Vol 93(7), 1998, 979-990.

35. Levin, Jeffrey. How Prayer Heals: *A Theoretical Model*. *Alternative Therapies*. Vol 2(1), January 1996, 66-73.
36. Pories, Walter and Fred R. Plecha. Tissue Healing. in McCredie, John A et al. *Basic Surgery*. Macmillan Publishing Company. New York. 1986. 80-87.
37. Espinel, Carlos H. deKooning's Late Colors and Forms: *Dementia, Creativity, and the Healing Power of Art*. *Lancet* Vol 347(9008), 20 April 1996, 1096-1098.
38. Knudson, Alfred G. *Hereditary Cancer: Two Hits Revisited*. *Journal of Cancer Research and Clinical Oncology*. Vol 122 (3), 1996, 135-40
39. Swantz, Lloyd. Health and Healing In Traditional African Thought and Practice in Tanzania. In *Health and Healing: The Makumira Consultation*. February 1967. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. pp 34-43
40. Transcription of Interview for *On The Other Side: African Americans Tell of Healing*. Alita Anderson. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville. in press. Not included in book.
41. Davidson, Larry et al. The Experiences of Long-Stay Inpatients Returning to the Community. *Psychiatry*. Vol 58, May 1995, 122-131
42. Davidson, Larry, et al. Friendship and the Restoration of Community Life: *Supported Socialization for People With Psychiatric Disabilities*. In press. P. Stastny & J Campbell (eds.), *Social Supports and Psychiatric Rehabilitation*. John Wiley & Sons. New York.
43. Davidson, Larry, et al. It Was Just Realizing... That Life Isn't One Big Horror. In Press. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*.



**HARVEY CUSHING/JOHN HAY WHITNEY
MEDICAL LIBRARY**

MANUSCRIPT THESES

Unpublished theses submitted for the Master's and Doctor's degrees and deposited in the Medical Library are to be used only with due regard to the rights of the authors. Bibliographical references may be noted, but passages must not be copied without permission of the authors, and without proper credit being given in subsequent written or published work.

This thesis by
has been used by the following person, whose signatures attest their acceptance of the above restrictions.

NAME AND ADDRESS

DATE

Doc. Del. 2/07

