

**TANTRIC TRANSFORMATIONS, A NON-DUAL JOURNEY FROM
SEXUAL TRAUMA TO WHOLENESS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS APPROACH**

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TRAUMA TO WHOLENESS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS
INVESTIGATION**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the Tantric transformational journey from sexual trauma to wholeness. The research question offers to explain, “What are the experiences of women who have experienced sexual trauma and have embraced the non-dual path of Tantra as a transformational journey to wholeness?” A phenomenological hermeneutic method of study was used to investigate and understand themes that surfaced from the co-participants narratives.

The narratives were gathered from research interviews that were conducted with the six co-participants. From these interviews, thirteen themes emerged. The following themes are: 1) discovering sexuality, 2) trauma: splitting the soul in two, 3) the betrayal bond of trauma 4) from betrayal by others to the betrayal of self, 5) befriending the self, 6) sacred spot healing, 7) releasement: a catapult into presence, 8) saying ‘yes’ to pain, saying ‘yes’ to pleasure, 8) embracing the open sky of awareness, 9) the power of presence in the here and now, 10) total freedom in the always, already, available ‘now’, 11) sublime and mundane: merging into oneness, 12) non-dual: vastness of oneness 13) suchness of life. Finally, a summary of findings as well as limitations of this study and the implications of counselling are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE

The most important question you will ever ask yourself is, Who am I?

(Gangaji, 2005, p. 47)

Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion as to how the author began to formulate her topic. This dialogue provides a foundation for understanding why this research needs to be done. Following this, the author presents a prelude to the literature review, by offering a brief description into the Tantric Transformational journey from Sexual Trauma to Wholeness. Finally, the author addresses the ways in which she implicates herself in the research process.

Study Rationale

In the process of learning to embrace my experience of becoming a counsellor, I struggled with questions relating to the spiritual aspect of the human journey through suffering. My search for understanding of the human condition deepened as I began working with women who had been sexually abused. It was their questioning of the connection between human sexuality and spirituality that most intrigued me: will I ever feel whole again? Will I ever be able to embrace my femininity? What does my experience of trauma say about me? Am I ruined forever? The sorrow and pain that had developed out of their trauma was something that I understood on an intimate level, having experienced trauma in my own life. As a counsellor, however, I felt unable to comfort them; unable to facilitate the healing process, even within myself. In looking back over these early days I understand that, like my clients, we were mirroring the horrors of sexual trauma to one another and we were all searching for some meaning to

explain who we are.

It was at this point that I began to consider and explore possible interventions directed towards integrating the experiences of sexual trauma and spirituality. I had been exposed to many psychological theories whose primary focus was on cognitive, behavioral, and affective areas of psyche; I needed to broaden my focus to include a spiritual dimension of counselling. My goal, to somehow integrate the spiritual component of human existence into the healing process in order to achieve wholeness, was challenging. Questions arose such as, was there a spiritual path or a type of spirituality that could heal the wounds of trauma? Is there a model of psychology that combines wholeness, transformation and counselling interventions? What kinds of counseling practices were survivors of sexual trauma able to access?

During this period of self-reflection, it began to occur to me that a connection could be made between the path of tantra and healing of sexual trauma. Initially, my knowledge of tantra was limited to its potential to improve sexual pleasure. The more I began to read about tantra, I began to realize the powerful, brilliant energy that tantra offers and tantra's potential to accept all that is (Shaw, 1994). For many women, trauma manifests more as a "non-acceptance" of all there is. In other words, it is an experience that strips away the core of our humanity; everything that is felt within oneself and with others is lost, leaving oneself feeling disconnected from wholeness (Grof, 1993). It occurred to me then, that if tantra accepts all, perhaps it would accept trauma: could tantra and trauma be the paradox along the transformational process to wholeness?

Prompted by my client's questioning of the link between trauma and spirituality, as well as my own experience of trauma, I began exploring theoretical orientations that

integrated spirituality and wholeness into its makeup. Hence, I found transpersonal psychology. Furthermore, it was during this time that I discovered tantra could offer tremendous therapeutic value for women who have experienced sexual trauma. These explorations lead to the basis for this thesis. It is my belief that tantra is a viable means of enabling us to consolidate spirituality and wholeness, especially for women who present with these concerns, and that transpersonal psychology is the spectrum of consciousness that can lay out the journey that these women desired.

Significance of Study

I have understood the effects of sexual trauma in many capacities throughout my life, as victim, family member, friend, woman, and counsellor. In fact, in my professional counselling life, it is rare that I encounter someone who has not been affected by a sexual assault, either directly or indirectly. Although I acknowledge that sexual assaults do happen to men and that men also suffer from the effects of trauma, this study focuses exclusively on women.

The prevalence of sexual assaults in this province and throughout our country also makes the focus of this research so critical. It is estimated that “39 % of Canadian women have experienced at least one sexual assault since the age of 16” (Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres [AASAC], 2007). In Alberta, “58 % of adult women...have experienced at least one incident of sexual or physical assault since the age of 16” (AASAC, 2007). There is a higher incident rate among those of low socio-economic status, including young women or girls and women living with disabilities (Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children [METRAC], 2007). Studies further suggest that the perpetrator is often known to the victims; family

members, friends, partners or colleagues (AASAC, 2007). Moreover, among Canadian women who are sexually assaulted, “victimization surveys show that less than 10 % of women who are sexually assaulted report the assault to the police” (METRAC, 2007). Furthermore, it is estimated that 80 % of those who are sexually assaulted, fail to report “due to humiliation or fear of re-victimization in the legal process” (METRAC, 2007).

My own belief, based on my counselling experience with the survivors of sexual assaults and their acknowledgement of failing to report, is that these statistics regarding the incidents of sexual assaults are actually much higher. Nonetheless these statistics point towards the high rate of prevalence of sexual assault in our province and country. In summation, as a practitioner and a researcher, I believe I am in the position of being able to offer supporting evidence to confirm these statistics, but more importantly to offer new paradigms of healing for these victims. Next, a discussion of the literature review will be provided to the reader.

Prelude into Literature Review

In the second chapter of this thesis I discuss my review of the literature. ~~In Chapter Two, this Discussion is organized -thesis will explore the literature that is relevant to this topic. The research discusses-~~ in linear fashion, beginning with an exploration of -sexual trauma,- and followed by discourses in counselling styles, transformation, transpersonal psychology and finally, tantra. In this prelude, a similar format is given.- To begin, sexual assault is a sexual act that occurs to a woman over a wide spectrum ~~Sexual assault occurs on a wide spectruof experiecem, from being subjected to ; such offenees include~~ inappropriate sexual comment through to rape (Laidlaw, 1990; Maltz, 1991).

Trauma is what manifests in the midst of the experience, as it is occurring. For example, sexual trauma occurs as a result of a rape, either during or after the sexual assault. ~~occurs as a result of the sexual assault.~~ van der Kolk (2006)(2007), a leading trauma expert, ~~describes~~ explains trauma as an ~~the~~ inability to present in the moment. Along with, ~~in this case, present during a sexual assault.~~ van der Kolk & MacFarlane, van der Kolk (2007) (2007) discusses the impact that trauma has on a ~~ways that trauma affects a~~ person's psychological, biological and socially equilibrium. They argue that because these areas of experience are (van der Kolk & MacFarlane, 2007). As these three areas are interconnected, it's so connected, it in almost impossible ~~to~~ to remain immune to the impact of trauma in any one area of life ~~impact one without impacting them all~~ (van der Kolk & MacFarlane, 2007). Furthering this observation, Naparstek (2004) further discusses the variables that may help gauge a person's degree of susceptibility to the traumatic experience, including regarding a person's vulnerability to a traumatic event, such as proximity to the event, duration of exposure, and the intensity of betrayal. Carnes (1997) research explores ~~(1997) deepens the e~~ the xperience of trauma by exposing the effects of trauma on an individual; his work continues to offer important insights into such things as. ~~Such effects are~~ trauma reaction, trauma splitting and trauma shame. Carnes, . By ordering the research in this manner, it is my hope that the reader will not only become aware of the various levels of experiences, but also have an understanding of the incremental nature of these complex concepts.

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To continue this exploration

of. ~~Each of these discussions expands the reader horizon into understanding the complexity of trauma.~~ Next, in exploring how trauma

imprints itself on human beings, ~~I offer an overview of the~~ various ~~treatment~~ therapies. ~~s~~
~~are introduced.~~—The aim of therapeutic practice is, of course, to ~~y is~~ bring healing and a
~~sustained sense of well being wellbeing~~ into a person’s life (Corey, 2001). Such
therapeutic practices include ~~and release the pain of trauma~~ cognitive behavioral therapy,
Somatic Experiencing (Levine, 1997) and Eye Movement Desensitization and
Reprocessing (Shapiro, 2001) which are the primary treatment modalities for working
with sexual trauma survivors (van der Kolk, 1996). Cognitive behavioral therapy is
interested in focusing on “changing cognitions to produce desired changes in affect and
behavior” (Corey, 2001, p. 271). Levine (1997) discusses the importance of body
awareness and how this awareness coupled with counselling intervention can thaw
trauma. And Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), which was
created by Francine Shapiro (2001), is a psychotherapy that seems to have a direct effect
on how the brain processes information regarding the trauma. Once EMDR is completed,
the survivor can still recall the traumatic event but the sounds, images, and feelings
associated with the trauma will have dissipated. Discussions during this thesis will be
limited to these three approaches, although a wide variety of counselling practices do
exist.

Another psychological approach to trauma is the
transpersonal approach. Transpersonal approach offers understanding into how trauma
can be healed from a transformational perspective towards wholeness. Transpersonal
psychology integrates both Western and Eastern approaches of religion and psychology
to provide a master template of each tradition (Wilber, 1996a). This psychology explores
the developmental process of the ego through to the transcendence of the ego to the non-
dual (Wilber, 1996a). Welwood (2003) explains the ego as being confined by dualistic

perceptions that keep people trapped in survival mechanisms that maintain a separate self-sense. For example, trauma imprints messages that people are unloved, unworthy and subject to blame. In other words, trauma manifests as an ego constraint, disconnecting individuals from their true nature, the non-dual. The ability to live the non-dual life thus occurs when individuals gain access to a consciousness, free of ego-fixations (Welwood, 2003). As Welwood (2003) indicates, the non-dual reveals,

a wide open field of awareness in which the separation between self and other, or perceiver and perceived, falls away...it reveals absolute truth, the way things ultimately are: inseparable, undivided, interconnected (p.139-140)

In this freedom, the non-dual is a spacious, timeless vast vortex of universal love and truth. Thus, transpersonal psychology provides a template of the transformational journey, as it offers a new and promising alternative to traditional therapies as it integrates a spiritual component to ways of exploring trauma to allow the individual to rest in one's beingness, a state of existence.

Tantra lies within the model of the transpersonal as a transformational path to wholeness. Tantra involves powerful transformative energies, which break the trapping of the ego to allow the person to be fully present with compassion, acceptance and insight (Yeshe, 1987). Through its gifts of understanding sexuality (Rajneesh, 1976), tantra could provide a sexual trauma survivor with the capacity to relinquish old trauma stories and to surrender to discover their true nature. The transformational journey refers to the experience of being able to bridge these two extremes, the traumatic experience and tantra. Transformation refers to a shift in consciousness (Almaas, 2001). Almaas (2001) discusses the transformational process in his work: "Transformation involves the

‘thinning away’ of such structures until they become flexible, and hence, transparent to essential presence” (p. 277). The practice of transformational counseling begins with uncovering the wounds of trauma, recognizing the ego’s grasp of trauma, such as the deficient emptiness one has been living from, allowing for a transformation into an experience of deep and peaceful being. It is through the tantric transformational experience, from trauma to the non-dual, that women can achieve the reality of learning to live in a place of wholeness.

Implicating Self as Researcher

This study’s research methodology is phenomenological hermeneutics. According to Gadamer (1967), this approach is based on the recognition and acceptance that the researcher’s personhood and experiences will play an important role in interpreting the phenomena (1967). Consequently, it is necessary to understand the researcher’s lived experiences.

As I reflect on my earlier experiences of self it appears to me that my transformational journey began when I was quite young, at the age of nine. At that time, I had experiences of timeless and intense black cosmic energy that felt welcoming and terrifying at the same time. Not surprisingly, I did not have an understanding of what these experiences meant. The understanding to surrender or let go into this black energy did not surface until much later on in life when I was confronted with the narcissistic self-representations of my self. I had spent much of my young adulthood struggling with narcissistic wounds that arose from sexual trauma and familial problems. The need to be seen as worthy manifested itself through the party girl, gypsy lifestyle, which covered up the fundamental feeling of unworthiness. I began to realize, in my twenties, that much

chaos and misery was arising from the consequences of these wounds. I had manifested stories around sexuality and trauma that evoked feelings of self-betrayal and anger that resulted in the lack of valued personal relationships within my self and with others. Other feelings such as shame, despair, and hopelessness arose as a result of risky behaviors that I succumbed to out of poor decision making. These decisions led to self-degrading thoughts, which allowed the circle of self destruction through use of sexuality to continue. Not knowing I had been invited into an existential crisis, in which I struggled with what meaning was there in life, I was faced with these stories of unworthiness. As I searched my regular patterns for meaning outside of myself, which typically meant becoming involved in unhealthy relationships, I began to realize the facades that these relationships provided me with. Such facades were validation from others and a self image based on conquering (that provided a false sense of power), all brought a moment's gratification and a narcissistic love that I 'thought' would provide peace and answers. In retrospect, the sexual games that at one time validated my existence, now only rendered despair and disgust in myself. The feeling of helplessness and self-loathing was pervasive and led me to believe that I was unlovable and unworthy.

It was only when a friend began to talk with me about the non-dual path of healing towards oneness, I realized acceptance was available in each moment and that the search for meaning outside of one self was doomed to be a failure. I uncovered the wisdom of the non-dual in the inherent awareness or consciousness (my true nature). I learned my perception on the way things should be had manifested from concepts, and judgments my ego created, and that the ego not wanting its own death, taught me to cling and grasp for love from others. The feeling of shame, loneliness and hopelessness,

however comfortable for the ego, was not my true nature. Through readings and group discussions on existentialism, tantra and the non-dual, as well as intense long distance running and meditations, vulnerability began to surface from my consciousness.

Returning to the true nature, experiences presented themselves, judgments existed, and deception still surfaced, however, through conscious awareness, judgments no longer became attachments and my grasping and clinging to a separate self lessened. My beingness was a journey inward to a place of openness. Tantra, a path of total acceptance allowed for an interconnectedness to rise along with a spiritual growth of a mature sexuality. Thus, through tantra, a voice arose that said “yes” to the oceanic expansiveness of oneness.

During the latter half of my transformational journey, I had begun counselling with women who had experiences with sexual trauma and addiction issues. It was during these clinical sessions that I began to explore women’s experience of sexual trauma and the impact it had on their lives. Women described experiencing a knowing that existed beyond them, a place of peacefulness and serenity, however from their childhood, societal and familial worlds did not have the understanding nor the language to describe what that was. Furthermore, it was during this time, I noticed there was a lack of research and counselling approaches dedicated to women who had experienced sexual trauma and spirituality. I began to explore the enormous potential tantric transformation could offer. I remember sitting with a woman during a counselling session in which she described her journey through horrific sexual trauma that had taken place in the family. At the same time she described an alternate place of knowing, a place that co-existed with the world of reality where the trauma took place, in which she felt whole, beyond the

sexual intrusion. Interestingly, she indicated that this place of “knowing” wasn’t a place of escape, as many therapists had suggested, but rather it was a point of connection; something that was larger than “you and me.” As a listener, this was a watershed moment for me: her story about an alternative way of knowing and being, of being able to connect sexual trauma and spirituality, opened the door to my own story, to my embarking on this thesis. In fact, the process of creating this work is representative of a transformational journey in its own right. It is my hope that the value of tantra will be recognized; that its potential to rekindle the human spirit will be understood; that more women will rise from the ashes of their broken spirits.

Overview of the Thesis

The central thrust of this thesis is to explore the experiences of women who have embraced the tantric transformational path from sexual trauma to wholeness. Throughout this thesis I will be using the words feminine, she, her, woman, women, they or we interchangeably, to describe the female gender.

Over the course of the next chapter, I will attempt to describe, explain and evaluate the process of the transformational journey through various modes of knowledge. Consequently, Chapter Two begins with a review of theoretical literature, thereby establishing the framework that my research has been conducted upon. It begins by examining the trauma, leading to an understanding of the transformational pathway highlighted by the spectrum of consciousness and self-realization model and a description of the chakra system will be presented as well. Finally, a discussion of tantra will be given. In Chapter Three, I will describe my research methodology in greater detail, and in

Chapter Four, I offer a thematic analysis of the personal narratives of six co-participants. Finally, in Chapter Five, I present a brief summary of the themes, discuss the limitations of my study, and discuss the implications for counseling practice.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to gain an understanding into women's lived experience of sexual trauma and their tantric transformational journey to wholeness. This literary review will explore themes in a linear manner, beginning with sexual trauma. In so, doing the reader can hope to gain an understanding of what it is to experience trauma, especially trauma of a sexual nature. In discussing contemporary counselling practices there will be a strong focus on the healing journey and wholeness.

Following this, the concept of Transpersonal Psychology, as developed by leading theorists Ken Wilber and A.H. Almaas, will be explored. In order to explain the body/mind connection that takes place during the transformational process, Wilber's Spectrum of Consciousness (Wilber, 1996a) and the Chakra system will be then be integrated into the overall discussion. Finally, this literature review will introduce readers to the Tantric realm, thereby shaping their understanding of the thesis question, "What

are women's experiences of tantric transformational journey from sexual trauma to wholeness?"

Sexual Trauma: Splitting from oneself

Let's just stay with the fear, the scariness, of not being here as solid 'me', of being no one, of having no future... What comes up?
(Packer, 1999, p.37)

When an act of sexual assault or abuse takes place sexual trauma is the result (Laidlaw, 1990; Maltz, 1991). Sexual assault/abuse includes any type of sexual activity that occurs without the individual's consent, such as inappropriate sexual comments, sexual touching without consent, and rape (Laidlaw, 1990; Maltz, 1991). During any sexual assault, the sexual activity is used to humiliate, dominate and hurt the individual (Maltz, 1991). In this thesis, we are concerned with sexual trauma and its lasting effects on women. This may include bodily disfigurement, as well as psychological damage manifesting in a variety of ways, including an inability to trust oneself as well as others, and a lack of worthiness and spiritual deprivation (Maltz, 1991). Sexual trauma is an experience that permeates all aspects of the person's being. Very often it is the pain of physical symptomatic distress, coupled with emotional and mental distraught caused by the trauma, which leads the woman to seek ways of healing. Consequently, the healing journey is extremely intense, involving drastic changes in lifestyle, extensive counselling, and/or a plunge into a spiritual quest.

Understanding Sexual Trauma

When describing trauma one typically identifies the precipitating event, an act of nature such as a hurricane or tornado, or a human-made event such as a car accident,

divorce, or abuse as the trauma. Herman (1997), a leading trauma expert, states that trauma is “to bear witness to horrible events” (p. 27). Similarly, van der Kolk (2007) understands trauma as the inability to be in the present with what is in the here and now. Along with MacFarlane, they take a step further in explaining the effects of trauma on an individual’s lifespan:

Despite the human capacity to survive and adapt, traumatic experiences can alter people’s psychological, biological, and social equilibrium to such a degree that the memory of one particular event comes to taint all other experiences, spoiling appreciation of the present (van der Kolk, & MacFarlane, 2007, p. 4).

Experiences such as a rape results in the person re-enacting and re-experiencing the trauma through involuntary intrusive memories that become a “normal way responding to dreadful experiences” (van der Kolk and MacFarlane, 2007, p. 5). These researchers indicate that trauma memories have an important function, as the replaying of these memories serves as a way of modifying the negative emotions connected to trauma, creating a tolerance for the content of these memories.

Trauma is also believed to affect the individual’s cognitive schemata, the way in which we organize and make sense of the world, basically a person’s belief system (Corey, 2001). During trauma the individual’s cognitive schemata are greatly altered, causing a large psychological shift in how the individual views herself and the world. Prior to a sexual assault, for example, a woman may have believed that the world was a safe place. After the experience, however, the world becomes a very frightening and dangerous environment for her. Her life may become centered on her fears and negative self-thoughts of being a victim.

Moreover, van der Kolk, McFarlane and van der Hart (2007) further explain how trauma can activate past self's schemata:

Traumatic experiences are not only processed by means of currently existing mental schemes; they may also activate latent self-concepts and views of relationships that were formed earlier in life... When trauma activates these earlier self-schemata, these will compete and coexist with more mature schemata in explaining cause-and-effect relationships in regards to the trauma. (p. 432)

Biologically, trauma seems to affect people on multiple levels of biological functioning (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007). Because the body, brain and mind are all inextricably connected, any alterations in one area will affect the other two areas (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007). For example, "mental processes are products of the brain and body, which continuously interact with each other through nerve impulses and through chemicals carried by the bloodstream" (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007, p. 216). Hypervigilance, problems with sleeping and shallow breathing, and other physical sensations are only a few of the ways that the trauma can manifest itself, both biologically and psychologically (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007).

Naparstek (2004), a trauma psychotherapist, discusses the impact of trauma on the brain's right and left hemispheres and the implications for healing. She states that,

Trauma produces changes in the brain that impede a person ability to think and talk (left side functioning) about the event but that actually *accentuate* their capacity for imaging and emotional-sensory (right side functioning) experiencing around it. (p. 13)

Consequently, Naparstek (2004) and van der Kolk (2006) advocate the use of combined therapies, such as, guided imagery and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) as well as body centered practices, such as yoga and meditations.

Trauma also has a significant impact one's social equilibrium. Following a traumatic event, family and community members typically gather to help someone support the person through a difficult situation. Often, however, they may have "conflicting agendas to repair, create, forget or take revenge" (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007, p. 27) regarding the trauma. These conflicts can then lead to an intensification of the trauma for the survivor, as blame and responsibility become the main focus (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007). In many instances families and community members will rally around 'the cause' of sexual assault, directing their energies to external events rather than attempting to support the survivor. That person is then left with feelings of abandonment and rejection, even as she struggles with her own pain. Additionally, the trauma may trigger recollections of someone else's tragedy, leaving that person unable to support the survivor. When the survivor is shunned and blamed for this occurrence she experiences what is known as "the second injury" (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007, p. 26). van der Kolk and McFarlane (2007) explain:

Many personal testimonies of trauma survivors indicate that not being supported by the people they counted on, and being blamed for bringing horrendous experiences upon themselves, has left deeper scars than the traumatic event itself... Thus, for many victims, a breach in their relationship to their expectations of themselves and of their culture becomes part of the traumatic experience.

(p.27)

In discussing the idea of what constitutes trauma, the psychological, biological, and social systems of the survivors must all be considered. It is also of critical importance to discuss the pre-existing variables or determinants that must be factored in to the person's initial experience of the trauma in order to fully understand the impact of trauma on a person.

Vulnerability of Sexual Trauma

It is important to discuss the variables regarding a person's vulnerability to a traumatic event, as these are prime determinants of how the individual reacts and heals from the trauma. These prime determinants are known to be pre-existing, meaning they are present prior to the trauma in the person's life (Naparstek, 2004). Understanding these determinants will shed greater light on why it is that some traumas affect one person more severely than another. Naparstek (2004) discusses seventeen key variables.

Proximity is by far the most critical factor shaping the survivor's ability to cope with the internal aftermath. Proximity refers to the "internal danger that generates the potential for symptoms, for example, if a person is in danger but doesn't know it, she remains immune" (Naparstek, 2004, p. 49). If a danger does not exist, the brain does not register the impending doom, but if it predicts annihilation then the biochemistry of trauma (heightening the body's response to trauma) is brought into play (Naparstek, 2004). A woman who is in an abusive relationship, for example, may "sense" an upcoming sexual assault due to a past history of behavior by her abuser. Her response to proximity would heighten in her body, causing her to anticipate the assault and live from a place of fear.

Another two factors is the duration of exposure to the trauma and the extent of brutality. If the sexual assault lasts for a long period of time, and is particularly brutal to the human spirit and psyche, then the impact of trauma to the person is greater.

Naparstek (2004) explains how the trauma resulting from a rape is different from that of a car accident:

This is why 46 percent of women who are raped develop post-traumatic stress, as opposed to only 9 percent of women involved in an accident, even though the physical injuries may be far greater from the accident...compounded by both frequency and duration, are so likely to be fully symptomatic. (p.50)

Exacerbating these symptoms is a sense of betrayal that a woman often experiences, altering her intimate connection to self, including her beliefs about safety, self-worth and trustworthiness of others (Naparstek, 2004). The threat of dying, injury or loss of self, home, or perhaps important possessions, can increase the severity of symptoms as well. For example, if a woman who is raped later discovers that her perpetrator has murdered his previous victims, she will experience deeper shock, fright and vulnerability about her situation.

The meaning that a woman derives from her experience is another variable that must be considered in determining the extent of severity in developing trauma. The social context of her trauma also has an important impact on a woman's ability to cope with it: Sexual assault, for example, can either be a catalyst to cushion the trauma or exacerbate its symptoms (Naparstek, 2004).

The experience of being trapped such as being held down or being confined to limited space escalates the severity of the traumatic incident. Being trapped increases a

woman's feeling of helplessness and fear of impending doom. Feelings of betrayal, domination, exploitation and brutality that add to intensify trauma symptoms can compound matters (Naparstek, 2004).

Another set of individual variables having an impact on the experience of trauma are survivor traits. A person's gender, age, ethnicity, psychology, personal history, neurobiological wiring, coping behaviors and unique social circumstances will all have an effect on the level of severity (Naparstek, 2004).

Although men will, statistically, be exposed to a greater number of traumatizing events in their lives, women will suffer a greater degree of traumatic stress overall (Naparstek, 2004). Age is another determinant: Older women and men are less vulnerable to experiencing traumatic symptoms due to their "stronger sense of identity, worth and integrity" (Naparstek, 2004, p. 56). Similarly, while children of both sexes are more vulnerable than adults, girls are more susceptible (Naparstek, 2004).

To continue, a history of mental health issues and previous abuse, in the individual or in her family, increases her susceptibility to trauma stress (Naparstek, 2004). Ethnicity is yet another variable. Naparstek (2004) discusses several studies on trauma and ethnicity that were conducted after Hurricane Andrew and 9/11 that demonstrated this correlation. For example, Naparstek (2004) discussed how Hispanics and African Americans were more susceptible to traumatic stress than other ethnic groups after these two traumatic events.

The level of a person's education also affects an individual's understanding of trauma. Naparstek (2004) refers to a study by Bruce Perry, a childhood trauma expert:

Education leads to more highly developed cortices in the brain, creating greater ease with abstract thinking, which, in turn strengthens the ability to modulate impulses and hyperactivity in the more primitive brain structures that are so intensely affected by trauma. (p. 58)

And finally those with few social supports, those who are single, perhaps without friends or other support systems, are at a greater risk of ensuing trauma disturbances (Naparstek, 2004). Trauma increases their sense of disconnection to the human race.

In summary, all of these variables increase a person's vulnerability to trauma; they are the 'cause' in the duality of 'cause and effect'. Next, Patrick Carnes (1997) explores the effects of trauma on the survivor.

Effects of Sexual Trauma

Trauma impacts the survivor of the sexual assault by leaving lasting experiences of the abuse in all the major areas of their existence, biologically, psychologically, spirituality and socially. Herman (1997) further describes trauma by categorizing psychological trauma as "an affliction of the powerlessness" (p.33). The way that individuals respond to this feeling of powerlessness and the length of time they continue to experience the trauma differs with each individual. Patrick Carnes (1997) discussed eight ways that trauma affects (also know as trauma symptoms) people:

1. Trauma reaction
2. Trauma arousal
3. Trauma blocking

4. Trauma splitting
5. Trauma abstinence
6. Trauma shame
7. Trauma repetition
8. Trauma bonds

These eight “effects” can manifest and occur sporadically over the course of one’s life. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (DSM-IV-TR) is one such example. When experiencing a trauma reaction, the body experiences a heightened sense of alertness that materializes in the form of traumatic symptoms, including flashbacks, sleeplessness, nightmares, and irritability (Carnes, 1997). Women who have experienced sexual trauma will often discuss a fear of the dark or bedtime, as it is during these moments that sexual trauma may have occurred. As a result, they may experience a heightened physiological response to darkness and bedtime. Although these symptoms of “...vigilance and hyper alertness being assiduously developed [constitute basic] survivor skills” (Laidlaw, 1990, p. 172) these responses also have a negative effect on the individual’s well being, confining and impacting her daily life.

This intense alarm state of the trauma reaction leads to an arousal state, in which a person “seeks or finds pleasure and stimulation in the presence of extreme danger, violence, risk or shame” (Carnes, 1997, p. 11). Examples of trauma arousal behavior are participating in high-risk sexual encounters, associating with dangerous people, and engaging in gambling and substance abuse activities. In these trauma states, the survivor wants to give up these behaviors, however cannot, as the arousal state itself becomes addictive, hence acting as an avoidance to experiencing the trauma.

Thus the arousal state becomes a form of an avoidance strategy for dealing with the trauma. This avoidance strategy is generally referred to as trauma blocking, it is “an effort to numb, block out or reduce residual feelings due to the trauma” (Carnes, 1997, p. 13). During a sexual assault, women may block out the sexually traumatic experience and its effects for many years, in order to cope with the psychological and emotional pain. For example, a woman may see a person who reminds her of her attacker and start to experience intense flashbacks. As a way of coping with these presenting flashbacks, trauma blocking would then occur.

Similarly, a person who develops a sexual addiction, another avoidance strategy, may also be sexually traumatized: spending more and more of her time engaged in sexual activity may thus be seen an attempt to gratify her needs or obtain a “fix.” The resulting “high,” from the repetitive intense sexual activity, numbs or blocks the pain of the sexual trauma (Schaefer, 1989). Often people will use a combination of variety of arousal strategies to block the affects of trauma (Carnes, 1997; Naparstek, 2004).

Trauma splitting is another avoidance experience, described as splitting off from reality. Splitting off provides an escape from the painful effects suffered during the sexual trauma. Trauma splitting allows the person to split off from a painful reality into a more pleasant or fantasy-like reality (Carnes, 1997). A person’s inability to integrate the trauma into reality causes one to dissociate. With dissociation, people “disconnect from their awareness of their sensations and emotions” (Naparstek, 2004, p. 60). The experience of dissociation is manifested as a loss of time, a detachment from one’s body, or as a period of amnesia (Carnes, 1997; Naparstek, 2004; van der Kolk, 2006). These experiences can result in the individual feeling overwhelmed. Very often she has little or

no understanding of what is occurring when she splits off. Consequently, she may experience feelings of worthlessness and shame, arising from the sense that “I’m crazy.”

Arising from these feelings of worthlessness, anxiety, shame and/or stress are two conditions referred to as trauma abstinence and trauma shame (Carnes, 1997). Trauma abstinence is described, as a compulsive deprivation in which survivor denies herself basic needs. Along with spoiling her successes, she may work in low achieving jobs, be underemployed and/or avoid pleasure (Carnes, 1997). It is out of fear and neglect the individual will participate in activities that bring deprivations into her life, as it is this fear and neglect that she will live her life from, hence creating a sense of unworthiness in her life. Trauma shame, on the other hand, is described as a persistent feeling of not being “good enough” or even flawed (Carnes, 1997). For these women, their core belief is that they are unlovable. Perpetuating this cycle of unworthiness and self-loathing is their extreme distrust for others. Participating in self-destructive activities such as prostitution, substance abuse, etc. contributes both to their failure as well as their sense of shame (Carnes, 1997). These effects are some of the very painful realities that those who’ve suffered a trauma must deal with in their daily lives.

The act of re-creating the trauma, or reliving the experience over and over, is called trauma repetition (Carnes, 1997). A number of studies have demonstrated that once a person has been sexually assaulted, she is at a higher risk of experiencing abuse again. Some individuals will place themselves in similar situations or with persons similar to the ones that were present when the trauma took place, in order to reenact the scenario of the “unremembered past” (Carnes, 1997, p. 25). In doing so, some may not be aware of this pattern, as it is an effort “by the victim to bring resolution to the traumatic memory”

(Carnes, 1997, p.26).

Finally,

trauma bonding occurs when “victims have a certain dysfunctional attachment that occurs in the presence of danger, shame or exploitation. There often is seduction, deception or betrayal. There is always some form of danger or risk” (Carnes, 1997, p.29). Being in a co-dependent relationship, obsessing about the person who has hurt them, choosing to stay in an abusive relationship, and continuing to be loyal to people who have betrayed them are some examples of trauma bonds.

In conclusion, learning about trauma, the variables that lead to traumatic symptoms, and being able to identify these symptoms gives readers a better understanding about the experience of trauma, particularly sexual trauma. Before exploring the tantric transformation of sexual trauma to wholeness, as this thesis states, it is necessary to consider the more conventional therapies currently being used to help survivors of sexual trauma heal.

Sexual Trauma Therapy

The aim of therapy is to bring healing and well being to a person suffering from psychological pain. Regarding trauma work, van der Kolk, McFarlane and van der Hart (2007) discussed:

The aim of therapy with traumatized patients is to help them move from being haunted by the past and interpreting subsequent emotionally arousing stimuli as a return of the trauma, to being fully engaged in the present and becoming capable of responding to current exigencies. (p.419)

There are a number of therapeutic approaches used by clinicians to heal trauma. The following therapies are different approaches that can heal sexual trauma. They include a

cognitive approach, a somatic therapy, and one therapy that combine many major psychological approaches.

van der Kolk, McFarlane & van der Hart (2007) recognized in their study of traumatic stress, that “most available published treatment studies have utilized cognitive-behavioral therapy and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)” (p. 417). The emphasis of cognitive behavioral therapy is for the client to acquire practical coping skills during problematic situations (Corey, 2005). Important to a behavior change is understanding how a person thinks, feels and behaves as well as the effect that these behaviors have on others. In addition, cognitive behavioral therapy would be interested in “teaching clients to make self-statements and training clients to modify the instructions they give to themselves so that they can cope more effectively with the problems they encounter” (Corey, 2005, p. 292).

In working with a sexually abused woman, for instance, a cognitive behaviorist therapist would be interested in her self-talk, feelings of the abuse, and how these factors affect her behaviors. For example, in relation to trauma, Rothbaum and Foa (2007) discussed a study of rape victims that suggests prolonged exposure to trauma memory allows for reevaluation of meaning of the memory, a cognitive step that would change outcome behaviors. Through exposure to memories, the survivor’s schemata are changed and a decrease in traumatic symptoms is experienced, resulting in a behavior change. Therefore, “if the victim no longer perceives the world as indiscriminately dangerous and the self as an inadequate copier, then he or she will more readily seek social support” (Rothbaum & Foa, 2007, p. 493).

Somatic therapists, on the other hand, are interested in understanding how trauma

impacts the body. Peter Levine (1997), a trauma psychologist, believes for instance, that when trauma occurs there is a physiological and psychological “freezing” (p.12) that takes place. Sexual abuse survivors often relate, for example, that during the assault they were unable to move their body or speak, that their mind went blank. Levine (1997) is one of many researchers to describe the experience in this manner. Trauma occurs when “massive amount of energy that we mobilize to protect and defend ourselves doesn’t get to complete itself” (Lumiere, 2003, p.252). Levine (1997) connected this ‘freezing’ response to an instinctual power in humans, similar to the animal response of ‘fight’ and ‘flight/flee’, but with an increased response to ‘flee.’

Although these energy responses are instinctual, because the survivors are so attuned to the situation, they are not aware of these responses. Once these responses have been heightened, as a result of an abrupt traumatic event such as rape, the energy created by the trauma is immobilized or ‘frozen’ (Levine, 1997; Macnaughton, 2004). In order to encourage the survivor to explore the experiential sense of how trauma feels, therefore, a “thawing” of this frozen traumatic energy is needed.

Healing begins through Somatic Experiencing, a therapeutic approach in which the felt sense of trauma is awakened in order to explore the bodily sensations that have been attached to symptoms of trauma, enabling the individual the possibility of connecting the whole (Levine, 1997). The felt sense “encompasses the clarity, instinctual power, and fluidity necessary to transform trauma” (Levine, 1997, p.67). Somatic Experiencing is essentially used to heal the frozenness of trauma (Levine, 1997; Ogden, Minton, & Pain, 2006). It unravels the immobilized experience by renegotiating the trauma. Levine (1997) explains:

Somatic Experiencing is a gentle step-by-step approach to the renegotiation of trauma. The felt sense is the vehicle used to contact and gradually mobilize the powerful forces bound in traumatic symptoms. It is akin to slowly peeling the layers of skin off an onion, carefully revealing the traumatized inner core. (p. 120)

Through this experiencing, the individual is engaged in a healing that “requires an ability to get in touch with the process of the traumatic event” (Levine, 1997, p. 129). This process is known in more general terms as “thawing” (Levine, 1997, p. 109).

Through the transformation of Somatic Experiencing, the survivor engages the traumatic response of flight/ fight or else flees, and surrenders to its polar opposite of thawing (Levine, 1997). For example, the clinician would activate the trauma response of the inability to move in a rape victim, through re-enacting the event trapped in memories. The clinician would then carefully engage the person to complete the frozen movements of trauma, through moving the incomplete motions that occurred during the rape (Levine, 1997). An example of a frozen movement might be the inability to push the perpetrator away during the rape. This approach might mean engaging the survivor in a dialogue or bodily movements in order to erase their previous inability to do so, possibly by allowing oneself to push/extend the arms. This is a cathartic moment that allows the mobility to complete itself, therefore, freeing for the survivor from trauma, hence the transformational process.

For Levine (1997), the transformational journey is a way of enabling the body to regulate itself, balance its emotions, perceptions and judgments, to accept these at face value. By thawing the frozen energy, it begins to be disseminated throughout the body. This gives the individual a new capacity to experience life from a sense of freedom and

spontaneity, a new awareness of life's possibilities (Levine, 1997). She can thus begin to celebrate a life of loving kindness and trust.

The final therapeutic approach to be discussed was developed by Francine Shapiro (2001) and is called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing or EMDR. It is a treatment modality that has proven to be very successful in the treatment of major trauma (Shapiro, 2001; van der Kolk, 2006; Napaarstek, 2004). This approach combines the major aspects of various psychological orientations:

EMDR brings together...the attention of etiological events underscored by psychodynamic therapy, the conditioned responses highlighted by behavior therapy, the beliefs of cognitive therapy, the emotions of experiential therapies, the imagery work of hypnotic therapies, and the contextual understanding of system's theory. (Shapiro, 2001, p. 3)

The goal of EMDR therapy is to process traumatic experiences in order to bring the client back to the present moment. Through EMDR, the survivor learns from the negative experiences of the past, desensitizes triggers that are distressing, and learns new beliefs for appropriate action to be taken in the future (Shapiro, 2001). For example, while treating a rape victim, the clinician would attempt to discover the trauma symptoms that are being manifested in the client, as well as the cognitive scripts and emotions that have been created as a result of the rape. During dissociative moments, for instance, the victim may experience feelings of shame and unworthiness. Shapiro (2001) explains EMDR can help:

...EMDR procedure is to focus on internal responses, the rape victim may be able to recall the rape without feelings of shame and fear. She may, in fact, feel

empowered and may be able to say, “I did very well. He was holding a knife at my throat, and I managed to stay alive.” In addition to this positive change in her thoughts and beliefs, she may no longer have intrusive images of the rape. If she later recalls the event, her associated emotions, thoughts, and body sensations, may be neutral or positive rather than disturbing. (p. 22)

EMDR essentially facilitates learning on an emotional, cognitive and physiological level (Shapiro, 2001). Following treatment survivors can return to a normal level of functioning while in the present.

In summation, these are a few common therapeutic approaches used in the treatment of trauma. There are numerous therapeutic approaches that clinicians use to treat trauma, including many that were not discussed such as medications, sensorimotor psychotherapy, narrative therapy and existential therapy, to name a few. Whatever the therapeutic approach, the essential goal is enhance the well being and health of the individual seeking treatment (Levine, 1997; van der Kolk, 2006; Ogden, Minton & Pain, 2006).

Transpersonal Approach

To facilitate further healing from trauma is to embrace a transformational approach towards wholeness. The transformational journey explores ways of opening oneself up to the pain of trauma, by exploring new ways of being with trauma. A transpersonal approach to healing will now be explored to offer a way of being with trauma that will lead to a transformational shift to wholeness.

Quest for Wholeness

The transpersonal approach to healing offers a spiritual experience that is necessary for one to realize wholeness. Brazier (1995) discussed transpersonal psychology as an “intrinsic part of the quest for wholeness” (p. 42). He further states,

It is, then, an attempt to once again find a place for ourselves as part of the universe rather than as its exploiters and dominators and to bring back into consideration experiences and ideas, which are generally regarded, as ‘spiritual’ rather than scientific. (p.42)

The transpersonal approach believes that transcending the small self or a person’s ego-centered personal identity, one will break through to a deeper Self (or true Self) i (Grof, 1993). This Self transcends the limitations of the ego, so that a person is suddenly aware that she is much more than an ordinary perception. The Self is a direct awareness of spiritual or mystical state, a place of wholeness (Grof, 1993). Therefore, as the transpersonal approach seeks to transcend the ego, it connects the individual to an expansive social, ecological and universal consciousness (Firman and Gila, 1997). A transpersonal shift in consciousness reveals a place of wholeness that represents complete oneness with ourselves, others and the world around us.

In summation, to continue along the transformational journey to wholeness, the transpersonal approach will be discussed by two of its leading theorist Ken Wilber and A.H. Almaas to give a richer description into theory and meaning.

Wilber's Development of Consciousness

Ken Wilber (1996a) is a Western philosopher who introduced a map of consciousness development called the Spectrum of Consciousness. Wilber's (1996a) map integrated both Western and Eastern approaches of religion and psychology providing a

master template of each tradition that filled previous gaps left by one another. It is the integration of Western and Eastern approaches that are valuable to the experience of the women in this study as it provides a template of understanding and healing along the tantric transformational journey to wholeness. Wilber (1996a) called this model a full spectrum of human growth and development, which contains “various lines of human development (affective, cognitive, moral, ego, object relations etc.), two dozen or so levels or stages of development, through which each of the various lines may progress” (Wilber, 1996a, p. 80).

There are ten basic structures along this path that all human beings can access. These structures begin with lower levels that transcend the self along to higher levels (Wilber, 1996a). These structures are placed in three stages called prepersonal, personal and transpersonal. A brief description is as follow (Wilber, 1996a, p. 87):

Prepersonal (pre-ego):

1. Sensoriphysical: three elements of matter, sensation and perception
2. Phastasmic-emotional: birth of the emotional self
3. Representational mind: the conceptual self

Personal (ego)

4. Rule/role mind: perform/abide by rule/role in society in order to belong
5. Formal-reflexive: self-reflexive/introspective mature ego
6. Vision-logic: existential, Aurobindo’s “higher mind”

Transpersonal (trans-ego)

7. Psychic: opening of the ‘third eye’, beginning of transcendental, transpersonal, contemplative development
8. Subtle: personal deity-form, realm of illumination
9. Causal: witnessing the abyss
10. Non-dual: complete integration and identity of manifest Form with unmanifested Formlessness

In discussing Wilber's developmental model, I have chosen to integrate the principles of the chakra system to help explain the impact of sexual trauma and the tantric transformational journey. The chakra system will give the reader a greater understanding into how trauma impacts the body and the spiritual connection of mind, body and spirit. Chakra means “wheel” in Sanskrit, and is an Eastern yoga path (Rama, 1976; Judith, 1996). These chakras or energy systems are “centers of consciousness” said to exist in seven locations aligned with the spine through to the top of the head in the body (Rama, 1976, p. 219). As energy systems, they are in constant motion when the individual is experiencing an opening of powerful, creative and abundance energy. However, if a person is struggling with psychological or physiological issues at one of the energy systems then that chakra is understood to be imbalanced or blocked (Rama, 1976; Breaux, 1989; Judith, 1996). Although each chakra is independent of one another, they do rely on one another to facilitate healing along to consciousness.

In summation, in discussing the chakra system it gives the reader an understanding into the psychological and physiological aspects of trauma and transformation that lead to wholeness. Furthermore, the chakra system is important to this thesis due to its connection to tantra, which will be explained in the transpersonal stages of Wilber's model. I have placed the seven chakras in the various levels of Wilber's developmental model to correspond with normal development, pathology and treatment that exist at each level.

Prepersonal Stages

In the prepersonal stages, Wilber (1996a) points out how the conventional stages fit into the spectrum of consciousness. The works of Mahler, Pine, & Bergman (1975),

Piaget (1977) and Erikson (1950) are all used to explain development at these stages. At each stage, there exist pathologies and treatments. The importance of development in the prepersonal stage is the emergence of personal selfhood.

Level 1- Sensoriphsical

At the beginning of this stage, the self cannot differentiate between its body and the physical environment; therefore there is a fusion of body and environment. Wilber (1996a) identified Mahler's six stages of psychological birth of an infant as being a useful framework for discussing the self's development during the prepersonal levels. A key focus of Mahler's is separation-individuation, in which the infant experiences a succession of differentiation from body and environment called "hatching" (Wilber, 1996a, p.49). During this time, the infant wakes from its nature with the mother, to begin a sensoriphsical existence, simply put, the infant begins to differentiate between its body and that of the mother (Mahler et al, 1975). The bodyself becomes aware of its distinctness from its surroundings; however, its emotional self and mind are not differentiated from the mother. A disturbance or negative occurrence during this phase can result in the self being unable to mark a separation of where the body ends and where the physical environment begins, which has the potential to cause some adults psychoses, such as schizophrenia (Wilber, 1996a). Wilber (1996a) describes this disturbance as "consciousness fails to seat in the physical body; thoughts of self and other are confused" (p. 163).

As a result of a disturbance at this level, treatments of a pharmacological or physiological nature are beneficial. Given the primitive nature of this level, Wilber (1996a) notes that individuals do not respond favorably to psychoanalytic therapy,

psychotherapy, analytic psychology or family therapy, as they are too difficult to treat.

The chakra at this level is the root chakra which is located in the lower base of spine. Its concern is with basic survival instincts, especially physical and bodily sensations, which correspond with Wilber's pathology at this level. The basic needs and issues of a person who is blocked at this chakra will be "trust, nourishment, safety and the right to be here" (Judith, 1996, p. 65). However, a successful individuation process will offer an individual a sense of groundness to carry forward in the world. An experience of sexual trauma at this chakra may cause an unsuccessful differentiation to occur as the self is "without roots bringing energy and nourishment up from the earth, we are weak" (Judith, 1996, p. 80). There is the feeling that one's body feels like an alien entity with static energy, as opposed to energy grounded from the earth up (hence the analogy of a 'root'). Judith (1996) explains this alienation causes the individual to objectify the body leading to an overwhelming need to control the environment as opposed to nurturing its surrounding. For example, a rape victim comes face to face with the experience of death after learning her perpetrator killed his previous victims. Her basic survival experience is in a state of hypervigilance due to learning of his violence nature. An experience of any trauma such as a Tsunami, places the survivor in a very fragile position in relation to a very elemental need, one's basic survival. To heal the first chakra, is to heal the body and the body's relationship to its environment. A person's understanding and her connection with her body is needed and can be observed through motions (Judith, 1996). It is important to remember that at this chakra "the energetic statement made by the body is more important than the emotion itself" (Judith, 1996, p.86). For example, to be grounded in the body is far more important.

A therapeutic approach such as Bioenergetics (Lowen, 1995) can be useful in healing the body through understanding the relationship of the physical and psychological worlds. Through cathartic physical and psychological work, Bioenergetics can heal the person connection to their body and the environment (Lowen, 1995).

The healing of this chakra is fundamental as it grounds the individual in the body and the environment. To continue with Wilber (1996a), the emotional self will develop bringing new experiences into awareness.

Level 2- Phastasmic-emotional

If the self successfully differentiates within the first level it enters into the next level, referred to as second fulcrum, which is the phastasmic-emotional. It is at this level, the self must “negotiate the emergence and growth of the emotional and phastasmic” (Wilber, 1996a, p. 102).

The infant begins a differentiation process within itself, namely it recognizes, differentiate, and integrates internalized self objects from internalized objects (Wilber, 1996a). The birth of the emotional self brings about new experiences never quite known before, such as pain and pleasure. As these experiences continue to occur, the self is able to establish emotional boundaries, creating a strong and stable emotional self (Wilber, 1999). If the self experiences difficulties differentiating itself from others, it will remain narcissistic, treating the world as an extension of itself, or feel very overwhelmed or 'flooded' by the outside world (Wilber, 1996a, 1999). Narcissism can be described as a “condition that results when the self identifies with any content of experience to the exclusion of awareness of its fundamental Being” (Almaas, 1996, p. 36). Failure to integrate this level will leave the individual with very weak emotional boundaries, in

which the self will tend to perceive a “flood from the outside world, causing anxiety, depression, and severe thought disturbances” as well as narcissistic and borderline pathologies (Wilber, 1996a, p.113). If a sexual trauma occurs at this level, a woman will experience difficulties with her boundaries. Although very independent, she will use her sexuality to gain a sense of power and control, but can fall a victim to her sexuality as well. For the survivor, this ‘back and forth’ action will feel very chaotic but nonetheless empowering at the same time.

The aim of therapeutic interventions at this level revolves around structure-building techniques which will re-engage and facilitate the separation-individuation process (Wilber, 1996a). It is important to understand what is preventing this process from occurring, including the feelings and thoughts that are being suppressed as opposed to expressed, and which feelings and thoughts are being fused with the world of others (narcissism) (Wilber, 1996a, 2000). A healthy structure building technique would guide the individual to engage and activate themselves into a separation and individuation process (Wilber, 2000).

The second chakra is connected with Wilber’s level two in the developmental map. This chakra is concerned with the development of sexuality and sensuality, called the genital chakra (Rama et al, 1976). The concerns at this chakra are with sexual impulses, lustful feelings, and sensory physical. An imbalance at this centre, will present itself in a person who is preoccupied with sexual desires, and experiences (Rama, Ballentine, & Swami, 1976).

Judith explains the connection of first and second chakras, “the first chakra, the structural forms of the body gave us clues to unconscious processes. In the second chakra

we observe the way these forms move and make contact” (Judith, 1996, p. 111). As it is this chakra that is concerned with movement (energy, behavior), there is a tendency to recreate repetitive patterns, as the energy is looking for release. Treatment would consist of rerouting the repetitive pattern and discharging and reclaiming healthy emotional energy while reconnecting with sensations of the body (Breux, 1989; Judith, 1996).

Sexual healing at this chakra would involve a new approach to life, one that embraces the emotional/sensate level to open emotions (Judith, 1996). There would need to be an involvement of many levels of consciousness, in hopes to “bring sex back into the realm of the divine” such as in the practice of Tantra (Judith, 1996, p. 1965), in which the trust and confidence of the first chakra and emotional confidence of the second are fully opened. However, as will be seen in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth chakras, the imbalance and healing of sexuality does not stop at chakra two, as sexuality touches each one of these energy systems in some kind of relationship (Judith, 1996).

Level 3- Representational mind

Moving on to level three, the representational mind, the self has gone from matter to body to mind. The mental self begins to emerge and develops language (Wilber, 1996a). This representational mind is similar to Piaget's (1977) level of preoperational thinking, in which the child is now able to feel and think, “to verbalize, talk, and mentally control its behavior”(Wilber, 1996a, p.113).

At this level, if the mental self learns that particular feelings and behaviors are unacceptable to those around them, the self will learn to disown or repress those feelings, sometimes causing severe and prolonged neuroses to form (Wilber, 2000). For a woman who has a history of sexual abuse, she will empower herself through sexuality by creating

energy through it by seeking the attention of others, such as flirting, or being a bar star. The energy created will give her a high and it will feel wonderful that others see her as well as want to be with her, but throughout this process she is not her true self as she continues to deself or deny herself. Interventions for neuroses include “undoing the repression barrier, reconnecting the repressed or shadow feelings, and reintegrating them into the psyche, so that the ongoing flow of consciousness unfolding can more smoothly continue” (Wilber, 1996a, p. 94). These uncovering techniques include classic psychoanalysis, Gestalt Therapy, shadow aspects of Jungian therapy, ego psychology and self psychology (Wilber, 1996a).

The third chakra, which exists at this level, is called solar plexus. This power and autonomy chakra is composed of the merging energy of lower chakras with the upper chakra. This chakra moves throughout this fulcrum, as well as the next fulcrum (level four), due to the issues that it merges with in the prepersonal and personal stages. This chakra is in a state of merging as the self begins to negotiate with the social world, by breaking away from other’s ideas of who we are, towards a place in which the individual begins to define him/her self (Rama, Ballentine, & Swami, 1975).

Autonomy brings personal responsibility composed of strength, whereas a lack of autonomy brings about blaming others for our lives. Furthermore, the energies of the masculine and feminine become alive, defining their power, and enabling the development into the heart chakra. If this chakra is not awakened, an individual will remain passive, give their power to others, lack in personal responsibility, which will possibility prevent the self from true psychic freedom (Judith, 1996).

Healing this chakra is essential to balancing the “distribution of energy

throughout the body, and determining the course of our lives with responsibility and freedom” (Judith, 1996, p. 219). Interventions at this chakra are built on the strengthening of the ego. Attachments such as the idea of 'being safe' must be transcended, as well as participating in releasing anger through psychosomatic energy work, and learning to express the shame that lives in the shadow. Healing is about realizing a sense of self, and power (Judith, 1996).

In all, the prepersonal stages are characterized by the development of the body, the emotional self and the representational mind (Wilber, 1996a). Moreover, the first three chakras correspond with these stages, with the development of “basic instinctual urges and needs for self maintenance” (Judith, 1996, p. 242). A healthy development leads to the personal stage where the ego begins to develop.

Personal Stages

The development of the self continues from the development of a healthy self-structure of the prepersonal stages to the personal realm of a mature ego. It is at this stage, the self develops entirely different conflicts and vulnerabilities consisting of three major levels, cognitive, identity, and existential (Wilber, 1996a). The works of Maslow's (1954) self needs, Loveinger's (1976) sense of self, and Kohlberg's (1981) moral sensibility are integrated as the self begins a shift from the egocentric/preconventional to sociocentric/conventional (Wilber, 2000).

It is at this personal stage that the ego develops, bringing about a higher level of consciousness in relating to self and others. With respect to the chakras, “it marks a sort of transition between those chakras below it, which are concerned with the more biological matters of self-maintenance and survival, and the chakras above it, which are

associated with a more evolved consciousness” (Rama et al, 1976, p.243).

Level 4- Rule/role mind

As the mental self transcends the representational mind, an emergence into rule/role mind occurs, or what Piaget's (1977) called 'conoperational' (Wilber, 1996a). During the first structure of the personal realm, the self can “not only imitate a role, but can actually take the role of other” (Wilber, 1996a, p. 123). The role of the “other” is a new perspective of object relations, as the self begins to recognize itself in others and, therefore, looks towards others for acceptance and belonging. Furthermore, others will be looked to in order to define and give understanding of the rules of society with correlative fear of losing face, losing role, breaking role. In order to belong the self will “overtly communicate one message, while covertly implying another” (Wilber, 1996a, p. 124). These covert messages, or hidden agendas, are considered to be deficient in the self. It is at this stage of the healing process when a woman begins to receive positive feedback from others, to which she begins to feel alive and exuberant, can be somewhat dangerous. This is dangerous as she is essentially deriving her sense of belonging and acceptance from others and not herself. She must be careful not to continue devaluing herself, as well as she must be careful not to believe everyone’s feedback, but to ‘watch’ her attachment to other’s judgments. If the self fails to integrate at this level, “script pathology,” consisting of false and sometimes crippling scripts, stories and myths of the self, is created (Wilber, 1996a). Therapeutic interventions, such as cognitive behavioral techniques, thus are useful to bring into awareness the faulty cognition distortions that are needed in order to replace them with healthy, accurate scripts (Wilber, 1996a).

Furthermore, with the impact of cognitive awareness, an instrumental

understanding at this level develops and as the self differentiates itself from the previous levels of self that were more psychodynamic in nature (Wilber, 1996a). The mind has now been exposed to several mental operations and with this knowledge a healthy structure and an individual with a healthy consciousness structure would move on to the emergence of formal-reflexive level.

Level 5- Formal-reflexive mind

At this level in the spectrum of consciousness, the self-reflexive ego emerges, and a shift happens occurs from a conventional/conformist way of living to a conversationalists/individualistic way of being(Wilber, 1996a). A concern for oneself begins to develop, transcending the of role/rule mind of self/object relations (Wilber, 1996a). For the first time, the self can begin to think and feel for itself, exposing itself to the possibility of conceiving a future (Piaget), with new avenues, possibilities, fears and desires (Wilber, 1996a). “It becomes a philosopher, dreamer in the best and highest sense; an internally reflexive mirror, awestruck by its own existence” (Wilber, 1996a, p.125).

If the self is not fully integrated, however, an “identity neurosis” can manifest: The self can be faced with problems of “identity versus role confusion,” as the self discovers it no longer needs societal rules and roles to make decisions, nor guide its conscience. In the transformation process, for example, women may struggle with letting go of their old identities as victims or survivors. In order to move along the spectrum they will need to let go of these identities. In order to heal these identity neuroses, ‘Socratic’ or philosophical dialogues are used to “activate, draw out and exercise the reflective-introspective mind and correlative self-sense” (Wilber, 1996a. p. 125). Given

the philosophical nature of the problem it is not surprising that Socratic dialogue, a creative exercise in verbal communication, is used.

At this level the chakra is the heart, also existing at level six (Rama et al, 1976). Emotions are highlighted at this level, playing a key role in relation of the self to itself and those around it. Some of the basic concepts encountered at this chakra include balance, love and relationship (Judith, 1996). Balance brings the “underlying foundation of longevity in all things” (Judith, 1996, p. 236), such as body/mind, anima/animus, ourselves and the world we live in. Elaborating on balance and its connection to Tantra, Judith (1996) states:

Ancient tantric diagrams depict the heart chakra as a lotus of twelve petals containing a six-pointed star, made of two interlacing triangles. This represents the downward movement of spirit into matter and the upward liberation of matter and spirit, meeting in perfect balance in the heart. More than just a meeting, this is an interpretation; the whole final goal is integration of spirit and mind with body and soul. (p. 236)

Love can open this path to consciousness, she continues, putting ourselves in touch with our own self, and with others (Judith, 1996). Love brings intimacy into life, allowing the self to enter relationships with its self (mind and body) and with others. Imbalance at this chakra is manifested itself through our wounds, self-destructive behaviors and self-loathing.

Healing of this chakra requires looking within, to the most vulnerable and sacred parts of ourselves, in search of love and self-acceptance (Judith, 1996). Self-reflection begins with honoring who we are, by integrating all aspects of our selves and allowing

oneself to express as well as nurture feelings. Love will open ourselves and others, bringing a “wider sense of connection with all life” (Judith, 1996, p. 292). As vitality of life and love is located at this chakra, it is not surprising that the location of this chakra is located in the chest area. Because breath is vital for life, breath work, is used to allow the cycle of breath to become strong, smooth and balanced, thus encouraging a dialogue between mind and body. As Judith (1996) explains, “only through attending to their truth can we drop the protective armor that keeps us bound to the ego, bound to smaller parts of ourselves” (p. 293).

With the self situated personally and securely in the world, having developed healthy introspection and philosophizing skills, the self is able to transcend the formal-reflexive level in order to move on to the vision-logic level, involving issues of love and compassion.

Level 6- Vision-logic

As the “formal mind” has developed enough to establish healthy relationships, the “vision-logic” can begin to maintain a network of those relationships, which can influence and interrelate with each other. This 'higher mind' (Aurobindo) can process single ideas as well as the facade and truth of each of these ideas. It is at this level, that the self develops and integrates body and mind called a “centauric self” (Wilber, 1996a, p.125). As it encounters dilemmas, such as overall meaninglessness of life, fear of death, loneliness and aloneness, this centaur, or existential self, concerns itself with authenticity, autonomy and self-actualization. This is a turning point in the transformational process, as the self understands the larger aspect of the self that is based in the cosmos: It adds up these relationships between various aspects of existential concerns and comes to the

realization that “personal life is a brief spark in the cosmic void” (Wilber, 1996a, p. 126).

In grappling with these dilemmas common syndromes, such as existential depression, may occur during these experiences of the existential self. This form of depression is a universal depression in which the individual is faced with the idea of her own existence as being meaningless (Wilber, 1996a). During this time other syndromes may manifest, including inauthenticity, a lack of awareness and acceptance of one's mortality, as well as existential isolation and “uncanniness,” a feeling of not being 'at home' in the world, causing intense anxiety. A woman through her transformational journey may experience an aborted self-actualization, in which she realizes that she is less than what she was capable of being, or experience existential anxiety, in which she experiences a loss of mirrors of being-in-the-world. This loss is typically threatened by a loss or death of these mirrors, which means the person, does not receive the validation from outside of themselves. These incidents cause a sense of panic and a fundamental lack of meaning in one's life.

These syndromes are all rather different from their neurotic counterparts in that they are “a highly differentiated- integrated self structure presents the symptom” (Wilber, 1996a, p. 127). Unlike neuroses, these syndromes cause a 'freeze in the functioning' of the self, with the self locked into a egocentric power struggle, creating a need to empty oneself of, in order to become more grounded in authenticity and autonomy (Wilber, 1996a). A surrender to egocentric power struggle thus allows for opening of Beingness. For example, one realizes the confines and fragility of body that the ego had initially lead one to believe was a facade. In turn this leads to the realization that “I am not the body;” a physical death does not occur but a sense that “I am more than physical body” expands

one's self. These discoveries, about the intrinsic meaning of life, autonomy, leads the self to open to being, allowing the self to identify with its beingness (Wilber, 1996a).

Transpersonal Stages

Like the prepersonal and personal realms, the transpersonal realm is composed of three levels of development, psychic, subtle and causal. This realm, however, is characterized by higher plains of beingness. In this sixth level, tantric transformations begin to occur as the self is challenged to face the death of the ego, to relinquish the reality of the mind, and to become aware that the self is not the body (Wilber, 1996a). As spiritual awakening occurs, tantra emerges as the self has begun to trust existence allowing for a surrender to the ultimate gift.

Level 7- Psychic

At this level, the higher mind (vision-logic) brings greater awareness into beingness, characterized by the opening of the 'third eye'. At this point the self is at the "beginning of truly higher-synthesizing capacity, of making connections, relating truths, coordinating ideas, [and] integrating concepts" (Wilber, 1996a, p.86). Moving onwards into the beginning of the transpersonal, psychic level, the higher mind transcends to this higher level that of an illumined mind (psychic level). As this occurs there is an expanded sense of self that has moved beyond the normal mind/body perception and any sense of personhood. The individual self begins to experience the dissolution of the separate-self and merges with the gross, manifest world.

At this stage the individual experiences temporary peak experiences that leave the individual feeling more whole and integrated "at the peak of his powers" (Maslow, 1961, p. 255) in which the person can become 'egoless'. Intense experiences of blissfulness,

radiance and expansiveness occur.

At this psychic level there are certain pathologies that may manifest in the beginning practitioner (Wilber, 1996a). Ego inflation may occur when, having experienced a spiritual moment, the practitioner begins to believe she has become a greater human being and thus places harsh judgments on others whose understanding of their existence appears to be meager in contrast. Similarly, another pathology is referred to as split life goals. After a person experiences a luminous and wondrous sexual experience, for example, she may find her experience diminished by stories. In other words, she may feel torn between the sacredness of spiritual life and her own “mundane” existence, seeing her everyday life as ‘pointless’ and perhaps engaging in a ‘hermit’-like existence. Another pathology is one referred to as “Kundalini opening problems” and the dreaded ‘dark night of the soul’. The dark night of the soul, on the other hand, is something that occurs after the soul has experienced the Divine. But, as the experience begins to fade, a profound despair descends on the soul, believing that its “meaning in life” has also faded (Wilber, 1996a).

At this level the governing chakra is called the throat chakra concerned with nurturance and creativity (Rama, Ballentine, & Swami, 1976). Physically, the function of the throat is to bring food into the body, helping it to receive nutrients. Psychologically; it only makes sense that this chakra is concerned with receptivity. One of the receptivity factors is nurturance, the basic feeling of being secure. If threatened, the ego will search for “nurturance from above” in an attempt to make contact with a higher realm of consciousness and awareness (Rama et al. 1976, p. 257). The second aspect of nurturance, acceptance, is intertwined with the expression of creativity. These aspects are

inseparable and both are enhanced when the chakras become balanced (Rama et al. 1976).

Creativity relates to the “realm of vibration, sound, communication” (Judith, 1996, p. 303). It is the pulsating rhythm of these realms that brings synchronicity and balance to the body, enabling the transformation to consciousness (Judith, 1996). Therapeutic interventions such as art therapy, vocalization exercises, and drama, dream or dance therapies are all used to stir creativity. Jung's archetypal symbols of myth and artistic expressions can also be utilized to integrate personality and consciousness (Rama, Ballentine, & Swami, 1976). The purpose of these creative expressions is not “merely to create art but to transform one's personality” (Rama et al. 1976). With a secure self development of introspection and philosophizing, this chakra of creativity and nurturance allows for higher consciousness.

As healing continues to occur during psychic level and the intuitive self (third eye) gains knowledge through the integration of intellect and emotion, an increase of new understanding and knowing awakens. Moreover, the self learns to “both depend on and promotes self realization” (Rama, Ballentine, & Swami 1976, p. 265). Consciousness thus has “reach beyond” (Wilber, 1996a, p. 86) individual perceptions and cognition, to a developed area of pluralism and universal realization.

Level 8-Subtle

The subtle level consists of a more intense self-development, with progressive running through of new object relations, new motivations, new forms of life and of death, and of course, new possible pathologies. At this level the self begins to experience a deeper intuitive connection with the archetypal presence. In tantra, the self becomes more

closely identified with the Archetypal Presence, which is aware that this Divine Presence is one's own essential nature.

Typical subtle pathologies include integration-identification failure, manifesting as a fracture between self and Archetype that leads the self to withdrawal into a separate being, thus unable to identify with its archetypal self (Wilber, 1996a). Similarly, pseudo-nirvana or what Zen refers to as "Zen sickness" can occur. In this case, the self mistakes subtle realm, archetypal forms, illuminations or insights as Enlightenment. A woman who shares a Tantric experience with another may, for instance, develop a reliance on this other person to fulfill this experience, as opposed to accepting the experience just as it is. A subtle split between self and other occurs leading her to see this otherness in tantra. She would need to work through this split of the 'other' to shift into cosmic orgasm of existence, a merging of powerful energy and consciousness that is beyond the self. Nonetheless, if the therapist has an understanding of spiritual/transcendental awareness, psychotherapy is still a relevant approach to treating these pathologies at the subtle level (Wilber, 1996).

Level 9- Causal

The causal level is the realized state of consciousness, of cosmic knowing and boundless universal self, no longer contracted by the ego and its manifest world. The supreme self is one's essence. The self has transcended all sense of separateness and in its place, is a wide cosmic feeling of the boundless universal self. The self witnesses the manifest and unmanifest forms as they arise in consciousness. It is the "unmanifest source or transcendental ground of all the lesser structures; the Abyss (Gnosticism), Emptiness (Mahayana), the Formlessness (Vedanta)" (Wilber, 1996a, p. 87).

In the causal stage, development refers to the proper differentiation of the causal and final integration of the Ultimate. Two potential pathologies include the “inability to accept final death of archetypal self,” and the failure to integrate, which results in a split between the manifest and unmanifest worlds (Wilber, 1996a, p.132). When a woman has experienced a cosmic orgasm state and distances herself from all aspects of daily life in order to stay in a blissful state, for instance, she is failing to integrate these worlds. The goal should instead be to witness this blissful state while staying actively involved in day to day existence.

The illuminated mind is best characterized by “third eye” or sixth chakra. The third eye involves “introspection or the ability to see within” (Rama, Ballentine, & Swami, 1976, p. 264), to perceive and to command awareness at an intuitive level, that of which the physical eye cannot grasp (Rama et al. 1976). It is at this level that illusions are challenged: We learn that what we see with the physical (eye) is an image of what we 'should' be seeing, as opposed to what is being “known” with the third eye. In other words, we learn that illusions are based in the dream world where the (physical eye) has not yet awakened to see reality.

Trust, as seen through the physical eye, is something that is still based in a dream world that has been constructed by the self and the ego, as opposed to a kind of trust that is awakened following a surrender to that which is known to be *True*. The physical eye ‘trust,’ therefore essentially caused the self to repress and dissociate from true self, while the true self is bombarded with images that “clutter up the psyche” (Judith, 1996, p. 382).

Some of the interventions that may help in opening the third eye include dream works, the study of mythology, vision meditations and of course, learning to develop and

trust intuition. The purpose of the causal level is thus the abolishment of ego-sense, replacing it with a “wide cosmic perception of feeling boundless self” (Wilber, 1996a, p.188).

Level 10- Non-dual or Ultimate

This is the “suchness” of all levels, representing the complete union of the manifest form with unmanifest formlessness. After transcending the casual level, consciousness is awakened and to rest in its natural state, the nondual. In “suchness of nondual (p. 357)” each individual is fully and completely One, the ultimate truth:

...in nondual Suchness, it is absolutely *not* that each being is a part of One, or participates in the One, or is an aspect of the One... An individual holon is not part of the One Spirit because each individual holon *is* the One Spirit *in its entirety*- the Infinite, being radically dimensionless, is fully present at each and every point of space time... (Wilber, 2000, p. 357)

At this level sexual intercourse exists as a naturally occurring state, like all other functions and there is no self-referring aspect. As Suzanne Segal (1996), a non-dual ‘teacher’ states “Sex serves no personal desire and has no deeper meaning that makes it anything but what it is at the moment” (p.143).

Governing this level is the crown chakra, representing the highest state of consciousness. At this level, awareness expands beyond verbal terms; all distinctions of ordinary consciousness are broken down (Rama, Ballentine, & Swami, 1975). An imbalance of this chakra may result in spiritual materialism, dissociation from body and over-intellectualization (Judith, 1996). Healing therapies would thus focus on energizing, calming and clarifying the mind, possibly through mediation or developing of inner

witness, in order to reestablish the spiritual and physical connection (Judith, 1996, p. 403). At this level of consciousness there is a vast awareness of limitlessness, “even the difference between the experiencer and experience has ceased to exist” (Rama et al. 1976, p. 75).

Although energy has no ending and no beginning in the chakra system, categorically the crown chakra (chakra seven) is considered to be the last. The purpose of the chakra approach, therefore, is not necessarily to reach the crown chakra but rather to reclaim pieces of each chakra in order to allow a fuller richer life to evolve (Rama et al. 1976; Breaux, 1989; Judith, 1996).

In summation, this review of Wilber’s Spectrum of Consciousness provides a framework, not only for explaining of Tantra , but also how a person can embrace Tantra to enable her to transform trauma from a constraining ego experience to that of a transcendent one. Wilber's (1996a) basic structure of consciousness, along with pathologies and treatment modalities is a map of the self-development of human beings, and revealed here, it corresponds with the development of sexual trauma through to tantric transformations. Additionally, the chakra system offers an understanding of bodily experiences and energies as it relates to emotions and mental aspects of the self.

A.H.Almaas: The Diamond Approach

The Diamond Approach, as developed by A.H. Almaas (1996), has its origins in depth psychology and object relations theory. Because this method explores a way of working with people towards inner realization, it is also viewed as being a valuable transpersonal approach to understanding transformational process. What is of particular interest is that it offers an understanding of the narcissistic patterning that can occur as a

result of trauma. Additionally, this approach provides an explanation into the transforming experience of human narcissism into self-realization (Almaas, 1988, 1996; 2001). In discussing self-realization Almaas (1996) states:

Self-realization is identifying with the essence of the self, which is presence. This presence can be experienced as the simple, clear existence of fundamental Being, or one might also be aware of the ever-changing forms that presence of Being is taking. Narcissism is the condition that results when the self identifies with any content of experience to the exclusion of awareness of its fundamental nature.

(p.36)

According to Almaas (1996), narcissism is the primary force alienating us from our real self, creating self-representations of ourselves that we take to be true. When we live from the perspective of these narcissistic self-representations (or the identities we take on), we find ourselves becoming self-conscious in an all-consuming vulnerability that shakes our foundation of who we are. If, for instance, the experience of sexual trauma causes a person to live from a place of narcissism, the self splits from their true realization of the self. In this split, the person's sense of self experiences a narcissistic wound that entraps the self in intense rage, betrayal and hurt. Caught up in narcissistic self-representations, this separate self resonates in worthlessness that furthers manipulates our actions so we feel insulted and ashamed.

When relating to others, a feeling of fakeness exists that continues to shame oneself as well as devalue others. The Diamond Approach suggests that the self can transform these narcissistic self-identities along the process of self-realization. The transformational journey from trauma to Tantra is thus the unraveling of narcissism to

self-realization. Living from a place of self-realization is to enjoy a freedom, authenticity and effortlessness that is not conscious in our separate selves. From this place of self-realization, we are centered in knowing “what and who we are, and we seek security in this knowledge” (Almaas, 2001, p. 3). There is a feeling of worth and creativity in the stable, real self with openness to experiencing others and ourselves. There is a “suchness” to life that brings clarity and understanding to one’s existence as we are connected to the true self.

In his research Almaas (1996), identified eighteen narcissistic representations, all of which offer transformational possibilities through the process of self-realization. Through each of these stages, the person will make a number of self discoveries that are related to the true self.

1. Fakeness
2. The shell
3. The narcissistic wound
4. The great betrayal
5. Narcissistic rage, hatred and envy
6. Narcissistic emptiness, meaninglessness, and pointlessness
7. Loss of orientation, center and self-recognition
8. Narcissistic shame
9. Narcissistic rejection objection relation
10. Selflessness inner spaciousness
11. Ego activity
12. Narcissistic depression

13. Helplessness and nondoing
14. Trust and need for holding
15. The ego ideal
16. The holding loving light
17. The Essential Identity
18. Point diamond, or essential self-recognition and resolution of the need for mirroring. (Almaas, 1996, p. 303)

As the person works through their narcissistic self-representations at each of these stages, the emptiness and meaninglessness that is connected to his/her normal sense of identity will be revealed: “She begins to realize that what she has been taking to be herself is actually a shell, devoid of any substantial realization or inherent richness” (Almaas, 1996, p. 303).

Along with these narcissistic representations, various images of the past will also be revealed to be false. Having believed this collection of images to be the real self, the self will now experience itself as a hard shell filled with emptiness, and fakeness that leads the self to rejection, shame and guilt. For instance, a woman who has been through a sexual trauma may feel that her whole identity is caught in the trauma shame she has experienced. Consequently, she may participate in self-degrading acts of prostitution, drug addiction or self harm, activities that represent the shame but do not allow her to fully experience the wound. The identity or representation leaves her feeling worthless, in essence hurt, wounded, contracted in the frozenness of trauma.

Because it does not want to feel the wound of trauma, the self is forced to rely on these narcissistic self-representations. Instead of recreating the cycle of rejection felt

through these self-representations, the Almas' (1996) approach challenges the self to inquire into the sense of fakeness. In so doing she is able to see how she has been living her life from this image of an empty shell, hence in self-inquiry transforming the wound:

Seeing that her normal sense of identity was based on this empty shell, and recognizing the development of this shell as the development of the concept of herself, she realized that the shell was composed of many self-images, many of which she had seen before, but a myriad of which were still waiting to be exposed. (Almaas, 2001, p. 305)

Through this process, the person reveals the sense of "I am" resting in authenticity as opposed to the fakeness (Almaas, 2001). In working through this narcissism, one realizes how they have presented themselves in an inauthentic fashion based on past memories, in this study, how they presented themselves from a trauma identity. This "false self" that is identified with a hard shell and fakeness, breaks down to rest in self-realization (Almaas, 1996).

Through the uncovering of narcissistic patterns, the self can experience an intense hurt that lives in vulnerability. This hurt is a deep wound which "is the sign of the threat of cohesion of this structure" (Almaas, 1996, p. 311). When a narcissistic wound arises, it symbolizes a loss in recognizing who we are, actually allowing for dissolution of self-representations. This wound reveals the lack of support and appreciation the self did not receive in childhood. An example of this painful wound can be the experience of incest as a girl, in which abandonment and rejection are the wounds brought on by the lack of nurturing and love not received. However painful this experience is, the wound can be transformed, by letting the self experience the hurt while being in touch with

vulnerability, allowing the self to become closer to Essential Identity. The wound then becomes “a window which can be open up to a vast emptiness” (Almaas, 1996, p. 315). In emptiness, a shell no longer protects the narcissistic wound. Instead an openness to dissolving the self resides there, a nothingness.

In the intense hurt of the narcissistic wound the individual lives in a façade. Within this façade, some experience of mirroring from the person’s environment still exists, allowing the person to tolerate the pain and loneliness of the wound. In order to continue living with this façade, however, the person has to betray oneself, hence the Great Betrayal (Almaas, 1996). Trauma repetition is an example of Great Betrayal, as the woman recreates the trauma by placing herself in harm’s way either through the environment or with dangerous persons. Unknowingly, she is betraying herself but looks at others as the betrayer. Through the intense pain of the narcissistic wound she comes to realize that she has created these hurtful events; that Great Betrayal of her self was turning away from herself and placing herself in danger. The Great Betrayal is thus defined as turning away from one’s true nature, so that one can survive in an intolerable environment (Almaas, 1996).

At the deepest level, the wound is about having ‘sold out’ or not remaining true to oneself. Almaas (1996) discusses:

we begin by feeling betrayed by others through narcissistic insults; we realize the betrayal of our true nature by our parents; and ultimately we realize that, in our struggle for survival, we have rejected our own truth and lost our precious Essential Identity (p. 322).

Through awareness and understanding of the betrayal of self, the individual

realizes the “choiceless choice” (Almaas, 21, p 321) she had in her childhood. This realization allows for the self to accept the pain in order to experience its intensity, and to see the emptiness of the false self and the “preciousness she no longer need abandon” (Almaas, 1996, p. 322).

A typical reaction to the wound is the experience of narcissistic rage which is a defense against feeling narcissistic vulnerability. As a result of failing to receive adequate mirroring from the persons we are close to in the world, the individual responds in rage and feels justified in doing so. From this point of uncontrollable rage, the individual responds by lashing out defensively with hatred and envy towards the one, she/he feels hurt from. The function of this rage is “protect her from the awareness of her vulnerability, dependency on mirroring, and the weakness of her sense of self” (Almaas, 1996, p. 325). In working through this rage, with the individual, a practitioner needs to be empathetic towards this defensive mode and understanding of the significance into the reactions and their importance. Once an individual demonstrates the ability to witness the narcissistic rage further exploration can occur.

In realizing and dealing with the narcissistic wound and rage, the self has fully accepted the intensity of the pain and hurt. In doing so, the wounds of sexual trauma expand and one can fully experience a loving kindness, allowing for the dissolution of the empty shell. As Almaas (1996) explains:

the experience generally proceeds until the student experiences no emptiness, a no shell or wound. There remains only an awareness of boundless emptiness, a nothingness that stretches out forever. The emptiness in the emptiness wound expands until its boundaries extend indefinitely. The emptiness within the shell is

now completely revealed. (p 329)

Due to emptiness of the shell, the self feels the emptiness as a loss of self identity. In this sense of deficiency, there is a discovery that the identity is gone. This experience is called narcissistic emptiness, as the self feels the emptiness as a loss of the familiar identity. Although memories and the identification of the physical self continue to exist, when no longer confined by the identity of a sexual trauma survivor, the self feels a sense of loss, of not knowing oneself, (Almaas, 1996). This feeling of loss manifests as a continuous dissolving process of the shell.

Struggles with meaninglessness and pointlessness are experienced as the self comes to realize there has been no meaning, as there has been no direct involvement in their true Self. By living in the sense of familiar identity, the self understands that it has not been living in the Essential Identity. The Essential Identity is the “capacity of the self to recognize itself without any reference to any experience of the past, or any self-image, or even any memory” (Almaas, 1996, p.138). The dissolution of the shell reveals the disconnection from the Essential Identity. One realizes the Essential Identity as always being present and authentic, but one has been disconnected from it. Almaas (1996) speaks of the realization of the absent true Self.

So narcissistic emptiness involves disconnection not only from the Essential Identity, but from beingness as a whole. It is the absence of self-Realization. It is the gap between our essential nature and who we take ourselves to be. It is the great chasm separating our experience in the conventional dimension of experience from the fundamental ground of the soul. It is the emptiness of narcissistic alienation itself (p. 334).

The experience of narcissistic emptiness is difficult to understand because once in the deficiency of the self, the self will react with judgments and rejection, leaving it residing in shame. This narcissistic shame causes the self to judge the experience of emptiness as painful and worthless. During the healing process, narcissistic shame can prevent the woman from fully experiencing trauma shame, as she will judge this shame as too painful and 'deathlike'. Feelings associated with the Great Betrayal can arise, causing the self to reject its self and others with harsh criticism and hatred. The self must work through this, by understanding the various projections she places on others and accepting the emptiness without judgment. The ability of the counselor to understand this process, when a sexually traumatized woman presents herself, is invaluable: In order to avoid the emptiness that needs to be experienced the client will project various transference issues onto the counselor. A counselor who understands this process will recognize this and will work with her to enable the woman to fully accept the emptiness without judgments or projections. In fully accepting narcissistic shame, the self realizes "the emptiness is the absence of being herself" with no judgments. (Almaas, 1996, p.336)

In accepting this emptiness, the self moves to a deeper acceptance transforming the self to an inner spaciousness that is peaceful and spacious. No longer confined to the reactions of the self-representations, the self experiences a freedom from its identity; free to experience emptiness not as a deficiency but as a release. It is at this point that the transformational process begins. Once defined by the shame and painful wounds of sexual trauma, the woman now accepts these wounds and allows for an expansion into emptiness at a universal level. Almaas (1996) explains:

There is a sense of newness and coolness, of lightness and lightheartedness, of the

absence of burden and suffering, and the presence of purity and peace. It is a nothingness, but it is a nothingness that is rich, that is satisfying precisely because of its emptiness. It is a direct sense of endless stillness, of pure peacefulness, of an infinity of blackness that is so black that it is luminous. It is a transparent blackness that is radiant because of its purity. (p. 338)

Although the self experiences this infinity as itself, this is not a permanent state. At times the ego's activity will create barriers to this experience. Now facing its own death, the ego will intensify its activity by recreating and engaging in old stories of sexual trauma in an attempt to create some sense of self identification. This ego activity constitutes a mental obsession with self rejection and desire. Because the ego wants to avoid the hopelessness and helplessness of its own fate, this activity intensifies. During this struggle, the self may become struck in narcissistic depression, defined as a deep existential feeling of despair and hopelessness regarding being one's true Self. This depression prevents one from fully embracing the narcissistic emptiness. Although constrained in its darkness the woman identifies with being depressed, which is judged as better than being nothing. To be depressed is more acceptable than being nothing at all. Discovering that one has been living the life of an empty shell brings up a deep hopelessness about living an essentially inauthentic life (Almaas, 1996, p. 340-41).

The depression itself is finally understood as yet another way to not work through ego activity. Ego activity persisting out of rejection of the deficiency realization cannot change the deficiency, instead it must be burned through to allow a surrender into Being. Surrender is a deep letting go in which one gains freedom from ego activity. In order for this to occur the individual must understand that 'doing' is the activity of the ego, and is

not required in 'being'. A deep surrender transforms the doing into being, allowing for understanding in Being. This process also requires an individual to have a profound trust in "truth and in reality in general" (Almaas, 1996, p. 342). She must be willing to believe that if the activity ceases to exist the person will be "okay."

Almaas (1996) also discusses a need for individuals to explore patterns of trust in childhood. The purpose of this is to enable her to recognize the absence of the parent's ability to hold a trusting environment during the person's formative years. If the sexually traumatized woman did not receive a safe and trusting environment during these years, this will make it even more difficult for her to fully surrender. It is this level of distrust that perpetuates the ego activity the most. It is only through experience that one can begin to know trust. In order for the ego activity to be eliminated a trust in reality must be experienced. Thus, for a sexually traumatized woman to have trust, she must appreciate her own experience, safety and also realize her true self.

Probing deeper into ego activity introduces the idea of the "ego idea," described by Almaas (1996) as the effort to be something based on a certain image or ideal. The self tries to approximate a certain ideal, in the hope that if she succeeds she will be worthy of the support she needs. Although this ideal is never attained, the self never tires of trying. Whereas self-realization is a process that occurs in the development of a normal identity, enabling an individual to discover that Beingness is the "fundamental ground of all existence," this process can not occur with those who have trust issues (Almaas, 1996, p. 343). Instead, the ego's activities are perpetuated by the individual's basic distrust in human. The purpose of exploring this distrust is to remove all barriers to self realization, allowing for openness to Universal Love to be recognized.

Once the individual has worked through the historical pages of the various ego activities, a deep surrender into a basic trust can then take place. It is at this moment that the individual would embrace Tantra, experiencing a loving light representing existence itself. It is this love that dissolves the ego activity, furthering the surrender process. In this realization of the loving presence, the individual can then accept the narcissistic wound and the emptiness that is present always. Almaas (1996) refers to this love as a Living Daylight or Loving Light and remarks:

The presence of the Loving Daylight helps us to let go of the empty shell, to allow the narcissistic wound and accept the narcissistic emptiness. The boundless, loving presence makes it easier for the self to relax and cease activity. One also comes to realize that it is this love, which actually acts, and not the self. (p. 344)

Once the resolution of narcissism has occurred, the individual realizes that the presence of Loving Light represents a spiritual path so integral to the surrender process. Now that the individual can be present and at ease with the ego, the Essential Identity, coupled with presence and authenticity, can now experience the realization of who one *is*. With the transformation of narcissism to self-realization, the ego is witnessed as an entity outside of oneself (as a third person), as are the other concepts, realizations and images of the self. Almaas (1996) explains the experience of Essential Identity:

when one is completely being the Essential Identity, the experience no longer takes the form of being or seeing a point of light. The sense of size disappears, even the feeling of identity disappears. Self-realization becomes a matter of Being, purely Being, with an increasing understanding of what this means.

(p.345)

In other words within this Being is the realization that the self is Presence in Being; that Being is not a simple construct. In this Being the self is aware of the direct experience of its own true Self. The woman who has experienced sexual trauma is no longer a trauma experiencer but rather a person who has possesses a sense of freedom and simplicity that quiets the mind, allowing it to rest in aloneness.

At this point the individual now understands the workings of the ego, which in turn allows her to see the transparency that has existed in the self-structure: She understands her narcissistic wounds, rage and Great Betrayal, as well as the working of the ego as being reactions to the experience of trauma. She also experiences a deep compassion for her own suffering that resonates from Being. She recognizes that her wholeness is connected to a greater historical and humanity perspective; that it expands to a universal network. In this process there is a danger that the individual's old wound may come back, the old object relations ideals of wanting to her own ideals separate from others. Almaas (2001) calls this a "trap... or narcissistic impasse" (p.349).

The narcissistic impasse causes the individual to isolate physically or psychologically, which signifies a lack of understanding of self-realization. The individual needs to come to a realization that she does not have to separate herself from the external world. (Almaas, 1996, p.349)

Once the resolution of narcissistic impasse has occurred, and there is a clear understanding into oneself, the need for mirroring transcends, and inquiry is needed, as explained:

Further investigation into the issue of external influence, and an increasingly objective understanding about how experience unfolds, brings us to the

understanding that to arrive at self-realization is not a matter of trying to get somewhere; it is not a question of working to actualize a specific state.

(Almaas, 1996, p. 352)

With 'no where to go' self-realization remains open to new inquiry, in which the person can look at oneself with an objective awareness. The non-dual awareness brings a richness and vibrancy to one's Beingness, which is the reference point of our existence. It is this nondual presence that offers endless possibilities into further explanation of tantra, including the transformational journey from sexual trauma to wholeness.

Tantric Transformations: the journey of unfolding into Supreme Bliss

A total orgasm with the universe...a melting and merging- the two are no more two; the bodies remain separate, but something between the bodies makes a bridge, a golden bridge, and the twoness inside disappears; one life-energy vibrates on both the poles.

(Rajneesh, 1975, p. 5)

Now that the concepts of Trauma, Transformation, the Chakra system, Spectrum of Consciousness, and Narcissism to Self Realization have been discussed an exploration of Tantra can be conducted. As we have seen, what connects these concepts is the transformation from ego constructs, involving sexual trauma through to transcendence of ego to the awakened state of Beingness, or our Essential Natures. As Lama Yeshe

(1987), a Tibetan master of Tantra, explains: Tantra is a principle involving the transformation of energies, as these transformational energies, “are our evolution from an ordinary, limited and deluded person trapped within the shell of a petty ego into a fully evolved, totally conscious being of unlimited compassion and insight” (p. 17).

Before examining Tantra’s transformational energies, a brief history of Tantra and its current impact on Western society is necessary. This will provide the reader with an understanding of Tantra’s vast spectrum, described as a complex and powerful constellation of approaches that involves many facets of life. Tantra’s non-dual perspectives constitute a crucial aspect of its teachings and are particularly relevant to this thesis.

Tantra’s Origin

Tantra has its origin in Asian society (Guenther, 1976, Allen, 1981; Odier, 1999, 2004; Shaw, 1994; Brooks, 2001). Two of its most well recognized forms appear in Buddhist and Hindu Tantric traditions and their accompanying literature. Buddhist Tantra is connected to the Mahayana school of Buddhism and its Tibetan forms are sometimes called the Vajrayana or “Thunderbolt path” (Odier, 2004).

Hindu Tantra challenges the orthodox Vedic tradition. In this Tantric tradition, Hindu is primarily concerned with the unity of opposites. The sexual union of male and female serves as symbols of cosmic ecstasy inherent in the ultimate human divine connection. Sexual union may also be practiced as a method through which humans unite with Goddess Sakti and Lord Shiva, two entities that together comprise the Divine, or Absolute Reality. It is through sexuality, that Tantra invokes the experience of wholeness, for both male and female unite to embody the Divine. Here is an explanation

of unity from a Hindu perspective in the Kashmiri Saiva tradition:

In the Hindu tradition this primal opposition and its reconciliation in the unity of opposites is understood as the intimate, inner relationship between God and His omnipotent power...God and His creation are not two contrasting realities.

Intimately bound together as heat is with fire or coolness with ice, Sakti- God's power, and Siva- its possessor, are never separate. Even so, if we are to understand their relationship we must provisionally distinguish between them in the realms of manifestations. First, we have the finite vision in which they are seen apart and then the infinite vision in which we realize their unity. Without the experience of duality that of unity would have no meaning. Unity is not mere negation of distinction, but the absence of difference in diversity. The realization of unity consists of the insight that apparently different things are identical.

(Dyckowski, 1989, p. 99)

This 'goal' of human sexuality is thus is to "transcend the experienced world, which is both external and internal" (Feuerstein, 1998, p. 25).

In contrast, the 'goal' of Tantric Buddhism is similar to other Buddhist teachings, namely "attainment of Enlightenment" (Geunther & Trungpa, 1975, p.6). The term 'goal' is used lightly in this instance as there is no end but a continual movement that is present in Tantra, which is known to progress beyond inner growth, towards enlightenment. This 'path' of enlightenment is described as a continual process of living from a place of newness (Guenther & Trungpa, 1975). Moreover, it is not a slow process as one might think, but rather a "quick path to enlightenment" (Shaw, 1994, p. 24). Its purpose is to dismantle dualistic situations swiftly. For example, as Tantra dismantles the

duality of a 'goal' and a 'path', it brings them together. This bringing together, allows for Tantra to engage in a continual movement, in which living the path is the goal

Many Tantric methods seek to break down conventional, dualistic thought patterns swiftly and directly, in a very immediate way. These may include situations meant to shock, repulse, or terrify in order to invoke a powerful reaction and draw forth the primal contents of the psyche. Every corner of the mind and heart will be illuminated, and all shadows and dark recesses will be exposed. (Shaw, 1994, p. 24)

For a woman who has been sexually traumatized, this is an extremely powerful process. Although the experience of sexual trauma solidifies the ego's dualistic patterns to make them impenetrable, once she embarks on the Tantric transformative path a "powerful reaction" may occur, thereby breaking up these dualistic patterns (Shaw, 1994, p. 24). In so doing, the tantric experience allows for a "clear realization of emptiness in the midst of passion... it turns passion into supreme bliss" (Shaw, 1994, p.24).

The "cosmological connection" (White, 2003) that Tantric Buddhism and Hinduism emphasize, is the crucial dualism that exists between the universal macrocosm and the microcosm of the person. "Tantra, an offshoot of the Vedic-Brahmanic and yogic traditions, is first of all a system of correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm, man and the universe" (White, 2003, p. 543).

With its integration of sexuality, Tantra brings a person and the world together through sexual union. The symbolism of sexual union between man and woman is a way to connect with the universe. For women who have experienced sexual trauma, the true beauty of this approach is an incredibly freeing process for a traumatic experiencer, as

she could embrace sexuality once again, while connecting with the universe. This union between the man and woman connecting them to the universe is described as the nondual dualism of Tantra. It “is in a true sense a nondual dualism: whereas the theory emphasizes nondualism, the practice is by and large characterized by dualism” (White, 2003, p. 544). He further explains Tantra’s divine conception of the universe:

Tantra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways. (p. 9)

Now let us turn our attention to how the West has appropriated this path to support its needs, thereby leading to many misconceptions about traditional Eastern Tantric practices and philosophy (Guenther & Trungpa, 1975).

Tantra in the West

Tantra, as one of the oldest Eastern paths, began to emerge as part of Western society during the 1970’s (Guenther & Trungpa, 1975). Consequently, “this ancient tradition is experiencing new challenges,” argues Feuerstein (1998, p. 270). Or, as another scholar puts it, Western manifestations of Tantra are populated with, “self-proclaimed Tantric entrepreneurs, who have hitched their elephant-wagons to the New Age star to peddle a dubious product called Tantric Sex...” (White, 2003, p. 4).

In fact, these activities have led to Tantra’s questionable status in the West, as consisting of sexual orgies and other questionable practices that allow individuals to manipulate sacred rituals and practices (White, 2003). White further argues that Tantra’s

growth in the West from “refined (“right-handed”) philosophical speculation that grew out of preexisting (“left-handed”) Tantric practices...to profit purveyors of Tantric Sex” (2003, p. 5). The perception of Tantra as a profitable endeavor has had another repercussion, rather than viewing the practice as a true spiritual path, it is often seen as a passing fad. Odier (2001) states that,

the main obstacle that the West will come up against is that what is presented as Tantra in our industrial societies is often an ersatz version in which all the basic principles have been twisted or distorted to fit with our most superficial longings for enjoyment, for orgasm. (p. 132)

The perception of Tantra as a sexual practice that will lead to expectations of “instant bliss” (Odier, 2001, p. 132) continues to fascinate Westerners due to its “confused mix of 1960’s therapies and spirituality with a light, Eastern scent” (Odier, 2001, p. 132).

Anand (1998) describes Western Tantra as the manipulation of sexual practices to arrive at a place of enlightenment: “tickle your G-spot for four hours and take a few drugs and then you reach enlightenment and that’s what Tantra is about” (p.2). In fact, she argues that a need for sexual healing exists, that will transcend the duality the West, such dualities as trauma and transformation. Duality of sexual repression and sexual indulgence is another example (Anand, 1998). The process of integrating sexual healing and spirituality thus allows for intimacy to take place and transformational energies to be expressed.

Lilian Stilburn, Arthur Avalon, Swami Lakshmanjoo, Navjivan Rastogi, Mark Dyczkowski, and Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega are among the scholars who have succeeded in delivering authentic meaning to Tantra in the West (Odier, 2001). It is

through their works that the realizations and powerful energies of Tantra can be awakened (Odier, 2001). Understanding the esoteric truth and having knowledge about the rituals, practices and philosophical notions that Tantra embodies will bring greater credibility as a treatment practice for sexual trauma in the West.

Tantra's Non-dual Approach

The Western corruption of Tantra's transformational approach of the non-dual, however, presents an interesting challenge to the awakening to enlightenment (Odier, 2001; Feuerstein, 1998). Odier (1997) explain:

In dualistic thought, we imagine God outside of ourselves and direct our desire for union toward the exterior. In non-duality, the quest is reversed. Mystic energy is directed toward the interior, toward the mind. To realize the nature of the mind is thus the highest accomplishment. (p. 3)

In other words, the non-dual path realizes the illusion of the external world by diving into the internal, and surfacing without boundaries. Therefore, the non-dual path would allow for the trauma survivor to turn inwards to her true self in order to realize her potential. No longer bound by the ego's separate self that is present in trauma, she thus awakens to Tantra's no separation. It is this transformation that, therefore, awakens Enlightenment in the West.

The wisdom of the non-dual is an Eastern spiritual teaching that uncovers our inherent awareness or consciousness (Miller, 2003). Once an individual realizes her true nature, there is no separation between the observer and the observed. The ego's illusions are revealed as a façade based in an emptiness that is deficient. In surrender, the problems created by the ego dissolve to reveal an awareness of authentic fullness with an

immense joy and bliss. There is a realization of true Bliss, and an understanding of the wholeness of consciousness (Miller, 2003). Tantra is a path to this Bliss. As we have seen with Wilber's Spectrum of Development and Almas's Diamond Approach, in the transformational journey from trauma to the non-dual, Tantra is in the non-dual path.

The wisdom of the non-dual as it pertains to Tantra is, perhaps, best explained by Bhagwan Rajneesh, later known as Osho. Once an academic scholar, Rajneesh is said to have experienced Enlightenment in 1953. Following this he began to speak of self-transformation and to teach meditative techniques (Rajneesh, 1976). Teaching in India and the United States he was, however, considered to be a controversial guru during the 1970's and 1980's. During this time his 'Osho' organization released hundreds of books of his discourses, many of which embraced the subject of Tantra. In the process of explaining the non-dual path of Tantra, I will be referring to a selection of his works as well as that of others.

To begin, Tantra's non-dual path is considered to be a "natural way; be loose and natural" (Rajneesh, 1976, p 1). To be loose and natural is the authentic way of allowing energies of love and trust to flower. It is a path beyond mind and no-mind to the original source, the non-dual. Tantra is said to exist at the highest peak of being, where Liberation is felt, and emptiness is present (Rajneesh, 1976). To be grounded in Tantra is to transcend the bodymind, to allow for a drop into the vast ocean of existence. Thus, the experience of embracing Tantra is to "understand the nature of mind as it is the root of all problems" (Rajneesh, 1976, p 29) in order to allow a drop or surrender. Surrendering is described as an experience in which one lets go. To a trauma survivor, the experience of surrendering would allow her to release the stories of self that are connected to the

trauma and in so doing she would discover Self-realization. In this process of transformation, the mind needs to be seen as the problem. Rajneesh (1976) discusses the mind's state of tension and confusion as its natural form. This state of tension and confusion is never peaceful as it is bonded by effort to process thoughts at an alarming rate to give individuals the illusion that the mind exists. Due to the effects of the trauma this pattern is experienced at an alarming rate.

Veltheim (2000), a non-dual teacher, explains that the effort of the mind keeps the focus on the external concepts driven by control, self consciousness and desire. In this effort, thoughts are 'things' that exist separate from you, as opposed to that which is natural to you, your essential nature. Thoughts give you the illusion that the mind exists, as they are identified in dualistic nature.

Such dualistic thoughts manifests as good/bad, love/hate, anger/compassion. These dualities perpetuate judgments, separation and distractions. Often heard from the sexual traumatized woman are harsh judgments such as "I'm no good," "no one will want me" and "I'm used." The creation of a self-image separating oneself from others generates misery based on illusions. By realizing that she does not have to be confined to concepts of trauma, a woman is freed from the experience in the present moment (Veltheim, 2000).

Tantra teaches that if in the experience of listening to such judgments, one "watches the mind and sees where it is, what it is," she does not have to be attached to these thoughts (Rajneesh, 1976, p 30-31). If one watches the mind one will see that thoughts exist and that while they exist individually from one another, the mind itself does not exist. There is no need to fight these thoughts by attaching yourself to them or

trying to stop them. Instead, the individual must allow the thoughts to float by effortlessly (Veltheim, 2001). Rajneesh (1976) states, “If one stays alert to thoughts, and continues to watch, one will soon come to the realization that thoughts are not yours” (p 37).

Another non-dual teacher, Adyashanti (2004) believes that alertness brings awareness, allowing for the effortless awareness of the thoughts to flow by. Alertness is thus defined as a letting go that can deepen the experience of being, in order for one to be fully integrated in awareness. In this awareness the limitation of the mind does not exist, as there is an openness that exists in liberation. In liberating yourself, “...it is the Self that is liberated. You’re remembering everybody’s Self because it’s the same Self” (Adyashanti, 2004, p 23). Once thoughts are floating by, you realize you are not thoughts, “you have attained to your Self-mind” (Rajneesh, 1976, p 45).

This realization is the phenomenon of consciousness in which no desire arises; there is nothing to be avoided; “you accept; you become loose and natural” (Rajneesh, 1976, p 46). In Tantra’s loose and natural beingness there is no need to be “other than.” There are no expectations, no identification required. Instead, a state of bliss, and enjoyment is present as the individual realizes that there is no one to protect (Veltheim, 2000; Veltheim, 2001). This would be an empowering experience for a traumatized woman to embrace, as her trauma keeps her locked in horrific identifications of shame, betrayal and hatred. In surrendering to true self, the woman would still have thoughts of trauma identity, but she would realize she would not have to “grab” onto them as well. More importantly, she would realize through liberation that this is not her true self.

As previously indicated, Tantra is not a gradual path to enlightenment but rather a sudden path, fuelled by energy that is spontaneous and transformative. Rather than being

in a state of inactivity the body is active but relaxed. The paradox of action and activity needs to be understood, as Tantra is a transformational path of action and not a destructive path of activity (Rajneesh, 1976). “Transformation within Tantra is, like all of tantra, practical” (Brooks, 2001, p.90).

Action is practical in its spontaneous, fresh movement of energy which is unmotivated from past experiences; its presence is in the here and now. In contrast, activity is chaotic energy that is goal oriented, and is an “escape from self” (Rajneesh, 1976, p 79). One can see how the effects of trauma such as flashbacks, anxiety, and numbing provide an escape from the self. Tantra says “drop the obsession of activity,” do not attach, cling or identify with activity, embrace activity with no separate self (Rajneesh, 1976, p 89). For the trauma survivor to rest in action would be so transformational as the hypervigilant state of trauma would subside, enabling her to remain present in the here and now, where there are no past stories of abuse, guilt or shame, just the suchness of the moment. India’s non-dual teacher, Poonja (1992) describes this moment as it occurs during sexual intercourse:

At a certain point in sex there is rest, there is peace, there is no desire. But people miss this chance and stir another desire for another activity again and so this has not worked. (p. 452)

If a woman who has experienced trauma can remain present and participate in sex, the opportunity of transformation is present. In terms of human sexuality, Tantra embraces one to relax in the body, accept your total beingness, and welcome silence and emptiness. Our natural state of Emptiness is full of space which allows for the explosion of

transformational process to occur. The transformational process is a paradoxical action that blows us wide open. Hart (2000) explains:

To transform is to go beyond current form. Transformation manifests as both an outcome and a process; it is the push and the pulse that drives self-organization and self-transcendence, a movement pushing simultaneously toward increasing unity and toward diversity. In human development, it is the process by which we become more uniquely who we are, and through which we recognize how much we have in common with the universe and even recognize that, in a sense, we are the universe (p. 157).

During the transformational process of Tantra, acceptance of sex may be described as a moment-to-moment transcendence of innocence between two lovers exists, in which there is no desire as one witnesses the ego's trappings of desire. As there is more understanding, more acceptance, more childlike, less egoist energy is present to allow one self to *be* in total being, desire is not present (Rajneesh, 1976). Orgasm thus, is seen as the merging of 'yes' and 'no, in which the polarity of the male and female dissolve, bringing one another closer to the truth, being one's true nature (Osho, 1978). As a result of this merging, sexual movement becomes compassion; Love a state of being. This love returns you back to the beginning of love on earth to the moment of presence, "a simultaneous union of joy and pain; in its fullness, an ecstatic agony, a cosmic convulsion" (Long, 2000, p. 92). It is this Love that opens cosmic consciousness. Rajneesh (1976) remarks:

You are love, you have the light, and your doors are open, then whoever wants to come in, into the inner shrine of your being is invited. You are already perfect,

perfection does not have to be achieved, it simply has to be realized (p. 112).

Therefore, Love, exists in small teachings of action that occur suddenly, questioning not what you do, but who you are. In looking at the centre of your being, you realize who you are and this is realizing Tantra's ocean of existence.

Tantric Transcendental Healing Aspect of Sex

As previously mentioned, Tantric transformations require the phenomenon of transcendence to occur. Transcendence is a transformational process that seeks truth, involves altered states that come out of nowhere and overcomes those who are involved (Wade, 2004). Transcendent experiences can occur while participating in a wide variety of behaviors, such as sex, as is the case in Tantra. Transcendent sex means "going beyond or breaking through the usual constraints of space, time and self that constitutes normal, waking consciousness (Wade, 2004, p. 11). This Tantric phenomenon is a spontaneous occurrence of wholeness.

To experience true transcendence is to realize "each stage of psychological growth is a step closer to God" (Wilber, 1996b, p. 100). Furthermore, transcendence requires one to remain a witness, observing and allowing distractions to disintegrate to 'avoid' duality (Wade, 2004). Wilber (1996b) discusses the idea that transcendence can be a frightening experience to the self, as it requires the ego to surrender its separate self illusion. However, one of the dangers of transcendence occurs when the individual can become frightened and judge the traumatic experience, therefore shutting it down; transcendence can mask similar trauma reactions such as dissociation. The difference between transcendence and dissociation is that dissociation needs to distract and diminish the experience while transcendence emphasizes the vividness of awareness (Wade, 2004).

The separate self is caught in dissociation that exists between the “inside-self vs. an outside-world, a subject vs. an object”, that is based in an illusion (Wilber, 1996b, p. 102).

The boundary between the subject-object needs to be dissolved so that “the subject can find the prior Whole” during a transcendent moment (Wilber, 1996b, p. 102). However, the ego at times will continue to resist surrender as there is a “fundamental double-bind in the face of eternity, the ultimate knot in the heart of the separate self” (Wilber, 1996b, p. 102) as the self believes the illusory world is the real world. Tantra as a transformational process can be utilized to transcend this illusion. For example, a woman who has been sexually traumatized is often left with the message that sex is dirty and evil; if one could witness those thoughts, which would allow the dissolution a transcendental experience to take place.

Wade (2004) discusses several accounts of transcendental moments that have occurred during sexual union involving “Gaia,” the transporting of space, and psychics. Shaw, an author on Tantric Buddhism explains that sex during these moments provides high levels of sensory arousal that “...supplies the dynamic motion that leads out of the mundane realm and into the transcendent sphere of experience” that could melt away the paradox between mind and no-mind (p. 188). Furthermore, human pleasure from sexual union removes the dualism of self and other, by allowing sex to deepen oneself into sexual pleasure to awaken an inner source of bliss that is beyond the mind. Shaw (1994) explains that the weave of Tantric sexual practice, through the mind and body, allows the self to realize the Ultimate. Moreover, she suggests that:

This merging of identities become the epitome of the nonduality wherein

‘subject’ and ‘object’ dissolve and fuse. Sexuality can be part of the path because erotic experience already contains the seeds of enlightenment awareness: blissfulness, loss of ego boundaries, forgetfulness of self, and absence of subject-object dualism (Shaw, 1994, p. 187).

Sexuality is a powerful energy that brings consciousness to bodymind. This energy awakens altered sensations that allow us to realize who we are. As Morin (1995) points:

When we surrender to a transcendent experience, we glimpse our universal aspects, moving beyond the limitations of the ego and its illusions of separateness. Yet the great paradox of transcendence is that while self-consciousness totally disappears, we know more clearly than at any other time exactly who we are (p. 336).

Tantra describes time as a moment-to-moment transcendence that takes place through choicelessness. Whereas choice is bondage that traps you into the mind’s fantasy world of desire, possession and judgments, choicelessness is freedom and liberation.

Krishnamurti (1980), a mystical non-dual philosopher, explains choice as a condition based in the illusion of freedom that brings conflict. Rajneesh (1976) agrees that with choice there is a conflict to “decide for this or against it, it is mind playing tricks” (p. 182). By choosing, therefore, you are choosing to become identified with a concept. If, for example, a traumatized woman chooses to be angry then all identifications/desires/judgments of anger will be attached to that choice. But if one watches choice then choiceless awareness becomes the whole process. Krishnamurti (1954) explains:

Watch yourself without any identification, without any comparison, without any condemnation; just watch and you will see an extraordinary thing taking place. You not only put an end to an activity which is unconscious- because most of our activity are unconscious- you not only bring that to an end, but, further, you are aware of the motives of that action, without inquiry, without digging into it.

(p. 95)

Krishnamurti (1954, 1956, 1980) further discusses the idea that to live one's life from choicelessness implies an awareness of being in a relationship of total sensitivity. In choiceless awareness a person has an understanding of the whole process of thinking and acting, free from judgment. The experience of choicelessness, would thus dissolve trauma, allowing for Tantra to take back the 'power and control' once thought to have been taken away from trauma.

As Tantra's 'goal' is to remain in the centre of your inner being where one can witness behaviors, emotions, and thoughts without becoming the doer, someone who creates choice, attachments, identifications and so on.. Based on an aggressive stance to pick one thing over the other, the doer is often confused with choice. Choice, however, is more aptly described as bondage that traps you into the mind's fantasy world of desire, possession and judgment.

To observe choice free from having a stance in the mind, is to open into an effortless existence of moment to moment awareness (Krishnamurti, 1954, 1956, 1980). To allow this is to simply allow things to come and pass by the mirror of your inner being, without making distinctions, creating reactions or interpreting things, to just bear witness. The mirror remains choiceless and centered in the self. Things are happening

and they will continue to happen, but if you can be “in your mirror-like consciousness, nothing will be the same, the whole has changed. You remain virgin, innocent, pure, your emptiness is untouched” (Rajneesh, 1976, p 186). It is in choicelessness, that Tantra can remain indifferent and unattached to others, leading one to turn one’s life inward. Tantra “is the state of beyond mind and beyond no-mind. This is the supreme most state of understanding. Nothing is beyond it” (Rajneesh, 1976, p 206). This supreme state of understanding is the point of Cosmic Orgasm, otherwise known as the “...point of nothingness” (Osho, 1978, p. 118). To go beyond to nothingness is the absolute source of being where one remains inside one’s abode.

You go on sitting inside your abode, and then suddenly you see actions don’t belong to you, you are not a doer, you are simply a watcher. Realize this, you have attained the Non-attainable, realize this, you have realize all that can be realized (Rajneesh, 1976, p. 220).

This is the moment of no-self, all individuality is lost, everything is dissolved, and one has dropped into the innermost suchness of one’s being. A person has returned to the original source, with no self, no boundaries (Rajneesh, 1976). Tantra understands that to remain loose and natural inside is to remain centered, even when things are needed in society.

Finally, in Tantra it is a valuable lesson to understand the royal path of Cosmic Orgasm of Oneness. What this means for the survivor of sexual abuse is that she can get back to enjoying lovemaking, with no fear of separateness during the love making experience. For it is during lovemaking when the man and woman are no longer two separate entities but one, they are nothingness, cosmic orgasm happens. During cosmic

orgasm, their bodies' energies lose sight of identity, "they are not more themselves- they have fallen into the abyss" (Rajneesh, 1976, p. 17). In these moments of Tantra awakening, Truth is present. Tantra's ability to say 'yes' to everything is met with 'no', as paradoxes dissolve into cosmic orgasm:

When 'yes' and 'no' meet, when the opposites meet and are no longer opposites, when they go into each other and dissolve into each other, there is orgasm. Orgasm is the meeting of yes and no...In a sense it is beyond both; in a sense it is both together, simultaneously. (Osho, 1978, p.119).

The ultimate experience of cosmic orgasm embraces the paradoxes of ordinary reality allowing the transformational journey to reside in oneness. No longer confined by the bodymind experience, the experience of blissful openness is expanded into a place of spaciousness and timelessness.

Tantra's energy to welcome an understanding and realization of a greater beingness invites a conscious surrendering of our paradoxical nature. Along this transformational journey a woman can transcend the knowledge of bodymind to allow for wisdom of the non-dual to return, transcend the confinements of the body to allow for ecstasy of the soul and to become one with the orgasmic gifts of existence. Tantra's total acceptance of what *is*, embraces both trauma and transformation, allowing one to reside in wholeness.

Conclusion

Lastly, this research material is provided to give understanding into women's experience of sexual trauma, tantric transformations and non-dual. Through understanding a shaping of perspective may develop. Next, a research approach will be

explained to thicken the research information. Chapter Three will explore the research philosophy and methodology that is used to direct research into the topic of Tantric Transformations: a non-dual journey from sexual trauma to wholeness.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research seeks to illuminate the transformational journey of women from sexual trauma to wholeness. The qualitative research method that was used in this research is phenomenological hermeneutics, with a transpersonal reworking. This is a preferred 'method' as it allows the researcher to explore the lived experience of the participant from an insider's perspective, without deconstructing the meaning and value of the experience. As such, an exploration of the founder's work of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (Palmer, 1969) will be explored. This will lead into examining the works of two phenomenology hermeneutic philosophers, Martin Heidegger and H. Gadamer (Mautner,

2000). Lastly, an exploration into a transpersonal reworking of phenomenological-hermeneutics will be presented. The intention of these research methodologies is to study the meaning of human experience as it spontaneously occurs in daily life (von Eckartsberg, 1981).

Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenology is a method that seeks to uncover the internal meaning of one's experiences (Van Manen, 1982). As a human science approach, phenomenology values the meaning of how human activity unfolds. This approach unlike other research methodologies is not intended to test out a hypothesis, instead its aim is to achieve a perspective understanding of a phenomenon and identify its structure (Osborne, 1990). Thus, rather than quantifying everyday experiences, phenomenology uses "perception, cognition, and language" (Valle, 1998, p.4) to give shape to lived experiences. Therefore, the phenomenological approach thus opens our experiences to the world through rendering the implicit explicit.

The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, (1969) proposed in creating this approach, the reintegration of the world of science and the lived experience. Phenomenology asks, "what is the experience like?" It explores the world through a pre-reflective experience rather than from a conceptual, categorical or reflective stance (Husserl, 1969). Pre-reflective knowing is grounded in meaningful (meaning-full) experience that existed prior to any cognitive manifestation (Valle, 1998). This meaning is regarded as the manifestation of consciousness, "reflective awareness of the underlying prereflective structure of the particular experience being addressed" (Valle, 1998, p. 275). Therefore, any phenomenological study would include meaningful human experience

that, once disclosures are explicated, an individual would be able to recognize and understand (Valle, 1998). According to this study, an example of such experiences would be the experience of dissociation, awakening or beingness. It is the experience set in understanding human nature as it is, that brings awareness through phenomenological study, as opposed to the preset propositions of the natural sciences (Pivcevic, 1970).

Husserl further believed humans were always conscious of everyday existence and this consciousness supported our reality (Osborne, 1990). Anything present in consciousness is of interest to phenomenology. Consciousness is the only access human beings have in the world (Van Manen, 1990). To be aware of the lived experience is to experience consciousness. Through Husserl's notion of intentionality he explained consciousness as the “pre-mordial window” of the world, an object in of itself (Osborne, 1990; Valle, 1998). Therefore, consciousness always has an object (Osborne, 1990; Valle, 1998). Husserl argued a person who exists co-constitutionally with her world, “meaning one has no meaning when regarded independently of the another,” (Valle, 1998, p. 275) is experiencing a “reality that is both construed, by subject and mirrored from object out there” (Osborne, 1990, p. 80). A neutral observer therefore, gathers the facts of the experience objectively.

Husserl's methodology introduced phenomenological reduction or “bracketing” (Valle, 1998). Through phenomenological reduction or bracketing (Osborne, 1990) the search to find meaning is facilitated by the researcher suspending all prejudices and interpretations, a process of self-reflection, in and of itself. “Bracketing means that one puts out of mind all that one knows about a phenomenon or event in order to describe precisely how one experiences it” (Giorgi, 1981, p. 82). The experience removes the

observer's judgments from experiences that may cause bias by previous wishes, desires, values, etc in order to come from a position as free from presuppositions as possible.

Phenomenology posits that the world and all its meanings are in a constant fluctuation of unfolding, revealing and uncovering, therefore, the participants' revealing and authoring of their stories cannot escape this reprocessing (Natanson, 1973). Thus, consequently we are in a constant state of interpreting our experience. Hence, hermeneutics allows us to gain further understanding into this interpretive process of lived experience.

A Hermeneutical Refinement

A hermeneutical refinement of the phenomenological approach is needed in order to interpret and present the phenomenon of women who have experienced sexual trauma and have embraced the Tantric transformational journey to wholeness. Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation in which two assumptions are important; firstly, humans experience the world through language and secondly, language provides both understanding and knowledge (Byrne, 2001). Hermeneutics in this study is valuable as it enables the researcher to draw out and preserve the significant meaning of the female co-researchers lived experiences. In doing so, an open understanding and meaning is presented to the researcher of the co-participant's lived experience.

To continue, as previously mentioned, Husserl's phenomenology explains that the researcher is a neutral observer to the experience, void of all prejudices and biases (Osborne, 1990). However, hermeneutics says we need to step into the experience occurring in the moment as an interpreter, including our prejudices and biases. Hence, hermeneutics asserts that our biases and prejudices are a part of our historical and cultural backgrounds, areas that humans are already implicated in. According to the hermeneutics

approach “meaning is always changing and historical/cultural past are inextricably tied to the present orientation of the interpreter” (Chessick, 1990, p. 257). Heidegger and Gadamer are two philosophers who are tied to this approach.

Heidegger developed the term “ontological hermeneutics which is concerned with the basis of human existence” (Chessick, 1990, p. 258). His notion of preunderstanding suggested “practical dealing and activities are achieved in historically/culturally background consisting of practices, habits and skills that are not explicitly and comprehensively spelled out, constitutes fundamental mode of human existence” (Chessick, 1990, p. 258). Using the term horizons, Heidegger explained the relationship of consciousness to self. Horizon is the place where the subject/object is not a separate entity, but a place where they meet: “it is the only place where the being of either “man” or “world” is disclosed” (Woolfolk et al, 1985, p. 15).

Consciousness thus cannot be viewed in an objective sense, as horizons include all that makes us human with one another, such as the historical and cultural qualities, expressed through our language, customs and institutions (Heidegger, 1962). Furthermore, as a horizon is composed of our self knowledge, preconceptions, prejudices and biases, it therefore represents a fusion rather than a separation. The ideal of a horizon, allows the interpreter to gather a full narrative with all its meaning and lived experiences of the co-researchers.

Further development of the horizon was conducted by Gadamer (1989). He believed that “our self knowledge is not freely chosen but embedded in culture, history and bodily being” (Chessick, 1990, p. 261). This self knowledge is constituted by our self interpretations and since these are not freely chosen or consciously recognized, there

cannot be a separation between self and other (Sass, 1998). Because no technique or method can ever secure absolute objectivity in interpretation, Gadamer (1989) believed that the observer or co-researcher should not attempt to overcome prejudices that make up our socio historical vantage point because no technique or method can ever secure absolute objectivity in interpretation. When listening to these narratives, therefore, the interpreter is always aware of herself, in and of the experience itself, with her own prejudices and biases present, as opposed to being absent.

In order to further understand the experiences of the co-participants, the researcher acknowledges the transpersonal realm of this research. To explore this further, Wilber's (1996b) three eyes of research will be introduced.

Wilber's Three Eyes or Modes of Knowing

In Wilber's 1996 study on human consciousness, he discussed three modes of knowing that reveal different types of knowing in the world.

There is a great spectrum of human consciousness; and this means that men and women have available to them a spectrum of different modes of knowing, each of which discloses a different type of world (a different world space, with different objects, different subjects, different modes of space, time, different motivations, and so on). (Wilber, 1996b, pp. xii-xiii)

Wilber referred to these modes of attaining knowledge "eyes" because "like the human eye they are an instrument through which we perceive our selves and our world" (Rich, 2004, p. 179). These eyes or modes of knowing, are named, "the eye of flesh", "the eye of the mind", and "the eye of contemplation" (Wilber, 1990, 1996b). The "eye of flesh" shares the world of sensory experience; it is the gross realm of space, time and matter, the

eye of science. In this realm, we understand the external world of separate objects. This eye is capable of understanding the five senses. The “eye of reason or mind” involves the world of ideas, images, logics and concepts, it is the subtle realm. It can picture sensory objects that are not present but give us logic to internally look for these objects. For example, in this study phenomenological hermeneutic exists in the eye of mind. The “eye of contemplation” is the causal mode of transrational, translogical, and transmental, being it possesses a transcendental reality experienced by mystics which goes beyond “time, space, sense perception, and mind, where unity with all existence and the Ground of Being is realized” (Rich, 2004, p. 181). The transpersonal approach exists in the eye of contemplation.

Although these realms exist together, they cannot be reduced to the prior realm (Wilber, 1990). Therefore, the eye of mind cannot be reduced to the eye of flesh, nor can the eye of contemplation be reduced to the eye of mind. They do, however, rely on the information given to them by the previous realm, as each realm will include and transcend the previous realm. For example, the mental realm includes but transcends the eye of flesh, as the subtle rises far more above the gross. Consequently, the eye of the mind can understand scientific inquiry, the eye of flesh (Wilber, 1990). Furthermore, just as the eye of the mind transcends the eye of the flesh, the eye of contemplation transcends the mind. And although one cannot use the eye of the flesh to see the abyss, the eye of contemplation can be drawn on to see it.

Wilber (1990) further described the danger of mixing these three different modes of knowledge, indicating “that each eye is valid and useful in its own field, but commits a fallacy when it attempts to fully grasp higher or lower realms” using its own eye (p.6).

This “fallacy” is called a *category error*, which is an attempt by one eye to seize the role of the other two (Wilber, 1990). For example, the eye of mind may dismiss or replace the eye of flesh’s findings. One eye cannot disclose the facts of another, as they each possess the truth of that particular realm. Wilber (1990) adds:

The eye of contemplation is ill-equipped to disclose the facts of the eye of flesh as the eye of flesh is incapable of grasping the truths of the eye of contemplation. Sensation, reason, and contemplation disclose their own truths in their own realms, and anytime one eye tries to see for another eye, blurred vision results.

(p. 10)

Wilber (1990) further suggests that religion, philosophy and science have all committed these errors. To avoid making these errors, he believes that it is important to recognize that each realm can only be determined by the eye of that domain (Rich, 2004).

Now that the different modes or eyes of knowledge and category error have been explained, the transcendental paradigm can be verified. The eye of flesh and eye of mind are based solely in the empirical. In the eye of contemplation, however, nothing is based in either the empirical or the philosophical knowledge bases (Rich, 2004). The realm of contemplation instead transcends space, time, and words. In recognizing that there is more than one form of knowledge, therefore, a researcher would need to verify higher forms of knowledge. This can be done through three basic components called injunction, illumination and confirmation (Wilber, 1990, 1996b).

Wilber (1990) suggested that in each of these realms, all *valid knowledge* consists of an injunctive, illuminative and communal strand. An injunctive strand refers to a simple or complex set of internal or external instructions, each having a similar form: If

you want to know this, do this. An illuminative strand refers to a way of *seeing* by a particular eye of knowledge called to mind by the injunctive strand. Finally, the communal strand is defined as a confirmation of the illuminative seeing, with others who are using the same eye. Some hermeneutical theorists may argue that the eye of contemplation is not real knowledge as it is not open to public knowing, based on its access to mystic knowledge as private. Wilber (1990) argues, however, that:

The secret to consensual validation in all three realms is the same, namely: a *trained eye* is a *public eye*, or it could not be trained in the first place; and a public eye is a communal or *consensual eye*. (p 34)

In other words, contemplative knowledge is public as it is a shared vision. In further his argument, Wilber (1990) uses the example of the essence of Zen: through a special transmission between Master and student, not dependence on words or letter (eye of mind) is needed as there is a seeing into one's Nature (eye of contemplation) and a becoming Buddha. "It is a direct seeing by the contemplative eye, and it can be transmitted from teacher to student because it is directly public to that eye" (Wilber, 1990, p. 34). In this research, for instance, the co-participants' description of tantra's cosmic orgasm cannot be verified due to its existence in the eye of contemplation.

As this thesis explores a transpersonal perspective into the lived experiences of women who have used Tantra as a transformational path, from sexual trauma to wholeness, a transpersonal reworking of phenomenological hermeneutics is needed to explain those their experiences 'beyond' the lived experience. By focusing primarily on the third eye of Wilber, the eye of contemplation, we gather an understanding into the transpersonal reworking of phenomenological hermeneutics.

A Transpersonal Reworking of Phenomenological Hermeneutics

A transpersonal reworking of phenomenological hermeneutics allows for the researcher to capture certain kinds of awareness not illuminated by our prereflective felt-sense of things (Valle, 1989). The transpersonal approach brings forward meanings that are beyond the individual and yet connects the individual with others and nature. As Braud and Anderson (1998) discuss:

This interconnectedness has important implications for our understanding of who we really are, of our individuality, of our true selves; from these implications flow other, ethical implications for appropriately interacting with others and with our environment. (p. 39)

In the course of my discussion, I will bring the qualities of transpersonal awareness to the reader's awareness, so an understanding of the transpersonal dimensions of this research can be better understood.

Qualities of Transpersonal Awareness

Valle (1998) discusses qualities of transpersonal awareness, the types of awareness that are not "experienced" in the normal sense of word, awarenesses that differs from "prereflective sensibilities" (p. 276). In so doing Valle (1998) refers back to phenomenology's intentionality, meaning the essence of consciousness as it presents itself:

Consciousness is said to be intentional, meaning that consciousness always has an object, whether that intended object be a physical object, another person, or an idea or feeling. Consciousness is always a "consciousness of" something that is not consciousness itself (p.276).

“Intentional” implies the deep interconnection between the observer and that which the observer is observing, which thus characterizes consciousness. Valle (1998) states, “it is this very inseparability that enables us, through disciplined reflection, to illumine the meaning that was previously implicit and unlanguageed for us in the situation as it was lived” (p. 276).

In all transpersonal awareness a space or ground context is brought forward that is known to the one experiencing. This spaciousness is rather ‘noumenal’, in which intentional consciousness and phenomenal experience co-exist (Valle, 1998). Valle has recognized six qualities of transpersonal awareness that includes the intentional knowing of the finite and being the infinite. The first of these six qualities is a deep stillness and peace that exist as itself and is “behind” all thoughts, emotions, or felt-sense. It is here that an experience of *amness* or *isness* rather than a *whatness* exists, an “I am this or that.” This stillness exists by nature, prior to the prereflective and reflective levels of awareness.

The second quality deals with an “all-pervading aura or feeling of love for and contentment with all that exist, a feeling that exists simultaneously in the mind and heart” (Valle, 1998, p. 276). In an intense, inner energy, a sense of open embracement of everyone and everything as they are, to simply ‘let is all be’.

Another quality of transpersonal awareness is that the sense of being one or the other, the observer or the observed, has dissolved leaving no ‘one’ left to experience an identity or relationship. The fourth quality is that normal sense of space seems transformed as to occupy space, ‘be here or there or someone’ as dissolved, so one is “simply Being.” Because space is different, time too becomes quite different from day to

day living of passing time, hence this is the fifth quality. With no thoughts of the past or future, the experience of this moment as the eternal Now is present. Finally, the sixth quality of transpersonal awareness, with the intensity of this awareness, insights and intuitive senses, qualities that are recognized to emerge from something greater and/or more powerful than 'me'. Valle (1998) states "In its most intense or purest form, the 'other-than-me' quality dissolves as the 'me' expands to a broader, more inclusive sense of self that holds within it all that was previously felt as 'other-than-me' (p.277). Having an awareness of these qualities is essential for the researcher, enabling her to be recognized in the co-participant's interviews thereby helping to deepen the themes. Thus, these characteristics of transpersonal awareness do not characterize intentionality but rather posit a "transintentionality that addresses this consciousness without an object" (Merrel-Wolff, 1973).

Valle (1989) furthers the understanding of the transpersonal perspective by building on Huxley's (1970) work on 'perennial philosophy'. Huxley argues that there are five premises that need to exist in order for any philosophy to be transpersonal.

1. That a transcendent, transconceptual reality or Unity binds together (i.e., is immanent in) all apparently separate phenomena, whether these phenomena be physical, cognitive, emotional, intuitive, or spiritual.
2. That the individualized or ego-self is not the ground of human awareness, but rather a single relative reflection-manifestation of a greater trans-personal (as "beyond the personal") Self or One (i.e. pure consciousness without subject or object)

3. That each individual can directly experience this transpersonal reality as it relates to the spiritual dimension of human life.
4. That this experience represents a qualitative shift in one's mode of experiencing and involves the expansion of one's self-identity beyond ordinary conceptual thinking and ego-self awareness (i.e. mind is not consciousness).
5. That this experience is self-validating

(p. 278)

From these five premises, if the sacred experience presents itself directly in one's awareness then, it is said to be self-validating. This direct experience of God is therefore the 'final step' in spiritual philosophy and practice. These experiences involve the integrated awareness of passion and peacefulness that arises out of stillness. It is this nature of awareness that provides a direct human science approach to enabling a participant to experience transpersonal-phenomenological approach. Through deepening our understanding of phenomenological-hermeneutics, by reworking the transpersonal perspective into it, a further deepening of the human experience is understood. In doing so, this understanding helps the researcher to verify the transpersonal themes.

Narrative Experience within Phenomenological Hermeneutics

To gather understanding throughout this thesis, language is used with its socio historical contexts to discover the narrative. Narrative stories are obtained through language, by listening empathically and non-judgmentally to the co-participant's stories, and by asking questions and asserting comments to gather an understanding of the experience. To understand the narrative process, in regards to this research, it is important

to explore the varied aspects of these narratives.

In order to gain an understanding into the lived experience of women who have embarked on a Tantric transformational process from sexual trauma to wholeness, a narrative approach will be used. Narratives gather the stories of the past, present and future transformational process through mutual dialogue between the researcher and co-participants. The researcher in this case, myself, gathers all the information from the co-participant's stories. These stories offer a rich description of the women's Tantric experience, starting with the traumatic incidences through to wholeness. Chessick (1990) describes this experience as a,

dialectic and mutual influence between subject of interpretation and interpreter, in which, as the horizons of each co-participate, meaning is generated, in that particular dyadic pair at that particular time and space.

(p.262)

This dialogue is referred to as a transformation of communion (Gadamer, 1989). It occurs through the use of language, a fundamental part of the interview. Language allows for the transformation of the experience to "come alive" (Gadamer, 1989). Language acts as a guide to acquiring the sociohistorical and cultural understandings that needs to be exhumed, as well as the socio historical cultural perspectives that live in language. Varieties of transformations which can occur include self reflection, self actualization, self realization, beliefs, perceptions, meanings and foreknowledge, all of which is present within the stories. These stories bring illumination and understanding of the inner experiences of the co-researcher.

In the course of my research I have primarily relied on the phenomenological

hermeneutics based on the Roger's (1961) person-centered approach. This approach is best described as,

a process of becoming one's experience as characterized by an openness to experience, a trust of one's experience, an internal locus of evaluation and the willingness to be in the process. (Corey, 2001, p. 170)

The qualities that the researcher employs in understanding a participant's experience are an empathetic understanding, acceptance, advanced listening, and understanding to the co-participants experience is involved within the researcher's questions and comments of the narrative. This enables the co-participant and researcher to have an open dialogue, thereby enhancing the interpretation of the lived experience as well as a relationship, based on mutual respect and understanding.

Research Procedures

Research procedures explain the criteria of the co-researchers and how the author organized the thesis. The research was conducted with the respect and safety of the co-participants in mind at all times.

Selection of Co-researchers

I wish to identify the subjects in this study as co-researchers or co-participants (Osborne, 1990). This distinction is important given the collaborative nature of the process that occurs, involving both the researcher and co-participants. The traditional linguistic hierarchy of "researcher" and "research subject" is thus effectively eliminated (Osborne, 1990).

This research embraced the participation of women. Each of the co-participants were required to have had an experience of tantric transformational journey, from sexual trauma to wholeness. Additionally, they needed to be on this journey for a period of at least two years, and able to articulate their experiences from trauma to transformation during the interview sessions. Furthermore, I looked for women who had intensity, such as a commitment and passion on the path, for the interview process. I also felt it was important they had passion and exuberance for the subject as they felt fit to express, whether through their own processes, such as readings, creativity and/or body work.

The number of co-participants who participated in this study was six. The co-participants were found using published advertisements in magazines and newspapers and through word of mouth. The advertisements clearly stated the intent of the research (See Appendix A).

Interview Format

An initial screening process was used during the selection process of the prospective co-participants. During a short phone interview, each woman was asked a series of screening questions pertaining to their journey and their ability to articulate to experiences. If these responses met the criteria for this study, an interview date was set up with each potential participant. Furthermore, the co-researcher was informed that she needed to sign a Letter of Consent (see Appendix B) before the interview begins. Within the Letter of Consent there was a section requesting permission to tape the interview for the purpose of transcription. Each co-participant was informed that dissemination of the data would be limited to this writer, a research assistant and thesis supervisor. A further

understanding was discussed with the co-participants, that the data may be published in a university paper and perhaps, in various scholastic journals. In conjunction with these requests, the researcher clearly communicated the role of confidentiality to the co-participant. A number of avenues have been taken in order to protect the confidentiality of each co-participant. A pseudonym name was given to the co-participant and used in all texts. Contact numbers of co-participant were needed if further themes needed to be explored on behalf of the researcher, to which the researcher used with absolute discretion. Furthermore, a transcription of the interview was given to the co-participant.

The interview procedure was conducted using questions to explore, clarify and expand the lived experiences of these women. I began the interview by asking each woman to tell the story of sexual trauma. Then I asked how she had discovered Tantra, and finally her tantric transformational path to wholeness. She was furthered asked about her non-dual experiences. Each interview was conducted in an environment that was comfortable for the co-participants and took between 1.5 to 4 hours. As mentioned, a person-centered approach, (Rogers, 1980) of empathy and non-judgmental attitude was used throughout the interview to illuminate their experiences of sexual trauma, the non-dual path, and tantric experiences.

During this process, I recorded my own experiences with each co-participant in a personal journal, as well as other experiences that occurred for me in this transformational journey of writing a thesis. Several experiences transpired with the various co-participants, circumstances that lead to deepening the themes as discussed in Chapter Four.

Data Analysis

Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed with all identifiable information omitted in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. A pseudonym was used for each co-participant. A copy of the transcript was given to the women for review, offering her an opportunity to further delete revealing information, and /or provide an opportunity for her to correct or expand the information, ensuring an accurate understanding of her lived experience.

During this process, I took personal notes that were used to identify core themes essential to the research. These notes were essential to the research for the intent of expanding on the experience and for the benefit of enriching the description of the phenomenon. Notes were further useful in compiling the final themes. Following completion of data analysis and this thesis, these documents will be destroyed.

During data analysis, I compiled all the information I had gained. In compiling this information, I followed the example of Osborne (1990) in reading and re-reading each of the transcribed stories of the co-participants (as well as all the other information gathered), in order to become familiar with their stories. I made notes during each reading and charted a path of each story using 'sticky notes' that were stuck to my office wall. As I reviewed these notes, a list of themes began to unravel based on meanings interpreted from their stories. I began to identify brief phrases that captured the most significant themes and made notes regarding these themes. These phrases or quotes were clustered together loosely to begin to make meaning. While beginning to piece them together, I reflected on each meaning. In order to fully immerse myself in the co-participant's words, this whole process occurred through this researcher's use of hand written notes and creative postings on walls. At times, I spoke with the co-participants to

gather more of a clarification and/or understanding. Furthermore, I consulted with my supervisor to ensure I was on the right path. A review of the literature was essential during these times, as the literature provided me with understanding and clarity into the co-participants lived experience. Themes upon themes were reviewed until I had a list of the deeper themes that illuminated the lived experiences of the co-participants. I then begin to present the data in a written descriptive narrative, seen in Chapter Four. For example, reading the transcripts I uncovered meaning into how trauma had impacted the women. From here, several of the co-participants had used the word 'wound' to describe their resulting experience of trauma. From the word 'wound' the word 'embodied' was added by myself as a result of the co-participants description on how the wound had a certain life to it. Therefore, the theme, the 'embodied wound' was created. The sub-themes to this one major theme were a result of the women's lived experiences of their embodied wounds.

Furthermore, due to the nature of this thesis in the non-dual, the co-participants did acknowledge the limitations of language to explain this phenomenon, as the phenomenon of the non-dual is difficult to explain through words. Therefore, I used the literature to help develop the themes; also my own experience of the non-dual was helpful in understanding their experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were of essential importance, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of those involved. To maintain confidentiality co-participants were required to sign a Letter of Consent (see Appendix B) and were presented with the opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns regarding the research. Before the

interviewing process began an effort was made, on behalf of the researcher, to clarify the purpose of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as answer any questions and concerns arising from these discussions. The following information was present in the Letter of Consent: the aim and method to be used, the responsibility of researcher and co-participant according to time commitment, and the understanding that no risk needs to be taken by the co-participant. The consent form further stated that at any time the co-participant can withdraw, and that conversely, the researcher can withdraw at any time as well.

Furthermore, due to the nature of the research, there could have been a time when the co-participant felt vulnerable, exposed and/or overwhelmed with narrative exploration. If an incident occurred in which this happened, the co-participant was informed that she could voluntarily discontinue the interview if she desired. In severe cases, appropriate referrals were made with the assistance of this researcher's thesis supervisor.

Summary

This chapter describes the research methodology used during this research.. In order to understand the approach, it contains a description of the study of phenomenology to express how this approach fits into the research. Next, a hermeneutics refinement on the researcher's interpretation of the experiences was discussed, followed by Wilber's three eyes or modes of knowing in which information about personal and transcendental realities. Following these eyes of knowing, a transpersonal reworking of phenomenological hermeneutics was discussed, explaining the importance of the three strands of knowledge and spirit. To conclude this chapter, the process of selecting the co-

participants was explained along with an outline of the interview format, a description of data analysis and an exploration into ethical considerations.

From this chapter, we now move to Chapter Four, where the co-participants themes were exposed regarding their Tantric transformational journey from sexual trauma to wholeness.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEMES OF WOMEN'S TANTRIC TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY FROM SEXUAL TRAUMA TO WHOLENESS

Presenting the Co-Participants

It is important for the reader to understand the lived experiences of the women who participated in this study. In presenting this I will offer a brief summary of each woman's history to the present time. The women range in age from 35 to 60. Of the women, five are Caucasian and one is African descent. Presently, one is lower economic status, four are middle class status and one is upper middle class. Their experience of trauma, transformation, Tantra and the non-dual will be expressed through the various themes identified throughout this chapter.

Tricia is a mother of one and is presently in a loving heterosexual relationship. She has been divorced from her child's father for a number of years. Tricia described her

childhood as being raised in poverty by an “absent father” and an “overbearing mother”. She describes herself “being drunk” throughout her early adulthood, which she recognizes enabled her to engage in sexual promiscuity with men, leading to experiences of sexual violence. She has traveled throughout North America and Australia. It was while she was living in Australia that she felt a “guide” pushing her to return to North America. Upon her return to Canada, she experienced a “cracking open” what she identified as a transformation through artwork. She began to feel a creative presence, something that been with her throughout her life, but that she had not fully embraced before. After her creative energies had been awakened she began a yogic path of Karpali and trained as a yoga teacher in New York State. It was there that she met her child’s father. Within this marriage she describes an experience of realizing the individuation process, which allowed her to participate in a tantric transformational journey. She continues to embrace her creativity through paintings, art performances as well as being a yoga teacher.

My second co-participant, Kathy, discussed being raised in an unloving home by an absent father and an angry mother. She describes a sense of “wanting to be loved,” a feeling that has persisted throughout her life. She left home when she was 13, a circumstance that lead her to living on the streets, using drugs, participating in illegal activity and engaging in sex in order to gather a sense of “fulfillment”. It was during these teenage years that she was sexual assaulted and raped. Kathy explained that it was these violent experiences that lead to her equating sex with the absence of love. As an adult, Kathy was once married to an abusive partner. During this marriage she suffered from chronic fatigue, back problems, and anorexia.

In 1983, that Kathy embarked on a “spiritual journey” that lead her down several paths including Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, Native Spirituality and Tantra. At one point she experienced a fear of dying and suddenly “knew” that she had to change her path in life. This lead to a period of celibacy that lasted eight years, during which time she continued to embrace Tantra. Later she met a man who has become her loving partner. Through their relationship they have explored Tantra, which she attributes to healing her from a cancerous episode. She continues to explore the powerful energy of Tantra, teaching it to couples in Canada and Australia.

During Leah’s formative years she describes herself as a smart athletic girl with no knowledge of sexuality. She disclosed many shameful sexual experiences that occurred during early adulthood: On of these moments occurred when she was caught masturbating. She related that she’d experienced two instances of date rape, one in high school and one that took place after college. After finishing her education, she traveled throughout the world and in the course of her journeys she discovered Tantra. After embracing it, Leah then relates that she experienced two intense betrayal episodes: She was once betrayed by a partner, leading her to become obsessional about him. Another time she identified as a betrayal was engaging in affair with her yoga teacher. Both episodes lead to surrendering experiences.

Additionally, Leah reported that she identified a pattern in her life where she has experienced periods of “low, pathetic” moods followed by high ecstatic states. It was during the ecstatic times, when she embraced her “bad girl” archetype, that lead Leah to a turning point in her life. She states that she has always resisted formal “class work” in learning Tantra, as she had a “knowing” she would not find “true Tantra” there and that

she's had moments of synesthesia and Oneness. She now works as a Massage Therapist and has aspirations of teaching Tantra to Medical Doctors.

Ava was raised in a Trailer park, by an alcoholic mother and a stepfather who was a pedophile. She named earlier judgments of her self as "white trailer trash". Ava described instances of her stepfather making sexual advances to her at a young age, leading her to believe that there was "no safety around sexuality in our house". Her sense of vulnerability became connected to her sexuality, something that later became an issue of integrity with males in her adulthood. During her only marriage, she and her husband discovered the availability of Tantric seminars and began to attend them together. After producing a child, the marriage ended. In her thirties, Ava experienced a Tantric transformation during a Tantric couple's seminar with her husband in which she felt a "knowing" that allowed her to awaken to her anger and enable her to recover from her "good girl" archetype. From this experience, she recognized a moment of preciousness in herself. After saying, "yes" to Tantra she felt a sense of aliveness and freedom in wholeness. She continues to work on the path of Tantra by offering workshops, teaching Sacred Spot massage and doing chakra work.

Mia was raised in the Netherlands and describes her first sexual exploration as safe. After the age of fourteen, however, Mia describes being raped three separate times. Later, when she continued to participate in sexual activity she describes a "numbing" taking place. She would have thoughts that "something was wrong with me" but at the same time a "deep knowing everything was possible". Although once married, she is now divorced. She has traveled extensively and has gathered understanding and has

awakening moments with Tantric masters Osho and Barry Long, and now embraces the non-dual path with her present non-dual teacher, Adyashanti.

Her first awakening came as a result of being aware of how much “unhappiness” existed in her body and having a “sense of permission to be in my body”. She began her tantric transformations in groups that allowed her to bring sexuality and spirituality together. Additionally, Mia has experienced other transformational moments through sacred spot massage and has experiences of surrendering, and Oneness. She now gives talks of non-dual throughout North America.

The final co-participant, Heather, was raised in the United States. She has traveled throughout the world speaking of and teaching transpersonal psychology, and is a renowned author, psychic and holds a doctorate degree. Heather described her earlier experiences of sexuality as fearful due to “conditioning”. She was sexualized by her ailing grandfather. She described a constant process throughout her life was several experiences of liberation from societal conditioning. Heather admits to earlier experiences of Tantra as being primarily intellectual, that is until she had embodied experiences. During her only marriage, which resulted in a divorce, she acknowledged the many gifts this union gave her.

One of these gifts enabled her to engage in “poly-fidelity” (meaning to have more than one sexual partner at a time), an experience that led to her meeting a strong Tantric partner who helped her through a difficult process. Her first experience with Oneness was through a psychic experience, not tantric. She articulated that many synchronicities in her life have contributed to her tantric transformation. One of these experiences that Heather indicated had occurred for her was the individuation process. This enabled her to

release projections, preconceptions and judgments. She has had experiences with God/Goddess and of Nothingness and now lives with a supportive partner.

Now that the background information has been presented on the co-participant's lives a number of themes will be explored, illuminating the lived experiences of women who have embraced a tantric transformational experience, from sexual trauma to wholeness.

Discovering Sexuality

Your sexual fantasies are normal and harmless. Don't worry about them.

Just relax and enjoy.

(Maltz & Boss, 1997, p.i)

Discovering one's sexuality can be a momentous experience. Five of the six co-participants related stories of sexual experiences that had occurred between the ages of 7 to 10 that were quite pleasant. In all of these instances the environment was a safe one and those sharing the experiences were trustworthy. Mia remarks, "it was the first time I kissed a boy and a boy was touching me. I was in the attic and my brother was on the second floor, so I was safe". During these early years she also recalls experiences of sex with females, occurrences that also allowed her a safe exploration of her sexuality. Tricia's earlier experiences were during elementary school, where kissing was involved "so it was like even, like up until grade 5 or 6 it was still just kind of exploring and being healthy and not feeling like I wasn't ok..."

Although Heather's sexual experiences begin later, in her early teenaged years, her experiences were similar:

There's always, always, always has been this other part which has moved me into a non-time non-space time experience of relationship to sexuality even as a child, a child I would say, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, erotic connection through relationship, having a boyfriend, my first boyfriend when I was 12 we would have many different kinds of psychic experiences and I was psychic as a child so it's like that feeling of um love and who you share a special sexual bond with as being a gateway to a psychic bond has also always been there Leah's early sexual experience, were rather different in that she found pleasure with herself.

I remember early on, like masturbation, trying to be really still and really quiet things like that, what's down there, remembering the first hair, things like that, and not having any idea of what was going on with my body, but being totally fascinated

Although all six co-participants discussed safety as being an important aspect of discovering sexuality, due to their similarities I've limited by focus to four. Of these four, it's worth noting that all of the co-participant's experiences were grounded by a sense of safety and comfort so critical to the development of a healthy sexuality in young females.

. From the discovery of sexuality we can begin to discuss how the sudden shock of sexual trauma catapults these women into the embodied wound, destroying their feelings of safety and trust in sexuality.

Embodied Wound

The ego is on the story it constantly tells of itself,

*the experiences and difficulties it has had, the path it has followed,
the wounds it carries.*

(Carse, 2006, p.11)

The transformational journey begins when a woman starts to question her lived experience of sexual trauma. The following themes are central to women's experiencing of the embodied wound of sexual trauma: splitting the soul in two, the betrayal bond, and from betrayal by others to the betrayal of self. As the women begin to discuss their uncovering of the wound of sexual violence, these themes begin to emerge. In recalling the experience of the sexual trauma, each woman described a sensation of disconnecting from oneself. It is at this point that the self began to identify with the traumatic wound, allowing for a disidentification with the true self. Firman and Gila (1997) describe this disidentification: "in these experiences we are torn away from human being and thrust toward human nonbeing, and our sense of self is profoundly wounded" (p. 93). This experience of being torn away is demonstrates the power of trauma to split the soul in two, as one is not connected to their true Self but with the trauma wound.

Trauma: Splitting the Soul in Two

There are two types of trauma wounds, overt and covert wounds. In the direct experience of overt sexual trauma an individual is violated through sexual assault and becomes identified with a sense of self that is disconnected and fragmented (Firman and Gila, 1997). The force of trauma leads to the emergence of a created self, enabling the individual to cope with the magnitude of the wound (Firman and Gila, 1997). Five of the six co-participants experienced overt sexual trauma that fragmented their identities. In

relating their experiences these women explain how these impressions became wounds embedded on their souls.

Our first participant Ava discusses her stepfather's overt behaviors toward her and the impact this trauma had on her:

I know that my stepfather was a pedophile, and he would do funny things like lift weights in the living room naked in front of the mirror with a hard-on... and I remember, he came home drunk and I was in my bed and I woke up and felt weird and came to enough to realize that he had my hand and he was stroking his penis with my hand while I was asleep... So you can imagine the kind of twists that, as a young woman coming out and having that kind of boundary, wishy washy, that I really was contracted in a certain way.

Ava mentions the word "contracted" to explain the experience of freezing or trauma blocking. Although Kathy doesn't use the word "contracted" directly, her choice of words provides evidence of a similar experience:

I would feel abuse because I had many abusive situations, I was raped when I was a teenager, I woke up to find 2 men with their fists inside of me and so all these images were coming to me... I was in withdrawal and I would just have, I would go into this fetal kind of position and I could feel my little girl and I could feel this little girl inside of me and she was so scared.

Her use of the words "withdrawal" and "fetal position" are also indicative of trauma splitting, a recoil from painful reality through withdrawal or contraction. In Ava and Kathy's stories we see trauma reaction coupled with trauma splitting. A severing of their true self thus occurs as a response to the trauma.

Mia describes the impact of trauma that resulted in her splitting off as well:

Then when I was 14 and a half I was raped, and that was very shocking and it was somebody who was 4 years older, he was kind of my boyfriend... I was asleep he woke me up and he basically just raped me and I was just in total shock. I was just totally numb... Then I was around 18 or 20 then I had a period of time that I had a sexuality there was just a lot of seclusion and numbness and totally not present... I had boyfriends, I was not very present, there is not much I can tell you about it, I was not very present and I just was closed.

Leah on the other hand, received shaming messages as a result of her rape. In other words she internalized and minimized the rapes, allowing herself to cope with the force of the traumas.

I had two instances of date rape, and one was in high school and it was saying yes to a date that I did not really want to go on, and it was a wedding and I woke up at the motel which is a ½ mile from my house and I had been penetrated by this kid and I did not talk about it with anybody and I did not do anything about it, I was just like Oh my god, if my mom finds out you know, I will be killed, but that was the whole extent of it, it was all just the fear of punishment, I never really knew what to do with it, I mean it had already happened and it was kind of like, ok, I will live and learn from that one.

The various effects of trauma including shame, splitting, and blocking are evident in the experiences of all these women. These effects allow them to disconnect from themselves, preventing them from experiencing the intense wounding that has occurred.

These are stories of overt wounding of the self, resulting in an embodied wound in a person's being.

Although the function of covert trauma is similar, it manifests in another way. Five of the six co-participants, discussed the way the debilitating messages of 'who they are imbedded in their psyches and then carried forward with them. These messages can be either created in childhood or created as a result of the traumatic experience.

Firman and Gila (1997) describe the effects of covert wounding as unknown psychological messages that a person imparts on the child. These messages develop into negative core beliefs regarding 'who' that child is. It is these beliefs that cause a core wound. Moreover, the covert acts of wounding "may not be ultimately traceable to particular's events, but will be embedded in the overall caregiver-child relationship, forming an atmosphere of wounding in which the child grows up" (Firman and Gila, 1997, p 94).

Five of the six co-participants articulated these debilitating core beliefs that were given to them that they internalized as they developed, beliefs that had a direct impact on the way they viewed themselves and their sexuality. When Heather was 22, for example, she described how the messages 'got inside her head' after her ailing grandfather made inappropriate advances towards her during a visit.

He actually came on to me sexually, and that was, I had been sexually molested as a child, as long as we're talking about sex and sexuality and conditioning and whatnot, um that was an intense one, he asked me to take my dress off and he tried to kiss me and it was like zany...you know but still it got inside of my head and disturbed me emotionally and oddly, psychically...

Tricia was covertly wounded by the societal messages that she internalized as a teenager concerning her body image. This wounding resulted in her experiencing a fear of rejection overall, not just a fear of being rejected sexually.

Well I think it meant like the possibility of rejection, like not so much sex exactly but just that possibility and you know like being, being, being...letting myself be vulnerable with somebody and, um I'd, I'd just fight you know how like a lot of typical female issues about grade 9 or 10 I just guess when my body started changing.

Tricia's experiences of rejection lead her to shaming her body. In covert wounding, the most common effect of trauma is trauma shame (Carnes, 1991). Because covert messages are not related directly to the individual, the received messages are left to the interpretation of the victim. This causes a person to experience intense shame as she finds herself in a state of betrayal and uncertainty, unsure what she should believe. Hence, the internalized message is one of deficiency and shame.

These experiences of overt and covert trauma permeate the self causing a disidentification with the self, thus splitting the soul in two. The self is disconnected and fragmented allowing for ego defenses to solidify, which helps the individual to cope with the trauma (Firman & Gila, 1997). In addition, as Almaas (2001) would claim, the woman becomes embodied in the fakeness of her narcissistic shell. She comes to believe the fakeness of this false narcissistic self, the one that is defined through the trauma episode. From the wounding experience, stories of shame, worthlessness and guilt arise and solidify in narcissistic self-the ego construct of 'who she is'.

Because the wound is embodied in the women's experience of self, it is necessary

to explore the betrayal bond, the mechanism that the narcissistic self uses to establish ego defenses by repeating the patterns of betrayal.

Betrayal Bond

Following a traumatic incident, the individual may create a pattern of recycling the wound by engaging in betrayal bonds. Betrayal bonds can be described as the relational experiences the woman has with others whereby she re-enacts the wounds of trauma in the self and perpetuates rather than heals the wound (Carnes, 1997). A common example of the betrayal bond is a young girl who witnesses domestic violence in her childhood home and then as an adult, lives in a domestic violence relationship herself.

The reader may recall that Kathy described being raised by an absent father and an angry mother, in an unloving home. Due to the lack of parental love, Kathy acknowledges that she actively and consciously sought out men she hoped would offer her love and validation. The betrayal bond of seeking love through sex with a numerous men is the wound that resulted from the initial trauma. Kathy remarks:

So I was just looking to be loved, to be acknowledged for who I was,
and I knew this at a young age – I wanted someone to listen to me and it was a
male figure that I was looking for... and so I would just go out looking for sex...I
didn't want love anymore, I was just looking for recognition.

Like Kathy, Ava's betrayal patterns also stemmed from the experience of an unloving childhood environment. Growing up with an alcoholic mother and then identifying herself as an Adult Child of Alcoholic resulted a pattern of caretaking. In engaging in various caretaking behaviors, in which she would place other's needs and wants before her own. Ava was thus recreating the wounds of trauma associated with her

mother and her pedophile stepfather by. Receiving some attention and validation for her caretaking behaviors was better than not been acknowledged at all... Recalling this she says: “And I remember, I am an adult child of alcoholic parents... they have to be grown up long before they are, and I was a big time caretaker, which was also a symptom of that.” In recognizing this pattern Ava then identified ways in which she continued to re-wound herself, by placing others before herself. Driving home with a man she named “a crazy,” due to his comment that the devil made him crash his van that night, she adds:

I lost my virginity to a crazy man. And I remember really liking the attention, I never really liked the close contact, and afterwards, I never saw him again, and I realized that I equated that sex had nothing to do with love. I still craved that contact as I did not have that in the family. I can connect with just about anybody on a really deep level but I was getting my needs met at all...anyways I just go into caretaker mode which I did with my mom the whole time, came home from school and put my mother to bed, and so I look at all these behaviors and (I realized) wanted to feel the intimacy.

Ava was intuitive enough to understand the connection between enjoying the close contact that sex gave her, with the lack of contact she experienced within her family. In engaging in sexual activity and her caretaker behaviors, she was able to experience closeness, at least momentarily, thus feeding the narcissistic wound. At this juncture Almaas (1996) would say that Ava was residing in the narcissistic wound of hurt, shame and lack of love. Residing in the wound and judging the emptiness as a negative, Ava at this time, looks to sex and caretaking as momentarily relief from

emptiness. While Kathy and Ava described familial patterns of betrayal, it was the impact of societal conditioning that wounded Heather during her early twenties:

I was still very much into maintaining my virginity for some reason, I'm not exactly sure what that was all about I was actually scared about having intercourse because of all the conditioning, scared about what it would mean, mean about me, the bond, the commitment, all you know there was so much conditioning on top of just allowing somebody in.

Thus far, the overt and covert wounds that these three women experienced resulted from a betrayal of trust in their relationships with others as well as the self. The betrayal of others is discussed in level four of Wilber's (1996a) states of consciousness where he explains the rule/role concept: As humans we have a need for belonging as well as acceptance. Due to the sense of deficiency that Kathy, Ava and Heather experienced in themselves, they looked more outside than inside themselves when seeking norms or beliefs that they could live by. In looking to define herself, she fails to stay true to her own sense of self. As new betrayal bonds (patterns) are established the initial betrayal deepens. In other words, the initial trauma is carried forth in life, creating a split from ones' soul, from one's true nature. This split or separate sense of being is comprised of illusions, inner critics and suffering, and so the split festers and deepens.

From betrayal by others to the betrayal of self

The experience of being betrayed by others ruins the relationship that a person has with others as well as herself: The betrayed self infects the self harming self, engaging it in a continuous battle, unable to ascertain what is true and what is untrue. In the literature review (Almaas, 1996) describes this as the Great Betrayal, meaning that rather than

being seen for who we truly are, by people who are capable of loving and supporting us, we allow others to interact with a false idea of what or who we are, or what we should be.

The pain of the betrayal is experienced when we feel we are not being seen or appreciated for who we are (Almaas, 1996). Living in narcissistic shame and without the experience of basic trust, therefore, the woman experiences no sense of grounding in who she is. Furthermore, she will judge herself harshly, based on the self identity created by the narcissistic wound. To further discuss the idea of betrayal and its relationship to trust, Beth Hedva (2001) explains:

It is a profound sense of trust in your Self, your inner Source of wisdom, healing, and love—a higher power within the psyche that brings each of use to and through every experience in life, including betrayal (p.1)

Hedva (2001) continues,

This is the essence of self-betrayal: living from the outside in, what psychologists call having an “external locus of control”, instead of living from the inside out and having an “internal locus of control.” No wonder betrayal of Self is at the core of most betrayal wounds (p.148)

What Hedva, Grof (1993) and Almaas (1996) all understand is that in dealing with individuals who have experienced a trauma wound, the disconnection from the Self occurs in the living outside of oneself, disconnected from one’s true self. Grof describes this disconnection as a void and recognizes that in order to heal, a person must embark on a thirst for wholeness.

Through the thirst of wholeness an individual recognizes a void in their life and the betrayal occurs when one looks outside of self to fill that void. The betrayal of the

self, Grof (1993) explains as a thirst for wholeness, a discontented emptiness or a spiritual longing, “people talk about a nonspecific hunger for something that seems to be missing in their lives” (p. 12). It’s a hunger fed by the abuse of sex, alcohol and other addictions, anything to fill the emptiness within.

Unable to recognize that this void was a lack of wholeness in their beingness, several co-participants had unknowingly perpetuated the cycle of addiction: It’s the need for wholeness that is the thirst and until this thirst is fully quenched the individual will continue to deny the betrayal. In Wilber’s Spectrum of Consciousness (1996a), we see a person will continue to move up and down along the prepersonal and personal levels as they heal.

Kathy’s thirst for wholeness lead her to engage in years of drug addiction, domestic violence and sexual promiscuity, behaviors that she later identified as reactions to the sexual assaults. Therefore, during the addiction they think they are satisfying the thirst for wholeness when in actuality they are only perpetuating it. In attempting to describe these experiences, Kathy speaks of a “deadness,” an emptiness and meaninglessness felt due to the lost of self due to betrayal.

Dead inside...I was completely dead inside...I...I felt like I knew there was something out there in the world for me like I’ve always known there is something more. I’ve always known and, and, and I felt trapped and I knew I had to find a way out and I just had this inner calm and I didn’t know how to you know, acknowledge it back then...

Kathy’s mention of her inner calm speaks to her emerging awareness of her need for wholeness.

Tricia also spoke of the many attempts she made to avoid the experience of being vulnerable during sex. Alcohol abuse was one of the behaviors that kept her away from wholeness. She discussed having an intense feeling of rejection, which she saw as fear of vulnerability.

It was all, like I never felt and I still don't really feel sort ofI don't know....
like I say a lot of it was like a sort of strangeness with boys and the fear was more about the vulnerability I think than it was so much about sex but sex involves vulnerability so...I think alcohol helped but I wasn't always drunk...
but maybe I felt safer eventually with them like after being drunk a few times and then I did feel safer I think that's maybe how it went.

Tricia and Kathy both engaged in self harming behaviors that enabled them to stay disconnected from wholeness. Living in a façade world based in hurt and pain, a woman looks everywhere but within for comfort, thus deepening the wound in the Great Betrayal, deepening her feelings of hurt, shame and abandonment (Almaas, 1996).
Although, Leah did not participate in the same type of behaviors, she too continued the self wounding experience, by denying herself the opportunity to listen to her inner voice. She recalls but ultimately denied her own "gut" feeling. This resulted in a betrayal of herself when she experienced an intense moment of knowing something was wrong in her relationship and did not listen to herself

I ended up in a situation with him where I felt he was one of those intense
betrayals in life, and he ended up being up with another woman while I was at his

house, he was down in the car alone, I ended up being aware of the whole thing but just in my gut, just knowing something was wrong.

Later in the interview, Leah described a pattern of being a “people pleaser,” something that kept her in the cycle of pleasuring men and living outside of her self: as we’ve already learned.

I would describe [it] as kind of like, just doing things cause that is what you should do when you are in a relationship. Out of curiosity, or intrigue, or desire to please him, in fact it was tough to pleasure him, and I thought that was sick, something about me just wanted to please him, like you don’t please other people, I am trying to be a pleaser in my life that goes against trying not to do

In not listening to their inner knowing, these women ultimately denied their vulnerability. Consequently, they continued to try to seek pleasure and peace from the external world, denying their ability to trust themselves, to “know”, thus, perpetuating the betrayal of self. Denying the self, the betrayal deepens and the trauma wound thrives, as through the betrayal we learned that we abandoned and rejected ourselves by hiding our most precious nature, our true self.

In exploring the theme of the embodied wound, we can better understand the trauma experience; we can recognize how the wound of sexual trauma manifests narcissistic self representations. As the wounds of trauma are opened, the quest for wholeness, from trauma to transformation, begins.

Launch into Healing: Opening the Wound

And, as the traumatic energies release, they naturally transmute into feelings of contentment, ease, love and even ecstatic bliss, which are intrinsic to our true nature.

(Lumiere, 2003, p.258)

The launch into healing begins when the woman begins to consider the old patterns of self deception that arose out of her trauma wound, disconnecting herself from her true nature. In the following section, co-participants will share stories of how their own healing began. In opening the wound, we see that three smaller themes emerge: befriending the self, healing of the wound through the body's sacred spot, and releasement: a catapult into presence. As Firman and Gila (1997) discussed the transformational healing journey begins to break the trauma trance and rest in disidentification from self.

Almaas (1996) describes this period as a time when the woman sees the inauthenticity of her 'false self' and begins to uncover narcissistic patterns. In realizing and dealing with the narcissistic wounds, the woman begins to accept the intensity of her pain and hurt, allowing for the dissolution of the shell to reveal the presence of the true self (Almaas, 1996). According to Wilber (1996a), we see a movement from the personal to transpersonal stages, as the self embraces authenticity and moves beyond in greater awareness of beingness. The moment of launch is identified as the moment that the wound is exposed and the woman's true self begins to emerge.

Befriending the self

The process of becoming aware of old wounds and patterns and opening to self is very much a process of beginning to befriend the self and embrace love for oneself. For Leah, this occurred during a tantric retreat. During a Tantric exercise, she realized that she had lost all awareness and had no recollection of what had just occurred. Unsure, how to explain what had just happened; she immediately dove into a period of harsh self

judgments. After listening to others talk of their experiences after the exercise, she continued to judge herself by measuring her ability to speak about her experience against the others. Eventually she was able to discontinue these judgments and recognize the value of spending time alone looking inward for the answers. This is Leah's account of befriending herself:

I realized, basically made an announcement at a certain point, where we have a chance to share what was going on that my experience for myself was different than what others had, that I do not need to go backwards and track my life, what I thought I had to do was go backwards and find out where I lost my life, where I lost myself, where my broken parts are, and what I realized was, I am standing here my wholeness, very aware that on that table I was every single moment aware of the pleasure I was receiving and I was completely present.

Almaas (1996) would describe this moment as complete presence, as the self's discovery of her true self. Leah was able to experience the narcissistic emptiness as the loss of the familiar identity. She came to understand that in order to discover who she truly was, her true nature, she did not have to look to old stories of her historical identity. In allowing herself to feel lost in an emptiness she had once tried to avoid, Leah surrendered so that she may reside in wholeness.

As the woman begins to listen to herself, these moments of clarity bring the self into befriending, resulting in the integration of self. Belenky et al (1986) refers to this as "constructed knowledge," a way of knowing and viewing the world along the transformational path;

. . . constructed knowledge began as an effort to reclaim the self by attempting to integrate knowledge that they felt intuitively was personally important with knowledge they had learned from others. They told of weaving together the strands of rational and emotive thought and of integrating objective and subjective knowing. Rather than extricating the self in the acquisition of knowledge, these women used themselves in rising to a new way of thinking. (p. 134-135)

Heather's moments of befriending were similar to Leah's in that, rather than staying in the old pattern of looking for meaning through others they both searched their own truths. Wilber's (1996a) describes their experiences in level seven, as there is an expanded sense of self that moves beyond the normal mind/body perception and personhood; as the dissolution of separate self merges with temporary peak experiences. These experiences allow women to feel whole. What Heather discovered in the process of individuation was that others don't necessary have psychic abilities.

I realized that people weren't pretending not to see things, they really didn't see them it didn't occur to me that I actually was psychic or that I saw more than most people and it especially didn't occur to me when I was intimate with somebody that they weren't living in that same place, you know, if I'm feeling this, what do you mean that we aren't sharing this cause I can feel you, you mean you can't feel me, you know it's like, I, I, really, it took me years to figure out the individuation that we all have our own experience and that it's really ok and that you don't have to know what I know and I don't have to ah know what you know we can have our own experiences

Heather's understanding of the limitations of others allowed her to connect to her own truths, especially her own psychic perceptions. In becoming her own *self*, Wilber (1996a) would say that this integrated self is no longer confined by trauma wounds, but instead has the ability to embrace moments of egoless.

Continuing with Heather's experiences, we can see how her individual perceptions expanded into areas of universal realization (Wilber, 1996a).

6 months after my marriage to **** stopped being sexually attracted to me and in fact told me that he was not sexually attracted to me actually ever, I wasn't really his type so my marriage to him was a requirement to break through my attachments around being able to control or manipulate or associate feeling rejected because somebody isn't attracted to me. If they are they are, if they aren't they aren't and they have the right to feel attracted to feel attracted to whoever they want to feel attracted to and if I'm not it, I'm not it. It doesn't mean that I'm not attractive, it doesn't mean that I'm not sexual, it doesn't mean that I'm not ok, it means that they aren't attracted to me.

Heather's experiences of individuation thus enabled her to listen to her own truth, and in doing so, she began to trust her own experience.

As with Heather and Leah, Ava was also able to step back from her judgments, to see with greater clarity what her truth was. When Ava surrendered to her past demons she permitted herself to fall into love with her inner child. It was through reintegrating with her inner child, that she was able to heal her self betrayal:

Basically I realized one day, that I am this white trailer trash, I was poor and white and lived in a trailer park... I swear I was raised by wolves and so I was just

kind of a person with a very different view of how to be in the world...and so meeting these men that were educated and handsome present and with good healthy boundaries, I was blown away. I am still blown away by it. Now I even recognize healthy energetic boundaries, like when a man, I can even recognize he is even attracted to me, and he has a partner and he is holding his energy back, that blows my mind, that shows a huge amount of integrity and I get a lot of warmth with that, cause I don't think that the men that were in my mother's life when I was young, had much integrity in how they acted around me, how they showed their interest and especially energetically, which kids feel, but is not shown on a physical level. It makes it unsafe for a young girl to grow. And so it is like getting to be a child again in a certain way getting to be seen and to be heard.

In befriending the inner child, Ava realized that her self doubt had been part of the betrayal, enabling her in adulthood to reclaim the innocence of her childhood.

Kathy was another co-participant who confronted her difficulties in childhood. Both these narratives are examples of the self's development, as seen in Wilber's (1996a) level three and four. In level three, we see neuroses form as a result of learning that one's feelings or behaviors are unacceptable to others hence the self disowns or represses these feelings. In level four, the self looks to others to define oneself in order to gain acceptance and belonging Kathy's befriending after confronting her parents about the negative impact they'd had on her development:

It was an amazing experience for me to assist me, it was like, sorry, everything was falling, all the pieces were coming together in me, making

that conscious decision to heal that male and female within myself to nurture the masculine and feminine energy in me, everything was just coming to me to assist me in doing that.

In healing the masculine and feminine, we see the self's deeper connection to the Archetypal Presence (Wilber, 1996a). With this intuitive connection healed, the self realizes the divine presence as always existed in oneself.

Unlike the other women who awakened to this presence, Mia had had brief experiences of "knowing" there was a befriending movement within. In fact she describes a deep knowing that everything is possible. When asked by the interviewer if this feeling was present even after the rape, her response was this:

It was never lost. It would still emerge because I would connect and I was surprised at how little presence there was and I always thought there was something wrong with me, and still in my heart I knew something, I had low self esteem, some things would go back and forth . . .

Further in the interview, we again revisited this knowing or truth:

Well, you know, I probably could not put it in these words, but I knew there was a deep love possible...very strange to be raped, having grown up, even though I was raped and I was there, there was also a deep knowing and thought that there is something possible and I know it is possible, and I don't know where it came from.

It is in learning to befriend this deep knowing that a woman can escape the wounding patterns that she has created and give rise to someone who was innately herself in the first place in.

Healing of the Wound through the Body's Sacred Spot

Like the various aspects of the self, the body experiences its own transformational journey. Through the vehicle of the body, the co-participants experienced various moments of expansiveness during sexuality that also contributed to healing the embodied wound. For example, we see various movements along the Chakra system in healing the body's sacred spot. The sacred spot is located in area of Chakra two, the chakra responsible for sexuality.

Several of the co-participants had experiences with Sacred Spot Massage, a physical exercise designed to bring healing through the massage of the woman's yoni (vagina). Ava's experience was particularly powerful in awakening the deadening force that trauma can imprint on a person. In the course of relating her experience she offers an adequate account of what the massage is. For this reason I have chosen to include a rather lengthy quote:

the whole thing about sacred spot massage is to start to awaken, and they go through, numbness, and they go through all these emotions, it is a very contained holy act, and to have men be taught, taken aside and really taught how to honor a woman, how to be complete in her feelings, and in her feelings then you receive these gifts of her yoni, I said I am really nervous, now I feel like I am a virgin again, and it is something I have wanted for so long and I am recognizing the rightness of it all.... Its all about eye contact, most of your wounding, your rape your everything the woman experiences alone and then holds alone, and so when you activate it, it is like activating trauma but you are getting them to see that they are not alone anymore that you are really letting God or whatever spirit

you believe in come right through your eyes into theirs. And you apologize for each of the events; you say apologize for the wounding my brothers have done to you and will you let my love in there – wow!! It is... so connected to the psyche, and how reflexology all the spots on your feet are connected to your organs, well in the yoni, all of your history is lodged in spots in the yoni, and you massage those spots and they can evoke the experience again. At first, you are just numb, or get out of there, and you find places, like if you find a little spot of pleasure, then there is that, and then you make a little bridge from the pain to the pleasure, and you start connect the dots in there, and then slowly, you feel alive. So for women that has never had an orgasm, women that have strong pain in their yoni that can start to be transformed.

As Ava explains, the sacred spot massage is a transformational experience. The massage focuses on the area located in chakra two, allowing for the healing of painful wounds left by sexual trauma. Furthermore, recognizing the interconnectedness of all the chakras to one another, this massage could have the healing capacity to vibrate energy along the chakra system as it uses all parts of the body to heal trauma.

Through this massage, both Ava and Mia recognized the sacredness of the yoni as it has healing potentials to penetrate the numbness to enliven the body. Mia describes the connection between pain and the Sacred Spot Massage:

they would go internally into the vagina, into the sacred spot – the G spot – that all the pleasure and all the pain is stored in the sacred spot and when you start massaging that it opens up everything, can be anything, pain, numbness –

basically everything under the sun, whatever, the pleasure and doing that worked basically healed my self. It was physical and some emotional...

Judith (1996) discusses healing value of chakra two in her work, how it opens emotions enabling the woman to freely embrace these feelings. Opening the second chakra creates a secure grounding between sexuality and emotions that allow for releasing of a healing power that then balances all of the other chakras. As Judith (1996) reminds us that healing of sexuality in chakra two, touches each of the energy system in some kind of relationship, hence what Ava and Mia have discussed in their narratives. In other words, the physical body is thus the vehicle to the psyche, the point of access to the emotions trapped in the wounds of the trauma. Sacred spot massage heals the wounds by unleashing the constrained energy allowing the energy to flow once again throughout all chakras.

While Leah and Tricia's transformations did not occur through sacred spot massage, they also experienced physical expressions that resonated with what their bodies required. Leah describes doing "psychological body," work that allowed her to discover wholeness, something that eventually lead to her becoming a teacher of this practice.

I am a psychological body worker and I assist people in coming home to their wholeness and I do that through movement and breath and touch and use examples of my own life and it just became, of course that is what I do! Of course that is who I am! And this has been a place where all these little rivets and paths of my life are coming together into this pool, I feel like all these parts of my life, being raped and not being able to ask for what I wanted, not being able to

say no, being repulsed by somebody who would stick something in that, all leading to this pool where one of my favorite things is actually sharing the relaxation around the rosebud mark and the anal massage all the things of all the techniques and pieces I have learned.

The anal area is located in chakra one, the energy system responsible for basic survival instincts and holding groundness forward into the world. As Judith (1996) mentions, this is the area that leaves a woman feeling alienated from herself after sexual trauma. To befriend this area is to befriend one's basic nature.

The overall befriending process has allowed these women to understand the need for physical healing. In relating their experiences, each of them identifies a physical experience that served to connect them to their psychological needs, thus bringing them to wholeness. Tricia spoke of a moment of healing through the body that led to her practicing yoga. She described a moment of self-listening to a "little voice going, do yoga, do yoga, do yoga . . ."

I had this one time when I can't remember what the exact experiment was but I did have an orgasm in front of like the group, like my whole body was just "waaaaaaah" like just going, it was like an, it wasn't sexual but it was like an orgasm...that kind of like total body feeling like a complete sort of like shocky thing... It was very like I feel, like I guess that the word I feel is release, very releasing and like just that feeling of my whole body being this thing, this energy current thing...

Having all her chakras balanced, Tricia's was then able to experience a cosmic orgasm, something beyond the body that connected her with the total universe. Osho (1976) speaks of cosmic orgasm as the ability to say 'yes' to everything.

In order to experience the expansiveness of cosmic orgasm, trauma cannot exist. Hence the person has already embraced the thawing process of the trauma. In relating to some of her earliest experiences in physical healing, Mia describes the sense of being "frozen" and the guardedness in the body from past trauma and then the releasement she wakes up to once she understands who I am.

I did some sexual groups in ****, I lived in a commune and there was a lot of sexual contact and there was so much exploration, and hardly was just you know on both sides, my side and the other persons, and also lot of waking up, becoming aware of my body, but mostly there was still a lot of guardedness. I feel in my time with ****, a lot opened up, there was no fear allowed, in the form of meditation, sexuality, spirituality, just on many levels. Basically waking up to myself and knowing who I am.

In summation, we see during the theme of physical healing is a critical aspect of a woman's journeys from sexual trauma to wholeness and that each must choose to explore this aspect of the healing process in her own way. In the telling of their stories, each of the co-participants describes the experience of a thawing occurring in the body. Once confined to trauma, the energy can thus be released and allowed to flow, thereby embracing wholeness.

Releasement: A Catapult into Presence

Another pattern that is revealing in the co-participants narratives is the releasement of various ego constructs. Almaas (1996) discusses, for instance, the idea that individuals become free to experience emptiness not as a deficiency but as a releasement. Thus freed from the reactions of the narcissistic self-representations, the self experiences a new lightness, feelings of purity and peace. In each woman's narrative we hear how each of them experiences a release from past patterns and deconstructs, allowing them to rest in their beingness and to have hope for their futures. The intensity of the moment catapults the women into a gateway of a transformational experience, an opening of sorts into the unknown, something that the self witnesses. At this point there is unraveling into an understanding of one's true self.

Kathy describes this as a spiritual experience:

I'd had spiritual experiences throughout my life, moments where I could not explain... and then all of a sudden I'm in my living room and I could feel this presence, it went through my whole body and it was just incredible love and... was like an awakening, I connected to Paradise and I'd shifted and it was like I was not to live this life anymore – I was to shift my life and change it and in that moment – it's really hard to explain cause it's so subjective, right...

Leah describes her experience as more of a process than a moment. She recalls being involved in her "bad girl," which meant participating in various sexual activities. It was in realizing that these experiences were not enjoyable for her that she began a transition.

I moved to the west coast, and out here I am just really focused on spiritual path, for a year and during that year it was really about looking at showing up and

telling the truth and paying attention to details and letting go of outcomes. it was a period of me just really going in deep and I started becoming more aware of things going on in this area.

Shortly thereafter she found Tantra, which enabled her to heal her sexual trauma, allowing for sexuality to become sacred once more. It was through Tantra that she discovered that exploring her sexuality could lead to an amazing healing process. Leah further describes being able to surrender to old constructs/judgments concerning her ideals of sexuality and her patterns of sex. As a co-participant what I found interesting, as I listened to her speak, was that although the experience she was describing was Tantra, she didn't specifically acknowledge this:

for me sexuality is almost like a little doorway it is almost a little front, it is one little door you can enter into presence work and it is appealing to a lot of people and it is just so taboo and forbidden, but that makes it more appealing to more people so it feels like for me that I am using the sexuality part of it really as a way to get to presence with people and nobody ever ever takes off their clothes and experiences anything related to genital touch or anything related to some of the practices that are involved with sexual active body work or it is about presence, more than it is about any of those other things.

For all of the co-participants it seems as though the moment of releasement that catapulted them into presence was rather ordinary. But it is this very ordinary quality that is Tantra's gift. Ava describes a Tantric experience with trust, for instance, that occurred during a moment of sexual exploration with a partner, allowing her heart energy to open up, bringing an expansiveness to her being: "So I felt so much trust and

so much, not only the beauty of the energy that we had but I feel sexual and safe and heartbroken at the same time, I just wept and wept and wept. It was just so, a huge huge breakthrough.”

As we have already learned, Ava has had experiences with the Sacred Spot Massage, she described here though how it is releasing for the woman:

You know, doing the actual sacred spot massage, receiving and giving, was bringing my awareness to my genitals, bringing my awareness to my pleasure and how to be with that. How to breathe with it, be present for whatever emotions were there or weren't there and how to move it, so that stagnant, left over you know issues and conditioning were slowly washed away through breathing and through making sounds, that is one thing that is so important, when you feel that anger, or whatever emotion, and just put a sound to it, a lot of howling and of crying, crying with somebody looking in your eyes and still putting loving touch into your sacred spot. Amazing.

Mia described her moment of truth, her releasement during sexual encounter as being similar to Ava's:

sex is just naturalness and totally something myself in trusting what is happening and not going for anything less than the whole truth and the perfectness of love. So it is kind of it is a commitment within myself that I don't go for anything less than is the truth and that is only what comes to me at this moment.

In this journey into healing, the co-participants surrendered to wounds that kept them confined to their ego constructs. Allowing for opening into their beingness, these wounds were transformed to heal. Although some of their Tantric experiences were

brief, all of the co-participants realized that the healing journey, from sexual trauma to wholeness involves some aspect of body work. It is now time to explore the Oceanic expression of the journey.

Tantric Passageway to Essence

Sexuality is not a leisure or part-time activity. It is a way of being

(Lowen, 1995, p.34)

Tantric passageway to essence explores the women's journey through Tantra to the non-dual. We have seen through the launch into healing the women's experience of self-realization. Almaas (2001) refers to the transformational understanding as the work of self-realization. As we have seen in the co-participant's narratives, whether the trauma has manifested in a lack of trust in self, sexual addiction, or low self esteem, the woman must be able to identify her wound patterns before she can recognize that this is not her true essence. In transforming the wound the "transformation involves the thinning away of such structures until they become completely flexible, and hence, transparent to essential presence" (Almaas, 2001, p. 277). Having realized the transparency of her wounds, she can thus begin to reside in her true essence. In their varied experiences the co-participants affirmed the powerful transformational energy of Tantra.

Within this major theme, of Tantric passageway to Essence, there are five sub-themes: Yes, pain; yes, pleasure; Open Sky of Awareness; The Power of Presence in the Here and Now; Total Freedom in the Always Available; Sublime and Mundane: Merging into Oneness. Each theme marks a woman's progressive passage along the women's journey along the tantric transformational journey to wholeness.

YES, Pain; YES, Pleasure

The path of Tantra is transformational in that it allows the self to open to the experience of wounds. Tantra allows for the “treatment and healing of old wounds, painful emotions” (Odiar, 2001, p. 77). Furthermore, Tantra instructs one to look within to see how we have been limiting ourselves through pain and fears, thereby creating our own separation from the essential presence. It’s a path of freeing oneself to realize our true nature. Brooks (2004) states:

we can turn our minds away from the outside world and look at the oppressions within ourselves. And this is when tantra really shines. now that most of us live as free men and women-free to choose our religion, sexual conduct and lifestyle - we have no more excuses to prevent us from finding out what we really want. We can discover our true calling... Tantra asks that we look within. Tantra does not believe that change will come by altering what is outside of ourselves. It all starts with me. Where is the oppression within me? How has my fear of change stopped me from evolving?... Tantra asks that we change what is within us, not that we change a whole society. (p.116)

In Mia’s tantric transformational journey she had the courage to look within and then confront the pain of her past wounds, thus enabling her to see her essential presence.

It was more a case of Tantra, to me Tantra is saying yes to everything that is, to absolutely everything. The feeling that says I am more than just this body. There is something looking through these eyes, something more than my body. That was opening up, sometime coming into my body, so much unhappiness, hurt and pain. It feels like coming out of a box,

unhappiness really, and becoming aware of just how much unhappiness there was.

Leah's transformational experience from trauma to wholeness was sparked in a similar manner, by the realization that everything is Tantric. It was this knowing that enabled her to welcome her pain, say yes to everything.

I think in this culture, there is this idea that tantra equals sex, to me tantra is about everything, it is that same piece of, it is about everything, so sex is one way to come into presence, sex is one part of tantra.

The co-participants' experience of Tantra has created opportunities to surrender to one's old stories of trauma (Rajneesh, 1976). In surrendering by saying 'yes' to everything, to feeling everything, to feeling connected to essential presence, Tantra welcomes the paradox of pain and pleasure. Almas (1996) would understand this surrendering as the deep surrender into a basic trust, where there exists a loving light that dissolves the ego activity.

Furthermore, there exists trust that Tantra awakens that is a profound trust in existence (Almas, 1996). Ava described healing the sexual wounds of her childhood by burning through her illusions of male partners. She discussed that idea that the lack of integrity she sensed in the men who had previously abused her affected the way she viewed men. At the same time, being able to realize the integrity she had within herself, not to devalue others, lead to her healing of self.

I don't think about what is going on with me, I feel what is going on with me, I feel my heart, I feel my emotions...I could also see that even just being around men with integrity, I am starting to feel the safety I should have felt

as a child. Now I am starting to feel the lack of doubt and expression that I should have felt safe to show it, it is mixed with adulthood now, but now my spontaneity, my ability to feel an impulse and jump into it, it is really really different...I really just feel so safe to look in everything, to be...

Ava's realization that she needed to look within, to see how she was oppressing her self, is evident in how she describes the beginnings of her Tantric journey: She learned breathing exercises, prayer, and gained the ability to move energy through her body to cope with "anxiety and contraction".

She came to trust in her ability to look within and feel her own energy and see that safety exists. Through these tantric experiences, Ava discovered that "all Tantra is about your self sense and your own body wholeness, I started to feel more wholeness myself". Having a basic trust in existence allowed the co-participants to realize the truth in their pain and pleasure. It is basic trust that allows a woman to open herself to the spontaneous activity of Tantra, enabling her to say 'yes' to everything.

For Kathy, the experience of wholeness along the Tantric path was opening to Love. As we heard from Mia and Ava, it was the act of surrendering that enabled them to connect to their true self. Kathy's realization was surrendering to the fear of love to allow herself to reside in love,

My whole, exploring myself was that I knew the tantric as a way of life, it's how I wanted to live my life and tantric is all about love and within the love means the absence of fear.

The ability to look within, to see love as being an absence of fear is the egolessness nature of true self.

Heather's realization occurred after a partner betrayed her. Here in this embrace of yes Heather could still reside in the presence of this world without fear. Her experience is akin to what Wilber (1996a) describes in the eighth level of spectrum of consciousness, when an individual becomes more aware of the Archetypal Presence, she becomes aware of her own essential presence.

I just filled it in and it became a tirade to God and a prayer to God and I realized that what was really happening was that I was feeling disconnected from my spiritual source and at that point I realized that everything in the world was actually about a projection onto God and I started listening to all of the music on the radio and I realized that all love songs were songs between the Ego and the Divine or the Divine showering the Ego with unconditional love and it didn't matter, it's was like I could listen to everything and hear it as this quest for being unconditionally loved, embraced and whole or the feeling of feeling disconnected from that...

In seeking to transcend the wounds of sexual trauma, the co-participants have all embarked on a Tantric transformational journey to wholeness. Moment by moment of looking within brings acceptance to rest in wholeness. The path of Tantra opened them up the possibility of looking inward to a realization of themselves, so they could transcend oppression that kept them confined within separation. Free of separations between the external and internal thus allows for the illumination of one's being. Time and space hold no reality, as one can now see true self. I think it would be appropriate to end this section with a quote from Leah, as she sums up Tantra beautifully: "It is yes, it is that Tantra yes to everything and no is closing down of everything."

Open Sky of Awareness

In surrendering to old wounding patterns, the co-participants allow for an awakening onto the Tantric path, a presence of openness and expansiveness to be felt. Shaw (1994) best explains this as an openness through a dissolution of duality that creates a blissful state. This state can be experienced through sexuality, or as some of the co-participants indicated, during periods of aloneness.

This merging of identities become the epitome of the nonduality wherein 'subject' and 'object' dissolve and fuse. Sexuality can be part of the path because erotic experience already contains the seeds of enlightenment awareness: blissfulness, loss of ego boundaries, forgetfulness of self, and absence of subject-object dualism. (Shaw, 1994, p. 187)

In this blissfulness of no subject-object dualism the co-participants find expansiveness with an intensity of conscious awareness.

Mia experienced this expansiveness in the process of healing her sexuality, in the midst of a divorce,

that I could really say yes my yoni is healed, my sexuality is healed, I am just whole, no matter what is, everything is whole here...I don't know what met what, something got totally empty and the men that I met after that in the lovemaking, that has been nobody there, just one movement in the making of love, that is kind of what happened in a nut shell.

The openness of Mia's experience had her feeling emptiness and one movement. In this state of blissful energy Mia was connected with Oneness. Continuing, Mia relates another experience that occurred during a Sacred Spot Massage

there was such a surrendering of the woman that I am the goddess or whatever you want to use, something eternally blissful or coming home, I don't even know what happened....I just in a very real sense, I know that my body is here, but at the same time I am so intimately here but over there, so it feels like somebody is here but that everybody is here, that is what I experienced.

What Mia describes is the power of the openness of the sky awareness of one's deity, powerful enough to dissolve the boundaries of the body.

Ava's surrender also allowed her to see her own divinity:

...and that is where I came into my own, that is where I just really stepped into who I was and a divine, I do not want to sound cliché, but priestess, a lot of religions say that we are made in the image of God, well we are God, you just have to see it that is the thing.

It was after this experience, when Ava was in the mountains, that she experienced a cosmic orgasm that opened her awareness to a spaciousness that is beyond boundaries of the ego.

my yoni was just like so turned on by the beauty of the nature, I had never had this before, I was having huge waves of orgasmic Kundalini whatever, and my yoni was wet, and I was just looking at the nature, and I was like look what happened me. You know, nature herself, was just so nice and I was just like I am coming out right now... Even that expansion, there is still some contraction afterwards, and you just have to learn to dance with it. So you know, I don't know what else to say, I still feel like I have a lot of cooking to do, still finishing my own, I guess we are all going to be growing and expanding.

It is these expansive states that break the confines of all boundaries. In describing a sexual experience with a male partner, for example, Heather says, “that I would move into these sexual states with my body moving on its own, it wasn’t quite as entranced...” In order to capture the expansive aspect here, it is important to understand Heather’s perspective on sex and sexuality:

so I want to step back a bit and talk about what we think of as sex cause to me everything I’m describing is about sex and sexuality and it’s really about evolution and expansion of consciousness... I had the experience of being infinite space and the creation of stars and the spreading out into space of all that radiant light if I were to put it into words, it was just, it will always be with me ...

We now have seen how the process of burning through the wounding process can lead to a transformational experience. The transformational path of Tantra catapults the individual into experiences that are beyond ego, to a space of expansiveness. After having experienced these moments of vastness, it makes it difficult for the co-participants to turn their back on Tantra. Instead they bring these moments into their day to day existence, through the power of presence, in the here and now.

The Power of Presence in the Here and Now

An essential part of the awakening process is learning to be mindful, being able to live in the present moment, the here and now. The idea of time, which is the duality of presence, is thus a construct that exists in the past and future:

Our consciousness is dominated by a linear conception that understands the passage of time as a narrow pointing from the past to the future rather than as consisting of self-repeating cycles. Correspondingly, we are forever

chasing time, either by aspiring after the future or by tracking down the memories of the past, while often forgetting to be mindful in the present. The traditional consciousness, by contrast, fears to be caught in the cycles of time, which ultimately bring little more than physical and mental suffering

(Feuerstein, 1998, p. 33)

In discussing her fear of death, Mia explains how the mind can create oppression through time. She describes a fear that has consumed most of her life, projected her thoughts to live in the future of death. After realizing the hopelessness in time, she surrendered to her fear and embarked on a transformational energy of timelessness that enabled her to finally rest in happiness.

It feels like the fear of death that is really the fear of life that is what it felt like. That fear, I had as a little girl, as long as I can remember, I was very fearful about my body, I was always afraid I was going to die, in my family they would joke me oh yea, I was just very scared that this body would die and something would be wrong with it and that is gone, that was one of the biggest things that stayed the longest with me, I would say it is completely transformational or something. That took a long, long time, the biggest challenge during the last fifty years, now it is all gone, I feel just happiness

Kathy explains a moment of transcendence, in which she dropped time during a tantric moment, enabling her to also surrender to fear:

Um when, when you're, when there's no fear anymore, there's no you're not in your head any more you're just allowing yourself to just be in the moment, um you, you're taking in all your senses, there's, its, the touch is electrified um the

smells are just um everything it just amplifies everything

If one thinks of fear and time as related constructs, fear is the cousin that directs the mind to be weighted down in future-oriented thinking, future being a state of time that will try to comfort fear. From here, the co-participants described a surrendering to the power of presence, a letting go of the process of time, allowing them to be “right here, right now.”

Mia’s transcendence of time allowed her to fall into the Tantric path to enlightenment:

I can say one thing, time is the most important in totally letting tantra, original tantric path and really enlightenment is number one, not just so much the sexuality is number one, enlightenment is number one...

Ava’s moment of transformation also occurred with the realization that the path of Tantra was in the present moment. When the present moment is felt, time is not a construct, as time is oriented to past and future:

It means really being fully in, tasting the present moment, tasting with my skin, when I breathe the air, when I look at the sky, really tasting all of it, and you know I am not you know I am not saying that I do that always, but I do that a whole lot more in this last year than ever before I’m not saying that I do that always, but I do that a whole lot more in this last year than ever before

Leah, on the other hand, experienced moments of timelessness and spaciousness with a partner:

we are together it is just pure partner engagement, trans, drop in, time does not exist, everything I have ever wanted in terms of being connected with myself and with the world, with oneness and sharing that with another human being and any

study I can attribute the relationship and the quality of loving and of touching, it is more being at the place in my life where I am at where presence is more important than anything to me and I need someone to have the value that presence is more important to them than anything and just being present, everything can be accessed and everything can be relieved and everything can be “ok”. It is an incredible place to be.

Total Freedom in the Always Available

The power of the here and now awakens Tantra’s intensity of total freedom, the experience of love from a source deep in consciousness where no ego presence of fear, desire, expectations and projections can exist (Odier, 1997). Total freedom is the only thing remaining in spaciousness; it is here that the person is “in the nonperson, in the nonrelationship- because we are in total and nondual presence” (Odier, 1997, p. 84). The totality of the freedom embraces the intense availability of Tantra’s presence. Mia connects to her experience of total freedom during moments of making love, in which she comes together to rest in the totality of Oneness.

I can only say that when I make love, there is just no thinking, that pure, that is just one movement, that is all there is and just my body moves. In the outside it can look the same as it did five years ago, the experience is totally different, the sex is, not sure how to put into words, total freedom there is just no holding, there is no affection there is just ...I feel that what is happening is one energy, one movement, there is not two anymore

Taking this further, Mia discusses the potential for Tantra’s freedom to exist in all aspects of life:

and knowing who you are and being that and just naturally just being there for all of life, and that includes sexuality, includes work, and it is kind of the sense of tremor or energy that is always alive that's here right now and makes love with all of life and everything. It is bringing together the pure silence that we are with all of life, it is kind of hard, it becomes kind of a dance of...I don't know...

Mia continues discussing this journey during another connection with a male in which she could feel the intense wave of Tantra.

Then I was with another man, and I felt with this man we were making love and I felt like this is what I wanted, this is what I knew was possible all my life, and was happening, and it was just one flow, just oneness and it was very different and very beautiful.

Leah describes going to a place of truth in order to embrace a direct knowing. For her this is where freedom lives and is available to her:

Yeah, there is a place in my body, and this is something I really want to work with my students with, that is finding that place, for me and that place, that when I go there when I bring my awareness directly there, truth, I know where truth is, and I know when I need to access truth I can go to that place or I can be aware that that place is telling me something. Like unequivocally yes, that is a place where absolute, that place I know I can get the truth.

In the realization of total freedom is the acceptance of what is. The self falls into a flowing state of beingness, no longer illusioned by the ego's need for desire. The ordinariness of life is appreciated along with the ecstatic presence of Tantra.

Sublime and Mundane: Merging into Oneness

In peak experiences of Oneness, the co-participants realized the intense energy of the moment. With these experiences in the here and now there brings a merging of Oneness with everyday life. The cosmic orgasmic energy and chores of daily living merge into Oneness, allowing the self to rest in the sublime. Mia's transformational process of merging thus recognizes no separation.

It is just present in all of life, there is no separation, like this is sex now, this is cooking now, or whatever, it is for sex it is, let me see if there is another way I can say it. It is being intimate with all of life. There is just no separation. I can still have preferences, I have a preference for making love that's for sure, physical making love, definitely a preference of making love, there's not an unhappiness when it does not happen, because there is a making of love that is happening all the time anytime, when I am with my clients, or I am here talking to you. There is no separation. And that is very different.

Ava discusses the danger of this merge, as others can mix up the essence of esoteric love with the everydayness of humanly love.

...tantric with each other and we just totally fell in love, and that is the danger of tantra too because people start to take the, kind of like a non-duality, like we are all One but they kind of put it on to you're the One, really it is just stepping into love and love as an entity and love is God or whatever your belief is that is, stepping into love and that can sound kind of esoteric but it is really important that when you are working with people that there is some understanding that I am just here as love, I am not here to become your partner or your girlfriend

Leah's experience with of Oneness is also present in her mindfulness of integration:

I am working on integration, integration is the very peak of the work that I do, you have these great ecstatic experiences, transcending experiences, but where do you go with that?

She continued to speak of being mindful during her daily chores, connecting this mindfulness with saying yes to everything, which allows for continual openness: “it is just laid out for me so beautifully if only I say yes to what I really want, it is overlapping into all kinds of areas in my life, the vehicle, being present...”

With the sublime being of Oneness there is no separation, there is a presence of yes to the moments.

Non-dual: Vastness of Oneness

You are beyond that.

You are the Silence,

The Silence of the Heart.

(Adams, 1999, p. 361)

The journey from sexual trauma has been a moment to moment process of surrender. In surrendering the woman is able to let go of ego constructs, to awaken to the non-dual. In each moment, there is an awareness of the vastness of this Oneness. Oneness is a sense of no-separation from our Essential Nature. Wilber (2000) describes the essence of Oneness:

That is why, in nondual Suchness, it is absolutely not that each being is a part of the One, or participates in the One, or is aspect of the One. In other words, it is

not, as in pantheism, that each is merely a piece of the 'One', a slice of the pie, or a strand in the Web...An individual holon is not part of the One Spirit because each individual holon is the One Spirit in its entirety - the Infinite, being radically dimensionless, is full present at each and every point of spacetime... (Wilber, 2000, p. 357)

Suchness of Life

While three of the six co-participants discussed moments of Oneness, Mia, Ava and Heather also articulated moments of the non-dual. "I feel that what is happening is one energy, one movement, there is not two anymore," explains Mia. "...this is what I knew was possible all my life, and was happening, and it was just one flow, just Oneness and it was very different and very beautiful." At this point sexuality was no longer a struggle for her. Healing through her transformational journey Mia Wholeness: "...only true lovemaking is possible when the non-dual is there. It is not possible; it is not the whole thing. My opinionated opinion!"

After discussing realizations of receptivity, Ava describes moments of surrendering that allowed her to rest in Oneness, "Yes, they really teach you not to reach out and touch, not to do anything, to really notice how you want to feel back, and say no, I am just receiving"

Finally, Heather discusses a three year relationship with a Tantric male in which she experienced moments of Non-dual:

I felt in his touch, god seeking the goddess, I felt the god and goddess embracing and making love and creating the universe. I remember one time when we made love, and this was the other thing, I experienced orgasms in parts of my body that

I didn't know were orgasmic. EVERY part of the body has the potential to be orgasmic I mean truly but I remember the first time I had a heart orgasm with him was like my whole body became electric, just totally electric and the feeling of merging and the feeling of expansion and, and the feeling of NOTHING else existing except this pulse and this place and this presence with the two of us um, just amazing, really amazing, nonverbal, totally nonverbal states, non dual um non cognitive, poetic, total poetry, we would commune with each other in poetry, our communications became prayers to the Divine.

Within the transformational journey, the experience of Oneness brings a blissful existence to life. No longer separated from one's true nature, individuals flow from moment to moment with an intense awareness that is expansive, timeless and electric, all simultaneously. The paradox of the trauma and transformation is dissolved in Oneness.

Summary

Our exploration of the co-participant's transformational journeys, from sexual trauma to wholeness through embracing the Tantric transformational journey, on embarking on a non-dual path, has now come to an 'end.' Beginning with stories of discovery, wounding, betrayal, transformation, Tantra and the non-dual each woman has shared her paradoxical experience of transformation and trauma. But, as each co-participant knows, the end never comes; instead the process continues.

The next and final chapter summarizes themes and explores the implication for counselling. It will also revisit the implicated researcher and identify the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study set out to gather an understanding of women's Tantric transformational journey from sexual trauma to wholeness. In order to uncover the co-researcher's experiences on this journey, it focused on the theoretical perspective of Transpersonal Psychology as well as Tantra. A phenomenological hermeneutics research approach with a transpersonal reworking was used to illuminate the co-researcher's themes. As a way to bring this study to a conclusion, Chapter Five will discuss final reflections of this thesis. This will be done by summarizing the themes, discussing the counseling implications and recognizing the limitations of the study. This will be followed with my concluding remarks.

Summary of Research Findings

What are the experiences of women who have experienced sexual trauma and have used the path of tantra as a transformational journey to wholeness? This study is based on interviews with six women who have all been on this transformational journey for a variety of years. It focused on the series of events that occurred in each of their lives enabling them to embrace wholeness along a tantric path after an experience of sexual trauma. It began with an exploration of their sexuality and develops into an exploration of sexual trauma that changed their lives. Embarking on the transformational journey through the discovery of tantra was where each woman discovered self-realization. In an attempt to understand this research question, the researcher gathered an analysis of their narratives and from this produced five themes with twelve sub-themes. The development of these themes was influenced by the transpersonal reworking of phenomenological hermeneutic approach that provided the researcher's methodology.

The first theme that the development of sexuality was explored through was *discovering sexuality*. It was suggested that this was period of safety and trust that facilitated a healthy growth of sexuality. At a normal and young age, all the women experienced an openness into knowing oneself and others, a necessary stage in healthy ego development. The process of discovering oneself and others brought pleasurable sensations that the body enjoyed, creating a foundation of maturity within their young lives.

The emergence of trauma is recognized in the next major theme of *embodied wound*. The experience of sexual trauma disconnects the self from its true being in human nature. We see in the next three sub-themes, the emergence and effects of the profound wounding through, *trauma: splitting the soul in two, betrayal bond, and from betrayal of*

others to betrayal of self. The self is wanting to experience a sense of belonging (rule/role) but the effects of trauma have led to false beliefs and cognitive scripts that distort relationships (Wilber, 1996a). The effects of overt and covert trauma lead to the experience of splitting off, where the individual feels contracted from its environment and of course, itself. These themes characterize several of Almaas' (1996) narcissistic stages, such as fakeness and empty shell. Moments of vacancy and dissociation, coupled with self blaming and self destructive patterns perpetuate the trauma wound. At times, these experiences are 'helpful' as the full impact of the trauma is not felt, however the impact of the wounding is embodied and therefore waits in the shadows. Consequently, there is a feeling of not being able to move outside of trauma causing the force of trauma to be debilitating.

Furthermore, the experience of trauma created a recycling of wounds through the engagement of betrayal bonds. Various trauma effects are repetitiously engaged in, providing a split from the present moment. Almaas' described the narcissistic patterns the self engages into in order to perpetuate the wounding experience. Connecting to their childhood stories, the women's accounts discuss various self, familial and societal bonds that kept them in betrayal. Still, confined in their trauma, the betrayal of self disconnects one from wholeness; the Great Betrayal has begun (Almaas, 1996). The co-participants identified an abandonment and rejection of several parts of themselves, hence living from a false self structure.

Throughout this journey the pursuit for something greater than this suffering awakens. In the next major theme, we see a *launch into healing: opening the wound.*

Old narcissistic patterns are challenged as the transformational process unfolds the healing process. There is a breaking of trance patterns opening the once guarded wound to experience moments of expansiveness and a deepening, which results in the dissolution of the wound (Almaas, 1996). We see through the three sub-themes the emergence of a self that begins to realize its true nature. The first sub-theme, *befriending the self*, explores the opening of tantric experiences as felt through moments of clarity. Beginning to listen, hence befriending the self, the process of individuation and selflessness inner activity is experienced. As the surrendering process ensues, there are states of feeling a “knowing”, and a “truth”. A shift into the transpersonal levels of Wilber’s spectrum of consciousness (1996a) is beginning to occur at these themes.

The next sub-theme, *healing of the wound through body’s sacred spot*, was seen as a chance for healing through the vehicle of the body. This represented a continuation towards wholeness along the transformational process. Here the women described activating trauma as a “waking up”, “letting go of numbness”, and connecting with “God.” This fundamental aspect of the journey deconstructed images centered around the body to allow an experience of sacredness to be realized. In these moments of awakening, authenticity was reclaimed in essential parts of the self that was hidden by the trauma wounds.

The next sub-theme, *releasement: a catapult into presence* represented the gateway of transformational experience, the opening into the Unknown. Through the enjoyment of lovemaking, one was connected with going deeper into the wound to transcend it. A decrease in external pursuits and need for validation is evident, as the women become more connected with themselves. In surrendering to what is, there is an

experience of expansiveness and openness present. In the awareness, sex was enjoyed as a natural and trust experience showing “the perfectness of love”.

In these themes just discussed, the women experience in a single moment, a process that changed their understanding and experience of the world. With a profound shift of consciousness, evident by the dissolution of trauma wounds, the journey of an intense transformational process is well on its way. These themes revealed that the act of seeking was dualistic and perpetuated the cycle of misery. In letting go of ego activity, there is a surrender that occurs so the self accepts emptiness (Almaas, 1996).

Understanding one’s narcissistic patterns becomes a healing process, allowing for transcendence of the wound to occur along the transformational journey.

The next major theme is *Tantric passageway to essence* in which the transformational understanding of self-realization resides. During this major theme the awareness of Tantra’s loose and natural way (Rajneesh, 1976) is evident in the opening transformative experiences. In the first sub-theme *yes, pain; yes, pleasure* the insights include paradoxical embracement of different dualities, through tantra’s ability to say ‘yes’ to everything, hence creating a sense of “coming out of a box”. In this merging with tantra’s energies, the ability to look within and feel one’s own energy became a powerful symbolic moment, connecting them to their “higher Self”. This theme revealed the archetypal presence of God in each woman. Furthermore, this theme possessed characteristics of the Wilber’s level seven and eight in the transpersonal states of consciousness without realization of boundaries, no concepts of time and space, and Tantra’s acceptance of wholeness. Here, we see woman becoming grounded in Tantra as

they transcend the bodymind, to allow for a drop into the vast ocean of existence (Rajneesh, 1976).

Within the major theme of *Tantric passageway to essence* the next theme identified the blissfulness of non dualism, the intensity of conscious awareness. In the sub-theme of *open sky of awareness*, sex can be part of the tantric path, but the experience of emptiness and One movement is present in all that one does. It explored a full emptiness present in the boundlessness of no-boundaries. Through sexuality women would experience a dissolving away of the self to experience a moment beyond them and a holding of a loving light. As Shaw (1994) explained sexuality is part of the part that contains the enlightened awareness. Glimpses of “infinite space”, “radiant light”, and “eternally blissful” within an intuitive sense, make it difficult for the women to turn their back on the journey.

The *power of presence in the here and now* awakened the process of mindfulness and attunement in everyday life. Here, time and space was realized to have no linear explanation and ‘presence’ is felt as a sudden bolt of lightening. With the boundless energy of tantra’s path emerging, a “taste” of the present moment came with a feeling of “I’m ok”. This theme contains a sub-theme of *total freedom in the always available*. tantra’s total freedom to accept everything, is experienced as “pure”, “no holding”, and “just one energy”. The self witnesses an awareness of ‘truth’ that exists in a place of absolute freedom, as a flowing state of beingness. The ordinariness of life is appreciated along with the ecstatic presence of tantra. In both of these themes, Choiceless awareness (Kristnamurti, 1980) is evident as the women describe an awareness of being in an relationship of total sensitivity.

The final theme in the cluster of themes belonging to the major theme of *Tantric passageway to essence*, is *sublime and mundane: merging into Oneness*. In this theme, Cosmic orgasmic energy, otherwise known as "...the point of nothingness" (Osho, 1978, p.118) merges with the mundane experience of daily life. Tantra's ability to say 'yes' to everything is met with 'no', as paradoxes dissolves into cosmic orgasm (Osho, 1978). The tantric transformational journey to wholeness is embraced in the "everydayness of humanly love". Integrating love by stepping into mindfulness of saying "yes" allows for a continual openness of Oneness. All ego activity ceasing, the Essential Identity emerges (Almaas, 1996).

The last major theme, *non-dual: oneness*, offered glimpses into the non-dual experience, bringing awareness into one's Essential Nature. Miller (2003) explained the non-dual as the uncovering of our inherent awareness or consciousness in which one realizes true Bliss. This blissful understanding into the tantric path and wholeness indicated that the non-dual was always in the availability of the moment. The sub-theme of *suchness of life* provides descriptions of "Oneness", "Nothingness" and "feel of expansion" were comparable within the narratives of the co-participants. It was within this theme that the limits of language were evident, in the giving of an understanding and an account of intense experience felt in the moments of the non-dual. The world as co-participants knew it was "electric" with merging and flowing energies.

In compiling these themes, a reflection of the Tantric transformational journey from sexual trauma to Wholeness was observed. Through the summary of this research it was not the intention of this research to "prove data" in this study but rather to engage and explore the experiences of those who have been transformed in their journey through

sexual trauma to Wholeness. Now, an exploration into the implication for counselling will be discussed.

Implications for Counselling

As this study did not deal directly with counselling, there are nevertheless, implications for counselling that could provide to be beneficial to field practice. In the forefront is the idea that because trauma is a quick and sudden experience that takes the person out of the present moment, its paradoxical counterpart, Tantra's transformational energy, is a quick, sudden experience that welcomes the intensity of the present moment. This has serious implications for women seeking counseling, as Tantra has the intense energy to heal the many effects of trauma that continues to remove the person out of the present moment.

Secondly, unlike conventional therapies where sexuality is typically not recognized, Tantra recognizes the healing potential of sexuality. With its intense healing energies, Tantra's sexual nature transcends many boundaries that talk therapies are unable to access: While talk therapies are bound in experiences that relate to language of the past, present and future, Tantra's transformational experiences are beyond language, time and workings of the rational mind. The therapist working with Tantra would have to have experiences of transpersonal energy. If a therapist did not have 'knowledge' in Tantra it could be dangerous to the client. If a client presents with experiences of Tantric transformations to a therapist who has no knowledge of Tantra, the client runs the risk of being pathologized. This would not be the fault of the client, but the error of the counsellor as most talk therapy counsellors comes from a position of 'expert', whereas transpersonal counsellors come from a place of beingness. To summarize in the words of

Walsh and Vaughn (1981), a therapist is a guide who can share in an experience of opening rather than an expert who can define who and what another person is.

Limitations of the Study

Within this study, it is important to share with the reader the strengths and limitations. I would like to preface this by saying that the limitations of this study are not to be associated in any way with the level of the co-participants involvement. Similarly, the limitations about to be discussed do not diminish the lived experiences of these co-participants. The openness and willingness of the co-participants involved in my study is greatly appreciated and by no means can their stories be contested. Rather, the limitations of this study are primarily related to research design.

The first limitation deals with the philosophical nature of phenomenological hermeneutics. While the research design seeks to illuminate and interpret the lived experience of the co-participants, it also brings the issue of the researcher's involvement in the process to the forefront: unable to detach myself from my own bias and prejudices, I attempted to account for my own process as much as possible, through writing daily journals of my experiences. As well as checking in with my own perceptions, I provided a transcript of the themes to each of the co-participants, allowing for an opportunity to have these ideas resonate with them and offer comment.

Because the study was limited to six co-participants, this study cannot claim to make any universal generalizations.

A third limitation is the fact that because all participants were women, the study is lacking a gender appreciation. Additionally, because ethnicity and age were based on a narrow population of 35 to 60 year olds, this too may bias the results work with a

misrepresentation in this area. The design challenges of this study, stemming from issues of gender, age, and ethnicity, thus leaves an uncertainty with how others from various populations may be represented.

Furthermore, with the exception of two, all of the co-participants' narratives were based on Tantric experiences cultivated through Western teachings. Eastern Tantric practices were thus significantly underrepresented in this study.

Despite the obvious limitations, a number of strengths were identified in the study. . In reworking the experience of trauma through Tantra's transformational energy, its potential to transform trauma wounds was clearly demonstrated.

In the process, this study demonstrates how trauma wounds are gifts to Tantric transformational journey. Through sexual trauma, women were given the gift to search for meaning in their lives that lead to Tantra, a path that open their lives to existence, as well as to the non-dual path.

Thirdly, it is the lack of research material in this subject area that speaks to the necessity of this study: In the course of conducting my literature review I did not find a lot of sources that connected the concepts of trauma, transformation and Tantra. Consequently, it is my belief that this thesis not only offers a new way of examining the interconnectedness of all three of these ideas, but also holds a powerful potential to heal many women who suffer the effects of experiencing sexual trauma..

Finally, perhaps one of the greatest successes of this study can be derived from the collaborative nature of the research and the connections that have been made between my co-researchers and myself. In the process of engaging in the research, we shared stories that enabled non-dual energies to flow between individuals. As Rich (2004)

pointed out, the transformational journey for women is often one of solitude, however for these six women; part of their healing journey was shared by one another and myself.

In conclusion the limitations and strengths of this study are based on a researcher's experience of this study. As opinions are a subjective experience, I would prefer the reader to come to their own conclusion on what they perceive to limitations and strengths.

Conclusion

This thesis presented the transformational experiences of six women who have endured sexual trauma and have embraced on a tantric transformational journey to wholeness. I am forever grateful to these women who shared their pain, heroism and brilliance with me. My hope in completing this thesis was to shine light on the healing process that one can embark on after being sexually traumatized. As well as, through reading this work, my wish was that one might gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual relevance tantric transformations could bring to one's life.

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Appendix A

Advertisement

Research into Tantric Transformations

Lisa Lewis, MSc: Health Sciences

University of Lethbridge

Lisa Lewis is a student in the Master of Sciences Program at the University of Lethbridge. She is conducting research on women who have experienced a sexual trauma and have chosen to embrace the non-dual path of Tantra as a transformational journey to wholeness. Female research participants, who have been on a Tantric transformational path from a preoccupation with sexual issues to wholeness for a minimum of one year, are wanted for a research interview that will take approximately 1-2 hours. Participants will be provided with a transcript of their interview. If you would like to participate in this study, please call Lisa at (403) 320-1613. Interviews will be conducted throughout central and southern Alberta.

Appendix B

Letter of Consent

Tantric Transformations: A Non-dual Journey from Sexual Trauma to Wholeness: A Phenomenological Hermeneutics Investigation

**Lisa Lewis, MSc: Health Sciences
University of Lethbridge**

Dear participant,

You are being asked to participate in a study about the Tantric Transformation, a Non-Dual Journey from Sexual Trauma to Wholeness: A Phenomenological Hermeneutics Approach. The focus of the study will be on women who experienced sexual trauma and have embraced a non-dual Tantric transformational path to wholeness for at least one year. This study will involve an in-depth interview exploring your experiences with sexual trauma through to the Tantra transformational path from the beginning of your journey to the present time. The purpose of the study is to illuminate the themes that emerge throughout the journey which will help us further understand the Tantric transformational journey from sexual trauma to wholeness and may lead to significant theoretical and treatment implications.

The research will require each individual participant to participate in a 1-2 hour tape-recorded interview. Participation is voluntary and individuals who wish to discontinue the interviews may do so at any time. If you wish to withdraw, all information that has been gathered up to that time will be destroyed.

Participant responses will be kept confidential. The data collected from the interviews will be shared only with my thesis supervisor and myself. All data (transcripts and tapes) will be stored in a locked cabinet in the secure office of the thesis supervisor. The tapes will be destroyed upon publication of the research. To maintain anonymity, you will be identified by a self-selected pseudonym, a copy of the transcript will be given to you and you will be given the opportunity to delete any identifying information. The results of this study outside of the thesis may be published in academic journals and/or presented at conferences and/or university classes.

If you have any questions about this study, or if you would like to obtain a copy of the research results, please contact Lisa Lewis at (403) 329-2644 or via email at lisa.lewis@uleth.ca. Questions may also be directed towards Dr. Gary Nixon, thesis supervisor, of the Addictions Counseling program at the University of Lethbridge, (403) 329-2644. Questions of a more general nature may be addressed to the Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge, (403) 329-2747.

Sincerely,

Lisa Lewis, BHSc

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I have read and understood the above information and I consent to participating in the study entitled, "Tantric Transformations, a Non-Dual Approach from Sexual Trauma to Wholeness: A Phenomenological Hermeneutics Approach".

(print name) _____ (signature) _____
(date) _____