

REEL LIFE CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD:
FILM IN ADDICTION RECOVERY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Faculty of Argosy University – Sarasota
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

by

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Sarasota, Florida

April 2011

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the
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2011

Co-Chair: Dr. Gary Boyles

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Member: Dr. Csaba Osvath

Department: School of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences

Many authors and many people in recovery themselves claim spirituality to be the key ingredient in recovery from addiction. In righting their relationships with God, self, and others and addressing their transcendent longing for meaning, many finally find release from their addiction, peace of mind, and meaning. The spiritual discipline of *Cinema Divina*, with its emphasis on watching movies with conscious awareness to receive the mystical messages embedded in film, serves not only as an 11th Step practice but also has psychotherapeutic properties. This researcher used the transcendental phenomenological research methodology posited by Moustakas (1994) to explore the lived experiences and shared meanings of six, inpatient rehabilitation residents in their experience of a *Cinema Divina* retreat weekend. They were purposefully selected based on their desire to grow spiritually and their ability to articulate their experience. This researcher collected the following as data from all participants: (1) field notes, (2) letters written to God, (3) post-retreat interview transcripts, and (4) clinical summaries. The co-participants reported: (1) *Cinema Divina* proved to be a “spiritual experience” whose essential reality entailed a sense of God communicating and communing with the co-participants

individually and as a group. (2) The co-participants experienced similar physiological and emotional reactions to the vicissitudes of the characters' lives in the three films. These reactions included happiness, sadness, tears, laughing, bodily warmth, stomach butterflies, felt openings of the chest, and an experience of the suspension of linear time. (3) The experience of these reactions and processing them through the stages of reading, reflecting, responding, and resting led to an overall sense of self-transcendence manifested in the virtues of love, self-surrender, gratitude, forgiveness, and hope. (4) Film possesses powerful mechanisms for psychotherapeutic healing and spiritual growth, in particular the power of the story and the activation of archetypes.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to my former mentor, Claire Stratford-Zimm, who showed me the kind of therapist and person I want to be when I grow up.

Thank you, God, for starting this work in me and bringing it to fruition.

I give a heart full of gratitude to my husband, Nathan, who supported and encouraged me throughout this process.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE EXPLORATION

*I believe in you, my Soul...
Loaf with me on the grass, loose the stop from your
throat...
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.
I mind how once we lay, such a transparent summer morning.
Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and
Knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers
And the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a keelson of the creation is love
-Walt Whitman*

*His craving for alcohol was the equivalent, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for
wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God.
-Carl Jung to Bill W*

The Exploratory (Not Problem) Statement

Since the time of Jung's admonishment to an alcoholic patient of the necessity of having a spiritual and religious conversion and the subsequent development of Alcoholics Anonymous in the early 20th century, spirituality has anchored many addicts as the core of addiction treatment and the process of recovery. Spirituality has ensconced them in healing by their initial understanding of addiction as stemming from spiritual dysfunction; the necessity of using spiritual principles to commence the healing process; and the need to continually grow in their understanding and practice of these principles throughout their lives (Alcoholic Anonymous, 1976; Kurtz, 1979).

However, many therapists and their treatment programs in contemporary society deemphasize spirituality and its crucial role in recovery in favor of the disease model of addiction (Scharff, 2009; Warfield & Goldstein, 1996). May (1988), in his classic book *Addiction and Grace*, has recounted how in his own experience as a doctor the best psychiatric treatment for addiction proved inconsequential when compared to spiritual interventions. This is

not to imply an either/or paradigm for addiction etiology and treatment but that the best explanations and treatments of addiction require a both/and model; spirituality and the disease model of addiction provide an overall holistic understanding of addiction. Kurtz (1979), along with many others, has proposed a tripartite “dis-ease” paradigm of addiction with etiology primarily in the spirit with harmful consequences beginning initially in the soul and cascading into the mind and body. For example, Tom Brady (1992) has described his first real relief from existential pain as occurring when he was fifteen years old and drank alcohol for the first time. Immediately, in his inebriated state he felt a sense of peace and social belonging; he would never do without “this stuff” again. Brady substituted “spirits” in a very tangible way - from the bottom of a bottle – for the Spirit, the transcendent realm. Because he chose a material object as opposed to a spiritual practice to fill a spiritual need, he began a long descent into the hell of his “dis-ease” with deleterious consequences for his soul, his psychological health, and his physical well being. “The alcoholics ‘sense of incompleteness’ combines with ‘the yearning for this feeling of harmony’ to become ‘the most important cause of alcoholism or, for that matter, any form of addiction’” (Ketcham & Kurtz, 2002, p. 233).

Given the necessity of effective, spiritual interventions, what are the most efficacious tools clinicians can use to aid clients in having transcendent experiences and in helping them to thoroughly implement the 11th step of AA/NA - seeking through prayer and meditation to have conscious contact with God praying only for knowledge of his will and the power to carry it out (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976)? About two years ago I noticed something significant when working with the residents at St. Joseph’s Addiction Treatment and Recovery Centers. Whenever I have utilized a film to convey a spiritual idea or concept, I have recognized throughout the viewing and in the post-film discussion an apparent psychospiritual opening within many of the

residents. Many who had never displayed emotions of grief or loss concerning the consequences of their addiction and had never articulated a genuine desire to find meaning for their lives began to display these emotions and the desire for meaning-making. This opening allowed for a cathartic (healing) space, in which good psychologically and spiritually therapeutic work could be accomplished. At this point, at least the potentiality of film to facilitate residents having transcendent experiences became obvious.

The residents at the inpatient were definitely having significant, spiritual experiences in response to the medium of film. The meaning and implications of these experiences were not apparent at the time. This led me on an internet search to better understand what exactly was occurring and how I could capitalize on this mechanism more fully. While searching the internet, I immediately found a website by Dr. Wolz dedicated to helping clients and therapists grow via the medium of film. According to Knickerbocker (2009), Dr. Wolz's website is the most comprehensive website for cinematherapy information on the internet. After several weeks of correspondence between Dr. Wolz and myself, I bought her book *E-motion Picture Magic: A Movie Lover's Guide to Healing and Transformation*. Using this book I began the still unfolding process of more completely comprehending how film, more than any other art form according to many authors and researchers, has the power to draw people out of themselves and into the experiences of others by its unification of mythic storytelling, visual imagery, music, and poignant character portrayal (Hillman, 1983; Robertson, 2006; Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005). In order to better understand the effects of film as therapy and spiritual discipline for those in early recovery, the creation of an experiential process seemed necessary to understand the spiritual experiences of inpatient, addiction residents in response to film. This research project sought to implement this experiential process. While literature does exist on the use of film in

psychotherapy and in spiritual discipline, I found no literature on the use of film in addiction recovery.

Context of Exploratory Study

What are the primary constructs constituting the context of this exploratory study? The primary context of this study entailed five complex realities: (1) spirituality and spiritual transformation, (2) the relationship between spirituality and recovery from addiction, (3) the spirituality inherent in many films, (4) the use of the story present in film as a means to evoke a spiritual experience in the process of recovery to help addicts heal, and (5) the particular dynamics of St. Joseph's as a treatment center. The healing power of AA and NA lies in the power of storytelling (Ketcham and Kurtz, 2002; Scharff, 2009). Wolz (2005) and others have posited film's capacity to heal by also capitalizing on the power of the story. Thus, the use of film as transpersonal therapy and spiritual discipline forms a nice fit for those in recovery from addiction, especially by facilitating spiritual experiences in the re-storying of one's past, present, and future. After all, all we are is our stories (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008; Ketcham and Kurtz, 2002). Despite the spirituality of recovery from addiction and the spirituality present in film possessing similar mechanisms of healing, I have found no literature addressing the use of film as a powerful tool for healing in addiction recovery.

For most of history human beings have perceived their primary nature as spiritual (Huxley, 1944/1990). With the advent of the scientific and modern, philosophical revolutions of the 17th and 16th centuries, in particular the influences of Copernicus, Galileo, and Descartes, a dualistic sense of human personhood arose in Western civilization (Tarnas, 1991). People came to view themselves as one half, body, and the other half, soul. Spirituality, however, concerns itself with wholeness and connection.

Spirituality, at least according to this study, is defined as right relationship with the divine, with one's self, and with others (including the natural world) as expressed in the transcendent longing for connective wholeness and meaning in life, a longing inherent in human nature (Ketcham and Kurtz, 2002; MacDougall and White, 2001; Whitfield, 1985). Since human beings consist of both body (a limited reality) and a soul (an unlimited reality) and have a natural longing for transcendence, human beings experience existential anxiety; yet, Ketcham and Kurtz (2002) described this sense of brokenness and "being-torn-to-pieces"-hood as human nature. We are not-God. In the words of Becker (1973), "man is a god who shits"(p. 58). To attempt to be anything other than a shitting god, plants the seeds of addiction, because one does not accept one's limited nature while simultaneously inviting God's grace to bring about the work of wholeness, of being God-like. May (1988) described the etiology of addiction in a similar manner; our societal preoccupation with self-image and the ego's obsession with appearance, achievement, and affluence become false gods in humanity's unwillingness to accept our paradoxical nature of being both limited (body) and unlimited (spirit). The archetypal story of the Garden of Eden revolving around Adam and Eve's desire to become god-like (in a negative way) at the temptation of the serpent serves as an apt metaphor for the resultant destruction which occurs when the ego takes primacy in human life. In AA and NA circles people in recovery have used the acronym E.G.O. to denote *Edging God Out*.

In the 20th century the great minds of William James, Carl Jung, and Abraham Maslow articulated in their writings the historical, spiritual quest of humanity from a psychological vantage point. The work of the first two, James and Jung, had profound influence on the formation of Alcoholics Anonymous, touted as the most significant philosophical and spiritual phenomenon of the 20th century (Ketcham and Kurtz, 2002; Mowrer, 1964). The writings of

Maslow, who drew inspiration from the work of James and Jung, on the experiences of transcendent self-actualizers formally resulted in the birth of the fourth branch of psychology, transpersonal psychology, in the 1960's. (Jung first coined the term 'transpersonal'). If, as the AA and NA literature has suggested, that the recovering addict must have transcendent experiences in order to be in recovery from the ravages of addiction, then any intervention attempting to facilitate those in recovery having such experiences would be deemed as a transpersonal intervention, because transpersonal psychology is spiritual psychology (Hutchins, 2005).

Until the 20th century alcoholism and drug addiction were mostly defined in terms of moral degeneration, as a moral failing (Scharff, 2009). As a result, any attempt at a cure focused on some form of aversion therapy with the belief people could simply will themselves out of their predicament. Although Jellinek (1950) of the Yale Center of Alcohol Studies popularized the disease/psychomedical model of addiction based on studies done during and after World War II, White (1998) has traced the medical model all the way back to America's first surgeon general, Benjamin Rush.

While many people in recovery accept the medical model as important for treating the physical ravages of addiction and for explaining aspects of the etiology of addiction (i.e. genetic predisposition, psychosocial factors, etc), the AA and NA literature has primarily described addiction from a spiritual perspective, as a spiritual dysfunction. Even Jellinek (1977) himself, the man responsible for popularizing the medical model, observed a correlation between spirituality and addiction when he wrote that "drunkenness can be a kind of shortcut to the higher life, the attempt to achieve a higher state without an emotional and intellectual effort" (as cited in Ketcham and Kurtz, 2002, p. 120). Human beings seek God but in the least arduous ways

possible; we desire to maintain our autonomy and exert the least amount of effort. To some degree, this makes eminent sense, because God, unlike the people and things of the physical world, will not be objectified by humanity. May (1988) wrote the following:

What would happen to our freedom if God, our perfect lover, were to appear before us with such objective clarity that all our doubts disappeared? We would experience a kind of love, to be sure, but it would be love like a reflex. Almost without thought, we would fix all our desires upon this Divine Object, try to grasp and possess it, addict ourselves to it. I think God refuses to be an object for attachment because God desires full love, not addiction. (p. 94)

Bill W, one of the co-founders of AA, traced the catalyst of the spiritual movement back to Jung's spiritual treatment of Roland, an alcoholic patient (Kurtz, 1979). Jung advised Roland he would only be cured by having a religious/spiritual conversion of such magnitude as to alter the personality entirely. Ketcham and Kurtz (2002) have described Jung's unequivocal solution for battling and overcoming "spirits" – the Spirit (*Spiritus contra spiritum*). Grof (1993), a transpersonal therapist, has written about addiction as a spiritual emergency and presented the addict as a sojourner seeking wholeness. Grof's paradigm has found corroboration in the work of James, Jung, several other transpersonal therapists and psychologists, and perhaps most importantly, in the innumerable experiences of those in recovery; those addicts with whom I have been privileged to work, the ones who have stayed clean and sober, have admonished the suffering addict of the need for transcendent experiences and right relationship with God, self, and others.

The discussion of addiction aside (albeit according to the mystical traditions of the world's religions we are all addicts, i.e. attached to the ego), film and cinema also possess

connections to the spiritual realm using the same mechanism harnessed by AA and NA – the power of the story. According to Bergman (1988), famed Swedish director, writer, and considered by many one of the best filmmakers in the history of cinema, “no art form goes beyond ordinary consciousness as film does, straight to our emotions, deep into the twilight room of the soul” (p. 8). Gabbard and Gabbard (1987) have referred to “the cinema (as) the great store house for the intrapsychic images of our time, and movies touch on fundamental human psychological processes with which patients and therapists alike identify” (as cited in Cashdan, 1988, p. 182). As early as 1916 the psychospiritual impact of film was being studied as evidenced by Munsterberg’s *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*.

While film can facilitate having spiritual experiences, filmmakers and society have also utilized the medium for less than noble purposes. Although Wolz (2005) has described many politicians’ attacks on the movie industry as proof of the power of reel life, the same author also mentioned many films pandering to the basest, human desires by displaying gratuitous sex and graphic violence, both of which have served to thwart full, human flourishing. Filmmakers and sociopolitical forces can and have manipulated cinema for the purposes of promulgating hateful propaganda also. For example, during World War II Hollywood produced many films instrumental in helping Americans to hate not only the Nazi regime in particular but the Japanese people as a whole. In this case, and many others, life certainly imitated art.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the role of film as a vehicle for transpersonal (spiritual) therapy and as a spiritual discipline (*lectio divina*) by facilitating newly recovering addicts having spiritual experiences (Wolz, 2005; Sinetar, 1993). An exact line delineating the use of film as transpersonal therapy and the use of film as spiritual discipline is arbitrary and cannot be drawn.

Cinematherapy can be employed as a means of psychological and spiritual growth; furthermore, the processes involved in cinematherapy can then be used by anyone watching a film as a form of spiritual practice. Using the model of the ancient, spiritual discipline of *lectio divina* as the way in which the client experienced the cinematherapy process, the transcendental/psychological phenomenological method as posited by Moustakas (1994) was then utilized to experience the phenomenon; gather and analyze data; and ascertain the core meaning of cinematherapy as transpersonal therapy and spiritual discipline for recovering addicts. (A definition of the phenomenological research method employed by Moustakas can be found in the “Definition of Terms” section of chapter one).

Research Question

The Question

1. What were my experience and the experiences by the resident-participants of cinema as part of the inpatient treatment of addiction?

Limitations/Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations of the study are those inherent to the chosen methodology and sampling strategies. These are considered as follows:

1. The participants, knowing the study to revolve around the spiritual effects of film, may have consciously or unconsciously attempted to “improve” their sense of spirituality as a result of the Hawthorne effect.
2. The participants may have attempted to “improve” their sense of spirituality on account of my position at the treatment center as the spiritual director, pastoral counselor, and one of our psychotherapists; given my position at the center, they knew I provided daily

feedback to their primary counselors and weekly feedback to the treatment team as a whole, feedback which could have influenced their treatment outcomes and/or aftercare placements. However, having such an intense, insider's role as a researcher could also have made them more willing to disclose and open their hearts. (The latter seemed more probable to me).

3. The findings and analysis, to a large extent, depended upon the participants' ability to articulate the "what" of their experience and the "how" of their experience.
4. The terminology and philosophy of phenomenology can at times lack acuity.
5. "In focusing on a rich description of an experience, the method may miss information about what led up to the experience, what its outcomes and consequences might be, and what the concomitants and other factors associated with the experience are" (Anderson & Braud, 1998, p. 265).
6. This study explored spiritual experiences, those aspects of human life transcending the phenomenal realm as pre and supra-reflective experiences of meaning. Spiritual experience occurs in the noumenal realm, the realm from which both pre-reflective and reflective consciousness proceed and without which they cannot exist (Anderson & Braud, 1998; Van Manen, 2007). This limitation can be attenuated to some extent by the willingness of other researchers – readers of this project, who will enter into the world of this dissertation project, to enter into the altered states of consciousness proposed by this study and by including visceral and less cerebral data such as works of art by the participants.

Delimitations

What factors encapsulated and limited the generalizability of this study to other individuals, populations, times, and places? (I focused more on the encapsulation construct, because much of the issue of generalizability stems more from a quantitative model of research. I would have done a disservice to my chosen methodology by pondering the delimitations and limitations from the quantitative, philosophical worldview).

1. The participants in the research were inpatient, substance abusers from New York State.
2. Almost all of the residents at the research site possessed Medicaid insurance.
3. Many of the residents participated as mandated clients.
4. The program at St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Centers differed from many treatment programs by the coalescing of the following: a strong emphasis on spirituality as found in the principles of the 12 steps, a three month, inpatient treatment (most programs last for twenty eight days to a month), a strong emphasis on family therapy, and a code of conduct and schedule stricter than many other programs.
5. The participants in this research completed spirituality group. (While residents enter spirituality group on their own volition, only a couple of residents among the fifteen or so whom are eligible every month decline to enter the group). In this group, they learned how to do *lectio divina*. Therefore, learning this spiritual discipline was not needed as an essential part of the retreat weekend.
6. While having utilized the transcendental phenomenological method of Moustakas with its emphasis on bracketing out the personal experience of the researcher, I also believed in the impossibility of a phenomenological researcher becoming completely separated from the text and one's own lived experience in many ways (Van Manen, 2007).

This dissertation was written utilizing both the first person, when I mentioned my own personal or clinical experiences throughout the document - to highlight, affirm, or challenge certain aspects of the study, and the third person when having discussed the scholarly works of other researchers and when having discussed the experiences of the research participants. As Scharff (2009) has stated, “to talk about myself as ‘the author’ feels disjointed and inappropriate” to a phenomenological study with transpersonal awareness. Whitfield (1985) has noted that consciousness itself serves as both the object and instrument of change in transpersonal research, hence the appropriateness of utilizing the first person. Furthermore, according to Polanyi (1966), levels of reality exist beyond the empirical laws of physics which are higher, ordering principles; to explore these transpersonal realms and to transmit tacit knowledge requires the utilization of my personhood (i.e. the first person pronoun).

According to Bateson (1972), consciousness and unconsciousness, body and soul, must be coalesced to create wisdom and not simply knowledge. In the fields of religion and art we can ascertain an education and utilization of the whole person. Thus, not only was the first person used, but I also attempted to relay through creative writing visceral understandings of the emerging data. Paradoxically, by utilizing the first person throughout the first three chapters of this dissertation, I have bracketed out my experience in order to more effectively engage in transcendental phenomenology.

7. In part three of the literature review – spirituality and addiction, along with having utilized the first person at times, I also included my background as a Catholic theologian in understanding the twelve steps and their link to spiritual theology.

Definition of Terms

Addiction – A spiritual “dis-ease” with spiritual, psychological, and physical disintegration resulting from excessive dependency upon a substance, another person, and/or object (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992; Whitfield, 1985). Any compulsive, habitual behavior that limits the freedom of human desire. It is caused by the attachment, or nailing, of desire to specific objects as characterized by tolerance, withdrawal, self-deception, loss of willpower, and distortion of attention (May, 1988, p. 24).

Alcoholics Anonymous/ Narcotics Anonymous – A fellowship of persons in recovery from addiction who attempt to live their lives by the 12 steps, which can be summarized as trusting God, cleaning house (moral inventory), and service (Kurtz, 1979).

Anima/Animus – Jung’s psychological construct of the feminine and masculine aspects of the psyche (Pascal, 1992).

Cinematherapy – The use of film to achieve psychotherapeutic goals and spiritual healing (Knickerbocker, 2009).

Collective Unconscious – The innermost aspect of the unconscious mind shared by all of humanity (Pascal, 1992).

God (Higher Power) – Existence and being itself; that than which nothing greater can be conceived. For many in early recovery, Higher Power simply refers to something greater than the individual self (MacDougall & White, 2001; Webber, 2003).

Grace – The supernatural life of God given to human persons as a free gift.

Lectio divina – An ancient, spiritual practice of reading sacred texts in a slow, meditative fashion and proceeding to reflection, responding to God, and resting in the presence of God (Keating, 2009).

Noumenal – Referring to the realm of the spirit beyond empirical grasping (Anderson & Braud, 1998).

Persona – Jung’s psychological construct of “the mask” a person wears for society as one fulfills one’s life roles (Pascal, 1992).

Phenomenology – A philosophy and method of research beginning with things in and of themselves, thus attempting to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment...reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened...by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 41).

Religion – The practices, beliefs, and attitudes that a person has toward a Higher Power according to a set of institutional codes or traditions (Webster’s Universal English Dictionary, 2004).

Spirituality – Right relationship with God, with oneself, and with others, including the natural world, as expressed in the transcendent longing for connection and meaning in life (Ketcham & Kurtz, 2002; MacDougall & White, 2001; Whitfield, 1985).

Theology – The study of God and of religious doctrine (Webster’s Universal English Dictionary, 2004).

Transpersonal Psychology/Psychotherapy – An approach to the self and to healing that goes beyond the ego and the individual personality (Day, 2004, p. 431).

The Twelve Steps – The spiritual principles by which a substance abuser recovers in AA or NA.

Importance of the Study

A tripartite significance exists for this phenomenological study. First of all, the implementation of this research project could serve as a conduit for the participants themselves

to have spiritual and transcendent experiences helpful to their recovery from the ravages of addiction. They will have the opportunity to utilize a powerful spiritual discipline with which to continue their conscious contact with a Higher Power during their growth in recovery. Secondly, the participants did better cognitively and affectively comprehend the nature and essence of spirituality itself. Lastly, this study added to the scholarly literature in both the fields of cinematherapy (CT) and addiction treatment; it is my hope that based on this research a monthly weekend retreat for the residents of St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Centers can be fully implemented, thus this study will have contributed to the spiritual lives of innumerable future residents of the facility, their families, and hopefully the lives of many others suffering from the dis-ease of addiction.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Because this research project explored the spirituality in film as a vehicle for transpersonal therapy (cinematherapy and *lectio divina*) and a method of spiritual discipline (*lectio divina*) for people in the earliest stages of recovery from addiction, the following topics were explored in a theoretically-oriented review of the literature: (1) transpersonal psychotherapy (TP), (2) the theory and constructs of Carl Jung, (3) spirituality and addiction, (4) the roots of cinematherapy, (5) sign and symbol, (6) myth and meaning, (7) the power of projection, (8) contemporary theories of creative learning, (9) the ways film aid the TP therapy process, (10) watching film with conscious awareness and *lectio divina*, and (11) the limitations of using film in a therapeutic manner. These ten, aforementioned topics constituted the essential elements of my concept mapping surrounding the purpose of the study and its main research question. An exploration of these topics and the relevant literature helped me to better understand the research data described herein as transpersonal therapy with Jungian mechanisms of healing and growth (sections 1 and 2) and as spiritual discipline (section 9) in order to more fully apply and comprehend the principles of cinematherapy (sections 4 – 8 and section 10) and to better foster the positive correlation between an increased sense of spirituality and success in recovery from addiction (section 3).

Transpersonal Psychotherapy

Perhaps one day, when psychological methods have been refined and incorporated into the education process, the spiritual journey will be a balanced blend of psychology, religion, and mysticism.

-Elizabeth Lesser

We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.

Description of Transpersonal Psychology and Therapy

“Transpersonal psychotherapy draws upon both psychology and spiritual traditions to create a bold new vision of a psychologically-informed spirituality and a spiritually-based psychology” (Lu & Lukoff, 2008, p. 1). The core presupposition of transpersonal psychology involves the notion of human beings as primarily spiritual beings as opposed to an empirical and differentiated ego (Day, 2004; Sperry, 2001). Western psychology has attempted to treat the human person solely as an ego, whereas the wisdom traditions of the world have always posited a level of being beyond ordinary, ego-bound consciousness. Huxley (1944/1990) posited the perennial philosophy in a book of the same title as the core, common spiritual tradition of all of humanity. This philosophy revolves around four main ideas: (1) God is existence and being itself; (2) Humans and all creatures are partial manifestations of the Divine; (3) Human beings, unlike other creatures, possess a special capacity to not only know the Divine cognitively but to have a relationship with the divine; (4) The aforementioned relationship with God, characterized by knowledge and love, is the ultimate goal of human life. Furthermore, while psychological and spiritual processes may at times overlap, the primacy of importance belongs to the spiritual (or noumenal) realm (Cortright, 1997; Lu & Lukoff, 2008).

Some of the most well known figures in the field of psychology wrote about; theorized about; and believed in the noumenal realm. Day (2004) wrote that:

William James, Carl Jung, Erik Erikson, and Abraham Maslow all concurred that there exists a state of awareness beyond the ego-centered norm. The position that put Jung outside of traditional Freudian psychodynamics was his belief in the unconscious

as a reservoir of symbolic wisdom from the history of human experience, not an intrapsychic battleground. (p. 431)

(Here, I highlight Jung, because many psychospiritual theories of personality, transpersonal concepts, and the cinematherapy process itself rely heavily on his writings and constructs. Furthermore, I have drawn much personal and professional inspiration for this research project from his writings. On account of this, an entire section of the literature review focuses on his theories and constructs).

Transpersonal Psychology versus Standard Psychology

Standard psychology concerns itself with the realm of human experience along a continuum from severe, mental illness to so-called “normal” functioning. The reason for standard psychology’s lack of understanding of realms of existence and levels of experience beyond “the normal” state lies in its tightly entwined alliance with material science (Grof, 2008; Kornfield, 2008). From its inception in the late 19th century, psychology desperately attempted to establish itself as just as valid a science as chemistry and physics. Because of its obsession in trying to “fit in,” psychology focused exclusively on measureable behaviors and characteristics displayed in psychopathology, thus betraying its highest calling as the study of the soul; albeit, some psychologists such as James (at the beginning of the 20th century) and Jung (in the middle of the 20th century) understood and focused on a wisdom psychology, which Kornfield (2008) has referred to as awakening to our true and highest nature.

The writings of James and Jung would become more prominent with the birth of transpersonal psychology. While standard psychology dismisses spiritual and religious states of consciousness beyond so-called “normal” states, according to Kornfield (2008) the more

spiritual, Eastern psychologies can learn from the West's techniques which masterfully treat human traumas and the darkness of our personalities.

In the middle of the 20th century some psychologists and mental health professionals became dissatisfied with psychology's preoccupation with either psychoanalysis or behaviorism, both of which ensconced themselves in a materialistic and deterministic worldview. Maslow (1954), the main proponent along with Sutich, of a new, humanistic psychology (discussed in the next section), argued against the first two forces of psychology (psychoanalysis and behaviorism), because they only captured a part of human experience. Behaviorism studied what human beings have in common with animals, and psychoanalysis focused exclusively on psychopathology with its roots in biological, animalistic instincts (Grof, *n.d.*). Humanistic psychology, however, focused on growth, potential, and positive, human experiences and states. While the therapeutic community at large widely accepted the new humanistic movement in the 1960's, the very founders became dissatisfied with its lack of holism:

In spite of the popularity of humanistic psychology, its founders Maslow and Sutich themselves grew dissatisfied with the conceptual framework they had originally created. They became increasingly aware that they had left out an extremely important element – the spiritual dimension of the human psyche (Sutich, 1976). The renaissance of interest in Eastern spiritual philosophies, various mystical traditions, meditation, ancient and aboriginal wisdom, as well as the widespread psychedelic experimentation during the stormy 1960's made it absolutely clear that a comprehensive and cross-culturally valid psychology had to include observations from such areas as mystical states; cosmic consciousness; psychedelic experiences; trance phenomena; creativity; and religious, artistic, and scientific inspiration. (Grof, *n.d.*, pp. 2-3).

In 1967 Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich, James Fadiman, Miles Vich, Sonya Marguiles, and Stanislav Grof held a small meeting in Menlo Park, California to launch the fourth force of psychology – transpersonal psychology (Grof, *n.d.*). Soon the Association of Transpersonal Psychology and the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology began. In 1975 Fadiman founded ITP (The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology), which has continued for over thirty five years to be the forerunner in providing models and theories for transpersonal therapy and transpersonal research. Also, in 1975 Fritjof Capra’s work, *The Tao of Physics*, concretized the scientific study of spirituality and the spiritually-affirming insights of Einstein’s relativistic quantum physics. In 1982 at the Bombay Conference spiritual leaders and scientists met together to discuss for the first time how ancient, spiritual wisdom and modern, Newtonian-Cartesian science both possess truth, albeit they may view that truth through divergent lenses (Grof, 2008).

In a paper entitled “A Concise Transpersonal Guide for the Pastoral Counselor” for my Non-Western Helping and Healing Arts course in 2009, I wrote the following concerning the differences between transpersonal psychology and standard psychology:

Boorstein (1996) wrote that ‘the end of psychotherapy is not seen as successful adjustment to the prevailing culture but rather the daily experience of that state called liberation, enlightenment, individuation, certainty or gnosis according to various traditions’ (p. 3). In fact, Goleman (1971) argued that our own psychological and linguistic frameworks may hinder us from seeing reality more clearly and more deeply. A society’s psychology and accompanying language produce a certain reality, and this reality then serves as the basis for that reality’s verification. In western civilization we

view states of consciousness from the so-called “normal” state of waking consciousness.

Yet what we deem as reality eastern wisdom deems psychosis!

Western psychology views other forms of consciousness and the knowledge derived there from with suspicion. The mystical traditions of the world’s religions (as represented by the perennial philosophy) provide a more holistic and complete psychology (Wilber, 2000). The American Association of Pastoral Counselors (2009) embraces this more holistic approach to psychology and counseling by propounding a counseling which is theologically grounded and sensitive to various faith traditions and practices for the total well being of persons and communities. These traditions encompass the states addressed by standard psychology, psychopathological and “normal” states; yet the spiritual psychologies go beyond these states to various transpersonal states of consciousness.

Wilber (2000) posited the possibility of transpersonal techniques healing pathologies all along the spectrum of consciousness from pre-personal states (schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder) to personal states (anxiety disorders, existential concerns) to post-personal states (dark night of the soul, demon affliction, soul retrieval, etc). Why? The transpersonal techniques and interventions (prayer, meditation, fasting, service, yoga) address the core pathology – the illusion of separateness (Day, 2004). ‘Freud saw no way out of suffering but to bear it; the Buddhist psychologist offers an alternative: alter the processes of ordinary consciousness and thereby end suffering.’ (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993, p. 20)

Harner (1980) critiqued western psychology as ethnocentric and cognicentric. Ethnocentrically, Western science dismisses the epistemologies of the world's wisdom traditions which have existed in every time and place throughout human history. According to Western science, the only valid form of knowledge to be gained comes from "the eye" of the flesh; "the eye" of the mind and "the eye" of the spirit do not represent real ontological (being) states at all, and therefore, they possess no epistemology (knowledge) either. (Bonaventure first used the analogy of the eye for the three ontologies and epistemologies within the realm of human experience; this analogy is further elucidated in the methodology section of this work). The cognicentric paradigm present in materialistic science judges all human experiences and states of consciousness from the so-called "normal," waking state.

Grof (1998) has referred to "non-ordinary" states of consciousness as *holotropic*. The word *holotropic* denotes "oriented toward wholeness...moving in the direction of wholeness" (Grof, *n.d.*, p. 6). These spiritual states and experiences have the potential to heal us. According to my observations thus far at St. Joseph's, the experiences of inpatient, substance abuse residents in response to film could be classified as *holotropic*, and therefore, these cinematic experiences may help these residents in the process of recovery from addiction. *Holotropic* states exist, because the spiritual realm (or world) "possesses extension and dimensions, forms and colors, but these are not perceptible to our senses as they would be when they are properties of physical objects. However, this realm is in every respect as fully ontologically real and susceptible to consensual validation by other people as the material world perceived" (Grof, *n.d.*, p. 7). In *holotropic*, or sacred-spiritual, states people experience the divine immanently from deep within oneself and/or transcendently as a force much larger and far beyond the self and the universe.

In discussing the differences between standard psychotherapy and transpersonal psychotherapy, an underlying assumption of this study involves the value of film as a medium for circumventing the cerebral and defense processes of ego consciousness, a consciousness so often utilized for rationalizations and denial in active addiction (Whitfield, 1985; Wolz, 2005). Film, by combining sign and symbol, myth and meaning, music, visual art, and multiple intelligences, has the potential to reach the unconscious mind, the noumenal realm, far more effectively than reading written material (as in traditional *lectio divina*) and far better than a strictly verbal psychotherapy (Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005).

Transpersonal Psychology and Humanistic Psychology

Transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy emanated from the third force of psychology – humanistic psychology, the first two forces being psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Like humanistic psychology, largely developed from the works of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow as a reaction against psychoanalysis and behaviorism, transpersonal psychology focuses on the process of full human development.

According to Rogers (1961), the self as process, as human becoming, is “the urge which is evident in all organic and human life – to expand, extend, become autonomous, develop, mature – the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, to the extent that such activation enhances the organism or the self” (p. 35). Eventually, through a person’s inherent growth potential, they will become in Maslow’s (1954) words a self-actualized person, a person whose ideal self and real self are more closely aligned as evidenced by an openness to experience, trust in one’s own organism, an internal locus of evaluation, and a willingness to be a dynamic process (Rogers, 1961). Maslow (1954) listed similar characteristics of self-actualized people: clearer perception of reality, deeper acceptance of self and others, simplicity, naturalness,

the quality of detachment, autonomy, more profound interpersonal relationships, democratic character, creativity, and resistance to enculturation (pp. 153-172).

Despite our inherent propensity to ascend Maslow's hierarchy of needs through the following levels – physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs (all deficiency needs), need to know and understand, aesthetic needs, self-actualization, and self-transcendence (growth needs) – this propensity can and often does remain stunted:

This tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses; it may be hidden behind elaborate facades which deny its existence; but it is my belief that it exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed. (Rogers, 1961, p.35)

The aforementioned conditions for full human flourishing include the reception of unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding from a person, usually the therapist, who has already become a person, i.e. congruency exists between the therapist's ideal self and real self. Many people do not receive unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding as they grow into adulthood; therefore, psychopathology develops.

Transpersonal psychotherapy and humanistic psychotherapy/psychology possess all of the previously mentioned tenets of belief and practice in common. Where transpersonal psychology and humanistic psychology diverge revolves around the significance bestowed upon the human personality. While Rogers and other humanistic psychologists viewed human personality as an end in itself, transpersonal psychology “does not see the human personality as an end in itself. Our personal history and the resulting personality traits, tendencies, and attributes are seen as the crust or skin covering our transpersonal essence... Thus, the proper role of the personality is to be a translucent window, a servant to divinity within” (Hutchins, 2005, p.

1). Transpersonal psychology transcends the biological, psychological, and social aspects of human personhood and focuses on the spiritual, while simultaneously not denigrating any aspect of the human person and human experience.

Soul Development

Wilber (2000) and other transpersonal theorists, basing their work largely on that of Jung, have proposed a human psyche as a multi-faceted manifestation of the one consciousness, the one Self. Pure consciousness, or God, is the one, true reality; all the manifestations of being in the physical world are partial manifestations of the divine life (Huxley, 1944; Whitfield, 1985; Wilber, 2000). The Divine pervades all of creation while also transcending the created universe.

Duality must be transcended along the spectrum of being from the prepersonal realm of nature to the personal realm of the human personality and onto the transpersonal realm of the Spirit (Wilber, 2000). Wilber (2000) has posited the great chain of being as circularly moving from God to matter (or slumbering spirit) in a process of involution; from matter in the natural world to mind in the human person; and from mind to spirit, thus back to God in the culminating moment of evolution.

On the most underdeveloped level of consciousness and being – the prepersonal level, psychopathology results from the inability to coalesce one's shadow and persona. (Here, one perceives the enormous influence of Jungian psychology again). At the personal level of the spectrum of consciousness and being, the human person attempts to unify the ego and the body, thus arriving at ego solidification and the healing of neurosis (Wilber, 2000).

In the realms of being and consciousness beyond the personal, a unified ego seeks to emancipate the self from the illusion of separateness. The incipient struggle in this realm lies in detaching one's identity from sociocultural norms and expectations by facing life's existential

issues – pain, guilt, death, love, and meaning (Frankl, 1959; Yalom, 2002). After emerging from the existential struggle, a person is initiated into the noumenal realm. At this juncture in psychospiritual development, one enters the realm of the collective unconscious and archetypes (Jung, 1960; Wilber, 2000). “Mystics are people who have particularly vivid experience of the processes of the collective unconscious. Mystical experience is experience of archetypes” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993, p. 29). An experience of the archetypes lies at the core of cinematherapeutic theory also (Wolz, 2005).

All along the spectrum of being and consciousness, from the prepersonal to the transpersonal realm, certain therapies, whether conventional or spiritual, are either indicated or contraindicated (Lu & Lukoff, 2008). For example, conventional psychotherapy aids in the healing of dualities at the prepersonal and personal levels along the spectrum, levels more tightly linked to the biological and psychological aspects of human existence. (At the lowest end of the spectrum, treating psychotic disorders with psychopharmacological methods seems more apropos than spiritual disciplines which would only exacerbate the presenting problem). When a person has healed the dualities inherent in the prepersonal and personal realms of being and consciousness, the existential and spiritual therapies could commence (Day, 2004). On the contrary, other transpersonal theorists believe TP to be useful in the treatment of psychotic disorders, personality disorders, and other disorders of the lower realm through the channeling of energy present in the nonordinary and/or psychotic states of consciousness often present in these disorders (Lu & Lukoff, 2008; Wilber, 2000).

Regardless of the lack of consensus in transpersonal psychotherapy concerning the treatment of certain disorders, many agree on the utility of TP to treat addiction, viewing addiction as an attempt to fill the “God-shaped hole” in a misguided fashion (Grof, 1993; Lu &

Lukoff, 2008; Scharff, 2009; Whitfield, 1985). Brady (1992) described his attempt to fill the “God-shaped hole” in the following manner:

The real power of alcohol and drugs is in their capacity to create the illusion of wholeness, causing users to believe they are in the best possible shape, when in fact they aren't. We all wanna go home, and the major effect of alcohol and other drugs is to modify our perception, causing us to believe that we are home, when, in reality, we are on a detour. Spiritually speaking, addiction is a detour on the way back home. From the longing come the drinking and using, from the drinking and using comes the illusion of fulfillment, and – if certain psychological and/or biological components are present – from the illusion comes addiction. You see, all addictions arise from spirituality. The desire to ‘go home’ is our deepest desire, the very essence of spirituality. Addiction is a hellish detour. (p. 47)

Lesser (1999) has provided a spiritual and socio-political explanation for the insidious prevalence of drug addiction in our society:

If we were more open to the legitimate need people have for entering exalted states of consciousness, the destructive drug and alcohol culture that is a hallmark of our society would loosen its grip. If the pursuit of the sacred were valued, we would teach healthy and effective ways of escaping the echo chamber of our limited perspective, and the hunger for God would replace the compulsion for sedation. It's been a slow and steady climb in the Western world away from an *experience of the sacred*. You can't really blame religion. The roots of every religion are in the soil of sacred experience. Rather, it's been the way in which power-hungry people have exploited religion to further their own need for control. Don't throw away the beauty of a religion's original intent because

of the ways in which it has been diluted or misused. (p. 332)

Limitations of Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy?

Day (2004) has captured the most salient objections to transpersonal psychotherapy and psychology, including the following: (1) TP is religion and not psychology; (2) TP can be an excuse for breaks with everyday reality; (3) a person with psychological problems may use TP as an excuse for the psychological difficulties instead of attempting to improve; and (4) TP may be inadequate for treating some psychological disorders.

While it is true that TP utilizes philosophies and practices from the world religions, it does so in the service of healing and not necessarily from a dogmatic point of view. James (1902/2004), in having posited the philosophical construct of pragmatism, wrote that from true religious experience comes “the sense of the enlargement of life...so uplifting that personal motives and inhibitions, commonly omnipotent, become too insignificant for notice, and new reaches of patience and fortitude open out. Fear and anxieties go, and blissful equanimity takes their place” (p. 241). True religious experience possesses epistemological and philosophical underpinnings in the perennial philosophy (Huxley, 1944).

Many western mental health clinicians commit the pre/trans fallacy in which they mistake the manifestations of transpersonal states as symptoms of prepersonal, psychological disorders (Wilber, 2000). For example, a clinician commits the pre/trans fallacy when diagnosing as schizophrenic a patient who has experienced genuine, supernatural visions and locutions. The critics of transpersonal psychotherapy often fail to educate themselves on the differences in manifestation of prepersonal and transpersonal states of consciousness. Transpersonal states of consciousness always lead to an increase in virtue (Walsh, 1999; Sperry, 2001). In fact, the essential spiritual practices at the core of all religious traditions, include purifying motivation;

engendering emotional wisdom; an ethical life; the development of a peaceful mind; developing wisdom and spiritual knowledge; seeing the divine in all; and engaging in service to all of humanity (Walsh, 1999). Similarly, the Dalai Lama (2001) has promulgated the acquisition of virtue as the main purpose of human life – kindness, goodness, compassion, gratitude, and forgiveness. The spiritual values and practices discussed by these prominent authors are strikingly similar when juxtaposed with the principles underlying each of the twelve steps: step 1 – honesty, step 2 – hope, step 3 – faith, step 4 – courage, step 5 – integrity, step 6 – willingness, step 7 – humility, step 8 – compassion, step 9 – justice, step 10 – perseverance, step 11 – spiritual awareness, and step 12 – service (MacDougall & White, 2001). (The end goal of the use of spirituality in film as transpersonal therapy and spiritual discipline is the acquisition of these spiritual values mentioned by Walsh and the Dalai Lama and enfolded in the twelve steps of AA and NA). Whether or not these spiritual values and practices exist in a film gauges well whether or not to utilize a film in transpersonal therapy. Most films, to some extent, display a flourishing and/or deficiency in these spiritual values and practices.

What about the use of transpersonal excuses to support and justify psychological problems? “The misuse of spiritual ideas and practices to support psychological problems is as common as the misuse of political ideology for personal pathological ends” (Day, 2004, p. 456). For example, a person can use religious belief to justify not expressing any form of anger whatsoever and thus maintain a depressive state; a person can also use religious beliefs to feel entitled to special rights and privileges (Day, 2004). Obviously, narcissistic spirituality is an abuse of religion for selfish motivations and ends manifested in extreme form as cults. “True spirituality results in making people calmer, happier, and more peaceful” (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 384).

Carl Gustav Jung

In my case Pilgrim's Progress consisted in my having to climb down a thousand ladders until I could reach out my hand to the little clod of earth that I am.

-Carl Jung

As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

-Carl Jung

I have treated many hundreds of patients... There has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life.

-Carl Jung

While the field of transpersonal psychology did not officially begin until the 1960's with Maslow's research on self actualizing and self-transcendent individuals, many of its constructs had already been explicated in the writings of Carl Jung. In fact, Jung first utilized the phrase transpersonal (uberspersonlich) in reference to the collective or transpersonal unconscious of the human psyche (Hutchins, 2008). On account of Jung's theoretical centrality in transpersonal psychotherapy and his theoretical centrality in explaining the healing mechanisms behind *lectio divina* and cinematherapy, his concepts must be explored to more fully understand this research topic.

The Life and Times of Carl Gustav Jung

Carl Gustav Jung was born on July 26, 1875 in Kesswil, Switzerland. His father, Paul, was a pastor in the Swiss Reformed church. Paul provided his son with a sense of faith and stability, although later in life Jung realized he didn't completely agree with his father's positivistic, rationalistic approach to faith (Jung, 1963).

While his father provided him with a sense of stability in life, his mother, Emille, proved to be quite eccentric and prone to bouts of depression. She often talked about the spirits which came to visit her at night. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, the closest thing to an autobiography, Jung himself described an experience with one of these spirits which visited his mother's room. One night he perceived a light emanating from her room; then he saw a headless ghost floating from her room with the head floating in front of the ghost's ethereal body (Jung, 1963).

Jung's early life experiences with his parents, school, and culture created a fusion of right and left brain thinking (Pascal, 1992). The Swiss culture of Jung's time reacted against the overly scientific ideology of the Enlightenment, which in turn, provided Jung with a more balanced outlook on life, psychology, and therapy as evidenced by his written and therapeutic works later in life. However, his experiences with his sometimes unstable mother colored his often times patriarchal view of women in general.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Jung finished his degree in psychiatry and began his professional career as an assistant professor at the University of Zurich. Freud and Jung became friends in 1906 after Jung sent him a copy of his own work entitled *Studies in Word Association*. Their friendship ended over their divergent beliefs concerning the nature of the unconscious mind. Jung posited the unconscious as the repository of sacred archetypes, thus diminishing the role of libido in the dynamics of the mind and elevating religion, philosophy, literature, and art to a level unacceptable to Freud, at least in terms of psychological theory and practice.

After his break with Freud, Jung poured himself into the study of religion, philosophy, the arts, and psychology via extensive reading, publications, and travel. He lectured at several prestigious, American universities and travelled to many different cultures in his attempt to

demonstrate the universality of his theory of the human psyche. While lecturing, reading, and travelling, he still maintained his private practice in Zurich. Spending his life theoretically and experientially exploring the process of individuation, or psychic wholeness, Jung died on June 6, 1961 just before his eighty-sixth birthday.

The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche

According to many transpersonal psychotherapists Jung has posited the most thorough and extensive mapping of the human psyche since the birth of formal psychology (Edinger, 2009). Due to his comprehensive theory which has detailed the structure and inner workings of the psyche (conscious and unconscious), personality typology, and the omnipresent, archetypal images originating from the depths of the unconscious, a person studying Jung's theories commences with one's own psychospiritual, archaeological dig (Lesser, 1999). In my own experience, I have found that engaging with Jungian psychology changes one personally and as a clinician for the same reason Lesser (1999) has articulated in the previous sentence. It is not coincidental that the field of psychology has denoted his theoretical and practical contributions as analytical (or depth) psychology.

In undertaking the aforementioned psychospiritual, archaeological dig, a person commences at a very superficial level (the crust) until arriving at the core of the human psyche. The "dig" commences with a scrutinizing of the persona to engaging the ego; from engaging the ego to exploring the underworld of the human shadow; from the human shadow to the ethereal realm of the anima/animus; and lastly from the anima/animus to the realm of the collective (or transpersonal) unconscious. This "dig" constitutes a real plummeting of the depths of one's personhood; in this plummeting, according to the healing theories proposed by *lectio divina* and cinematherapy, one arrives at psychospiritual wholeness (Keating, 2009; Wolz, 2005).

In coming to understand the dynamics (as opposed to the previously mentioned structures) of the psyche, one probes the states of consciousness – waking consciousness, dreaming, and dreamless sleep (Pascal, 1992; Vaughan, 1993). While Western civilization has presupposed waking consciousness to be reality, the spiritual traditions of the world have advised humanity of the reality of all three states (Lesser, 1999). In fact, dreaming and dreamless sleep may be more real than waking consciousness, because in these states the ego's grip on the rest of the psychic structure is lessened.

The persona. The first structure (or aspect of the mind) encountered on the psychospiritual, archaeological dig into the depths of the psyche consists of the persona. The word 'persona' comes from the Latin word for the masks actors wore in ancient Roman and Greek plays. Understanding the etymology of the word sheds light upon the meaning of this psychic structure, because the purpose of the persona entails mediating between a person's ego, the center of consciousness, and the external world of culture and society (Jung, 1956; Jung, 1960). Ultimately, the persona exists as "a partially calculated public face an individual assumes towards others. The persona is composed of various elements, some based on the individual's personal propensities and others derived from the society's expectations and the early training of parents and teachers" (Edinger, 2009, p. 5).

Pascal (1992) posited three basic factors in developing a healthy persona: (1) expressive of true individuality; (2) meets society's expectations in moderation; and (3) respective of one's physical and psychological parameters. Obviously, the persona meets necessary demands as one shifts roles throughout the cyclical nature of one's days, weeks, months, and years. For example, one would not act and think the same way at home with one's children and spouse in the same way one would at work. For this reason, the persona ought to remain flexible for psychological

health to ensue. When the persona becomes rigid by the ego's complete identification with it, neurosis and psychopathology result. Pascal (1992) provided as an example of psychopathology, resulting from the fusion of the ego and the persona, the inability of Norma Jean to be anybody else except Marilyn Monroe. Pascal (1992) further identified introverts having possible persona problems in an extremely extraverted, American society. In fact, to overcompensate for living in such an environment, a natural introvert may become an annoying enthusiast or an obnoxious big mouth. The aforementioned author has suggested becoming friendly in an attentive, silent way – smiling, simple acts of kindness, flowers, etc as an antidote to the aforementioned problem.

The clothes people wear serve as an apt analogy for the persona. In fact, “dreams involving missing or inappropriate clothes refer to a persona problem” (Edinger, 2009, p. 5). Shouldn't one's clothes be comfortable and well fitting, not too constrictive and not too loose? This query may be asked of the persona as well. The spiritual themes in film may help people struggling with problems in the realm of the persona to free themselves from overly burdensome and constrictive roles placed on them by a mismatch between societal expectations and one's truest self (Wolz, 2005). Ultimately, the therapeutic processing of film can help people to choose and wear the right clothing, the right persona.

The ego. When a new human being emerges from the womb, the mind consists solely of the unconscious (Jung, 1960). As a human being matures into early childhood, the ego, and later the persona and shadow, emerge from the unconscious as many object relational experiences amalgamate and memories begin to form (Fadiman & Frager, 2005). Eventually, the ego becomes the epicenter of conscious life, “the experiential being of the person” (Kaufmann, 1984, p. 116). As the “experiential being of the person,” all memories, sensory perceptions, cognitions, and emotions constitute the ego.

No unconscious, and therefore mystical elements, live in the ego, albeit the ego can be inundated by them. For the ego to experience the divine, it must be united to cleared channels to the shadow, anima/animus, and the collective unconscious (Edinger, 2009). When the ego, the structure which most individuates a person, becomes the center of a person's life, a person unnaturally forces the previously mentioned, unconscious elements of the psyche to orbit around it like the planets around the sun. However, the Self, or the spirit of a person, ought to and strives to be the center of the psyche in the process of individuation (Lesser, 1999; Pascal, 1992). The Self infiltrates all the constituent parts of the psyche and encapsulates them simultaneously. This supremacy of the spirit serves not to denigrate the significance of the ego; the ego functions as the orchestrator of the various aspects of the human psyche. However, a person on the path to wholeness ought to be cognizant of the perils latent in the human ego.

The shadow. The persona functions as the conduit of the ego's experiencing of the outer world; the shadow functions as the ego's bridge to the interior realm of the unconscious (Jung, 1960). As mentioned previously, the persona, the ego, and the shadow simultaneously grow together throughout childhood and into young adulthood. The aspects of a personality which the ego does not desire to express, whether good or bad, whether for societal or personal reasons, constitute the shadow. The shadow results from the ego's capacity to repress (Jung, 1960; Pascal, 1992).

Essentially, the shadow exists as a person's alter-ego, usually functioning outside the realm of conscious control. Robert Louis Stevenson eloquently and metaphorically captured the relationship between the ego and the shadow in his famous book, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Cashdan, 1988). Dr. Jekyll attempted to alchemically discover the secrets of the human soul in order to eradicate evil; however, in the process, overpowering and unconscious

forces overtake him and transform him into the villainous Mr. Hyde. The shadow is our personal unconscious, and because it constitutes part of the unconscious psyche, one normally experiences it via the defense mechanism of projection unless one is engaged in serious spiritual and/or psychotherapeutic work. That which we hate most in others is what we hate most in ourselves. Kaufmann (1984) captured the notion of projection well:

The dynamics of projection seen in this way are more encompassing than in the customary form; here, they do not necessarily involve an erroneous attribution of feelings or qualities to another person, but a mirror of ourselves. We might very well be correct in our perception (e.g. the other person might indeed be angry), but if it stirs strong emotions in us, that person reflects our own anger.

An encounter with the shadow is the *sine qua non* of every analysis and is generally very painful. (p. 118)

The therapeutic, confrontation process of facing one's shadow proves excruciatingly painful, because the constituent elements of the shadow directly clash with the "masks" the persona projects for others and for society to see. However, when the ego persistently resists the aspects of the shadow, the shadow becomes proportionately stronger to the degree the ego rejects it.

Pascal (1992) has mentioned in his book on Jung a proverbial, French axiom which states that the more a person tries to act like an angel (denying one has a body), the more that person acts and becomes like a beast. "To be human is to embody a paradox, according to the ancient vision, we are 'less than the gods, more than the beasts,' yet somehow also both" (Ketcham and Kurtz, 2002, p. 2). The shadow must be met with sympathy and kindness like all other entities in order to achieve a therapeutic outcome. By owning the "unacceptable" parts of ourselves which we split off from conscious awareness into the psychic structure of the shadow, we become more

whole. We learn to accept our imperfection, our not-godness, and the imperfection of others. In the act of this acceptance, we gain a felt sense of belonging to humanity. This sense of belonging brought about by the recognition of imperfection is crucial in addiction recovery (Ketcham & Kurtz, 2002; Scharff, 2009).

While each individual possesses a personal shadow, humanity as a whole possesses a collective shadow. The reticence to confront the dynamics of humanity's collective shadow manifests in such travesties as the Holocaust. Interestingly, Pascal (1992) has emphasized a highly devastating component of our mythic, belief system regarding the archetype attached to our collective shadow; most people typically have referred to this archetype as Satan or the devil. According to our Western mythology, Satan, the fallen angel of pride, lies outside the possibility of redemption and salvation. Yet, as Pascal (1992) explained, any god who condemned or would condemn any of his creatures to perpetual torment would by definition be no better than Satan. "Any God condemning a creature for human weakness to an eternity of torment is Satanic" (Pascal, 1992, p. 138).

A corrective is needed in our mythic belief system by a return to and embracing of the ideology and philosophy of the mystics who experienced a God for whom all of creation will be redeemed as opposed to the ideology and philosophy of academic theologians and the institutional churches and mosques (Pascal, 1992). The mystics, saints, and sages understood and lived the spirituality of imperfection. St. Therese of Lisieux, a 19th century cloistered, Carmelite nun, became a doctor of the church precisely because her doctrine of the little way of spiritual childhood was a direct return to the ancient teachings of Jesus. Her little way consisted of the acceptance of our status as God's little children from whom all God asks are self-surrender and gratitude and not great and heroic deeds. On the other hand, many people in Western

civilization have been exposed to a spirituality of perfection via the institutional aspects of monotheism, in which one must follow the commandments perfectly to be loved and accepted by God (Ketcham & Kurtz, 2002). Perhaps this is the root of our collective and individual inability to accept our brokenness, our not-godness? As long as we retain the view of Satan as unredeemable, we will always view “the other” and the rejected aspects of ourselves in the same manner - unredeemable (Pascal, 1992). Simon (1989) has captured well the importance of accepting our true nature and thus exercising the virtue of humility, the opposite of Satan’s pride:

God can exercise his mercy when we avow our defects. Our defects acknowledged, instead of repelling God, draw him to us, satisfying his longing to be merciful. As this is understood through meditation, the person realizes that those things by which he feels unlovable are exactly what he has to offer God to attract him. (p. 163)

Dionysus, the god of wine, metaphorically captures the human tension between the longing for transcendence and the acceptance of limitation, a tension seemingly incarnated in the addict (Ketcham & Kurtz, 2002; Pascal, 1992).

The seven deadly sins of pride, envy, greed, lust, gluttony, anger, and sloth are the typical, negative shadow elements in Jungian psychology and the defects of character listed by the twelve step movement (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1981; Pascal, 1992). When a person possesses a somewhat positive persona, the shadow will often appear in dreams as a derelict or outcast figure (Kaufmann, 1984). The gifts of the Holy Spirit (prudence, understanding, fortitude, fear of the Lord, wisdom, counsel, and knowledge) along with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love are positive, shadow elements (Lesser, 1999; Keating, 2009). When an individual possesses a somewhat negative persona, then the shadow figure in dreams may quite possibly be very talented, successful, and extremely kind and loving (Kaufmann, 1984). One of

the most important goals of the Self in psychospiritual development involves the achievement of an internal balance between the expression of our positive energies and an acceptance of our negative energies. The acceptance of our darkness and brokenness proves we are not-God but creatures capable of becoming god-like (Kurtz, 1979). In the process of becoming godlike, a person must walk through hell with one's heart wide open thus experiencing strength in the broken places of one's humanity (Tick, 2010).

The anima and the animus. “Human beings are potentially bisexual, biologically as well as psychologically. During our development one side comes to predominate over the other, the other side existing in an inferior form” (Kaufmann, 1984, p. 119). These words corroborate Pascal's (1992) discussion of an originally androgynous Adam in the Garden of Eden. The mythic story of the creation of humankind, with Eve being formed from Adam's rib, symbolically represents Adam's original androgyny as made in the image and likeness of God, the psychospiritual androgyny to which all human beings are called in their process towards individuation.

Within the unconscious of every man lies an unconscious feminine principle, the anima. Within every woman lies an unconscious masculine principle, the animus. During initial work with the anima or animus, it appears as an entirely other personality all together; however, a person continuing the psychospiritual, archaeological dig proposed by Jung discovers that the anima/animus functions as the passage way into the collective unconscious (Fadiman & Frager, 2005). According to Jung (1956), the purpose of the animus in women involves the awakening from an unbalanced earthiness and sensuality (the *eros* principle) into union with the rationality and spiritual transcendence of the masculine, *logos* principle. The anima in men bestows a state of earthy connection, emotional tenderness, and commitment. “Ideally, individuals, regardless of

one's sexual orientation, ought eventually to develop psychological androgyny to be complete, whole human beings" (Pascal, 1992, p. 163). As an interesting aside, in those with a same sex orientation, the loved one carries the projection of the Self; in those with an opposite sex orientation, the loved one carries the projection of the anima or animus (Pascal, 1992).

Since the fall of the Roman Empire, the *logos* principle has gained increasing predominance in Western civilization while denigrating the feminine, *eros* principle (Lesser, 1999; Pascal, 1992). The suppression of the *eros* principle in our collective psyche can be seen in the destruction of our environment and in such hateful states as homophobia. Ultimately, homophobia stems from misogyny (Karslake, 2007). Our patriarchal society accepts women displaying animus qualities (assertiveness, have short hair, wear pants, act like a tom boy), because they (women) are elevating themselves to the level of a man in our society. However, for a man to behave like a woman (the stereotypical portrayal of male homosexuality) is unacceptable, because he is degrading himself and all other men along with him by symbolically stepping down from a privileged status; this abdication of power threatens the patriarchy. Perhaps we all, both men and women alike, need to access the anima now more than ever given the current state of our world and society?

The collective (transpersonal) unconscious and the self. When a person excavates, or more accurately allows the spirit access, into the inner most recesses of one's soul, a person eventually experiences the collective unconscious and the Self. The collective unconscious is the realm and repository of all psychological material not stemming from personal experience (Fadiman & Frager, 2005). Human beings are not born an empty slate; they are born with certain, universal predispositions and symbols in the mind from which everything else will emanate (Jung, 1960). All humans share this collective unconscious. The collective

unconscious consists of “inherent potentials in the psychic structure of all individuals” (Livingston, 2005, p.72). For this reason, the myths and symbols of all cultures throughout history have proven to be drastically similar in nature. Herein lies the dramatic power of film to stir and transform.

The Self lies at the center of the collective unconscious and permeates the entire human psyche simultaneously. The Self is God immanent as opposed to transcendent, although in deeply religious and/or spiritual experiences the Divine is experienced as both (Lesser, 1999). The Self is “both the center and circumference of the psyche...incorporating within its paradoxical unity all the opposites embodied in the masculine and feminine archetypes...an intuited and experienced symbol of psychic totality” (Pascal, 1992, p. 107). In dreams the appearance of the hero figure, the divine child, and mandalas all express the Self. Recent studies have demonstrated a correlation between creating mandalas and psychological and physical health (Hendersen, P., Kohli, M., & Rosen, D., 2009). A mandala, a circle with a square or cross in it, represents individuation.

The Dynamics of the Human Psyche

The Greek word *psyche* denotes the soul and not the mind as understood by modern psychology, and Jung understood the term in this manner (Jung, 1956; Jung, 1960). Given this understanding, the opposite of modern, psychological epistemology, the *psyche* exists as a holistic expression of the human person. And what does this soul, or *psyche*, express? The soul expresses three distinct but non-separate states of consciousness – waking consciousness, dreaming, and dreamless sleep (Pascal, 1992; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). Our suffering arises from a fragmented soul; people in Western civilization often experience the latter two states as somehow less real, and in turn, become fragmented human beings. However, the human psyche

“is interconnected, interrelated and in continuum with all other manifestations of nature” (Pascal, 1992, p.12). The mystics, saints, and sages of all times and cultures have coalesced these three states of consciousness within themselves and then coalesced a unitary being with the rest of creation. From this unity have emanated science, the arts, religious ritual, theology, and philosophy (Jung, 1933).

The Archetypes and Archetypal Images

The archetypes are to the collective unconscious what organs and instincts are to the physical body (Edinger, 2009). An archetype cannot be experienced directly but only through the emergence of an archetypal image from the collective unconscious. The archetypes, the symbol and myth producing organs of our collective unconscious, are the “memory of our immediate and more remote evolutionary ancestors biochemically transmitted from one generation to the next” (Pascal, 1992, p. 56). The archetypes are “inherited tendencies” which produce “representations collectives” (Livingston, 2005, p. 72).

When an individual has an experience of an archetype by means of the emergence of archetypal images, the experience is usually transformative. People encounter these archetypal images in many ways: in one’s dreams; in the psychotherapeutic practice of dream analysis and interpretation; utilizing the technique of active imagination; a persevering prayer and meditation practice; fasting; the arts (i.e. cinematherapy); and through major mental disorders (Jung, 1933; Pascal, 1992; Wolz, 2005). In fact, all of the world’s major religious and wisdom traditions, including the practice of transpersonal therapy, have fostered these practices in order to help people access the archetypal realm of the psyche - the realm of the transpersonal unconscious, what Jesus termed the Kingdom of God within, the realm from which our deepest healing

emerges. For Jung, the importance of the archetype “such as the hero, lies in its psychic efficacy or therapy” (Livingston, 2005, p. 72).

While many archetypes exist, including all of the structures of the psyche mentioned in the previous section on the structures of the psyche, all of the archetypes can be categorized according to four major archetypes: (1) the Great Mother, (2) the Spiritual Father, (3) Transformation, and (4) the Self (Edinger, 2009). These four major archetypes are described below.

The archetype of the Great Mother is the personification of *eros*, or Dionysus, the feminine, unconscious principle (Edinger, 2009; Pascal, 1992). Positively, she represents the fertile womb and the fertile earth from which all life springs forth. Negatively, she connotes the darkness of the grave in which all of life eventually becomes swallowed. (All archetypes, just as with all components of the psyche, possess positive and negative qualities. However, from the more objective vantage point of the Self, even negativity becomes transformed into light and spiritual growth). In dreams (and film), caves, coffins, empty vessels, the vagina, the womb, and all forms of water express the Great Mother archetype (Edinger, 2009; Kaufmann, 1984; Wolz, 2005).

The archetype of the Spiritual Father personifies the masculine principle of consciousness, spirituality, and light. Positively, the Spiritual Father provides order, law, discipline, and rationality. Negatively, he can alienate the psyche from concrete, earthy reality, thus resulting in hubris. In our dream states (and in the signs and symbols of film), this archetype may manifest as the priest, the doctor, the wise elder or in non-human forms such as the rain, wind, sun, knives, rays, birds, crowns, and halos (Edinger, 2009; Wolz, 2005).

The archetype of transformation reveals itself as the human longing for growth and change. Edinger (2009) has posited that this archetype may manifest in dreams as images and motifs of precarious journeys, exploration of far away, dark lands, climbing mountains, flying, death, and the birth of the hero or wonder child. The significance of this archetype in the dream state parallels the importance of myth, meaning, and storytelling in the film experience (Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005). Of course, these archetypal images may also manifest during waking consciousness by various events of synchronicity. Synchronicity, one of Jung's most famous concepts, postulates the meaningful link between an inner and outer event that cannot be explained by scientific causality (Pascal, 1992; Stein, 2005).

The archetype of the Self has been interspersed throughout this dissertation.

The Complexes

A complex refers to a psychic entity formed around an archetypal image and outside the control of the conscious mind (Pascal, 1992). The complexes are really sub personalities created by the intermingling of our personal histories with the archetypal images incessantly emerging from the collective unconscious. When activated, the complex will dominate the conscious personality in an almost possessed state. They always entail highly sensitive and unintegrated psychic material repressed into the shadow (Jung, 1956; Jung, 1960).

Pascal (1992) described how to engage the complexes, our sub personalities, in the healing process by means of active imagination:

We must talk sympathetically and caringly with our inner Wicked Witch of the West, our inner Mr. Scrooge, as they too are in need of love and can be softened and transformed by constant exposure to the most powerful force in human existence, namely unconditional love and acceptance. (p. 64)

In the process of active imagination the ego talks empathetically with the complex (or dream figures) as if speaking to a very hurt, little child, for in fact this is what one is doing (Fadiman & Frager, 2005; Pascal, 1992). This continued conversation with the complex allows for the separation of the personal experience from the archetype, thus allowing the archetype to flourish in its purest form. Pascal (1992) has mentioned numerous complexes: the pioneer, the martyr, the perfectionist, the do-gooder, the savior, Peter Pan, the forever optimist, the tightwad, the lover, the star, etc. Scrooge's interaction with the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future in *A Christmas Carol* stands as a beautiful paradigm for working with and healing the complexes.

Individuation and Jungian Therapy

In a letter from 1945 Jung wrote the following:

You are quite right: the main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neurosis, but rather with the approach to the numinous (the glowing divine awareness in our psyches)...the approach to the numinous is the real therapy, and inasmuch as you attain to the numinous experience, you are released from the curse of pathology. Even the very disease takes on a numinous character (as cited in Pascal, 2009, p. 198).

These few words capture the essence of Jung's psychotherapeutic conceptualizations and treatment discussed in this section of the literature review. The goal of analytical psychotherapy is always individuation, or in the Christian, mystical tradition, *theosis*, to become god-like and thus to become whole, holy. Livingston (2005) referred to Jungian individuation as an integration and unification of a person's ego, or conscious life principle, with the archetypes of the unconscious. When I ponder individuation in terms of the aforementioned psychospiritual, archaeological dig, I envision a clearly dug channel from the persona (the mask) to the ego

(conscious life principle), from the ego to the shadow (the personal unconscious), from the shadow to the anima/animus (latent feminine and masculine principles), and from the anima/animus to the collective unconscious (repository of the divine).

In analytical therapy the therapist begins by taking a detailed *anamnesis* of the client's conscious life. *Anamnesis*, from the Greek 'to remember,' is a biographical summary of all the important people and events in a client's life in chronological order (Edinger, 2009).

Afterwards, the therapist and client together explore current problematic areas in life. Only after thorough investigation into a client's consciousness of the past and present can unconscious, psychotherapeutic work begin.

In traditional, analytical therapy the two major techniques have been dream analysis and active imagination. However, Jung always advocated for the implementation of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and service and all forms of art (painting, drawing, sculpting, writing) in the client's life. Since the technique of active imagination has already been mentioned, and a thorough investigation of spiritual disciplines and art forms lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, the remainder of this section will briefly explore dream interpretation on account of its import for film's therapeutic effectiveness.

Symbols constitute the states of reality we call dreams. However, a symbol is not a sign. A symbol represents itself, while a sign points to another reality. "A symbol is an image or form giving the best expression available to a content whose meaning is still largely unknown" (Edinger, 2009, p. 13). A symbol consists of the unification of a thesis and an antithesis to form a synthesis (Edinger, 2009; Lesser, 1999). Because symbols are impregnated with and bear strong, spiritual realities, the work of dream interpretation entails unlocking their power by personal and general amplification.

Personal amplification involves the client associating the symbols in one's dreams with one's thoughts, feelings, and past experiences. The combination of the symbols and the personal associations often reveals significant meaning. The therapist provides the general amplification for the symbols inherent in the dreams. General amplification "provides the collective, archetypal associations to the dream elements...the therapist presents parallel imagery from mythology, legend, and folklore" (Edinger, 2009, p. 13). The art forms produced by a client and their writings from engaging in the process of active imagination can also be analyzed in the same way as dreams. A person's experience of watching film with conscious awareness, as implemented in this study, can also be analyzed this way (Wolz, 2005). All of the analytical psychology literature emphasizes the need to prepare one's psyche beforehand for the coming of dreams by petition or self-reminder and subsequent recording of the dream first thing upon awakening.

Spirituality and Addiction

More than most people, I think, alcoholics want to know who they are, what this life is all about, whether they have a divine origin and an appointed destiny, and whether there is a system of cosmic justice and love.

-Alcoholics Anonymous

"The spirituality of addiction is a spirituality of possession where the person has no real being or is a lost soul, disconnected from self, others, and God in a profound way."

-Kevin McClone

"There is a natural desire for heaven, for the fruition of God, in us."

-Thomas Merton

"To be alive is to be addicted, and to be alive and addicted is to stand in need of grace."

-Gerald May

“A radical shift in our thinking about alcoholism (and drug addiction) is required to free a great number of addicts from the yoke of addiction....it is argued that the disease model of alcoholism, with its emphasis on medical interventions, is not a useful tool for understanding the nature of addiction” (Scharff, 2009, p. 5). While psychological and biological research have concluded the multifaceted etiology of the addiction process, ultimately addiction emanates from a “soul sickness,” a misplaced search for transcendence (McClone, 2003; Scharff, 2009). The world’s religions and wisdom traditions have admonished us that we are all addicts (attached to suffering), and the symptoms of alcoholism and drug addiction exist as the extreme magnification of what all people are really suffering (Grof, 1993; May, 1988; Whitfield, 1985). “To be alive is to be addicted, and to be alive and addicted is to stand in need of grace” (May, 1988, p. 11). Spiritually, addiction exists as a form of idolatry, because certain people, things, or chemicals become enshrined on the thrones of our hearts in place of Love itself. And however hard we try, these false gods can never fulfill the ultimate desire of the human heart for self-transcendence and infinite happiness. As May (1988) suggested, addictive spirituality comes much easier to human beings since the objects of our desire in addictive spirituality are empirically tangible. The need for infinite happiness and self-transcendence combined with the search for the fulfillment of these spiritual needs through physical and transient objects results in needing more of the object(s) until alas our bodies and minds become prisoners. The healing of addiction, or attachment, can come only from a simple, volitional act of surrender combined with the action of grace. As stated earlier, addiction has biological causes and consequences; however, the primary cause and primary suffering involve the dynamics of the human soul.

When viewing the human person from a Jungian or transpersonal perspective, the spiritual or meaning orientations of human life exist as omnipotent forces for all of us. Frankl (1959) viewed addiction as losing one's way, one's existential search for peace in a world saturated with anxiety. Addiction and most psychological problems entail a crisis of faith – faith in one's own strength; faith in the world's capacity to nourish the individual; faith in the dissipation of doubt and uncertainty; faith in the emergence of meaning from suffering; and faith that one's life is of ultimate value (Frankl, 1959; Yalom, 2002). Frankl (1959) promulgated the school of logotherapy in which human beings have three ways to meaning: a work or an achievement, living for another, and rising above suffering (we are ultimately free to choose our attitude, and thus our personhood, in any given situation). These three ways to meaning and our struggle with the three ultimate dilemmas of life (pain, guilt, and death) constitute the essence of spirituality (Frankl, 1959; Yalom, 2002).

From a religious or existential vantage point, holding the psychospiritual constructs of identity, interbeing, and free will in mind, the process of arriving at wholeness is one of creation (Whitfield, 1985; Wilber, 2000). In a religious context, when God created mind from primordial matter as discussed in the first section of the literature review on transpersonal psychology, God created a separate, and therefore, free will. Possessing a free will, all persons are not so much human beings as human becomings, engaged with our Higher Power in the process of our own creation, the claiming of our birthright. Our lives express the manifestation of our will as concretized in our relationship to self, our interaction with others, and with God. Although we are called to individuation, or wholeness, this process cannot be accomplished in psychic isolation – but in right relationship with God, self, and others (MacDougall & White, 2001; Jung, 1933). The healing power of spiritual disciplines in recovery from addiction, which brings about

the process of individuation, lie not so much in the external, religious nature of a practice but in the inner, spiritual dynamics of experiencing and abiding in one's highest Self (Whitfield, 1985; Sperry, 2001). "The spirituality of addiction is a spirituality of possession where the person has no real being or is a lost soul, disconnected from self, others, and God in a profound way" (McClone, 2003, p. 22). Addiction is a misguided spiritual search for peace, meaning, and transcendence ending in destruction, because ultimately it exists as a form of idolatry. In seeking to place an object (whether alcohol, drugs, food, sex, etc.) on the throne of God within one's inner world, addiction offers temporary relief from pain but in the end brings more suffering. Spirituality by definition is an inwardly directed process; however, addiction inverts this process into an external search. May (1988) described addiction in a similar fashion as a deliverance process unto spiritual, psychological, and physical slavery on account of the inversion of the spiritual process.

Creation and the expansionary evolution of the cosmos is God seeking God's self in a great cosmic dance (Merton, 1961; Wilber, 2000). As human beings we are on the edge of this evolutionary process. Therefore, we live many of our days with an aching, existential hunger eloquently articulated centuries ago by St. Augustine: "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

Rolheiser (1999) reiterated Augustine's idea of a holy longing as our fundamental disease. As humans we possess an inherent, all-encompassing restlessness while simultaneously experiencing our limitation as finite creatures. We find ourselves in quite the predicament! Since all humans are born into this life with this inherent restlessness, this divine madness, we all have a spirituality, whether destructive or integrative.

Rolhesier (1999) has provided Janis Joplin as an example of a disintegrative spirituality and Mother Teresa of Calcutta as an example of an integrative spirituality. While both women possessed fiery spirits, one (Mother Teresa) channeled her *eros* effectively and willed the one thing necessary, the will of God, and the other (Janis Joplin) dissipated her *eros* on the desires of the false self (Rolheiser, 1999). Joplin's dissipation cut short her life; however, she did contribute to the transformation of modern rock and the youth culture at large.

Being born into the universal matrix of our world's restlessness ("original sin") possesses ramifications: ignorance, concupiscence, and a weak will (as seen in the life of Janis Joplin). Keating (1996) explicates what original sin means psychologically: 95-98% of people suffer from co-dependency and dysfunctional families; many of us also find our lives ruled by a sort of addictive process in which we need to hide our deepest pain suffered early in life by means of indulging in unbalanced pleasures blunting the full impact and processing of these unconscious realities.

In this regard, the ancient church was extremely psychological in emphasizing that the locus of redemption lay in one's struggle with one's self and with the inner forces of integration and dissipation (Webber, 2003). And so, it seems our very addiction and desire, the "original sin" of being slumbering Spirit, reminds us of our creaturehood and yet calls us onward in the process of evolution towards divinity – towards willing the one thing necessary. A mystic is in love, like the human Christ, with the absolute (Underhill, 1961).

Based on addiction literature and my own clinical experience, one may conclude the following – if not the most salient aspect of recovery, spirituality somehow factors into the process of recovery from addiction. Chemical dependence is a spiritual emergency (Grof, 1993). Research bears out this hypothesis; many recovering people come to the realization a craving for

wholeness and transcendence fueled their addiction (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1981; Ketcham & Kurtz, 1992; MacDougall & White, 2001; Webber, 2003). One could claim this realization comes as a result of educational inculcation from spiritually-oriented helpers; yet, many alcoholics and drug addicts in my clinical experience describe the first drink or hit (or a drink or hit somewhere in their addiction) as their first, real spiritual experience; it is no coincidence that alcohol has obtained the name of “spirits.” Jung once wrote that “you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison” (as cited in McClone, 2003, p. 22). During this spiritual experience ego boundaries and existential pain seemingly disappear. In my own experience as a clinician, almost all of the cocaine and heroin addicts describe their addiction as chasing that first high of oceanic bliss. Of course, this first experience can never be regained. One may describe addiction as spiritual emergency, because the journey to the depths and the subsequent daylight of recovery signify a real ego-death and subsequent rebirthing. Here, one can notice the archetype of death and resurrection so entrenched in the Christian path of mysticism. One can also find a corollary in the hero’s journey from initiation and departure to the underworld; the experiences of struggle in the underworld; and the subsequent returning home after the learning of deep, spiritual lessons (Campbell, 1988).

In Euripides' play, *the Bacchae*, Dionysus, the god of wine, exists as an archetypal figure holding the tension between the longing for transcendence and the acceptance of our limitations. Looking at the character of Dionysus is looking at the journey and struggle of the addicted person. In Greek tragedy, suffering comes when we are absolutely certain of our wisdom; when we justify our behaviors through outrageous hubris, not acknowledging that in reality we are just ignorant. Listen to the last words of the chorus: “Let no mortal think that he is so wise that he

can discern what god is, for the divine comes in many forms and wise is that man who allows his eyes to see the truth.” These words parallel the AA/NA notion of “God as we understand him.”

One of my committee members, Dr. Csaba Osvath (personal communication, December 6, 2010) wrote the following in an e-mail regarding the archetype of Dionysus:

Since your project, I have been revisiting the god Dionysus. He is a powerful archetype. He is brought back to life by his life after his death, but what fascinates me is his association with wine. I worked as a vintner in Hungary, so as I look back I understand the story of Dionysus. During the winter months we severely cut back the vines, but they come back every spring, the time when the dramatic plays were performed. So this eternal recurrence of life was celebrated as a miracle and if we carry further this image, during the harvest, the grapes are crushed. Their blood gives wine which can be a life giving fluid, but also leads to destruction, or madness if moderation is not reinforced. I would feel blasphemous to bring Christ into this context, but if C. S. Lewis brought back Dionysus into Narnia, maybe it is not so blasphemous.

The rebirthing process involves an enlightenment in which the addict realizes the illusion of happiness lying outside of the self as opposed to inside (Webber, 2003). Ultimately, life without spirituality and a Higher Power becomes total emptiness. Addiction, as spiritual emergency, may be conceptualized as being stuck in the underworld, in the hell of existential suffering and not having the tools and support to come back home (Tick, 2010). Another comparable enlightenment can be made to the Buddha’s understanding of life as suffering and the root of this suffering as attachment to an illusory realm of egoic possessions when he had his spiritual awakening under the bodhi tree.

While on the verge of death, Bill W. had an undeniably spiritual experience, a resurrection experience, while undergoing another desperate medical treatment for his alcoholism (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976). He cried out for God to show Himself, if there be a God. Immediately, a bright, white light surrounded him and transported him to the top of a breezy mountaintop. A great peace came over him as the words were spoken, “You are a free man.” He never drank again. Soon afterwards the twelve steps of recovery would be formulated over a period of a few years.

The patient, Rowland, approached Carl Jung in a similar sense of desperation as that experienced by Bill W (Kinney, 2008). In fact, Roland was the one who brought the message of his experience to Bill W and Dr. Bob, the original founders of AA. Hence, historically Carl Jung proves significant in the development of this spiritual approach to recovery. Having tried all sorts of treatment, Jung declared his situation hopeless, unless Roland could have a genuine spiritual and religious conversion. Jung equated (rightfully so) Roland’s search as a search for union with God. Roland was healed. How do we connect post-modern human beings with the notion of the use of alcohol and other drugs as the search for God and spiritual connection? Not an easy task. I think this connection comes later in treatment for individuals identifying themselves as agnostic (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976). In working the first five steps, in time many of them come to understand the reality of God “as they understand Him.”

Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous have formed the foundation for recovery for many people. Specifically, the twelve steps form the framework for a lifelong process of recovery based on spiritual principles and storytelling (Ketcham & Kurtz, 1992; Scharff, 2009). As a theologian I am struck by the remarkable similarity between the twelve steps and the ongoing process of spiritual growth in the world’s mystical traditions. Truly, when

scrutinized carefully, the Twelve Steps are the implementation of the Perennial Philosophy articulated by Huxley; the principles and mechanisms behind the steps constitute the heart, or spirituality, of all the world's religions (McClone, 2003; Whitfield, 1985). McClone (2003) discussed the twelve steps as facilitating seven psychospiritual processes to occur: a movement from a lack of awareness to living fully in the present moment (spiritual awakening); a movement from denial and control to humility (accepting one's strengths and limitations) and surrender; a movement from fear to trust; an acceptance of a certain degree of asceticism as opposed to immediate gratification; a movement from the need for perfection to acceptance of one's and others' personal limitations; a movement from insufficiency to gratitude; and lastly a movement from self-imposed isolation to communion with others in love and service.

Step One states, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, pp. 59-60). Step one clearly states the problem and the ramifications of this problem. "First of all, we had to quit playing God" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, p. 62). In step one, by engaging the principle of total honesty, the addicted person begins to move from denial to acceptance; in doing so, one begins to accept life on its own terms and not on the terms of an idolatrous will (Kominars & Kominars, 1996; MacDougall & White, 2001; Webber, 2003).

The world's religious and wisdom traditions believe that in human life spiritual development must begin with this step also, because we are all powerless over life (Webber, 2003; Whitfield, 1985). If we leave the word 'alcohol' out of the aforementioned statement, we simply substitute our own false god – alcohol, drugs, work, sex, a person, an activity, one's opinion (Fowler & Hemfelt, 1990). In mystical theology we are all addicts, for we are all attached in one way or another, and suffering results from attachment (Whitfield, 1985). Step

One enunciates an often denigrated aspect of Christian theology – the concept of original sin. This theological construct could be compared to the Eastern notion of the world as *maya*, or illusion and how easily human beings become trapped in this psychospiritual web (Whitfield, 1985).

In returning to the Church Fathers and Mothers, we find the authentic meaning of the construct of original sin – we are born basically good but with a tendency to “miss the mark” (Webber, 2003). “Missing the mark” is also the real meaning of the word ‘sin.’ ‘Hamartia’ in Greek referred to the sport of archery in which many times the archman would “miss the mark.” The way I and many others understand the concept of original sin and the first step of AA involves an understanding of the fact that we are born into a matrix of flawed object relations and a universe in the process of evolution towards spirit (Wilber, 2000). In accepting this truth and the truth of our limited nature, we can truly have insight into the first step and the Christian doctrine of original sin.

Step Two states, “We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, pp. 59-60). This step speaks to the reliance on some external agent in order for change to occur. Juxtaposing this step to Christian theology, the corresponding theological concept would be the virtue of faith (Webber, 2003). The Christian mystic can only begin and continue the path of spiritual evolution by means of faith, the blessed assurance of those things which are hoped for. Similarly, the recovering addict must come to faith. Initially, this faith does not need to be in a divine reality but could be the group itself, the therapist, etc. The only problem with taking anything less than a divine reality as the higher power involves the reality of these alternate “higher powers” being finite like one’s self and thus perpetuating the cycle of co-dependence (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Fowler & Hemfelt,

1990). Theologically, submission to something of the same nature would be spiritual slavery. Previously, the addict submitted to the drug as a false god, but the high always ended; likewise, a particular group, therapist, and/or other human being will always let us down to some degree. Of course, this relates to the discussion in the previous paragraph about being born into a matrix of flawed object relations and an evolving universe. Step Three brings Step Two to a natural conclusion: “We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, pp.59-60). The essential core of faith is trust.

Step four states, “We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves,” and closely connected to this statement, Step Five states, “We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, pp.59-60). Anyone with knowledge of the Judeo-Christian tradition sees an immediate description of confession within steps four and five. The group members become priests unto one another by fully listening to the stories one is called to witness. This priesthood of all believers takes effect in these steps. In the process of confession to God, self, and others (the triad of the spiritual life), we begin the process of finding right relationships within this triad. The centrality of storytelling in the healing process of AA/NA cannot be emphasized enough (Ketcham & Kurtz, 1992). The power of film to portray story and myth can connect the person in recovery more completely to rewriting one’s own story by the bestowal of meaning on that story and simultaneously connect one more fully to understanding and working the steps (Tick, 2010). Thus, the storytelling of the hero’s journey which occurs in AA/NA meetings throughout the world is the same storytelling experienced in films of high artistic and spiritual quality.

Step Six states, “We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character; step seven states, “We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings” (Alcoholics

Anonymous, 1976, pp. 59-60). Step six reminds the recovering person once again of the tendency to “miss the mark” (*hamartia*). This reminder serves as a call to due diligence in the undertakings of one’s life. Step Seven correlates to the theological virtue of hope (MacDougall & White, 2001). Despite the possibility of repeated errors in any aspect of life, personality change can still occur. Because a person at this point in recovery probably still suffers from low self-esteem, the installation of hope proves to be necessary for the long road which lies ahead.

Steps eight and nine are a form of almsgiving, one of the three practices of spirituality preached by Jesus (the others are prayer and fasting). We “made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all (step eight); (and we) made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others (step nine)” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, pp. 59-60). Almsgiving, or service, addresses our relationship with other people. These steps ask the recovering addict to make a list of all of the people one has harmed and to be willing to make amends; if possible, the offender must make amends, but only if doing so would not cause further harm. Forgiveness from the one offended is not required here. In fact, forgiveness of one’s self and the subsequent alleviation of shame arising from trying to make amends free the recovering addict to make current relationships healthy (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976).

Step ten requires one to continually “take personal inventory and when we were wrong to promptly admit it” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, pp. 59-60). Really, this step ensures the continuation of the examination of conscience and the attitude of confession mentioned in steps four and five. Step eleven requires prayer and meditation in order to increase one’s conscious contact with God for the sake of understanding God’s will and the strength to carry out that will (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976). Of course, this step corresponds to Christ’s command to pray

(one of the three practices of spirituality). The prayer Christ taught us asks the Father: “thy will be done....thy kingdom come.” Fostering this attitude in prayer maintains the spirit of self-surrender and gratitude in the recovering addict. I work with a lot of clients on this step. In group and in individual sessions we practice and/or discuss many of the following transpersonal practices: breathing meditations, dream journals, gratitude journals, reflective meditations on a spiritual passage, nature walks, awareness meditations, yoga, mantras, etc. It brings me a lot of joy when I experience someone blossoming as he/she discerns a spiritual discipline and through that discipline begins to finally find meaning in life beyond the drugs and alcohol.

Step twelve advises people in recovery to “carry this message (the 12 steps) to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, pp. 59-60). Step twelve encourages the person in recovery (1) to continue to share one’s own mythic, hero’s journey through storytelling and to listen to that same mythology in the stories of others and (2) to perpetually implement and grow in the spiritual values of surrender, gratitude, humility, tolerance, and forgiveness (Ketcham & Kurtz, 1992). “Carrying the message” corresponds to the storytelling mentioned in number one above, and “practicing these principles in all our affairs” corresponds to the continued growth in spiritual values mentioned in number two above by never ceasing to work the steps in one’s life.

Bateson and Alcoholism

Bateson’s view on the etiology and treatment of alcoholism sheds further light on the link between spirituality and addiction recovery. In order to understand his view, I must briefly discuss cybernetics and systems theory. Cybernetics has concerned itself with studying and understanding communication and relational patterns in any kind of system (Scharff, 2009). In studying systemic communication and patterns of relationship, cybernetic researchers attempt to

understand the direction in which a particular system may be moving. Systems theory, closely akin to cybernetics, attempts to study and understand how an organization of entities interact. In both cybernetics and systems theory a circularity process exists; thus at each entry level into a circular system (i.e. any system), each entry point exists as both cause and effect of the other points in the system.

Bateson (1972) in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* posited the world as a continuous series of interlocking and interrelated systems, from the tiniest atom to the largest societies. Not only do interlocking systems constitute the universe, these systems exist as part of a higher, supreme ordering system which controls all subsystems within the universe; many call this supreme, ordering system ‘God’; Bateson referred to this system as ‘Mind.’ Here, one may notice a striking similarity to the theories of Polanyi (1966) and Wilber (2000), both of whom posited higher realities ordering the empirical laws of science and the biological world.

Like Wilber (2000), Bateson attacked the epistemology of the modern, scientific world. (Much of this will be discussed in the chapter on methodology). Western epistemology believes a human being can objectively separate from the system in order to arrive at objective knowledge; yet any individual human being can never escape the systems to which one belongs. This attempt to arrive at objectivity harkens back to the scientific and philosophical revolutions of the 16th and 17th centuries with the theories of Copernicus, Galileo, and Descartes (Tarnas, 1991). This attempt to reign supreme over the world and the environment directly relates to the alcoholics self will run riot and sense of alienation arising from a world which prizes autonomy above all else.

Psychiatry and psychology have attempted to ensconce themselves in a model of first order change, a model of linear causality, with the hopes of being seen as “real” science

(Bateson, 1972). Yet, to understand addiction, functioning from the model of linear causality fails miserably. For example, if someone goes to the doctor and is diagnosed with having high cholesterol predisposing that patient to heart disease, the patient may very well go home and begin an exercise regimen and dietary alterations to lower one's cholesterol. This is first order change arising from a worldview of linear causality. This mode of epistemology, which also creates a way of being in the world (ontology) prizing will power, autonomy, and causality, cannot help the addict (Bateson, 1972). Perhaps this very epistemology creates a way of being in which humans existentially experience unusually high levels of anxiety, depression, and addiction. Doesn't this stand to reason? The contemporary, Western mind, forged several centuries ago unnaturally dissects systems into their component parts, and human beings come to feel this spilt within themselves.

To the alcoholic and addict, the ordinary way of being in the world proves unacceptable. Does this make the alcoholic/addict actually more sane? At least the alcoholic/addict seeks altered states of consciousness, seeks transcendence, the goal of human life. Grof (1981) wrote that "it is conceivable that the alcoholic is somehow more sane than people around him and that the ordinary way of being in the world, accepted by many others, is intolerable for him...the intoxication may be seen as an appropriate subjective correction for some intolerable aspects of the state of sobriety" (p. 18). The alcoholic cannot live in the world of human alienation created by a Cartesian-Newtonian dualism, which splits body and soul, leaving care of the soul to clergy and care of the body to physicians, or a world in which the soul does not even exist. In this dualistic world, from this philosophical paradigm, people tell the alcoholic to "just stop" and to "pull yourself up by your bootstraps." This is impossible for the alcoholic/addict.

Bateson (1972) posited the philosophy of AA has eminently helpful in placing an alcoholic in recovery, because the twelve steps function from a cybernetic and systemic model of existence and change. In cybernetic and systemic theory, the self-sufficient ego, the false self, is an illusion; the same holds true for AA, because “we had to quit playing God” and accept our not-godness (Kurtz, 1979).

In second-order change the alcoholic/addict experiences “a modification in the way (one) relates to the system” (Scharff, 2009, p. 49). Bateson (1972) referred to this as the experience of powerlessness; AA refers to this as the experience of surrender in Step 1 – admitting powerlessness and unmanageability. At this stage in recovery, usually within the first year of sobriety, many may have had spiritual experiences but have not yet experienced a spiritual awakening (Scharff, 2009). What occurs within the alcoholic/addict during this second-order change? In the process of ego-deflation, the alcoholic’s relationship to alcohol and other people begins to change from one of symmetry (connoting a winner and loser) to one of complementarity. “Common examples of symmetrical relationships are armament races, keeping up with the Joneses, athletic emulation, boxing matches, and the like” (Bateson, 1972, p. 323). Symmetrical relationships rule much of modern life. In relational complementarity, the highly spiritual nature of recovery can be seen. In moving from a symmetrical relationship to the world and others, a relationship based on will and autonomy, to one of complementarity, the alcoholic/addict begins to viscerally understand the self as constituted of the interlocking systems of Higher Power, one’s own body, mind, and soul, other people, and the natural world. When the alcoholic’s/addict’s relationship with one of these systems suffers, all the relational systems suffer; when the relationship with one of these systems grows and flourishes, they all benefit.

Bateson (1972) referred to third-order change as surrender, while AA refers to this level of change as spiritual awakening (Scharff, 2009). AA places spiritual awakening in the twelfth step – the last step – for good reason. While a reconfiguration of relationships within an alcoholic’s cybernetic system has commenced in second-order change, a total transformation of the psyche does not occur immediately but only by daily working the steps over an extended period of time (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Scharff, 2009). The same holds true for anyone on the spiritual path; total transformation only occurs after painstaking devotion to one’s spiritual practices and disciplines. After continually working the steps and repeated contact with a community of complementarity, Bateson (1972) described the alcoholic’s “profound redefinition of self” (p. 304). Scharff (2009) referred to this “profound redefinition” and the alcoholic’s metamorphosis in her excellent dissertation entitled *Filling the God-Shaped Hole: Reframing Alcoholism as an Opportunity for Spiritual Transformation*. Ultimately, the process of healing entails the following:

In sum, psychospiritual recovery from addiction involves a fundamental recognition that at the heart of the addictive process is a lost soul traveling down a path seeking peace and an absence from life’s pain, yet ultimately destined for greater alienation from self, others, and God. At the root of the compulsive and addictive pattern is a self that feels incomplete, insecure, and lacking adequate resources to cope with life’s many changes, losses, and challenges. The direction of that search is clearly misguided by false idols or attachments that promise quick answers to life’s complexities and suffering. Hope lies in recognizing these psychological and spiritual maladies that plague the lost soul.

(McClone, 2003, p. 28)

Other Models of Addiction Treatment

Other models of addiction treatment do exist; these alternative models do not necessarily have spirituality as their primary focus. The philosophical basis for some of these models can be found in chapter one of this research.

Pharmacotherapies have proven to be helpful in some forms of addiction. For example, methadone, which prevents the extreme withdrawal symptoms from the cessation of opioids, in conjunction with certain forms of behavioral therapy, has helped some people. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) (2009), “patients stabilized on adequate, sustained dosages of methadone or buprenorphine can hold jobs, avoid crime and violence, and reduce their exposure to HIV” (p. 39). Perhaps the most successful use of pharmacotherapies can be seen in the use of medications such as zyban and chantix as a form of nicotine replacement therapy. Psychopharmacological interventions do not seem to be as successful in the treatment of alcoholism (NIDA, 2009); medications such as antabuse, which essentially turn alcohol into acetaldehyde in the body makes the taker of the medication experience flushing, nausea, and heart palpitations. The medications only seem effective in highly motivated individuals, and then, only if taken before exposure to high risk situations.

In terms of psychotherapies, several seem to be effective in evidence based studies. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) teaches those suffering from addiction how to correct problematic thinking processes leading to drug use and other destructive behaviors. A core presupposition of CBT lies in its belief that human consciousness exists as an intermediary factor between stimuli in the external world and responses (behaviors) to those stimuli from the human organism. Behaviorally, CBT can help addicts in the development of physiological, coping strategies and the avoidance of high risk situations. “In several studies, most people receiving a

cognitive-behavioral approach maintained the gains they made in treatment throughout the following year” (NIDA, 2009, p. 47). Contingency management interventions and motivational incentives seem effective in some cases of treating addiction, particularly with alcohol, stimulants, opioids, and marijuana (NIDA, 2009). Motivational interviewing is a therapy aimed at ending a person’s ambivalence about quitting drugs by helping the client experience and resolve the discrepancy between ones values and actual behaviors (Miller, Tonigan, & Yahne, 2003). Ultimately, “treatment varies depending on the type of drug and the characteristics of the patient. The best programs provide a combination of therapies and other services” (NIDA, 2009, p. 6).

NIDA (2009) does mention 12 step groups as a useful *adjunct* to “professional treatment” on account of AA and NA’s provision of community support to the addict. NIDA makes no mention of the spirituality which lies at the heart of 12 step recovery as evidenced by two aspects of their explanation for the utility of such programs. (1) They refer to AA/NA as “self-help” programs, which is definitely a misnomer. Individual powerlessness over drugs and God’s ability to save exist as the basic tenet of AA/NA. (2) The only utility of such groups according to NIDA (2009) entails AA and NA’s “added layer of community-level social support” (p. 26).

Limitations

Finally, in this section on spirituality and addiction I would like to mention the importance of a person in recovery not confusing the roles of individual counseling, group counseling, and AA/NA (Kinney, 2008) Each of these three components is essential, and each does a distinct task in a holistic process. One cannot attend AA and claim one does group therapy; the premises of each are different. One cannot perform the spiritual steps of

development solely in individual sessions either. I have found that helping clients understand the distinctions between the three is very important in the process of their recovery.

Scharff (2009) has mentioned some common objections to AA/NA and the use of spirituality in addiction recovery. Religiously, some pastors, faith adherents, and theologians view spirituality as too ethereal of a concept, a concept which also infringes on the domain of religious entities. Scientifically, spiritual experience and the quality of a person's recovery cannot really be quantified. Lastly, many addictionologists and mental health professionals frown upon a person's reliance on a power outside themselves as engendering hopelessness; they also often times view AA/NA as too much like organized religion. AA/NA take no stance on any treatment approach an individual decides to take on the path to sobriety (Scharff, 2009).

The Roots of Cinematherapy

Many researchers have traced the phenomenon of using film for therapeutic purposes (cinematherapy) back to the emergence of bibliotherapy. While bibliotherapy stands as an important milestone in this history, the roots of cinematherapy can be traced back even further to the rise of the Greek tragedy/drama and beyond the rise of drama to the development of human language itself (Tick, 2010). Ketcham and Kurtz (2002) have aptly emphasized how being a storyteller and story-listener constitute what it means to be inherently human; the telling of stories and the imbibing of their meanings bestowed purpose on the lives of our ancestors. For example, the Jewish people orally transmitted the monotheistic faith for centuries before scribes (approximately five centuries before the birth of Christ) committed the Torah to writing; the Torah constitutes the first five books of the Christian Old Testament.

While the Torah was being committed to writing approximately five hundred years before Christ, across the Mediterranean Sea in Greece the drama/tragedy concurrently rose to

popularity as a way for the Greek people to deal with the ancient wounds of war. Aristotle noted how “tragic plays have the capacity to purify the spirit and aid us in coping with aspects of life that cannot be reconciled by rational thought” (as cited by Wolz, 2005, p. 105). In both modern and ancient Greece spectators scream(ed), hollar(ed), and cry(cried) at the theater, in essence transforming themselves from spectators into participants as the drama of their own lives unfold(ed) before them on the stage. If we engage films with conscious awareness, clients and therapists can gain access to the cathartic (healing) dynamics experienced by the ancient and modern Greeks during drama/tragedy plays (Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005).

Hesley and Hesley (2001) have noted Sir Walter Galt as early as 1840 cataloging books into the categories of fiction and non-fiction upon the recommendation of psychiatrists for inpatient, mental health residents. However, not until the 1930’s did bibliotherapy, the process of engaged reading for therapeutic healing, come into the mainstream of therapy primarily through the work and writing of William Menninger (1937). “William C. Menninger first described how selected literature might serve educational, recreational, and social purposes in psychiatric hospitals” (Hesley & Hesley, 2001, p. 6). Menninger desired to help clients reframe their symptomatology and history and to expand their interior horizons (Menninger, 1937; Hesley, 2001). In 1940 Hazel Sample wrote the very first paper discussing bibliotherapy as an independent treatment modality and field of study. In the 1970’s Rhea Rubin detailed the effectiveness of self-help materials in conjunction with traditional therapy; her list of self-help materials included books, various types of literature, and poetry (Deane, Kazantzis, & Lampropoulos, 2004).

In 1990 Baruch, Berg-Cross, and Jennings first coined the term ‘cinematherapy’ in their article entitled “Cinematherapy: Theory and Application.” The articulation of their concepts

concerning the relationship between film and therapy developed from an extrapolation on their previous success with bibliotherapy. Sinetar (1993) wrote the first book on the utilization of film as a means of personal psychospiritual growth. In Sinetar's book entitled *Reel Power: Spiritual Growth Through Film* she wrote about film's personal impact on her own life:

For me, there's a magic in film – magic that people like Spielberg know about.

And Capra. I've never felt this magic was totally under the control of the director, but rather that it came from a higher source. During my life, I've looked for the mystical message from the Creator through the medium of film. (p. 6)

Sinetar (1993) has noted that while movies are a pop culture phenomenon, they are proving to be more than this – not just inappropriate waste for the culturally elite; cinema has accomplished in our time what the printing press did in its time – revolutionized the world. Many researchers in the media psychology field have mentioned Sinetar's book as perhaps the seminal work in the field of cinematherapy. More recent works which have contributed to the field of cinematherapy include Wolz's (2005) *E-motion Picture Magic: A Movie Lover's Guide to Healing and Transformation* and Johnston's (2006) *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*.

The Spiritual Effects of the Movie Experience

In this section of the literature review I explore the following constructs: (1) image and symbol, (2) myth and meaning, (3) the power of projection, and (4) modern theories of learning. These four constructs taken together constitute the core of cinematherapy's power to move people affectively and to transform them spiritually.

Image and Symbol

“An icon is like a window looking out upon eternity.”

-Henri Nouwen

“As image, film assumes an artist and a viewer. As story, film assumes a speaker and a listener” (Johnston, 2006, p. 35). Image and story constitute the principal parts of film, and while these integral parts cannot be separated when actually experiencing the healing power of a film, for the purposes of making tacit knowledge somewhat more explicit, I will discuss them – image and story – separately in this literature review. However, one cannot forget how in reel life and in real life the image and the word coalesce in film as the source of its power (Johnston, 2006; Wolz, 2005).

Images, or archetypes, consist of a threefold structure: (1) a visual component, (2) a somatic correlate, a set of bodily sensations and accompanying emotions, and (3) a cognitive schema which imposes meaning on the experience (Kuzendorf, Sheikh, & Sheikh, 1995). Some times images move us more than words. How many artistic images have stirred, uplifted, and even transformed the human mind? Johnston (2006) and Waldron (2009) have mentioned icons, paintings, and statues in the Orthodox and Catholic churches becoming “mediators of ultimate reality” (Johnston, 2006, p. 106). The aforementioned authors and others have connoted film as “word icon,” a phrase used by Waldron (2009). In framing film as a “word icon,” film, like icons in Orthodox theology, becomes sacramental, i.e. God somehow becomes present in a special way through a created object.

A discussion of image and symbols naturally leads to the topic of metaphor. Heston and Kottman (1997) defined metaphor as “phrases, images, or story lines that symbolize, through analogy, another object, idea, person, situation, or relationship” (as cited in Bierman, Krieger, & Leifer, 2003, p.92). Films, like dreams, are littered with metaphorical symbols. And “as the mind explores the symbol (the metaphor), it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason” (Jung, 1964, p. 35). According to Wolz (2005), the paradoxical nature of symbols can stimulate

bi-lateral processes in the brain by transporting many levels of information to the subconscious mind. Sinetar (1993) discussed imagination (notice the word ‘image’ present in the word ‘imagination’) as infiltrating our intellects and our wills. On a preconscious level, human beings think almost exclusively in images. Because of this pre or subconscious reality, it behooves us to inundate our minds with symbols of love and virtue. Living up to and incarnating the essence of images of love and virtue are daunting tasks; film vividly portrays the struggle to incarnate the symbolic images of love and virtue (Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005). Usually, an experience of powerful metaphor, or an archetypal image, permits an individual to reach the collective unconscious, the realm of the Spirit. If movies are watched with conscious awareness, a person can learn to live within their metaphors. “Some films are like parables in the Gospel; they bring to our attention moral, social, and spiritual issues that we wouldn’t otherwise learn about through the medium of ordinary words” (Keating, 1999, p. 40).

Lesser (1999) posited that any art form which puts a person in touch with his or her deepest spiritual longing commenced a process of soul retrieval, because the human spirit speaks the language of metaphor and images. Ancient peoples viewed their lives mythologically, in the context of magic, godly mystery, and enchanting beauty. The mythological world, largely lost to modern human beings, portrays a physical world undergirded and infiltrated by the Spirit. This mythological paradigm existed at least 20,000 years ago with the existence of shamanism (Kunzendorf et al., 1995). Some of the following beliefs about reality characterize shamanism: (1) The human soul is the most real and living aspect of a person; (2) Invisible, or spiritual, dimensions of life exist and undergird the phenomenal world; (3) Human beings can access these invisible realms of existence; (4) Through the soul, persons can connect in very real ways to nature, humanity, sentient life forms, and the deceased; (5) All creatures, including inanimate

objects in nature, possess spirits with which we can communicate; and (6) The source of shamanic power lies in the spiritual foundation of reality (Tick, 2007).

Shamans themselves were living metaphors, including within themselves the highly symbolic roles of healer, magician, and priest (Kunzendorf et al., 1995). In discussing persons as metaphors in film, Sinetar (1993) proposed all heroes and heroines (the shaman in all of us) as self-actualizing individuals capable of rising above the limits imposed by socio-cultural norms and the vicissitudes of life. In shamanism all sickness emanated from a spiritual crisis; this spiritual crisis served as an initiatory gift into the spiritual realm. This view of illness parallels the etiology and treatment of alcoholism and addiction posited by AA, NA, and transpersonal psychology.

In shamanic practice manifesting existed as a powerful healing tool. Manifesting, what many might call today visualization meditation, included “clearly visualizing a desired circumstance and then adding one’s self to the picture with all of one’s senses” (Kuzendorf et al., 1995, p. 474). Invocations, or affirmations, would also be used in conjunction with manifesting. Here, even 20,000 years ago, we glimpse the unity of image and word, the unitary power harnessed by film. Benefits of imagery work with clients include some of the following: (1) a circumventing of rational processes, (2) conducive to desired affective states, and (3) useful with clients of lower than average intelligence.

Although writing from a Christian vantage point, Pope John Paul II (1999) eloquently captured the essence of the power of image in art:

Art must make perceptible, and as far as possible attractive, the world of the spirit, of the invisible, of God. It must therefore translate into meaningful terms that which is in itself ineffable. Art has a unique capacity to take one or other facet of the message

and translate it into colors, shapes, and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen. It does so without emptying the message itself of its transcendent value and its aura of mystery.

The Church has need especially of those who can do this on the literary and figurative level, using the endless possibilities of images and their symbolic force. Christ himself made extensive use of images in his preaching, fully in keeping with his willingness to become, in the Incarnation, the icon of the unseen God.
(p. 28)

Art psychotherapy. Mentioning the field of art therapy seems appropriate at this point. “Art therapy is a modality that uses the nonverbal language of art for personal growth, insight, and transformation and is a means of connecting what is inside us – our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions – with outer realities and life experiences. It is based on the belief that images can help us understand who we are and enhance life through self expression” (Malchiodi, 2007, p. 1). For most of human history, cultures across the world have utilized art forms for healing and self expression. Malchiodi (2007) has defined the two basic tenets of art therapy: (1) the creative process itself possesses an inherent capacity to heal; ‘art as therapy’ denotes this idea. (2) The artistic productions of clients can serve as a way to enhance the verbal exchange which occurs during psychotherapy, because clients can, through their art work, express ideas and feelings words cannot communicate.

In describing the creative process, Wadeson (2010) mentioned the power of creativity coming from its inherent capacity to facilitate transcendence of one’s ego into the realm of universal themes (or what Jung would call ‘the collective unconscious’) and the application of these themes to one’s personal life. For the most part, human beings think in images. In order

for linguistic communication to occur, images must be changed into thought and then thought into language. One of the advantages of art therapy lies in its ability to communicate more quickly and viscerally through bypassing the more advanced language-producing parts of the brain (Wadeson, 2010). Wadeson (2010) described verbal communication as a linear process and artistic communication as more holistic in its ability to display many relationships and concepts simultaneously.

Many art therapists credit Freud and Jung as the foundation of art therapy theory on account of their emphasis on symbolization. For this reason, an entire section of chapter two has been devoted to the theory of Jung who placed such a high importance on his own artistic productions and those of his clients. In terms of addiction, Wadeson (2010) discovered the reoccurring themes of loss and ambivalence in working with those suffering from alcoholism.

Myth and Meaning – The Power of the Story

“The shortest distance between the truth and the human person is a story.”

-Anthony DeMello

“My films will explore the heart not with logic, but with compassion...I will deal with the little man’s doubts, his causes, his loss of faith in himself, in his neighbor, and in his God. And I will show the overcoming of doubts, the courageous renewal of faith...And I will remind the little man that his mission on earth is to advance spiritually.”

-Frank Capra

“I have a tale to tell; sometimes it gets so hard to hide it well. The life that you could never see; it shines inside you; you can’t take that from me...A man can tell a thousand lies; I’ve learned my lesson well. Hope I live to tell the secret I have learned...till then it will burn inside of me.”

-Madonna

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you.”

-Maya Angelou

The hero's journey applies to almost any aspect of the human journey with its nagging search for meaning (Campbell, 1973; Tick, 2010). The essential elements of the hero's tripartite journey include the departure from “home,” the experience of the underworld, and the return to a different “home” based on a renewed or altered sense of meaning and self. Vogler (2007), drawing inspiration from the life and works of Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, has presented an elaborated and detailed description of the stages in the hero's journey:

1. **The Ordinary World.** At this stage we first encounter the hero and form a bond based on an understanding of this character's particular strengths and weaknesses.
2. **The Call to Adventure.** At this juncture the protagonist encounters some sort of problem and can no longer remain psychospiritually at “home.”
3. **Refusal of the Call.** The main character displays fear and an unwillingness to face the unknown despite how difficult and unfulfilling the current “home” may be.
4. **Meeting with the Mentor.** The protagonist solidifies a deep bond with a highly symbolic person who serves as a source of inspiration and wisdom. Wolz (2005) referred to the relationship between the protagonist and the mentor as an archetypal bond symbolic of that between parent and child, between God and the human person.
5. **Crossing the First Threshold.** Here, the hero (or heroine) decisively commits to the mythic journey and enters the underworld.
6. **Tests, Allies, and Enemies.** While journeying in the underworld, other characters and pivotal events serve to define the geography of the psychospiritual terrain; these

characters and events also become part of the newly emerging self of the protagonist (Wolz, 2005).

7. **The Approach to the Inmost Cave.** At this juncture of the story the hero or heroine prepares for the apex of confrontation. This confrontation could result in the protagonist's failure to successfully complete the crucial, psychospiritual task, spiritual demise, and/or physical death. Not all protagonists successfully navigate this stage of the journey. (Not all stories have fairy tale endings).
8. **The Ordeal.** This is the pivotal struggle of the hero/heroine when he/she stares down terrifying fears and metaphorically or in actuality, confronts death. In addition, as in post terror soul distress (PTSD), a person cannot resolve the ordeal and becomes stuck in the hellish prison of the underworld (Tick, 2010).
9. **The Reward.** In this segment of the journey the hero/heroine commences the return home after a psychospiritual rebirth. This rebirth results from the confrontation with one's biggest fears. Courage is not a lack of fear but acting despite the fear.
10. **The Road Back.** The protagonist commits to finishing the journey and reviews lessons learned. However, danger still lurks, because the main character cannot use familiar means to return home.
11. **The Resurrection.** Wolz (2005) described this stage of the hero's journey as "a climactic test that purifies, redeems, and transforms the hero on the threshold of home" (p. 10). In essence the resurrection serves as the hero's final examination.
12. **The Return with the Elixir.** In this final stage the hero/heroine returns "home" and shares the wisdom imbibed from the journey; this healing wisdom often consists of a new ideology and identity. "The antidote for the ache lies in ceasing the resistance to our

calling, finding courage to face our worst fears, and consequently expanding our possibilities” (Wolz, 2005, p. 11).

Myths are deeply entrenched, enduring spiritual truths about human nature and the world, which people need perpetually reaffirmed; the best myths teach us even as children the vain hope for finding happiness in external successes (Sinetar, 1993). For example, in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, the mean and nasty Grinch, who lives on a mountain overlooking Hooville, believes he can destroy the seeming irrepressible joy of the Hoos by confiscating on Christmas Eve all of their Christmas gifts and outward manifestations of Christmas (trees, decorations, etc). Upon awakening on Christmas morning, the Grinch does not hear songs of lament; he hears the Hoos singing their traditional songs of Christmas joy. The Grinch, along with the listener, understands how the most important realities in life are invisible, and his heart grew however many sizes that day. Searching outside ourselves for happiness ensconces us in the lower level of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The absolute focus on society’s obsession with appearance, achievement, and affluence as the means of happiness ultimately fail; only soul development can provide us with the peace surpassing understanding, the peace which the world cannot give.

How do we access our past and current mythology for the purpose of spiritual growth? Film exists as the modern medium conveying our collective mythology, the spiritual truths to liberate us (Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005). If we actively engage with film, we can find models to emulate; solutions to our everyday and existential problems; and new stories by which to re-author our lives. To change our lives, we must re-author our stories, because “stories shape our experiences, the stories we enact with one another are not about our lives, but rather *are* our lives” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2009, p. 365). We are our stories. If we are our stories, recasting them in the paradigm of the stages of the aforementioned hero’s journey as portrayed in

film, can cause an individual to have transcendent experiences and cause virtue to flourish. This is important, because the struggle to be a loving and virtuous person, a spiritual person, is the core of what bestows meaning on our personal narratives (Sinetar, 1993). In the 21st century film is our primary method for telling stories; film serves as scripture for the modern world (Johnston, 2006). Sinetar (1993) wrote:

Stories heal. Their teachings can awaken inner strength, nobility, and self-value. Myths and fables ignite and dignify life. Our favorite movies are emblematic of ideas we need and value for this enrichment to happen. While engaged with these, we sense that we are at our best and comprehend what we must do to act on what we know is real and meaningful. (p. 125)

In a similar way, albeit from the vantage point of religion, Bowker (2002) wrote the following about mythic story:

Myth is the way in which the story of an individual life is set in the context of far larger stories – narratives of the family or tribe or nation to which the individual belongs, and the whole world, past, present, and future. Myth is supremely the way in which the human mind is able to explore and imagine God; and religions are communities with a common narrative and story in their shared mythology. (p. 46)

While music, image, and the special effects present in movies are important, the mythic story is the central reality and axis of any quality film. The other elements of a movie are nothing without myth and meaning, without the power of the story. A quality film possesses many, if not all, of Vogler's (2007) twelve stages of the hero's journey. A quality film and quality religion, through their narratives, will also pose three pertinent inquiries with possible answers: (1) identity

– who I am; who we are; (2) source of self – from where does one come; and (3) action – this is possibly the best action to take (Johnston, 2006).

The importance of narrative in the film experience as mentioned in this section corresponds to the mechanism of spiritual healing experienced by alcoholics and addicts. Largely, through the telling of and listening to stories do alcoholics and addicts heal (Ketcham & Kurtz, 2002; Scharff, 2009). A spirituality characterized by surrender, gratitude, humility, tolerance, and forgiveness lives in the stories of recovering addicts. Therefore, when an alcoholic/addict shares one's story, a simple description doesn't occur, but the experience of redemption does (Ketcham & Kurtz, 2002). Words have the power to create and to destroy; language shapes reality, and therefore language penetrates, influences, and colors how we think, perceive, and act. For this reason, for example, Buddhism emphasizes the significance of right thought, right speech, and right action, and Don Miguel Ruiz, author of *The Four Agreements* (2001), makes the very first agreement about language – *Be impeccable with your word*. The Gospel of John opens with “In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God” (*New American Bible*, John 1:1). The opening of John's Gospel parallels the opening of the first book of the Bible in which God creates everything through the power of the Word, the *Logos*. God speaks, and creation of some sort follows. The importance of language and the narrative! Ketcham and Kurtz (2002) in the following paragraph have described the healing power of narrative in addiction recovery; however, the description could eloquently serve as one for the power of narrative in film as well:

Stories are the vehicle that moves metaphor and image into experience. Like metaphors and images, stories communicate what is generally invisible and ultimately inexpressible. In seeking to understand these realities through time, stories provide a perspective that

touches on the divine, allowing us to see reality in full context, as part of its larger whole. Stories invite a kind of vision that gives shape and form even to the invisible, making the images move, clothing the metaphors, throwing color into the shadows. Of all the devices available to us, stories are the surest way of touching the human spirit. (p. 17)

Narrative therapy. According to Epston and White (1990), largely influenced by Bateson's notion of interpretive maps, stories consist of events linked in sequential order across time in accord with a plot or theme. Psychopathology results when people possess negative and thin descriptions of their lives; these negatively, internalized scripts prevent people from living out their preferred narrative, their preferred story. Anthropologically, people in power, whether parents, clergy, or professionals, impose a belief statement, with the power to define, on another human being, usually children; unfortunately, these narrative beliefs often do not reflect a person's individuality (Geertz, 1973; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Thin descriptions are labels. Over time, problem-saturated stories become problem-saturated identities of a self-fulfilling nature. In families and societies problems emanate from the "meaning that members attribute to events (which, in turn,) determine behavior," and individuals, whether for good or for ill, "organize their lives around specific meanings" (Epston & White, 1990, p. 3).

From a social constructionist vantage point (i.e. we can create our own lives and stories despite societal and cultural impositions), narrative therapy seeks to help people create thick and nuanced stories from the many meanings we can bestow on events. Thick descriptions, as opposed to thin ones, honor the subjectivity of the human person with all of his or her values, meanings, interests, and hopes. Thick descriptions result from the continued retelling of one's preferred story (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Ultimately, a narrative therapist does not help

a client to replace one story with another but facilitates the understanding of one's life as multi-storied.

Ruiz (2001) referred to living out the narratives imposed upon us by society and the world at large as living the dream of the planet. The deconstructionist philosophy of narrative therapy provides people with the freedom from sociopolitical influence to impose their own meanings on events. Narrative therapy challenges the “issues of power, privilege, oppression, control” and applauds efforts at personally meaningful “ethics and social justice” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 370). Therapists help clients to create fuller, nuanced stories by the externalization of problems *and* positive characteristics. In externalizing a problem, the therapist and client can focus on the negative consequences of that problem in a person's life as opposed to viewing the problem as an internal, inherent quality of the person. This externalization creates the psychological distance for change to occur concerning the problem. Naming the problem as frequently as possible during therapy and discussing what tactics the problem utilized to cause suffering stand as valid, narrative techniques in helping the client to externalize the problem and therefore re-author one's story. The problem can become externally personified with its own story and its own desire to wreak havoc on the person's life. Here, in terms of addiction, I ponder the problem of addiction almost as an unwelcomed, demonic spirit of sorts. This act of actually giving the problem its own identity and story finds a correlate in the Native American tradition of naming the spirit of an illness and entering into dialogue with that spirit for the sake of healing.

Locating positive qualities and values outside a person also aids in the narrative therapy process. By viewing the existence of desired qualities during certain life events, qualities existing in direct opposition to the problem-saturated story, the client can view exceptions in the

narrative of one's life. Narrative therapists refer to these exceptions as unique outcomes. Unique outcomes can be "exceptional events, actions, or thoughts contradicting (the) dominant problem-saturated story" (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 375). These acts of defiance against the thin, negative, and problem-laden story, against the now personified problem, can provide the framework for the future re-authoring of one's past, present, and future. For example, in using a therapeutic document, a client may journal about his or her feelings in regard to the times the problem ceased to exist, if even momentarily; about how he or she has acted when the problem was not present (the exceptions); and/or about how one would act and feel when overcoming the particular problem (Epston & White, 1990).

Native American healing and story. Mehl-Madrona (2007), an author on Native American healing practices, touts the power of the story as one of the most powerful tools of healing in the Native American tradition. "All you are is the story. When you pass over, the stories told by you and about you are all that remains" (Mehl-Madrona, 2007, p.1).

In most Native American cultures identity formation entails the development of a "coherent master story" (Mehl-Madrona, 2007). This master story links together one's past, present, and future into a transpersonal theme with sequential logic. Mental illness results from a breakdown in the transpersonal vision and sense of cohesion in one's narrative, i.e. in one's life. Ruiz (2001) posited the etiology of this mental illness in the lack of personal, existential authenticity; many of us have bought into the dream-story narrated to us by society, religion, culture, and the world at large. We have imbibed these stories, the dream of the planet, without questioning its veracity.

When the aforementioned breakdown occurs, illness often results. According to Mehl-Madrona (2007), illnesses possess spirits and also have their own story to tell. Often times in

Native American cultures, the shaman will enter into dialogue with the spirit of the illness after the individual suffering from the ailment has entered an altered state of consciousness. This dialogue provides clues about how to proceed in the process of healing and the soul lesson to be learned from the suffering. Mehl-Madrona (2007) described one of his sessions in poignant detail:

In the first session, I had Shannon relax and enter an altered state. When we first set off to converse with Shannon's diabetes, it was very elusive. We had to go looking for it. Eventually, we found ourselves in a bayou on a flat-bottom boat. We were hunting frogs and dodging alligators. As it turned out, Shannon had an uncle who used to hunt frogs early in the morning, selling them to fancy restaurants just after daybreak. They were the freshest frog legs money could buy. She had gone with him a few times and had helped with the frogging.

Shannon's diabetes turned out to be a really big frog. We stopped into its lair for a chat, and Shannon apologized for her uncle's hunting its kin. "Oh, well, he had to eat," responded the Frog King, "but the joke's on him. In the end, I ate him." He was right. Her uncle had lost both of his legs to diabetes; gangrene had literally eaten them off.

"Why are you here?" asked Shannon.

"I came at birth," he said. "I just wait until the right time to appear. Then I claim you for my own."

"What if I don't want to be claimed by you?"

“Well, then,” said the Frog King, wearing an old-time suit like that of a Mississippi River boat gambler, “you’ve got to live your passion. Nothing else will do. You see, I can’t compete with passion. It trumps every card in my deck.” The dialogue continued productively, but this small vignette highlighted the key message for Shannon: she needed to live her passion. When we explored what this might mean, together we discovered how miserable she was in her job, her relationships, her life. She worked just to make money in an environment that she hated and felt was unethical and demeaning. Her partner mooched off her and rarely held a job. She resented his freeloading.

She kept telling herself that she could be better if only she worked harder, tried harder, and sacrificed more. Together, we got to the core of this idea: it was part of a family story, a story about how God rewards good Catholics who then are celebrated and healed. At a deeper level, Shannon’s mother and grandmother actually had a lot of anger at God for not following the formula.

For Shannon, there was a direct relationship between the beliefs she had inherited with this family story and her diabetes. But in order to heal, she needed to understand more about how to change the story. What did she really believe? We sought further guidance.

In this communication, Shannon was told by a healing spirit, “You’d like to heal. You’re trying to. But what if you can’t? Everyone and everything has limits. And God has no more power than all of us added up, because all of us, together, are God.” This contradicted and challenged Shannon’s story about an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God. And it led her toward another question and

another story, that of how she would live if she were God to herself. Would she be punishing or loving?

Through our work together, Shannon constructed a new story about her life, a story in which she was part of a compassionate God, she could live her passion without fear, and she didn't have to sacrifice in order to be blessed. As this new story developed, her health improved, and she began to feel stronger. She exercised. She lost weight. She went to ceremonies. The symptoms of her diabetes disappeared, though we knew it still lurked in the corners and the shadows, ready to return if given the opportunity. As Shannon changed her story, other aspects of her health improved. She successfully used herbs to reduce her glucose and her cholesterol. Homeopathy reduced her neuropathic pain.

Acupuncture improved her digestive symptoms.

There are many, many stories like this—stories of healing in which a person becomes empowered to create health through a change in their story. (p. 1)

Tick (2007) has also mentioned the power of the story for healing in the Native American tradition. In *Wild Beasts and Wandering Souls: Shamanism and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*

Tick (2007) listed the following tenets as crucial to healing:

- The themes and patterns of stories are built into the universe.
- Our souls replicate these stories and have destinies and tasks to fulfill.
- The soul or some of its traits can become damaged, wounded, skewed, or even lost.
- Healing of both physical and psychological disorders must fundamentally and ultimately occur in the soul.

- Cultures foster the expression through story, role, ritual, and practice the eternal stories, roles, tasks, and influence of spirits, and the connection of the human community with these spirits. (p. 12)

The works of Tick (2007/2010), Mehl-Madrona (2007), and Ruiz (2001) in the Native American tradition corroborate and complement the theory of narrative therapy, Vogler's twelve stages of the hero's journey, Campbell's exposition of mythology and its importance, and Jung's theories concerning the collective unconscious, mythology, art, religion, and the psychotherapeutic process of individuation.

Projection Power

Interestingly enough, in the dictionary, projection is defined as the pushing of an image onto the screen and the psychological attribution of one's inner, emotional state onto other persons or objects (Wolz, 2005). This fact lends further credibility to the use of film as a projective device in therapeutic work. This section focuses on the dynamics of projection and how film can elucidate these dynamics for the purposes of healing. In the process of cinematherapy, people reveal themselves through the power of projection in the process of extracting scenes, lines, issues, and characters which inspire and/or disturb them.

Human beings seemingly are experts at denying both their light and their darkness (Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005). What we strongly hate in film characters, we hate most in ourselves. What we strongly admire in film characters are usually latent, positive qualities in our unconscious minds waiting for development. When we understand our shadow elements, whether negative or positive, we can cease projecting these psychological realities onto the world and others; we can cease feeling badly about ourselves when in complete admiration of another and cease reacting angrily when strong feelings of dislike awaken as a result of someone else's

negative capacities. “If we can see the log in our own eyes *and* our heroism, compassion, and power, we can do ourselves and one another a world of good” (Sinetar, 1993, p. 23). (The previous section on the theories of Jung discusses the formation and dynamics of the shadow). Bierman et al. (2003) noted in their research the projective utility of film. In their research at an inpatient, mental health facility, film allowed clients to speak about themselves indirectly by directly speaking about the qualities of characters and the relationships between characters. Directly confronting themselves, the tremendously, anxiety-provoking content of the unconscious would have inundated and psychically paralyzed the clients. In this regard, the researchers demonstrated respect for an individual’s ego strengths and weaknesses.

Cashdan (1988), an expert in object relations theory, has posited the utility of the cinema in helping clients and therapists overcome the pathological idea of our “badness” having to be destroyed in order for our “goodness” to flourish. The splitting of good versus evil occurs in all great myths. In children’s fairy tales the power of goodness can completely destroy the reality of evil (Cashdan, 1988). However, in adult mythology the goal entails the reconciliation between the good and evil residing in all of us. Cashdan (1988) wrote:

If the patient is to cease splitting off bad parts of the self through pathological interactions, the patient first must come to terms with the fact that what is considered ‘bad’ is not necessarily grounds for rejection or abandonment. The fact that good and bad can live side by side holds out the opportunity for the acceptance of badness as an integral part of the self. (p. 170)

Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* demonstrates how a full scale attempt to eliminate our “badness” results in self-destruction.

Cashdan (1988) posited *The Wizard of Oz* as the best cinematic example of splitting and coming to terms with the good and the evil in us. (In the subsequent description notice how Dorothy travels the path of the hero's journey outlined by Vogler). The wicked witch of the West appears in Munchkin Land soon after Dorothy arrives in Oz and has killed the sister of the wicked witch of the West – the wicked witch of the East. The sudden appearance of the wicked witch of the West symbolizes how evil cannot easily be destroyed (Cashdan, 1988). Glenda, the good witch and maternal/mentor character provides Dorothy with a transitional object – the ruby slippers - as she steps out into life as portrayed in the following of the yellow brick road.

On the yellow brick road Dorothy encounters three characters, three of Dorothy's inner complexes, three of our inner complexes we want to overcome. Cashdan (1988) referred to these characters as forms of "badness" that all children and adults desire to overcome; in keeping with Jungian theory, I have utilized the term 'complex.' In encountering the scarecrow with no brain, we encounter with Dorothy our own intellectual ineptitude. Therefore, we want to travel with the scarecrow to Oz in order to obtain knowledge and wisdom. Secondly, Dorothy, and we along with her, encounters the Tin Man with no heart. Have our hearts become shielded and blockaded with metal? Cashdan (1988) wrote of the encounter with the Tin Man as an encounter with our own alienation from others and our desire to overcome the anger, hate, and resentment which separates us from humanity. Lastly, we encounter the Cowardly Lion, the existential complex of the fear of living and the fear of dying, who at times can seemingly possess us. And so, we travel to Oz in search of courage also. In the journey to the Emerald City, Dorothy journeys inwardly to find her highest Self and overcome all obstacles to experiencing this Self. In summary, Cashdan (1988) wrote:

The qualities for which they have been searching lie within each of them and have

been there all along...The lesson learned in Oz and the wisdom she takes back to Kansas is that her journey has led to the realization that she must search within herself if she hopes to overcome her own personal shortcomings. The source of badness lies not without but within, and one needs to come to terms with this if life is to proceed.

In the end, the victory Dorothy wins is a victory over herself. (p. 181)

‘Home’ was within Dorothy all along; it is not a physical space but a spiritual state of the heart. Cashan (1988) has cited numerous authors, all of whom have praised cinema for providing the modern world with psychospiritual metaphors with which to access and work with preverbal and unconscious material and experiences.

Recent Theories of Learning and Creativity

Many people think of intelligence as a singular, encapsulated construct to which an assessor can assign a score (i.e. IQ scores). However, more recent research has suggested the existence of multiple intelligences. According to Gardner (1993), the term ‘intelligence’ as used by psychometrics denotes a singular construct; yet human beings display a vast array of behaviors indicative of cognitive capabilities underlying them. Based on evidence such as brain isolation, studies of brain damaged individuals, developmental progression of capabilities, and the existence of idiot-savants, Gardner (1993) has listed the following as forms of intelligence: (1) spatial intelligence – the capacity to visualize inside one’s mind; (2) linguistic intelligence – the ability to use words and language in a facile manner; (3) logical-mathematical intelligence – the ability to reason well and abstract; (4) musical intelligence – displaying a high sensitivity to sound and its qualities; (5) interpersonal intelligence – an ease in interacting with others; (6) kinesthetic intelligence – the ability to exercise control over one’s bodily movements - Athletes

and dancers might have a high kinesthetic intelligence; and (7) intrapersonal intelligence – the capacity for a high level of self-reflection.

Wolz (2005) took note of Gardner's theory and its application to cinematherapy. The more intelligences a person utilizes simultaneously, the faster the individual learns; film utilizes all seven of the intelligences posited by Gardner (Wolz, 2005). Spatial intelligence corresponds to filmmakers' use of scenery and special effects; film accesses linguistic intelligence via the dialogue of the characters; the plot of a film capitalizes on one's logical-mathematical intelligence; the soundtrack of a film obviously corresponds to musical intelligence; the storytelling which occurs in a film corresponds to Gardner's construct of interpersonal intelligence; movement sequences in movies capture one's kinesthetic intelligence; and lastly, any self-reflection a film creates in the minds of the viewers prompts the use of intrapersonal intelligence (Wolz, 2005). All of the aforementioned aspects of a movie and their corresponding intelligences function synergistically. A movie's story, visual imagery, and soundtrack work in synchronicity to suggest how the viewer ought to think and feel (Sturdevant, 1988; Wolz, 2005).

While Wolz (2005) has provided the most comprehensive overview of the relationship between film and multiple intelligences, other authors have commented on this relationship as well. Tart (1977) discussed the effects of music on the human midbrain, a less evolved, emotional response center of the nervous system. Listening to music can loosen the grip of the ego on the emotional life and thus allow emotions to surface from the unconscious mind (Tart, 1977). Therefore, film soundtracks and music exist as crucial elements in any given film's effectiveness. Music and image aid in the reinforcement of messages bestowed on the audience by the story and the characters. Sinetar (1993) wrote at length about film's ability to engage the most important faculties of the human soul - intellect and will; when the intellect and will apply

messages received from films, change can occur. Sinetar (1993) also noted how film coalesces all of the art forms in a unique way and therefore possesses the ability to transform the soul more so than other art forms. In essence, Sinetar captured twelve years before the work of Wolz the synergistic power of film when compared to other art forms.

Ketcham and Kurtz (2002) have noted all valid spiritual experience as involving all of the human senses so that our entire being touches, hears, smells, tastes, and sees the divine. Therefore, the body, with its somatic intelligences, cannot be divorced from true spiritual experiences. Finally, Logue (2008) wrote the following:

It (film) is seen as an advance over earlier media-related therapy-aiding devices like print, art, or music, because it can simultaneously and more affectively engage the senses, arouse or connect to problem-related thoughts, and possibly bypass psychic sensors more readily, thereby speeding up the therapeutic process. (p. 2)

Ways Film Aid the Transpersonal Therapy Process

Wolz (2005) has mentioned three ways of using film in therapy: (1) the evocative way, (2) the prescriptive way, and (3) the cathartic way. The method chosen by the therapist depends to a large extent on the personality and symptomatology of the client. The methods highlight how cinematherapy can be used in conjunction with any form of affective, behavioral, and cognitive therapies.

The evocative way aims at self discovery by making unconscious material conscious. Similar to dream work, the therapist utilizes the evocative way to help the client discover positive and negative aspects of the shadow; parts work, couples, group, and family therapy, hypnotherapy, and EMDR are useful when combined with the evocative way (Wolz, 2005). This

method of cinematherapy bears resemblance to the depth psychotherapy discussed largely in the previous section on Jung.

The prescriptive way of cinematherapy focuses on models of behavior (Wolz, 2005). In this method, the therapist assigns and performs film work based on characters who model specific problem-solving behaviors. “Here, films are used as cautionary tales” (Wolz, 2005, p. 27). This manner of using film in therapy works well in conjunction with cognitive-behavioral therapies (Wolz, 2005). In early recovery from addiction, this might be a preferred method of engaging in cinematherapy, because those in early recovery need models to emulate a life of recovery. The existence of sponsors and storytelling in the AA/NA movement testify to the importance of emulation.

The cathartic way attempts to ensure emotional release in clients (Wolz, 2005). This method of watching movies seeks emotional and physiological release through laughing and/or crying, thus expunging the distressful emotions stored by the body over time. The emotional and somatic release experienced in the cathartic way permits quality therapeutic work to be done (Sinetar, 1993). Laughing and crying releases endorphins in the body, and emotional tears also release stress hormones from the body as evidenced by their higher protein content as compared to irritant tears (Wolz, 2005). The emotional vulnerability made possible in the cathartic way, allowing for good therapeutic work to be accomplished, initially led me to explore the role of film in psychotherapy and addiction recovery. The cathartic way seems highly appropriate in doing grief work.

Diagnosis and Assessment

Wolz (2005) has claimed that knowing a client’s favorite films, preferred genre of films, and how the client’s emotions and actions are reflected in screen characters as very useful in the

diagnostic and assessment process. The assessment process of the client continues throughout the entire course of therapy. Hesley and Hesley (2001) have also referred to the role of film in diagnosis and assessment:

“In the clients’ choice of movies, we find clues to their working role models, ideal self-images, internal resources, potential goals, perceived obstacles, degrees of imagination and creativity, and overall philosophy in life. Furthermore...by talking about films early in the therapeutic relationship, we allow clients to express feelings that may be too threatening to express directly. (p. 41)

Overcoming Resistance

The last lines of the aforementioned quotation suggest the utility of film in overcoming resistance in the therapy process. Clients are likely to display curiosity and a willingness to establish rapport at the suggestion of a film by a therapist (Wolz, 2005). In my view, film can provide a more broadened and objective vantage point concerning one’s current problems and symptoms and can also imbibe hope in seeing characters on the screen with similar problems change before one’s eyes.

Bierman et al. (2003) suggested that the cinematherapy process permits the accessing of extremely difficult, psychological material more easily on account of the projective nature of the process. In their 2003 study the researchers observed group dynamics after viewing the movie imitate the dynamics which occurred between the characters in the film. This imitation occurred largely through an identification with certain characters in the film and the subsequent sharing of feelings emanating from that identification. Furthermore, “through the metaphor of the movies the girls were able to view a resolution to their conflicts...(the films) provided psychological and visual nourishment” (Bierman et al., 2003, p. 12).

Important Studies in the Use of Film in Psychotherapy

While Portadin (2006) and some others have posited a lack of empirical studies to support the efficacy of cinematherapy, the aforementioned author failed to include several important, empirical studies in the 2006 dissertation and also failed to view holistically the numerous case studies and anecdotal evidence supporting the use of film in therapy. For the most part, clinicians do not debate whether to utilize films in therapy but are debating just how to use them for maximum effectiveness. My research findings have provided one meaningful and effective way of implementing cinematherapy. The following studies and/or works (in chronological order) refute Portadin's claim, and taken as a gestalt (or whole), these studies provide research leverage to cinematherapy as a sometimes distinct and definitely powerful form of therapy.

Adams and McGuire (1986) measured the effectiveness of comedies on helping a group of elderly patients in a long term facility deal with chronic pain. The study consisted of thirteen participants, seven constituted the research group and six constituted the control group. The research group watched humorous films, while the control group viewed non-humorous films. The seven ($N=7$) residents who engaged in the humorous film experience possessed significantly higher affective scores than the control group. My one critique of this study concerns the sampling size. The size of the research group for a quantitative study seemed relatively small to me.

Heming and Lu (1987) demonstrated through their pre and post test questionnaire study the reduction of the participants' death anxiety and an improvement in their attitudes towards death based on the use of the film *Ikiru*, a 1952 film by A. Kurosawa. The authors used twenty-

five adult viewers as the experimental group and forty-six adults participating in a psychology conference as the control group.

Sinetar's (1993), while mostly an auto-ethnographical book on her own use of film for personal spiritual growth, discussed many researchers and filmmakers in her work to corroborate her own experience with film. Film, when actively engaged, can allow us to experience our inherent goodness and virtue and to accept our brokenness. Before re-directing negative shadow energy, it must first be accepted. "Any infusion of greater inspiration or positivity to thought, feeling, or action, any movement at all of our will toward self-acceptance, kindness, patience, or charity indicates the presence of spirituality" (Sinetar, 1993, p.5). We can experience and grow in the virtues mentioned by Sinetar by watching movies with conscious awareness and listening for the mystical messages in movies. Researchers cannot ultimately quantify constructs such as love, spirituality, and wholeness, and therefore psychology has primarily focused on pathology.

Collins and Jurich (1996) utilized movies about teenagers in an effort to enhance the participants' (themselves teenagers) levels of self-esteem. They measured any change in the construct of self-esteem amongst forty teenagers ($N=40$). The researchers administered the Tennessee Self-Concept scales before and after a six week program of film watching with post-film discussion. The authors indicated a statistically significant increase in total self concept scores as a result of increased scores on the scales of self satisfaction, family self, and social self. The authors used the SPSS system to calculate their statistics reported as valid and reliable. According to Knickerbocker (2009), the main weakness of this study entailed a lack of a control group and no longitudinal tracking of the participants. Collins and Jurich (1996) highlighted how the modern teenager will spend well over sixteen thousand hours of time in front of a television; this far surpasses the amount of time modern adolescents will spend in school and on

school activities combined. This fact seemed pertinent to my study, because I believe I helped the participants transform the manner in which they engage with media.

Cole, Sharp, and Smith (2002) concluded the utility of film in suggesting solutions to problems; reframing one's negative circumstances; commencing the process of spiritual growth; and building rapport between therapist and client. Furthermore, many people who do not cry in real life will do so in "reel" life as film circumvents the normal, defense mechanisms. Watching a movie places a person in a semi-dissociative state in which reality becomes temporarily suspended. Clients are more likely to acquiesce to watching a two hour long film as homework as opposed to reading a long book. (Film is also already an important reality in many people's lives). Lastly, audiovisual material proved to be more effective than bibliotherapy in therapeutic outcomes (Marrs, 1995).

Bierman et al. (2003) posited the development of a tripartite relationship forming between the client, the therapist, and the metaphors of any particular film. Conducting the research at a large, inpatient mental health facility for adolescent girls, the researchers determined that a client can broaden one's internal perspective by applying the associations, ideas, and symbols in a film to one's own life. The researchers, based on the work of Jeon (1992) and Morawski (1997), highlighted four stages through which a client progresses in the process of cinematherapy: (a) identification – seeing one's self in a character on screen, (b) catharsis – emotions and difficult material arise from the unconscious, (c) insight – client consciously makes the connection between one's self and the film character, and (d) universalization – others experience the same problems as the client.

Niemiec and Wedding (2003) discussed the educative influence of film in our society regarding mental illness, whether for good or for ill. For example, the film *As Good As It Gets*

provided a good and accurate view of a person suffering from OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder), while the movie *Psycho* insinuates that people with psychoses such as schizophrenics are always violent and dangerous, which is not true. Film can educate clients and their families about the nature and treatment of mental illness; offer hope and inspiration; can aid the client in reframing difficult life circumstances and symptoms; offer role models for emulation; ascertain and aid in the development of client strengths; elicit emotion; provide examples of appropriate communication; aid clients in a determination of one's life values; and help establish rapport in the therapeutic relationship. Baruch et al. (1990), Sinetar (1993), Hesley and Hesley (2001), and Wolz (2005) have also discussed the previously mentioned benefits of film in psychotherapy. "Metaphors, repeated often, used creatively, and applied to the client's life can alter behavior, foster insight, and deepen personal understanding" (Niemic & Wedding, 2003, p. 211). "At best, cinematherapy can be a major catalyst for change in psychotherapy; at the very least, it is a valuable tool and useful adjunct to treatment" (Niemic & Wedding, 2003, p. 214).

Suarez (2003) presented a moving case study detailing the process of healed object relations occurring through film. The study revolved around a middle aged woman plagued with troubling relationships with men on account of her inner sense of unworthiness in her father's eyes. This woman deeply connects to a character, a young girl at boarding school, who possesses a strong sense of her father's love for her despite the fact that the father is a P.O.W. and believed to be dead. Although the young girl cannot physically see and touch her father, the love of her father for her lived in her, and this love provided her with the courage to face very daunting circumstances. The client, the middle aged woman, connected the story of "the invisible, yet very real, father's" love for the daughter to God's love for her. The image of God

as an unconditionally loving father healed the client's broken object relations and gave her the courage to fully engage in her daily relationships with men.

Deane et al. (2004) surveyed 827 licensed and practicing psychologists about their use of film in psychotherapy. The sample population reflected the population of psychologists at large in terms of age, race, and gender. 67% of the correspondents reported using film in conjunction with therapy. Of that 67%, 88% of the psychologists rated film as extremely helpful in the therapeutic process. A strong positive correlation existed between the use of film in therapy and "successful" therapeutic outcomes. The authors concluded that film addresses a vast area of clinical problems, helping clients feel less isolated in their suffering and providing them with never before attempted, alternative stories and actions for healing.

Holmes (2004) scrutinized the beliefs concerning destiny and romantic relationships of sixty one research participants after viewing a film portraying the message of destiny determining romantic relationships. After the film the participants demonstrated significantly stronger beliefs in destiny controlling the formation and outcomes of relationships when compared to the control group of sixty two participants. In another study within this research, Holmes (2004) demonstrated how total television consumption time did not influence beliefs concerning romantic relationships; however, when people had increased times watching romance and relationship related television programs, they possessed increased rates of idealism in relationships; expected mind reading in their romantic relationships; viewed any form of disagreement as a destructive force in their romantic relationships; and believed fate brought soul-mates into each others' lives. While this study provides insight into the power of film, it cannot truly be considered a cinematherapy study, since no processing of the film occurred. The

study does suggest the powerful influence of television and film on our cognitive schemas and affective states.

Wolz (2005) provided perhaps the most comprehensive and most easy to implement work on the relationship between film and therapy. *E-motion Picture Magic: A Movie Lover's Guide to Healing and Transformation* detailed the synergistic effects of story and myth, image and symbol, and sounds and music to create perhaps the most powerful art form in human history. On account of film's power, therapists of different theoretical backgrounds can utilize film in the therapy process. Psychoanalytic and existential clinicians can use film in the same way as dream work. Existential clinicians can use film in helping clients to clarify values and meaning in life and to confront life's ultimate dilemmas. Cognitive-behavioral therapists can use the irrational and negative beliefs of film characters in a very visual way to help their clients in the process of cognitive restructuring. Because film can stimulate us affectively, the charged emotions experienced through film bestow even more power on new cognitive schemas.

Johnston (2006) explored the dialogue between film and theology and how both have influenced each other. Film reflects the socio-cultural context of our times by reflecting to us our existential seeking and providing us with possible answers. In a world which has become increasingly secularized, film has become modernity's scriptures. Watching movies and the subsequent conversations these movies perpetuate exist as natural, spiritual outlets for the modern world and its people.

Lee, Newgent, and Powell (2006) discovered a strong, positive correlation between cinematherapy and the construct of self-esteem when compared to the control group in their study. The researchers constructed their own survey; many of its sub scales reflected strong statistically significant differences. The authors studied the self-esteem of sixteen teenagers with

severe emotional problems. They utilized the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale at a pre, post, and a one week follow up period throughout a six week coping skills group. The sixteen participants in the study engaged in the coping skills group and cinematherapy simultaneously. The control group only received the intervention of the coping skills group.

White (2008) with 127 research participants measured the constructs of internal locus of control, self-esteem, hope, and affect on a pre and post movie test. The author studied how identification with the protagonist and degree of psychological transportation by an inspirational film influenced the aforementioned constructs. The participants ($N= 127$) who felt deeply moved by the film and identified with the protagonist displayed increased levels of the four constructs.

Knickerbocker's (2009) dissertation discussed how therapists who favor cinematherapy over bibliotherapy listed client preference and the synergistic power of film as their rationale. Therapists also felt depressed people, people experiencing conflict, and clients with limited reading and writing skills progressed better with film. All of the previously mentioned factors seem to explain why I initially felt a special, spiritual process was occurring within the residents at St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center through the medium of film. Many of them, in the earliest stages of recovery from addiction, display depressive and anxiety symptoms; experience intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict as they come to terms with the impact of their addiction and a newly emerging sense of self; and many cannot read and write well. Division 46 of the APA on Media Psychology has hosted forums and presentations on cinematherapy. GATEM (Global Association for Treatment and Education through Movies) provides networking for therapists and educators interested in the use of film in their work. Wolz's cinematherpy.com provides the most comprehensive information on cinematherapy on the

internet. Processing the film experience by some method of reflection proved the key ingredient to client improvement.

Lectio Divina and Watching Films with Conscious Awareness

-Since the 1960's a new generation of Christian has matured which does not find reading a pleasure, but instead spend hours before a television set. I realize that many spiritual directors and religious leaders seem to have written these people off as a lost generation or even as spiritual illiterates. But I disagree with these people who feel that the only way to a spiritual insight is through the printed word. In this era of film, I believe that significant spiritual insight can come from viewing a well-chosen film, and approaching this video with some preparation reminiscent of the lectio divina of Benedictine spirituality. Since the original term is lectio divina, I am going to call this Video Divina."

-Father Benedict Auer

-Cinema divina is a way to practice spirituality while simultaneously engaging our noisy, over-stimulated technological world.

-Sister Pacatte

-Record the vision, and inscribe it on tablets.

-Habakkuk 2:2

A striking similarity exists between the ancient, spiritual practice of *lectio divina*, or sacred reading, and watching movies with conscious awareness as proposed by most cinematherapy authors. This similarity roughly corresponds to the similarity between bibliotherapy and cinematherapy. "Beyond the written word, the giant visual image of the modern movie screen may provide the impetus for an authentic lectio" (Neuman, 1977, p. 109). Auer (1991), largely inspired by the work of Neuman, wrote about conscious awareness in

watching film: “This evening, I wish to get closer to God. So, I think I’m going to watch this film which might give me better insights into myself or why my neighbor acts as she or he does” (p. 1). The act of intention and attention is paramount.

God first communicated to us through the medium of creation; filmmakers and actors communicate to us in a similar fashion through the creation of inspired films (Pacatte, 2008). Combining all art forms, film can provide access to spiritual and transcendent experiences. After all, our best films ARE our modern scriptures (Johnston, 2006; Sinetar, 1993). Given the aforementioned information, we must delve into the history and practice of *lectio* and how it applies to watching film with conscious awareness for the sake of spiritual growth.

***Lectio Divina* – History and Practice**

The term *lectio divina* (LD) derives from the Latin for sacred reading. As a spiritual practice involving the use of the written word, the practitioner seeks formation of one’s person rather than information (Arico, C., Brussat, F., Brussat, M., Begeman, P., & Tasto, M, 2008; Lichtmann, 2005). The difference between formation and information is exemplified in the difference between reflectively reading a love letter or a letter from one’s good friend and ferociously skimming through the New York Times (Thompson, 2005). The two forms of reading emanate from divergent intentions and attitudes and have different affects on the personality. Even studying the Bible or any sacred text would fall into the category of information and not formation.

Before becoming a well established practice among the church fathers and mothers in the desert, the roots of the practice of *lectio divina* existed in the Jewish community in the form of *haggadah*. The *Haggadah* (Hebrew for “telling”) denotes both the text detailing the order for the Passover, Seder meal celebrating the Exodus, the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt, and

how “the telling” itself makes present again the event of the Exodus. Exodus 13: 8 advises Jews to “tell your children,” i.e. to make them remember. *Haggadah* existed as “an interactive interpretation of the Scriptures by means of free use of the text to explore its inner meaning” (Arico et al., 2008). By the time of Christ, *haggadah* was a well established religious and spiritual practice among Jews.

By the 6th century St. Benedict formally established the practice in the Christian, monastic tradition as *lectio divina* with its four movements or moments – *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (reflecting), *oratio* (responding or prayer), and *contemplatio* (resting in the presence of God beyond words and images). The four “Rs” make remembering the movements or stages in LD easy to remember. Like the practice of *haggadah*, *lectio divina* functions from the assumption that the reading and speaking of the scriptures make present the events and persons described. Ultimately, the reading and speaking aloud of the scriptures make present the divine itself.

Essentially, sacred reading of the Word of God, and in this case the modern scripture of film, both entail listening with one’s heart as God initiates the process of communication and the topics of that communication. If a person begins this process of intimate communication with the divine, it leads to a communion with God beyond words. A dynamic movement from communication with the divine to communion with the divine constitutes the essence of *lectio divina* (Thompson, 2005). The silence ultimately experienced in LD possesses its own sound, a sound pregnant with the presence of God (Arico et al., 2008).

Lectio Divina – Means of Relationship with God

“The monks listened, not to conceptualize or analyze the text, but just to hear it” (Arico et al., 2008). From the beginning of *lectio divina* as witnessed in the Jewish practice of reciting the

haggadah, the primary goal of the practice ultimately entailed relationship with God. This harkens back to the difference between information and formation. Applying LD to the practice of teaching and education reform in the book *The Teacher's Way: Teaching and the Contemplative Life*, Liechtmann (2005) quoted St. Bernard of Clairvaux:

For there are some who desire to know only for the sake of knowing; and this is disgraceful curiosity. And there are some who desire to know, that they may become known themselves; and this is disgraceful vanity...And there are also some who desire to know in order to sell their knowledge, as for money, or for degrees; and this is disgraceful commercialism. But there are also those who desire to know in order to edify; and this is love. (p. 10)

I think of Albert Einstein's words when he wrote: "I want to know what God's thoughts are; the rest are details."

The four movements or stages in *lectio divina* – reading, reflecting, responding, and resting – are moments in a spiritual circle "joined to each other in a horizontal and interrelated manner as well as to the center, which is the spirit of God speaking to us through the text and in our hearts" (Arico et al., 2008). Entering the sacred circle of the four "Rs," one enters into an organic relationship with the living God, a relationship which grows in a similar way to human relationships. The reading stage of LD, in which the practitioner first encounters God in Scripture, corresponds to the beginning stage of acquaintanceship in human relationships; garnering information and a formal atmosphere characterize acquaintanceship. (Even very close and highly developed relationships will return to the information gathering of this stage in a concentric process of ever deepening knowing and loving). The second stage of LD, reflecting, or pondering over a moving phrase from our reading, corresponds roughly to the friendliness

stage in the development of human relationships (Arico et al., 2008; Keating, 2009). In friendliness a relationship becomes more conversational, informal, and involves self-disclosure (Arico et al., 2008). In the third stage of LD, responding, or prayer characterized by acts of petition, gratitude, adoration, love, and praise, one can see a parallel to the stage of friendship in human relationships; faithfulness and commitment characterize true friendship. Lastly, the stage of resting in God, allowing oneself to love and be loved beyond words and images, corresponds to the stage of intimacy in human relationships; in human intimacy there exists an experience of unity beyond words, surrender of the self, and compassion in shared joy and suffering (Arico et al., 2008). Best friendships and strongly developed marriages function from and within intimacy. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, summarized the process of LD as a growth in relationship by stating that “the heart of God opens itself to us in God’s word” (as cited in Arico et al., 2008).

The Four Movements of *Lectio (Cinema) Divina*

Hall (1988) stated that in *lectio divina* we read (*lectio* - reading) under the eye of God (*meditatio* - reflecting) until our hearts are touched (*oratio* - responding) and leap to flame (*contemplatio* - resting). Before beginning the first movement, one quiets the heart and mind and asks God to speak and open one’s heart to the divine presence. This preparatory act of quieting with the intention of attentive listening parallels the suggestions of cinematherapy authors to begin the process of watching film with conscious awareness with a form of breath meditation. Our attentiveness to our breath places us in direct contact with our bodies which our culture has taught us to eschew (Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005). Experiencing the modern scripture of film with our whole bodies and attentive awareness allows us to access wisdom (not knowledge); to experience the full range of human emotions; and can reveal buried memories stored in the body. Ultimately, “you can learn to relate to the content of the mind instead of from it, which allows a

whole new dimension of participation in life itself ” (Wolz, 2005, p. 44). Brussat and Brussat (2008) emphasized the significance of beginning the cinematherapy process with silence and breath meditation in order to fully receive the images and stories of film freed from the normal filters of our minds. In both *lectio divina* and cinematherapy, one must be consciously aware of either the text or the film and engage in a process of digesting that same text or film. Combining the practices of LD and CT in this research undertaking, I have referred to the process from here on as *cinema divina* (CD) (Pacatte, 2008). Whereas *lectio divina* may be understood as sacred reading, *cinema divina* may be understood as a sacred viewing of film; practitioners may engage in this sacred viewing, because the Gospel and the presence of the Spirit permeate many films (Pacatte, 2010). As a group practice, CD will begin with breath meditation and prayer for spiritual opening and entail post-film discussion and prayer in a circle. The circle aids in reinforcing the sacredness of the experience. Equality and eternity are the qualities embodied whenever human beings form a sacred circle (Brussat & Brussat, 2008).

Reading. After the preparatory stage, an individual listens to the Word (or the film) as one slowly reads the passage out loud. Speaking the words allow for them to settle more deeply into all aspects of our being. The ancient monks, and many modern ones as well, engaged the first stage of reading in this manner also. In the first stage of reading the text (or the film), “we listen deeply with the ear of our heart; we don’t think about the text (or the film); we let the Word awaken within us; we listen in a spirit of both silence and awe” (Arico et al., 2008). In *cinema divina* we allow God to speak to us and move us through the story, characters, music, and imagery as we engage the movie in “both silence and awe.” Pacatte (2008), transposing the model of *lectio divina* onto the film viewing process, described the first stage in terms of watching the movie with conscious awareness.

Reflecting. After slowly reading a passage out loud in the first movement of the *lectio* process, in the second movement of reflecting one re-reads the passage listening for a word or phrase which stirs the heart of the practitioner. Through the gentle stirring of our attention towards a particular passage, God has begun the process of reaching out to the practitioner of *lectio* or *cinema divina*. With the modern invention of DVDs and websites like youtube, in the process of *cinema divina* a person can quickly return to a scene which inspired or spoke to the individual. When the phrase surfaces, one allows the phrase or word given to the individual by God to address and intermingle with one's dreams, needs, hopes, and life history (Arico et al., 2008). Allowing the divine to fully convey the mystical message of a word or phrase requires the practitioner of LD and CD to slowly repeat the phrase or word as it slowly seeps into every aspect of one's being. A shift in perspective while repeating the phrase like a mantra usually indicates the workings of the Holy Spirit (Keating, 2009). With CD in particular, in the reflecting stage one inquires as to which character, scene, or line chose the individual and begins to slowly allow "the word" (character, image, scene, or line) to percolate (Pacatte, 2008).

Responding. The third movement of responding to God in prayer emanates from the word or phrase bestowed upon the individual in the reflecting movement. After inundating the conscious and unconscious mind with the phrase, this phrase becomes the foundation for beginning one's response to God, what most people conceptualize as prayer. (What most people do not recognize is that prayer is already a response to the calling out, the speaking, of God). As our response to the phrase God has spoken to us grows, "our hearts are warmed; we may respond with tears, movements of love, gratitude, praise, or sometimes even a question" (Arico et al., 2008).

Ultimately, the third movement of response moves one to the experience of self-surrender and gratitude in the acknowledgement of one's creaturehood. This experience of self-surrender and gratitude accompanied with an acknowledgement of one's not-godness obviously corresponds to the first three steps and step eleven of AA and NA – admission of powerlessness, coming to believe, deciding to surrender, and seeking through prayer and meditation conscious contact with God to know God's will and carry it out. In the moment of responding one might ask if a strong response surges within the heart, a particular prayer, a question, an insight for a life circumstance, a feeling or sensation (Hall, 1988; Thompson, 2005).

In the conduction of this research, the participants and I maintained CD journals to write down during the viewing of the film (the reading stage or movement) the following - characters, plot, images, etc. During the reflecting stage, we wrote down in the journal the character, scene, and/or line which moved us in order to share this during a post film, group discussion. After the completion of the discussion, writing letters to God, or our Higher Power, based on the character, scene, and/or phrase which moved us, constituted the third movement of the CD process – responding. The maintenance of a *cinema divina* journal is in keeping with Sinetar's (1993) reference to the prophet Habakkuk: "Record the vision, and inscribe it on tablets" (Habakkuk 2:2). The act of "recording one's vision" of any particular film naturally activates spiritual intention and conscious attentiveness.

Resting. In the fourth and final movement of traditional LD, the believer/practitioner rests in the presence of God beyond images and words, loving and being loved in a silence inundated with the divine presence. Here, one concerns oneself with being as opposed to doing. Here, we experience ourselves as human beings, human becomings, and not as doers of endless activity. When engaged in individually, this silence may last as long as one likes; however, in a

group setting the period of silence ought to be predetermined (Dysinger, 1990). I have determined a resting period of five minutes to be sufficient for this research based on the difficulty many in early recovery have with their attention spans. However, five minutes also proves a sufficient amount of time for the body, mind, and soul to experience a deep rest. If distractions arise during the resting stage, one may commence with a recitation of the original phrase from the second movement of reflecting as a means of returning to rest. In my own experience with *lectio divina*, I have noticed that with continued practice one more organically and easily progresses through the stages of the concentric, spiritual circle constituting this process.

A New Fifth Movement: Becoming the Word of God or *Actio*

Several authors have pointed to a fifth movement beyond the resting stage – *actio*, putting into concrete action the grace bestowed by God through the first four movements of reading, reflecting, responding, and resting (Arico et al., 2008; Dysinger, 1990; Pacatte, 2008). Arico et al. (2008) refer to this fifth stage as “becoming the word of God...we live and act out of an inner freedom, because our inner drives, the exaggerated needs of our false selves, are being satisfied by the divine presence.” Ultimately, one must bring the fruits of sacred reading into daily life and allow creation and the people and events of daily living to become, like the scriptures in LD and film in CD, a continual revelation of the presence and will of God. Pacatte (2008) summarized this fifth stage of CD very well:

To discern some course of action beyond oneself into the world is the fruit of the practice of *cinema divina* as prayer. For a group, after *contemplatio* the leader invites the group to consider action; after a few moments, invite them to share one way they will carry the fruit of *cinema divina* into the world. By moving beyond individual, personal prayer

through action, we can grow spiritually and meaningfully and love the world as it is, even as we seek to transform it in and through Christ. As state and federal budgets for the arts for elementary, middle, junior, and high schools continue to be cut, I will write a letter, make a phone call or donation to lobby and support for the arts in education because the arts promote peace; I will acknowledge the validity of the arts by thinking of creative ways to integrate film clips or music into the curriculum and my teaching; I will research more on what the Church teaches about art, artists, communication, and media; I will talk about this film experience with my family and colleagues. (p. 1)

Each movement of LD and CD possesses an assignment (Arico et al., 2008). Reading (or *lectio*) asks one to be attentive to a perseverance in listening – studying scriptures and films beforehand and being attentive to one’s changing image of God. Reflecting (or *meditatio*) asks one’s attentiveness in allowing the text and/or the film to speak; noting the dissonance between the message and one’s current spiritual state; and the reception of God in all aspects of life. In responding (*oratio*), one bestows attention on the following: the conscious act of praying, God’s omnipresence in ordinary life; learning to pray without ceasing; and the performance of our duties and the enjoyment of our recreation all in the presence of God. In resting (*contemplatio*) one gives attention to resting in God; surrendering to the divine therapy (as Father Thomas Keating has referred to the combination *lectio divina* and centering prayer, which will be discussed in the next section); and the reception of the divine, unconditional love attracted by our human brokenness. Finally, in “becoming the Word of God” (action – *actio*), one brings the fruit of one’s communication and communion with God concretely into the world through action.

The Healing Power of the Divine Therapy

Keating (2009) referred to the combination of *lectio divina* (in whatever form it takes – the Scriptures, film, art, etc) and centering prayer as the divine therapy. The rationale for Keating’s choice of the term “divine therapy” may be seen in Baker’s (2003) description of how both the contemplative practice of *lectio divina* and depth psychotherapy aim at and accomplish the surfacing of deeply embedded unconscious, psychospiritual material. When juxtaposed, Baker’s (2003) discussion of the surfacing of unconscious material and Keating’s (1996) discussion of the Spirit plummeting to the core of one’s person like a circular staircase appear quite similar to my metaphor of the psychospiritual, archaeological dig. Ultimately, the practice of the divine therapy as mentioned by Keating, and contemplation as mentioned by Baker, result in clearer insight, emotional stability, and psychospiritual wholeness (Baker, 2003; Keating, 2009).

Why do we suffer? Mostly, because our emotional programs for happiness have never evolved beyond childhood. Many people’s emotional programs for happiness bestow prime importance on three factors: appearance, achievement, and affluence. According to Keating (2009), we normally experience our lives as dominated by external events and our habitual response to these events – anger, fear, sadness. The seemingly chronic experience of these negative emotions in our society result from our emotional programs being frustrated.

The divine therapy, like the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, commences with the notion that our lives are unmanageable, that one is not simply powerless over drugs and alcohol but over life itself (Keating, 1996; Keating, 2009; Whitfield, 1985). One cannot will one’s self into a state of peace and divine surrender; yet love, peace, and joy, God’s essence, are meant to be the milieu in which we live, and move, and have our being. Our normal state of consciousness is grossly distorted, whether one understands this from the western perspective of

original sin or an eastern perspective like *maya*. Kurtz and Kectcham (2002) relied on depth psychotherapy to corroborate their exploration of the spirituality of imperfection – there is something wrong with me and the world, but there is nothing wrong with that. Interestingly, Keating (2009) compared our “normal”, distorted, and reactive state of consciousness to being engrossed in a movie in which our cognitions and emotions are determined by whatever scene in the movie of our lives plays out before our eyes. However, through the divine therapy (in this research the divine therapy as practiced as *cinema divina*), a person can change the inner movie with the help and grace of God.

As disjointed and broken human beings in our not-godness, we need a strong spiritual practice like *cinema divina* to embark on the psychospiritual, archaeological dig of the divine therapy, in which the Spirit repeatedly, through daily practice, brings an individual to contemplation and expunges all defects of character over a life time of practice. During the experience of contemplation, the Spirit suspends the activity of the intellect, and a person viscerally experiences ultimate security and unconditional love in the presence of God (Keating, 2009). Over time, repeated exposure to this secure and unconditionally loving presence destroys the defense mechanisms and permits the positive and negative aspects of the unconscious to surface; the negative contents of the unconscious can be expelled by their coming to dwell in the conscious mind and a subsequent act of the will to simply let go of this damaging material (Baker, 2003; Keating, 2009). The journey of divine therapy, in which our co-traveler is none other than the divine, is ultimately the hero’s journey – the journey of the saint and the mystic. The longest journey is eighteen inches - from the head to the heart!

Positive Cinematherapy

Positive cinematherapy entails the use of film to bolster the virtues and character strengths described by Peterson and Seligman (2004) in *Character Strengths and Virtues: A*

Handbook and Classification (CSV). These authors wrote the CSV to counteract the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual's overemphasis on psychopathology. The virtues and character strengths described in this book form the core of positive psychotherapy's philosophy. Positive psychotherapy, while acknowledging the dark side of human nature, focuses primarily on positive emotions and personal strengths as opposed to pathology in the search for wholeness. Since films frequently portray the development of character virtues and strengths, film exists as a powerful medium for the implementation of positive psychotherapy (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008).

Seligman (2002) has described positive psychotherapy as facilitating people having meaningful, happy, and flourishing lives on three levels. On the subjective level, a person grows from internal experiences of health and happiness. On an individual level, a person develops any of the six virtues and twenty-four character strengths mentioned in the subsequent paragraph. On a group level, civic virtue penetrates institutions and society and promotes civic virtue amongst its members.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) detailed six core virtues with twenty-four, measurable strengths subsumed under these virtues. According to Niemiec and Wedding (2008), "virtues are those universal, core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers. Strengths are the psychological ingredients or specific routes through which virtues are displayed" (p. 3). The research of Peterson and Seligman finds corroboration in the history of the world's religions and philosophy over the past three thousand years.

The six core virtues include wisdom and knowledge (cognitive development), courage (emotional development), humanity (interpersonal development), justice (civic development), temperance (moderation development), and transcendence (development of meaning-making and

connection to the universe as a whole). The virtue of wisdom and knowledge consists of the character strengths of creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, a love of learning, and possessing perspective. The virtue of courage consists of the character strengths of bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality. Humanity, the virtue of interpersonal development, consists of the strengths of love, kindness, and social intelligence. The strengths of citizenship, fairness, and leadership constitute the overall virtue of justice. Subsumed under the virtue of temperance can be identified the strengths of forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, and self-regulation. Lastly, the virtue of transcendence consists of the character strengths of the appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality. A person's top five strengths are connoted as one's signature strengths.

According to the tenets of positive cinematherapy, if watched with conscious awareness (attention to film and one's inner self), a client will more likely imbibe the desire for the virtues and strengths portrayed in so many films. Films can also facilitate learning by proxy (Wolz, 2005). In viewing and understanding the catastrophic consequences of a character's behavior, a client may be less likely to behave in a similarly destructive fashion. Using forms of cognitive behavioral therapy in conjunction with learning by proxy through film may be quite beneficial for clients.

The process of watching films can cause a person to enter a trancelike state. In this trancelike state, the filmmaker can convey subliminal messages about virtues and strengths (Niemic & Wedding, 2008; Wolz, 2005). Of all the subliminal messages conveyed, the assimilation of the archetypical hero's journey with the arduous struggle to achieve the six virtues, proves to be the most inspirational and most significant as discussed in the section on the hero's journey in this chapter. The hero's journey is everyone's journey, everyone's story. If a

client understands a therapist's intention of utilizing a film to facilitate spiritual experiences and the acquisition of virtues and strengths, the client more easily focuses and grows from the engagement with film (Niemic & Wedding, 2008). This reality of understanding the therapist's intention connoted my own personal instrumentality in this study. My person, my therapeutic presence and my instructions, coalesce with the film to synergistically create a spiritual experience.

The therapeutic choice of film depends upon the presence of cinematic elevation (Haidt, 2003; Niemic & Wedding, 2008). According to the theory of cinematic elevation, a therapist should choose a film based on the presence of the following criteria: (1) witnessing moral beauty, (2) physical sensations of neurological significance (experience of warmth, tingling in the body, and an openness in the chest), and (3) a motivation to grow towards levels of higher morality and spirituality. Dramatic films are usually the best choice for fulfilling the three criteria of cinematic elevation on account of their variety and their fuller exploration of the hero's journey. Darker films often prove to be more beneficial to the process of positive cinematherapy, because they provide the contrast from which the virtues and strengths are called forth. The most popular character strengths portrayed in film include love, kindness, hope, persistence, bravery, creativity, and spirituality (Niemic & Wedding, 2008).

Limitations of Using Film in Therapy

Deane et al. (2004) and Wolz (2005) have mentioned some of the more salient objections to using film in a transpersonal psychotherapy and in psychotherapy in general:

- Some clients cannot appropriate insight based on the symbolism of film.

- Films are contraindicated for people with severe psychiatric disorders in which poor reality testing is present. These clients may have difficulty distinguishing the film from reality.
- Do not assign a film to a recently traumatized individual in which the protagonist suffers a similar trauma; this creates the potential for immediate re-traumatization.
- With children, some movies are not appropriate, and if used in therapy, a digestion of the film must occur immediately following the end of the film due to possible problems with long term memory skills not being fully developed. Film can work for children in the context of family therapy in which all the members of the family watch and digest the film together at home.

In summary, many ideological constructs have contributed to an understanding and conceptualization of this research project. From a psychological vantage point, spirituality is necessary for full, human flourishing (James, 1902; Maslow, 1971). *Holotropic* experiences, or spiritual experiences oriented towards wholeness, exist because the spiritual realm exists and is the highest realm of existence from which humanity is called to live (Grof, 1988; Whitfield, 1985). Addiction can be viewed as a misguided, spiritual search, seeking to fill the “God-shaped hole” with external realities as opposed to spiritual ones (Scharff, 2009). The spiritual discipline of *cinema divina* helps people on the path to healing from addiction and with spiritual growth in general by utilizing the modern scriptures of film. Film exists as the conveyor of our modern, collective mythology imbuing our lives with mystical messages from God when viewed with conscious awareness (Sinetar, 1993; Wolz, 2005). The synergistic effects of story, myth, image and symbol, and music have created the most powerful form of art in human history to date (Wolz, 2005). When people engage films with the stages of *cinema divina*, they experience the

power of the story to heal by means of projective identification with characters and by the activation of the hero/heroine archetype. Because phenomenology has purported to study the lived experiences of people regarding a phenomenon *per se*, this qualitative research methodology seemed the most appropriate for answering the research question, which revolved around what inpatient residents actually experienced in their encounters with film.

CHAPTER THREE: PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY OF PHENOMENOLOGY

“If your dissertation were a cake, this chapter would be the recipe both for making that cake and for judging how successfully the cake turned out.”

-Miles Bryant

Research Design

Philosophy of Phenomenology

The qualitative philosophy and methodology of phenomenology studies the lived, conscious experiences of individuals concerning a particular phenomenon by returning to the experiences per se and the meanings imputed to a phenomenon by these same individuals. In fact, according to the phenomenological philosophy, the reality of any phenomenon itself is constituted by the intermingling of the self-reflective consciousness of human beings and the external or internal object of the intentionality of consciousness. This “grasp of the very nature of the thing” produces thick and rich descriptions of human experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). A return to the experiences per se requires the researcher’s suspension of all preconceived notions and assumptions concerning the phenomenon being studied. Having ascertained the themes pervading all of the individuals’ experiences of a particular phenomenon, the researcher(s) can articulate a universal essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenology has its roots in Husserl’s (1859-1938) attempt to return to the original work of philosophy before the advent of empirical science in the 17th century. The etymology of the word ‘philosophy’ reveals the discipline’s objective – the acquisition of wisdom. Moustakas (1994) has noted that while Hegel first defined phenomenology as “knowledge as it appears to consciousness,” Descartes’ questioning and deconstruction of everything he took for granted as real knowledge most influenced Husserl (p. 26).

Husserl posited that the only way to arrive at genuine knowledge entailed the researcher becoming a completely objective observer ensconced in personal intuition and visceral experiencing of the world. To Husserl, the knowledge gained from intuition and visceral experiencing of the world precedes all scientific knowledge. A researcher achieves this genuine, phenomenological knowledge by bracketing out (*epoche*) one's experiences and preconceived assumptions prior to engaging with the phenomenon; engaging with the participants; and engaging with the data obtained, all of which constitute the phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Heidegger, a contemporary of Husserl, argued for the impossibility of bracketing out one's experience in studying a phenomenon. Guthrie (2006) assessed Heideggerian phenomenology in the following manner:

...our life experiences prohibit an objective viewpoint. In addition, Heidegger pointed out that it was not enough to understand and describe the experiences of individuals. It was imperative to learn how the subject came to experience the phenomenon in the way they did...(this) is an appropriate methodology because it brings a relevant application to everyday life. (p. 39)

In understanding the viewpoints of Husserl and Heidegger and the evolution of phenomenological philosophy, one can better understand the components of the transcendental phenomenological method of Moustakas (the methodology of this study). In *epoche* the researcher brackets out one's experience and assumptions about a phenomenon as much as is possible. Here, one may note the influence of Husserl. In the phenomenological reduction the researcher articulates a textural description of *what was experienced*. Again, one may note the influence of Husserl. In the process of imaginative variation, highly influenced by the writings

of Heidegger, the researcher articulates a structural description of *how individuals experienced a phenomenon within the contextual factors of life and environment*.

Ultimately, the philosophy and methodology of Moustakas not only coalesce the best of Husserl and Heidegger, but they coalesce the three epistemologies, or ways of knowing, promulgated by St. Bonaventure (1217-1274) in the Middle Ages and accepted by the field of transpersonal psychology. Using the metaphor of “the eye,” these three levels of knowing and being include “the eye” of the flesh, “the eye” of the mind, and “the eye” of the spirit (Anderson & Braud, 1998; Judy, 1996; Wilber, 2000). “A physical, sensory realm is accessed by the ‘eye’ of the flesh; a mental realm of ideas, thoughts, and images is perceived by the ‘eye’ of the mind; and a transcendental or spiritual realm is known through the ‘eye’ of the spirit” (Anderson & Braud, 1998, p. 49).

The “eye” of the flesh refers to our sensory capacities as animals and the knowledge derived therefrom. The “eye” of the flesh filters reality only through the five senses. Science, originating and functioning from an empirical worldview, lies primarily in this level of knowledge. According to Wilber (2000), modern science (with the exception of quantum physics), has committed a category error in claiming to be the only source of true knowledge and in determining the knowledge gained from “the eye” of the mind and “the eye” of the spirit to be unreal and no knowledge at all. In denying the possibility of gaining knowledge from these two realms, science in turn denies the existence of these realms. Perhaps this is science’s projective reaction against the narrow-mindedness of the medieval church?

The “eye” of the mind reflects the fact that humans are *homo sapiens*; *sapiens* comes from the Latin word denoting knowledge and wisdom. In this level of knowledge one perceives humanity’s capacity for reason, logic, and abstract thinking. The “eye” of the mind separates

humans from other animals and makes humans a symbolic bridge between the pre-personal realm of matter and nature on one hand and the transpersonal realm of the spirit on the other. The field of philosophy (the love of wisdom) lies in this level of knowing.

The “eye” of the spirit pertains to supernatural knowledge obtained through the living of a spiritual life constituted by such practices as prayer, meditation, fasting, and service. Science and its methods can never attain to the intuitive and experiential knowledge of God and transcendent experiences, experiences and knowledge located at the apex of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Science addresses the experiences and knowledge found in the lower levels of Maslow’s hierarchy – physiological and some psychological needs (“the eye” of the flesh); however, science is an inappropriate tool when studying phenomena of “higher realms” (Anderson & Braud, 1998).

Moustakas (1994), while not explicitly utilizing the vocabulary, possessed some insight into the aforementioned distinctions between the three levels of knowing as evidenced by the following:

...whereas we learn certain kinds of things from distancing ourselves from the subject studied, we get another kind of knowledge from intuitively becoming one with the subject. We do not learn about reality from controlled experiments but rather by identifying with the observed.

Although phenomenology is concerned with ideas and essences, there is no denial of the world of nature, the so-called real world. The concept of realism became a major focus of transcendental phenomenology. Realism and objectivity were presumably the province of the natural sciences, yet ultimately the natural sciences operate from ideal principles in that they presuppose that objects in time and space

are real, *that they actually exist*, yet there is no evidence that objects are real, apart from our subjective experience of them...The objectivity which it presupposes is essentially ideal and therefore a contradiction to naturalism's own principles. Husserl concluded that 'phenomenology is the science of science since it alone investigates that which all other sciences simply take for granted (or ignore), the very essence of their own objects. (p. 46)

Stewart and Mickunas (1990) have captured the essence of phenomenology in four points.

- (1) Phenomenology attempts to return to philosophy's original objective, which consists of the acquisition of wisdom. Phenomenology attempts to return to a holistic worldview. Pascal (1992) wrote about the destruction in modernity of humanity's long held holistic worldview:

Historically, the parting of the ways between psychology and philosophy really only began in the early nineteenth century. Throughout human history, psychology was an integral part of philosophy, which was the study of how to avoid mental pitfalls in the acquisition of wisdom, considered healing balm for all psychic wounds. (p. 86)

- (2) Phenomenology attempts to be a philosophy and methodology free of all preconceived ideas about phenomena. A researcher must suspend the "natural attitude" concerning what is supposedly real (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1994) himself has admitted to the difficulty in fully bracketing out one's experiences and presuppositions as a researcher. I believe *epoche* (bracketing out) can only be achieved by approaching the participants and the research data from a transpersonal vantage point, i.e. with "the eye" of the spirit. This

was achieved in this study by engaging in breath meditation before each film session and before sitting down each time to “read, reread, and once more read through the data” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998 as cited in Bryant, 2004, p. 100).

- (3) Phenomenology focuses on the “intentionality of consciousness” (Creswell, 2007, p.59). Creswell (2007) described “being conscious of objects (as) always (being) intentional” (p.235). For example, when perceiving a tree, Moustakas (1994) wrote that “my intentional experience is a combination of the outward appearance of the tree and the tree as contained in my consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning” (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 236).
- (4) Lastly, phenomenology refuses to divide the world into separate categories of subject and object. The full reality of any object can only exist within the meaning bestowed upon that object by the subjective experience of any given human being.

Selection of Participants

The six participants selected for this research project were purposefully selected on account of their desire and readiness to grow spiritually and to fully embrace a life of recovery from addiction based on twelve step principles. I also sought participants who possessed a desire to share and articulate their spiritual experiences based on their engagement with *cinema divina*. The rationale for this form of purposeful sampling correlated to answering the exploratory, research question based on the philosophy and methodology of transcendental phenomenology as promulgated by Moustakas. Transcendental phenomenology seeks to provide thick and rich descriptions of lived experience. Six participants did provide research saturation, a breadth of data across individual differences.

Which residents will meet the criteria listed above – the desire and readiness to grow spiritually and fully embrace a life of recovery from addiction – was determined during a treatment team meeting as evidenced by progression towards achieving treatment plan goals and as evidenced by the clinical intuition of the staff. The recruiting of the six participants began with the presentation to the treatment team of the twelve to fifteen names of those residents whom had already given informed consent to participating in the facility’s spirituality group.

Based on the aforementioned criteria and after a brief discussion, each member of the staff voted on a ballot for six residents. I then ranked the twelve to fifteen residents in spirituality group from one to fifteen based on the number of votes received from members of the treatment team; the resident ranked number one had received the most number of votes and the fifteenth the least number of votes. After the compilation of this list, I approached the residents individually in descending order beginning with the resident ranked number one. After six residents had understood and signed the informed consent form, the process of the selection of participants had come to a conclusion.

The participants came from the population of residents (sixty-three total) at St. Joseph’s Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center, a large, inpatient substance abuse facility located in Saranac Lake, NY in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains. The residents of the facility consist almost entirely of New York State residents, many of whom are on Medicaid and many of whom are simultaneously legally mandated to treatment. Some of these residents have difficulty with reading and writing. Many of them have co-occurring psychiatric disorders. The age of the residents can range from eighteen to people in their sixties. The particular biopsychosocial histories of the six participants in this study constituted aspects of the Findings and Conclusions of this study (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), especially in the formulation and articulation of

structural descriptions of the *cinema divina* retreat weekend, i.e. *how* the participants experienced the weekend within the context of their lives, environments, and daily life at the treatment center. The commonalities all the resident participants shared included approaching the end of a three month treatment program and living in a facility whose program focuses heavily on twelve step principles and spirituality, family therapy, daily group counseling, and a strict and regimented schedule.

Instrumentation

The following qualitative instruments were utilized in this research project to provide rich and thick descriptions of the participants' lived experience:

- (1) Two researchers maintained field notes throughout the duration of the retreat weekend; a fellow clinician and I were the ones who produced these field notes.
- (2) The participants wrote letters to God during the response stage or movement of *cinema divina*. (The response stage, as mentioned in the literature review and below in the Procedures section, constitutes the third stage of *lectio divina* (LD) and *cinemadivina* (CD). The following reviews the stages of CD: (1) First, one engages in a preparatory stage of centering and asking one's Higher Power to speak. Following this preparation, the first stage of LD and CD commences with slowly *reading* the text or watching the film with conscious awareness. (2) In the second stage, one *reflects*, or ponders over the line, scene, and/or character which moved the heart, allowing this message to soak into one's spirit without over analyzing. In *cinema divina*, *reflecting* occurs through group discussion and sharing. (3) In the third stage, *responding*, the participants write letters to their Higher Powers as a form of self-expressive prayer in response to being spoken to by

God. (4) Lastly, the participants *rest* for a few minutes in the presence of God beyond words and images to bring the process of CD to a conclusion).

(3) Biopsychosocial histories were gleaned from the St. Joseph's Intake and Assessment Packet.

(4) After the conclusion of the retreat weekend I conducted individual interviews with the six participants. The questions mostly came from the General Interview Guide of Moustakas (1994). The questions constituting the interview guide included the following:

- So, we've spent all of this time together during this retreat, what happened?
- What dimensions, incidents, and people intimately connected with the experience stand out for you? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- What feelings were generated by the experience? (Moustakas, 1994, p.116)
- What thoughts stood out for you? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- Were you aware of any bodily changes or changes in states of consciousness during the retreat weekend? (Moustakas, 1994) For example, did you cry, laugh, notice a change in your breathing, and/or experience sensations in your body not usually present, or not? If you did experience any of these things, what did these experiences mean to you?
- As you look back over your history with addiction and your pain, what is the connection between this part of your history and what was experienced during the retreat?

*** I utilized these questions in a pre-test conducted with a colleague. This colleague participated with me in a *cinema divina* process prior to the interview.

Assumptions

- (1) Human beings are primarily spiritual beings having physiological, psychological, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and spiritual experiences throughout their lives.
- (2) “There are invisible or spiritual dimensions of existence that are as real as the visible, and we can access these dimensions” (Tick, 2007, p. 12).
- (3) Right relationship with God (the divine), with self, and with others (including the natural world) as expressed in the transcendent longing for connection and meaning in life constitutes the essence of spirituality.
- (4) Addiction is primarily a spiritual dis-ease with deleterious consequences for body, mind, and soul. A person can be genetically and psychologically predisposed to addiction. “The soul or some of its traits can become damaged, wounded, skewed, or even lost...Healing of both physical and psychological disorders must fundamentally and ultimately occur in the soul” (Tick, 2007, p. 12).
- (5) Film, combining all the art forms, can serve as a conduit for powerful spiritual experiences when engaged in with conscious awareness, proper intention, and when a processing of the film occurs.
- (6) Film harnesses the healing power of the story. “The themes and patterns of stories are built into the universe; our souls replicate these stories and have destinies and tasks to fulfill; cultures practice the eternal stories, roles, tasks, and influence of spirits, and the connection of the human community with these spirits” (Tick, 2007, p.12).
- (7) The ancient spiritual practice of *lectio divina* can be transposed onto other media and other life events besides the printed word.

Procedures

- Obtained License from Motion Picture Licensing Corporation (MPLC) for St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center. (MPLC issued a certificate of license for the inpatient on September 1, 2010; this license is valid for one year). A copy of the certificate of license can be found in the Appendices of this research document.
- Secured institutional permission to conduct phenomenological research at St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center.
- Secured institutional (Argosy University – Sarasota) permission to conduct the phenomenological research of weekend, *cinema divina* retreat.
- Generated list of possible films based on the presence of Walsh's (1999) essential spiritual practices/virtues, including purifying motivation, emotional wisdom, ethical life, peaceful mind, wisdom and spiritual knowledge, seeing divine in all, and service.
- Narrowed and finalized list of films to three based on Walsh's essential spiritual practices/virtues.
- Engaged in *cinema divina* process myself and with a colleague with the three chosen films in order to better bracket out my experience. Not only did this process facilitate the achievement of *epoche*, but it also served as a pre-test for the actual research.
- Identified research participants in the manner described in the previous section entitled "Selection of Participants."
- Approached identified research participants to present them with the informed consent form. Made sure the participants understood the following: the nature and purpose of the research, time involved (i.e. one weekend retreat and an hour long interview the following week), possible benefits of engaging in the research, possible negative effects of engaging in the research, autonomy to withdrawal from participation in research

without any repercussions for treatment decisions, confidentiality of identity, and final use of the research.

- Two signed copies of informed consent form were made, one for myself, and the other for the participant.
- Date was selected for weekend retreat.
- Friday evening (2 hrs) - Ritual gathering of six participants, co-researcher, and I in designated area. Began retreat weekend with the ritual “Lighting the Candles of Hope” as found in the appendices. After the opening ritual, I reviewed with the resident-participants the purpose and process of *lectio divina* and how this spiritual discipline can and would be applied to the medium of film.
- Saturday morning (3.5 hours) – *Cinema divina* process as described in the literature review was performed with film #1, *Dead Man Walking* (opening centering/breath meditation and prayer asking to be spoken to through the film (preparatory stage), read film review which highlighted spiritual value(s) in the film (reviews found in appendices A, B, and C), viewing of film with conscious awareness (reading - *lectio*), group discussion (reflecting - *meditatio*), writing letter to Higher Power based on group discussion and line, character, and/or scene which spoke to the participant (responding - *oratio*), end with breath meditation and Serenity prayer (resting - *contemplatio*). Before beginning the process with each film, the residents were given a synopsis of the film and the spiritual virtues found within it from the website www.spiritualityandpractice.com. At the outset of the retreat weekend, the participants were given journals in which they would be encouraged to write down the line, scene, and/or character moving them and speaking to them. The writing down of the message from God did serve as the impetus

for discussion during the reflecting period. The participants also wrote their letters to God in their retreat journals during the response period of *cinema divina*.

- Saturday afternoon (3.5 hours) – *Cinema divina* process with film # 2, *Pay It Forward* (same process as found in the previously mentioned, Saturday morning description)
- Sunday afternoon (4 hrs) – *Cinema divina* process with film # 3, *With Honors* (same process as found in the Saturday morning description). Ritualized ending of retreat weekend with “Lighting the Candles of Hope” and spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving, praise, intercession, and/or petition
- Individual interviews of six participants during the week following the retreat. Interviews were conducted as discussed in the Instrumentation section of this chapter. For the most part, interview questions corresponded to Moustakas’ General Interview Guide.
- Individual interviews were audio-recorded and destroyed after transcription to protect participant confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used in transcribed documentation of the interviews and in the Findings and Conclusion sections of the dissertation.
- Interviews were transcribed by the transcriptionist at St. Joseph’s Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center’s inpatient site. She could not identify the participants as she had no personal interaction with them.
- Data Analysis was performed on field notes, letters to God, transcribed interviews, and biopsychosocial histories (clinical summaries) of the participants according to the transcendental phenomenological method of Moustakas.
- Individual analyses and collective analysis were presented to six participants and co-researcher for corroboration and/or any corrections.

- Finalized writing of Findings (Chapter 4) and Conclusions (Chapter 5)
- Sent final copies of dissertation (if so desired) and “Thank You” notes to research participants, co-researcher, and CEO of St. Joseph’s Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center.

Data Processing and Analysis

Ultimately, as an exploratory, phenomenological study with transpersonal awareness, the data processing and analysis revolved around one research question: What is the experience of cinema as part of the inpatient treatment of addiction? Having only one question and phrasing this question in as open-ended a manner as possible allowed for a highly emergent process and data analysis. The phrasing of the research question and the nature of the study, along with the nature of the *cinema divina* process, allowed for *epoche*, or bracketing, to exist as much as humanly possible.

The Transcendental Phenomenological Steps

1. Read and re-read many times my field notes and the field notes of my co-researcher, the letters written by the participants, the transcribed interviews, and the biopsychosocial histories of the participants. Before each reading I engaged in breath meditation to facilitate the suspension of all preconceived ideas and meanings in an effort to achieve the highest level of *epoche*.
2. Phenomenological reduction did require returning again and again to the phenomenon in question in order to eventually arrive at a textural description of the phenomenon stripped of personal presupposition. “We focus on the object itself and not the perceiving experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 91). By having excluded from one’s description everything not in immediate, conscious awareness (i.e. focusing only on the documents in

number one above), I began the process of arriving at a textural description, the *what* of experience, of cinema in an inpatient, addiction treatment facility.

3. After focusing only on the five documents mentioned above, the process of horizontilization began to occur; I highlighted all non-repetitive, significant statements (horizons).
4. I clustered the horizons together into certain meaningful patterns to create themes. From the creation of themes, I wrote a textural description for each of the six individual co-participants. After the writing of the six, individualized textural descriptions, I coalesced these six descriptions into a “composite textural description” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 180).
5. I then brought individual and composite textural descriptions to participants and the co-researcher in order to gauge the veracity of my descriptions. Any suggested changes were made.
6. Imaginative Variation, the third process of transcendental phenomenology, after *epoche* and phenomenological reduction, aims to arrive at the *how* of lived experience through the creation of a structural description of the phenomenon. How was cinema in an inpatient, addiction center experienced by the participants in the context of treatment and in the context of their lives? What accounts for the emergence of the phenomenon in the textural description? Here, I engaged in varying “possible meanings and varied perspectives of the phenomenon from different vantage points, such as opposite meanings and various roles,” especially considering the constructs of space, time, embodiment, causality, and a participant’s relationship to self, others, and God (Moustakas, 1994, p. 180). I primarily utilized the biopsychosocial histories and the individual, transcribed interviews to create the six, individualized structural descriptions for each participant. A

“composite structural description” did emerge from the unification of the six, individual structural descriptions from each of the participants (Moustakas, 1994, p. 181).

7. I then brought individual and composite structural descriptions to participants and co-researcher in order to gauge the veracity of my descriptions. Any suggested changes were implemented accordingly.
8. Finally, I wrote and allowed for the emergence of the invariant structure, or essence, of the phenomenon (cinema in an inpatient, addiction treatment center) by “intuitively, reflectively (integrating) the composite textural and composite structural descriptions to develop a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon or experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 181).
9. I then brought the essential description of the experience to the individual participants and to my co-researcher to gauge for veracity. Any suggested changes were implemented into the description of the invariant structure of the phenomenon.

Criteria for Evaluation

Many researchers have attempted to base their evaluation of qualitative research according to quantitative research standards in much the same way the burgeoning field of psychology attempted to establish itself as completely empirically-based since its birth in the late 19th century. However, evaluating qualitative research according to quantitative standards and quantitative terminology is unjust and disrespects the field of qualitative inquiry. Quantitative research can provide us with wonderful information, but it can never explain the *why* of human thought, feeling, and behavior; it cannot explain contextual factors and the deepest motivations of human action (Creswell, 2007).

Some researchers have posited evaluating qualitative research in terms of the veracity of the data, its truthfulness and accuracy, as opposed to using the traditional terminology of validity and reliability (Bryant, 2004; Creswell, 2007). In other words, do the textural, structural, and invariant descriptions of the experience viscerally resound with the participants, my co-researcher, and with me? Veracity (or validation) exists as a “distinct strength of qualitative research in that the account made through extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to participants in the study all add to the value or accuracy of a study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 207). Patton (2002) has referred to the rigor and credibility of data analysis. Agostinho (2004) posited three criteria for evaluating qualitative research: the appropriateness of the research design, a demonstration of rigor, and usefulness of the research product.

In this study I utilized several “validation” or veracity strategies mentioned by Creswell (2007). (1) A period of “prolonged engagement” and “persistent observation in the field” did occur, because I had interacted with the six participants for three weeks, five times a week for spirituality group prior to the commencement of the retreat weekend and subsequent interviews. After each group, spirituality session, I am required to write clinical notes. Throughout the three week period the residents developed a sense of trust in me. (2) I also triangulated the research by including different sources of data: my field notes, a co-researcher’s field notes, letters to God, individual interviews with the six participants, and their biopsychosocial histories. (3) I engaged in peer debriefing with my clinical supervisor once a week throughout the data gathering and data analysis phase. (4) I have clarified any assumptions about this research from the beginning and in the Assumptions section of this chapter. (5) Member checking did occur by bringing textural, structural, and invariant descriptions back to the participants and to the co-

researcher for verification and possible alterations. (6) The writing of thick and rich descriptions in Chapters Four and Five “allow(ed) readers to make decisions regarding transferability, because the writer describe(d) in detail the participants or setting under study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209).

Creswell (2007) posited several criteria for a high quality, phenomenological study:

- (1) A comprehensive understanding of the philosophical beliefs and presuppositions of phenomenology as displayed by the author.
- (2) The author studied a clear “phenomenon” articulated in a precise way.
- (3) The author used “procedures of data analysis in phenomenology, such as the procedures recommended by Moustakas (1994)” (p. 216).
- (4) The author articulated the comprehensive essence of the lived experiences of the research participants. This articulated essence included an accurate and thick description of the experience and the context of the experience.
- (5) The author remained reflexive throughout the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FINDINGS

*I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you....
Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never
forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.
-Walt Whitman*

Autoethnography

In order to achieve *epoche*, or the bracketing out of my experience to suspend my presuppositions about the experience of the participants in this phenomenological research study, I decided to begin chapter four by exploring my own life experience from a spiritual perspective in a concise, spiritual autobiography and then by writing my own textural and structural descriptions of the experience of *cinema divina*. Sparkes (2000) has described autoethnographies as “highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experiences of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding” (p. 21). As mentioned by Wall (2006), I emphasize the “auto” (the self, the personal narrative) in autoethnography, leaving the reader to one’s own cultural and societal extrapolations, which are beyond the scope of this study. I emphasize the personal narrative, as opposed to cultural and/or sociological conclusions, mostly for the sake of achieving *epoche*, because this is a phenomenological study and not primarily a narrative or ethnographic research undertaking, albeit the findings have narrative and ethnographic undertones, especially in terms of my own structural description (how I came to experience what was experienced). “Knowledge does not have to result from ‘research’ to be worthwhile, and personal stories should have their place alongside research in contribution to what we know about the world in which we live” (Wall,

2006, p. 11). Similar to the heuristic research proposed by Moustakas (1990), the writing of this personal narrative, along with the textural and structural description of the six participants, allowed for knowing by “focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, accessing bodily knowledge, and maintaining an internal frame of reference” (Anderson & Braud, 1998, p. 265).

Interestingly, the last of the three films, *With Honors*, which we processed as a group, focused on the character of Simon, a homeless bum at Harvard University whom the students mistakenly claim is the ghost of Walt Whitman. In the film, Simon quotes Whitman:

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand.... nor

look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres

in books,

You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.

Immediately, my thoughts turned to the telling of my own spiritual autobiography at the beginning of this chapter. I did not originally intend to write or share this personal narrative. Hearing the character of Simon quote Walt Whitman sparked a certain creativity in me and influenced me to begin Chapter Four with my personal narrative. Intuitively, when Simon used Whitman’s words I understood how my personal narrative could help me achieve *epoché* and also help me in writing my structural description of the retreat weekend. I have shared briefly the story of my soul’s journey in order to analyze the participants’ data from a psychospiritual state “in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p.34). After writing my story, I felt more able, as much as is humanly possible, in a pure state of being freed from preconceived notions, to “listen to all sides (the participants’ experiences) and filter

them from myself.” The sharing of my own spiritual journey before analyzing the participants’ data also corresponded very well to the importance of the healing power of story in film and in recovery from addiction. I wrote the following short, spiritual autobiography based on materials from the following sources: my personal journal entries, an assignment from my doctoral level course entitled “Individual Spiritual Enhancement,” and my entrance essay to Argosy University.

The Story of a Soul

How does one capture in a concise manner one’s faith journey? My mother and father wrote the following in my baby book when I was two years old: “Chris loves to touch pictures of our Lord and our Blessed Mother.” Apparently, before the possession of my own self-consciousness, grace operated in my soul drawing me onward.

I remember learning to pray by my Grammie’s side. We stood in front of her ornate, Italian altar filled with images of Jesus, Mary, the saints, and loved ones from Italy already in heaven with the flickering of candles flanking both sides of the altar. In retrospect, I understand the deeply incarnational nature of the Catholic, Christian spirituality bequeathed to me by my grandmother. My Grammie’s house and my father’s presence provided me with a sense of protection from my mother’s undiagnosed and untreated bipolar disorder growing up.

I was born in November of 1977, and in the process disrupted my family’s Thanksgiving dinner. As soon as all of the food had been placed on the table, my mother’s (Anna) water broke. I was born 10 o’clock in the evening that day, a Thanksgiving baby. My sister, Tracey, preceded me in this life six years earlier. After me came three younger brothers – Matthew (3 years younger), Joseph (6 years younger), and Stephen (16 years younger). While my siblings and I did spend time together growing up, and we do love each other, I feel that our mother’s illness alienated us from each other in a sense, because we modeled her emotional reaction to

unpleasant life events as evidenced by isolation, rage, bouts of depression, and a clear lack of individual boundaries. As we grew into young adults, my mother's illness improved through medication and therapy. This improvement I believe brought us the gift of compassion for the suffering and the marginalized in our world.

My father was a kind, quiet, and patient man. He taught my siblings and I a love for the outdoors, for reading, and for hard work. I fondly recall many camping and fishing trips with my brothers and my father (Bruce). He died fourteen years ago due to complications from gastric bypass surgery. As a result of being released too early from the hospital after his operation, he died in his sleep of a massive bacterial infection. The sudden loss of my father devastated me and my family. We have not been the same ever since. Our relationships and communications amongst each other now seem strained and artificial. He was the epicenter of our familial life. In retrospect, I understand one of my father's character flaws – he became addicted to food as a way to cope with my mother's mental illness; he saw the surgery as his only hope. What he didn't realize was that he could change his body, but he would be the same person by not changing his mind and his lack of love for self. This realization about my father as an adult and a therapist causes me much heartache, because he never fully lived his own life. He neglected his own needs and his own happiness by being self-effacing towards my mother's mental illness and by overworking to provide for his children all the material things we wanted in life.

At about eight years old I experienced an apparition of the Mother of God. While standing in my Grammie's darkened living room one evening before heading to my bedroom, a soft light emanated from her side lawn. Turning my gaze towards the beckoning light, I saw her. She spoke no words but simply smiled at me. Being afraid, I ran to my bedroom at my nonna's

house; I told no one except my Grammie. Surprisingly, she understood me as she herself had had such experiences on several occasions.

Until the age of fifteen my faith played a marginal role in my life. At fifteen during my freshman year of high school two events revived the spirituality of my early childhood. That year, 1992, preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation began for me at my home parish, and I also attended World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado with Pope John Paul II. The Holy Spirit worked an ineffable process within me through these outward events.

The Spirit also led me to discover the phenomenon of Medjugorje during 1992. Medjugorje is a small village in Croatia where the Blessed Mother has appeared since 1981 to six visionaries giving messages for humanity. Medjugorje, with its simple message of a return to Christ through daily prayer (the Rosary), the Scriptures, Eucharist, fasting, and conversion, did and continues to influence my spiritual life.

After two years at a “normal” university as an education major, the Spirit drove me to the city (NYC) to live with the Franciscans and work with the most marginalized of our society. It was there where I first came to really understand the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel; there I experienced the naked Christ, the hungry and thirsty Christ, the unclad Christ, and the imprisoned Christ. (I continued similar work in Rome several years later working with Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity while in major seminary at the North American College).

Upon finishing minor seminary, the bishop decided to send me to Vatican City for major seminary to study at the North American College and the University of St. Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum). While experiencing the mystical presence of God in sacred art, in liturgy, in the catacombs, the study of theology, and three pilgrimages to Medjugorje, the Dark Night of the Soul and a concomitant psychological disorder (depression and anxiety) also began while

overseas. The experience cannot be captured in words, especially not in this short amount of space. Suffice it to say, soon after finishing seminary and my transitional deaconate ordination, I decided to leave active ministry when the Lord made me realize the cause of so much of my struggle with depression and anxiety – internalized homophobia. I had cognitively accepted myself but not affectively, and as my former spiritual director used to say, “The longest journey is eighteen inches – from your head to your heart.” The path to fuller self-acceptance, after years of fear and self-hatred inculcated by the Church, truly proved to be an Exodus of sorts. As a matter of integrity and conscience, I had to leave. After leaving the confines of the institutional church, the depression and anxiety worsened for about a year until I met my future husband; found a community with which to worship; and returned to graduate school for mental health counseling.

The most recent peak experience in my life involved my marriage to my husband, Nathan. Surrounded by our family and friends on New Year’s Eve of 2008, we professed our vows to each other and to God. This was an enormously spiritual experience for me, not simply on account of the religious nature of our vows, but also due to the presence of *a community*, one which validated our love for each other and validated each of us as persons. One can never underestimate the sociological influence of prejudice and discrimination in the creation and maintenance of mental health and spiritual issues in minority groups. God seemingly used the marriage ceremony to free me from psychospiritual shackles. These shackles had kept aspects of the image of God imprisoned within me for too many of my thirty-two years on this earth.

Nathan and I met through a mutual friend in 2006. Since then, we have been inseparable. Before all else, he is my best friend and accepts me unconditionally with all of my strengths and weaknesses. This level of acceptance filled a void I had in my life given my strained relationship

with the institutional church and my siblings. Nathan's acceptance of me has taught me to accept myself as I am – this is the greatest gift he has given me. Together we enjoy lying in bed together on lazy days; watching movies; discussing current events; playing with our dogs, Rowan and Woodruff; and going out to eat. We have a good life.

What is my current life situation? Currently, Nathan and I are certified pre-adoptive parents greatly looking forward to bringing children into our home and lives in the near future. I have a very rewarding career as the spiritual director and pastoral counselor at St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center; I have a license to practice psychotherapy in New York State and am an internationally credentialed alcoholism and drug addiction counselor.

After leaving the institutional Catholic Church in 2004, I felt forlorn and searched for an accepting community of believers. I kept asking in my prayer time, "Jesus, what do you want your church to look like?" Eventually, I started attending the Episcopal Church, because it retained so many of the elements of Catholicism which I loved while dispensing with the elements I despised. However, I also came to understand that the Episcopal Church was not what Jesus really wanted the church to look like, especially in its maintenance of sacerdotalism. We are all priests, and the presider at the Eucharist and the shepherd of the community, must be a servant priest within the priesthood of all believers.

Therefore, as God has continued to encourage me to refine my own theology, what I believe is a growing understanding of the ancient theology of the church, the question, "What do you stand for and not against?" has come to me throughout the past year. I stand for a reforming church, a church which retains the essential elements of the ancient community of believers (Baptism, Eucharist, the Creed, Scripture, prayer, and service) while responding to the needs of an ever-changing world. For this reason, the Spirit has also incessantly led me to the phrase,

“Why do you think you met them in Florida?” during my daily *lectio* time. “Them,” of course, refers to the Roman Catholic Women Priests Movement (RCWP) movement, a movement ordaining all eligible and called Catholics with the appropriate spiritual and theological training and whom have also been marginalized by the Church (women, LGBT, married priests, divorced and remarried, etc). While at one of my doctoral residencies in Sarasota, FL, one of my classmates had inquired as to whether I wanted to attend a Eucharist presided over by Bridget Mary Meehan. My curiosity was piqued. During the Eucharistic celebration, I remember the still, small voice in my heart saying, “This is it; this is my church; this is the place for which you have searched.” This first encounter with the RCWP movement left an indelible mark on my heart. In the midst of this new church community to which God calls me, the call to pastoral service seems to be growing in fervor, particularly the yearning to celebrate the Eucharist; to preach the Gospel; to baptize; to teach the Christian faith; and to serve the most marginalized of God’s people and empower them in their own priesthood. The Spirit appears to be leading me in the direction of creating an inclusive, Catholic community for the people of God in the Adirondacks of northern New York.

What are my strengths? I believe I am self-aware, sensitive to diversity, trustworthy, intelligent, compassionate; and I have a good sense of humor. My friends love my playfulness. I suffer from a neurological disorder called benign fasciculation syndrome which causes a lot of twitching and abnormal sensations in my arms and legs. This condition began during my time in seminary in Rome. As a result of this sometimes highly annoying condition, I became aware of the seemingly most devastating disease about which I have ever heard – ALS, commonly called Lou Gehrig’s disease. I anguished many nights over the obsessive thoughts that plagued me from thinking incessantly about this motor neuron disease in which a person becomes frozen in

his or her own body. Despite the reassurance of the neurologists, I continued to obsess. On an existential level, in the marrow of my bones, I could completely empathize with ALS and MS patients on account of my own symptoms. I began praying for all people who faced this death sentence; I continue to try and spread light across the world in my prayer as a means of comfort for those who feel they are losing their very selves in this particular dying process. I finally decided to turn this anguish into positivity and spiritual growth by raising money in the Walk to D'Feet ALS in Burlington, VT. While there, I volunteered with the New England chapter to help ALS patients one on one, hoping to assuage some of their loneliness and fear. I have also run a half marathon for all who suffer from neurological conditions. I know that I cannot necessarily change the world, but I decided to make it a little more bearable for these people.

This very personal story reveals the compassion in my soul, yet it also reveals my weaknesses. I am, in the words of Henri Nouwen, a wounded healer who daily manages a neurological condition, generalized anxiety, depression, and the demons of the past from the trauma inflicted upon me and many others by a patriarchal and hierarchical church that imbibed within me shame over my inmost identity. All of these forces have shaped who I am, and sometimes they can seem crushing, but I am a work in progress, and God has shown me through my personal struggles and through my clients navigating the path to recovery from addiction that divine power reveals itself most fully in our weakness. Simon (1989) wrote the following:

God can exercise his mercy when we avow our defects. Our defects acknowledged, instead of repelling God, draw him to us, satisfying his longing to be merciful. As this is understood through meditation, the person realizes that those things by which he feels unlovable are exactly what he has to offer God to attract him. (p. 163)

When we can only exercise self-surrender and gratitude as little children in the embrace of an all-loving God (the Little Way of Spiritual Childhood as articulated by one of my patrons – St. Therese of Lisieux), we can truly taste and experience the living waters of the Kingdom of God within us. As God draws me further along this journey towards exercising the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, slowly but surely the initial contradictions of my life have turned into paradox, mystery (the stuff out of which mystics are made).

Phenomenological Reduction of My Own Experience (Textural Description)

- Bracketing the topic or question
- Horizontilization: Every statement has equal value
- Delimited Horizons or Meanings: Horizons that stand out as invariant qualities of the experience
- Invariant Qualities and Themes: Nonrepetitive, non-overlapping constituents clustered into themes
- Textural Description

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 180)

My Own Illustrative Significant Statements

As I look back on my experience of *cinema divina* via my notes taken during the showing of the films and my own letters written to God, what horizons stood out for me as core qualities of my own experience? To obtain a sense of the films, their individual plots, and the spiritual values/practices they emphasize, please read the appropriate appendices (A, B, and C). I gave these exact appendices to the co-participants, along with their own journals, at the commencement of the retreat (as mentioned in the methodology section of this study).

Dead Man Walking

- “It’s easy to kill a monster; it’s hard to kill a human being.”
 - “Every person is worth more than their worst act.” (Sister Helen to Matthew in *Dead Man Walking*)
 - “The music almost seemed like a weeping.”
 - “Jesus was a rebel. He loved the unlovable, which was dangerous.”
 - “You have to participate in your own redemption.” (Sister Helen to Matthew in *Dead Man Walking*)
 - “You are a son of God, Matthew Poncelet.” (Sister Helen to Matthew in *Dead Man Walking*)
 - “Christ is here.” (Sister Helen to Matthew in *Dead Man Walking*)
 - “Most Sacred Heart of Jesus” (used three times at the beginning of each of my post film letters)
 - “We so easily set limits to our own and to others’ redemption.”
 - “Are some people beyond the realm of forgiveness?”
 - “Even if I make my bed in hell, you are there.”
 - “True Christianity...Sister Helen always quoted and lived the message of Jesus.”
 - “Jesus and the Bible often conflict, and when they do Jesus always wins.”
 - “Our faith is about a person, not about a book.”
 - “Can I be you for others?”
- Pay It Forward*
- “Think of an idea to change our world – and then put it into action.” (Mr. Simonet to Social Studies class in *Pay It Forward*)

- “Three big favors for three other people...requires an extreme act of faith in the goodness of people.” (Trevor and Mr. Simonet in *Pay It Forward*)
- “We do not know the ultimate effects of our decisions and actions.”
- “Is the world just shit?” (Trevor in *Pay It Forward*)
- “It’s supposed to be something hard. That’s why this is the one.” (Trevor to Mr. Simonet in *Pay It Forward*)
- “Some people are too scared to think that things can be different.” (Trevor during interview at school in *Pay It Forward*)
- “You can fix a person.” (Trevor during interview at school in *Pay It Forward*)
- “Calling on angel to walk me through this world.” (Closing music in *Pay It Forward*).
- “Humility, yes that’s what I need, a reconnection to the earth.”
- “I am always catching myself living outside of my body by being in a rush and pushing myself beyond my physical limitations.”
- “Maybe it’s in accepting my creaturehood that I transcend it and become like you?”
- “Mother Teresa’s saying, ‘God does not ask of us great deeds, but small deeds done with great love.’”
- “I feel empathy for Tyrone (participant); he cannot forgive and move on...I wish I could be his big brother and give him the love he deserves.”
- “Pay It Forward means being a peaceful and loving person in all situations and to all people. This is the essential message of all true religion – non-violence and compassion.”
- “Peace and forgiveness to all whom have severely hurt me in this life.”

With Honors

- “What do you see when you look at me? You see a piece of shit!” (Simon, homeless ‘bum’, to Monty, Harvard student in *With Honors*)
- “Parallel between Monty’s need to control his educational efforts and the addict’s need for control.”
- “Each stone tells a story I want to remember.” (Simon, homeless man to Monty, Harvard student in *With Honors*)
- “They (the founding fathers) knew one thing all great men know – that they didn’t know everything.” (Simon to haughty professor and his class at Harvard)
- “You shall no longer take things at second or third hand... You shall filter them through yourself.” (Simon quoting Walt Whitman).
- “Do you know why you hate me so much, Jeffrey? Cause I look the way you feel.” (Simon to Harvard student)
- “How could he die? He never lived.” (Simon to Monty as Simon is dying from mesothelioma)
- “You’d be surprised how different the view is on the way out than on the way in.” (Simon to Monty)
- “I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love.” (Courtney, Harvard student, quoting Walt Whitman near Simon’s death bed)
- “We are all bums...even the idea is so liberating.”
- “Don’t have to be afraid of what others may say to or think of me.”
- “It was never about you and them anyways; it was always between you and God.” (A quote from Mother Teresa)
- “Be true to yourself, Chris, be true to yourself.”

- “All shall be well; and all shall be well; and all manner of things shall be well.” (A quote from St. Julian of Norwich)

Interpreted Meaning of Significant Statements (Themes)

After repeatedly returning to my own horizons and allowing their meanings to penetrate my mind and soul, the following are the themes which emerged:

- Theme 1 – Devotion to the message and person of Jesus. This theme finds support in that I addressed all three letters (my written prayers) to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Beyond this fact, I mentioned the name of ‘Jesus’ or ‘Christ’ six times in my letters. This makes for a tally of nine times. During the opening meditation before each film, I prayed to the “the Lord Christ” to open me and speak to me through the vehicle of the film. At the beginning of *Dead Man Walking*, Sister Helen Prejean entered the prison to visit Matthew, a death row inmate, for the first time. As she entered the prison, the security wand beeped at her crucifix; the camera focused in on the image of the cross. Immediately, I felt a sense of connection both mentally and bodily to the character of Sister Helen and to Christ himself. Without knowing it at the time, I filtered the remainder of the film and the other two films through the lens of the person and message of Jesus.
- Theme 2 – Tension between personal autonomy (self-definition of personhood) and conforming to society and institutions. I noticed the tension between Sister Helen and her society’s lust for vengeance; the Louisiana society around her was for the most part in favor of the death penalty. I quoted Sister Helen in my journal notes when I first viewed the film: “It’s easy to kill a monster; it’s hard to kill a human being.” “Every person is worth more than their worst act.” She also came into conflict with members of the

institutional church. I felt a squeezing sensation in my chest whenever she came into conflict with members of society and the institutional church. I felt a sense of expansion in my chest whenever she spoke about or displayed unconditional love. Trevor, the protagonist in *Pay It Forward*, also experienced the tension between personal autonomy and societal pressure as he attempted to implement his idea of doing three big favors for three other people. His classmates challenged him; his mother's alcoholism challenged him; and his apparent and repeated failures challenged him to a point at which he questioned, "Is the world just shit?" The tension was also palpably felt throughout the film *With Honors*. Simon, the homeless man in the film, defined himself as a "bum...searching for freedom and justice." By the example of his life and his incessant quoting of Whitman, he challenged Monty, the Harvard student obsessed with graduating *summa cum laude*, and the viewer to "filter (all things) through yourself." Simon's character moved me to write in my third and final letter, "Be true to yourself, Chris; be true to yourself."

- Theme 3 – Redemption manifested as self-surrender to a Higher Power, gratitude, and forgiveness. In my first letter to my Higher Power after viewing the film *Dead Man Walking*, I wrote, "How far can redemption go?" Immediately, after pondering this question, I wrote a line from psalm 139: "Even if I make my bed in hell, you are there." People place limits on their own and others' personal worth by drawing a spiritual line around who can and cannot be forgiven based on certain acts and/or race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. The characters of Sister Helen, Trevor, and Simon manifested an all-forgiving God experienced when a person surrenders control of one's life to some form of Higher Power and when one possesses a sense of gratitude for life.

Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking* said, “You are a son of God, Matthew Poncelet...Christ is here.” Trevor in *Pay It Forward* said, “Some people are too scared to think that things can be different even if they’re really bad....but you can fix a person.” Simon, the homeless “bum” at Harvard in *With Honors*, lived his life deeply in touch with his humanity, particularly as evidenced by his gratitude: “Each stone tells a story I want to remember.” “You shall no longer take things at second or third hand; you shall filter them through yourself.” “I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love.”

- Theme 4 – Therapist as instrument of film as spiritual experience. Although not alluded to in the aforementioned significant statements and not completely cognizant of during the retreat weekend, this theme became more apparent during the post retreat interviews. “Darcey,” one of the participants stated, “Thank you, Chris, for facilitating this spiritual experience. Uh, I felt like I, uh, wasn’t even watching movies. It was nothing like that. By teaching us *lectio divina* during spirituality group and then having us, uh, view movies in this way, it really became something totally different for me. Thank you for making this happen.” Similar comments by the other five participants occurred during their respective post retreat interviews.

Textural Description of My Own Experience

I did not experience the process of *cinema divina* by myself and with the participants during the retreat weekend as the watching of movies as people normally conceive of this phenomenon. I did experience what Maslow (1971) denoted as self-transcendence occurring through peak experiences. The portion of the retreat weekend in which we actually viewed the films was a moment of intense, positive emotions and strong, physical sensations. The positive emotions

included joy, peacefulness, gratitude, and release through tears. Strong, physical sensations occurred with my breathing and sensations in my chest. During the film *Dead Man Walking*, “I felt a squeezing sensation in my chest whenever she (Sister Helen) came into conflict with members of society and the institutional church. I felt a sense of expansion in my chest whenever she spoke about or displayed unconditional love.” Despite the negative emotions also present during the weekend, these emotions somehow transmuted into positivity and a sense of growth, because as Sister Helen said in the darkest moment of *Dead Man Walking*, “Christ is here.”

Throughout the weekend retreat and the following week in which the interviews occurred, I experienced vivid dreams, events of synchronicity, a strong sense of resistance to enculturation, and a sacred space of harmony and trust. In my dreams during the weekend, I vividly saw the faces of the three people whom have harmed me the most in my life. In my letter based on the film *Pay It Forward*, I wrote the following: “Peace and forgiveness to all whom have severely hurt me in this life.” I wrote this line before the dreams began. In the dreams I experienced a sense of release; I simply spoke the word “Peace” to each of “my enemies” faces. The theme of forgiveness inundated all of the films (the protagonists faced the perilous journey into deep and true forgiveness in some manner), the group discussions, and apparently my unconscious mind. The dreams stand out to me as events of synchronicity. The inner need to commit myself again to forgiving my three “enemies” became apparent during the writing of the letter corresponding to the film *Pay It Forward*. The aforementioned dreams were not coincidences. The dreams exist for me as answers from the spiritual realm to my inner need to re-forgive.

The feeling of resistance to enculturation commenced with the film *Dead Man Walking* and reached its height during the film *With Honors*. I saw myself in Simon, the homeless “bum” at

Harvard. He made the difficult choice to step outside the boundaries of a government and society which abused him. He was proud of his “bumhood.” I began my letter to God in response to this film with “we are all bums; I am a bum...searching for freedom and justice.” Throughout the weekend, from *Dead Man Walking* to *With Honors*, thoughts about my internalized homophobia and abuse at the hands of the Catholic Church and the homophobia in my society repeatedly entered my consciousness. I cried whenever Simon or another character in *With Honors* quoted Walt Whitman’s *Song of Myself*. That Sunday night after the last film, I went home and pulled Whitman’s anthology *Leaves of Grass* off of the book shelf. Since that Sunday night, I have returned again and again to the following stanzas in my own meditation time:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.
I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of grass....
Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin
of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun...there are
millions of suns left,
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand...nor
look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the specters
in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself...

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men
and women,

And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring
taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?

And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,

The smallest sprout shows there really is no death,

And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait
at the end to arrest it,

And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,

And to die is different from what any one supposed, and
luckier...

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,

I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,

If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,

But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,

And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,

Missing me one place search another,

I stop somewhere waiting for you. (Whitman, pp. 190-251)

The experience of a sacred space of trust and harmony began at the opening ritual on Friday evening. Standing around the candles of hope with hands joined in the formation of a circle, a sense of tranquility and unity came over me. This sense of harmony and unity with the other co-participants carried through the weekend, into the following week of interviews, and persisted as they go about the remainder of their treatment program.

Imaginative Variation of My Own Experience (Structural Description)

- Vary Possible Meanings
- Vary Perspectives of the Phenomenon: From different vantage points, such as opposite meanings and various roles
- Free Fantasy Variations: Consider freely the possible structural qualities or dynamics that evoke the textural qualities
- Construct a list of structural qualities of the experience
- Develop Structural Themes: Cluster the structural qualities into themes
- Employ Universal Structures as Themes: Time, space, relationship to self, to others, bodily concerns, causal or intentional structures
- Individual Structural Description

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 181)

Structural Qualities of My Own Experience

The context of the experience included working as the spiritual director and pastoral counselor in the process of completing my doctoral dissertation to facilitate six co-participants, residents of the facility, in having an experience of film during a retreat weekend. The facility,

St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Centers, facilitates a sixty three bed, inpatient addiction rehabilitation program. The contextual factors for my own experience of the retreat weekend are too numerous to list; however, the following are some of those factors: a long and complicated history with Catholicism; functioning as the facilitator of the experience; possessing an already established, therapeutic relationship with the co-participants; a history of depression and anxiety on account of struggles with the Church and with some members of my family; and an expectation that the retreat weekend will be one of a spiritual nature resulting in the co-participants having spiritual experiences.

My Own Structural Description

My enthusiasm about ideals, especially for social justice and uplifting marginalized people as evidenced in my personal narrative at the beginning of this chapter, led me to identify with the character of Sister Helen, a staunch advocate of social justice, and with the suffering of the oppressed like Matthew Poncelet, the death row inmate, and Simon, the homeless “bum” at Harvard. On account of this longing for social justice, I quoted Sister Helen in my journal: “It’s easy to kill a monster; it’s hard to kill a human being...Every person is worth more than their worst act.” In thinking of the correlation between Sister Helen and the person and message of Jesus (theme 1), I wrote in my journal and in my first letter that “Jesus was a rebel. He loved the unlovable, which was dangerous.” I also quoted Mr. Simonet in *Pay It Forward*, most likely as a result of my passion for social justice: “Think of an idea to change our world – and then put it into action.”

The tension between personal autonomy (self-definition of personhood) and conformity to societal expectations and institutions (theme 2) connected to my own sense of intrapsychic pain emanating from the dysfunctional aspects of my family of origin, arriving at full acceptance of

my sexual orientation in the face of societal oppression, and an alienating religious dogma and institution. While ordained in the Catholic Church and studying in Rome, I progressively became more anxious and depressed. I was deeply wounded by the societal and theological views which denigrated my sexuality and my own sense of belonging in the world. For this reason, a resistance to enculturation and the articulation of theme 2 occurred in the previous sections of this chapter. For this reason, I experienced a sense of constriction in my chest during the retreat weekend whenever Sister Helen confronted society and/or the Church.

My experience with Catholicism cannot be completely classified as malignant either. In fact, my lifelong experience with the Church instilled within me many positive values, values manifested in theme 3 – redemption manifested as self-surrender to a Higher Power, gratitude, and forgiveness. The inculcation of my spirituality by my Catholicism and rewarding interpersonal relationships in my life (in particular my relationships with my father, grandmother, husband and friends) also served as the foundation for the experience of positive emotions during the retreat weekend – joy, peace, gratitude, and release through tears. The interpersonal relationships on the screen resonated with the interpersonal relationships which live inside of me.

The synchronicity involved in my dreams of forgiveness during the retreat weekend revealed my still embedded defensiveness as I live in a heterosexual society. The three “enemies” in my dreams were people who severely mistreated and hurt me on account of my sexual orientation. My defensiveness surfaced from my unconscious mind as I practiced a spiritual discipline. In fact, the work of this dissertation has prompted me to return to my spiritual disciplines and to personal therapy. Eventually, my defensiveness will yield to the healing aspects of a spirit-mind-body process. I cried during the moments of the retreat weekend, whether watching a film,

during group discussion, or in writing letters to God, when my cognitive perspective on life relaxed and allowed a sense of being to emerge spontaneously, as my will let go of control. The relinquishment of control and the reveling in being allowed for the emergence of the experience of a sacred space of harmony and trust during the retreat, lasting until the present amongst the members of the retreat weekend.

“Darcey’s” Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation

Darcey’s Illustrative Significant Statements

The following are illustrative significant statements, or horizons, for “Darcey.” The statements correspond to their listed source: *Dead Man Walking*, *Pay It Forward*, *With Honors*, the post retreat interview, and the clinical summary. These statements serve as the foundation for ascertaining themes in Darcey’s experience and for constructing a textural and structural description of her experience.

Dead Man Walking

- Darcey wrote the following phrases in all capitalized letters in her notes for the film:
“THE FATHER’S PAIN...DIE WITH DIGNITY...BE NOT AFRAID, I GO BEFORE YOU ALWAYS....THE CHILDREN....MISS MY GIRL AND BOY.”
- “I know that you will protect me from evil always.”
- “You are here with me now just as you will be with me at the hour of my death.”
- “I DO NOT fear death for you will be there to guide me and hold me, and for that, I feel peace.”
- “I am eternally grateful and even joyful knowing that I will be with you for eternity.”

Pay It Forward

- Darcey wrote the following phrases in all capitalized letters in her notes for the film:
“ANXIETY: POISON MY BODY...FEAR VERSUS FAITH...FORGIVENESS.”
- “Living in your likeness means being kind.”
- “Giving when it may be difficult.”
- “Give me the strength to do good, to do your will every day.”
- “Bring me together with my brothers and sisters.”
- “Love those I don’t always like.”
- “Let me forgive whether it is asked of me or not.”
- “See the good in all those around me.”
- “Live my life the way it should be lived: full of meaning, full of kindness.”

With Honors

- “How can you let him sleep in the van?”
- “When we worry so much about what others think, we betray love.”
- “Knowing that we don’t know it all = true strength.”
- “You didn’t see a man.”
- “There’s a different view on the way out.”
- “All around are signs of your love.”
- “You never left me.”
- “Let me love all your children.”
- “You have spoken to me; you have never left me.”
- “My life’s meaning was always clear; it was I who turned away.”
- “On the road of your love, there is nothing that cannot be done.”
- “Let me know every day what your will is for me.”

- Darcey drew a picture of balloons rising into a sunny sky in the margin of her letter for this film.

The Post-Retreat Interview

- “I mean I obviously watched movies the way I never watched movies before. You know I watched them with intention rather than just sitting and watching a movie.”
- “It was a spiritual experience rather than just watching a movie...I wouldn’t really say I watched a movie, you know what I mean. It was more of an experience – more than just watching a movie. And if somebody asked me, you know, what I did this weekend, I wouldn’t really say, ‘I watched three movies.’ I would say, ‘I had a spiritual experience with some friends.’”
- “I don’t think I found it (meaning) in the movies, but I found it in the messages in the movies by asking God to help me find it in the movies, if that makes sense.”
- “I was really available to hear definite things that God wanted me to hear, and I heard them...that was profound, like I was touched.”
- “God was actually speaking to me, you know. That was really awe-inspiring. It was very humbling, and I felt a lot of gratitude.”
- “God has always been there for me. I was the one that kind of blocked out God, you know.”
- “I was really grateful that I was there and was chosen for this study.”
- “The retreat was almost like an out-of-body experience...The whole weekend people kept saying to me, ‘Are you okay? Are you okay?’ I said, ‘Yeah, I’m fine, and I’m just having an overall out-of-body experience.’”

- “At first I had like butterflies in my stomach. I couldn’t really explain it. It was like I had found out something.”
- “I was exhausted the first night, and I just kept on being driven to read the Bible and had butterflies in my stomach, you know, good butterflies. You know, not like anxiety. It was a physical reaction that I did not want to stop.”
- “Even though I was so tired, it kind of felt like I needed to keep on feeling it. It wasn’t about the movies so much. It was about the messages, you know.”
- “Early this morning I went right to the Healing Garden, and I just meditated. I haven’t meditated like that ever, even though we learned about meditation and stuff....It happened this morning; I really just felt great. I had butterflies the whole entire weekend, even still now.”
- “I just learned I don’t have to struggle anymore. I can forgive myself and everybody else.”
- “I’ve always been very, very hard on myself. You know I think it is very clear that God doesn’t want me to do that anymore. He wants me to be satisfied with myself. I think I thought it was noble to be hard on myself. I really think now that that was disrespectful to be so torturous to myself.”

Clinical Summary (Structural Qualities)

- Mid 40’s, Caucasian, English speaking, divorced Catholic female who is mandated to treatment.
- Previous month before treatment resided at mother’s house under house arrest. Prior to stay at mother’s house was in jail for three months.
- Three inpatient, psychiatric treatments in lifetime for anxiety and depression

- Cancer survivor who had a double mastectomy. Went into remission for several years. Recent imaging tests at the hospital reveal the possibility of cancer having returned in a very aggressive and late stage.
- When not under the influence, takes out anger on self...history of cutting from pre-adolescence. Self admission of borderline personality traits. No official diagnosis of BPD on Axis II. Axis I diagnoses include alcoholism, major depression disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder.
- Diagnosis of Alcohol Dependence with Physiological Dependence, Severe.
- Had a 14 year period of abstinence from alcohol. Went to AA meetings and worked the steps.
- Arrested for driving under the influence five times. "I've driven while in a total blackout."
- Completed Master's degree in public administration.
- Defined spirituality as "my relationship with God. When I was drinking my relationship with God wasn't good." "I'm more likely to stay sober with a stronger relationship with God."
- Strong feelings of guilt and shame over not having custody of her two children and over her divorce from a marriage which lasted over six years.
- Per self-report, three positive qualities she feels she possesses are intellect, compassion, and perseverance
- Per self-report, three traits she would like to change are self-doubt, being overly analytical, and impulsivity.
- People described her as a "compliant" child.

- Father was an alcoholic and was sober for the last several years of his life.
- Several siblings are also addicted and not in recovery.
- “I’ve gone through cancer treatment. I’ve gotten my son help (for his psychological problem). I just keep persevering.”

Interpreted Meaning of Darcey’s Significant Statements (Themes)

- Theme 1 – Spiritual experience and not simply watching movies. This theme emerged throughout the analysis of Darcey’s data as evidenced by some of the following quotations:

“It was a spiritual experience rather than just watching a movie....I wouldn’t really say I watched a movie, you know what I mean. It was more of an experience – more than just watching a movie. And if somebody asked me, you know, what I did this weekend, I wouldn’t really say, ‘I watched three movies.’ I would say, ‘I had a spiritual experience with some friends.’”

“I mean I obviously watched movies the way I never watched movies before. You know I watched them with intention rather than just sitting and watching a movie.”

“I don’t think I found it (meaning) in the movies, but I found it in the messages in the movies by asking God to help me find it in the movies, if that makes sense.”

“I was really available to hear definite things that God wanted me to hear, and I heard them....that was profound, like I was touched.”

“God was actually speaking to me, you know. That was really awe-inspiring. It was very humbling, and I felt a lot of gratitude.”

- Theme 2 – The power of the story through identification with characters. While Darcey did not state this explicitly, she emphasized in her writings and in the discussion the lines

and stories of one of the characters from each of the films. For the film *Dead Man Walking* she identified with Matthew Poncelet's character- his fears and the damage to others he had caused as evidenced by the following written in her notes and in her letter to God:

Darcey wrote the following phrases in all capitalized letters in her notes for the film:

“THE FATHER’S PAIN (child murdered by Matthew)...DIE WITH DIGNITY...BE NOT AFRAID, I GO BEFORE YOU ALWAYS....THE CHILDREN....MISS MY GIRL AND BOY.”

Darcey wrote the following in her letter to God which corresponded to this film:

“I know that you will protect me from evil always.”

“You are here with me now just as you will be with me at the hour of my death.”

“I DO NOT fear death for you will be there to guide me and hold me, and for that, I feel peace.”

I noted similar quotations and observations in the notes, letters, and group discussions for the two subsequent films.

- Theme 3 – Spirituality manifested in virtues/practices of self-surrender, gratitude, forgiveness, and kindness. Darcey experienced emotional and physiological states connected to these spiritual virtues/practices as a result of the weekend retreat experience with film. These spiritual virtues/practices are evidenced in some of the following quotations from Darcey:

“Living in your likeness means being kind.”

“Giving when it may be difficult.”

“Give me the strength to do good, to do your will every day.”

“Bring me together with my brothers and sisters.”

“Love those I don’t always like.”

“Let me forgive whether it is asked of me or not.”

“See the good in all those around me.”

“Live my life the way it should be lived: full of meaning, full of kindness.”

“On the road of your love, there is nothing that cannot be done.”

“Let me know every day what your will is for me.”

Darcey drew a picture of balloons rising into a sunny sky in the margin of her letter for this film (*With Honors*).

“I just learned I don’t have to struggle anymore. I can forgive myself and everybody else.”

“I’ve always been very, very hard on myself. You know I think it is very clear that God doesn’t want me to do that anymore. He wants me to be satisfied with myself. I think I thought it was noble to be hard on myself. I really think now that that was disrespectful to be so torturous to myself.”

- Theme 4 – Spiritual experience connected to strong physiological sensations. From the beginning of the retreat weekend until the time of the post retreat, weekend interview, Darcey continued to feel “butterflies in (her) stomach.” She possessed a sense of being outside of “normal,” waking consciousness. Her usual experience of temporal space and time became disrupted. Darcey’s following statements corroborate this theme:

“The retreat was almost like an out-of-body experience... The whole weekend people kept saying to me, ‘Are you okay? Are you okay?’ I said, ‘Yeah, I’m fine, and I’m just having an overall out-of-body experience.’”

“At first I had like butterflies in my stomach. I couldn’t really explain it. It was like I had found out something.”

“I was exhausted the first night, and I just kept on being driven to read the Bible and had butterflies in my stomach, you know, good butterflies. You know, not like anxiety. It was a physical reaction that I did not want to stop.”

“Even though I was so tired, it kind of felt like I needed to keep on feeling it. It wasn’t about the movies so much. It was about the messages, you know.”

“Early this morning I went right to the Healing Garden, and I just meditated. I haven’t meditated like that ever, even though we learned about meditation and stuff....It happened this morning; I really just felt great. I had butterflies the whole entire weekend, even still now.”

- Theme 5 – Searching for meaning in the face of human mortality (faith versus fear). This theme pervaded her writing and her contributions to the group discussions. She wrote “FEAR” in all capitalized letters in her notebook. Juxtaposed to the word “FEAR” appeared the words “BE NOT AFRAID.” In her notebook, with these two realities appearing side by side, she circled the phrase “BE NOT AFRAID.” Next to this phrase of existential meaning, she drew a picture of several balloons floating into a sunny sky. She wrote: “I DO NOT fear death for you will be there to guide me and hold me, and for that, I feel peace.” She also wrote: “My life’s meaning was always clear; it was I who turned away.” The struggle for meaning also appeared several times in her clinical summary.

The Textural Description of Darcey’s Experience

During the retreat weekend, Darcey had a “spiritual experience” while engaging three films with the ancient, spiritual practice of *lectio divina*. During the weekend, she was “not just watching movies.” The “spiritual experience” of the weekend retreat possessed physiological, emotional, and meaning correlates. These correlates constituted the essence of her “spiritual experience.” Physiologically, she “had butterflies in her stomach even now” (up to the point of the post-retreat interview). She simultaneously felt a sense of urgency and equanimity course through her body throughout the retreat. Emotionally, she cried, laughed, smiled and experienced an overall sense of self-transcendence as she identified with characters from each of the films. In terms of meaning, she unhesitatingly faced her fears surrounding human mortality and articulated her own quest for meaning in the face of that mortality. Her existential answer to human fear is faith as expressed in self-surrender to God, being kind to herself and others, gratitude, and forgiveness.

The Structural Description of Darcey’s Experience

Darcey had a “spiritual experience” consisting of “being spoken to by God” on account of learning the stages and skills of *lectio divina* in spirituality group, a group which had finished a week before the retreat weekend. She stated during her post retreat interview that she “was really available to hear definite things that God wanted me to hear, and I heard them....that was profound, like I was touched.” This statement evidenced her understanding of the core philosophy behind *lectio divina*. Coming into the experience she also had a strong faith in her Higher Power. In her clinical summary at the time of admission she defined spirituality as “my relationship to God and others.” When she drinks “her relationship with God is not so good.” Her faith in God and her faith in her AA support system provided her with fourteen years of sobriety.

Her intense physiological sensations during the retreat weekend; her search for meaning in the face of human mortality; and the expression of the spiritual virtues/practices of surrender, gratitude, and forgiveness in her letters, group discussions, and the post-retreat interview all correspond to her suffering and her character strengths of “intellect, compassion, and perseverance.” She has survived not only an aggressive form of cancer, alcoholism, depression and anxiety, unemployment, imprisonment, and divorce, she also disclosed to me at the end of the retreat, and before the interview the following week, the possibility of cancer having returned with a vengeance. The doctors performed some imaging tests revealing “spots” on the bones in one of her arms and in her lower back. As she discussed this again with me with grace and peace in her demeanor during the post-retreat interview, she also asked for me to give her the anointing of the sick, which I gladly did. I anointed her forehead and the palms of her hands with oil as we prayed for her healing in body, mind, and soul. This moment was profoundly spiritual for the both of us and revealed the causality behind her diligent search for meaning in the face of human suffering and mortality. She has continually faced the existential dilemma between fear and faith in her life; Darcey continues to decide for faith in the face of fear. The last line of her clinical summary read: “I just keep persevering.”

“Tyrone’s” Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation

Tyrone’s Illustrative Significant Statements (Horizons)

The following represent horizons of Tyrone’s experience of the weekend retreat. The horizons corresponded to the data from the three films – *Dead Man Walking*, *Pay It Forward*, and *With Honors* and to the post-retreat weekend interview. This data proved necessary for constructing a textural description of his experience. The data from his clinical summary revealed structural qualities necessary for writing the structural description of his experience.

Dead Man Walking

- “God, I thank you for this experience in which I have had an experience of true forgiveness.”
- “I judge myself as he (Matthew Poncelet, the death row inmate) does....I want to forgive myself, but it is so hard to do sometimes.”
- “He (Matthew) finally finds forgiveness for himself.”
- “Matthew truly came to acceptance.”
- “I have to come to acceptance of my past....Only through you, Lord Jesus Christ, can that acceptance be done.”
- “In order for me to fully accept myself, I need to help other people.”
- “I pray that all the people I have harmed in my life will come to forgive me.”
- “I pray that I can forgive myself and all the people that have hurt me.”
- “Deep down inside of me, I know there is a good person.”
- “Only to do your will.”

Pay It Forward

- The words TREVOR and TREVOR’S MOM are found in the notes in all capitalized letters, and these words are circled.
- “Dear Lord, I pray for all people sick and suffering from the disease of addiction.”
- “I ask, ‘Why you would do such a thing to innocent people, young children...Is there a motive behind this? Is this a test of yours to be overcome?’”
- “I don’t understand; maybe I don’t need to understand.”
- “Father, help me to accept the things I cannot change, and allow me to change the things I can.”

With Honors

- Quotes from the film with check marks next to them: “All great men know that they don’t know everything.” “Listen to all sides, and filter them through yourself.” “You know why you hate me, Jeffrey? Because I look the way you feel.”
- The following words are capitalized in the notes with brackets around them: “FAMILY IS PEOPLE WHOM ARE CLOSEST TO YOU; BLOOD DOESN’T MEAN ANYTHING.”
- The following words are capitalized in the notes with brackets around them: “I LEARNED TO LET GO.” (This was a line from the film’s theme song entitled “I’ll Remember” by Madonna).
- “Life is not about judgment, rather lack of it.”
- “I need to see people for who they are on the inside, the true goodness of a person.”
- “The person I least expect could tell me the most important message in my life.”
- “Lord Jesus Christ, you will talk to me through anybody and in any way.”
- “You lay the path for me to change; I just have to follow it.”

Post-Retreat Weekend Interview

- “Anyone could help you, not judging them, any person can help you. Don’t judge people, because any person could help you.”
- “Initially, I was shocked, like it was different to watch a movie like that, you know. This way, I got so much more knowledge.”
- “The experience was hard to put into words.”
- “Oh, yeah, yeah, never watched a movie like that in my life. When I watched a movie before I always thought it was just a movie, but it’s not just a movie.”

- “This was a spiritual experience where I received messages from God.”
- “I was angry at that moment in the film (*Pay It Forward*). To have the ability to just move on. It made me angry, because to me I don’t think the movie made it seem right to other people how it should be. Uh, I think it is more in depth than that. I think they should have showed more of the steps to how Trevor’s mom came to forgive her own mother of her alcoholism, because you don’t just forgive somebody instantly. At least for me, I don’t just forgive somebody.”
- “The film helped me see like the 12 steps and how recovery is used in other aspects of life, not just, you know, in addiction to alcohol and drugs. People can be addicted to other things.”
- “The first movie, it just made my stomach upset. I didn’t want to eat lunch afterwards.”
- “You know, it was like a bodily change, I guess you could say, because I just felt so good. Watching the movie the way we did, I felt good.”
- “The movies were in the end really uplifting. You know, it was like it gave me a sense of goodness.”
- “I received good messages – do not worry about trying to be perfect in everything. You know, you don’t have to be the honor student as long as you are the honor student on the inside.”
- “There are so many messages in movies, and I feel I received the messages from these movies, messages from God....Recovery is everywhere.”
- “My addiction has been a blessing. I would never have found anything like this in my life if it hadn’t been for my addiction.”

Clinical Summary (Structural Qualities)

- Mid twenties, Caucasian, non-Latino, English speaking male who considered himself Christian and has considered the process of conversion to Catholicism. Does not belong to any church.
- Single and never been married.
- Transported to treatment by police from a New York State county jail where he served more than 100 days of jail time.
- Court mandated to treatment and aftercare completion for his severe alcoholism.
- Considered himself to be homeless.
- Has never received psychiatric treatment but does display adult anti-social traits. He relegated all such traits to his severe alcoholism.
- Multiple physical altercations in his life always under the influence of alcohol.
- Noted that he becomes more angry and violent under the influence of alcohol.
- Binge drank every Thursday night through Sunday night after he completed his four day work week.
- Has suffered all the signs of alcohol withdrawal.
- Hospitalized many times by police due to concern over alcohol poisoning.
- Began drinking at age sixteen and became a problem immediately.
- Continued to drink while in the military for over two years. Military offered honorable discharge or treatment. Chose honorable discharge. Could not admit problem at the time.
- Went to AA meetings twice a week while in jail. Liked these meetings very much.
- Has been arrested a dozen of times. 3 DWI's, multiple counts of disorderly conduct and one felony larceny.

- Dropped out of high school from alcohol abuse. Received GED and learned a trade before entering military.
- At time of admission stated, “I have no idea what spirituality is.”
- Tremendous feelings of guilt and shame over past behaviors.
- Identified guilt and shame, legal problems, and lack of stable relationships as main issues during treatment.
- Mother and father separated when he was three. Very strained relationship with mother. She suffers from severe alcoholism, and she and Tyrone have had many physical altercations.
- Tremendous resentments towards father and mother who are both alcoholic.
- “I am just divorced from my family.”
- “Alcohol has destroyed my family.”

Interpreted Meaning of Tyrone’s Significant Statements (Themes)

- Theme 1 – Spiritual experience and not simply watching movies. Tyrone felt that he wasn’t really watching films during the retreat weekend but rather had a “spiritual experience” through the medium of film. During the post-retreat interview he stated the following: “This was a spiritual experience where I received messages from God.”
- Theme 2 – Need for forgiveness of self and others but hesitancy to do so. Tyrone expressed in his letters, group discussions, and in the post-retreat interview his need to forgive himself for his mistakes and his need to forgive others, particularly his mother. Despite his recognition of the need to forgive, he simultaneously expressed hesitancy to forgive himself and his mother. During the post-retreat interview he stated the following:

“I was angry at that moment in the film (*Pay It Forward*). To have the ability to just move on. It made me angry, because to me I don’t think the movie made it seem right to other people how it should be. Uh, I think it is more in depth than that. I think they should have showed more of the steps to how Trevor’s mom came to forgive her own mother of her alcoholism, because you don’t just forgive somebody instantly. At least for me, I don’t just forgive somebody.”

- Theme 3 – Desire for radical acceptance of self and others. Tyrone wrote the following statements in his letters to God:

“Matthew truly came to acceptance.”

“I have to come to acceptance of my past....Only through you, Lord Jesus Christ, can that acceptance be done.”

“In order for me to fully accept myself, I need to help other people.”

- Theme 4 – Search for meaning amidst suffering. Tyrone wrote the following statements in his letters to God:

“I ask, ‘Why you would do such a thing to innocent people, young children...Is there a motive behind this? Is this a test of yours to be overcome?’”

“I don’t understand; maybe I don’t need to understand.”

“Father, help me to accept the things I cannot change, and allow me to change the things I can.”

- Theme 5 – Power of story to heal via identification with characters. Tyrone expressed an identification with at least one character in each of the three films. He particularly identified with the character of Matthew Poncelet, the death row inmate, in the film *Dead Man Walking* and the character Trevor in the film, *Pay It Forward*.

- Theme 6 – God utilizes any means to reach us. Through the experience of receiving messages throughout the retreat weekend from the films and from other co-participants, Tyrone had an epiphany of God always attempting to reach us, if only we view the world from the vantage point of faith. In his letter which corresponded to the film, *With Honors*, he wrote the following:

“The person I least expect could tell me the most important message in my life.”

“Lord Jesus Christ, you will talk to me through anybody and in any way.”

For further corroboration of this theme, during the post-retreat interview he stated the following:

“I received good messages – do not worry about trying to be perfect in everything. You know, you don’t have to be the honor student as long as you are the honor student on the inside.”

“There are so many messages in movies, and I feel I received the messages from these movies, messages from God...Recovery is everywhere.”

- Theme 7 – Retreat experience possessed strong physiological correlates. This theme found corroboration in such statements as the following made during the post-retreat weekend interview:

“The first movie, it just made my stomach upset. I didn’t want to eat lunch afterwards.”

“You know, it was like a bodily change, I guess you could say, because I just felt so good. Watching the movie the way we did, I felt good.”

Textural Description of Tyrone’s Experience

Tyrone had a “spiritual experience” during the retreat weekend; he did not “simply watch movies.” Several, significant factors constituted his “spiritual experience.” He felt a need for

self-forgiveness and an attitude of forgiveness towards others, while simultaneously admitting to a hesitancy and difficulty in commencing a forgiveness process. The other co-participants provided him with feedback concerning his need to release his deeply embedded resentments towards his mother. In response to this feedback, he leaned forward somewhat aggressively in his chair and expressed his anger towards her as if she were present in the room. In the post-retreat interview he said, “At least for me, I just don’t forgive somebody.” Verbalizations concerning his mother moved from being purely cognitive to being strongly affective during the retreat and during the following week also. His group counselor reported an affective “dam breaking” after the retreat. Tyrone’s expressed desire for radical acceptance of self and others prevented his anger, activated by the theme of forgiving his mother, from evolving into rage. “I have to come to acceptance of my past...only through you, Lord, can that acceptance be done.” “In order for me to fully accept myself, I need to help other people.”

Tyrone’s search for meaning amidst suffering became somewhat quenched by his insight into God utilizing any means to reach and be in communion with individual, human beings. “I don’t understand; maybe I don’t need to understand....Father, help me to accept the things I cannot change, and allow me to change the things I can.” “The person I least expect could tell me the most important message in my life.” “There are so many messages in movies, and I feel I received the messages from these movies, messages from God...Recovery is everywhere.” The insight of God utilizing any means to reach Tyrone was not without consequence. Besides having strong insights and experiencing a strong and healing, emotional discharge, Tyrone experienced some initial, adverse physiological reactions also – an upset stomach and an inability to eat lunch after the first film. In the end, however, per self report he experienced an

amorphous “bodily change” of sorts which “felt good.” He had difficulty in articulating the exact nature of this “bodily change.”

Structural Description of Tyrone’s Experience

Tyrone completed spirituality group a week before he participated in the retreat weekend. On the first page of his journal for the retreat weekend, he wrote down the stages of *lectio/cinemadivina*; this fact reflected his astuteness and eagerness to engage in the retreat as fully as possible. He has engaged his treatment program with an equal vigor and strong “thirst” for recovery. Apparently, Tyrone set into motion a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts through his eagerness and preparedness to have a “spiritual experience.” He remained open and teachable throughout spirituality group, and this openness carried over into the retreat weekend, which allowed for spiritual growth and therapeutic outcomes.

According to his clinical summary, he has “tremendous resentments towards his mother and father who are both alcoholic.” “Alcohol has destroyed my family.” Tyrone suffered multiple, physical attacks by his mother. In an individual session we had prior to the retreat weekend, he described his reluctance and “torn feelings” about setting firm boundaries with his mother. My clinical impression is that he is highly co-dependent and has not fully self-differentiated from his mother. He cognitively knows he “must not have her in his life” but affectively struggles with the reality of setting boundaries. He has admitted to his co-dependence and psychological enmeshment with his mother who possesses psychological control over him even when he is not physically present. Tyrone’s realization of her psychological control created the atmosphere for him to project and identify with the character, Trevor, in the film, *Pay It Forward*, a young child of alcoholic parents, and thus to finally express his anger towards his mother affectively in the group discussion period.

Tyrone's insight of God's desire, in God's omnipresence, to continually attempt to communicate and commune with individuals appears to have resulted from his expressed desire to deepen his Christian faith, from the influence of the meetings and steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, and his experience during twelve sessions of spirituality group at St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment Centers. He stated the following during his post-retreat interview: "I received good messages – do not worry about trying to be perfect in everything. You know, you don't have to be the honor student as long as you are the honor student on the inside." "There are so many messages in movies, and I feel I received the messages from these movies, messages from God...Recovery is everywhere." He explicitly mentioned the Serenity Prayer from the AA movement in one of his letters: "Father, help me to accept the things I cannot change, and allow me to change the things I can."

"Cordelia's" Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation

"Cordelia's" Illustrative Significant Statements (Horizons)

The subsequent statements revealed horizons of Cordelia's experience of *cinema divina*. The statements come from the three films and the post-retreat weekend interview. The structural qualities of her experience were taken from her clinical summary written shortly after her admission to the treatment center.

Dead Man Walking

- Wrote Uncle "Michael" = prison in margins of her notes.
- Quoted Sister Helen's character in margins of notebook: "I want the last face you see to be a face of love."
- In all capitalized letters wrote the following in margin: "GOD IS LOVE." A heart and a cross flanked both sides of this statement.

- “Maybe life is heaven’s waiting room.”
- “I know love is the answer.”
- “Through your love for me, I will love others unconditionally.”
- “Stay with me throughout this journey, and show me all you can.”
- “Forgive me for all of my sins.”
- “Thank you for everything and everyone you’ve put in my life.”
- “I know you are all around and in everything, speaking to me everywhere.”
- “Continue to speak to me through all.”
- “This film, like a dream, has opened my heart; thank you for the emotions I felt.”

Pay It Forward

- The following words could be found in the margins of her notebook: “FEAR VS. FAITH, ACTS OF KINDNESS, FORGIVES, FAITH.”
- “Thank you for the message of forgiveness, faith, hope, and love.”
- “Forgiveness allows for me to move on and heal.”
- “I know I can do many small things to make a difference, and one act of kindness can have a ripple effect.”
- “I pray I can see meaning and importance in all you place around me.”
- “This film was a reminder of our lack of trust in people.”
- “How big a role fear plays in our lives.”
- “My faith in you will take away this fear.”

With Honors

- The following words and statements could be found in the margins of her notebook for this film: “LOVE, ACCEPTANCE, FORGIVENESS; ‘Filter all through yourself’;

‘When I give, I give myself’; changes senior thesis = changes life/values; grateful 2 be;
HUMANITY/the human condition; Meaning of life; ‘Not all who wander are lost.’”

- “Thank you for another beautiful message through this film.”
- “Looking for happiness in outside things is insufficient, that I must find from within.”
- “Everyone in this life is a child of yours, therefore all my brothers and sisters and me must love and care for all of them.”
- “ ‘When I give, I give myself.’ This was very significant, because I pray that I can fully give myself to You and others.”

Post-Retreat Interview

- “I got more out of the retreat than I have from a lot of my sessions in small group and a lot of individual sessions. It was an experience instead of just talking, an experience of the divine.”
- “So, after watching the films I really felt on a deeper level and was able to have a better understanding of what I was trying to do in recovery and able to act on it a little better.”
- “I felt like a deep connection with the characters in the film.”
- “Although teary-eyed at certain times, I felt hopeful from the movies and from the characters’ lives.”
- “I felt a sense of love, of how important love is.”
- “It was like I became the characters.”
- “I felt a lot of emotions – mostly forgiveness, love, and compassion.”
- “My mind was completely absorbed in the film, like I became the characters.”
- “I became intertwined in the lives of the characters.”

- “A huge part of my reason for using drugs was like a really bad search for spirituality, and I mean, I was looking for God but through the wrong means – through heroin. What I really wanted was a fullness to life.”

Clinical Summary (Structural Qualities)

- Teenage, single, white, English speaking female mandated to treatment
- In jail for a month prior to entering treatment
- Lived with mother and step-father until thirteen; lived with father briefly; and lived with grandparents for past several years
- Has a diagnosis of depression, anxiety, and ADHD
- “I have been on and off depression medications.” Wanted to re-start taking Wellbutrin
- Does not have an anger management problem
- No regular use of alcohol
- Daily heroin user for past two years
- “I couldn’t stop doing it. I spent all my money on it.”
- “I’ve been using heroin daily. It helped me get things done and made me very happy.”
- Three prior inpatient stays of only twenty-eight days
- Current treatment over ninety days
- “Spirituality is important to my recovery.”
- Defined spirituality as one’s way of being in and belongingness to the world
- “I am most concerned with my constant desire to get high. I always want to use no matter what I’m doing.”
- In past year has not engaged in any hobbies or social recreation
- Non-addicted parents and biological relatives

- “I don’t talk to my family much when I’m using, and they just want to lecture me, so I avoid them. I want to show them I can do the right thing and have them be proud of me.”
- Extreme feelings of guilt and shame over drug use
- “Heroin was my God.”

Interpreted Meanings of “Cordelia’s” Significant Statements (Themes)

- Theme 1 – A somewhat ineffable, spiritual experience, not simply watching film. Cordelia, although a very articulate young woman, as evidenced by her writing and her verbal skills during group discussions, found articulating the exact nature of this experience difficult. She did acknowledge that the experience transcended simply watching movies and was spiritual in nature as evidenced by the following quotation taken directly from her post-retreat interview: “I got more out of the retreat than I have from a lot of my sessions in small group and a lot of individual sessions. It was an experience instead of just talking, an experience of the divine.”
- Theme 2 – God’s presence everywhere and continued efforts to communicate with us. Cordelia illustrated this theme of her experience in such statements as the following:

“Stay with me throughout this journey, and show me all you can.”

“I know you are all around me and in everything, speaking to me everywhere.”

“Continue to speak to me through all.”
- Theme 3 – Transformative power of narrative through projective identity with the characters. This theme pervaded the post-retreat interview. The word “connection” and certain synonyms were mentioned eleven times in the interview, always in conjunction with the word “characters” or the actual name of a character. For example, in the interview she stated the following in a more deeply progressive sense:

“I felt like a deep connection with the characters in the film.”

“It was like I became the characters...I became intertwined in the lives of the characters.”

- Theme 4 – Addiction as a misplaced spiritual search. Although this theme pervaded the retreat weekend, it became highly pronounced in Cordelia’s letters to God and in her post-retreat interview. One of the last statements she made in the interview concerned her addiction to heroin and its connection to spirituality: “A huge part of my reason for using drugs was like a really bad search for spirituality, and I mean, I was looking for God but through the wrong means – through heroin. What I really wanted was a fullness to life.”
- Theme 5 – Identification of spirituality as an internal search for meaningful and good relationships with God, self, and others. In her letter to God based on the film *With Honors*, she wrote emphatically the following: “‘When I give, I give myself.’ This statement was very significant for me, because I pray that I can fully give myself to YOU and to others.”
- Theme 6 – An experience of the spiritual values/practices of love, forgiveness, hope, faith, and gratitude. Cordelia mentioned the word ‘love’ more than any other word in her notes, letters, and interview. She mentioned this word a total of thirteen times. For her, Love is epitomized in her definition of spirituality (theme 5). “Through your love for me, I will love others unconditionally...God is Love.....Love is the answer.” The word ‘forgiveness’ was found almost always a line or two after she mentioned or spoke about ‘love.’ “Forgiveness allows for me to move on and heal.” This statement was preceded and followed by two statements in which the word ‘love’ figured prominently. She expressed a feeling of hope from the commencement of the retreat: “Maybe life is

heaven's waiting room." She mentioned the word 'hope' several times in her letters. Her experience of faith in this retreat was juxtaposed to her experience of fear: "How big a role fear plays in our lives...My faith in you will take away this fear." In terms of her experience of gratitude, the phrase "Thank you" appeared six times in her letters, and in one of the margins of her letter she wrote "Grateful 2 be" with big stars flanking both sides of this statement.

Textural Description of "Cordelia's" Experience

Cordelia had an experience which she did not explicitly identify as "spiritual," however she did utilize the word "divine" at the opening of our interview in her description of the retreat weekend. She stated, "I got more out of the retreat than I have from a lot of my sessions in small group and a lot of individual sessions. It was an experience instead of just talking, an experience of the divine." Unlike the previous two co-participants, she specifically mentioned no physical alterations, at least of which she was aware. Her "mind was completely absorbed into the films" as she identified "becom(ing) the characters" and "becom(ing) intertwined with the lives of the characters." She wrote about and discussed her addiction to heroin as a misplaced spiritual search. She searched for "outside things" to fill a spiritual hole. She insightfully understood how pairing a physical object with a spiritual longing was a mismatch. "Looking for happiness in outside things is insufficient, that I must find from within." To Cordelia, the solution to her addiction problem would only be found in the recognition of God's omnipresence and accessing that presence through the spiritual practices/virtues of love, forgiveness, hope, faith, and gratitude. "I know I can do many small things to make a difference for myself and others, and one act of kindness can have a ripple effect...I pray that I can see the

meaning and importance in all you place around me...through forgiveness, faith, hope, and love.”

The Structural Description of “Cordelia’s” Experience

Cordelia’s relationship to time, self, others, and to heroin have all influenced how she experienced a weekend retreat involving *cinema divina*. In terms of time, she never seemed to have enough of it for healing to occur. According to her clinical summary, she has gone through three previous, inpatient stays of twenty-eight days in length. During an individual session with me, she mentioned how this was never really enough time to “get recovery.” Being at St. Joseph’s for over ninety days has provided her with a sense of expansiveness and an ability to thoroughly explore her healing from addiction without the pressure of time.

While a very intelligent and articulate young woman, her relationship to herself has been characterized over the past several years by guilt and shame. “I don’t talk to my family much when I’m using, and they just want to lecture me, so I avoid them. I want to show them I can do the right thing and have them be proud of me.” This intense guilt and shame may be causally linked to her effusive expressions of love, forgiveness, and faith in the presence of fear during the retreat weekend. Her intelligence allowed her to understand the connection between her addiction and spirituality. Even at the time of her admission she stated, “Heroin is my God.” Having an artistic quality to her personality, she almost “became the characters” as she became “intertwined” with their lives. Cordelia has had strong experiences of archetypal activation in her lifetime, whether through a naturally occurring self-transcendent experience or through the high of shooting heroin. For this reason, she easily recognizes God’s omnipresence. “I know you are all around and in everything, speaking to me everywhere.”

“Freud’s” Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation

“Freud’s” Illustrative Significant Statements (Horizons)

The following statements represented horizons of Freud’s experience over the weekend retreat. As with the previous co-participants, his significant statements were drawn from his letters and notes which corresponded to each film and from his post-retreat interview. The structural qualities of his experience came from his clinical summary.

Dead Man Walking

- “I’m learning that I’m constantly changing, constantly growing. My whole life I’ve been like a chameleon, adapting whenever necessary to my surroundings in order to be accepted.” This statement came from an assignment Freud included in his journal. The assignment, from his primary counselor, was entitled “Fear of Finding Out Who I Really Am.”
- “Adonai, thank you for even further confirming what I have been taught so early in life.”
- “Darkness can only exist in the absence of light.”
- “Nothing, absolutely nothing, means anything except for love, in this world and beyond.”
- “The essence of Love’s presence is precious, beyond expression.”
- “With Love and Light, Simcha.”
- Freud drew the Star of David in the margins of his letter.

Pay It Forward

- Freud wrote two poems as a result of his experience with this film. He wrote the first poem to address his own relationship with God; he wrote the second poem for Tyrone, a co-participant in the group. (Tyrone struggled during the discussion period with this film on account of his dysfunctional relationship with his mother).

Poem 1

Let the ripple happen.
If Your words ring true,
Hold on to me,
I'll hold onto You.
Let's give this one more try, only
this time don't ask, "Why?"
I don't ask, "Why?"
I blow You my smiles and kisses,
then look up at the sky.

Poem 2

The salt that's in my tears, I cry for you.
The ocean flowing in my veins, I bleed for you.
I care so much for you, because I care so much for me.
If you'll let me, can I pray for you?
Someone once said, "If you don't believe in miracles, you're being unrealistic."
So glad, He channeled that quote, cause for me
It has made all the difference.
It is possible.
Because it's possible, I will get better.
Because I'll get better, this world will get better.
If this world gets better, maybe you can too?

With Honors

- “As the music plays to the theme song, “I’ll Remember,” I wish I could play the piano right now. Emotional response.”
- “You know why you hate me so much, Jeffrey? Because I look the way you feel.”
Quoting Simon, the homeless man from the film
- “You’d be surprised how different the view is on the way out than on the way in.”
Quoting Simon, the homeless man from the film
- “Monty Kessler will graduate life with honor and with no regret.” Quoting a letter from Simon, the homeless man, to Monty, the Harvard student at Simon’s burial
- “Thank you again for this experience, this message that I received today.”
- “I pray I can apply what I have learned to my life, in dealing with myself, and in dealing with others.”
- “Guide me on a path of love, of light, of purpose, of strength.”
- “Even with material success, I will know the real value that lies within.”
- “I pray to believe in myself.”
- “I pray to believe in others.”
- “May I continue to believe in You; with this belief, this relationship will grow stronger with each day of my life.”

Post-Retreat Interview

- “I felt myself relating with the characters, and I felt very emotional.”
- “At times, I broke out into tears.”
- “I think what Matthew did was horrible, and he acted like an animal, but how he died with dignity and made a decision that his life had meaning.”

- “When you really think about the mortality of life, the circle of life, everything passes away.”
- “The *lectio divina* practice helped in small group today when the group counselor mentioned being an independent man. He wasn’t talking to me, but God was. Without even thinking about it, the phrase “independent man” made me stop and think about me becoming an independent man, free from drugs, free from darkness. All I ever wanted to be is free. I think I need to just learn to let things happen.”
- “The feelings from the films were bitter-sweet. A sense of comfort. I cried. Heavy stuff. One stripe white, one stripe black. It was bitter sweet.”
- “The experience was a paradox, like life. It’s hard to explain.”
- “Very aware of being in the moment. My eyes seemed to be like more open. I sensed like radiant through my eyes. I can’t explain. It went throughout my whole body.”
- “At times I felt jittery, shaky, and at times I felt overall just intense. I felt magnified. I never thought about drugs. These feelings bring me back to the idea of freedom.”
- “What was emotionally there before the drugs is still there now. I think there is a lot of very sensitive people that happen to become addicts for whatever reason. My emotional make-up was there before the drugs.”

Clinical Summary (Structural Qualities)

- Mid twenties, white, single, Jewish male
- Currently unemployed
- Not mandated to treatment, came of own volition after a recent relapse on heroin
- Living with parents prior to entrance into treatment

- Intense feelings of guilt and shame about how he treated others during use, especially for stealing from family
- “My emotions sometimes become overwhelming and intense, and I have difficulty channeling them in a positive way.”
- Would like to learn to channel feelings in a more positive way
- As a young teenager began smoking marijuana and binge drinking on the weekends
- After a year or so started using psychedelics, LSD and mushrooms
- In early twenties switched solely to the use of heroin
- Has attended AA/NA meetings in the past. Believed these will be helpful to his recovery
- “My alcohol and drug use has inhibited my emotional and personal growth. It has interfered with my relationships with myself and others.”
- “I have been able to remain abstinent for a couple of months at a time and then relapsed. I want to stay stopped.”
- Being on the streets and having money are relapse triggers
- “My using has become a way of life.”
- First time in an inpatient facility program. Previously did detox and an outpatient program
- Had real fear of letting go and entering a full-fledged inpatient treatment program
- “My using has limited my ability to work and develop an occupation.”
- “It’s been hard to get in touch with the powerlessness I feel in relation to my disease. I like to be in control of my life and do not want to turn to a Higher Power.”
- Identified as culturally Jewish and had experiences of mystical aspects of faith but did not identify formally with the synagogue

- Lived in Israel for awhile exploring his faith and the Hebrew language
- “I have created a distance between myself and God and between myself and my family and friends.”
- “I want to work on responsibility to myself and to other people and to God.”
- “I’ve lost my grandmother who was the light of my life.”
- Closest relationship to sister; have always been best friends
- Distance between Freud and his sister on account of drug use

Interpreted Meaning of Freud’s Significant Statements (Themes)

- Theme 1 – A somewhat ineffable, spiritual experience connected to artistic activation. Freud expressed having a “spiritual experience” during the retreat weekend connected to the use of film as an art form. He identified with characters; felt strong emotions; wrote two poems in response to the second film; and expressed a desire to play the piano when he first heard the opening bars to the theme song, “I’ll Remember,” for the film, *With Honors*. He read both of his poems during the group discussion of the second film. Tears streamed down his face as he read both of the poems; the group seemed riveted as he recited them.
- Theme 2 – An experience and definition of spirituality as right relationship with God, self, and others manifested in love, hope, and meaning. Freud used the word “God” or its equivalent (e.g. Adonai) seven times in his letters and nine times during the interview. He stated the following in his letter which corresponded to the film, *With Honors*: “I pray to believe in myself. I pray to believe in others. I pray to continue to believe in You.” This triad of God, self, and others was found twice in his clinical summary, four times in his letters, and twice in his post-retreat interview. Close to these triadic statements could

be found the words love, hope, and meaning, or synonyms for these words. He signed all of his letters “With Love, Hope, and Light.” After his recitation of the two poems he wrote, the group expressed how the qualities of hope, love, solidarity, and meaning/purpose emanated from his words and his recitation.

- Theme 3 – The individual capacity to hear God speak in any circumstance. Freud had a powerful experience of this not only during the retreat weekend but also in the week following the retreat. He related the following during his post-retreat interview: “The *lectio divina* practice helped in small group today when the group counselor mentioned being an independent man. He wasn’t talking to me, but God was. Without even thinking about it, the phrase “independent man” made me stop and think about me becoming an independent man, free from drugs, free from darkness. All I ever wanted to be is free. I think I need to just learn to let things happen.”
- Theme 4 – Transformative power of story through projective identification with characters. “Every character was very human. I felt myself relating with the characters and their stories, and I felt very emotional.” “I think what Matthew (*Dead Man Walking*) did was horrible, and he acted like an animal, but how he died with dignity and made a decision that his life had meaning.” He identified in group discussion his affinity for AA/NA meetings on account of hearing people’s stories. Freud identified hearing and witnessing the stories of recovery in meetings as healing per se; he extended this idea to cinema also.
- Theme 5 – Significant physiological and emotional response to retreat. Emotionally, he reported feelings along a wide spectrum, from extreme sadness to happiness. His feelings were “bitter-sweet.” Overall, however, the retreat weekend provided him with

“a sense of comfort.” He could not completely articulate his emotional experience save to say that “it (the experience) was a paradox, like life. It’s hard to explain.” This “bitter-sweet” emotional description found corroboration in my notes. I noted him crying, laughing, and smiling. Physically, he was “very aware of being in the moment. My eyes seemed to be like more open. I sensed like radiant through my eyes. I can’t explain. It went throughout my whole body. At times I felt jittery, shaky, and at times I felt overall just intense. I felt magnified. I never thought about drugs. These feelings bring me back to the idea of freedom.”

Textural Description of “Freud’s” Experience

Freud had a spiritual experience throughout the weekend retreat and in the subsequent week, an experience which he found hard to articulate completely. He would describe the experience during the interview for a few moments, and then frequently end the description with the words, “it’s hard to explain.” The spiritual experience he underwent possessed significant artistic overtones. He felt moved to play the piano upon hearing the theme song to the third and final film. He wrote two poems as his written prayers to God in response to the second film. He shared these poems with the group during the discussion period as tears of “bitter-sweet” emotion streamed down his face. After relaying his experience of a Higher Power speaking to him through the medium of film by way of the sharing of his poems, the group felt touched by God in return. The co-participants commented on the hope, love, and the sense of solidarity and purpose which permeated his poems.

Furthermore, Freud had a spiritual experience during the retreat weekend connected to his projective identification with the characters and their stories. He said the following in his post-retreat interview: “Every character was very human. I felt myself relating with the

characters and their stories, and I felt very emotional.” In group discussions he very clearly related the power of stories to heal in AA/NA meetings to the power of stories in film to do the same. The co-participants affirmed his experience as their own. He experienced a greater sense of freedom as he learned through spirituality group and through the characters’ lives “to just learn to let things happen....All I wanted to be is free.”

Structural Description of “Freud’s” Experience

Freud presented himself as an intelligent and astute man during spirituality group and during the retreat weekend. On the first page of his retreat notebook, he wrote down the stages of *lectio/cinema divina*. This level of intention concerning the retreat weekend emphasized the benefits he gained from the retreat, including tapping into his artistic abilities and desires, sensing the presence of God, and feeling cathartic emotions which provided a “sense of comfort.” The early spiritual influence of his Jewish grandmother seemed evident also in having facilitated his experience. “I’ve lost my grandmother who was the light of my life.” He implicitly expanded upon this statement from his clinical summary throughout the group discussions and in his writing. Freud drew the star of David in the margin of his first letter to God; he utilized Hebrew names for God; he signed all of his letters with his mystical, Hebrew name bestowed upon him during his stay in Israel. The influence of his grandmother led him to live in Israel for a period of several months to further explore his spirituality. The emergence of his “spiritual experiences” have emanated from and find contextualization in his triadic definition of spirituality as a right relationship with God, self, and others. This definition of spirituality existed at the time of his admission. He stated the following during his interview for his clinical summary: “I have created a distance between myself and God and between myself

and my family and friends.” “I want to work on responsibility to myself and to other people and to God.”

His emotional and artistic constitution played a role in the emergence of his experience. During the last few minutes of our interview, as he pondered the influence of his addiction on the retreat experience, he commented that “what was emotionally there before the drugs is still there now. I think there are a lot of very sensitive people that happen to become addicts for whatever reason. My emotional make-up was there before the drugs.” This theme of emotional constitutionality was evident even in his clinical summary written shortly after his admission. At the time of admission he stated that “(my) emotions sometimes become overwhelming and intense, and I have difficulty channeling them in a positive way.” Spirituality group, his peers, working the twelve steps, and learning spiritual disciplines such as *lectio/cinema divina* have helped him in obtaining this ability to channel his emotions. The interrelatedness of his emotional constitution, addiction, and search for God became very evident in the explicitation of his data.

“Drew’s” Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation

“Drew’s” Illustrative Significant Statements (Horizons)

The following horizons of Drew’s experience came from his notes and letters which corresponded to the three films and from his post-retreat interview. These horizons were utilized to understand the themes of his experience and to write a textural description of that experience. The structural qualities of his experience, drawn from his clinical summary at the time of admission, helped to write the structural description of his experience.

Dead Man Walking

- “Any person is worth more than their worst act.” Quoted Sister Helen

- “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” Quoted Sister Helen who quoted Jesus
- “Thank you for loving me.” Quoted Matthew speaking to Sister Helen
- “Be not afraid; I go before you always.” Quoted Sister Helen who quoted the Scriptures
- “He presented a strong exterior, but he’s really a child, hurt and afraid in the face of death.”
- “He (Matthew) reminded me of Jesus as he was suspended from the lethal injection table, apologetic in front of the families he hurt.” (This quotation from Drew’s notes had a big asterisk in front of it).
- “My eyes are awakened by your merciful forgiveness.”
- “I walk in your hands, and now you have control and are watching my every step.”
- “Thank you, great Spirit and Father, for the air in my lungs and the warmth in my heart today.”

Pay It Forward

- “It’s possible...the realm of possibility.” Quoted Mr. Simonet
- “Do me a favor, and save my life.” Quoted an addict who attempted to save a woman from committing suicide by jumping off of a bridge
- “When you think the impossible can’t happen, it does.”
- “Great Spirit, Holy Father, let the people of this world find themselves and care and love for other people when they so desperately need it.”

With Honors

- “When you looked at me, you didn’t see a man.” Simon to Monty

- “You know why you hate me so much, Jeffrey? Because I look the way you feel.” Simon to Harvard student
- “Great Spirit, the world around me is a journey in itself...ups and downs, happiness and sadness, toil...give us the strength to get through it.”
- “We cannot judge other people until we have worn their moccasins for two weeks.”
- “Give me the wisdom and right mind to live happily and to help others find happiness too.”

Post-Retreat Interview

- “Well, I experienced a lot of emotions. Good and bad.”
- “I experienced even more insight towards my spirituality.”
- “Basically, the weekend made me realize how important life is. It made me feel better about myself emotionally.”
- “I want to be more helpful to others and make sure they are taken care of too, instead of worrying about myself.”
- “I never used to be one to go and help others, if they couldn’t help themselves. She (Sister Helen) was helping other people in dire need of help when no one else was there to help.”
- “I felt sadness and pity for others. I felt really bad for even the emotions of other people in the group.”
- “Overall, I sensed a feeling of gratitude, being grateful, more or less.”
- “I couldn’t even eat lunch after the first movie, because my stomach was so full of butterflies.”

- “He (Matthew) finally comes to an understanding about life when death was in his face. Inside, he was just a child instead of a man.”
- “I was kind of feeling his (Matthew’s) emotions through the movie. I was feeling like my mind went to him. I was feeling like I’m the one who was going to be right there.”
- “I didn’t realize what I was doing in life. I didn’t realize about the world out there, people caring about me, how I was affecting other peoples’ lives. I impacted their lives through my addiction. How I was killing myself. I got a whole new outlook on life.”
- “The weekend made a whole new outlook for me on life and insight on life and what I am going to do with my life. I’m not going to go back with the way I did things...I used to get so frustrated with people, now I feel more patient.”

Clinical Summary (Structural Qualities)

- Early thirties, Native American, English speaking, male, nominally Catholic
- Mandated to treatment as an alternative to incarceration
- Suffered from PTSD as a result of best friend’s drowning, attempted to save him
- “I tend to stress out. When I get stressed I tend to drink.”
- “I need to learn healthy coping skills.”
- Daily drinker of alcohol since mid twenties
- Drank larger amounts over time with unsuccessful efforts to cut down
- All social, occupational, and recreational activities have been given up or drastically reduced to almost non-existent
- Identified sober friends, AA meetings, and sober events as entities to keep him sober
- Three previous treatments with an increased length of sobriety after each. First two treatments were short, inpatient stays and the third an outpatient treatment

- Identified relapse triggers as friends, certain social events, boredom, and stress
- Arrested many times in his life, arrested four times for driving under the influence
- Completed high school and learned a trade afterwards (certificate)
- Defined spirituality as “relationship with God and nature.” “When I’m drinking, spirituality doesn’t come to mind.”
- Identified losses include, death of best friend who drowned in his presence, the end of his marriage, and disappointing his four children
- “I would like to learn to forgive myself and work on my feelings and learn to cope with them.”
- Lived with mother and stepfather until eighteen
- “My drinking has become more important than my family and affected my work ethics. I want to stay sober the rest of my life. I just want to have a stable relationship with my family and make amends.”
- “The willingness to finally quit is finally there.”
- “I want to work hard, learn the steps, and learn the tools to recovery.”

Interpreted Meaning of “Drew’s” Significant Statements (Themes)

- Theme 1 – A bodily, earthy experience of the divine. Drew began each of his letters to his God/Higher Power with the words “Great Spirit.” He followed this invocation with some kind of statement which referred to the natural world and/or to his own bodily senses. For example, in the first letter he wrote the following:
 “My eyes are awakened by your merciful forgiveness.”
 “I walk in your hands, and now you have control and are watching my every step.”

“Thank you, Great Spirit and Father, for the air in my lungs and the warmth in my heart today.”

He utilized the term “Great Spirit” six times in his letters to God. He even referred to “walking in another’s moccasins” in one of his letters and in one of the group discussions.

- Theme 2 – Kindness to others as an integral aspect of spirituality. This theme pervaded Drew’s writing and conversation during the post-film, group discussions. For example, the last line of his letter for the film, *With Honors*, he wrote: “Give me the wisdom and right mind to live happily and to help others find happiness too.” During the post-retreat interview, he made comments similar to the following: “I want to be more helpful to others and make sure they are taken care of too, instead of worrying about myself.”
- Theme 3 – Importance of story through identification with characters. He strongly identified with the character, Matthew Poncellet, from the film, *Dead Man Walking*. “He (Matthew) reminded me of Jesus as he was suspended from the lethal injection table, apologetic in front of the families he hurt.” In the post-retreat interview he more explicitly expounded upon his own identification with Matthew’s character: “I was kind of feeling his emotions through the movie. I was feeling like my mind went to him. I was feeling like I’m the one who was going to be right there.”
- Theme 4 – A renewed sense of hopefulness. In the group discussions following *Pay It Forward*, Drew’s comments revolved around the notion of the realm of the impossible being/becoming possible. This sense of renewed hopefulness in him was confirmed in his letter for this film: “When you think the impossible can’t happen, it does.” Overall,

the retreat weekend “made (me) realize how important life is. It made me feel better about myself emotionally....I became more hopeful about my recovery.”

- Theme 5 – Insight into the real cause of peoples’ “bad/evil” behavior. The first line in his retreat notebook quoted Sister Helen as having said, “Any person is worth more than their worst act.” Comments such as the following proceeded this quotation from the movie: “He presented a strong exterior, but he’s really a child, hurt and afraid in the face of death.” In group discussions he explained how he had never before considered a person’s “bad/evil” behavior stemming from deep-seated hurt and fears of abandonment. “Matthew finally comes to an understanding about life when death was in his face. Inside, he was just a child, not a man.”
- Theme 6 – Variety of emotions having an overall transcending, transformative effect. I sensed this theme emerging when he wrote in his letter for *With Honors* that “the world around (me) is a journey in itself...ups and downs, happiness and sadness, toil...give us the strength to get through it.” In the post-retreat interview, he stated that he “experienced a lot of emotions, good and bad” but that “overall, I sensed a feeling of gratitude, being grateful.” “The weekend made a whole new outlook for me on life and insight on life and what I am going to do with my life.” The transformative effect seemed to be a reality when a few days after the post-retreat interview he mentioned to me concrete actions he would implement on a daily basis as a result of insights gained from the retreat.

Textural Description of “Drew’s” Experience

During the retreat weekend of *cinemadivina*, Drew had a bodily, earthy experience of the divine. In his letters and in his comments during group discussions, he frequently referred to an

experience of the presence of “the Great Spirit” through the vehicle of his bodily senses. For Drew, the senses are the gateway to his spiritual life. His “eyes are awakened”; his “lungs are filled”; and he possessed “warmth in his heart.” Several realities intertwined with his bodily, earthy experience of “the Great Spirit,” including a sense of hopefulness regarding his own recovery and the goodness of people; the urgency for the presence of the practice of kindness towards himself and others in his life; experiencing a broad range of emotions with an overall transcending effect upon him; and the importance of the story, of personal narrative, to help people heal. In regards to hope, he stated: “When you think the impossible can’t happen, it does.” In terms of the urgency of kindness in his life, he said in the interview that he “want(s) to be more helpful to others and make sure they are taken care of too, instead of worrying about myself.” Emotionally, he “overall...sensed a feeling of gratitude.” In terms of the power of personal narrative to transform by means of connection to characters’ lives, he deeply connected to the character of Matthew Poncelet and related Matthew’s journey on death row to his own journey in recovery: “I was kind of feeling Matthew’s emotions through the movie. I was feeling like my mind went to him. I was feeling like I’m the one who was going to be there...I haven’t realized what I was doing in life. I didn’t realize about the world out there, people caring about me, how I was affecting other peoples’ lives. I impacted their lives through my addiction. How I was killing myself. I got a whole new outlook on life.”

Drew’s “whole, new outlook” did not simply exist as an insight either but was transformed into action. A few days following the weekend retreat, he approached me with a concrete list of actions to be implemented in his life upon discharge. The retreat weekend influenced him to write this list of concrete actions for the sake of his recovery. Hopefully, this list will manifest as sustained action, which in turn, could lead to real change in his life. He

possessed this same hopefulness I had for him, when he stated in the interview: “I’m not going to go back with the way I did things.” He came to understand his own destructive actions and the destructive actions of others as emanating from an unconscious, psychological state of hurt, the fear of abandonment, and ultimately the fear of non-existence in the face of death. “Matthew finally comes to an understanding about life when death was in his face. Inside he was just a child instead of a man.” Based on Drew’s insights, the group discussed most people walking around as hurt, little children inside of adult bodies.

Structural Description of “Drew’s” Experience

Based on his Native American tradition, Drew possessed a slightly, different perception of time and space and their relationship to spirituality as opposed to the other co-participants. He defined spirituality at the time of his admission as his “relationship to God and nature.” The “and nature” part of that definition appeared significant. He addressed his three letters to “the Great Spirit” and did not view himself and others as somehow separate from the reality of nature. Having understood himself as a part of nature, he experienced a somewhat more bodily and earthy encounter with the divine as evidenced by statements made in his letters: “My eyes are awakened by your merciful forgiveness.” “I walk in your hands, and now you have control and are watching my every step.” “Thank you, Great Spirit and Father, for the air in my lungs and the warmth in my heart today.” His Native American tradition has also pre-disposed him to alcoholism. He identified relapse triggers as friends, certain social events, boredom, and stress surrounding life as a rural, Native American.

The film’s ability to bypass the more verbal, thinking hemisphere of the brain through story, scenes, and music also made it possible to bypass (somewhat) the numbness surrounding his PTSD and his lack of emotional vulnerability and openness in the past. This may have

opened up new avenues of healing for him, which the clinical staff may have missed. “Basically, the weekend made me realize how important life is. It made me feel better about myself emotionally.” He mentioned in the interview how a strictly verbal form of counseling had only taken him so far and that this experience reached parts of him that words could not.

“Dee’s” Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation

“Dee’s” Illustrative Significant Statements (Horizons)

As with the other five co-participants, “Dee’s” horizons emerged from her notes and letters which corresponded to each of the films, her comments during group discussions, and the transcript from the post-retreat interview. These horizons eventually clustered into themes and the themes into a textural description of her experience. The information from her clinical summary served as structural qualities of her experience, which helped in writing the structural description of her experience.

Dead Man Walking

- The words “Hope” and Value” were written in capitalized letters and scattered all throughout her notes and circled.
- “The shot of Sister Helen’s ring on Matthew’s shoulder = married to God = I need to be married to sobriety, to God, to love”
- “I received many messages regarding hope, about ills in society and politics, love, addiction, and honesty.”
- “The film clearly depicted contrast (scenes that went from serenity to chaos):
tranquil sunset to a family’s last visit in prison
serene, rocking on the porch to a disgusting prison scene

Sister Helen singing in church to prison guards making Matthew's mother say her final goodbyes

love versus hate

acceptance versus prejudice

hope versus giving up

an emotional family versus a non-emotional victim's family

- “Messages of HOPE abounded: I always hang onto hope, no matter what!”
- “Thank you for the symbol, the ring on Sister's finger, showing her marriage to you, Love, as I now choose to be married to Love, which You are for me, and to sobriety, which is my only way to live in your presence.”

Pay It Forward

- “So very grateful for this incredible, spiritual experience, to feel such safety and intimacy amongst brothers and sisters whom you have placed in my life in an unforgettable way.”
- “You are Love, and I am filled with gratitude for the love I have been able to share in my life.”
- “The film filled me with hope. I want to trust people – which can enrich my life.”
- “I want to empower others with my actions and words.”
- “I won't give up on giving and accepting forgiveness.”
- “One genuine smile can change a life.”
- “I am grateful for this film's depiction of hope amongst drugs and alcohol in our lives.”
- “This experience has given me hope, that although I am plagued by dis-ease, I can remember that which I had passion for and made me feel worthwhile.”

- “God, you are the creator of all beautiful things, yet I struggle to see it in me – forgive me; I’m working on it.”
- “Thank you for blessing me with this group of people.”

With Honors

- “My heart is overflowing with Love – which is You.”
- “I am grateful for the gifts of each new day, each experience through which you teach me and reach me through everyone I meet.”
- “I appreciate being able to see past what one looks like and allow myself the chance to listen for the gift that is inside each “package” you place in my life.”
- “I am grateful for the simple things in my life.”
- “It is now that when I feel myself bubbling up with anxiety, I can sit back; breathe; and know I am safe with you.”
- “I pray to stay forever young. It is my childlike spirit that I cherish so much.”

Post-Retreat Interview

- “I had a spiritual experience watching films in a very comfortable setting with people I trusted and could open my heart with.”
- “I watched a movies in a way that I’ve never watched a movie before as far as looking for feelings, signs, and opening my heart to messages from my God, you know, things that may pertain to my personal life.”
- “The weekend just filled my heart with really positive emotions, hope, and I saw a lot of good things in the movies and in my brothers and sisters.”
- “I want to see the good in people, and I choose to be positive, and since coming here to this recovery program, especially with spirituality group and this retreat, I’ve developed

such a relationship with a Higher Power, which makes me feel very safe, and I will know from here on forward that I will go out feeling the warm arms of God around me and know that I am never alone.”

- “I had and continue to have feelings of happiness and hope. There were times I felt scared. There were a lot of things in the three movies that I could relate to that scared me about my own behaviors, things that I will continue to work on with vigilance.”
- “Right now, thinking back, I have a visual in my mind of how my chest opened and my heart. My heart at this point is overflowing with love and goodness, and that’s what I feel inside.”
- “I felt my face warm at times, and that could have been like my Mom and Dad, who are gone, there with me at times. I think they were sending me a message when I felt that warmth.”
- “I know I wasn’t alone. I was with people I cared about as well as a sense of presence there for me, supporting me, and a sense of comfort all over.”
- “As I was leaving the hallways, full of personalities, people, and some chaos, I felt like I came into a space where I was able to just let my body drop, my shoulders drop, relax, and take time to open my mind, to clear my mind and open it for whatever was going to come my way within that space I was within.”
- “Oh, the alcohol. I went a whole lot of years having a lot of fun, but in the end I was blind-sided. “
- “I fell into a very deep, dark hole, and I used to describe myself as being under a very heavy, wet, dark blanket that I couldn’t get out from under. I was paralyzed in my

addiction, and with this experience, I felt light, free, just like how I wanted to stay, like how I can stay in that space, that feeling. It was light, shiny, peaceful.”

Clinical Summary (Structural Qualities)

- Late forties, Caucasian, English speaking, separated female
- No current legal history save an open CPS case
- The CPS case mandated her to treatment
- Asked family court to mandate her for insurance purposes
- Lived in own home for past seventeen years
- “I would like to return home and attend outpatient. I had to get a mandate letter from the court in order to come to treatment for insurance purposes.”
- Suffered from anxiety, depression, hypothyroidism in addition to her alcoholism
- Taken some psychotropics for anxiety and depression. “My meds have helped to give me some relief from anxiety and depression. They help to slow down my brain at night.”
- Daily drinker of alcohol for almost two decades.
- Physical symptoms worsened by alcohol consumption. “I have dry skin, elevated liver enzymes, at times memory loss, and increased blood pressure.”
- Stated that she needs a sponsor, a home group, and sober friendships to stay in recovery
- Relapsed because “I stopped going to meetings. I stopped calling. I isolated and got on the pity pot.”
- Arrested once for DWI
- Defined spirituality as “a state of grace and peace with faith in a Higher Power greater than one’s self.”
- “Faith in God’s will will help me with my sobriety.”

- Lost guardianship of only child
- Listed patience, empathy, and intelligence as three positive qualities
- Would like to change the following characteristics: people pleasing, indecisiveness, and lack of self love
- Separated from husband who is addicted and not in recovery
- Both parents died as alcoholics not in recovery
- Has three siblings, all addicted and in recovery

Interpreted Meaning of “Dee’s” Significant Statements (Themes)

- Theme 1 – A spiritual experience of God speaking through any means. In the last of her letters Dee wrote that God “teaches (me) through everyone I meet.” In group discussions she commented on how she perceived God speaking to her through all the people and events in her recovery process, at least when she used the “eyes of faith.” In the post-retreat interview she emphasized how she “watched movies in a way that (I’ve) never watched a movie before as far as looking for feelings, signs, and opening my heart to messages from my God.”
- Theme 2 – Transcending life’s conflicts into a realm of hope, love, forgiveness, self-surrender, and simplicity. Dee discussed the conflicts present in each of the films and how she could identify with those conflicts as an addicted person in recovery. She also discussed how the characters transcended their conflicts into a spiritual realm. In her notes for *Dead Man Walking*, she wrote the word ‘HOPE’ seven times, circled and in all capitalized letters. ‘HOPE’ appeared next to notes concerning all of the conflicts experienced by the characters. “This film clearly depicted contrast” but the contrasts always contained for her “messages of hope.” “I always hang onto hope, no matter

what,” she wrote. Sister Helen’s ring, as a symbol of her marriage to God, to love, strongly touched Dee as a symbol of her desire to fully commit her life to God and to sobriety. The ring expressed outwardly Sister Helen’s inward “marriage to (You), Love, as I now choose to be married to Love, which You are for me, and to sobriety, which is my only way to live in your presence.” In terms of the transcendence of chaos into an experience of forgiveness, she wrote that she “won’t give up on forgiveness, giving and accepting it.” In terms of the transcendence of chaos into a realm imbued with simplicity and self-surrender, she wrote the following: “I am grateful for the simple things in life.” “I pray to stay forever young. It is my childlike spirit that I cherish so much.”

- Theme 3 – Spirituality as group/human solidarity and a feeling of not-aloneness. She wrote and spoke of “feeling such safety and intimacy amongst brothers and sisters whom You have placed in my life in an unforgettable way.” She experienced wanting “to trust people” and to “empower others with (my) actions and words.” Her experience during the retreat weekend of her solidarity with the co-participants and God’s omnipresence made her “feel very safe, and I will know from here on forward I will go out feeling the warm arms of God around me and the support of my brothers and sisters and know that I am not alone.” “I know I wasn’t alone. I was with people I cared about as well as a sense of presence there for me, supporting me, and a sense of comfort over all.”
- Theme 4 – Intense emotions and physiological reactions leading to a sense of peace and comfort. “The weekend just filled my heart with really positive emotions, hope, and I saw a lot of good things.” “I have feelings of happiness and hope.” As she entered the room each time, she “was leaving the hallways, full of personalities, people, and some chaos, I felt like I came into a space where I was able to just let my body drop, my

shoulders drop, relax, and take time to open my mind, to clear my mind and open it for whatever was going to come my way within that space I was within.” During the post-retreat interview, as she reflected upon her experience, she had “a visual in (her) mind of how my chest opened and my heart. (Her) heart at this point is overflowing with love and goodness, and that’s what (she) feel(s) inside.” She also experienced strong sensations of warmth in her face and body at certain moments during the retreat: “I felt my face warm at times, and that could have been like my Mom and Dad, who are gone, there with me at times. I think they were sending me a message when I felt that warmth.”

- Theme 5 – Addiction as a heavy darkness versus spirituality as light. She expressed in her letters, in the interview, and in the group discussions how addiction and spirituality existed as the ultimate “contrasts,” the ultimate dualities. At the end of her interview she described the difference between her experience of alcoholism and her experience during the retreat weekend: “Oh, the alcohol. I went a whole lot of years having a lot of fun, but in the end I was blind-sided...I fell into a very deep, dark hole, and I used to describe myself as being under a very heavy, wet, dark blanket that I couldn’t get out from under. I was paralyzed in my addiction, and with this experience, I felt light, free, just like how I wanted to stay, like how I can stay in that space, that feeling. It was light, shiny, peaceful.”

Textural Description of “Dee’s” Experience

Dee had a “spiritual experience” during the retreat weekend while engaging in the process of *cinema divina*. Several themes constituted her experience of the weekend as “spiritual.” She “watched the movies in a way that (she’s) never watched a movie before as far as looking for feelings, signs, and opening (her) heart to messages from God.” Lines, scenes,

and characters from each of the three films and the presence of her peers affected her emotionally and physically. She experienced her “chest open(ing) and (her) heart”; at times her “face (felt) warm,” because her “Mom and Dad are gone,” and she thought they were “sending (her) a message and (she) felt warmth.” At the time of the post-retreat interview, she stated that her “heart at this point is overflowing with love and goodness, and that’s what I feel inside.” These physical sensations, along with feelings of “lightness, happiness, and hope,” existed simultaneously with her sense of transcending chaos into a realm of self-surrender, peace, solidarity, and comfort. In her own words, she felt “very safe, (and knew) from here on forward that I will go out feeling the warm arms of God around me (and knew) that I am never alone.” “I know I wasn’t alone. I was with people I cared about as well as a sense of presence there for me, supporting me, and a sense of comfort over all.” The retreat weekend also confirmed for her the reality of God always attempting to communicate with us using any means possible.

Dee also experienced the divine presence during the retreat as “light,” which differed strongly with her experience of her alcoholism as “dark, wet, and heavy.” She expressed in her letters, in the interview, and in the group discussions how addiction and spirituality existed as the ultimate “contrasts,” the ultimate dualities. At the end of her interview she described the difference between her experience of alcoholism and her experience during the retreat weekend: “Oh, the alcohol. I went a whole lot of years having a lot of fun, but in the end I was blind-sided.” “I fell into a very deep, dark hole, and I used to describe myself as being under a very heavy, wet, dark blanket that I couldn’t get out from under. I was paralyzed in my addiction, and with this experience, I felt light, free, just like how I wanted to stay, like how I can stay in that space, that feeling. It was light, shiny, peaceful.” The symbol of the ring stood out for her as the symbol of her new-found transcendence beyond the “wet, heavy, and dark blanket” of her

addiction into the realm of “Love.” Sister Helen’s ring, as a symbol of her marriage to God, to Love, strongly touched Dee as a symbol of her desire to fully commit her life to God and to sobriety. The ring expressed outwardly Sister Helen’s inward “marriage to (You), Love, as I now choose to be married to Love, which You are for me, and to sobriety, which is my only way to live in your presence.”

Structural Description of “Dee’s” Experience

In terms of the passage of time, Dee’s alcoholism had progressed rapidly prior to entering treatment as evidenced by the commencement of severe physiological problems, the loss of guardianship of her child, the end of her marriage, the cessation in all of her normal occupational and recreational activities, and her visceral description of her alcoholism as a “heavy, wet, dark blanket” she couldn’t get out from under. In AA/NA terminology she had “hit her bottom.” In conversations I had had with her previously, she had no choice but to surrender to God; develop a sincere relationship with the divine; and work the steps of recovery. For this reason, she pleaded with the family court judge to mandate her to treatment so that insurance would cover the costs; she knew beforehand the St. Joe’s program lasted ninety days as opposed to the typical twenty-eight day program. She also chose St. Joseph’s on account of its emphasis on spirituality, the twelve steps, and its family program. Dee is an intelligent and articulate woman who came to the treatment facility highly motivated. Her high level of motivation and the late stage of her addiction led her to say during our interview: “I want to see the good in people, and I choose to be positive, and since coming here to this recovery program, particularly with the spirituality group and this retreat and the family weekend, I’ve such a relationship with a Higher Power, which makes me feel very safe, and I will know from here on forward I will go out feeling the warm arms of God around me and know that I am not alone.”

The physical space of the chapel as a “different world,” combined with the separation of the co-participants from the rest of the residents during the retreat weekend, created an atmosphere in which Dee could have the “spiritual experience” she did. During the post-retreat interview she described the inner experience of leaving the realm of treatment and the rest of the residents and entering a “different world”: “As I was leaving the hallways, full of personalities, people, and some chaos, I felt like I came into a space where I was able to just let my body drop, my shoulders drop, relax, and take time to open my mind, to clear my mind and open it for whatever was going to come my way within that space I was within.” Later on in the interview she compared the physical and psychological space of the retreat to evening prayer. “It is like when I go to the chapel for evening prayer here...it’s definitely a completely different place for me that is so peaceful and just brings such comfort.”

Composite, Invariant Structure of *Cinema Divina* Retreat Weekend

The six research, co-participants had a “spiritual experience” during the retreat weekend of *cinema divina*. The words “spiritual experience” occurred thirty-three times amongst the eighteen written letters and the six, transcribed interviews. The experience of God communicating and communing with the co-participants individually, and the sense of shared physical and emotional reactions to the films (happiness, sadness, tears, laughing, bodily warmth, stomach butterflies, and felt openings of the chest), constituted the essence of their “spiritual experience.” While they bodily experienced the vicissitudes of emotions inherent in the films, the overall experience of processing the films through the stages of reading (watching with conscious awareness), reflecting (group discussion), responding (letters), and resting (stillness meditation), led to a sense of self-transcendence manifested in the virtues and/or spiritual practices of love (expressed as self-surrender and gratitude), forgiveness, and hope.

Love existed as the thread which held the “spiritual experience” of *cinema divina* together. The virtues/practices of self-surrender to God and gratitude for the gifts of God, self, and others constituted the reality of love as experienced and expressed during the retreat weekend. The desire to give and to receive forgiveness in the process of recovery was the concrete expression of the aforementioned love expressed by the co-participants in their letters, in the group discussions, and in the post-retreat interviews. The presence of love and the desire for forgiveness came to fruition in a pervasive feeling of hopefulness in myself and the co-participants. We recognized in all of our past instances and states of negativity, cynicism, and self-destructive thinking and behaving, our failure to express, to be an embodiment of love and forgiveness. God and life never hopelessly abandoned us; on the contrary, we experienced the despair of our addictions (whether to substances or not) by the creation of our own desperate realities. Thus, love, self-surrender, gratitude, forgiveness, and hope were seen as necessary ingredients to a life of recovery and to a spiritual life.

From the palpable sense of shared despair and brokenness in our shared humanity, with its impetus for meaning making, emerged a strong theme – the power of story in film to heal through our projective identification with the characters and through the activation of archetypes. We stood as witnesses to the characters’ lives as they journeyed from suffering to the influx of grace and onto some kind of experience of transcendent love. The characters in the films served in turn as witnesses to that same journey in the research participants. Ultimately, the co-participants saw in each other their own story. The hero and his/her journey was the major archetype activated by the retreat experience. Scharff (2009) described the activation of this archetype within those on the path to recovery from addiction quite well:

Alcoholics (addicts) have experienced the devastation of the ‘God-shaped hole,’

the unquenchable, abiding desire to know God, to feel his grace, presence, and love. From suffering, a need is born within some of us to follow any path, no matter how difficult, to reach him. The bliss one finds, the ability to face life's challenges with grace and humility, the unimaginably gentle and all-encompassing love, and the longed-for healing of one's deepest wounds are what is to be found on this path. The path cannot be taken without suffering. It cannot be taken by those who are taught that they are solely diseased of body and mind, and therefore have no need of the divine. A journey of this magnitude and type can only be taken by those who have a longing in their soul for the divine that surpasses all else. This journey is not only for alcoholics, but those who meet all manner of suffering on life's journey. (pp. 221-222)

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Poetry and religion both have their origin in the spoken word, in tales shared around a campfire or sung at a cradle. Both poetry and religion suffer as they are removed from the oral realm: poetry can wither on the page, and a living faith, as it turns into text, can get lost in rules and regulations. As this poet puts it, love becomes a lesson. It is good to be reminded of the love that remains at the center of our lives, the universal love that, to paraphrase Dante, moves the sun, the moon, and stars.

-Kathleen Norris

This last chapter provides a summary of this research project, conclusions drawn from this research, and recommendations for further research, clinical practice, and personal growth. The summary follows the basic outline of a journal article: purpose of the study, the central, research question, the most important literature, methodology, and findings. The conclusions section of this chapter compares and contrasts the research findings with the literature review. The recommendations section explores implications for research, implications for professional practice, personal implications, and my own future direction with this research.

Summary

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the role of film as a vehicle for transpersonal (spiritual) therapy (cinematherapy) and as a spiritual discipline (*lectio divina/cinema divina*) by facilitating newly recovering addicts having spiritual experiences (Wolz, 2005; Sinetar, 1993). An exact line delineating the use of film as transpersonal therapy and the use of film as spiritual discipline is arbitrary and cannot be drawn. Cinematherapy can be employed as a means of psychological and spiritual growth. Furthermore, cinematherapy, at least the model utilized in this study, can then

be used by anyone watching a film as a form of spiritual practice. Superimposing the ancient, spiritual practice of attentively reading scripture (*lectio divina*) onto the watching and processing of film created the process of *cinema divina*. Throughout and after the weekend retreat of *cinema divina* with three films, the transcendental phenomenological method as posited by Moustakas (1994) was utilized to gather and analyze data and to ascertain the core meaning of *cinema divina*, both a form of cinematherapy and *lectio divina*, as transpersonal therapy and spiritual discipline for recovering addicts.

Research Question

The following was the central, research question for this exploratory study: What were my experience and the experiences by the resident-participants of cinema as part of the inpatient treatment of addiction?

Literature Review

Many psychologists and the field of transpersonal psychology in general have emphasized the importance of spirituality as a necessary ingredient in the process of full, human flourishing (James, 1902/2004; Jung, 1933, 1956, 1960, 1963, 1964; Maslow, 1971). Human beings possess an innate longing for ultimate meaning and self-transcendence in their lives. When an ultimate meaning and experience of self-transcendence are lacking in an individual's life, he or she becomes more susceptible to the ravages of addiction and mental illness (Frankl, 1959). Our modern, materialistic world denies the existence of a spiritual realm; and this proves excruciatingly painful for the alcoholic/addict (Bateson, 1972). Yet, *holotropic* experiences (experiences oriented towards wholeness) exist, because the spiritual realm exists (Grof, 1988; Wilber, 2000). Maslow (1971) described similar experiences and states of being as self-transcendence, the apex of his hierarchy of needs.

When people search to fill “the God-shaped hole,” an immaterial and spiritual need, with an external reality, addiction ensues. Ultimately, seeking the divine in drugs and alcohol proves to be a misguided, spiritual search; drugs and alcohol temporarily provide the addict with the experience of God but with deleterious consequences for body, mind, and soul (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Kurtz & Ketcham, 2002; Scharff, 2009; Whitfield, 1985). As a misguided, spiritual search, healing from addiction can only occur from implementing spiritual principles and practices and the re-authoring of one’s life in storytelling (Kurtz & Ketcham, 2002).

Film, like the realities of AA and NA, can provide addicts with the healing power of story and spiritual practice. Vogler (2007), based on the works of Jung and Campbell, expanded the stages of the hero’s journey in literature and film. While Vogler (2007) enunciated twelve stages, three basic stages exist: (1) departure from “home”, (2) experience of trials and tribulations in the underworld, and (3) the return to a new “home” based on a renewed and/or altered sense of meaning and self-definition.

Sineta (1993) published the first book on film as an instrument for psychological healing and spiritual growth. This seminal work provided a basis for subsequent, cinematherapy research and writing. Films exist as the modern medium for conveying our collective mythology. People need to have the mystical messages of our collective mythology continually reinforced for the provision of meaning and access to healing (Sineta, 1993). Actively engaging a film through conscious awareness allows people to experience their inherent goodness and virtue while simultaneously accepting their brokenness as members of the human race. Ultimately, we must listen for the mystical messages in film; films are our modern scriptures (Sineta, 1993).

Wolz (2005) has provided perhaps the most precise and comprehensive exposition on film as a tool for therapy and spiritual growth. Wolz (2005) has explored the synergistic effects of story and myth, image and symbol, and music to create the most powerful of art forms – film. Therapists and clients can use films evocatively, prescriptively, and/or cathartically. In the evocative way, self-discovery and spiritual growth occur by making the contents of the unconscious conscious. The weekend *cinema divina* retreat largely followed this method of digesting and experiencing film. Utilizing the prescriptive way with film allows for behavior modification by means of modeling both desired and undesired actions. Cathartically, a film can be a conduit for emotional release by means of crying and laughter. The weekend retreat also possessed elements of the cathartic way. Therapists and researchers can use cinematherapy within diverse, theoretical orientations. Psychoanalytically, film can be used like dream work. Existentially, therapists and researchers may use film in the process of values clarification. In the cognitive-behavioral realm, therapists and researchers can use film effectively, because characters often times dramatically display distorted and negative schemas and the undesired emotions and actions that emanate from this distortion and negativity.

Niemiec and Wedding (2008) first discussed positive cinematherapy based on the positive psychology and psychotherapy posited by Seligman. According to Niemiec and Wedding (2008) films, when utilized properly, exist as conduits for growth in the six, main virtues and corresponding character strengths. The six main virtues mentioned by Seligman included wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. The world's great religious and wisdom traditions have affirmed these six main virtues from time immemorial.

Finally, Pacatte (2008) coined the term “*cinema divina*.” While this author also used the method of *lectio divina* with film, Pacatte (2008) did not transpose this ancient, spiritual practice onto the watching and processing of film in the same manner as described in this study. This study represents a new and innovative way of practicing *cinema divina*.

Methodology

Phenomenology. In this exploratory research, I utilized the phenomenological method as primarily posited by Moustakas (1994). The two main goals of phenomenological research include capturing the lived experience of human beings in regards to a particular phenomenon and the provision by the primary researcher of thick and rich descriptions of the essence of that phenomenon as experienced by the co-participants and the researcher him/herself.

According to Moustakas (1994), capturing the essence of a phenomenon occurs through three different processes: *epoche*, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. In the process of *epoche* (or bracketing) the primary researcher suspends all preconceived ideas about the particular phenomenon being studied. In this research project I achieved *epoche* by writing my own spiritual, autobiography in order to momentarily suspend my own experiences and presuppositions as I allowed the voices and experiences of the co-participants to emerge. I also achieved *epoche* by engaging in a five minute period of breath meditation before each session of data analysis. In phenomenological reduction the primary researcher aims to write a textural description of “what” the co-participants experienced. In arriving at a textural description, the researcher searches the collected data for horizons, or non-repetitive, significant themes (Moustakas, 1994). Upon obtaining horizons from the data, the researcher clusters the horizons into themes of the participants’ experience. Finally, the explicitation of themes allows the researcher to write the textural description of the experience. In the process of imaginative

variation, the researcher seeks to create a structural description of the participants' experience, or "how" the phenomenon was experienced in context. In other words, what accounts for the emergence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994)? In searching for structural qualities of the experience, it behooves the researcher to explore the structures of time, space, materiality, causality, and relationship to one's self and others. Exploring these aforementioned structures, allows the primary researcher to write the structural description of the experience. After writing the textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon for all of the participants (in this case, seven including myself), the primary researcher can write the invariant, composite description, or essence of the phenomenon.

Selection of participants. The six co-participants selected for this research project were purposefully selected on account of their desire and readiness to grow spiritually and to fully embrace a life of recovery from addiction based on twelve step principles. I also sought participants who possessed a desire to share and articulate their spiritual experiences based on their engagement with *cinema divina*. The rationale for this form of purposeful sampling correlated to answering the exploratory, research question based on the philosophy and methodology of transcendental phenomenology as promulgated by Moustakas.

Which residents met the criteria listed above – the desire and readiness to grow spiritually and fully embrace a life of recovery from addiction? This was determined during a treatment team meeting as evidenced by the residents' progression towards achieving treatment plan goals and as evidenced by the clinical intuition of the staff. The recruiting of the six participants began with the presentation to the treatment team of the twelve to fifteen names of those residents whom had already given informed consent to participating in the facility's spirituality group.

Based on the aforementioned criteria and after a brief discussion, each member of the staff voted on a ballot for six residents. I ranked the twelve to fifteen residents in spirituality group from one to fifteen based on the number of votes received from members of the treatment team; the resident ranked number one received the most number of votes and the fifteenth the least number of votes. After the compilation of this list, I approached the residents individually in descending order beginning with the resident ranked number one. After six residents had understood and signed the informed consent form, the process of the selection of participants concluded.

The participants came from the population of residents (63 total) at St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center, a large, inpatient substance abuse facility located in Saranac Lake, NY in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains. The residents of the facility consist almost entirely of New York State residents, many of whom are on Medicaid and many of whom are simultaneously legally mandated to treatment. Some of these residents have difficulty with reading and writing. Many of them have co-occurring psychiatric disorders. The age of the residents can range from eighteen to people in their sixties. The particular biopsychosocial histories of the six participants in this study constituted aspects of the findings and conclusions of this study (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), especially in the formulation and articulation of structural descriptions of the *cinema divina* retreat weekend, i.e. *how* the participants experienced the weekend within the context of their lives, environments, and daily life at the treatment center. The commonalities all the resident participants shared included approaching the end of a three month treatment program and living in a facility whose program focuses heavily on twelve step principles and spirituality, family therapy, daily group counseling, and a strict and regimented schedule.

Instrumentation. The following qualitative instruments were used in this research project to provide rich and thick descriptions of the participants' lived experience:

- (5) Two researchers kept field notes throughout the duration of the retreat weekend; a fellow clinician and I produced these field notes.
- (6) The participants wrote letters to God during the response stage or movement of *cinema divina*. (The response stage constituted the third stage of *lectio divina* (LD) and *cinemadivina* (CD). The following reviews the stages of CD: (1) First, one engaged in a preparatory stage of centering and asking one's Higher Power to speak. Following this preparation, the first stage of LD and CD commenced with slowly *reading* the text or watching the film with conscious awareness. (2) In the second stage, one *reflected*, or pondered over the line, scene, and/or character which moved the heart by having engaged in group discussion, thus allowing this message to soak into one's spirit without over analyzing. (3) In the third stage, *responding*, the participants wrote letters to their Higher Powers as a form of self-expressive prayer in response to being spoken to by God. (4) Lastly, the participants *rested* in the presence of God beyond words and images to bring the process of CD to a conclusion).
- (7) I obtained Biopsychosocial histories from the St. Joseph's Intake and Assessment Packet.
- (8) After the conclusion of the retreat weekend I conducted individual interviews with the six participants. The questions mostly came from the General Interview Guide of Moustakas (1994). The questions constituting the interview guide included the following:
 - So, we've spent all of this time together during this retreat, what happened?

- What dimensions, incidents, and people intimately connected with the experience stand out for you? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- What feelings were generated by the experience? (Moustakas, 1994, p.116)
- What thoughts stood out for you? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- Were you aware of any bodily changes or changes in states of consciousness during the retreat weekend? (Moustakas, 1994) For example, did you cry, laugh, notice a change in your breathing, and/or experience sensations in your body not usually present, or not? If you did experience any of these things, what did these experiences mean to you?
- As you look back over your history with addiction and your pain, what is the connection between this part of your history and what was experienced during the retreat?

*** I pre-tested the interview questions with a colleague. This colleague engaged in the *cinema divina* process with me prior to the commencement of research.

Procedures. The following constituted the procedures implemented to bring this exploratory research to fruition:

- Obtained License from Motion Picture Licensing Corporation (MPLC) for St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center. (MPLC issued a certificate of license for the inpatient on September 1, 2010; this license is valid for one year). A copy of the certificate of license can be found in the Appendices of this research document.
- Secured institutional permission to conduct phenomenological research at St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center.

- Secured institutional (Argosy University – Sarasota) permission to conduct the phenomenological research of weekend *cinema divina* retreat.
- Generated list of possible films based on the presence of Walsh’s (1999) essential spiritual practices/virtues, including purifying motivation, emotional wisdom, ethical life, peaceful mind, wisdom and spiritual knowledge, seeing divine in all, and service.
- Narrowed and finalized list of films to three based on Walsh’s essential spiritual practices/virtues.
- Engaged in *cinema divina* process myself and with a colleague with the three chosen films in order to better bracket out my experience. Not only did this process facilitate the achievement of *epoche*, but it also served as a pre-test for the actual research.
- Identified research participants in the manner described in the previous section entitled “Selection of Participants.”
- Approached identified research participants to present them with the informed consent form. Made sure the participants understood the following: the nature and purpose of the research, time involved (i.e. one weekend retreat and an hour long interview the following week), possible benefits of engaging in the research, possible negative effects of engaging in the research, autonomy to withdrawal from participation in research without any repercussions for treatment decisions, confidentiality of identity, and final use of the research.
- Two signed copies of informed consent form were made, one for myself, and the other for the participant.
- Date was selected for weekend retreat.

- Friday evening (2 hrs) - Ritual gathering of six participants, co-researcher, and I in designated area. Began retreat weekend with the ritual “Lighting the Candles of Hope” as found in the appendices. After the opening ritual, I reviewed with the resident-participants the purpose and process of *lectio divina* and how this spiritual discipline can and would be applied to the medium of film.
- Saturday morning (3.5 hours) – *Cinema divina* process as described in the literature review was performed with film #1, *Dead Man Walking* (opening centering/breath meditation and prayer asking to be spoken to through the film (preparatory stage), read film review which highlighted spiritual value(s) in the film (reviews found in appendices A, B, and C), viewing of film with conscious awareness (reading - *lectio*), group discussion (reflecting - *meditatio*), writing letter to Higher Power based on group discussion and line, character, and/or scene which spoke to the participant (responding - *oratio*), end with breath meditation and Serenity prayer (resting - *contemplatio*). Before beginning the process with each film, the residents were given a synopsis of the film and the spiritual virtues found within it from the website www.spiritualityandpractice.com. At the outset of the retreat weekend, the participants were given journals in which they would be encouraged to write down the line, scene, and/or character moving them and speaking to them. The writing down of the message from God did serve as the impetus for discussion during the reflecting period. The participants also wrote their letters to God in their retreat journals during the response period of *cinema divina*.
- Saturday afternoon (3.5 hours) – *Cinema divina* process with film # 2, *Pay It Forward* (same process as found in the previously mentioned, Saturday morning description)

- Sunday afternoon (4 hrs) – *Cinema divina* process with film # 3, *With Honors* (same process as found in the Saturday morning description). Ritualized ending of retreat weekend with “Lighting the Candles of Hope” and spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving, praise, intercession, and/or petition
- Individual interviews of six participants during the week following the retreat. Interviews were conducted as discussed in the Instrumentation section of this chapter. For the most part, interview questions corresponded to Moustakas’ General Interview Guide.
- Individual interviews were audio-recorded and destroyed after transcription to protect participant confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used in transcribed documentation of the interviews and in the findings and conclusion sections of the dissertation.
- Interviews were transcribed by the transcriptionist at St. Joseph’s Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center’s inpatient site. She could not identify the participants as she had no personal interaction with them.
- Data Analysis was performed on field notes, letters to God, transcribed interviews, and biopsychosocial histories (clinical summaries) of the participants according to the transcendental phenomenological method of Moustakas.
- Individual analyses and collective analysis were presented to six participants and co-researcher for corroboration and/or any corrections.
- Finalized writing of Findings (Chapter 4) and Conclusions (Chapter 5)
- Sent final copies of dissertation (if so desired) and “Thank You” notes to research participants, co-researcher, and CEO of St. Joseph’s Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center.

Findings

What constituted the essential findings of this phenomenological study? The following themes capture well the phenomenon of *cinema divina* during a retreat weekend at an inpatient, addiction treatment center:

- (1) *Cinema divina* proved to be a “spiritual experience” whose essential reality entailed a sense of God communicating and communing with the co-participants individually and as a group.
- (2) The co-participants experienced similar physiological and emotional reactions to the vicissitudes of the characters’ lives in the three films. These reactions included happiness, sadness, tears, laughing, bodily warmth, stomach butterflies, felt openings of the chest, and an experience of the suspension of linear time.
- (3) The experience of these reactions and processing them through the stages of reading, reflecting, responding, and resting led to an overall sense of self-transcendence manifested in the virtues of love, self-surrender, gratitude, forgiveness, and hope.
- (4) Film possesses powerful mechanisms for psychotherapeutic healing and spiritual growth, in particular the power of the story and the activation of archetypes. The mythic stories in film can heal through one’s projective identification with characters. The qualities one despises in a character are often the negative, rejected parts of the self shoved into the shadow of the psyche. The qualities one most admires in a character often are the positive and latent aspects of the self living in the shadow of the psyche, aspects which have not come to fruition. Ultimately, the co-participants saw in each other their own story. The hero/heroine and his/her journey existed as the major archetype activated by the retreat experience. In their journey of searching for ultimate meaning, the co-

participants have “left home” and entered the underworld of their addiction. In the underworld, they have realized that the only “way home” stems from a desire for the divine which surpasses all other desires; this recognition of the “God-shaped hole” and the awesome power of drugs and alcohol testify to the absolute need for desiring God above all else. The “return home” in recovery from addiction is not to the same psychospiritual home or state they left behind. Now, they can revel in their brokenness, in the fact that they will always be hurt, little children walking around in adult bodies. This realization of perpetual childhood reinforces the constant need for grace.

Evaluation Criteria

The last section of Chapter Three discussed the criteria for evaluating this phenomenological study. These criteria were met and methodological rigor obtained. Many qualitative researchers have referred to the veracity, or truthfulness and accuracy, of qualitative data (Bryant, 2004; Creswell, 2007). Patton (2002) referred to the rigor and credibility of data analysis, and Agostinho (2004) formulated three criteria for qualitative evaluation: appropriateness of design, demonstration of rigor, and utility of research product. The following constituted “validation” strategies for this research data: (1) saturation – a breadth of data across differences; (2) engaged in an extensive literature review; (3) followed the transcendental phenomenological method rigorously; (4) kept field notes; (5) triangulation of data as collected from various sources, including field notes, journal notes of co-participants, field notes of co-researcher, letters to God from co-participants, post-retreat interviews, and co-participants’ clinical summaries; (6) peer debriefing with my clinical supervisor (co-researcher); (7) engaged in member checking by bringing explicitation of data back to co-participants for verification; (8) wrote thick and rich descriptions; (9) engaged in a period of prolonged engagement with research

participants; and (10) engaged in a five minute meditation period before each session of reading participants' data. I returned to each participant's data on three separate occasions for an hour each time in order to allow the horizons, themes, and structural qualities to emerge.

Creswell (2007), as mentioned in the end of chapter three, posited five specific criteria for evaluating the quality of a phenomenological study. These five criteria were met. (1) In chapter three I have displayed a comprehensive understanding of the philosophical beliefs and presuppositions of phenomenology. (2) As articulated in chapter one, I studied a clear "phenomenon," and I precisely articulated that phenomenon in the literature review and in this chapter of "Findings." (3) I utilized "procedures of data analysis in phenomenology, such as the procedures recommended by Moustakas" (Creswell, 2007, p. 216). (4) I articulated the essence of the lived experience of the co-participants in regards to *cinema divina*, both the "what" and the "how" of that experience. (5) Lastly, I remained reflexive throughout the study as evidenced by my autonethnography and my own textural and structural descriptions of *cinema divina* at the beginning of Chapter Four

Conclusions

Change leads to disappointment if it is not sustained. Transformation is sustained change, and it is achieved through practice.

-- BKS Iyengar

This section of the final chapter compares and contrasts the findings of this exploratory research with some of the sections of the literature review. Comparing and contrasting the findings of the study with the literature review is completely consonant with the transcendental phenomenological method (Moustakas, 1994). Of particular importance, this section explores the following themes: (1) change as a difficulty articulated, existential process, (2) the purpose of

therapy as helping people in making transformative change, (3) the instrumentality of a therapist's transparency, authenticity, and congruence, and (4) the shared meanings of the co-participants across preciously unique paths to recovery from addiction.

Transpersonal Psychotherapy

The findings of this study appear to support a wisdom psychology in which the end of psychotherapy and spiritual discipline does not entail an adjustment to prevailing cultural norms but an experience of enlightenment, individuation, salvation, and/or transformative, existential change (Boorstein, 1996; Kornfield, 2008). The experience of transformative, existential change in regards to addiction, the natural, human state, involves a process, a journey, of interaction between the human will and divine grace. May (1988) wrote:

I can say with certainty that every authentic movement toward freedom involves both grace and will, but it is impossible to describe just how grace and will interact. If we were to look only at God's transcendence, we could develop an explanation based on God's actions and our responses. Similarly, if we concentrated only on God's immanence, we could develop a psychological explanation based on our journey toward individuation and discovery of the True Self. But God is both immanent and transcendent, so any either/or explanation is bound to be insufficient. We are left with mystery. Here we find another meaning of consecration: the willingness to participate in mystery through faith instead of through comprehension. (pp. 155-156)

Moments of enlightenment, individuation, salvation, and/or transformative, existential change are experienced as moments of spaciousness in which God provides us with the power to change, but we must follow through with our diligence and effort for lasting change to occur. Ultimately, we are co-creators with God in making the film, the narrative of our lives. May's (1988) having

mentioned the spaciousness of grace may correspond to the physiological openings of the chest experienced by myself and several of the co-participants during the retreat weekend.

May's description of participating "in mystery through faith instead of through comprehension" emphasizes the aspect of change as a difficulty articulated, existential process. Human beings can understand this process on a visceral level, from what Wilber (2000) described as "the eye" of the spirit and from what Polanyi (1966) described as tacit knowing, but not on the level of cerebral, verbal comprehension. While the co-participants did attempt to articulate their *holotropic* experiences of the retreat weekend through letters to God, group discussion, and post-retreat interviews, perhaps a better or an adjunct form of presenting the findings of the co-participants would have been through artistic representation. While the reader of this research may experience spiritual stirrings and visceral understandings, one must enter into the steps of the spiritual discipline of *cinema divina* as enunciated in this research to more fully understand my experience and the experience of the co-participants. We experienced what James (1902/2004) termed a true, religious experience coming from a "sense of the enlargement of life so uplifting that personal motives and inhibitions, commonly omnipotent, become too insignificant for notice, and new reaches of patience and fortitude open out. Fear and anxieties go, and blissful equanimity takes their place" (p. 241).

Transpersonal therapists disagree on the utility of transpersonal psychotherapy in healing certain pathologies on the pre-personal level of the spectrum of consciousness and being (i.e. schizophrenia, psychosis, etc). Wilber (2000) posited transpersonal therapy's inherent ability to heal pathologies all along the spectrum. Lu and Lukoff (2008) believed transpersonal therapy to be helpful in existential dilemmas but contraindicative in severe and deeply entrenched psychopathologies. After my experience with this research, I am more apt to side with Wilber.

Certainly, transpersonal therapy can facilitate healing from addiction (Grof, 1993; Whitfield, 1985). However, the experiences of the co-participants delved further than simply addressing chemical dependency to address what Jung (1945) termed the noumenal realm. In a letter from 1945 Jung wrote the following:

You are quite right: the main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neurosis, but rather with the approach to the numinous (the glowing divine awareness in our psyches)...the approach to the numinous is the real therapy, and inasmuch as you attain to the numinous experience, you are released from the curse of pathology. Even the very disease takes on a numinous character (as cited in Pascal, 2009, p. 198).

After my experiences with this exploratory research, it appears to me that a large part of the healing involved in transpersonal psychotherapy, or any form of therapy for that matter, lies in the instrumentality of the therapist. Within the realm of transpersonal therapy, the therapist's personal therapeutic transparency, personal authenticity, and spiritual congruence coalesced with the proper spiritual technique or intervention may quite possibly be able to facilitate healing in any form of psychopathology for the very reasons mentioned by Jung and other transpersonal psychologists and spiritual masters. The therapist no longer treats the symptoms but the true etiology – our “torn-to-pieces-hood” (Ketcham & Kurtz, 2002).

Jungian Psychology

The ego's grip on the psychic structure appeared to loosen as a result of the trance-like state created by the synergistic effects of film. The trance-like state created by film, combined with practicing the stages of *cinema divina*, allowed for the activation of archetypal images, unconscious symbols from the spiritual world. “Mystical experience is an experience of

archetypes” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993, p. 29). The most highly activated archetype was that of the hero. The hero archetype, closely connected to the notion of spiritual sojourn, is an expression of the Self, “the center and circumference of the psyche...an intuited and experienced symbol of psychic totality” (Pascal, 1992, p.107). As sojourners in recovery, the co-participants also travelled together throughout spirituality group for three weeks into the retreat weekend and into the post-retreat interview process. The archetypes of hero and journey are inextricably linked in recovery and in the retreat experience.

The experience of the hero archetype related to a projective identification with positive and negative aspects of the film characters’ shadow elements. They could experience projective identification with the characters in the three films, because the characters served as “a mirror of ourselves” (Kaufmann, 1984, p. 118). As in the cinematherapy study by Bierman et al. (2003), the co-participants could identify with the very negative and very virtuous parts of the characters, because they were not literally talking about themselves in their letters and in the group discussions. Bierman et al. (2003) posited the development of a tripartite relationship forming between the client, the therapist, and the metaphors of any particular film. Conducting the research at a large, inpatient mental health facility for adolescent girls, the researchers determined that a client can broaden one’s internal perspective by applying the associations, ideas, and symbols in a film to one’s own life. The researchers, based on the work of Jeon (1992) and Morawski (1997), highlighted four stages through which a client progresses in the process of cinematherapy: (a) identification – seeing one’s self in a character on screen, (b) catharsis – emotions and difficult material arise from the unconscious, (c) insight – client consciously makes the connection between one’s self and the film character, and (d) universalization – others experience the same problems as the client. These four processes

occurred throughout the *cinema divina* retreat weekend and into the post-retreat interviews creating an almost massive Rorschach experiment.

The aforementioned processes of identification, catharsis, insight, and universalization occurred in the milieu of the Jungian therapeutic techniques of personal and general amplification. Personal amplification involves the client associating the symbols in one's dreams (or art, writing, film viewing, etc.) with one's thoughts, feelings, and past experiences. The combination of the symbols and the personal associations often reveals significant meaning. The therapist provides the general amplification for the symbols. General amplification "provides the collective, archetypal associations to the dream elements...the therapist presents parallel imagery from mythology, legend, and folklore" (Edinger, 2009, p. 13). At certain moments during our group discussions, I provided general amplification for co-participant material. The co-participants also provided general amplification for the material of others; in this way, they acted as therapists unto each other. The art forms produced by a client and their writings from engaging in the process of active imagination can also be analyzed in the same way as dreams. A person's experience of watching film with conscious awareness, as implemented in this study, can also be analyzed this way (Wolz, 2005).

Addiction, Cinematherapy, and *Cinema Divina*

The addict's journey is the hero's journey, from initiation and departure to the underworld (searching for meaning and transcendence in drugs and alcohol); to the experience of struggle in the underworld (the battles lost in the addiction process); and the return home a changed person after having imbibed life-altering, spiritual lessons (the love, self-surrender, gratitude, forgiveness, and hope mentioned in Chapter 4 – The Findings). Ultimately, the

recovering addict knows that the acceptance of our brokenness and our darkness proves human beings are not-God but creatures capable of becoming God-like (Kurtz, 1979).

The same storytelling, the recounting of the hero's journey, which occurs daily in AA and NA meetings throughout the world is the same mythic storytelling occurring in film. The power of film to portray story and myth, when accessed properly, can connect a person in recovery more completely to rewriting one's own story by the bestowal of meaning on that story and simultaneously helping the recovering addict more fully work the steps. According to Johnston (2006) our best films remind us of our truest identities, from where we come, and the best action to take in our lives. The experience of redemption occurs when an addict shares one's story and in the process re-authors it and the stories/lives of others by making present the very qualities mentioned in The Findings Chapter (Chapter 4): love, self-surrender, gratitude, forgiveness, and hope. May (1988) summarized well the interactive realities of change, therapy, addiction, and the story in the following words:

We need God's grace to help us through the deserts of addiction, but that is only one small aspect of grace. Homecoming is only the beginning of homemaking. Grace exists for the fullness of love and for the creative splendor that such fullness brings. There are gardens to create, to dance in. There is pure love to be enjoyed as an end in itself. There are Edens, where people and God simply please one another. And there are the deserts of others, where we can be a part of God's rain. Finally, there are always other deserts in ourselves. I am certain that no one, no matter how holy, is ever completely freed from attachment in this life. *The pilgrimages of addiction and grace, the joys and pains of homecoming and homemaking are processes that go on and on.* Longing and grace grow into love; love invites communion;

communion grows into union; union brings forth creation; creations enables love; love becomes grace and longing. (p. 145)

The cosmic dance alluded to in the previous quotation corresponds to the microcosmic dance which occurs when a person undertakes the spiritual discipline of *lectio/cinema divina*. Through the stages of reading, reflecting, responding, and resting, whether with the Scriptures or with film, one enters into the dancing heart of God. *Cinema divina*, because of its utilization of the modern scripture of film with its powerful mechanisms for harnessing the power of story, serves as a highly recommended Step 11 practice for those in recovery from addiction. As an 11th Step practice, *cinema divina* met the criteria for cinematic elevation also. Cinematic elevation entails the following: (1) the witnessing of moral beauty, (2) physical sensations of neurological significance, and (3) the motivation to grow towards higher levels of morality and spirituality (Haidt, 2003; Niemiec & Wedding, 2008). Ultimately, *cinema divina* is both a spiritual discipline and a specific form of transpersonal, cinematic therapy.

Recommendations

Implications for Research

As this study was an exploratory one, it ought to serve as the springboard for those whose research entails an attempt to implement film and/or *lectio/cinema divina* in innovative ways, and not simply amongst people at an inpatient, addiction rehabilitation center. Given the overwhelmingly positive responses to the “spiritual experience” of the *cinema divina* retreat weekend, this exploratory research could serve as the foundation for many different qualitative and quantitative studies. What differences exist between *cinema divina* done as a group and done individually? The group setting allowed for the formation of a sacred circle and for others, along with the three films, to also be instruments of the divine presence. Obviously, *cinema*

divina performed by one's self would lack these dynamics. How would the findings of individual *cinema divina* compare and contrast with the group *cinema divina* done in this research?

What findings would emerge when implementing *cinema divina* amongst an outpatient population of people in recovery from addiction? What are the long term effects of practicing *cinema divina* as a consistent, spiritual discipline? Based on the previous question, a researcher could choose to undertake a longitudinal study. The idea of a longitudinal study has piqued my curiosity recently, because two of the co-participants have contacted me in the past two weeks from their aftercare facilities; they utilize the process of *cinema divina* together whenever they go out to the movies. It would also be of particular interest to me to expand the sample size of co-participants to include not just residents at an inpatient, addiction treatment center but also to outpatient, addiction treatment clinics, inpatient and outpatient mental and psychiatric facilities, and to people in general whom are seeking psychological and spiritual growth.

Ultimately, because the human experience of any phenomenon necessarily possesses many layers, I would suggest for future researchers to engage in an imaginative variation of sorts with the subjective perspectives of future co-participants *and* the contexts in which these participants experience film, *lectio divina*, and/or *cinema divina*. For example, a study could explore the influence of diverse, demographic factors among individuals on the process of *cinema divina* within various types of facilities. Would this study have worked with self-identified atheists? Many people entering recovery, on account of a dysfunctional relationship with religious institutions in the past and/or with dysfunctional parental figures, cannot accept "God" as a Higher Power. Would this reality have altered my findings? If so, in what way? The co-participants in this study evidenced a desire and readiness for a spiritual awakening. Another

possible avenue for research could be implementing the process of *cinema divina* with those who lack the aforementioned desire and readiness to embrace recovery and a spiritual path. Could the intervention of *cinema divina* create the space in which a desire and readiness for recovery and spiritual growth come to fruition in those who are lacking these internal dynamics? Many of the clients with whom I work do lack these internal dynamics. Lastly, a researcher could explore the import of a therapist's or a researcher's level and type of intentionality and/or the influence of diverse therapeutic and theological orientations on the findings of a *cinema divina* study.

Implications for Professional Practice

In Chapter One I mentioned my hope for implementing a *cinema divina*, retreat weekend based on the emergent findings of this research project. Now, having phenomenologically verified that many residents are having a “spiritual experience” by processing film in the manner described in this study, implementing such a retreat weekend seems pertinent. I processed the findings with the clinical director of St. Joseph's, and together we determined that a holistic, bimonthly, retreat weekend, in which *cinema divina* will be a prominent component, ought to be implemented for the spiritual growth of the residents. We determined a bimonthly retreat would allow most residents to experience the retreat once during their three month stay at the inpatient. Discussions have already begun between myself, a highly recommended, certified yoga instructor and healer, a recreational therapist, and art therapist, and a few local ministers on how to implement the best possible holistic, retreat weekend. The experience of collaborating with these wonderful spiritual teachers and seekers, an experience I would not have had if not for my dissertation research, has proven to be spiritually fruitful to me and to them.

Since many people enjoy watching movies, the findings of this study and the *cinema divina* process itself can serve as a catalyst for helping professionals (counselors, therapists,

social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, medical doctors, nurses, etc) to explore spirituality together, both professionally and personally. I have pondered implementing a weekly or monthly session of *cinema divina* for staff at St. Joseph's and for other local clinicians working at various sites. Helping professionals could use the methods and findings of this study to explore the effects of engaging in a consistent, fun, and powerful spiritual discipline in their own lives and in the lives of the people they serve. Furthermore, in writing about the clinical realm, it would be highly appropriate to present this exploratory study and its findings at various venues, including conferences pertaining to the fields of spirituality, addiction, and/or therapy. I have already been asked to present this study and its findings as a two day training this fall at my own inpatient facility; the staff of St. Joseph's and professionals from other area providers/facilities will be invited to attend.

The wisdom and knowledge gleaned from this study are already being interwoven into the spirituality group I facilitate at St. Joseph's. I have used the spiritual discipline of *cinema divina* as two to three sessions throughout the duration of the two, previous spirituality groups. I believe that *cinema divina* and the power of film (when channeled and processed properly) are providing hope and healing for those in the earliest stages of recovery from their addictive processes. Through *cinema divina*, I hope that future residents can more fully experience and articulate their own unique journey of spirituality and recovery.

Personal Implications

This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy.

Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.

-The Dalai Lama

I am proud of this study. I am proud of conducting a massive, research undertaking consistent with my existential and theological beliefs about spirituality, recovery, change, therapy, film, and human nature. While I would like to believe I have not created a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts, the findings of this study confirm my personal metaphysics and meaning orientations, my philosophy of life. Love, self-surrender, gratitude, forgiveness, and hope are the noblest aspirations and achievements of the human spirit. The human striving for these aforementioned virtues constitutes the value of our stories, of our lives. Human beings, especially those in the grip of addiction, eventually derive meaning from the struggle. Oh, the tension of opposites! In striving for these virtues, the human person imbues his or her story with meaning and lives out the mythology of the hero/heroine, the archetype of the Self.

Holy Wisdom's visitation throughout this dissertation process has certainly influenced my personal growth and the daily conduct of my life. Now, I keep a *cinema divina* journal. While I formally perform the steps of reading, reflecting, responding, and resting with a film on a weekly basis, I have noticed my beginning to process all media with conscious awareness. Mystical messages from God come to us through music and television also. I have recorded the messages meant for me in the previously mentioned journal. What is the significance of the insight of God communicating through all media? Instead of rejecting modernity and the material world as so many religious institutions admonish us to do, God can *only* be experienced through the medium of who we are as human beings – enfleshed spirits. For this reason, music, film, and art beckon and stir us in ineffable ways. For this reason, the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus makes eminent sense to me. We need a God who wears skin so to speak. We need a God who deifies a world already holy. In the words of an ancient, Church Father: "God became human so that humans might become God."

Lastly, this research project has birthed a desire in me to explore and become an “expert” in the fields of art therapy, narrative therapy, and phenomenology for the sake of my own spiritual growth and the healing of those I serve.

Appendix A

Film Review of *Dead Man Walking*

Film Review

By Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat
From www.spiritualityandpractice.com

Dead Man Walking

Directed by Tim Robbins
MGM 12/95 DVD/VHS Feature Film
R - for a depiction of rape and murder

Sister Helen Prejean (Susan Sarandon) is a Catholic nun who exemplifies the compassion of Jesus in her work with death row prisoners. While teaching in a Louisiana ghetto, she begins corresponding with Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn), who has been sentenced to death for the brutal murders of two teenage lovers. It takes all of Sister Helen's patience to stomach this young man's anger, racial hatred, and callous disregard of the suffering he has brought into the lives of others. At the same time, she is shocked by the grim realities of prison life and the extent of Poncelet's isolation and loneliness.

When all his legal appeals fail, Sister Helen agrees to be his spiritual advisor during the remaining days of his life. Meeting the parents of the slain teenagers in court, she eventually visits them and listens to their accounts of grief, rage, and loss.

During her vigil with Poncelet during his last hours on earth, Sister Jean is taken aback by his torment and the chilly aloofness of prison officials who won't allow him to hug his mother or listen to music. She also is forced to listen to arguments on the moral rightness of capital punishment from a Catholic prison chaplain and several guards.

Meanwhile, Sister Helen has a salutary effect upon Matthew, helping him to take responsibility for his acts and to seek forgiveness. In the anguished minutes before this "dead man" walks to the execution chamber, she assures him that "Christ is here." In the powerful scene when he is killed by lethal injection, she never wavers in her role as the emissary of God's love.

Dead Man Walking presents a rounded and riveting look at the life and work of this extraordinary Catholic nun. Her experience of working with a death row inmate changed the direction of her vocation. Director Tim Robbins has taken the material from her book and reshaped it into one of the most inspiring and positive portraits of Christian ministry ever put on film. Susan Sarandon justifiably won an Academy Award for her luminous portrayal of this nun,.

This important and unforgettable film exposes the cruelty of death by lethal injection and offers instead an alternate path based on compassion and forgiveness. It also shows that hate is the worst prison of all.

Appendix B

Film Review of *Pay It Forward*

Film Review

By Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

From www.spiritualityandpractice.com

Pay It Forward

Directed by Mimi Leder

Warner 10/00 DVD/VHS Feature Film

PG-13 - mature thematic elements: substance abuse, some sexual situations, langu

Trevor McKinney (Haley Joel Osment) is an eleven-year-old who lives in Las Vegas with his working-class mother, Arlene (Helen Hunt), who is a recovering alcoholic. She works hard at two jobs to support her son but feels that it is a losing battle. Trevor is a latch-key kid who often has to take care of himself.

This seventh-grader's spirits are lifted when on the first day of school Eugene Simonet (Kevin Spacey), his new social studies teacher, gives the class an extra credit assignment: "Think of an idea to change our world and put it into action." Whereas the rest of the class has trouble looking past the teacher's badly scarred face, Trevor realizes that he now has been given a moral adventure.

The energetic and idealistic boy decides he will do a good deed for three people, something they can't do for themselves, and then will ask each one of them to "pay it forward" by doing similarly difficult big favors for three others. Trevor begins by helping out a homeless man (James Caviezel), a heroin addict. He gives him lodging for a night, a chance to take a shower, and some money so the fellow can get it together and look for a job.

Trevor's second mission is to bring the lonely Eugene together with his mother. Only trouble is that they both must deal with old tapes of fear, self-doubt, and lack of self-esteem. And to make matters worse, Trevor's physically abusive and alcoholic father (Jon Bon Jovi) returns home. The boy's third project is to help out a weak classmate at school who is always being attacked by bullies.

Meanwhile, a Los Angeles reporter, Chris Chandler (Jay Mohr), is knocked for a loop when a lawyer (Gary Wertz) gives him his Jaguar after seeing that his old Mustang has been totaled. Tracking the rich man down, he learns that his action was part of paying forward the kindness he received from an African American (David Ramsey) in a hospital emergency room. That person, in turn, was given a new

lease on life by an alcoholic lady (Angie Dickinson) who lives in her car in a desolate area outside Las Vegas.

Eventually, Chandler's investigations lead him to Trevor and his innovative "pay it forward" project that has already had more of a positive impact on the world than he had realized. The reporter does an interview with the boy on his twelfth birthday. Soon afterwards Trevor is back at his good work helping out his classmate at school.

This inspiring and imaginative film is based on a novel of the same title by Catherine Ryan Hyde. Mimi Leder (*ER*, *China Beach*, *Deep Impact*) directs from a screenplay by Leslie Dixon. It speaks directly to the greatest social problem and character disorder of our times – incivility. Wherever one looks – in the home, on the street, or at work – everyone is consumed with taking care of number one. Small acts of courtesy, it seems are a thing of the past.

Pay It Forward dares to point us in a different direction. It boldly reveals that kindness and putting others first are acts of moral beauty. It concretely proclaims that each person can make a difference in the world by doing good. And it reveals that although we'll probably never know the effects of our acts of compassion, that's okay. All of the world's religions point out that the reward is in the act itself.

The DVD contains an audio commentary by director Mimi Leder, a 13-minute featurette, and the theatrical trailer.

Appendix C

Film Review of *With Honors*

Film Review

By Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat
From www.spiritualityandpractice.com

With Honors

Directed by Alek Keshishian
Warner 04/94 DVD/VHS Feature Film
PG-13

Monty Kessler (Brendan Fraser), a smart public policy major at Harvard who has nothing on his mind except getting ahead in the world, is thrown together with Simon Wilder (Joe Pesci), a middle-aged bum who is living in the basement of the university's library. They desperately need each other – even though neither knows it.

Kessler convinces his three roommates to take in this homeless and colorful character during the winter. There's a rumor going around campus that Wilder is the ghost of Walt Whitman. That's not far off the mark: he is a vagabond soul who traveled all over the world in the merchant marines and is now dying of an asbestos-related lung disease.

Joe Pesci is perfect for the part of the volatile Wilder, a man of emotional highs and lows. Brendan Fraser is just right as the upwardly bound Kessler, an honors student whose senior paper is a tribute to his advisor (Gore Vidal), a waspish conservative. Wilder helps this achiever see that the education of the heart is as important as book learning. And Kessler and his friends help Wilder achieve a finely finished death.

The English mystic Evelyn Underhill once wrote: "I am sure that God has something to teach us in every situation in which we are put and through every person we meet; and once we grasp that, we cease to be restless and settle down to what we are." By the end of *With Honors*, Kessler and Wilder have reached across the abyss of age, class, and political persuasion separating them. They have exchanged meanings and deep emotions.

We need more movies about the education of our feelings. This one fills the bill nicely.

Appendix D

Retreat Schedule

Reel Life Conversations with God: Retreat Schedule

Friday January 14, 2011

7:00 – 8:00 PM Gather in Chapel (Ritual Opening and Review of the Process of *Lectio Divina*)

Saturday January 15, 2011

8:15 AM – 11:45 AM: Meet in Room-With-A-View for *Cinemadivina* with the film *Dead Man Walking*

1:00 PM – 4:45 PM: Meet in Room-With-A-View for *Cinemadivina* with the film *Pay It Forward*

Sunday January 16, 2011

1:00 PM – 4:45 PM: Meet in Room-With-A View for *Cinemadivina* with the film *With Honors*

*** Special Note: Please resume regular schedule when not involved in the times above. Also, Monday morning I will make individual appointments with all of you for the post-retreat weekend interviews. Thank you!

Appendix E

Motion Picture License

MPLC
Motion Picture Licensing Corporation

Certificate of License

License No.
505670867

Be it known *S. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center*

has obtained from the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation the right under the copyright law of the United States of America to publicly perform certain lawfully obtained motion pictures and other programs intended for personal, private, home use only, such as DVDs, at the location(s) specified in the license agreement between these parties.

Motion Picture Licensing Corporation

By *J. Marasca*

This Certificate of License is set to expire on : 09/01/2011

Appendix F

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Reel Life Conversations with God: Film in Addiction Recovery

I have been asked to participate in a research study on the experience of film in addiction recovery; this research is the doctoral dissertation for the primary researcher, Christopher Courtright-Cox. I was asked to be a possible participant, because I have completed the spirituality group at St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center and am progressing towards the completion of my treatment goals. A total of six people have been asked to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the spiritual and psychological experiences of people in an inpatient, addiction treatment program with film.

If I agree to be in this study, I will be asked to participate in a cinematherapy retreat weekend and a post-retreat interview; this interview will be audio-recorded. Throughout the retreat weekend, I will be asked to engage with three films based on the spiritual practice of *lectio divina*, a practice I learned to do during my participation in spirituality group facilitated by Mr. Courtright-Cox. This retreat will also require group discussion and letter writing to my Higher Power. This study will begin on a Friday evening and end on the following Sunday afternoon. Breaks will be given throughout the weekend for eating and relaxation.

The risks associated with this study are, as in any psychotherapeutic intervention, a possible, negative psychological activation. Since all therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of one's life, a participant may experience some uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. These feelings are likely to arise, but the possible psychological and spiritual benefits to be gained by processing these feelings and experiences far outweigh the initial distressing emotions. The benefits of participation quite possibly will include many of the following: having spiritual experiences, growing in recovery, mastering a spiritual practice, enhanced interpersonal relationships, solutions to specific problems, and a reduction in feelings of psychological distress.

I will receive no monetary reimbursement for participating in this study. Participating in this study will also not directly determine progression towards my treatment goals and successful completion of my treatment program.

This study is confidential. Several precautions will be taken to preserve the confidentiality of the participants (my confidentiality). Pseudonyms (fake names) will be used in the findings and conclusion chapters of the dissertation and in the transcription of the interviews. The weekend retreat will be held in the chapel of the facility, which is sectioned off from the remainder of the facility. All papers (i.e. field notes, letters to God, transcribed interviews, and printed clinical summaries of the participants) will be shredded after data analysis has taken place. The records of this study will be kept private and secured throughout the processing of the data. In reporting the results of the research analysis, only pseudonyms shall be used in identifying participants. Certain identifying information may be found in the structural analysis (i.e. *how the participants*

came to experience film in the context of treatment and the context of their lives), however this identifying information will be as generalized as possible. For example, if a participant's experience is contextualized by growing up in the inner city, the name of that city will not be mentioned. No words linking me to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Christopher Courtright-Cox, the primary researcher, and Phyllis Magnus, the co-researcher, will have access to the records. The audio tapes made from the post retreat interviews will be transcribed by someone from one of our outpatient facilities who will be unable to identify any of the participants; the tapes will be destroyed as soon as the primary researcher has finished his degree. I have the right to get a summary of the results of this research if I would like to have them. Confidentiality cannot be maintained in the following circumstances: when a participant admits to child abuse; elder abuse; wanting to physically harm another in the group; has homicidal ideations; and/or suicidal intent.

I understand that my participation is strictly voluntary. My decision regarding my participation will not affect my current or future relations with Argosy University and St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment and Recovery Center. If I decide to participate, I am free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make me uncomfortable. I can withdraw at any time without my relations with the university, the treatment center, and the outcome decisions of the treatment team being affected.

I can contact the following people with any questions about this study:

Christopher Courtright-Cox (Principal Investigator)
St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment Center
P.O. Box 470
159 Glenwood Drive
Saranac Lake, NY 12983
(518) 891-3950
ccourtright-cox@stjoestreatment.org

Dr. Susan Marcus
Argosy University – Sarasota
5250 17th Street
Sarasota, Florida 34235
(941) 379-0404
1-800-331-5995
smarcus@argosy.edu

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and certified by the Institutional Review Board, Argosy University – Sarasota. For research-related problems or questions regarding participants' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board at the same Sarasota address and phone number above.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form. By signing this document, I consent to participate in the study.

Name of Participant (printed) _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Principal Investigator:

_____/_____
/ Date

Appendix G

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Appendix H

Post-Retreat Interview Guide

- So, we've spent all of this time together during this retreat, what happened?
- What dimensions, incidents, and people intimately connected with the experience stand out for you? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- What feelings were generated by the experience? (Moustakas, 1994, p.116)
- What thoughts stood out for you? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116)
- Were you aware of any bodily changes or changes in states of consciousness during the retreat weekend? (Moustakas, 1994) For example, did you cry, laugh, notice a change in your breathing, and/or experience sensations in your body not usually present, or not? If you did experience any of these things, what did these experiences mean to you?
- As you look back over your history with addiction and your pain, what is the connection between this part of your history and what was experienced during the retreat?

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