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Botanicas in Connecticut: Implications for Allopathic Practitioners

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Botánicas in Connecticut: Implications for Allopathic Practitioners

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Botánicas in Connecticut: Implications for Allopathic Practitioners

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Chapter 1-Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to expand the viewpoint of the allopathic practitioner and like minded health care professionals as to the existence of alternative belief systems that offer healing to Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Haitians, Jamaicans and other ethnic communities in Connecticut. Devotees to these healing philosophies purchase products at a type of neighborhood folk pharmacy known as a botánica. The principal objective is for the reader to develop an understanding of the potential for healing through the Afro-Caribbean religion Santeria and its related practices and its links to the botánica. Consequently this thesis will serve to identify providers of care within the framework of these beliefs systems and provide further insight into Latino and Afro-Caribbean health cultures.

Background of Study

During the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, millions of Yoruba were taken from what is now Benin and Nigeria to Puerto Rico, Cuba, Brazil and other parts of the Americas. The slave holders in these sugar cane producing countries were Catholics. The slaves brought to these islands had existing belief systems known in their language, Lukumi, as the Orishas. The process of blending the Orisha pantheon with the Iberian Peninsula saints has come to be named synergy. De La Torre (2002) describes the term Santeria as follows:

The word Santeria itself originated as a pejorative term used by Catholic clerics in Cuba to denote what they considered a heretical mixture of African religious practices with the venerations of the saints. (p.xiii)
The institution of slavery in Spanish speaking countries produced a group of slaves who were baptized Catholic yet were fierce guardians of the Orisha worshipping rituals. These beliefs, when combined with the Catholic intercessors, created a set of demi-gods and goddesses who were both White and Black. This type of spiritual double agency allowed captive slaves to co-exist in a cruel environment, yet escape total cultural obliteration. De La Torre (2002) explains this further:

While the roots of Santeria can be found in Africa’s earth-centered religion, in Roman Catholic Spain, and European spirits it is neither African nor European. Christianity, when embraced under the context of colonialism and/or slavery, has the ability to create a space in which the indigenous or oppressed groups can resist annihilation. (p.xiii)

In the current society, where the descendants of the slaves live in poverty in the nation’s largest Northeast cities, the practice of Santeria is vibrant and salient. Furthermore, Latinos and others living and working with Latinos are familiar with these belief systems. Consequently health care providers need to develop an understanding of the history of Santeria and other Trans-Atlantic religions and how they can be used to enhance health care outcomes of Latino, Hispanic Afro-Caribbean populations. These populations are a large viable culture in Connecticut that places unique demands on the medical health care system.

In cities such as Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport and Stamford these cross continental connections have resulted in the establishment of botánicas in metropolitan neighborhoods. Each of these cities has a large Latino population.

The city of Hartford has a population that totals 40% Latino. Bridgeport is second to Hartford with 31.9%. Within the metropolitan area of New Haven people
calling themselves Hispanics comprise 21.4% of the total population. Stamford, Connecticut has a Latino population of 16.8 %. All of these cities host a Hispanic population which totals higher that then national percentage of Latinos, 14.4% (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09000.html).

It is my argument that health care professionals and other stakeholders will begin to perceive the availability of spiritual support and alternative medicine as a compliment to the bio-medical system. A partnership which embraces both folk medicine and allopathic protocols allows the patient to be healed within a framework of cultural familiarity. A partnership between the two may also provide a better health outcome for the sick patient through understanding the of health care protocols which occur inside a neighborhood botánica.

Uncovering the health care treatment options available to customers who utilize their local botánica is the main focus of this project. After reading this thesis, it is hoped that professional health care workers who have patients/clients based in Connecticut and other East Coast cities will be able to describe what a botánica is, who patronizes them and how health care delivery is transacted there.

A botánica is a shop, often found in Latino communities, that serves as a place to discuss problems and buy products that help solve these problems. People seeking services there may be helped by the store owner and/or referred to other practitioners. The store provides customers with a variety of over the counter products designed to solve relationship problems, money problems and most importantly for this thesis, physical and mental conditions. Devotees who patronize these businesses participate in a holistic form of medicine. The underlying framework is based on the fact that the physical, emotional and spiritual balances are all linked. The pathogen is only one aspect of disease etiology. Remedies for physical ailments, emotional stressors, relationship repair and other issues are for sale, and recommended by the owner or practitioner at the botánicas.

The healing traditions, based on a spiritual foundation, were brought to the Americas by captured slaves. Within the Caribbean Islands and the continents of both North and South American, Native Americans were adherents to their own magico-relgion
philosophies. Although each group was subjected to acculturation and eradication of beliefs through colonization, the end result is the cultural phenomenon of synergist integration. Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz describes the attempted eradication of one culture by the more powerful one, a failure in the removal of ideologies and rituals. Instead the end result of the African-European-Indigenous mélange morphs into transculturation. (Olmos & Paravsini-Gebert, 2003)

**Research Objectives**

The cultural trilogy that results is a combination of paradigms taken from the African slaves, European colonizers and native populations. It lays the framework for the existence of Trans-Atlantic magico-religio practices, and the role of the botánicas in Connecticut specifically and in New England in general.

Understanding that this project is exploratory in scope, I utilized ethnography, semi-structured interviews and observation to obtain information from owners/practitioners who work in the physical space of the folk pharmacy known as a botánica. The aim of this thesis is to uncover through observation and narratives answers to five investigative questions:

1. Why do people come into the Botánica?
2. How are customers conceptualizing illness?
3. How are practitioners/owners conceptualizing disease and illness?
4. What illnesses are diagnosed?
5. How are these illnesses cured?

This project examines the providers’ descriptions of illness, products used to eradicate illness and rituals employed to change unwanted conditions. These narrative responses are used to provide feedback for the research questions posed.
Trans Atlantic Healing Practices in a Wider Context

People who are seeking a cure for an illness or the solving of a life problem will do so within the context of their culture, community, family and available helping resources. African-derived cultures have their own system of healing, identification of disease, conceptualization of disease and practitioners who operate within this framework exclusively, or in combination of these three. A distinct definition for each will provide the reader with the background needed to identify believers of the practice, and their practitioners who seek information, products and referrals from botánicas.

Universally each culture has its own system of healing, identification of disease and conceptualization. As enslaved Africans toiled for European plantation owners in the Caribbean and exchanged information on flora and fauna with neighboring Indians, it was a natural outgrowth for the belief systems of these other cultures to become part of enslaved Africans' practices. Latino immigrants from Mexico, South and Central America are the transplanters of the healing systems known as Curanderismo, Espiritismo and Santeria.

Curanderismo

*Curanderismo* is often defined as the art of curing taken from the root *cura* in Latin. Enos (2001) explains that Spanish priests brought with them their own *Curanderas* from Spain as they began to colonize South America (Enos, 2001). The Spanish healing system transplanted to Latin and South America was largely based on the Arab
civilization and mores and as well was influenced further by the Greek texts and teaching of Hippocrates (Enos, 2001).

Maduro (1993) provides further insight into the varied cultural influences on which lay the underpinning for Curandereismo.

Curandereismo is syncretic, eclectic and holistic; it is a mixture of beliefs derived from Aztec, Spanish, spiritistic, spiritualists, homeopathic and modern 'scientific' medicine. (p.2)

Further elaborating on Maduro's point, curandereismo existed as a holistic system in Spain before arriving in the New World. One tenet, which made a nice fit with Native American animism, was the use of four natural elements found in the carnal world--fire, earth, water and air--as correspondences. These were being used in Spain during prayers for the ailing patient. (Enos, 2001). This background provided a syncretic belief system, which combined with the indigenous belief systems that the Ameri-Indians were practicing, since they contained these essentials and a belief in the humoral system as well.

Catholic Saints who can heal such as Saint Vincent are part of the spiritual beings, which cross the Atlantic with the Spanish to South and Central America. The comparable system of named spiritual beings that heal that belonged to the Native Americans merged with the imported ones. Consequently, this produced a Catholic-Indian synergy, analogous to the syncretism effect of the Euro-African paradigms seen as part of the Trans-Atlantic magico philosophies.

Disease conceptualization or etiology begins with determining if the ill person's ailment has a source in witchcraft, or a similar spiritual origin. For believers in this
Trans-Atlantic magico philosophy, Maduro (1983) describes eight philosophical premises that distinguish Curanderismo from traditional or allopathic medicine.

1. “The mind and body are inseparable”
2. “Balance and harmony are important”
3. “The patient is an innocent victim”
4. “The body and soul are separable”
5. “Cure requires family participation”
6. “The interpenetration of the natural and Super natural worlds”
7. “A sick person needs to be re-socialized”
8. “The healer is expected to interact openly” (p.3)

People from Latin America are often familiar with the holistic beliefs and practices of Curanderismo. Transplanted beliefs that evoke the spirits of the dead are also a component of the Trans-Atlantic religious systems such as Espiritismo.

Espiritismo

In contrast to Curanderismo, which petitions Catholic saints and their synergistic Native American spirits to evoke a healing condition, Espiritismo is based on the ritual calling of the dead to intervene on behalf of the living.

The word espiritismo has a root in the original Latin, espirit, which translates to the soul. People who study this belief system and the mediumship phenomena, popularized at the turn of the century, point to Allen Kardec as the driving influence behind establishing this as a spiritual ritual. This French author lectured in physics,
comparative astronomy and anatomy (http://www.spiritwritings.com/Kardec.html). Once he turned his scholarship to the subject of the spirit world, believers were validated instead of shunned. This movement meant a wider knowledge and acceptance of the practice, which calls on decedents as intercessors.

The web site http://www.neworleansmistic.com provides more in depth treatment of the subject by identifying two variations which are alternative forms of Espiritismo. La Mesa Blanca tradition from Cuba has been largely inspired by European influences. The more Africanized form is referred to by the Yoruba word Eggungun, which can be translated as the manifestation of collective spirits. In this form the collective sum of shared ancestors are summoned and asked to appear in a public showing. The African cultural pressures are evidenced by the drumming, rhythms and chants performed by the medium. In La Mesa Blanca African rhythms and invocations are not used to induce a trance. Instead, in “The White Table” variant of Espiritismo a medium or Espiritista creates a sacred gathering called a misa in Spanish. People gather around a table to communicate with the spirits of the departed in English this; is called a séance.

(http://www.neworleansmistic.com)

Santeria

The hierarchal structure of a religious pantheon is what distinguishes Santeria from Espiritismo. Santeria, a magico-religio belief system framed in the Yoruba tradition of Ifa, is linked to the transplantation of slaves to Cuba and Puerto Rico. The Spanish speaking slaves brought with them the language and customs of the Lukumi. Santeria is a label for Lukumi, Lucumi, La Regla de Ocha and La Regla de Ifa by devotees and
academics who study these religions. Once they were brought to the United States there is a transference and re-implantation of these beliefs in cities like Miami and New York. Based on the patakas or legends of the Orishas, religious postulates, ritual sacrifices, altar building and ceremonies all tie believers throughout the African Diaspora to a spiritual core. Barnett (2001) elaborates on the cultural continuity that makes Santeria, and its sister practices, historically important and applicable to modern’s society by the perpetuation of rituals, story telling and performance:

They tell the stories of the deities, adventures, everyday pursuits, festivities, fraternal and sexual relationships, conflicts and other matters. Their purpose is to explain the rituals in which these events appear and also the religion and the society. (p. 3)

He argues that there is a cultural continuity based on the survival within the African Diaspora. In addition, the incorporation of Catholic saints into the person of African deities creates a blended belief based on societal pressures. As with Curanderismo the beings that emerge are a synergetic blend, which contain aspects of the colonists’ Saints and the colonized gods and goddesses.

Now we turn from the syncretic beliefs of Spanish speaking slaves in the New World to those of French speaking slaves in French colonies to show the connection through belief and rituals.

**Haitian Voodoo**

The different labels for their Yoruba based faith are not necessarily indicative of different denominations in the way that a Baptist worships differently from an Anglican, for instance. The same name variance found in Santeria occur which occurs in Voodoo.
Believers in this practice utilize the names Voodoo, Vodoo, Vodun and Vodoun to describe their synergistic faith. Inconsistencies in spelling or pronunciation are not indicative of disparate rituals or beliefs.

Within the Francophone Caribbean and its cultural cousin in North America, New Orleans, Voodoo is well known outside of its geographic origins. The name Voodoo is based in the “Adjo-Tado group of languages spoken in Arada, was brought to Haiti from Ouida (or Wydah) on the West Coast of Africa, at the height of the eighteenth century slave trade.” (Olmos & Paravisinis-Gebert, 2003) The meaning of the word is spirit. The doctrine, rituals and beliefs are centered on a hierarchy of *loas*, or laws. Each *loa* essentia commands a domain of colors, foods, and specific dances. Devotees may honor their personal *loa* by feeding their guardian spirits with the bodies and blood of sacrificed animals as well. The spirit returns this devotion by possession of the devotee. In both Santeria and Voodoo devotees refer to this as being ridden or mounted, suggesting a horse/rider relationship.

Although some observers, theologians, and anthropologists may describe Vodoo as a polytheistic worship system, it is important to note that it is actually based on monotheism, as “practitioners recognize a single and supreme spiritual entity or God-Mawu-Lisa.” (Olmos & Paravisinis-Gebert, 2003) This lack of acknowledgement of the belief in one God continues to provide a misrepresentation of the religion even today.

An overview of the history of the religion being brought to Haiti includes the influences that slaves brought to the Caribbean and could be described as a reaction to colonization. Among the ethnic groups known to have migrated from West African to present day Haiti during slavery are the Fon and Yoruba, who were living in Dahomey at
the time of their capture. One could argue that this explains the similarities in the two belief systems of Santeria and Vodoo since the Yoruba culture contributed to both. Hence Vodoo is also an Afro-syncretic religion, borrowing from the variety of ethnic groups forced into labor to cultivate sugar plantations in Haiti. One description of this effect follows:

The enforced immigration of black slaves from all the various African tribal populations, Anmines, Fons, Dahomean, Yourbas, Congos, Senegalese and Sudanese became inconceivably confused. (Rigaud, 1985, p. 11)

The author Rigaud has listed both tribal names and locations for this description of tribal origins. Nonetheless this hodgepodge of beliefs creates a less distinct line of cultural continuity as in the Lukumi derivate religions found in Africa, the Caribbean, Brazil and the Americas. Unlike the Yoruba-based religions, Candomble and Santeria, Vodoo originates in a different part of Africa.

Hence Vodoo is a Trans-Atlantic ritual system with a foundation in a different African society. It is founded largely in the spiritual practices of the Fon and various African ethnic groups forced into labor to cultivate sugar plantations in Haiti. This amalgamation of beliefs creates a line of cohesive rituals as in the Lukumi derivate religions found in Africa, the Caribbean, Brazil and the Americas.

Parallels between Lukumi and Vodun are varied; the most important one for this discussion is that Haitian loas masquerade as Catholic Saints in the way that Yoruba deities have a secondary presence as Orishas. For instance, the loa Ellegba, ruler of the crossroads, has the synergistic presence of the Catholic, Saint Anthony.
New Orleans Voodoo incorporates the same spirit guides and similar rituals. French slave ships brought people directly from West Africa to Louisiana. One ship brought 294 Kongo speaking people in 1720. (Ward, 2004) Shortly after the Haitian revolution of 1804, former slaves began to migrate to New Orleans. These historic events link the cultural continuity of the Congo based Vodoo religion to Haiti and New Orleans. What is most appropriate to this discussion of alternative medicine is the use of Vodoo rituals to facilitate healing.

Recently medical professionals who have Haitian clients among their patients have been trying to understand the beliefs of Vodoo in the way they influence their patients’ health behaviors. Although their focus is on their patients’ mental health, the quotation below provides insights into the Vodoo practitioner’s concept of illness.

Clinicians must question clients and when possible their families about their perception of the etiology of the illness. When clients believe that they have been cursed, clinicians should focus on the client’s strengths as an antidote to the power of the curse. (Desrosiers & Fleurose, 2002, p.11)

Desrosiers & Fleurose urge mental health care providers to educate their patients about the biological origin of disease, and the role of stress on health in Western society. My argument is to recognize the belief system, honor it and then discover what help is available within that framework. As a rule of thumb, health care providers should invest their professional attention to this diversity issue. The knowledge that there is probably a local store, a botánica, and a folk-medicine trained practitioner who, in most cases, owns that store, allows a discussion about treatments that are readily available and more familiar potentially resulting in a better health outcome.
Candomblé

The descendants of Yoruba slaves in Brazil use the mechanisms of transculturation to re-establish and maintain their own version of Trans-Atlantic religions. The most widely known one is Candomblé.

The Candomblé religion as organized in Brazil by the Yoruba speaking slaves is derived from the religion brought to Brazil by Portuguese colonists. Despite the pressure placed on these slaves by the Catholic Church, they were able to maintain a cultural link with Africa by continuing their ceremonial healings, elaborate drumming, and long-standing religious rituals. As in Cuba, Brazilian slaves fused the original Yoruba pantheon with Catholic saints. A summary of syncretism follows:

Catholicism and the combination of diverse Afro-Brazilian religious strains may coexist side by side such that one religion is practiced at certain times and places and the other at other times and places. (Merrell, 2005, p.139)

Today transplanted Brazilians are estimated to number one million in America. (http://www.brazilbrazil.com/brasusa.html) Large numbers of these immigrants are concentrated on the Eastern Coast of the Americas where they generally live near Hispanics and other immigrants. Their use of herbs, amulets, candles, oils and similar products based within this shared belief system is a lesson in cultural practices, and use of the botánicas.

Examining the Trans Atlantic healing systems in a wider context has provided an introduction to these systems. My argument is that health care providers should develop an understanding of which healing belief systems are being utilized by their patients or clients so that eventually a collaborative health care system could emerge.
Transmigration between the Afro-Caribbean and Spanish speaking countries has been crucial in the establishment and maintenance of botánicas in the United States. Cuban immigrants were the first to establish botánicas in the United States. As people accustomed to magico-religion healing systems in their home countries immigrated to the New York City area they soon found out that these products were not available. Botánicas were established out of product demand since many of the adherents to Santeria, Lukumi, La Regla de Ocha and other similar belief systems needed to practice their religion in a new place. (Bustamante, 2005).

For an institution that is more than 50 years old (in the Unites States), literature which focuses on the botánica as a space where religion and healing transpires is lacking. Secrecy, xenophobia and cultural invalidation may be the culprits behind hindering the scholarship. The project that I have undertaken is an opportunity for me to argue for cultural competency and inclusion when it comes to the Botánicals themselves and the magico-religio paradigms that support these traditional folk pharmacies.

Investigators working for the New York City Immigration and Health Initiative counted 350 Botánicas within the five boroughs in New York City. They concede that the actual number is probably higher than what their field work uncovered. (Vega, 2005). The proprietor’s decision not to publicize the store location or phone number may be reflective of the reticence with which ethnic and immigrant communities view public health officials and the medical community. Furthermore, yellow page ads are expensive and may constitute a financial hardship for the botánica owner.
The public health workers in the New York study mentioned above were identifying these businesses as store fronts and merchandise vendors. Other research showcased the way botánicas serve a function for connecting immigrant communities to their pasts. Holliday (2003) provides the following description of botánicas:

I find it useful to think of botánicas as conceptual portals where ideologies of authority, legitimacy and knowledge formation and accreditation in the guise of health intersect and produce tangible forms reflected in human relationships. (p.2)

Although all the botánicas she observed and all the practitioners she interviewed were of Mexican descent and living in California, her description of botánicas that serve as connectors between cultures is applicable to the more afro-centric establishments seen on the East Coast, Midwest and Florida. Through her patients in Miami, Grossman’s observation as a nurse provides insight into these practices from a medical health care professional’s point of view.

Cuban Americans may go to a botánica to purchase herbs, oils, powders, incenses and religious figurines used to alleviate various maladies or drive away evil spirits. (p.34)

Urging nurses to be sensitive to patients’ beliefs, Grossman (1996) describes the items that are associated with cures for her patients in Florida. At the botánica, Cuban-Americans purchase statues of both Saints and Orishas, herbs, oils, and other items which are labeled with pictures of Saints or Orishas, to use in healing rituals. Her first hand knowledge as a psychiatric nurse could be applied to the large Spanish speaking populations in New York and New England.

In the study above, investigators found that those botánicas with a large Cuban clientele also sell to people from the Afro-Caribbean group. Her observations of the items sold that reputed to facilitate healing are similar to what the investigators affiliated with
Harvard found in Boston neighborhoods while observing immigrants from the African-Diaspora.

Observations of clients, patrons and practitioners of botánicas in Boston provide further insight into the importance of these folk pharmacies. Researchers in the Boston Healing Landscape Project undertook a study that examined the use of the botánicas by immigrants from the African Diaspora (Barnes et al., 2001). Dr. Barnes, the project leader, is a medical anthropologist who is focused on gaining understanding between doctor and patient across cultural barriers.

Barnes and her colleagues from Harvard Medical School describe botánicas as "healing centers" (Barnes, et al., 2001). She and her researchers point out that many Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) therapies such as yoga and aromatherapy have become popularized and accepted. This can be attributed to the fact that Botánicas patrons are most likely to be adherents or devotees of one of the African-Diaspora religions. She and her colleagues imply that this identification with Africa is connected to the stigma of admitting to these beliefs, especially in the presence of biomedical physicians. However, field work and mapping reveal that within the immigrant/ethnic community botánicas are obvious and plentiful:

A pilot study focusing on Dudley Square-one of the hubs of African Diaspora communities in Boston-illuminates the richness of current active practices. In this one city square, in addition to multiple chiropractors, a market run by African immigrants also sells herbs. Above an Afro-Caribbean market, one finds Botánica Aché, which not only sells herbs but also oils for ritual baths and the figures and ritual objects related to the African descended religious and healing tradition of Santería. (Barnes, et al., 2001, p.28)

What is intriguing about the field observations made is the proximity, in this part of Boston, to chiropractors and a commercial pharmacy that sells prescription drugs and herbs.
Clearly, immigrant ethnic groups who live in this square are aware of the variety of health care options available in their neighborhood. Furthermore, within the tight confines of this one city square Barnes and her colleagues are able to determine that customers are African Americans born in America, West Africans born abroad, Afro-Caribbeans and Brazilians. This supports my argument that the breadths of belief systems which are derived from Yoruba traditions connect people across continents and oceans. This connection can be observed in the way these immigrants seek healing, and where they go to purchase healing products.

Barnes and her team from the Healing Landscape Project researched botánica patronage and urged additional observers to analyze the visits and see how they relate to the larger practice of Santeria and other such belief systems. Researchers from this project detail the significant impact of botánicas as folk pharmacies.

For the most part botánicas are consumer driven. That is, clients inform the owners about what products that they like. Botánicas have a devoted and diverse clientele which constitutes the basis for further research inquiry. Diverse in this sense covers differences in background, heritage, education and socio-economics. Healing with a faith-based component can be found transculturally. However, in terms of the African Diaspora practitioners, there is often misunderstanding and sometimes outright scorn from the larger community about botánicas. Oftentimes, what little attention they receive is hostile and dismissive. Mainstream media portrays botánicas incidentally or fleetingly if at all. (Barnes, Fox, Adams, et al., 2006)

The identified literature describes botánicas on the West Coast as well as on the East Coast, a reflection of the immigration patterns of the people who frequent these establishments. An organization with a notable online presence, herbalgram.org, reports that
there are as many as 500 botánicas in the Los Angeles area. This observation is based on a cultural arts exhibit in the Fowler Museum at the University of California, “Botánicas in Los Angeles: Latino Popular Religious Art in the City of Angels.” (http://www.herbalgram.org)

A Puerto Rican artist in attendance, Dr. Ysmur Flores Pena, provided a description of the botánicas both a physical and spiritual space:

Botánicas offer spiritual and communal solace in ways Western conventional medicine and much of Complimentary medicine do not. The amulets, oils and candles sold in Botánicas address the spiritual malaise of the customers while the Botánicas itself is a meeting place for the community to connect and share pain, problems, joy and remedies. (http://www.herbalgram.org)

Understanding that these products can help relieve spiritual malaise gives one insight into the holistic concept of illness held by those who patronage and own these stores. Amulets are worn around the neck, and incense is burned. Each product can affect the physical illness, the spiritual malfeasance or the combined aggregate. In allopathic medicine most prescriptions are taken by mouth. It is clear here that this is an important distinction.

Burke (2001) makes the argument that immigration itself transformed the spiritual and physical architecture of America. Immigrants must morph into the adopted society but resist and reassemble their communities here into spiritual houses. She argues that the houses of Santeria, establishments where initiations occur, provide the framework for the Cuban community to re-establish cultural continuity.

Santeria is a permanent spiritual fixture in America. It is in these houses that the secrets of preparation of potions and tinctures and other rituals are passed on from the
older initiate to the new one. However, people who are not initiated into Santeria can still access the same products, just in a commercial form, from their neighborhood botánica.

For some botánica clients, the cures are more accessible and indeed more familiar. Holliday has become an expert in the belief systems and practices of Mexican-Americans and describes Botánicas more esoterically. Her definition is that of a place where wisdom and the social structure collide. She further emphasizes that the Botánica is about both social and health relationships (Holliday, 2003).

The botánicas themselves, are physical places which supply herbs, candles, amulets, baths, incense and other so-called mysterious items. Patrons range from committed adherents to curiosity seekers. People who describe their belief systems as Christian and those who do not can all be found making purchases. The common denominator is that they believe that the cures offer something more. These cures could be a personal consultation, a diagnosis, or a general cure, all in one visit.

Botánicas are not only stores that sell products, but also may be sites that host ritual ceremonies. This two-pronged purpose is described by Bustamante (2005): “Some Botánicas are also sites for spiritual cleansings, divination and séances.”

The existence of someone on site or who can come to perform ritual functions makes this similar to an outpatient clinic. Now it is important to describe the people who provide the services for the clientele who patronize their neighborhood botánicas.

Chapter 3-Healing Beings and Practitioners

To facilitate a healing event, adherents of Trans-Atlantic religions believe one must make contact with a spiritual being that heals. You reach this deity by “working
with” or “praying to” him or her with your specific health care issue or life problem. For instance, within Santeria there is the deity Babaluaye, who is the god of epidemics in the original Yoruba pantheon. He is evoked to relieve those who suffer from infectious disease. Within the system of Curanderismo a woman seeking to have children can be told by the Curandera to light candles for Our Lady of Guadalupe, a syncretic form of the Virgin Mary and the Aztec goddess Tonantzin.

This practice of calling on spirits to heal the suffering differs greatly from mainstream medicine. The directors of the healing process are the spiritual beings associated with that function, for without a prayer or sacrifice no one would be healed. The beings, represented in the European saint form, the Africanized Orisha form, or the many aspects of Our Lady of Guadalupe, are then petitioned and evoked to allay suffering of the sick. In Puerto Rico one of the Orishas, Babaluaye is one of the 400 plus infinity deities who exist within the original Yoruba pantheon. He is one of two Orishas associated with healing discussed in further detail here.

Babaluaye also known as the Omulu, a reference to the holes made by smallpox, has the capability to spread diseases and then stop those epidemics from spreading further. Each Orisha has a list of flora and fauna associated with his or her divine powers. Believers may use these herbs as offering or ingest them to counteract illness, or bathe with them to heal skin or life conditions. They may also burn them on top of charcoals or add them to the top of the candle to burn. The Babaluaye or Omulu known in his syncretic form as Saint Lazarus, is associated with the following herbs:

Angelica, All spice, Acacia, Almond, Anis, Asafetida, Basil, Bay leaves, Balm of Gilead, bergamot Mint, Cuneiform, Copal, Clove, Cumin, Cedar Wood, Carnation, Cinnamon. (This entire list appears in the yahoo group
Healing in the Orisha pantheon is not just the domain of male Orishas. While the Babaluaye’s face is obscured by straw or a cloth, a more exhibitionist type female, Oshun, is also associated with healing. Known in Spanish as La Caridiad del Cobre, Oshun is the patron Saint of Cuba. Luis Manuel Nunez describes her coquettish behavior as follows:

Oshun is the most beautiful Orisha. She is sexy and flirtatious and happy. As goddess of rivers, she loves to bathe naked in natural springs.” (Nunez, 1992, p.51)

The herbs or flora associated with her often are vibrant to the olfactory senses. Nunez (1992) writes that Oshun or (Oshum) is associated with:

Rose, sunflowers, Indian lotus, male, and female ferns, creeping crowfoot, purslane, oranges and orange leaves, papaya, amber, anise seed and flower, peppergrass, marigold, sow thistle, river weeds, seaweed, white hamelias, plantains, vervain, lantanta, purple grapes, maidenhair fern, rosemary, wild lettuce. (Nunez, 1992, p. 47)

Most of the plants associated with the two Orishas as described are indigenousness to North America. Furthermore, plants that bear fruits such as papaya and oranges are often available all year round in your local grocery. Further insight into magical beings who are appealed to for healing, and who have products for sale in the botánicas, is undertaken by examining the beings within the Haitian magico-religio philosophy.

Haitian Loas

As in the Yoruba pantheon the Haitian one contains a supreme being. In Yoruba he is called Oludumare. Haitian Voodoo adherents refer to him in the creolized French as
Bon-Dye, which means Good God. (Louis, 1997) The actual numbers of Haitian spirits who are evoked by worshippers to facilitate change in a specific condition are infinite. This is also consistent with the complete Yoruba pantheon, where there is actually not a finite number assigned. In fact each shares a concept that every human death of a believer signifies a birth of a new ‘invisible.” The growth of the spirit world is therefore a constant. These beings are called loas, or lwa, in Haitian Voodoo. They are generally defined as spirits. Alternative definitions of these magical essentias are angels, saints, and the invisibles of mysteries. (McAlister, 1990) As in the Yoruba belief system one spiritual being may have a dual function or an alternative path. For instance the goddess Erzulie has several paths or aspects. In her darker aspect she is scarred and protects women who are victims of domestic violence. In this aspect she is called Emily or Erzulie-Dantor. (http://members.aol.com/racine125/goddess.html)

Products associated with these beings are available at botánicas. The multidimensional layering of illness, wellness, and spiritual imbalance is reflected through the variety of products available from the botánica. Self-referred clients, who come in to purchase an Oshun candle, may not see one on the shelf. Those who understand the synergism would then look for the candle known in Spanish as La Caridad del Cobra. I have seen the same candle, which depicts the Patron Saint of Cuba in the grocery store, and the label is written in English as Our Lady of Charity.

Each one of the three deities or magical essentias described here is expected to heal when petitioned to do so. The basis of the deities’ function dictates the type of ritual to be performed. Furthermore, knowledge of what the loa can do, will facilitate healing for those who believe.
The ability to involve Haitian spirits and to change a person’s mental health condition was examined by Desrosiers and Fluerose in 2002. They argue that their patients believe that a mental health condition is a sign of being cursed, therefore these form the basis of the way their Haitian patients conceptualize illness. Based on aforementioned healing areas of the above beings, the client and the practitioner can identify which spirit is responsible for bringing on the condition. The similar work or ritual can be undone by invoking the appropriate deity that can remove this condition.

**Our Lady of Guadalupe, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, A Mexican Syncretic Deity**

Immigrants from Mexico who are often living in urban environments are the custodians of the beliefs and rituals surrounding Our Lady of Guadalupe, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe. Revered by many, this deity began as an apparition seen by a new Catholic convert. People who utilize Curanderismo describe her power as strong and reliable. Eventually her veneration was sanctioned under the auspices of the Spanish clerics once the story of the Indian who saw the Virgin Mary appear was codified and published.

According to the story generally accepted by Catholics, Juan Diego was walking between his village and Tolpetlac, near Mexico City), where the Catholic mission was headquartered, on Saturday December 9, 1531. Along the way, on Tepeyac Hill, the Virgin Mary appeared, speaking to him in his native Nahuatl language.
(http://www.crystalinks.com/ladyguadalupeday.html)

Our Lady of Guadalupe was seen by an Indian named Juan, who then reported this apparition to Catholic clerics. His experience and the Catholic interpretation provide an
argument for a European-Indian synergy. This blending of religion and culture can be seen as the background for the widespread use of Curanderos. Our Lady of Guadalupe reveals many things to Juan. Of particular relevance to this discussion are the words she reveals to him during one of her apparitions. “Here I will hear their weeping and their sorrows, and will remedy and alleviated their sufferings, necessities and misfortunes.”

(http://www.crystalinks.com/ladyguadalupeday.html)

It was this appearance on a sacred ground dedicated to the Aztec goddess Tonantzin that gave birth to a version of Mexican religious synergy. What emerges is the intertwining of the Mother of Christ with the indigenousness iconography and Aztec spiritual connotations. Our Lady of Guadalupe has several functions which differ in spiritual demeanor and practical purpose. A similarly concept of different paths or personas within the named deity exists within Orisha worship. For instance the Yoruba Goddess Yemaya associated with fertility in the Cuban Santeria and Brazilian Candomble is both calm as her ocean home is when the water is peaceful and violent when the seas are stormy. Within the Mexican magico-religio philosophy, Our Lady of Guadalupe has a manifestation known as La Madre de Dios. (Divine, 2000) Similar to Yemaya in this aspect both in vestments and responsibilities, her iconography differs here from what tourists commonly see on post cards, key chains, and the like. In this path, she is cloaked in a flowing robe of blue and white, surrounded by two stars. Emanating from the palms of her hands are precious gems which refract light. In this aspect female devotees can petition her to cure them from amenorrhea, menstrual cramps, polycystic ovaries and other fertility problems.
The discussion here of the Omolu, Oshun, Ezurlie and Our Lady of Guadalupe does not touch on the service of the deities available for spiritual and healing. Instead it is my intention to highlight the ones who are commonly known, and therefore have a large variety of products associated with them, which are available for purchase at the local botánica.

Although no Mexican American or Chicana botánica owners were uncovered in this study, there is plenty of evidence presented previously which shows these establishments are prospering in the Western part of the United States. An internet search using the name Our Lady of Guadalupe uncovered glassed candles, placards, oils and incenses which bear her iconography. Appendix B contains a picture of her.

This project is designed to describe the use of the botánicas by Latinos and other ethnic communities. It is my argument the folk pharmacy system, is utilized as a type of alternative medicine by people who may not have the same access to mainstream to pharmaceutical preparations. Researchers working to determine the prevalence and use patterns of CAM among urban Latinos in California report that 63% of them admit using one or more alternative medicines. (Mikhail, Wali, Zement, 2004) Health and Policy researchers from the University of Chicago term botánicas “culturally appropriate healthcare for Latinos.” (Gomez-Beloz, & Chavez, 2001) The field researchers from this project describe the healing process from diagnosis to the acquisition of products:

In curanderismo, santería, and espiritismo, the practitioners asses the patient and, depending on diagnosis, prepares a healing remedy or a variety of healing remedies. A remedy is any combination of medicinal herbs, religious amulates, a and or other products used for the prevention, treatment or palliation of folk and somatic illness. (Gomez-Beloz, & Chavez, 2001, p.537)
Gomez-Beloz describes the practitioner's magico-religio philosophy which provides the basis for disease interpretation and delineates which cures or remedies should be used. During his study he also uncovered those practitioners who do not work in the space of the Botánica but take referrals. Their customers go to the botánica with a shopping list of items to prepare remedies and perform healing rituals.

Although Gomez does not mention the names or labels of the specific items, it is imperative to understand that these products are not generic. For instance, an herb that is associated with the deity that is going to bring your husband back will be recommended by the santero or espíritista. Many of the names of the deities have been defined by the culture, and are known to those who do not practice a Trans-Atlantic religion. This discussion leads back to Our Lady of Guadalupe, a dominant figure within curandersonimo and the patron saint of Mexico.

Since Mexican and Chicano owned botánicas were not located by me in my field research in Connecticut I had to turn to the World Wide Web to investigate the association with healing beings and the names of products. I conducted several online searches in states known to have large Mexican and Chicano populations. An online search of the Texas www.yellowapges.superpages yielded 18 stores under the religious category. I conducted a more specific internet search by typing in the name of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Spanish, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. This specification took me directly to a link that depicted her classic iconography (www.mexgrocer.com/categories-household-religiositems.html). Her picture was on this page with the option of buying
candles and herbs. By clicking on the herbs I was taken to another site within this Mexican-American grocery store (www.mexgrocer.com/remdios-caseros). There was an extensive list of herbs in Spanish and their reputed healing properties. Had I not been familiar with the healing beings name, depictions, and availability I would not have found this botánica, nor would I have had access to the information available. Knowing which spiritual beings cure, by name and belief system framework, allows for a more informed customer, and an improved client/patient understanding of the process. This in turn identifies which deities to work with based on the presentation of symptoms and description of problems.

**Practitioners**

**Babalaos and Babalochas**

Olmos & Paravisin-Gebert (2001) distinguish between the Babalao and the Bablocha. Surveys of other writings may not reveal the same distinction. Within the Yoruba based magico-religio philosophies, these male priests provide leadership, divination and ritual healings. My own experience of having sought the services of divination is that the Babalao or the Santero provide this service by using cowrie shells. The Babalocha is confined by ritualistic regimens to providing reading with these exclusively. Reading the sacred chain, ekeule, is the exclusive domain of the Babalao.

The reading of either the chain or the shells will reveal for the devotee seeking help what ebos, or offerings, he or she must perform to bring forth the desirable eradication of disease or misfortune. Often these are referred to as ebos, or sacrifices. However, the Spanish word trabajito, which means “little work,” is often used by
devotees not familiar with the creolized Yoruba used in all of the rituals. As a lay practitioner, one who has not undergone the series of initiations, I employ the word *trabajito* to describe this process. Practitioners who are initiated into the healing arts of Santeria use the word *ebo* to describe the way spirits are evoked.

**Santeros and Santeras**

This is the first level of initiation within the Santeria belief system. A Santera (the female form) is well versed in the original Yoruba rituals will have *received the saints*, which is a formal ceremony where the devotees’ spiritual guides are divined on and become an integral part of the initiate’s permanent spiritual repertoire.

Santeros who work in a botánica often hold a ‘consultat’ with a client to determine what is going on. Here the divination used may be throwing of the cowrie shells, reading tarot cards, blowing cigar smoke. This practitioner is accessible usually through a botánica. Once the reading is completed the client is told what works he or she may have to do to improve his or her condition. Here within Santeria functions based on gender become apparent to the client or researcher.

Women cannot reach the higher level ranks in Santeria. Thus a man can be a Santero and then a Babaloa, while a woman can never become this type of practitioner in traditional Santeria. However, in the Congo derivative system known as Voodoo, there are no restraints put on training or leadership based on gender.

**Hougans and Mambos**
The tradition of Voodoo has a less complicated hierarchical structure. The gender roles of priests are identical. Female high priestesses are known as mam’bo in Haitian Voodoo. Her male counterpart is referred to as a houn’gan. Each of these African-derivative belief systems has a series of other roles, in the way that organized religions do. There are people in charge of the music, like choir directors and organists. Further reading will reveal roles such as hounsihs, who in the Voodoo religion are initiates learned in the sacred songs. This is mentioned to explain that the positions of responsibilities listed here are those most strongly associated with healings. Rigaud equates both the role of the hougan and mamabo to that of a pope or popesse.

Although Rigaud likens their perceived omniscience to that of a priest in that male and female temple leaders, hougan (ougan) and mambo, respectively have an expressed role in the healing requests of their temple, or ounfon members. Most who study Haitian Voodoo agree that the power base of these temple leaders is directly related to their ability to be possessed by spirits, or loas. Communicating with the loa, receiving that spiritual entity solidifies their ability to communicate with the spiritual world, thus securing their position of leadership in the temple.

**Curanderas and Curanderos**

Moving from the Franco-phone Caribbean belief system to a more indigenous one, this paper now looks at the healing craft of Curanderas. While conducting field research in Mexico, Enos interviewed a mother and son who work together as a Curandera and Curandero, respectively. His explanations of the duties performed by the son reveal the healing acts performed.
He is recognized as a curandero, although young, offering services such as spiritual cleansings, consultations, and herbal therapies to a regular clientele from his home. (Enos, 2001, p. 9)

In his field work Enos observed the mother, the Curandera and the son, the Curandero, performing the same job function. They share the same job title. In comparison, in the Yoruba-based healing systems women are prohibited from becoming the highest level of practitioner, a Babalooa, or Babalocha. No gender ceiling is enforced within the healing practice of Curanderismo.

Chapter 4-Methods

Methods

The research design for this project used a combination of qualitative methods. Many social scientists believe that when attempting to understand the beliefs and practices of a culturally distinct group, qualitative methods are best. The description of a botanica as a folk pharmacy in terms of retail space, the store’s role as a folk pharmacy, role of the botanica owner as a health care professional and the products he or she recommends to cure ailments are all areas that the research explored.

Descriptive research, observations, in depth interviews, and a written inventory of the products openly stored on shelves and displayed in showcases are the qualitative tools I used the descriptions of the botanicas visited in this project follow.
**Interviews**

In order to gain an understanding of the job function and title of the botánicas worker structured interviews were conducted. The respondents’ answers explained their roles as health care consultants, life advisors and entrepreneurs within the framework of their respective Trans-Atlantic belief systems. This use of qualitative methods provided an opportunity for the practitioners to shed light on the types of diseases they diagnose and cure and the conceptualization of disease etiology within Santeria and Espiritismo.

Identifying where the practitioners worked provided insight in the activities that will help further understanding this alternative system. Items that are sold for curing were described in terms similar to that of a doctor writing a prescription. The owners’ selling of those items to the sick client also provided an understanding of the proprietary nature of the botánica. Recording how clients conceptualize disease or discord within their minds and bodies will provide information about his illness is identified and treated.

**Research Design**

All the botánicas listed in the online white pages for the entire state of Connecticut were identified through an internet search. (http://www.whitepages.com) Nine were identified. Two of the Botánicas were closed. I called the number of each and no alternative phone was given. Of the seven remaining I visited all except the one in Bridgeport which was the farthest from the Health Center Campus. An additional botánica was known by me and was not listed in the online white pages and included in this sample. A total of seven botánicas are included in this sample. My field research was
conducted in three cities, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury. IRB protocols were granted and applied to this study.

I gained access to the respondents by visiting each Botánica listed in the online white pages. After placing a call to establish business hours, I then drove to that location. I entered the store. After browsing the inventory, I made a purchase of charcoal tablets. The price range for these was $2.00-$3.00 dollars. Once at the register, I was always asked, “Can I get you anything else?” or a similar phrase. At this point I replied yes then explained:

“My name is Lisa I am from the University of Connecticut Medical school I am working on a project to improve the health care outcomes of Puerto Rican patients. Answering some questions would be helpful.”

If the worker agreed then, I pulled one folded copy out of my purse of the questions and the interview began. The results of the interviews follow the description of the Botánicas. The original structured interview sheets are available in Appendix C.

Proprietors/owners and practitioners were interviewed. An inventory of product shelves, cases and counters was recorded at each visit. This entire method enabled me to collect descriptive and narrative data. The field work allowed me to analyze the role of the botánica as a folk pharmacy; the role of the Botánica owner as a health care professional and to observe the space where transcultural mechanisms function within immigrant communities as a direct connection to ex-patriot practices and beliefs.

By interviewing the practitioner, his or her role as a consultant, advisor and supporter of allopathic professionals will helped further understanding of this alternative system. Items that are sold by the owner for curing were described in terms similar to that
of a doctor writing a prescription. The owners selling of those items to the sick client also provided an understanding of the proprietary or commercial nature of the botánica. The perspective of the healer as one who cures was obtained by these methods. This project looks specifically at how the practitioner receives client/patients, conceptualizes disease, diagnosis then cures. All these healthcare delivery protocols were reported by the respondents interviewed. And a pattern emerged even though the sample is tiny.

Results

One pattern that emerges within the small sample of people who completed the interviews is that the dominant practice is Santeria. The only other identified Trans-Atlantic belief system is Espiritismo. Table 4.0 summarized the name of the belief system and the gender of the respondents. Table 4.1 depicts the relationship between business ownership and folk healer title.

Through observation I was able to identify the stores, record inventory and interview the owner/practitioner. Shelf inventory, the numbers of shelves, store configuration and presence of vertical displays were all recorded in my field notes. In a botánica owned by a Cuban or Puerto Rican entrepreneur/practitioner I recorded and observed more products named for African deities in the Orisha Pantheon. No Mexican owned botánicas were identified or visited; consequently, no data was obtained concerning the inner workings of Curanderismo.

Direct observation techniques allowed me to observe in the field setting the interaction between the practitioner/owner and client. From these field observations I was
able to observe the way a client “presents” with symptoms. Many times as I was waiting in line, a client just said outright “I need something for…” This was directly connected to the both individual’s concepts of disease based in cultural norms. Once his or her ailment is understood, then the store owner or employee/practitioner made a recommendation. These following two tables provide a brief assessment as to the gender and belief systems of the respondents.

Table 4.0

Gender of Respondents, Title and Name of Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Santero</th>
<th>Santeria</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Santero</td>
<td>Santeria</td>
<td>1 Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Santero</td>
<td>Santeria</td>
<td>3 Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Espiritista</td>
<td>Espiritismo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, botánica ownership was split evenly within this tiny sample as depicted by Table 4.1 The two that did not own the Botánicas took client referrals from Botánica owners. The tables give a glimpse into the relationship between ownership of a business and knowledge of the belief systems described in this project. Although I visited 7 stores, only four people agreed to be interviewed.

Table 4.1

Practitioner Botánica Ownership and Non Ownership
This business establishment faces a busy street that connects the ethnic neighborhood with the downtown area. Some parking is available both in the front of the store and on a side street. Both streets connect downtown to the Jamaican and Latino neighborhoods where this botánica is located. On 4 of my 5 visits the electricity and heat were off, as evidenced by the darkness and coldness inside of the store.

Glass showcases are arranged in a U shape. The aisle is blocked by a series of cardboard boxes, taped and unopened. The wall on the right housed two shelves which contained, *soperas*, old fashioned soup terrenes. Some are very ornate and reminiscent of baroque and Victorian designs. Others are made of clay with a dark adobe color. One of these large lidded vessels depicts Elegua, the god of the crossroads. His face is oval with cowry shells for eyes. Most are porcelain and the clay ones are an adobe color and absent of any metal decorations. The porcelain ones seemed to dominate in terms of numbers. These *soperas* are given as sealed pots to initiates of the Ifa/Santeria/Lukumi/Palo tradition in the religion who are babalos. The inventory also included large covered dishes with blue, white and gold floral patterns, similar to what you would expect in an English china shop.
To the left of these were large clay pots depicting a bull and an Ellegua image for a handle that served as a three dimensional sculpture as well. Five fly whisks made from horse tails hung down from the ceiling. And finally, a series of large mats with Oshun, the goddess of love, and Chango, her lover and god of lightening, were hung from the ceiling as well. The cash register displayed magnets with the Visa/ Master card label. I observed only cash transactions.

Botánica Two

This is a very busy street. The day after my first visit a woman was shot to death while dropping off her daughter, on this very street. The retail signs nearby are mostly written in Spanish. Side by side there are small stores, with signage advertising Groceria, phone cards, clothing and toys. There is a parking lot behind the store which has a low brick wall shared with an apartment complex. Inside the store there is a u-shaped arrangement of cases. On my first visit, an employee was stocking the shelves with candles. Candles that were available included all the Orishas, which include: Obatala, Chango, Oshun and Yemaya. Candles that contained labels addressing life’s troubles were visible and written in English: Fast Luck, Horseshoe, Lottery and Adam and Eve. Each of these has a single color wax. Horseshoe, Fast Luck and Lottery are all green. The Adam and Eve’s candle is a dark pink.

To the left, the shelves contain, powders, and incense. There is a shelf that connects with this one, blocked by a ladder. These shelves contain candles only. The shelving makes an upturn, and it contains more powders. Connecting the U-shaped cases and holding the cash register, is another glass case. This contains books, along with the intersecting case, contains Spanish language books. These two cases are close enough to
be contiguous but part with just enough room for a person to slide in between. This is where customers leave the retail section and are directed to the Santeria's office. Here is where she does readings. Oddly enough this space has light. Most prominent in this store is the inventory of baths and candles. The baths containing liquids begin to be displayed on the farthest most left shelve. Titles of these prepared solutions include:


Candles are stacked to the ceiling with a ladder to assist the workers. Examples of candles with the synergistic titles of the saints were observed including, Santa Barbara, and Our lady Caridade del Cobre. Candles describing situation were available as well:

*Break Up, Bloc Buster, Better Business and Come to Me.* On one visit, the store contained several live chickens in a large white bag with a red label across the top of bag. The writing on the bag was not visible.

**Botánica Three**

The door to this botánica is locked. You have to be buzzed in. It is immaculate. The woman behind the counter is also the one who buzzed me in. Some of the products are labeled, “America Sud.” These products were not seen by me in the other botánicas visited. Titles of these products were only written in Spanish. Some that I observed were: *Corderito Manso, El Destructor,* and *Amarra Hombres.* Some of the meanings had to be inferred by me. For instance, *Amarra Hombres,* depicts a bare-chested man restrained by ropes. This appeared to offer assistance with a male spouse who was straying from his primary mate. These products came in a perfume and soap.
Incense and candles line the shelves in very neat precision. Ritual items from the Lukumi tradition were not observed in this establishment. Customers seeking a reading were taken behind the counter through a curtain to a room where this was done. This private space was secluded and open on a first come first serve basis.

Products available from South America which were displayed included:

*Cat's Claw, Amarra Hombres* perfume, *Amansa Guapa* bath, *Attraction* perfume and *Patchouli* perfume.

Botánica Four

Located on a large main street, many of the signs are in Spanish. Botánica two is actually not facing the street as the phone books indicates. Instead it is on a side street with a large parking lot to the left which faces the larger street. The sign along with the phone number are displayed facing the busy street. From the curb it looks like a converted church. Inside the architecture appears church like, with arches, and a vestibule. To the left is the store; behind the vestibule there is a large inventory. Back outside you can see there is a driveway and boxes are being brought to the loading dock. The botánica itself is a tiny space divided into two tiny aisles. The U-shaped retail space breaks at the beginning of the first aisle, but wraps around the second aisle. You are allowed to go behind the counter to pick out items. Items located behind the glass cases include herbs, displayed on cards. There names available only in Spanish. To the right of the herbs, the vertical spaces are stacked with tiny spaces shelving. This contains powders and perfumes.
This store’s large selection of glass vials containing perfumes and oils was extensive. The workers know which ones are oils and which ones are perfumes on site. The oils are blue, burgundy, dark green, yellow and clear. The titles I observed were mostly those that described conditions these were all exclusive written in Spanish. Quite malediction, Vena Mi, Commonadante, Controlar, Arrasa Con Todo for instance.

The space between the case that holds saint cards and talismans leads to the warehouse. New products are literally re-stocked right before your eyes. Behind the cash registers extending to the left are rows of candles which extend to the right... Facing the cash register is another aisle of candles. Candle labels for the most part are in Spanish only. The Orishas candles are made of wax associated with the colors known to be associated with that Orisha. In candles that are one color just the iconographic representation of the deity appears, but it is a large image taking up the face of the candle.

Botánica Five

This store faces the intersection on a busy street. As I entered I noticed that the glass case facing the front left contained books written in Spanish, on the Orishas. To the right was a second counter, above which were mounted racks that held CDs of various recording artists from the Caribbean and South America. Each side of the store was lit by a set of large bay windows. The configuration was made V-shaped. The woman working behind the counter stood here at the apex of the two large glass showcases, which were shiny and clean free of fingerprints or cracks. To her left were mounted packages of baths, which contained herbs. The envelopes contained such titles as Black Healer, Rompe Saraguey, El Curandero, Quita Malediction, Rua. Behind her were three open
shelves running the length of the wall. I observed such saints as St. Martin de Porres, Santa Barbara, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of the Rule and Jesus Christ. Some statues were small enough to affix to a car dashboard. Others were larger, 24 inches or larger. These figurines did not contain one African Orisha. A chair was placed at an angle nearest the leftward most showcase. A rug connected the spaces. Candles were interspaced within the inventory. Tarot cards in Spanish were enclosed in one of the glass cases.

Botánica Six

This store did not face the street. Instead, a white placard on the sidewalk alerted people passing by to its existence. All the stores on the right side of the building faced the parking lot, not the busy main artery that connected the city. In the store on the floor immediately to the left was an Ellegua shrine. It included a grey elliptical head with white cowry’s shells for eyes. Next to a bowl of clear liquid was a train set, with yellow and red cars. The shelving that faced you as you walked in contained only candles. Previous stores had two screened colored candles with Orisha images. This store included a multicolored screened glass candle for Oya. There were two sets of these aisles shelves containing candles. The opposite wall contained bath salts in glass jars with labels such as Good Luck, Jinx Removing, and Road Opener. Previous stores had powders in small vials.

Behind the cash register a space to another room was visible. No inventory was sighted, but the furniture and its arrangement suggested a type of meeting place. To the left of the cash register hung up vertically were a series of herbs in envelopes. They
contained titles as those seen previously (e.g., Rompe Saraguey). Next to them were tiny packages of herbs. On the floor to the right of the last candle display were a series of Ellegua heads in various sizes. Each had the basic oval shaped head and cowry shells for eyes.

Botánica Seven

The store faces a busy street. Parking is available in a large adjacent lot the serves the entire building, which includes a restaurant serving Puerto Rican cuisine. The sign covers the entire top half of the space between the roof and door. A walk inside reveals the veneration of the owner. To the left is a large black female figure, easily 5 feet 6 inches in all. The figure faces the store with the back to the window. She is dressed in a golden charmeuse type fabric.

Diagonally across from this larger than life figure is the counter and glass case that contains miscellaneous items such as tubes of tin foiled charcoal lined up carefully inside red boxes. This linear space leads to a sitting area. One couch is backed up against the wall on the opposite side. In between is a magazine rack with slots, each of which contains a book. This botánica had the most books on display of all the ones visited, and is also the only one with a fixture dedicated to books. Most titles are in Spanish and two of them are The Book of Palo, by Baba Raul Canizares and Brazilian Palo Primer by Robert Laramie.

Behind the counter near the cash register were shelves of baths. On the floor was an enclosed box with air holes, and an animal could be heard squeaking inside. The entire
length of the opposite wall was stacked floor to ceiling with product such as incense, candles and oils, all with labels depicting the various Orishas.

The following is a list by product types observed on the shelves of all the botánicas visited.

**Inventory by Product Category**

Aerosol Room Sprays

Baths--personal and floor

Books--in English and Spanish

Candles--glassed and tapers

Herbs

Incense--powdered, resin, stick incense

Jewelry--Beads

Talismans

One of the conveniences of the commercialization of products is that the condition to be resolved or the deity to be invoked is available in a variety of formats. If the Santero says you need to work with Ellegua, the road opener, and then there are a variety of products associated with his name, a candle, and oil, a perfume, a beads necklace, herbs associated with this Orisha, a room spray, stick and powdered incense.
For the female Orisha most associated with healing I have included a list of products I observed in the collective inventories of the stores visited. The following products were Labeled Oshum or Oshun:

Orisha 7 Day Candle Oshun- Yellow
Orisha Cowrie Bracelet- Oshun
Orishas Aerosol Spray Oshun- Mother Of Charity
Orishas Pure Oil Oshun

These Products were labeled Elegua or Ellegua:
Onrushes Pure Oil Elegua
Orishas Aerosol Spray Elegua- St. Anthony
Orishas 7 Day Candle Elegua- Red/Black
Orisha Necklace Elegua
Orisha Cowrie Bracelet- Elegua

The following is a list of products associated with changing luck and obtaining a job or money. In my observation these were the most prominent lifestyle issue merchandise available for sale.

Luck

14 Day Candle 7 Color Fast Luck
14 Day Candle Fast Luck- Green
14 Day Candle Fast Luck- Pink/Green
7 Day 7 Color Candle Fast Luck
7 Day Candle 2 Color Fast Luck- Pink/Green

Jobs
7 Day Candle 2 Color Job- Pink/Green
7 Sisters Oil Job
Amulet Job’s Tears
Anna Riva Oil Job
Anna Riva Incense Powder Job

The herbs in this category were labeled for a purpose or deity:
7 African Powers, Black Healer, Cleansing, Come to Me, Dispel Jinx, Hex breaker,
Money Drawing, Prosperity, Take Away Evil, Saint Miguel,

These herbs are labeled by common name:
Boldo leaf, rosemary, spearmint, asafetida, balm of gilead, hyssop, rompe zaraguey,
mandrake, palo mulatto, palo abre camino, palo amansa guapo, arrasa con todo, palo de brasil, palo santo, palo vence batalla, anamu, salvia, yerba Buena, espanta muerto.
These products were observed at all the 7 botánicas, they do not represent ALL of the products available for practitioner use.
The second relevant point that arises from this project is the wide variety of available products. These are prescribed by the practitioner, and available for the asking by customers who have a simple retail relationship with the store and the workers there. This makes the availability of these over the counter products analogous to the ones available at Walgreens. People arrive in the store knowing that they do not feel well, they then seek out a product that they think will make them feel better, purchase it and use it at home or per the practitioner's instruction.

The products available and the answers to the surveys showcased the interactions between provider and health care patient/client. Table 4.2 depicts a list of illnesses that each of the informants have diagnosed and treated.

Table 4.2 Practitioner and Illness Treated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner</th>
<th>Illness Treated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santero One</td>
<td>Empacho, pain in legs, insomnia, vomito, diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santero Two</td>
<td>Cancer, sleeplessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santero Three</td>
<td>An unknown presence around you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espiritista</td>
<td>Need of a spiritual cleansing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows evidence that illnesses treated are both physical and spiritual. The illnesses as described in the table are those that have been described to the practitioner by the client. Table 4.3 illustrates that herbs used by the practitioners can be prescribed for both somatic and lifestyle problems. In other words herbs are not limited to
treating diseases with an underlying medical pathology. During the interview each of the Santeros and the Espiritista were asked a series of opened-ended question designed to allow them to name the plants used once disease or a life problem was discovered in the person seeking care.

Table 4.3 Practitioner and Herbs Reported Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner</th>
<th>Herbs Used for Clients with Somatic or Lifestyle Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santero One</td>
<td>Menta, yerba hojas de guayaba, ruda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santero Two</td>
<td>Rompe zaraguey, rue, sandelwood, golden seal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santero Three</td>
<td>Rompe zaraguey, abre camino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espiritista</td>
<td>Albahaca, ruda, perejil, heirba buena, menta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 5-Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of the structured interviews, and inventory descriptions two major points arose. The first point is uncovering the health care pathway of client to practitioner. The Santero or Espiritista conducts a divination based on the self-reported symptoms of the clients. This is where the diagnosis is done. After that the practitioner offers further assistance for the ailment, physical, life situation or other disturbance as revealed in the divination. The ritual performed by the practitioner, such as the limpia, a
ritual designed to facilitate the healing process. Figure 6.0 depicts this circular route from patient/client to Espiritista and Santero. The interactions between client, disease conceptualization and the subsequent action or remedy provide insight into the system being utilized by the botánica patrons.

Figure 5.0 Feeling Sick and Seeking Services

- **Seeking Services from A Santero or Espiritista**
  - Performing limpia, cleansing, praying, elevating bad spirits, reading shells, reading tarot cards

- **Descriptions of Feeling Sick**
  - Cannot sleep, stomach hurts, tired all the time, unknown presence

- **Santero or Espiritista Diagnosis**
  - Condition worsens or another occurs
Within the model of seeking health care there other components discovered during this project. Each of this helps to expand the understanding of how healing is taking place at the botánicas.

*Self Referred*

All respondents concurred that the client themselves are usually self-referred. This means that they may not have access to the traditional medical services and they may not feel comfortable with traditional medical care. Since some of their complaints are not addressed by traditional providers they have sought services elsewhere. The respondents who provide care in this study are also more accessible since they do not have set hours. Those practitioners who were reached by phone have given out their home or cell phone numbers and are therefore directly accessible to the caller. Since no receptionist answers who screens calls, another barrier is removed for those seeking treatment.

*Prayer*

Most of the glass candles contained a prayer that reflected the iconographic representation of the candle. In one botánica I asked to touch and read the Saint Michael candle. The candle was a vibrant red color and the following prayer was printed in
Saint Michael, Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And you, Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into Hell Satan and the other evil spirits who prowl the world for the ruin of souls. Amen.

I broadened my understanding of how each Orisha, or magical being is associated with the life problem or illness. As a believer of these healing arts I might ask for white candles to help me with stomach troubles for instance. I would go to the store already possessing this knowledge. However, usually the prayers that are given to the sick person as part of the treatment are chosen by that practitioner; he or she, decides which Orisha to work with, not the patient, according to this study.

Illnesses Treated

All respondents conceptualized disease or life problems as the manifestation of a “work” or trabajo. So when grouping the illnesses described as having been treated, the Santero is looking at a physical ailment of a spiritual origin. For the holistic practitioner an imbalance cannot be diagnosed with x-rays, blood work, and computerized tomography scans. Instead, each person asserts that not feeling well is the result of a work, a bad spirit, and the path of the person who sent you this negative energy. So for the believer in this process cancer, insomnia, male erectile dysfunction, addiction, anxiety, lack of money, divorce, loneliness, bad luck and confusion can all be attributed to the same etiology, or path. In the Public Health system we have stronger evidence that diseases are caused by pathogens, not curses.

Treatment
Being cured is seen as a measurable release of the *muerto* or spirit that brought disease and destruction to one’s life. The client stops reporting the somatic or spiritual symptoms. The male Santero born in Cuba, who works with clients referred to him by the botánicas, used the word “elevation” to describe how white candles are used to lift up these negative essentias up and away from the person suffering. He prepares a special herbal cleansing bath for his clients. When probed he declined to say which herbs it contained, and admitted only that these plants were grown in Cuba. Each informant listed the herbs that were used when they attempted to heal someone from the bad spirit, which is seen as the source of disease be it neurological, psychological or physiological in origin.

Most commonly, herbs were used as a “limpia”, or a cleansing bath. The Santero included ingestion of herbs and prayer as part of the healing regimen. herbs such as basil (albahaca) and golden seal could be taken as a tea.

*The Holistic Concept*

The holistic concept is described by all who were interviewed. The integrative nature of any condition engages both spiritual and physical spheres within the individual seeking resolution for a health or lifestyle complaint. Each of the practitioners interviewed implied or stated that this philosophy is more encompassing then the allopathic medicine of the mainstream. Conventional medical professionals are accustomed to focusing on curing the disease itself and putting aside the intangible parts of a person. For these respondents removal of the pathogen is perceived as creating an imbalance, even though the person may be disease free. One Male Respondent states: “The muerto can begin as a spiritual discomfort and then change to a physical ailment,” it
is the application of the holistic viewpoint in action. We can reverse his statement and conclude that he believes a disease that manifests itself first as physical may alter its ability to physically sicken, and instead make the person spiritual or mentally ill.

The botánica as a place where care was sought was supported by the descriptive data. The botánica as a place where those cures were available was supported both by the informants, and by my observations. Items on display were there to solve both physical and spiritual ailments. No product was there that did not purport to have a purpose, and that property was directly connected to the aspects of the magical being associated with it. These associations are largely depicted by color and iconographic representations.
Chapter 6-Conclusion

This thesis explores the location, existence and patronage of botánicas as a type of folk pharmacy and healing space. Seven botánicas were visited in Connecticut that provided the data used in this project. The literature cited showcased the fact that these folk pharmacies serve a multi-ethnic community and are not the sole domain of Spanish-speaking immigrants. The literature and interviews conducted answered the original research questions.

Customers come into the botánicas seeking a remedy or cure from a somatic, spiritual or life stressing concerns. Customers who interact with the Santeros and Espíritista interviewed in this project arrive with a description of symptoms. The patient’s ability to describe a physical or spiritual disturbance facilitates the communication between the two and thus improves the healing process. This pathway does not distinguish CAM from allopathic medicine with in the context of botánica use. Diagnosis of the underlying cause for illness is a two-fold process. First, the customer comes in explaining that he or she does not feel well. After a few minutes of this informal conversation, the practitioner elects to perform a consultat, to gain further insight into the client’s troubles. At this juncture an appointment is made and the client shows up to have a more formal evaluation of the troubling issues. The type of divination varies with the belief system, and was available on site for six out of the seven botánicas visited.

Within the context of a health care delivery system, and within the confines of this discussion, I am proposing an appropriate definition of cultural competency. It is a
paradigm that includes the ability to anticipate belief systems, viewpoints and normative behaviors outside of the dominant group’s ethnic, racial, or economic domain.

Allopathic health care providers and others like them will be able to describe and empathize with patients or clients who have belief systems that are composed of four basic ontologies or healing philosophies:

- The conceptualization of healing etiologies in Trans-Atlantic religions
- The intendment of holistic diagnosis and curing
- The performance of rituals
- The regency of magical beings

The National Center for Cultural Competency, located on the campus of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., specializes in the training of both health and mental health care professionals to deal with a culturally and linguistically diverse patient load. There are two pieces of their detailed model for best practices that I am highlighting here:

✓ Culturally competent organizations design and implement services that are tailored or matched to the unique needs of individuals, children, families, organizations and communities served.
✓ Practice driven in service delivery systems by client preferred choices, not by culturally blind or culturally free interventions. (http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/foundations/frameworks.htm)

Readers who were unfamiliar with Santeria, Curanderismo, Voodoo, Candomble and Espiritista religions now have an understanding of their origins and their present continuance.
Implications for Further Research

This project merely touches on a microcosm of the entire field of CAM, holistic medicine, folk medicine and African-derivative religions. A holistic approach that takes into consideration the patient’s physical, mental and spiritual well-being is one of the foundations of complimentary and alternative medicine, also known as CAM.

Researchers working for the Centers for Disease Control, interviewed 31,044 adults aged 18 and older in 2002. Sixty-two percent of the respondents admitted to using some type of CAM, intervention for a health concern during the 12 months preceding the survey. (Barnes, 2004)

The ethnography tools I used fit nicely into the confines of a preliminary study. What I am urging is for hospitals, insurance companies, and private practitioners to develop collaborative research which incorporates, a babalao, curandero, mambo and folk trained healer. Providing an alternative to allopathic care may help ease the medical issues of the 40 million Americans who are without health care insurance.

At this juncture I am proposing several scenarios to illustrate possible collaborative areas. For example, paramedics and emergency medical technicians, (EMTs) in Connecticut could develop a collaborative relationship with known Curanderas, Espiritistas and Santeras, and evaluate whether this may prove helpful for the culturally bound syndrome “ataque nervioso.” Presumably the EMT, may describe the disease as hysteric or anxiety. At this point the EMT and the Curandera should confer. And then the patient is offered both possibilities, overnight hospitalization as a psychiatric emergency or the drinking of a calming tea such as mint, or Chamomile.
These herbs are also found in capsule form as over the counter supplements at Stop and Shop, CVS and General Nutrition.

If the Curandera lives in the patient’s neighborhood she could then be relied upon to conduct a follow up visit. This would allow her to conduct a one-one one visit with the patient. There is a cost advantage to this approach as well. Grouping all the possible psychiatric diagnosis together one study has reported that the average stay for an adult for inpatient treatment was 7.2 days for patients on Medicare, Medicaid or other public insurance. The average cost for that stay was $4,598.00, (Brown, 2001).

I am also proposing that all medical students who plan to work with Chicanos, Cubans or Puerto Ricans or Afro-Caribbeans in large metropolitan areas be exposed to traditional healers. For example, a young doctor who plans to practice medicine in Miami, Florida will undoubtedly have patients from the Cuban community. There are over 1.5 million people of Cuban descent living in America and most of those are in Florida. Thus a study abroad program that trains the allopathic professional in Cuba along side a Babaloa would be useful for treating this population. With this type of field experience the future doctor will develop a comfort level with alternatives to pharmaceuticals and cultural competency in dealing with Cubans who are adherents to Santeria.

My final recommendation is that I am proposing is that of a collaborative relationship should be formed between Latino Complimentary and Alternative Medicine practitioners and their allopathic trained counterparts, to develop a syndromic surveillance partnership. In this application of folk methods to medical conditions, an alliance would be developed that provided funding and training for those people
identified as folk healers within their communities. The training would be as a Certified Nurse Assistant because this training is short and directly related to the data that I am proposing to be collected. Once a male Santero is trained how to take a person’s blood pressure, pulse and temperature they would then be asked to perform the triage on each person who comes in with a health complaint. The syndrome surveillance would be anonymous and paperwork in compliance with confidentiality would be prepared in both English and Spanish. So, the data would be collected before the consultat that identifies the physical illness, and after. What would be reported are changes in the blood pressure, heart rate and pulse.

The small study I conducted suggests that further insight into the practitioner/client relationship could be strengthened by identifying verifiable initiates of the religion, and more extensive field work, that includes the contiguous states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York. Furthermore, there is a need for public health officials to do more research to evaluate the effectiveness of CAM treatments.

The project that I undertook had several short comings. Of particular interest to allopathic trained professionals is my lack of information concerning adverse affects of herbs, or oils, or other products that I observed contained the types of warnings that are seen on over the counter medications or prescriptions.

Although I did not observe any mercury on shelves in the botánicas I visited, products which contain mercury are of grave concern to Public Health officials, medical doctors and environmentalists. In 2002, the Environmental Protection Agency published a report on the selling of mercury in botánicas and the hazards associated with use. Short term mercury exposure affects the respiratory system. Those exposed for a longer period
of time will present with neuropathology such as insomnia, ataxia, and marked loss of
cognitive functions. (Environmental Protection Agency, 2002)

Another short coming is the tiny sample of practitioners available to me in the state of
Connecticut. Even though I was referred to others, the respondents in my study were
people who had formal connections to the botánicas. I failed to uncover those
practitioners who were operating without this connection. Furthermore, this is my first
time first time conducting field research on my own; a more seasoned researcher may
have uncovered more data. And finally, this project could have been expanded to
contiguous states like New York and Massachusetts that have large Spanish speaking and
Afro-Caribbean populations. Being able to conduct this in a larger scope would allow me
to gather more data on the numbers of people who patronize the botánicas in a region,
with contiguous states.

Medical doctors who have Latino or Afro-Caribbean patients in their practice are
gaining awareness of these alternative healing systems. Projects like this one can serve as
an introduction to understanding, who uses alternative medical treatments, the risks
associated with them as well as the benefits.
References


market research, political polls and social and health questionnaires.


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Appendix A
Glossary

**Ache, Axe**-life force power, the essential of the creator Oludumare

**Babaloa, Babalawo**-the male high priest in Yourba derivative religions including Santeria

**Botánica**-the store where items for worship, healing and other life situations are sold as on the shelf products

**Cabilido**-mutual aids societies patterned after the Spanish, reformulated into secret societies by slaves in Cuba and Puerto Rico

**Congo, Kongo**-the group of people from the Kongo in Central Africa, their descendants have influenced the practices of Macumba, Voodoo and Palo

**Curandera/o**-the healer in the Mexican-American tradition

**Curanderismo**-the art of healing in the Mexican-American tradition

**Ebó**-offerings to the Orishas, can consist of money, food, live animals

**Ekuelé**-a divination chain used exclusively by Babalaos

**Espiritistmo**-influenced by Alan Kardec, this is the practice of conducting a séance

**Espiritistá**-the person who conducts the séance

**Hounfort**-the temple or religious place within the practice of Haitian voodoo

**Hougan**-this is the spirit leader who acts as an intercessor between humans and spirits

**Ifá**-the name of the orthodox practices of Yourba, exclusive of synergy

**Loa**-in Haitian Voodoo, the name for spirits who manifests themselves during ceremonies Lucumi, Lukumi-the word Spanish speaking Afro-Cairbbeans use to describe Yoruba language, culture and religious tenants

**Mambo, Manbo**-the priest within the Voodoo belief system also called hougan
Obeah-this is the magico-religio belief system maintained by slaves in the Anglo-Caribbean, it includes spell crafting and healing, this is not an Orisha based belief system

Orisha, Orisas, Orixas-these are the deities which link the transatlantic original Yoruba religious pantheon to the Spanish speaking Caribbean and Brazil

Pataki-story of the birth of each Orisha, and explanations for the different paths he or she takes

Regla-in the original Spanish, this means rule, it is used to described the codification of Yoruba beliefs and rituals within Santeria, Lukumi by Spanish speaking afro-Caribbean

Santeria,-this is the name often used to describe the Yoruba based magico-religio rituals and paradigm practices by Spanish speaking devotees, the word means of the saints and acknowledges the syncretism between the Saints and Yoruba deities

Santera/o-one who has been initiated into Santeria, often the Botánica owner

Voodoo-a belief system with a polytheistic paradigm, transplanted from by slaves brought to America and Haiti, it has origins in Dahomey and emphasis the circuitous relationship between mortals and the spirits which intersect with believers
Glossary B

Pictures of Healing Deities

AYIDA WEDO

www.hranajanto.com/goddessgallery/aidawedo.html
Our Lady of Guadalupe

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/73/Virgen_de_guadalupe2.jpg
Ezurlie-Dantor

Oshun, Oxum, Osun

www.mulhernatural.hpg.ig.com.br/trablux/oxum.htm
Omulu, Babaluaye,
Original art work by Bolaji Campbell, PhD. Used with permission.
Appendix C

Questionnaires

Respondents/Informants/Interviews

Male Respondent One
Interview Questions

Describe your role in this business.
Are you the owner? Yes
Do others own it with you? Yes/ wife
What is your role? Employee? Santera/o? Espirtista

Do you help people with health problems? Yes.

What illness or sicknesses do you treat? Yes some people come with empacho, Dolores, pain in arms and leg, consulta de cartas, card reading
What are the complaints of your clients? Doro puerna empacho cataro, mate finding, consultas they know what is happening, to know if they are pregnant

How do your patrons describe illness? They used the name of the illness to describe the symptoms
Are there illnesses that your clients describe that you think Anglos, or White people do not suffer from? No really. Please describe these illnesses.

What is being ill? Feeling ‘bad’ no sentirse bien, pain week. What is the role of the sick person? Not applicable because she is not a practitioner What is the role of the healer?

What are physical illnesses? Feeling bad
What is a spiritual illness? Como un trabajo que hacen otra gente muerto
How do your patrons know they are sick? They feel it and they go to the hospital, and they do not find anything
What illnesses only manifest as physical sickness? Cuanndo bregan al camino de paio eso muerto te vuelven loco-depends on the path that makes it physical if you don’t get help.
What illnesses only manifest as spiritual ailments? **vomito, diarea, insomnia, butterflies in the stomach**

How do you know when the patron is feeling better? **They let you know and they come back happy**

How do you know if the patient is feeling worse? **Didn’t have that experience**

What is curing? **sanar, limpiar, la persona feels okay**

What types of plants do you work with? **menta, yerba, (grass) hojas de guayaba, ruda**

Which plants are used the most? **alba haca, aposote, palo, anamu, amasam guapo**

Are plants available from Puerto Rico or Cuba? Mexico? **Puerto Rico**

Are similar plants available in the US? (Grown in America) **Basil-Albaca**

Which plants have both physical and spiritual qualities? **It depends on who did the curse on you and depends on the way people name their illness**

How do people pay for your service? **Check, cash**

If you do not know about the art of healing does someone come into the store to perform this art? **No One** please describe that person. (i.e. Curandera? Iyalocha?)

**Duties**

Country of Birth **Puerto Rico** Languages Spoken **Spanish, English, Lucumi**

Please use this space for details.

**Male Respondent Two**

**Interview Questions**

Describe your role in this business.

Are you the owner? **No**

Do others own it with you? __________________________

What is your role? __________________________

_________ Employee? ___________ Santera/o? ___X_____ Espiritista ___? Other__________

Do you help people with health problems? ________________
What illness or sicknesses do you treat? **Cancer, sleeplessness, male erectile dysfunction**, 
*But only if they will “go see a doctor, then we will deal with .it”*
What are the complaints of your clients? **Can’t sleep, not able to have sex**
How do your patrons describe illness? **Often provide a spiritual explanation**
Are there illnesses that your clients describe that you think Anglos, or White people do not suffer from? Please describe these illnesses? **No have wealthy white clients, have more white people who believe in the disease itself**
What is being ill? **Mental state of not being well, can’t be well physically if you are not well mentally and off balance**

What is the role of the sick person? **To seek assistance** What is the role of the healer? **To help and if you cannot steer them to someone who can. I cannot deal with pyromaniacs. “I do not want to know what makes them tick!” I make referrals to others whether they are adults or children.**
What are physical illnesses? **They are manifestation of spiritual imbalance, bad diet abuse, not taking care of the body, excess, to much recreational drugs, when you are in harmony; god is the god of order**
What is a spiritual illness? for example a very attractive woman who can’t keep a man, her karma her vibe could all be the result of another woman’s work, you can have problems like can’t sleep, if you wake-up wide awake in the middle of the night but not drowsy, you are experiencing something in coming, something feels alien, not your spirits, not for a good reason, a spirit is being sent to you to torment you, to do things
How do your patrons know they are sick? **They complain of physical ailments-too much gas, “I changed my diet and I have been to 4 or 5 doctors.” I treated a woman who I took one look t and believed that she had cancer. I gave her cancer killing hers, she began to feel better. I told her to go to the doctor. She got an x-ray and on the ex ray was cancer in her breast that had spread to the liver. She knew something was wrong, but did not know what; this is why she came to see me. When people are terminal I still help. I help them get their affairs in order, and make them feel more calm, more balanced.**
What illnesses only manifest as physical sickness? **depends on the path of the root worker**
What illnesses only manifest as spiritual ailments? **depends on the path of the root worker**

How do you know when the patron is feeling better? **All my clients with a physical ailment must go the doctor after I treat them so that there can be a medical professional involved. I ask for medical proof.**
How do you know if the patient is feeling worse? **They won’t go see the doctor**
What is curing? **process of diagnosis, wholeness and a restoration of that**
What types of plants do you work with? **Rompe zaraguey**, this is a work breaker, rue-it blesses, drives and balances work. It brings good fortune and removes evil. **Sandlewood**—repells, attracts a la mismo, golden seal—medicinally a cure-all, use in moderation to break a condition

Which plants are used the most? **ones associated with removing bad luck**

Are plants available from Puerto Rico or Cuba? **Mexico**

Yes, and I get them from **China town too. And Africa**

Are similar plants available in the US? (Grown in America) **yes**

Which plants have both physical and spiritual qualities? **Depends on the path of the work**

How do people pay for your service? **Cash**

If you do not know about the art of healing does someone come into the store to perform this art? **n/a**

**Please describe that person.** (i.e. Curandera? Iyalocha?)

Duties

**Country of Birth** **Trinidad** **Languages Spoken:** **English**

Please use this space for details. Get an understanding, be balanced, go see the doctor, you will find good and bad health care professionals, they studies this because they wanted to help save our life and add years to your life, **God brings peace, the blessed mother Mary, sometimes you need to talk it out.**

**Male Respondent Three**

Interview Questions

Describe your role in this business.

Are you the owner? **no**

Do others own it with you? **n/a**

What is your role? **Employee?** **Santera/o?**

**Espiritista?** **Other**

Do you help people with health problems? **yes in several ways, cleansing with a special herbal bath**

What illness or sicknesses do you treat? **Spiritual first**

What are the complaints of your clients? **An unknown presence around you**
How do your patrons describe illness? **they tell a story, and then I interpret it**

Are there illnesses that your clients describe that you think Anglos, or White people do not suffer from? Please describe these. **illnesses. no**

What is being ill? **Feeling a presence, being nervous**

What is the role of the sick person? **What is the role of the healer? To do a consultation, read the cards, listen to each client’s responses**

What are physical illnesses? **They can be the result of a spirit that disturbs you, first it interrupts your sleep, and then it moves to other parts**

What is a spiritual illness? **This can be the result of a sent spirit**

How do your patrons know they are sick? **They say they are nervous, confused, wake up ion the middle of the night, feel someone is around**

What illnesses only manifest as physical sickness? The muerto can change from spiritual to physical

What illnesses only manifest as spiritual ailments?

How do you know when the patron is feeling better? **don’t see the muerto or cloud anymore**

How do you know if the patient is feeling worse? **Same symptoms**

What is curing? **elevation of the spirit and returning the muerto, this can be done first with white candles, then a bath prepared by me**

What types of plants do you work with? **Plants from Cuba associated with the & potencies, the 7 powers**

Which plants are used the most? **rompe zaraguey, abre camino**

Are plants available from Puerto Rico or Cuba? **Mexico?**

Are similar plants available in the US? (Grown in America)** No**

Which plants have both physical and spiritual qualities? **They can have both properties depending on the work that was sent to the person**

How do people pay for your service? **Cash I charge $40.00 for a consultat, the reading of the cards, and $50.00 for the cleansing bath where I prepare herbs from Cuba**

If you do not know about the art of healing does someone come into the store to perform this art? **n/a Please describe that person. (i.e. Curandera? Iyalocha?)**

**Duties**

Country of Birth **Cuba**

Languages Spoken **Spanish, English and Lucumi**
The muerto can begin as a spiritual discomfort and then change to a physical ailment.

Female Respondent One

Describe your role in this business.

- Are you the owner? _x_ 
- Do others own it with you?
- What is your role?
  - Employee? _x_  Santera/o? Espiritista

Do you help people with health problems? Yes, love-money other problems too, trouble with husband, wife, family etc.

What illness or sicknesses do you treat?
  - cleansing, spirituals, read tarot

What are the complaints of your clients? In love, in money lucky

How do your patrons describe illness? As personas dicen no tener suerte en el trabajo—en el amore-todo sale mal

Are there illnesses that your clients describe that you think Anglos, or White people do not suffer from? Please describe these illnesses. No-Todas las personas blancas hispanias, afro-americanas

What is being ill? Cuando no sentien felicidad what is the role of the sick person?

Acondsejarla

What is the role of the healer?

What are physical illnesses? Bantos de la suerte, leer el taro para saber de done proviene el problem

What is a spiritual illness? Puede ser spiritual

How do your patrons know they are sick?

What illnesses only manifest as physical sickness? Falta de interes en todo, problemas de parajau.

What illnesses only manifest as spiritual ailments? Peles en sum matrimonio

How do you know when the patron is feeling better? Conejos y bano, limpia-amuletos porque la fe hace todo eso

How do you know if the patient is feeling worse? No ver los resultados ye perder su dinero, porque hay lugares-que enganan as las personas

What is curing? La Fe

What types of plants do you work with? Albahaca, Ruda-perejil, hierba Buena

Which plants are used the most? _ Ruda, Albahaca.
Are plants available from Puerto Rico or Cuba? Mexico?

Are similar plants available in the US? (Grown in America) **yes, basil and Ment**

Which plants have both physical and spiritual qualities? **Ruda-Albahaca**

How do people pay for your service? **No, por los productos**

If you do not know about the art of healing does someone come into the store to perform this art? ____No____ Please describe that person. (i.e. Curandera? Iyalocha?) 

Country of Birth ___________ Costa Rica ______ Languages Spoken 

_______________Spanish English _______