



Lived Experiences of Women Healers

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Background: Women healers have been present in many cultures for centuries and have been devalued for their healing work and excluded from systems of power and formal education. Given the challenges that women healers face and their largely undocumented stories, this research project aims to give voice to the lived experiences of current women healers.

Objectives: To describe the lived experiences of women healers.

Method: This study was approved by the St. Catherine University IRB. We used purposive snowball sampling to recruit and virtually interview 22 individuals who identified as women and healers. We developed the interview schedule based on the literature and our own experiences as women healers. We analyzed the data using content and thematic analysis.

Results: Participants used many modes of healing (e.g., energy healing, herbalism, body work) and practiced in a variety of settings (e.g., private practice, medical settings, informally with family and friends).

Eight themes emerged:

- Socio-economic-political context
- How participants came to the work
- Education/love of ongoing learning/many tools
- What healing means to the participants
- Reluctance to identify as a healer
- How participants have transformed

Conclusions: This study provides thick rich descriptions of the lived experiences of women healers. Implications for practice include the importance of mentors, the value of ongoing education, self-care for the healer, and community support. Future research could focus on how healers transform as a result of their healing work.