DUEÑO DE LA CABEZA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF SANTERIA HEALERS ON THE NATURE AND MEANING OF THE MIND

by

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Abstract

This study was conducted with the intention of gathering data on Santeria healers' perspectives and understanding of the mind. The study was formulated using a qualitative research design and data analyzed using Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology. Eight participants were selected to be part of the sample. Interview questions focused on participants' understanding of psychological constructs associated with the mind, such as thoughts, emotions, and personality. As dictated by Moustakas's phenomenological methodology, data was organized into patterns and themes followed by the construction of textural, structural, and textural-structural descriptions for each participant. As part of the data analysis process, a composite description of all eight participants' reports were also formulated to create a description that captured the experiences of all participants as a whole. Results from the study, found that Santeria healers conceptualized the mind as existing in three parts: the physical, mental, and spiritual planes. This aligned with Ken Wilber's quadrant theory, which also classified lived experience as existing in various domains, ranging from the interior/subjective to the exterior/objective realms. The study concluded that Santeria healers' understanding of the mind was more holistic in nature than modern psychiatric models and offered suggestions for integrating these worldviews and approaches to current clinical practice.

Dedication

To my sister Raquel, who never lost faith in me, and believed in me when I could not believe in myself, and to Theodore, always.

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I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to my mentor, Dr. Gabriela Mihalache, for her guidance and support over the past few years both as my professor and dissertation mentor. She has been an essential part of my professional development as both a student and researcher and am forever indebted to her. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Eleni Pinnow and Dr. Chip Turner for their guidance throughout this academic endeavor.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this phenomenological dissertation study was to explore how healers in the syncretic Afro-Cuban tradition of *Santeria* practicing in the United States, described the nature and meaning of the mind. Santeria is a syncretic spiritual system that melds together beliefs and traditions of the African Yoruba religion and Catholicism. This religious system developed because of the slave trade through the Caribbean, where African slaves continued to practice their religion by disguising their gods with Catholic symbolism (Rankin, 2017).

Santeria is practiced primarily in Cuba and areas within the United States where there are Cuban immigrants such as South Florida. Santeria healers play many roles within the community, ranging from providing spiritual guidance to consulting on healing physiological and medical concerns. In terms of spiritual guidance, Santeria healers use a multitude of tools for divination, such as the *diloggun (cowrie shells)*, *ikin (kola nuts),* and *opele (Ifa divination chain)* to diagnose and provide appropriate interventions based on the religion's mythology (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014; Loue, 2017; Olupona & Abiodun, 2016). The divination system of the *Ifa* tradition (the sect of Santeria that is practiced by *babalawos*), uses divination to reference a specific *odu*, which outlines a parable from Santeria folklore that offers advice on how to approach a certain situation. "This is premised upon the belief that any problem facing an individual in

contemporary times, has an equivalent in the past life of our ancestors" (Olupona & Abiodun, 2016, p. 18).

It is the hope of this study to provide insight into the viewpoints of Santeria healers as compared to modern psychological theory in terms of conceptualizing the mind and psyche. The population that was used for this study is Santeria healers practicing in the United States. This specificity is noted because Santeria is practiced in other countries and can take on different manifestations depending on the region where it is practiced. The criteria for being included in the sample for this study is that participants must be initiated priests in the Santeria tradition, either as a *santeros*/*santeras* or babalawos. The reason for this criterion is that there is a hierarchy in terms of knowledge distribution to initiates. There are varying levels of initiation in the Santeria healing tradition, each of which entails a different set of skills and training that builds on what has been learned in prior levels. A person who is initiated as an *olorisha* has completed all necessary training and is permitted to work with the *orishas*, consult the using the divination systems and provide spiritual services. Lesser levels of initiations include training and the assumed protection of said orishas, however, these initiates are not considered fully trained or knowledgeable about all there is to know about the faith.

Background of the Study

The study's aim was to document and explore the lived experience of Santeria practitioners regarding the nature and meaning of the mind. Currently, research done on the practices and experiences of Santeria practitioners has focused on the historical background of the faith, including its development due to the African diaspora and its numerous initiations and rituals (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014; Loue, 2017). There has been anthropological documentation on the use of psychodrama in their rituals, however, in-depth research has never been completed

exploring practitioners' views on the psychological processes connected behind these ritualistic procedures (Brown, 1989; & Friedman, 1982; Hagedorn, 2000; Lindsay, 1996; Murphy, 2012). Santeria emphasizes the intersect between human beings and spiritual forces, namely ancestral spirits (*eggun*) and divinities called orishas. The orishas are universal forces rooted in African spiritually and associated with various natural forces, be it the ocean, mountains, and forest or elements such as fire and wind (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014). The histories of the orishas and the Lucumi faith are taught through mythological stories called, *patakis* and which are used to both teach moral lessons ranging from respecting one's elders and family to explaining the history of tradition and rituals (Olupona & Abiodun, 2016). Prior research on other spiritual practices and their intersection with modern psychotherapy has also been done, however this research primarily focused on members of these communities and their preference in seeking out traditional healers in lieu of psychotherapists when it came to illness or conflicts that the client deemed to be spiritual in nature (Audet et al., 2017; Lucchetti et al., 2011; Nxumalo et al., 2011).

The study advances scientific knowledge in the field of transpersonal psychology by contributing data on the views and perspectives of Santeria healers regarding their understanding of the mind. It is the goal of this study to gather data on these perspectives to provide suggestions for improving mental health training protocols in terms of cultural competence. The theoretical implications of this study are to expand on the theories of Ken Wilber as they apply to the perspectives of Santeria traditional healers. Wilber's integral theory outlines the importance of exploring a client's individual, subjective, objective, and collective phenomenological domains (Wilber, 2006). By exploring the perspectives of Santeria healers within this healing system this study provided evidence of the benefits of increasing a psychotherapist's cultural skill set to include the utilization of psychospiritual healing techniques and practices to provide therapeutic

services more in line with Wilber's integral theory which emphasizes the inclusion of culture and spirituality into treatment.

Need for the Study

Currently, there is limited scientific research regarding Santeria from the purview of psychology. Most of the articles included in the literature review stem from journals chronicling the cultural anthropology bases and historical context of the inception and practice of the religion. What little has been written about Santeria in terms of psychological concepts has focused primarily on the use of psychodrama to act out emotional or interpersonal conflicts (Hearn, 2009). Even in this instance the conclusions and inferences garnered are based on the observations and perspectives of the researcher. There is limited data from the perspective of the Santeria practitioners themselves or their understanding of the mind.

Aside from scientific and peer-reviewed literature, there are several books on Santeria, however, most are written by persons not directly involved in the religion or who are not fully initiated (only have participated in minor initiations and ceremonies) and therefore not as well equipped to explain these phenomena (Gonzalez Perez, 2003).

Much of the research that has covered both spirituality and psychology has focused on other religious systems such as spiritism or various forms of shamanic or folk religions (Blom et al., 2015; Lucchetti et al., 2011; Moreira-Almeida & Koss-Chioino, 2009). Much like the research conducted on Santeria, the focus has been on anthropology and culture as well as trends were seen in medical settings. The research literature on indigenous healing systems and its intersection with mental health systems indicate that we know that culture and spirituality shape a patient's subjective experience and perspective on mental illness as well as how this subsequently influences their choice in treatment. This is reflected in the inclusion of the

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spiritual and religious category in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-V)(APA, 2013). A patient who comes from a culture that employs folk or indigenous healing systems are more likely to seek out spiritual healers if they begin to experience symptoms that they attribute to a spiritual disturbance (Blom et al., 2015; Lucchetti et al., 2011; Moreira-Almeida & Koss-Chioino, 2009).

Another phenomenon that has been researched within this area of study has been the conceptualization of illness from the perspective of indigenous cultures. Currently there is no prior research on the Santeria tradition's conceptualization of mental health issues. Prior research has found that indigenous cultures conceptualize and approach psychological distress from a perspective of growth and transformation, unlike their Eurocentric counterparts that place emphasis on psychopathology and work from a medical model (Bartholomew, 2017; Marovic & Machinga, 2017).

There is a general lack of knowledge on the perspectives and lived experiences of Santeria healers and practitioners. There is limited knowledge available to the public outside of the community due to the prevailing culture of secrecy that surrounds this religious system. Historically, the religion has been practiced in secret because the practice of indigenous religions was prohibited by European settlers in the Caribbean. By better understanding Santeria healers' conceptualization of the mind, mental health providers can improve their level of cultural competency when working with clients who belong to this community. The final chapter of this dissertation will provide additional suggestions for the training of psychotherapists in terms of cultural competence.

Purpose of the Study

This study's purpose was to identify and describe the conceptualization of the mind by healers in the Afro-Cuban tradition of Santeria. It is estimated that there are approximately 500,000 practitioners of Santeria living within the United States (Lefever, 1996). Prior studies have found that minority populations (African Americans and Hispanics) are more likely to seek out psychospiritual healers as compared to their White Anglo-Saxon counterparts (Meyer & Zane, 2013). This is due to a lack of confidence in psychotherapists' ability to understand their spiritual beliefs and or cultural worldviews. The Santeria tradition is also surrounded by stigma, due to their use of animal sacrifice in rituals. This has led persons outside of the community to associate Santeria with witchcraft or demonic worship. This stigma further alienates practitioners from seeking out help outside of the community due to fear of judgment. By increasing the knowledge base of this community's understanding of the mind, psychotherapists can better serve members of the community who practice this religion.

Significance of the Study

More than half of populations in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America seek out indigenous healers instead of modern doctors (Nxumalo et al., 2011). Within the United States, alone, it is estimated that there are half a million Santeria practitioners (Lefever, 1996). Understanding Santeria practitioners' perspectives and experiences when it comes to psychological constructs, proves to be a significant area of study when it comes to the field of psychology.

The primary school of thought that was utilized in this study was transpersonal psychology. Specific theoretical foundations included Ken Wilber's integral theory and quadrant model (Paulson, 2008). Ken Wilber's integral theory (Wilber, 2006) states that to provide a

comprehensive understanding of human experience one must include both individual and collective components. Wilber's quadrant model divides phenomenological experiences into four domains, half of which relate to the individual and the other half belonging to the collective human experience, including culture and spirituality (Marquis, 2007; Paulson, 2008; Wilber, 2006). This supports the indigenous spiritual systems' approach which focuses on integrating both the individual's experience while also encompassing larger cultural and spiritual factors into their understanding of this said experience. The focus was placed on Wilber's quadrant model, which categorizes experience on subjective, objective, individual, and collective domains (Paulson, 2008). Much of the reason why there is resistance to seeking out psychotherapists or western medicine practitioners is the fear of judgment or sense of lack of understanding when it comes to their beliefs and experiences. By increasing the practitioners' understanding of this religion, the healthcare community, collectively, can raise the confidence of this population that psychotherapists are well trained and equipped to provide care that is both inclusive and respectful of their cultural worldview.

Striving for cultural competence and integrating spirituality and religion into psychological study and practice has long been a goal of the American Psychological Association. The study aligns with the agenda of APA Division 36: Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, whose goal is to apply psychological research methods to study the frameworks of diverse religions and spiritualities to incorporate these findings into clinical and applied settings (APA, 2009).

In terms of APA's code of ethics and principles, this study also promotes the principle of justice, which states, "fairness and justice entitle all persons to access to and benefit from the contributions of psychology and to equal quality in the processes, procedures, and services being

conducted by psychologists" (APA, 2017, para. 5). Currently, due to a lack of data and understanding of the beliefs and experiences of this population, there has been a lack of available resources to make psychotherapy or psychological services more assessable to them.

Research Question

The research question that was proposed by this study is, how do healers of the syncretic Afro-Cuban tradition of Santeria practicing in the United States, describe the nature and meaning of the mind? The study set out to gather information derived from the perspectives and experiences of the participants. Prior studies had relied heavily on the researchers' perspectives on observed phenomena, rather than asking for direct interpretations from the participants themselves. By phrasing questions in such a way that emphasizes personal and lived-in experiences, this study hopes to better capture the lived experiences of this population to provide perspective to the clinicians who work with them.

Definition of Terms

Babalawo: A babalawo is a priest of Ifa (sect of Orunmila) (Asante & Mazama, 2009).

Eggun: "The eggun, in Santeria are traditionally the spirits of the dead, from ritual ancestors to kin" (Espirito Santo, 2015, p. 71).

Espiritismo: "The belief that problems, conceptualized by Western psychologists as being related to mental health issues, are caused by spirits. These spirits can be forced away from the person through interventions offered by a folk healer, the espiritista*"* (Leong, 2008, p. 1132).

Healer: "A person who seeks to cure diseases or heal injuries by means other than conventional medical treatment" (Lexico, n.d., para. 1).

Mind: Broadly speaking, intellectual and psychological constructs, including cognitive activities and functions such as thinking, feeling, learning and perception (APA, 2021).

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Orisha: Deities of the Yoruba pantheon (Pogue, 2015).

Santero: "A priest of the Santeria folk religion" (Lexico, n.d., para. 1).

*Ori: "*Refers to the physical head among the Yoruba of Nigeria; it is the symbol of *Olodumare*, the creator, and of the essential personality—the soul of each individual. Ori is that spiritual essence that wields the greatest influence on a person's life from birth to the grave*"* (Asante & Mazama, 2009, p. 499).

Santeria: "A pantheistic Afro-Cuban folk religion developed from the beliefs and customs of the Yoruba people and incorporating some elements of the Catholic religion." (Lexico, n.d., para. 1).

Research Design

This study was conducted using a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology was selected as the research design for this study because the focus is on understanding the nature and meaning of the mind based on the lived experiences of Santeria traditional healers. Phenomenology is an approach that places emphasis on consciousness and how it is shaped by direct experience (Churchill & Frederick, 2018, p. 2). Rather than focus solely on the physical and observable world, phenomenology considers the subjective experiences and subsequent thoughts and perspectives of the subject being studied. The study will utilize Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological model (Moustakas, 1994), which uses a four-step approach to analyze data. The first step of Moustakas's model uses the process of *epoche* to set aside prejudgments and opens the interview with an unbiased receptive presence. The second step is defined as phenomenological reduction where descriptions of the observed phenomenon in terms of internal processes with a focus on the participant's experiences are noted. The third stage, "imaginative variation" builds on the observations from the 2nd stage and helps to further explore

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meaning and similarities between the experiences of members of a shared population. The final stage is to formulate a unified theme based on the integrated experiences of the participants studied to make broader assumptions on the experiences of the population as a whole (Moustakas, 1994; Paulson, 2008; Wilber, 2006).

The research study was composed of data collected from interviewing Santeria healers who lived and practiced in the United States. Data was collected using an informal conversational interview structure and included a sample size of eight participants. Participants were selected using snowball sampling, scouting social media accounts that featured Santeria healers who provided educational videos and information on the practice of this religion. All efforts were made to maintain the privacy and identity of the participants involved in the study. The interviews were conducted via Zoom using password protection to access the meeting room. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, while situated in a private office where no one else was present or within listening range. Data was analyzed at the same site it was collected. The office where the interview was conducted met HIPAA compliance for the double lock rule.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

This study utilized a qualitative methodology, specifically Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research is focused on gathering data on the nature of consciousness and the direct experiences of the population being studied. This approach comes with certain assumptions as to what will be found during the study. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection (Atieno, 2009). The researcher collects data via fieldwork, then later develops concepts and abstractions based on what they observed. This poses a risk of implicit biases that

the researcher may harbor and therefore requires extra steps to consciously become aware and set aside any prior preconceptions that may influence the researcher's presentation of the data. Moustakas's methodology addresses this issue with its epoche stage by instructing the researcher to take inventory of personal biases and preconceptions before data collection.

The primary theoretical orientation that was applied to this study is Ken Wilber's quadrant theory which speculates that all human experiences can be compartmentalized into four dimensions: subjective, objective, intersubjective, and interobjective. According to this theory, human experience shares many commonalities despite differences in culture, race, ethnicity, etc. This assumption ties into the study's assumption that the experiences of Santeria healers (a niche community) are relevant and parallel to the experiences of other groups of people, or humanity. The assumption being that while there may be some features that are specific to this culture (Wilber's intersubjective dimension), there are principles that may also resonate with persons outside of this community in the subjective and interobjective dimensions (Paulson, 2008).

Yet another assumption of this study was that the participants that were interviewed would be open to discussing their religious beliefs with the researcher who was not initiated as an olorisha/santeria healer. Spiritual knowledge is protected even from those who are in the process of becoming initiated and are not revealed to them until they have been involved over a period of time. This serves the purpose of building rapport between the padrino/madrina and the initiate while also demonstrating humility and willingness to learn from the elders. It appears that the information that is most closely guarded has to do with the specific techniques and materials that are used during initiation processes or ritual workings as it is believed that if this information fell into the wrong hands, this information could be abused. It is for this reason that questions were geared towards more neutral topics, such as the practitioner's personal experiences and

understanding of abstract psychological constructs than on any specific methodology revolving around their initiations or rituals.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of this study were the size and sampling of the population. The study included eight participants which were selected solely from the United States. Currently, Santeria is practiced worldwide and can be observed as having some variance in practice and beliefs based on where the religion is being practiced. Therefore, the findings of this study solely reflect the lived experiences, beliefs, and perspectives of healers who live and are practicing in the United States. Future research would benefit from increasing the sample size as well as the inclusion of Santeria practitioners outside of the United States to get a more complete understanding of the experiences of Santeria practitioners, regardless of where they are practicing.

Other limitations of this study included finding practitioners that were willing to share information on their religion, as this community has historically been reluctant to talk to persons outside of the faith out of fear of social backlash. Historically, this religious system is the result of a culture that has attempted to survive diaspora and oppression due to the slave trade. As a result of this, maintaining a level of secrecy when it comes to the practice of this religion has become an ingrained part of the culture. Even in modern times and with legal protection from spiritual persecution, there are still feelings of fear and antagonism about this religion from people who do not practice the faith. Much of this stems from a lack of understanding, since one is not able to learn about the faith unless one is involved in it, and because of practices such as animal sacrifices which can make many people feel uneasy.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study will be exploring the lived experiences and beliefs of Santeria healers when it comes to their understanding and conceptualization of psychological constructs such as the mind and psyche. Data analysis was formulated using Moustakas's phenomenology and the theoretical orientation of Ken Wilber's quadrant and integral theories. This theory emphasizes the varying dimensions of phenomenology, ranging from the individual level to cultural and societal dimensions that shape a person's worldview.

The remainder of the study will be divided into four sections: a literature review (Chapter 2), discussion of the methodology used (Chapter 3), presentation of the data (Chapter 4), and a discussion of implications, and recommendations (Chapter 5). The following chapter will present a review of the current literature that is available on the topic of Santeria and indigenous healers as well as gaps in the literature that this study will work to supplement.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will cover the current research available on Santeria, its history and practice in the United States, as well as its origins in Nigeria. One of the primary focuses of Santeria practice is the veneration of the orishas, African deities that have been syncretized with Catholic saints. This system was developed by African slaves to continue to practice their religion under Spanish rule. The main initiations and rituals of the faith will be covered, including the divination systems used for diagnosis and treatment. The primary methods used for determining the source of a problem and finding ways to resolve it are usually through divination or communication with the spirits of the dead (Brandon, 2012; Eyiogbe, 2015; Hagedorn, 2000; Jones et al., 2001; Kleinman, 1980; Olupona & Abiodun, 2016).

Santeria is closely tied to other Caribbean spiritual traditions such as Espiritismo and Palo Monte. At times practitioners are known to practice or blend the beliefs of all three traditions, therefore these spiritual beliefs are also covered as they are relevant to the understanding of Santeria beliefs and traditions as they are practiced in the Americans (Koprivica, 2010; Toutaine, 2016; Wirtz, 2009). Limited information is available regarding perspectives on psychological concepts within the Santeria religious tradition, however, there have been some ideas that come close. One such concept is that of *ori* and the use of archetypes in religious and mythological storytelling.

Methods of Searching

The literature reviewed was sourced using the Capella summons library, Google Scholar, JStor, and ResearchGate. Results were filtered to include only peer-reviewed articles featured in scientific journals. Textbooks were also included in the search. Terms used in the search included Santeria, *Espiritismo, Palo Monte, orishas, ebbo, kariocha, ori*, folk healers,

personality, emotions and personality to name a few. The primary goal of the search was to attain background information on Santeria as well as to determine what is already known about this religion in the purview of psychology and psychotherapy. Most of the sources covered the cultural, historical, and ritual practices associated with Santeria. Those that did cover psychological concepts focused predominantly on the use of psychodrama in rituals utilized in this religion.

Theoretical Orientation for the Study

Ken Wilber's quadrant theory was the primary theoretical orientation used for this study. Wilber's theory classifies experience as falling into four different quadrants: subjective, objective, intersubjective, or interobjective (Wilber, 2006). The subjective and objective quadrants refer to the individual's experience with the world. The upper left quadrant or interior individual quadrant refers to the "subjective, phenomenal dimension of individual consciousness" (Marquis, 2007, p. 165). The upper right quadrant or behavioral/exterior individual domains refer to the objective observations of human behavior and the individual's interactions with the world. The two lower quadrants, the interior and exterior collective domains correlate with culture, shared worldviews, and larger organizational factors such as political, economic, or sociological systems within which the individual participates and interacts with.

Most psychological systems such as cognitive behavioral and psychodynamic theories operate from the individual subjective and objective perspectives, without acknowledging collective factors such as culture and spirituality. Later paradigms such as humanistic, Jungian and Wilber's theories have emphasized the importance of taking into consideration these features to get a complete understanding of the human experience. This study will work to fill the gaps

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currently present in the research due to the exclusion of cultural and spiritual elements when attempting to conceptualize and understand psychological phenomenon.

Wilber's theory resonates with the theme of this study, whose focus is on how culture and religious belief, influence phenomenological and epistemological experiences. Furthermore, in exploring the experiences and perspectives of practitioners of the Santeria faith as it exists as part of the African diaspora, it is noteworthy to take into consideration the political and sociological factors of the intersubjective and interobjective quadrants of Wilber's theory as these factors have influenced the transformation of the faith as it is practiced in the Caribbean and in the United States. This religion, while originating in Africa, has, through the course of diaspora and melding with European influences, evolved into a religion that is uniquely its own.

Caribbean Spirituality and Healing

Santeria and Espiritismo are two folk religions practiced in the Caribbean. Delgado (1978) argues that the healers within these religious systems play the same role as psychologists and psychiatrists. Delgado classifies folk healers into two categories, metaphysical and physical healers. He places santeros and espiritistas under the metaphysical category and santiguadores and herbalists in the physical healer category. Much the same way that psychiatric treatment focuses on both psychotherapy and medication, folk religions also utilize a system that integrates the treatment of the spiritual/mental plane and another emphasizing the use of herbal remedies for the physical. Herbal remedies are not usually ingested, but rather involve ritual washings of the body and home to clear negative energies that may be contributing to the person's malaise. For folk healers, there is no distinction between the body, mind, and spirit. All three must be diagnosed and treated during healing.

History of Santeria in the Americas

The Santeria religion arose from the blending of West African Lucumi/Yoruba tradition and European Catholicism because of the slave trade that was brought to Cuba (Mena, 1998). Hearn (2009) describes this phenomenon as "transculturation", where the blending of the two cultures formed to create a unique national and cultural identity of the Cuban people. Despite being rooted in the African spirituality of the Yoruba people and sharing many of its same gods and initiations, Santeria, as it developed in Cuba, has become a unique spiritual practice with its own set of principles and beliefs reflecting the experiences of the African diaspora (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014).

In terms of psychological health, a person experiencing emotional disturbances is thought to have been caught up in spiritual conflict or *trastornos* with these forces (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014). *Santeros* do not distinguish between the physical body and the spiritual realm and see both as coexisting in a symbiotic system. This is especially true for persons who have been initiated as priests or priestesses within the religion and have crowned their patron *orisha*.

The Orishas

Within the Yoruba pantheon, there are hundreds if not thousands of orishas. From this plethora, there is a handful that is considered essential or pillars of the religion. When one receives their kariocha ceremony and has their patron orisha crowned, they also receive the other "pillars" of the religion (Karade, 2020). Before crowning their patron orisha, practitioners receive two other initiations, usually simultaneously. One such initiation is called the *Guerreros* or the Warriors.

Los Guerreros initiation includes receiving the following orishas: Eleggua, Oggun, Ochosi, and Osun. Eleggua opens and closes the paths of mankind (Siedlak, 2018b). Oggun and

Ochosi are two orishas who work together and are presented to the initiate in a metal cauldron containing their tools. Oggun is the god of metal and provides the initiate with the tools to overcome battles, and Ochosi, the god of the hunt, assists with administering swift justice (Siedlak, 2018b). Lastly, *Osun*, who is characterized as a figurine of metal rooster, is used to represent the initiate's head. This figure is placed in a high place and out of reach of others. If the figure falls, this symbolizes that danger is at hand and that the initiate should seek out their padrino or madrina to determine what needs to be done to avoid calamity.

In addition to the warrior orishas, there are a few others that make up the pillars of Santeria. They are, Yemaya, Oshun, Chango and Obatala. Yemaya is the orisha of motherhood and resides in the oceans (Siedlak, 2018b). Oshun is the sister of Yemaya, resides in the rivers or sweet waters and is the patron spirit of love and beauty. She is also associated with pregnancy and conception. Together, Yemaya and Oshun are considered *las dos aguas* or the two waters and are often petitioned together. Chango, another popular orisha is known for his domain over lightening, power, and passion. In contrast to Chango's hot temper, Obatala represents a cool mind, intellect, and justice (Siedlak, 2018b). Obatala and Chango are also said to work together, perhaps because their temperaments balance each other out.

Syncretism with Catholic Saints

The term, Santeria, comes from the word *santos* or saints. This refers to the religion's use of Catholic iconography to represent the African orishas (Kirby, 1985) When first brought to Cuba, the Yoruba people were not at liberty to practice their faith openly, however, this did not deter them from finding new and creative ways to continue their religious traditions under Spanish rule. The Yoruba people quickly began finding symbolic similarities between the Catholic saints of their oppressors and the gods of their homeland.

For example, the fiery orisha, Chango who is characterized as being the god of thunder, who wears red and carries a double-edged ax, was syncretized with St. Barbara (Romberg, 2007; Williams, 1975). Even though Chango is a man and St. Barbara is a woman, the Yoruba people connected the two because St. Barbara is usually depicted as carrying a sword and dressed in red. According to the legend behind St. Barbara's story, her father was also killed by lightning. By substituting Catholic imagery for that of their gods, the Yoruba were able to continue to practice their faith and pass on their traditions.

Yoruba Concept of Ori

The closest concept resembling what Western thought would classify as the mind in Yoruba culture is the concept of ori. For the Yoruba, the ori covers a range of spiritual and psychological constructs, including personality, mind, spirit, and even one's personal guardian angel. Ori is also closely tied to the idea of human destiny (Ademuleya, 2007; Ekanola, 2006; Gbadegesin, 1983). There are some inconsistencies regarding what ori is and its role in human behavior and free will.

According to Yoruba mythology, a person selects their ori before being born. This ori determines their life path, challenges they will face, and life experiences they will encounter along the way. In this sense, the ori symbolizes the person's destiny. However, the ori is not simply seen as one's destiny, it is also conceptualized as a deity, as it will subconsciously influence and direct a person to keep them on the correct path (which they selected before birth).

Another area of contention, when it comes to the ori, is the simultaneous belief in free will, and predestination. If one decides their life path and experiences before being born, where is there room for free will and self-efficacy? Despite the belief that our destiny is predetermined before birth, the Yoruba place a great emphasis on good moral character and the principle of free

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will. A person's character and the choices that they make can ultimately fulfill or ruin a person's destiny (Gbadegesin, 1983). There is also the idea that a bad ori can be improved through consultations and spiritual workings within the religion (Ekanola, 2006).

When describing the ori and its connection to free will and personal responsibility it is important to take into consideration how this ties into African values and ideals as compared to that of Western society. African communitarian theory claims that the community defines an individual, and his actions and proper behavior define whether he honors and lives up to the potential of a good ori or ruins it (Fayemi, 2009; Gbadegesin, 1983; Menkiti, 1984). These challenges the question of whether a person's ori represents a fixed destiny or potentiality, which requires human effort to fulfill a positive destiny or evade and change a negative one. Altering and maintaining the trajectory of a person's destiny falls into the realm of consultation and divination, either with a santero, santera, or a babalawo.

Consultation and Divination

A person seeking a consultation from a santero or santera will most likely start their journey by visiting a local *botanica*. Botanicas are spiritual supply stores, usually run by either a santero, palero, or espiritista (McDonugh, 1993). In addition to selling herbs and tools used in spiritual traditions, most botanicas will also offer consultation and divination services to help guide clients as to what steps they should take next while attempting to overcome an obstacle or help them to decide over a situation (Jones, et al., 2001).

In the Santeria faith, divination is the primary tool used for diagnosing a problem and determining its appropriate solution (Brandon, 2012). There are two sects when it comes to divination and consultation. Santeros and santeras, work directly with the orishas using an oracle called the diloggun while the sect of Ifa, or high priests of Orunla, work specifically with the

orisha of divination and use a tool called an opele and Table de Ifa. Some religious houses, consult using both santeros and babalawos, while some work solely with one sect or the other.

There is some debate among practitioners over which sect has the right to perform certain rituals over the other, however, there is no set consensus as to who is correct. Two of the major initiations one receives early in the religion are the receiving of the warriors and a second ceremony where a person's guardian orisha is determined. There is some debate as to who can determine a person's patron orisha (santeros or babalawos) due to mythological stories reporting that Orunla was the only orisha who was allowed to be present at the time of creation and therefore has ultimate knowledge on the destiny of all humans (Eyiogbe, 2015). Orunla is not only consulted when it comes to determining a person's patron orisha and life destiny but also when a person needs guidance on their life journey or experiencing a difficulty of which they need to overcome.

Ifa Divination and Oddun

During major initiations or when attempting to diagnose the root of a problem and its solution, one tool used by Santeria practitioners is divination through Ifa (the cult of the orisha Orunla). Ifa is the realm of babalawos specifically, who work with the orisha Orunla to draw what is known as an oddun or sign that ties into a pataki or parable with messages, warnings, and advice on how to handle particular life circumstances that a person may be experiencing at the time of the casting. The Yoruba believe that the pataki referenced in the oddun brings advice in the form of a reference to mythological stories that parallel the circumstances that the person is experiencing (Brandon, 2012; Kleinman, 1980; Olupona & Abiodun, 2016). The *orishas* provide guidance and instruction in this way.

Ire and Osogbo

When attempting to find a solution to a problem through divination, the first step is to determine if this person is currently in ire or osogbo. Ire refers to good energy and blessings, while osogbo refers to negativity, bad luck, and danger (Eyiogbe, 2015). There are a possible 256 Odduns that can be drawn from the oracle, each of which carries paths of ire and paths of osogbo. Regardless of whether the oddun comes in ire or osogbo, the casting will come with the retelling of the corresponding pataki, any advice, ebbos or sacrifices that need to be made to either maintain ire or evade osogbo.

One of the primary ways that ire can be maintained or osogbo dissipated is through sacrifice. Sacrifice or ebbo can take many forms, such as placing fruits, flowers, or other objects to a specific deity or through a blood sacrifice (Brandon, 1991). The use of animal sacrifices in the Santeria religion has caused much of the stigma and notoriety surrounding the practice of this religion in the United States. There have been several legal cases arguing for and against the legality of animal sacrifice, whether this constitutes a case of religious freedom or animal welfare and/or cruelty (Brettschneider, 2010; Sheehan, 2009). The reasoning behind the use of animal sacrifice is the belief that blood contains life, energy, or ashe (Pokines, 2015). To move and manipulate the material world, this ashe or energy is needed. Animal sacrifice can also be used as a means of metaphorically transferring negative energy or disease from the person to the animal. In certain circumstances, an animal such as a chicken is passed over the body of the afflicted person and then ritually slaughtered to symbolize that the disease or affliction, was transferred to and died with the animal.

The fact that osogbo can be remedied and the future altered, corroborates the idea that ori and a person's destiny is more a potentiality and less a case of fatalism. One could argue that a

person walks in osogbo due to poor life choices or insight, but that with the guidance of the orishas and their intermediaries, the babalawos and santeros this can be altered. This further exemplifies the idea of free will and personal responsibility and character. The latter being particularly important to African cultural values, which place greater emphasis on community interdependence and cooperation over individuality and selfishness (Fayemi, 2009; Gbadegesin, 1983; Menkiti, 1984).

Crowning the Saint

The final initiation in becoming a Santeria priest is called *kariocha* or *coronacion del santo.* This initiation varies depending on what orisha has been determined to be the ruler of the neophyte's head. This is determined during another ceremony called *ikofa* or *mano de Orunla* (Loue, 2017; Siedlak, 2018a). Usually, this ceremony is performed simultaneously with another introductory ceremony where the initiate receives what is called the warriors, a set of *orishas* who will guide and offer protection to the initiate throughout their life and spiritual journey. The ikofa ceremony is usually 3 days long and involves several secret rituals involving divination, prayers, and animal sacrifices. Once the person's patron orisha is determined, they can continue preparing for seating or crowning the orisha (Loue, 2017).

The *asiento* ceremony involves what Santeria practitioners call birthing the orisha. During this process, it is believed that the orisha is placed on and settling itself into the initiate's head. This act of placing the orisha on the person's head results in the person cultivating a sense of interconnectedness with this spiritual force (De La Torre, 2004). The orishas are not the only forces that are said to intermingle and affect a person's sense of self and spiritual identity. Ancestral spirits are also said to have the power to possess and afflict the living and require regular attention via ritual processes and prayer.

Spirit Possession and Trance in Healing

Santeria and Espiritismo alike, utilize ritual spirit possession as both a means of healing and divination. There are many ways that a participant can become possessed. At times it can be intentionally through a specific ritual, while other times it can happen unintentionally. Not all spirit possessions are positive, and some may cause the person experiencing this phenomenon great distress and require an exorcism. Concerning intentional spirit possession, one of the primary forms of initiating this event in the Yoruba faith is through the use of ritual bata drum ceremony. These ceremonies are usually done for major initiations or if the *orisha* request it through divination (Hagedorn, 2000).

Santeria and Espiritismo are both action-based religions requiring the active participation of both practitioner and client (Mason, 1994). This participation includes not only the need to engage in elaborate rituals which require periods of prayers and collection of sacred objects or tools, but it also requires the person to involve his whole person, their body included. Ritual dancing and trance states are part of this active participation, connecting the material, physical reality to the spiritual and metaphysical (Delgado, 1978; de Rothewelle, 2021).

Bata Drum Ceremony

One of the rituals used by Santeria healers to assess, diagnose and heal on the spiritual level is the use of trance, which is induced via ritual drumming called, *bembe* (Murphy, 2012). The ritual is also known as a *toque de santo*, and can be used to heal, appease an orisha or change a participant's circumstances (Brown, 1989; & Friedman, 1982; Hagedorn, 2000; Lindsay, 1996). This technique is believed to invite a specific orisha to mount a practitioner and thereby work through the healer's body. Other than in the scope of ritual and drumming ceremonies, spiritual possession has not been explored or written about further, especially not in

the scope of how these factors affect personality or mental processes. Prior research does not clarify whether santeros view initiates as a psychologically being a tabula rasa whose mind reflects a greater spiritual phenomenon or if the individual exists outside of but is still connected with this phenomenon.

Espiritismo

Espiritismo refers to the practice of mediumship and communication with spirits of the dead that originated with the teachings of Allan Kardec (Diaz-Quiñones, 1997; Horta, 2004). Spiritism as it exists and is practiced in Latin America and the Caribbean has integrated other spiritual influences, such as African and Native American beliefs to create a spiritual system that is distinct from its European roots (Bettelheim, 2005).

There is a saying within the Santeria community, that all santeros are espiritistas but not all espiritistas are santeros. This is to emphasize that all santeros practice some level of work with the dead and with mediumship, but not all mediums or espiritistas work within the orisha tradition. Within the orisha tradition of both Santeria and Lucumi, there is a belief in the *eggun* or spirits of the ancestors. These spirits are given as much reverence as the orishas themselves, because the eggun came before the orishas. In fact, according to Lucumi mythology, the orishas were at one point living and breathing human beings, who through their time on earth was able to spiritually evolve and transcend their existence from mere humans to godlike figures. Therefore, those who came before us, whether that be our ancestors or evolved beings such as the orishas are sought out when trying to resolve trials and tribulations that one is experiencing in this space and time.

Espiritismo uses various ways to connect with and communicate with spirits. One of the principal tools used in this spiritual practice is the *boveda* or *mesa blanca* which acts as a portal

to the other side (dos Ventos, 2008). The boveda consists of a table, white cloth, a set of goblets filled with water, flowers, along with spiritual iconography (statues, prayer cards, or other visual representations of various deities). Within the Espiritismo tradition, there are various "courts" of spirits. These courts can include, gypsy spirits, Congo or African spirits, Native American spirits, Middle Eastern spirits, and pirate spirits to name a few (Bettelheim, 2005). Each court of spirits has specific set of characteristics and can be called upon depending on the nature of the problem being solved.

An espiritista may have spirits from multiple courts, regardless of their actual ancestry. Espiritismo believes that one can have many prior lives and during these lives one will connect with and continue connecting with spirits through their *cuadro espiritual* or spiritual court. This refers to the group of spirits that will accompany a person throughout their life. Santeros that practice Espiritismo, may use the boveda to connect with their eggun (ancestors) or with other astral connections from their cuadro espiritual.

Another tool used to connect with spirits is the spiritual caldron (*caldero espiritual*) or *teja de muerto* (Capone, 1999). There is some debate as to whether this is something unique to Santeria, or the result of influence from the Congo tradition of Palo Monte, which utilizes a caldron to represent a spiritual force that the practitioners work with. In the case of Palo, human remains will be used, including skulls, bones, and fed "*menga*" or blood to sustain in. In the case *of both the caldero espiritual* and *nganga* (*Palo* caldron), a practitioner uses a staff to call forth spirits and a set of shells or dried coconut pieces, called *chamalongos* to consult with the spirits (Ramírez, 2017). The divination system can provide yes and no responses to questions depending on the pattern they fall in, as well as refer to mythological stories connected with a specific deity to provide advice on a specific situation.

Palo Monte

Palo Monte or the Reglas of Palo is perhaps one of the most controversial religious practices found in the Caribbean. Its notoriety comes from the practice of utilizing human remains in the construction of the *prenda* or *nganga* (Martin & Luis, 2012). The nganga is a spiritual tool used to house a practitioner's spiritual assistant. The caldron acts both as a house for the spirit and a portal for the practitioner to be able to communicate and work with this spirit. There have been several reports of grave-robbing that have been connected to the practice of Palo (Pokines, 2015). More modern practitioners may attain human bones from science supply stores that sell human bones for medical models, however, this option can be pricey, therefore leading practitioners to find alternative ways of constructing the caldron.

Spiritual Pluralism

While Santeria, Espiritismo, and Palo are three distinct religious systems, there is a lot of influence and overlap between the three. This is mostly due to the comingling of the different cultural groups, causing some practices to blend. As stated before, many practitioners are initiated in multiple traditions, working with all three or picking and choosing different tools from each religion to meet their spiritual needs. This blending of traditions is called "cruzado", for example, Espiritismo Cruzado or Palo Cruzado, to designate that the tradition is being practiced in a form that has implemented other traditions such as those of Santeria (Koprivica, 2010; Toutaine, 2016; Wirtz, 2009).

Archetypes in Santeria Orisha Practice

Psychologically, the orishas of the Yoruba pantheon can be seen to represent archetypal figures that form part of the collective unconscious of this ethnic group. Archetypes as they were conceptualized by C.G. Jung, are "personalities that are recognized within the subconscious and

understood universally" (Stinchcomb, 2013, p.3). These figures are seen in mythological stories across all human cultures. In the Santeria tradition, these archetypes are commemorated in the form of orishas, and their stories are passed down in the form of oral traditions called patakis. The purpose of these stories is to pass on the history of the religion, teach moral values and lessons as well as instruct initiates on the rituals and initiations of the religion (Stinchcomb, 2013). Gonzalez Perez (2003) goes on to suggest that during ritual possession, the participants and dancers of the ritual are acting out the psychological archetypes of the collective unconscious.

The utilization of storytelling to reflect archetypal patterns is not unique to Santeria (Spencer, 1990). Myths and religious parables usually carry with them themes such as good vs evil, loss, tragedy, and transformation to name a few. Smith (2014) poses a theory called the cognitive science of religion (CSR) to attempt to offer a scientifically credible explanation for religious thinking. According to CSR theory, the themes covered in religious thought and stories are not only relevant but can stand the test of time if they prove to serve a functional role to the community. This functionality usually comes in the form of teaching values or solutions to problems and situations that this particular group has encountered over time.

Review of the Literature

A review of prior research studies was conducted to assess what had previously been covered regarding Santeria healers' perspectives on psychological constructs of the mind. All prior research on Santeria has focused more so on ethnography and specifics of the religious and spiritual practices of this tradition. Santeria healers can be grouped under the classification of folk healers, which is a topic that has been covered more thoroughly when it comes to psychological constructs. This section of the literature review will focus on prior studies and

research that has been done on folk healers within Hispanic and Caribbean cultures, which have the most similarities or overlapping belief systems with the Santeria faith.

Perception of the Ego

Ethnographic studies completed on Santeria healers in Miami and Spiritist healers in Brazil found that healers in these traditions believed that there was an interconnection between the physical, spiritual, and psychological (Albus, 2014; Rios, 2010). Santeria and Spiritist healers, conceptualized the mind as being influenced by spiritual forces such as spirits or the orishas. Conceptualizing the self from the perspectives of folk and indigenous healers requires one to take into consideration the concept of the soul or spirituality. Indigenous healers view healing as requiring the integration of the body, mind, and soul because it exists within a symbiotic system.

In addition to the belief in spiritual forces on the ego, folk healers, specifically Spiritist healers view a person's past life as playing a role in their current mental state (Albus, 2014; Magliocco, 2014; Rios, 2010). Despite this belief, Spiritists healers still considered a person to be equipped with personal volition and capable of overcoming any problems that they may encounter during this lifetime. For example, while a person may have a proclivity towards certain health conditions (due to their past life experiences), it was their responsibility to change these conditions. "An individual always has the choice of transforming these tendencies and/or influences into action or not" (Rios, 2010, p. 180). Spiritist healers like Santeria healers believe that external spiritual influences can affect a person's psychological functioning, but also believe in human beings' ability in overcoming these conditions using the techniques and practices outlined in their doctrines.

Personal & Divine Consciousness

  Studies done on indigenous and folk healers have determined that these healers conceptualize consciousness as existing both in the form of personal and divine consciousness (Ademuleya, 2007; Beliso-De Jesús, 2014; Brandon, 2012; Clement, 2016; Ekanola, 2006; Loue, 2017; Magliocco, 2012; Viarnés, 2007). Human beings are seen as having their own thoughts, emotions, and perceptions, however these mental processes are not strictly their own, as there are other consciousnesses, in the form of gods and spirits that comingle with the personal consciousness. This idea of dual consciousness (consisting of both the individual and the divine) is the result of the belief in causality between spiritual forces and human mental processes (Albus, 2014; Magliocco, 2012; Rios, 2010). This belief in a dual consciousness between the individual and the divine has been documented in case studies done via various cultures, ranging from Europe, South and Central America and the Caribbean (Albus, 2014; Luchetti et. al, 2011; Magliocco, 2012; Moreira-Almeida & Koss-Chioino, 2009; Nxumalo et. al, 2011).

Thoughts and Emotions

  Like the idea of duality in consciousness, folk healers approach the idea of thoughts and emotions as existing both in the mind and the body. For Santeria healers this is exemplified by the concept of ashe, a term the refers to energy that is created by both the person and the divine. Santeria healers perceive that bodily substances such as nail clippings, hair and blood can be used to capture a person's ashe and thereby be used to influence their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Albus, 2014). In this instance, the elements of the physical body (even if no longer connected to the person), is still connected to a person's consciousness, as the possessor of these items is believed to be able to influence the person's thoughts, perceptions, and emotional states.

The individual is also able to create and manipulate this energy through concentrated thought, prayer, meditation or subconsciously through intense emotions (Navarro, 2013).

Folk healers in different traditions recognize the effects of emotions on a person's physical and psychological functioning, however there is no set agreement on their effects. In Northern Brazil, folk healers were noted as believing that strong emotions were an impetus for illness (Rebhun, 1994). When describing the act of suppressing anger or irritation they described it as akin to "swallowing frogs" (Rebhun, 1994, p. 360). This idiom captures the uncomfortable physiological response to this action as well as alludes to the idea of internal contamination, with the symbol of ingesting a potentially poisonous animal. Italian healers on the other hand, viewed intense emotions as acting as a catalyst for healer. In the *pizzica tarantata* ritual, ecstatic dancing, leads to intense emotions, which bring the participant into a state of altered consciousness which is used to heal physiological conditions such as spider bites (Trulsson, 2014). In the case of folk healers from the Caribbean, Brazilian or Italian traditions, some believe emotions to cause harm and others believe it act as a means to healing or transmuting of energy.

Healers who believe that emotions can be used for healing often use rituals involving altered states of consciousness. Altered states are perceived as being healing due to the belief that this state leads to a connection with the spiritual realm. In Western psychiatry, these states are viewed as pathological and stemming from psychosis, while traditional healers recognize that these states serve a purpose and are transitory. A study conducted by Hernandez-Sutton (2011), found that when assessed using psychiatric measures such as the MMPI and LCS-36, traditional healers met criteria for schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders. Despite meeting the criteria for these psychological disorders, the participants studied (Spiritist healers practicing in Puerto

Rico), showed no signs of distress. The study's findings suggested that these individuals, while symptomatic by Western standards, had found a way of transforming these symptoms and elevating themselves to the role of a healer. In these instances, the ability to experience these altered states while remaining grounded in the waking world is seen as the healer's ability to transcend liminality.

Spirituality and Psychotherapy

Previous research published on spirituality and psychotherapy has focused mainly on the spiritual techniques and procedures that have been integrated into psychotherapy, such as mindfulness, gratitude and even breathing exercises such as those utilized in practices such as yoga (Audet et al., 2017; Blom et al., 2015; Delgado, 1978; Jones et al., 2001; Kleinman, 1980; Lucchetti et al., 2011; Sandage, 2012). While these techniques are rooted in spirituality and religious practice, in terms of psychotherapy, their spiritual qualities are stripped. Psychotherapies that are rooted in treating existential issues have also been shown to benefit from the inclusion of spiritual principles when treating clients struggling with loss, death, and attempting to find meaning during a difficult life transition (Sandage et al., 2020).

Existing literature has focused on two primary components in terms of indigenous religious systems and psychology. The first being the utilization of these healing systems as compared to modern healing systems and their subsequent treatment outcomes. A study completed by Nxumalo et al. (2011), found that more than half the population in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia utilized spiritual indigenous healers. Data was gathered by conducting structured interviews and anonymous surveys on a sample of nearly five thousand participants.

Prior research has determined that patients who utilized both treatment modalities of modern and traditional healers had fewer rates of decompensation and longer periods of stability (as measured by the subsequent hospitalizations after treatment) than those who utilized only one system (Audet et al., 2017; Blom et al., 2015; Luchetti et al., 2011; Moreira-Almeida & Koss-Chioino, 2009). It is possible that the effectiveness of these treatments is due to how indigenous healers conceptualize psychopathology as compared to their Western counterparts. One such difference is the perspective of psychopathology as transitory and as a potential opportunity for growth and transformation. A study completed by Moreira-Almeida and Koss-Chioino (2009) collected qualitative data from 49 Spiritist healers and 22 patients to categorize the indigenous healer's conceptualization of psychopathology as well as to document the patient's experience with this form of healing. Treating the patient in a safe space that was free of judgment while at the same time removing them from the environment that made them sick appeared to be an essential component in the effectiveness of these treatment modalities.

Indigenous healers also deviate from Western medicine when it comes to diagnosis. Conditions such as the Latin American *susto* are currently being measured according to the Western understandings of illness and do not take into consideration the cultural beliefs on the causation of psychopathology that would be relevant to this condition. It was determined from the results of a study on Mexican folk healers, that a diagnosis of *susto* was seen as stemming from four possibilities (Burr, 2013). The first being environmental causation. This is most closely aligned with the Western medical model. In addition to this one possible cause, they also included mystical, animistic, and magical causations. Mystical causation was correlated to the consequences of a person's immoral behaviors, animistic to supernatural forces such as spirits, and magical causation to witchcraft.

In the case of mystical causation, it is of note that this is not exclusive to Mexican folk healers. Moral character and personal responsibility are also emphasized in other folk traditions when it comes to illness and healing. African Yoruba and European Spiritist traditions also believe that immoral behaviors (specifically those which are self-serving and detrimental to the community) will result in bad luck, stagnation, and illness. It is possible in the case of the Yoruba that this stems from African traditional values that promote community interdependence and cooperation (Fayemi, 2009; Gbadegesin, 1983; Menkiti, 1984). Spiritism, which is linked more closely to Christian mysticism pulls on the idea of sin as it is outlined in the Bible as an explanation of causation for illness as a repercussion of immoral behavior.

Taking into consideration the cultural and spiritual understanding of the causation behind illness can help professionals better conceptualize the diagnosis and treatment of certain disorders. DSM-V disorders such as PTSD can explain trauma from a Western perspective, however it lacks consideration for cultural factors that may affect how the patient is perceiving their experience. The DSM-V has attempted to cover this phenomenon in the section titled cultural concepts of distress (Lewis-Fernández & Kirmayer, 2019). Other critics of the DSM, claim that its medicalization of disorders is evidence of the omission of culture, especially those who perceive illness to extend past the medical model (Ecks, 2015).

According to a study done on Ecuadorian shamans, healers in this tradition do not classify their practices as religious, but rather view their practices as stemming from an understanding of, and manipulation of ancient technology (Pendelton, 2014). To the shaman, healing takes place by altering the inner energetic fields of the patient, which may have fallen out of equilibrium due to a traumatic or upsetting event. The participants emphasized that faith was not needed to conduct the healing, rather knowledge on the appropriate techniques required to

manipulate this energy or life source until it readjusted to its homeostatic state. This idea of thoughts and emotions being tied to energetic forces is shared by Santeria healers and their concept of ashe.

In contrast to the perspectives of the healer, other studies have explored the perspectives of persons diagnosed with psychiatric disorders and who are part of cultures that utilize indigenous healers. Clement (2016) conducted a qualitative study using ten persons of Trinidadian descent, who had also been diagnosed with either schizophrenia, bipolar, depression, or anxiety to gather information on their perspectives on mental health. Most participants agreed that mental health may have spiritual or mental roots. When asked to clarify what was considered mental as opposed to spiritual, one participant responded that if a mental health issue is due to mental issues, it is due to a dysfunction with the brain. If it was spiritual, it was due to the interference of the Devil or the effects of witchcraft. There was no clear distinction of how they determined an illness to be mental or spiritual, but they did place their faith in indigenous healers to determine the cause and appropriate treatment for their conditions. When it came to their perspectives on psychiatrists and psychotherapists, there was much less confidence in these healers, due to their lack of consideration of the idea that spiritual forces may be a part of the cause of their condition. Subsequently, many participants showed resistance to seeking out a psychiatrist over an indigenous healer.

<div align="center">**Synthesis of the Research Findings**</div>

The current research that is available on the topic of Santeria is limited mostly to the understanding of the mythology and rudimentary explanations of some initiations and rituals that are performed. Most research has been written from the understanding of the Yoruba faith as it is practiced in Nigeria, not as part of the diaspora, outside of Africa (Ademuleya, 2007; Ekanola,

2006; Eyiogbe, 2015; Fayemi, 2009; Gbadegesin, 1983; Menkiti, 1984). Detailed information is

lacking since more in-depth information is reserved for initiates and followers of the religion.

Outsiders seeking to gather information on this gnostic knowledge are only provided with basic

and superficial information. There has been some research done on the major ceremonies of the

Santeria faith (mano de Orunla, los Guerreros, and kariocha) however many details are omitted

to preserve secrets of the faith (Brandon, 1991; Brown, 1989; de Rothewelle, 2021; dos Ventos,

2008; Friedman, 1982; Lindsay, 1996; Loue, 2017; Mason, 1994; Murphy, 2012; Pokines, 2015

& Siedlak, 2018b). Additionally, there has been research done on the divination systems of the

Yoruba faith, however in-depth documentation regarding interventions is limited (Brandon,

2012; Eyiogbe, 2015; Hagedorn, 2000; Jones et al., 2001; Kleinman, 1980; Olupona & Abiodun,

2016).

Information on the intersect between this spiritual practice and psychological constructs,

must be inferred based on prior research done on similar indigenous spiritual systems. The

closest concept which has come to address the topic of the mind, or the psyche is the Yoruba

concept of the ori, however, this term is also used to describe the soul and destiny of the person.

This concept is better suited to fit a spiritual standpoint than that of a psychological one

(Ademuleya, 2007; Ekanola, 2006; Eyiogbe, 2015; Gbadegesin, 1983). It is the goal of this study

to contribute data and further understanding of the spiritual beliefs of this community and how

they apply to the understanding of psychological processes from this population. This data can

help to further help clinicians understand the experiences of clients suffering from emotional or

psychological disturbances within the scope of their phenomenological experience as a

practitioner of Santeria.

Regarding other indigenous healers in the Hispanic or Caribbean communities, there is a recurring theme of a belief in spirituality and mental health being connected (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014; Bettelheim, 2005; Delgado, 1978; Diaz-Quiñones, 1997; Horta, 2004; Koprivica, 2010; Toutaine, 2016; Wirtz, 2009). In the case of Ecuadorian shamans, this spiritual force was seen less as a case of religiosity and more so as a form of metaphysical science that required the transmutation of energy to heal the client (Pendelton, 2014). In the studies involving Trinidadian patients or Spiritist healers in Brazil and Puerto Rico, spirits were seen to be active forces affecting the mental and emotional states of the patients. In all cases, neither the shaman nor the patient felt helpless in resolving the crisis (Blom et al., 2015; Clement, 2016; Hernandez-Sutton, 2011; Lucchetti et al., 2011; Moreira-Almeida & Koss-Chioino, 2009; Rios, 2010). Mental states (including illness) were perceived to be dynamic and subject to change with the right interventions, unlike Western psychiatry's perspective, which can be bleaker. Once a person is diagnosed with a disorder such as schizophrenia, the condition is considered chronic, requiring a lifetime of medication and intervention from the practitioner, whereas the shaman would see the condition as transitory and the person capable of making a full recovery.

Critique of Previous Research Methods

Prior research on Santeria and indigenous healers has focused on collecting data via ethnographic or case study formats (Albus, 2014; Audet et al., 2017; Blom et al., 2015; Burr, 2013; Clement, 2016; Lucchetti et al., 2011; Nxumalo et al., 2011; Rios, 2010). While these formats allow for the collection of information that is relevant to fields such as cultural anthropology, the focus is more so on the observable phenomenon, rather than the internal processes, thoughts, and experiences of the participants. By using a phenomenological methodology, this study aims to contribute additional data to what is already known about this

population. The focus will be on the participants' perspectives and experiences with these concepts. Some research has been conducted on indigenous healers and their beliefs on healing and spirituality, however, there has not been any prior research done on how these classify and conceptualize the mechanics or psychological constructs behind these healing practices.

Other limitations of prior research include the use of structured interviews and surveys (Albus, 2014; Hernandez-Sutton, 2011; Moreira-Almeida & Koss-Chioino, 2009; Navarro, 2013; Pendelton, 2014). This format limits the amount of information collected, as the questions do not allow for the participant to elaborate on their answers, or for the researcher to ask additional follow-up questions. By structuring this study using semi-structured conversational interview questions, participants will be able to speak more freely, as well as be encouraged to elaborate on any other topics that may come up organically during the conversation.

Summary

Santeria's history as part of the African diaspora and development as a result of religious intolerance and transculturation is well documented in the literature currently available on the matter. Some information is also available on some of the basic beliefs and initiations of this faith, including their belief in spiritual forces such as ancestral spirits and *orishas* and the role they play in a person's daily life. Minimal information is available on specific rituals because this information is only available to practitioners of the faith. Prior research has focused on ritual processes such as the use of bata drumming and understanding the role of possession and animal sacrifice in rituals (Boaz, 2019; Brandon, 1991; Brettschneider, 2010; Friedman, 1982; Gonzalez Perez, 2003; Hagedorn, 2000; Murphy, 2012; Navarro, 2013; Otero, 2007; Pokines, 2015; Sheehan, 2009; & Viarnés, 2007).

There is currently no prior research, exploring Santeria healers' understanding and perspectives the mind. By exploring the phenomenological experiences and perspectives of Santeria healers regarding psychological constructs and processes it is the hope of this study to further what is known about this population and their belief systems as well as increase cultural competency when it comes to treating persons who belong to this faith.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs and perspectives of the mind as understood by Santeria traditional healers. Currently there is no existing data on this population's conceptualization of psychological constructs. The closest research has come to exploring this topic has been through ethnographic studies of the spiritual concept of the *ori*, which has been classified as encompassing, the physical head, mind, soul and even human destiny (Ademuleya, 2007; Beliso-De Jesús, 2014; Brandon, 2012; Delgado, 1978; Ekanola, 2006; Eyiogbe, 2015; Gbadegesin, 1983; Hagedorn, 2000; Hearn, 2009; Karade, 2020; Kirby, 1985; Kleinman, 1980; Loue, 2017; Mena, 1998; Murphy, 2012; Olupona & Abiodun, 2016; Siedlak, 2018b). While this research has helped to better define what is meant by this term, it still does not answer the question of how this population conceptualizes the mind (emotions, personality, and cognitions). Data was collected using a phenomenological approach, which places a greater emphasis on the internal, lived-in experiences and perspectives of the participants rather than rely solely on the researcher's observations.

There was a need for research in this are due to the limited information that is currently available on this topic. Prior research conducted on this population has focused on ritual processes and spirituality rather than from the scope of psychology (Ademuleya, 2007; Beliso-De Jesús, 2014; Brandon, 2012; Delgado, 1978; Ekanola, 2006; Eyiogbe, 2015; Gbadegesin, 1983; Hagedorn, 2000; Hearn, 2009; Karade, 2020; Kirby, 1985; Kleinman, 1980; Loue, 2017; Mena, 1998; Murphy, 2012; Olupona & Abiodun, 2016; Siedlak, 2018b). The literature review covered in the previous chapter, demonstrated that most prior studies done were conducted using ethnography or case study research designs (Albus, 2014; Audet et al., 2017; Blom et al., 2015;

Burr, 2013; Clement, 2016; Hernandez-Sutton, 2011; Lucchetti et al., 2011; Moreira-Almeida &

Koss-Chioino, 2009; Navarro, 2013; Nxumalo et al., 2011; Pendelton, 2014; Rios, 2010), which

poses the issue that the data collected was presented strictly from the perspectives and

observations of the researcher. By using a phenomenological approach, this study provides a

more all-encompassing presentation of data regarding this topic.

Research Question

The research question used while conducting this study was, how do healers of the

syncretic Afro-Cuban tradition of Santeria practicing in the United States, describe the nature

and meaning of the mind?

Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative methodology utilized a phenomenological

research design. Phenomenology was selected as the research design for this study because the

focus was on understanding of the mind from the perspective of Santeria traditional healers. The

philosophy behind phenomenology stems from the ideas of Hegel and Husserl, who believed that

knowledge was dependent on consciousness and on the assigning of meaning from lived

experiences. According to Hegel, consciousness refers to "the science of describing what one

perceives, senses and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience" (Polkinghorne,

1989, p. 26). Consciousness is the main mechanism used in attempting to gather data, in the form

of descriptions of perceptions, reflections and memories of a particular experience.

Phenomenology calls these descriptions structures which define the characteristics that classify a

phenomenon.

Consciousness and subsequent classification of structures will vary from person to person

due to prior experiences, biases, or the cultural framework from which they are perceiving and

interacting with the phenomenon being studied. It is the role of the researcher to analyze this data, and strip it of any redundancy to find its core meaning and essence.

Other qualitative psychological approaches assume that consciousness is the result of "mechanically learned responses to stimuli" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 44). Phenomenology on the other hand, argues that consciousness is an activity that is propelled forth by intention and active processes such as memory, perception and imaginative varying. With this approach, greater emphasis is placed on the internal processes leading to the creation of meaning units, when attempting to integrate and understand interactions with a particular phenomenon. Even if an object or phenomenon exists outside the individual it cannot be understood outside the scope of the observer's perception (Moustakas, 1994).

The study utilized Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological model, which uses a four-step approach to analyze data (Moustakas, 1994). The first step of Moustakas's model uses the process of epoche to set aside pre-judgments and opens the interview with an unbiased receptive presence. The second step is defined as phenomenological reduction where descriptions of observed phenomenon are collected and categorized into textural and structural categories. The third stage, imaginative variation builds on the observations from the second stage and helps to further explore meaning and similarities between the experiences of members of a shared population (Turley et al., 2016). The final stage is to formulate a composite description based on the integrated experiences of the participants studied, connecting both personal and universal meaning units.

Data was collected using an informal conversational interview structure. As outlined by Atieno (2009), in qualitative research, the primary instrument in data collection is the researcher. This study followed this approach in the use of the researcher as the source of data collection and

analysis. Data was collected using open ended questions, relying on the "spontaneous generation of questions in the nature as an unstructured interview" (Paulson, 2008, p. 436). Purposeful and snowball sampling was used to gather study participants.

<center>**Target Population and Sample**</center>

Population

The population used for this study was Santeria healers practicing in the United States. This is a distinct group, as Santeria is practiced in other countries, and can take on different manifestations depending on where it is practiced. Santeria healers are categorized into two groups, santeros/santeras and babalawos. The first group refers to a class of healers that is accessible to both males and females in the religion. The latter group, babalawos, is a title only available to male practitioners. Babalawos are part of a sect within Santeria that work directly with the orisha Orunla.

Because of the secretive nature of this community, it is not known how many persons in the United States either practice this religion or are initiated and practicing as healers. Lefever (1996) estimated that 500,000 (about half of the Cubans living in the United States) were practicing the religion. Prior ethnographic or phenomenological studies done with this population in the form of structured interviews, had sample sizes that ranged from 20 to 30 participants (Albus, 2014). This study utilized a sample size of eight participants.

Sample

The primary inclusion criteria for this sample were that participants be initiated healers in the Santeria tradition (either as a santero/santera or babalawo). Other casual practitioners who were not initiated into the religion or practicing in the role of a traditional healer were not included in the sample. Additionally, only participants who were practicing in the United States

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were included in this sample. Practitioners of the traditional Yoruba religion as it is practiced in Nigeria were also excluded, due to the fact that while Santeria originates from the Yoruba religion, it diverges enough in its beliefs and ritual practices that it is classified as its own distinct religious system.

Procedures

Participant Selection

Participants were scouted from public social media accounts such as Youtube and Instagram that post educational videos and content featuring information on the Santeria faith. Most of these accounts are run by initiated Santero priest and priestess or babalawos. Purposeful and snowball sampling was used to gather study participants. Potential participants were messaged directly via their social media accounts. Snowball sampling was implemented by networking with Santeria healers who were readily available and willing to participate (Patton, 2015). These persons were used as a source for other referrals to potential participants who met the criteria for participation.

Protection of Participants

To protect the identity of participants, all identifying information was omitted from the data collected. Files were be titled, "interview1, interview2". The interview was conducted in a private office where no one else was present or within listening range. Participants were asked to sign into a secure online meeting room via Zoom that required a password to enter. Data was analyzed at the same site as it is collected. The office where the interview was conducted and where data was analyzed met HIPAA compliance for the double lock rule.

Data Collection

The recruitment process began with sending a direct message to Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube accounts that featured educational videos posted by initiated Santeria healers. The initial message served the purpose of introducing myself to the participant, explaining the nature of the study and sharing the recruitment flyer. A copy of the recruitment flyer in both English and Spanish was provided to participants, and they were encouraged to share it with other persons within their circle who may be interested in participating and who qualified for the study. All communication was online, and no direct face-to-face contact took place. Participants were emailed the informed consent forms via DocuSign to review prior to agreeing to participate in the study. A phone call was conducted to go over the nature of the study and address any questions or concerns the participant may have had before agreeing to participate. At least 2 days before the study, the participant was provided with the form again via email. A second opportunity was given to ask any questions or address any concerns.

Data Analysis

The steps from Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological method that were utilized in this study for data analysis were epoche, transcendental phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meaning and essences. The first step in phenomenological data analysis is what Moustakas terms epoche. During this phase, "we set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). It is important for the researcher to be aware of their prior beliefs and preconceptions to not ask leading questions or seek out answers that confirm or validate their beliefs. The goal of phenomenological research is to discover and elucidate an observed phenomenon, not to prove or disprove a particular thought or idea.

Once prior preconceptions have been identified, and measures taken to separate these beliefs from the analysis, the researcher can begin the process of transcendental phenomenological reduction. This refers to the process of "describing in textual language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object, but also the internal act of consciousness, the experience as such, the rhythm and relationship between phenomenon and the self" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90). The goal of this reduction process is to present and analyze the data gathered from the study in a way that reflects not only the observed phenomenon, but the reported experiences of the participants involved.

Descriptions are composed of two categories, textural and structural. Textural refers to descriptions based on the direct narratives collected from participants. Structural descriptions on the other hand, refer to how the participants' experiences fit into larger universal themes such as "time, space, relationship to self and to others" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). This is closely tied to the final stage of analysis in Moustakas's methodology, which is the synthesis of meaning and essences. During this phase, the researcher attempts to consolidate the collected descriptions of the shared experiences of a population to find common themes and patterns that are unique to their worldview.

Imaginative variation uses varying frames of references based on the reports of participants' narratives as well as previously gathered data on the subject to develop new conceptualizations and meaning to the observed phenomenon. Imaginative variation gives the researcher some creative freedom in creating a new understanding of a previously observed phenomenon, by combining data that was gathered during the study with what is currently known about the topic. During this phase, the researcher makes inferences and deductions based on the combined sources of data.

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Instruments

The Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher included conducting interviews with Santeria healers in the community with the goal of collecting data on their understanding of psychological constructs. I was in a unique position to conduct this research as I had experience working with this population and had access to persons within this community who were willing to speak to me due to our shared cultural background. This population is notoriously secretive and weary of disclosing information about their beliefs to "outsiders" therefore it has been difficult in the past for researchers to approach this group to gather data due to lack of accessibility.

My prior understanding about this topic, regarding the research question was that Santeria practitioners conceptualized the mind as being influenced by spiritual forces such as a person's patron orisha, spirits or ancestral spirits known as eggun. I had had previous conversations with Santeria healers through my work as a psychotherapist, where a person's personality quirks were attributed to their being a child of a particular orisha. I was also under the impression that they conceptualized persons suffering from mental health issues such as bipolar disorder as being under the influence of emotionally volatile spirits usually *indios* or *gitana* spirits.

Guiding Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me your story about how you became a healer?

   Rationale for Question: This question will help to start building rapport with the participant by giving them an opportunity to speak about themselves. It also offers the participant to share his personal experiences with this spiritual system and their experiences both as a healer and person healed.

2. Do you think the mind plays a role in healing?

Rationale for Question: To gather data on the participant's views and perspectives on the connection between the mind and their role as a healer.

3. How did your understanding of the mind change since becoming a healer?

Rationale for Question: This question is geared towards understanding how the participant's views or experiences have changed or evolved over the course of being outside of this population and their worldview to being an active participant of this religious system.

4. How would you describe the effects of a patron orisha on a person's mind?

Rationale for Question: It is a common belief in Santeria, that your patron orisha, affects a person's personality and temperament. For example, children of "Chango" are considered to be fiery and passionate, while children of Oshun are considered to be preoccupied with vanity and beauty. This phenomenon has not been explored further in scholarly articles; however, it is well known within the community. This question will attempt to explore this phenomenon further and contribute this missing piece of information to the current scientific base.

5. Does the mind exist on an individual level? How would you describe it?

Rationale for Question: In Santeria the word for the mind is ori which roughly translates to the head. It is believed that one has a certain alignment and path directly connected with one's ori. However, there are outside influences such as a patron orisha or ancestral spirits that can also affect a person's mental state. Therefore, Santeria practitioners believe that ori is essentially the basic canvas of the psyche, which can be influenced and altered depending on spiritual forces (Ekanola, 2006).

6. When is a person assigned their patron orisha? How do they discover who their

   patron orisha is?

   Rationale for Question: The initiation of Ikofa or Mano de Orunla is the ceremony in

which a participant consults with a high priest, or babalawo, who reveals who is their

patron orisha as well as to tell them what sign under Ifa they have been born under. Their

256 odu which outlines trials and tribulations the initiate will experience throughout their

life, as well as what helpful orishas or spirits walk with the initiate and will help them

along their path

7. How do healers in this tradition approach situations in which the person is

   experiencing problematic behaviors or mental problems?

   Rationale for Question: Orishas in the Santeria pantheon, much like in the Greek

pantheon have both positive and negative qualities. It is believed that often these negative

qualities can influence a person's temperament or behaviors. For example, children of

Chango are often characterized as hot headed and having a proclivity towards drinking

and reckless behaviors. As a solution to this, santeros may suggest ritual procedures that

either subdue the orisha or help to refresh the head to alleviate the influence of the orisha

on the person.

8. How do Santeria healers describe the influence of other spiritual forces on a person's

   mind?

   Rationale for Question: In Santeria, orishas are not the only forces that influence a

person's state of mind. In addition to orishas, ancestral spirits, eggun, can also affect a

person's mental state and personality. "In Yoruba diasporas "each person's body, set of

vessel altars, and sacred paraphernalia thus embody the accumulating presence of a dozen or more gods, spirits of the non-kin dead, and ancestors" (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014, p. 517).

9. How would you describe the Santeria ritual of "rogacion de la cabeza?" Why is this ritual performed and how would you describe the effects of this ritual on the person's mind?

    Rationale for Question: Rogacion de la cabeza is one of the basic rituals performed to "refresh the head" that is prescribed when a person is describing symptoms of mental uneasiness, depression, or discontent (Loue, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

The proposed population for this study was Santeria traditional healers working within the United States. Participants recruited for this study were provided with IRB approved documentation, describing the nature of the study and with an explanation of all efforts that were put in place to protect their anonymity. Healers within this tradition are usually native Spanish speakers, so all information was offered in both English and Spanish. The proposed population was not considered to be an at-risk population.

Special consideration was taken in upholding the *Belmont Report* and APA Code of Ethics. The principle of respect for persons was upheld by gathering data from persons in a way that was not intrusive and was respectful of their views and beliefs. All efforts were made to minimize risk and optimize the benefits to the community (principles of beneficence and justice). Additionally, informed consent was provided in both English and Spanish to ensure that participants fully understood the nature and context of the study. This researcher met with an IRB consultant on November 13, 2020, for further clearance regarding conducting interviews in Spanish. IRB authorized for this researcher to conduct the interviews in Spanish and translate

materials back into English. Participants who qualified for the study, were provided with informed consent documentation, as well as received orientation on the study. Any questions or concerns the participant had, were addressed by the researcher prior to conducting the interview. Informed consent forms were reviewed by IRB in both English and Spanish before being presented to participants.

Summary

This study utilized a phenomenological research methodology to gather information on the perspectives of Santeria healers regarding the mind. It explored their beliefs and understanding on constructs such as thoughts, emotions, and personality. While prior research has focused more so on the cultural, historical, and spiritual aspects of this population, this study approached this population from the scope of psychology. The study found that all participants interviewed, believed that mental processes acted in symbiosis with spiritual forces. Participants described a belief in the influence of orishas and spirits as influencing the mind, while also believing the person could create and transmit energy via their thoughts or powerful emotions. Through concentrated effort (either using witchcraft or prayer) a person could harness the power of these thoughts to heal or to harm.

The Santeria healers interviewed placed a great emphasis on personal responsibility. Not only did this apply to deflecting the influences of spiritual entities that may cause harm but also with being mindful of one's thought processes. Because they believed that negative thoughts or emotions, such as anger, sadness or jealousy could cause harm to the self or others, healers promoted regular spiritual cleansings, prayers and even psychotherapy as a means of controlling and managing these energies. The following chapter will present the data that was gathered and its subsequent analysis using Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological methodology.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction: The Study and the Researcher

I first became interested in studying the beliefs of the Santeria community in 2016 after becoming licensed as a mental health counselor working in South Florida. Many of my clients are of Caribbean descent, and either practice or believe in Santeria or other folk religions. Growing up in Miami and being raised in a Cuban American household, Santeria has always been a presence in my life. Driving through any Hispanic neighborhood, one will find botanicas dotted throughout shopping plazas. From the outside, you can see several colorful and dramatic religious statues, ranging from Catholic saints to more Afrocentric or Native American iconography, potted plants, colorful bottles of perfumes and potions, and other spiritual objects.

As a child I did not know of anyone who was initiated into the religion, however I knew of plenty of people who dabbled or believed in the power of Santeria healers or espiritistas. One such person was my grandmother, who despite identifying as a Catholic, had on multiple occasions consulted with Santeria healers. Growing up, I can still recall the reports of how a crisis was averted or a miracle performed by these healers. Much like the participants' interviewed for this study, I feel this religion found me rather than I find it.

The focus of chapter four will be the presentation of the data for this research study. The chapter will cover the demographics of the eight participants used in the study, the methodology used during the data analysis, followed by the presentation of the data analysis results. Data was analyzed using Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Data was presented in both textural and structural descriptions, followed by a synthesis of meaning under the heading "textural-structural" descriptions, as this methodology dictates.

Description of the Sample

The study's sample consisted of eight participants who were recruited via social media platforms and using snowball sampling. The age range of the participants ranged from 30 to 65 years old. Five participants were Hispanic males, initiated as santeros/olorisha, one Black (non-Hispanic) male, initiated as a santero/olorisha, one White (non-Hispanic), initiated as a babalawo and one Hispanic female initiated as a santera/olorisha. Three of the participants belonged to the same spiritual house, one being the padrino (godfather and oba oriate) and the two being his godchildren. Educational levels of participants ranged from high school to doctoral level (one participant was a licensed psychotherapist).

All participants selected were initiated in the Afro-Cuban tradition of Santeria. Participants who practiced the traditional Yoruba religion of which Santeria originates were excluded from the study, as there are significant differences between the beliefs and practices of these two traditions. Even though one originates from the other, over the course of time and as a result of the African diaspora, the two religious systems are considered distinct from one another. Five out of the eight participants reported having beliefs in spiritism and practicing this religion simultaneously with Santeria, while the other three reported practicing Santeria or Ifa exclusively. All participants were aware of the beliefs and practices of Palo Monte, however, none of the participants interviewed reported practicing or being initiated into this tradition.

Research Methodology Applied to the Data Analysis

The research methodology applied to data analysis was Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology. After the interviews were conducted and recorded, they were translated and transcribed. Phenomenological reduction was conducted, filtering through the transcriptions bracketing terms and meaning units that were significant to the research question (Moustakas,

1994). These meaning units were organized into similar patterns and then into themes. A textural description was written for each participant, describing in their words, the nature of their experience.   The four structural themes that were created utilizing the process of imaginative variation were the collective mind, destiny, personality, and the ori/liminal mind. Meaning units relating to the orishas, spirits, heaven or past live were classified under the collective mind theme. Any discussion about predestination were grouped under the theme of destiny. Descriptions of the mind that pertained to the individual that were independent of the collective mind were grouped under the theme of personality. Personal volition, free will and personal responsibility was also included in the theme of personality, as it made up parts of the individual's mental functioning, thoughts and behaviors that were autonomous from the collective mind. The theme of ori/liminal mind was used for meaning units relating to the ori or concepts involving a metaphysical bridge between the individual. The structural themes focused on the concepts of time, space and relationship to self and others. Finally, a synthesis of meaning was created blending both the textural and structural descriptions to create a composite description of the participant's experiences.

Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis

The following section will present data collected and the results of analysis. Meaning units were extracted from the transcripts and organized into themes and patterns. The data will be presented first by outlining the meaning units and their corresponding themes, followed by textural, structural, and textural-structural descriptions of each participant's narrative. Participants were labeled participant 1 (P1) through participant 8 (P8). The textural description will focus on the description of the participants, while the structural will focus on explaining how these descriptions fit into the phenomenological structures of time, space, relationship to self and

others. The textural-structural descriptions will create a composite of textual and structural

meanings presented.

Participant 1 Textural Themes and Meaning Units

Collective Mind

- "And then the man tells me the following words, 'So look [participant], what is happening is that in this sign, Orunla wants you to walk these lands, so you can begin your path in this religion."

- "So he goes, 'look, commit to this. At times commitment is more valuable than the ability to complete something. Commit to Orunla, that if you are able to resolve these problems and you are able to do the ceremony, you will do it."

- "The saints don't do anything for us, the saints help us to attain and accomplish our goals."

- "The saint is going to help you to have the strength and volition to. Understand and process the reasons why you need to leave alcohol."

- "And in this the saints help to amplify, you understand? When you are in these kinds of things, with ceremonies, with cleansings, with proceedings, it helps to change the energetic charge of the person, that many times is not even his. Sometimes it is external factors, the things that are interfering with energic charge of the person."

- "This person who sits before you, I don't resemble any traits of a typical child of Obatala. Yet Olofi has placed Obatala as my patron orisha because there are a lot of lessons regarding Obatala that I need to learn."

- "Once that primary Orisha takes its position, on the third day, a 2nd orisha will manifest, sharing that they too walk with the person and influence their life. So of course, you will have characteristics as well since they are your companion throughout life."

- "Our patron orisha cannot influence over the decisions we make in life because like I mentioned earlier, we are the ones who make decisions on how we do things. But they can guide us to intuitions, premonitions, with desires, with that strange thing that in some moment…you know those random decisions that we suddenly make on a whim. It is almost unconscious. It's like a suggestion that comes through our patron orisha."

- "Humans are spiritual beings living through a physical existence"

- "So, what happens, many of the energies that stay behind as a result of untimely death, without being processed, let's say it that way, because for one reason or another, the

person doesn't ascend, they didn't finish the process of the evolution. They end up attaching themselves to a son, their partner, to a house, they attachment themselves to whatever, human beings will anchor themselves to something ok? So that is where the obsessed spirits come from."

- "I've had two cases of already of two women who have been attacked by these kinds of spirits….and they have physical manifestations of these attacks."

- "There are cases where the spirit will try to influence the person to commit suicide too, so that the person will join them again, thinking, ok, we are together now, we can continue evolving together."

- "Through Ifa, a doll is constructed that has the person's characteristics and smell so that the spirit will become attached to the doll and a ritual is done in order to distract the spirit and confuse it, so that it torments the doll instead of the person."

- "Some people see this as the silver string or other things that keep us connected to this spiritual world."

- I have seen cases in persons where despite knowing who their patron orisha is, and they have been told what they should not do, and they keep doing it ok? There are people who bring baggage from past lives.

- Even so, with my prior life, there are reflections of qualities from this prior incarnation. And because of this I drag characteristics that are Oggun's. Why? Because in a prior life, I lived through his lessons, God only knows who many years. So, this of course reflects in what you were in the past, what you are now and what you come into contact with now in life.

- According to Yoruba mythology, the experience that I, you, all human beings are receiving is a training camp, it's like a military boot camp, where we are submitted to numerous negative situations, with the intention of improving and evolving our spiritual qualities.

- "According to Yoruba theology. The person has a universal understanding and what they learned in this life is added to their understanding."

- "All we know, the saints, the orishas, they all had lives, they learned and evolved and then chose not to continue to reincarnate"

- "There are different proceedings and techniques for determining this, let's call these rituals, that allow you to manipulate these energies and remove them from the person so that the person can function better."

- But when you are already involved in the ceremony, when it is you who see the process, when you're the one receiving the signs from the orishas, telling you what is going on, you understand. That's when you realize the magnitude of the manipulation of energy.

- "If it's an illness that is artificial, what I call manufactured, then yes, it is workable."

Destiny

- Well, look, like many people, I came to this religion in search of some sort of help, ok? I was going through a chapter in my life where the tools that I had available were not sufficient in order to find solutions.

- "And if I'm honest the religion found me, rather than I found the religion."

Ori/Liminal Mind

- "It is the second guardian angel. The part of myself that is up there, fights for me to stay on my path."

- "Ok so according to the concept of the Yoruba, human beings have something in their head called ori. Now adays there is a lot of diatribes of whether this is a deity or part of the human being itself. I understand it as both things. A part that is divine that forms the human being, ok?"

- "This deity [ori], to say it in some way, this part is very sensitive to energies, in Ocha, this is seen as the controlling over energies"

- "And that is one of the problems of religious people, to determine if what is happening is the result of internal or external origins that are affecting the person."

- "Because the ori is like an antenna. It is through the ori that we receive all the blessings that our patron orisha wants to give to us."

- "I see it as an interlocuter. As an intermediary between our consciousness, our physical world and what is our spirit and our emotions. Ok? It is an interlocuter of those two realities."

- "I always tell people; you need to find the source of your illness."

- "So essentially the rogacion de cabeza is a ritual that works with the person's ori to pacify it. That is a deity that needs to be in balance, something like a still lake."

- "If you are driving and crash, immediately your ori is agitated, because of the physical and psychological effects of crashing the car. If you are assaulted or robbed, your ori is thrown off balance. Why? Because of the physiological and psychological effects of the

fear of being attacked. So, one of the most important things we can do is keep the ori as calm and pacified as possible."

Personality

- "I had to learn a lot about how thoughts function and how logic functions, amongst ourselves to determine which were thoughts that were erroneous so that I could find my functional errors that were not letting me evolve as a human being."

- "If your ori is nourished by positive things, this helps you to realize and conceptualize things in a way that is positive. If your ori is fed in such a way that is negative, this will lead you to process things in a negative way."

- "It (the mind) influences optimism, yes, it influences hope, it influences your vision of what you want for the future, it influences what you can achieve in the future."

- "Their feelings of anguish and desperation go away" (in regard to the effects of paraldo ceremony)."

- "Many of the people to whom I have had the benefit of helping through this religion, end up realizing that their big problem is themselves, that their problem is here (points to head), not to say that the head controls the material world, because that would be a very exaggerated assertion, but it does influence."

- "When something that Eleggua says doesn't play out, it's because of the decisions the person makes."

- "What happens is the person takes certain decisions incorrectly despite what Eleggua has told them. Obviously, their future adjusts to every decision the person makes. If not, free will would not exist."

- "It is possible that what was prophesized won't come to pass, because the person manages to make decisions in time and evades that situation that is happening to them, that is being prophesized by Eleggua."

- "What happens, also what also exists is free will, that can never be taken out of the equation. I can be very much a child of Chango, Chango can talk to me about humility of the world but not listen to the internal processes that are going to take me to becoming a humble person. That is a material issue that is pending."

- "It is a combination of my faith with my actions."

- "She made sacrifice, put her faith but also did the necessary physical things."

- "Now if the illness is a result of the consequences of a person's actions, there is not much we can do."

Participant 1 Textural Description

P1 was a Hispanic male, initiated as a santero/olorisha. He reported having come to the religion after having been approached by a Santeria practitioner while undergoing a difficult period in his life (struggling with money). He reported that with his faith and willingness to participate in the initiations and sacrifices that were asked of him by the babalawo, he was able to overcome the difficulties he was experiencing. Despite describing having come into the religion by "fate" he put a great emphasis on personal responsibility and self-efficacy.

P1 reported that external spiritual forces can affect mental processes (be it spirits, energy/ashe, or the orishas themselves), however, the individual is still responsible for how they respond to these influences. He even goes so far as to explain how having a bad attitude or focusing on negative thoughts, draws negative spiritual forces to one's psyche. He describes these external spiritual forces as connected to but also independent from the individual. The connecting force is the person's ori, which is a concept that is associated with the physical head, soul, and a person's destiny.

Participant 1 Structural Description

The primary phenomenological structures that emerged from P1's descriptions of the mind were the concepts of relationship to self and others and space. P1 makes several references to the mind existing both on an individual level and on a collective level. On the individual level, the mind is seen as containing elements of free will and self-efficacy. Within this sphere, thoughts and emotions were also attributed. P1 emphasized that while thoughts and emotions could be affected by external factors such as spiritual forces (spirits, orishas, or magic/energy),

the responsibility still fell on the individual to behave correctly. From his perspective, when a person is plagued by spiritual or mental disturbances that are attributed to external contamination, say for example due to the effects of an obsessed spirit, the person is responsible for seeking out the appropriate treatment to remedy it.

Time and space were two other phenomenological structures that were prevalent in P1's narrative. When describing factors that contributed to personality traits, P1 described the belief that one drags traits and qualities from past lives into their current manifestation. This stems partly from Yoruba mythology which describes how a person (and even the orishas) live out multiple lives in order to evolve spiritually throughout several lifetimes. This is also reflected in the effects that a patron orisha has on the individual's mind. P1 outlines, how he was a child of Obatala, because he had certain experiences and lessons that he must learn tied to Obatala, but also carried traits of the orisha Oggun due to possibly having been Oggun's child in a prior life and therefore carrying over those qualities into the next life. In either case, P1 was adamant that the orisha's influence was there to guide the individual towards good and that negative traits or behaviors associated with a particular orisha's story were meant to act as a lesson and not an excuse for bad behavior.

Participant 1 Textural Structural Description

P1's conceptualization of the mind consisted of a three-tiered, interconnected model consisting of the collective mind, ori, and individual mind. The individual mind consisted of a person's thoughts, emotions, and free will. The individual mind was not perceived as existing as a tabula rasa, but rather a piece connected to a larger universal mind via a structure called "the ori." The collective mind and the ori were perceived as being both psychological and spiritual. The collective mind consisted of the idea of "heaven" where the orishas, spirits, and the soul of

the person existed, as well as a sort of akashic record of collective experiences. A person's past life experiences are stored here and have an influence on the individual's mind and personality in their current incarnation.

The ori was described as both the physical head/brain as well as a liaison between the individual and the divine (collective mind). According to P1, the orishas and spirits could reach the individual mind via the ori. If the ori was rested and calibrated, the person would be more receptive to receiving blessings from the divine. If the ori was not well cared for or disoriented it would reflect in the individual level in the form of depression or anxiety. The ori could be affected in several different ways, ranging from physical trauma to the head, to spiritual attacks or black magic. In either instance, the person was responsible for the care and maintenance of their ori, via the use of various rituals and cleansings, including the rogacion de la cabeza. This ritual involved cleansing the physical head with cooling items, such as coconut water to cool the head and recalibrate the ori. This ritual is used when the person is feeling mentally unwell or in preparation to receive an initiation and subsequent blessing from the orishas who reside in the sphere of the collective mind.

Participant 2 Textural Themes and Meaning Units

Collective Mind

- "So, we definitely attach certain traits that are different from each orisha."

- "For example, a lot of children of Yemaya, they are different people, different looks, but a lot of times it is like a lot of similarities in their personalities, that are traits that you're in…they are all different people, but they all act in the same manner or like it's exhibited."

- "This is prior to kariocha, you exhibit certain characteristics. And then after kariocha, I feel like because the ashe and all that stuff, then the person really begins to add up,

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amplifies what they exhibit out of that orisha based on gender roles, male or female, you know? Personal traits and all that stuff."

- "But the overall energy of the orisha, you still portray it forward."

- "A lot of people do exhibit certain traits that are enhanced after kariocha."

- "So, we as human beings, are a living manifestation of that orisha. Okay? So, I'm a living manifestation of Oshun and you will be a living manifestation of whomever, and I, our lives, is the orisha itself living through us. So that's why we exhibit characteristics."

- "But when the orisha, when the orisha is placed on the person's head, it enhances the connection. So, then you definitely, exhibit a lot more of the traits of that orisha, including also to some extent your parent in Ocha, because you parent in Ocha is very influential."

- "And your parenting orisha is a lot more influential than just your destiny and your, your way of life. And your parenting orisha is a lot more influential than like personality, your inner personality, because I have Oshun crowned, and I'm like really glamorous at some points and not so glamorous at other points, but everyone can tell I have Oshun at every point."

- "So, I feel like their, like albatori, will reflect on the outside, the destiny of the person, versus the secondary orisha will reflect like internally and characteristics of the person."

- "When the human comes to earth, they are already assigned to their albatori, a secondary parent and any other spirit guides and entities and things that walk with them and all that stuff."

- "And then that may create this disrespect between certain entities, because certain orishas are more cool than other entities."

- "People then get entities attached to them, that you called on to yourself, that you didn't know what you were calling on or how to deal with that."

- "And then that's when you end up with people with possessions and people going crazy and people acting all sorts of ways and their life getting all messed up and losing their job and losing their wife and…. but it's your fault, your spiritual fault because you're calling things that you shouldn't be calling on."

- "If it's a spirit revolting against you, obviously a spirit is non-corporal, and it will mess you up a lot quicker and easier."

- "You may have spirits, without light, dark spirits, whatever, which are definitely negative entities, which may be walking with you. You may just be walking down the supermarket and an entity attaches itself to you. You know? Or it may be sent to you by someone."

- "If you do have a spirit, you can go to an orisha to help take the spirit off, you know? Orisha is always going to be considered stronger than a spirit just by ashe."

Destiny

- "And then that becomes your body, which then will be…which is already packed up with all the experiences that you will have, like, you will have to break your leg at this age, because you know, whatever, you have to win the lottery at this age, or you have to go there….major things in life that will have to happen for that person. They might happen sooner, or it might happen later."

- "Because I was having a lot of health issues. My mom did more because of health reasons, more than anything."

Ori/Liminal Mind

- "As an olocha, we have, we are humans and we, you know we get sick, so we need to have whatever medication or whatever that only a doctor can give or somebody else. So, you have to be practical not everything is just religious. There is a fine line between being religious and fanatical."

- "Because if you're just depressed, then you know you may just take a white bath, or dress in white, or not sleep in the dark. You may do different things like that, but if it's something really dramatic, like your whole family passed away, something dramatic, or the person has been raped or something, obviously, you might do an ebbo, or cleanse yourself on top of Oggun, to make you stronger. You may do those things, but you also need to go see a psychiatrist. You might need to. You have to take the physical with the spiritual and be okay with that."

- "I do feel like there's just one mind, and that is just the mind. I feel like there is the mind itself, then we have what we call the overall human consciousness. And then there's this little thing that leaks out of the main mind. And that creates our mind as little portions still attached to the bigger mind. So, you know, think of a bubble and things are just coming out. And each of those things is still connected."

- "I feel our consciousness is like the end of the little funnel of the mind. So, we're still connected to the bigger part, but we're, we're looking at everything from a very small, which is our ori, our ori would be the funnel of the mind behind us."

- "The ori will be the funnel, the ori will be us. Whereas orisha, would be more so the collective unconscious, you know? Everything else?"

- "If you're feeling bad or you're feeling down and you know, we may do things like rogating the head, or like cleanse your head with bread or cleanse your head with coconut water or cleanse your..., give yourself a white bath and dressed in white and things like that, that are meant to help the person feel better, when they are not okay."

- "It's also bringing things, spiritual things like bringing you down to the floor and lighting two candles to them or putting fresh water to the refreshing your mind, et cetera."

- "That's called ebori, okay? And that means ebbo of the head which means for our ori, our prayers to the head and feeding to the inner spirit to give strength to the energy itself."

- "So ebori, is a way for you to calm yourself down. It is a way to think better. It's a way for you to reinforce your mental attitude overall. And it is way to get ashe to the, to the person, internally to be able to deal with whatever is going on in life."

- "So ebori, the point of ebori, rogacion de la cabeza, is to calm the person."

- "Then there are some, it starts from the feet up to the head, lift them up instead of the head down to the feet to calm them down."

- "Because usually people have rogaciones of the head, it is also time when you're very stressed, or times you just can't think straight or something is going on around you and besides, religious ceremonies…. because their body is a part of the religious ceremonies."

- "Is usually when you're stressed out or you just want to connect a little further."

- "At any point, that an individual is feeling any type of way besides good, you can definitely, even if it doesn't come out in a divination, you can still do a rogation of the head. At any point that the person is feeling down, you should definitely consider, especially if the person is not crowned."

Personality

- "I do feel like the mind plays a role for people [to heal]"

- "I think your mentality has a lot to do with how you go into Ocha and what you gain out of war also. So, I think that the person and your mentality is definitely going to influence how you see the Orishas."

- "We just don't see eye to eye, like our beliefs or what the orishas stand for or the trades of the orishas or things like that. And all of that is heavily influenced by just the way the person thinks."

- "Obviously, you know, sometimes you put, you make God out to be what you think God should be."

- "The way you go to Ocha, it's going to reflect your opinions of Ocha and then it'll give you a taste of your house and taste of your personal practice of how you're doing."

- "And then it's like, your fault that you called such a thing."

- "For you to be more open minded or just more, optimistic with things, is to create a mental shift inside the person and is extremely, extremely important."

Participant 2 Textural Description

Participant 2 was a Hispanic male, initiated as a santero/olorisha as well as an oba oriate. He reported that this title designates him as a leader of ceremonies. This is because of the length of time that he has been initiated, and his knowledge and experience of the religion. P2 is also the godfather of several other santeros (meaning that he has initiated others and continues to guide them through their religious journey). P2 reported that he was initiated as a child to the

religion due to health issues around the age of 9 years old. He also reported that his mother became initiated during this period and that he was raised in this faith from that point on.

P2 described in much greater detail the belief that a patron orisha influences not only a person's personality but even their physical appearance. He reported being able to note in himself and others, traits that could help to identify who their patron orisha was even prior to being revealed during initiation. When questioned if this applied to persons who did not practice Santeria, he went on to explain that yes, even a Christian, Jew or Muslim person would be considered to have a patron Santeria orisha and would exhibit personality quirks and physical traits of that orisha but that it would never develop further due to not being initiated. He described that while these traits are present at birth, once the person is crowned the orisha in the ceremony of kariocha, these traits become amplified and the divide between the physical and spiritual realms lessens.

P2 was very knowledgeable of co-existing spiritual traditions such as Espiritismo and Palo Monte. He elaborated on his understanding that spirits or eggun could affect a person's mental functioning but that these forces were powerless when it came to the power of the orishas. According to his narrative, spirits could affect a person's thoughts and emotions but not their personality. In this regard, P2 made it a point to redirect the focus to personal responsibility, especially regarding spiritual hygiene and maintaining the ori. If a person was experiencing a spiritual disturbance leading to depression or anxiety, this person was seen as being responsible for seeking out a consultation which would instruct them on how to remedy the situation. P2 also went on to explain that part of the spiritual consultation may include a recommendation to see a doctor or psychiatrist if it was determined that the condition was not spiritual in nature but rather due to psychological trauma or even a brain condition. He described the ori, as both the physical

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and spiritual head. Therefore, if the physical part of the ori (the brain/head) were damaged or malfunctioning, then a physical or non-spiritual treatment would be required. If the cause was due to a spiritual disturbance, then a spiritual intervention would be implemented.

P2 went on to describe the ori as existing in a liminal space, between the heavens and the earth. He described it at one point as a "funnel" from the collective mind to the individual mind. When asked to elaborate on what he considered to be the collective mind, he described it as the place where the orishas existed as well as the higher self. Because of the importance of the ori in maintaining physical and psychological health, P2 described how many of the rituals and cleansings associated with healing revolved around soothing and pacifying a hot ori. From his perspective, if the ori, is calm or cool, it is then more receptive to receiving blessings from the orishas residing in the collective mind.

Participant 2 Structural Description

P2's narrative described the mind as consisting of two parts, the collective and individual mind. For him, there was only one mind, made up of its parts. Structural themes that were present in his narrative were the concept of space and relationship to self and others. The phenomenological structure of space was seen in his description of the mind both existing in the heavens and in the physical brain and in the form of the individual psyche. He described the ori as a physio-spiritual organ, that both existed as the physical head and as the higher self in the heavens. When asked to describe where the ori fell regarding the collective or personal mind, he explained that the ori was neither, but rather the "funnel" connecting the two. Throughout the course of our conversation, he continued to emphasize that the collective and individual minds were parts of the whole mind, and that there was no separateness. Even parts of the mind, including the orishas that felt outside of the self, were still very much a part of the individual.

This perspective was also reflected in P2's view that one's patron orisha had a great deal of influence on not only a person's personality but even their physical features. Although he did acknowledge that there are certain traits that are typical for certain orishas, he did point out that this was not an excuse for misbehavior. The emphasis on personal responsibility for one's actions extended into the scope of healing and health. Per P2's narrative, many different things could affect a person's thoughts, feelings, and emotions, however the individual was still responsible for seeking help. During the interview, P2 mentioned that santeros such as himself recognized that not all depression, for example, was the result of being plagued by an obsessed spirit or witchcraft and that sometimes the cause was due to a brain disorder or the person experiencing trauma. This corroborates his earlier description of the mind as existing on both of a spiritual and physical level and requiring appropriate treatment depending on the specific causation.

Participant 2 Textural Structural Description

P2's understanding and description of the mind was that the mind existed on both a spiritual and physical level. Per his understanding there were not two separate minds, but rather two parts that created the whole. In addition to the spiritual and physical components, P2 described the role of the ori, which he reported was a liaison between the two parts of the mind. In order for the two parts to interact, the ori needed to be in good health. When a person was experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties or needed to prepare to receive the blessings of the orishas through a ceremony, the ori needed to be cleansed and pacified. The ori was not designated as the mind itself, but rather as intermediary between the physical and spiritual. Because it exists in both planes, it could also be affected by both spiritual and/or physical forces. It is for this reason that it is important to determine the cause of an affliction to determine

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whether the treatment intervention be spiritual or medical/physical in nature. P2 used the example of being assaulted as a potential cause for depression and anguish in an individual. In this case, he specified, that the person experienced trauma and therefore required psychological intervention, not spiritual treatment because the causation was physical and psychological in nature. If through divination it was determined that the person was experiencing emotional disturbances because of an obsessed spirit or brujeria, then the intervention would require a spiritual cleansing and possible the intervention of entities such as the orishas.

Participant 3 Textural Themes and Meaning Units

Personality

- "But I don't think people should, ever consider that acceptable to say to excuse bad behavior, because that's their orisha and it makes it worse, when you allow people to create a self-fulfilling prophecy."

- "I found out what my orisha was when I was eight years old, so I've always known. So how do I tell whether that knowledge influenced my, my behavior or they just happened to line up, right?"

- "I do believe that once people know who their orisha is, my hope is that they will try to copy and emulate the best aspects of them."

Collective Mind

- "Your patron orisha is partially determined by family, right? So, so if that pair of parents had six children, right, all these six children, even with all the different personalities, we're going to have the same patron orisha."

- "So, the spirits of the dead, it has the light that is the most common way that we consider these things as attaching themselves to people, and most of the time we, we phrase it in terms of bad luck, you know, you can't keep a job, a spouse, you know, money comes in, but it goes away all right. But sometimes, the *espiritos oscuros*, those reflect mental illness."

- "There are other spirits called…. we're seeing primordial, so primordial. So, when I say that, so these…it is the spirit of death, the spirt of illness. It is the spirit of tragedy. It is

the spirit of loss, right? So even in the mythology, right? There are certain stories where for example, Yemaya, was unable to find one of her children, and the pain of that loss caused her to, what would we call it…. you know, she kind of lost it. So, we do have references to people losing it, you know, exhibiting mental illness based on trauma, based on simply being possessed by that spirit."

- "We do for some people a rompimiento, a breaking, where we, you know, tear the shirt off the person in question to represent the breaking off of any spirit that is currently on them."

Ori/Liminal Mind

- "If you look at some of the older writings, you'll see reference to the tripartite soul. Where a part of the person's soul, even when they are incarnate, and still remain to them, sometimes they'll refer to it as a spiritual bubble. A part of your mind, out of your ori, is residing in heaven at the same time. As far as I'm concerned, the ori is the psyche but the ori has a spiritual component simultaneously."

- "[The term ori] to mean the physical head, physical organ, you know brain matter, all that stuff. So, it's also the spiritual aspect, so yes, it is the mind. It is what we in the English language call the mind. But there is a spiritual component that interacts with the orisha."

- "So, our belief is that the orishas cannot bless your head, unless your head is properly aligned, so lessons can reach you."

- "So, you know if a person is not thinking straight, persons would make bad decisions. So, yea, we also mark for rogacion for that too. It may be marked for a person experiencing mental illness."

Participant 3 Textural Description

Participant 3 was a santero/olorisha, initiated not only in the Santeria tradition but also in the traditional Yoruba/Lucumi tradition. P3 reported that he had a bachelor's degree in psychology. His experience and knowledge with psychology was evident, as his answers were often more philosophical or academically based rather than simply based on personal experiences. P3 explained that he first became involved in the religion through his stepfather who was a practitioner. At the time he was a child and was not an active participant, however

after having been diagnosed with cancer, his mother took him to a Santeria healer. While P3 received traditional medical treatment, the Santeria healer who consulted the family advised them to have the child initiated into the religion as a means of saving his life. The idea being, that when a person receives their kariocha ceremony, they are receiving the ashe of the orisha, who had the ultimate power to heal the child. P3 reported that at the time he was too sick to receive the initiation (as it would have been dangerous to undergo the ceremony due to having open sores and wounds from the chemotherapy), however his family made a promise and commitment to the *orisha* that they would complete the ceremony if their child was saved.

P3 was very logical when describing his experiences and understanding of his faith. He cited to me several different authors and papers, some of which he even forwarded to me after our interview. When asked to describe the effects of a patron orisha or spirits on the mind, he was quick to retort that no external force trumped free will. He acknowledged that while these spiritual forces could influence a person's personality, thoughts, or emotions, it was equally important to hold oneself accountable and not use these traits as an excuse to misbehave. For example, we discussed the negative stereotypes associated with children of Chango; that they are womanizers and hot tempered. P3 went on to describe how Chango had these traits as a young man, but grew up, evolved, and learned from these mistakes. Chango's character arc starts off as impetuous, yet his path leads him to redemption and maturing into an honorable and just king. When describing the influence of the patron orisha on the individual, he reported feeling skeptical as to whether the influence was due to a person attempting to emulate the behaviors of their patron orisha or whether these traits were organic, concluding "my hope is [that once people know who their orisha is], that they will try to copy and emulate the best aspects of them."

Regarding other spiritual forces such as dark or obsessed spirits, P3 reported viewing these energies as primordial forces of an archetypal nature. For example, he described the story of Yemaya losing her child and subsequently losing her mind because she was overcome with the spirit of grief. P3 perceived this spiritual force as manifestation of intense negative emotions rather than as a disincarnate entity. He went on to describe how negative energies could be created because of trauma, grief, or other heavy emotions. Once these energies were created, they needed to be extracted and removed from the physical body, even if their origins were spiritual/psychological in nature.

P3 described the human mind, soul, and physical body as part of a "tripartite" soul. This concept was further associated to the concept of ori, which was described as consisting of the physical head/brain, the mind (where thoughts and emotions originated) and the soul, which resided in the heavens. Like prior participants there was not a distinction made between the three components, but rather the conceptualization of these parts as part of the greater whole. Because the ori is such an integral part of a person's emotional, psychological, and spiritual health, there is a great emphasis on maintaining and balancing this metaphysical organ. If a person is experiencing disordered thinking, depression, anxiety, difficulty sleeping or difficulties in their job or relationships, this would be attributed to the ori not being in a good state. This could be due to physical trauma to the head or intense negative emotions. From his description, mental illness, could be understood as reflecting problems with the ori.

Participant 3 Structural Description

P3's descriptions focused on the structural themes of relationship to self and others. P3 focused on personal responsibility, especially when it came to handling negative personality traits that could be attributed to having a certain patron orisha. From his explanation, these traits

were meant to help a person learn and mature as a person, much the way that the orishas had when they were humans. Additionally, when describing the influence of spirits or other energetic forces, P3 reported that many times a person would create energy based on their own thoughts and emotions, which could be conceived as something outside of themselves. Regardless of how it was perceived by the individual, the real source was more likely from an internal source rather than due to external contamination.

P3's conceptualization of the ori incorporated the structure of time and space, with the belief that the mind existed both in the physical realm (brain/physical head) and the soul (which resided in heaven). Like the participants interviewed before him, P3 reported that the ori could be affected via both physical, spiritual, or emotional interference. That said, cooling or cleansing the physical head would also cool and calm the spiritual part of the mind. To P3, the physical head and spiritual head were interconnected and two parts of the same whole.

Participant 3 Textural Structural Description

P3's conceptualization of the mind focused on the power that the individual had, not only to create energy through their thoughts and emotions, but also with the personal responsibility that came with this power. He acknowledged that a person's patron orisha and their story arc, would act as a blueprint for the individual and would have some influence on the person's temperament, personality, and life experiences. However, he also emphasized that even if negative traits were present because of having a particular patron orisha, it still fell on the individual to use these experiences as a means of growing and evolving, rather than use them as an excuse to act immorally. Even when it came to mental health issues, P3 was more inclined to attribute this to the effects of negative emotions produced by a person due to trauma or loss, rather than from a disincarnate spirit or because of the influence of an orisha.

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Participant 4 Textural Themes and Meaning Units

Collective Mind

- "The orishas, they have different characteristics, so you tend to align with them. So that's why it's easily identified that this is a Motorola, this is a logo. It's something like that."

- "You know mindfulness, and how you act, once you've been assigned an orisha, for example Obatala, you have to align your mind with the orisha so that you may, you may find peace with yourself.

- "I think the person is a representation of the orisha. The mind is a somehow affected."

Ori/Liminal Mind

- "Worshipping, it'll help but sometimes, there's a connection, that you seek, afterward, you seek the doctor's intervention because there's some things that affect the brain and affect you, the way you're thinking. So, you must be careful on how you, how you interact with your religion.

- "It ties more to the soul and the mind is you know; personality is somewhat external because it might change with a person over time. But the soul and mind always interact with you."

- "This is a ritual, when it performed, it's like a blessing ritual, and once your mind wants to algin with your personal orisha…you cleanse your mind, and you get connect with the orisha. This is mostly used to prepare the mind to be a kind of personal orisha."

Participant 4 Textural Description

Participant 4 reported being a santero/olorisha who was in the process of initiating into Ifa as a babalawo. P4 was a Black male (not of Hispanic descent) who reported having been born and raised in the religion. He claimed to be initiated in the Santeria tradition, however based on his responses, I suspect that his religious house is geared more towards the traditions of the faith as it is practiced in Africa more so than on the Afro-Cuban manifestation. One of the main indicators of this was his report that one's patron orisha was determined due to family lineage.

P3 gave a similar report when describing the differences between the religious beliefs and practices of this religion as it is practiced in Nigeria vs in Cuba. According to him, in Nigeria, one's patron orisha is determined by family lineage, whereas in Cuba it is determined due to a person's individual personality traits and through divination. There has been a resurgence of Santeria practitioners within the community who are initiated in the Afro-Cuban tradition but who are also becoming dually initiated and educated in the traditional Yoruba. Considering this fact, P4 was not eliminated from the sample as he claimed to have been initiated into the Afro-Cuban tradition.

When describing the mind, P4 described it as being two folded. The first half he described as "personality" which was unique to the individual and would change over time. The soul on the other hand, he described as eternal and connected to the orisha in the heavens. It was the soul that was responsible for thoughts and emotions as well as the volition to complete one's destiny. He did clarify when describing mental processes such as thinking that some thoughts were created by the brain and others by the soul. The thoughts created by the brain required medical intervention, as this was physical in nature and the thoughts created by the soul required spiritual intervention.

Participant 4 Structural Description

Like P3, P4 focused primarily on relationships to self and others when it came to conceptualizing the mind. It is of note that both participants were educated in houses that held beliefs more in line to the original African tradition than the Afro Cuban one. P4 reported that one's place in the community, or more importantly one's family would determine one's patron orisha. He described how a father who is a child of Chango would naturally have children who

were also aligned with Chango due to both belonging to the same family. P4 did not elaborate or suggest that this was due to genetics, however there was an implication of a spiritual heredity.

While P4 conceptualized the mind mostly from a standpoint of spirituality and family heredity, he also pointed out that the brain too played a role in thoughts and emotions. P4's distinction between the origination of thoughts from both the soul and personality, can be explained by the phenomenological structure of space. From his explanation both were present within the metaphysical organ of the ori, which existed in the form of the physical head/brain of the person and the soul in the heavens.

Participant 4 Textural Structural Description

P4 provided some interesting perspectives that implied a belief in spiritual heredity. He reported that his patron orisha was determined by his family lineage and that he exhibited these traits because his spiritual parents (orisha) carried these traits as did his biological parents (who shared the same patron orisha). When it came to the mind specifically, P4 described the mind as existing in the form of the individual personality and the soul. The individual personality was unique to the individual and would change and evolve overtime, while the soul was eternal and fixed. Both parts existed within the ori, which was located on the physical plane as the physical head/brain. According to P4, the physical and spiritual are interconnected. Despite serving different roles, they existed as parts of the whole.

Participant 5 Textural Themes and Meaning Units

Collective Mind

- "I think, you know, I, I know people that are, they are children of Chango, and that's what they, they use as an excuse for, for messing around all the time. And it's like, no, that's not how it works."

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- "When I found out, you know, through mano de Orunla, that Chango was my orisha, and through that I, I managed to control my anger, to gain patience and that sort of thing, you know, cool headedness."

Destiny

- "I mean, there's a part there, that for us, it's connected with destiny."

- "You choose your own destiny."

Ori/Liminal Mind

- "I guess the closest thing to the mind, that concept would be ori, right? Our head."

- "It is your physical head, you know. But it is also. It's the part of you that comes from, you know, what someone would say heaven, when you're created."

- "We're talking about your actual head, but also your spiritual, your mind, your soul, whatever you want to call it."

- "These are all cool ingredients, so the idea is to coat our head, cleanse it, I guess that would be one way to say it.

- "But for me, it's more, it's more about bringing it into balance. Right? Into alignment. and all those ingredients are cool."

Personality

- "So, you know, there are stories of the orishas, such as Obatala getting blamed for messing up humanity because he had gotten drunk. Right? So [if you are a child of Obatala], you avoid being in that type of situation."

- "Well, there's, there's definitely free will, right? We are free to do what we want. And our ori, well your ori, is definitely yours."

Participant 5 Textural Description

Participant 5 was the only participant within the sample who was initiated as a babalawo.

He was also an anomaly in that he was a white American male, not of Hispanic descent. He

reported that he had come to discover Santeria because of his love of Cuban music. While

attempting to learn more about this style of music, he discovered orisha worship music, which

led to him becoming more curious about the orishas and Santeria. Unlike the prior participants

who had come to the religion due to health reasons or life problems, P5 came to the religion by

chance, and due to personal curiosity.

When asked to describe the effects of external forces on the mind, such as the orishas or

spirits, P5 reported that he had noticed certain temperamental dispositions as a result of being a

child of Chango. He reported that when he was younger, he would be very hot tempered, often

breaking things in fits of rage. After learning that Chango was his orisha, he reported learning to

control that anger by learning Chango's patakis, or mythological stories of how he overcame

these kinds of situations. Like prior participants, P5 emphasized that while a patron orisha will

have some influence on personality, it was still not an excuse to act in a way that was immoral.

P5 reported that as a babalawo, he did not work directly with spirits of eggun and could not be

possessed by them, but that he had witnessed clients who claimed to be possessed by these spirits

acting erratically and exhibiting signs that mirrored mental illness, such as experiencing a deep

depression, anxiety or in more extreme cases, psychosis. He admitted that he was less

knowledgeable about this phenomenon, although he did know how to treat the condition using a

ceremony called paraldo.

Regarding the mind specifically, P5 reported that he considered the ori to be the mind. He

went on to explain that from his understanding, the mind was the brain, the physical head, but

also the spirit and one's personal destiny. P5 described one's personal destiny as a sort of

blueprint that was selected by the individual prior to birth, outlining all the events and

experiences they would go through during this lifetime. Even though the term of destiny suggests

predestination, P5 points out that the person selected their destiny and therefore free will was at play (even if we do not have recollection of this decision once we are born on this Earth).

Participant 5 Structural Description

P5's narrative focused on the structural theme of relationship to self. He spoke about free will and personal responsibility when describing the mind's functioning. While he acknowledged that external spiritual forces such as the orishas or spirits could affect a person, he did not give it as much as importance as the decisions that a person makes while on this earth, and prior to being born. According to P5, the ori was the metaphysical organ that represented the mind. It was both the brain, the soul and the person's destiny. If the ori was well balanced and cool, it would be able to think and follow its course normally. If it was disturbed or "too hot", it could be cooled and pacified using cooling ingredients such as coconut water. In this way the ori would be balanced, leading the mind (thoughts and emotions) to be clear.

Participant 5 Textural Structural Description

P5, like P3 focused primarily on explaining their experiences in logical terms rather than spiritual ones. P5 acknowledged and referenced Yoruba mythology and beliefs, however he was quick to counter any points that suggested that free will was not a factor. He admitted from his own experience that his patron orisha had some influence on his temperament but went on to report that these traits were used to learn and grow as a person, rather than as an excuse to be belligerent or violent. Another concept where P5 tempered mythology with rationality and emphasis on free will was with the concept of the ori representing destiny. Whatever a person was experiencing in life, good or bad, was perceived as having been preselected by that person prior to being born. In this way, the santero views hardships as part of his journey, which he

selected as part of his spiritual development, rather than view himself as a victim to circumstances or external forces such as God, spirits, or the universe.

P5 like other participants, conceptualized the mind as existing in both the brain and physical head (skull, scalp, etc) and as the soul that existed in the heavens. When attempting to heal the spiritual aspect of the mind, one of the treatments that could be utilized were the cleaning of the physical head through a ritual called rogacion de la cabeza. There is a sense here again, of perceiving the mind as existing both in a physical and spiritual sense, both parts of which are interconnected. P5 did not speak much about other phenomenological structures such as time and space, and rather focused primarily on how these concepts related to the individual instead.

Participant 6 Textural Themes and Meaning Units

Collective Mind

- "So, it's kind of the same concept for his children. We have to go through all these different things in order for us to learn our lessons and try to emulate the type of energy that he is you know, not necessarily be like an orisha, but try to, you know, display those characteristics of what a priest should be."

- "And it's, it usually alludes to the fact that some children of Chango are a little crazy, not, not in the psych, psychiatric sense, just very outspoken, very outgoing. They can sometimes fly off the handle. So, they might have a really bad temper, you know?"

- "But I also believe being crowned Obatala, has kind of brought down that cooling energy, where instead of just reacting, and I'm like, let me, let me think about this, let me process this."

- "So, it's kind of like, you know, we've walked kind of sort of hand in hand but a lot of them don't necessarily control my thoughts in that aspect, you know? He might give me a thought, he might give me a message on anybody, for that matter, you know? So, I think it's a little tricky because it can be like a symbiotic relationship where the orisha will, will send a thought and I'm like, wait, does that mean? Who was that?"

- "And actually, one of the managers actually said to me, she was like, I love your energy. I was like, I'm thinking to myself, that's Chango."

- But that particular moment, for that particular road, because they needed to give you, their ashe, to allow you to get through those obstacles, because you went this way, you're going to have this orisha, they're kind of helping guide you.

- "You know I may have needed Chango in that moment in my life…when I was in that room and was selecting what was going to happen to me."

- "Oftentimes, the characteristics are…. they're there prior to crowning. Sometimes they are there after crowning."

- "You know, and the medication wasn't working. After, after a while, because my mom was like well, maybe, something else is going on you know? And she ended up taking me to my grandmother [a santera] and I started learning things little by little, creating a bowl, leaning prayers, meditating. That kind of stuff really helped to simmer down the voices, you know? Cause it was a way for them to try to connect with me but being unable to, because I wasn't understanding."

- "But with her, if the cause was spiritual and we clear the spiritual, will it heal her? You know? And that can be tricky because even, there are certain things, someone can send a spirit to you, to drive you mad…even if you get rid of the spirit, she's still going to be the same because the spirit did damage."

- "You get messages in your mind, because sometimes it's just a feeling."

- "And then we were able to actually get that energy off of him."

- "And then I prescribed a couple of like very simple, very simple, I'm like, you know, grab a cup of water, put some salt in it, and put it by the front door overnight. So, I can collect all the energy that you are creating. Because I think sometimes it isn't, sometimes it is those thoughts that we're manifesting and stuff and we're verbalizing all that stuff and it's manifesting into energy, and we have to get it."

Ori/Liminal Mind

- "Because I have heard of cases of like that, that too, where it's like the person is not mentally ill, but rather they need to develop that. And a lot of times, that, that part of the healing process is to get more involved in the spiritual aspect."

- "I want to say, spiritually attuned, or connecting more to the spiritual, they're going to see that sometimes we have to try and calm the mind and then…that's when the medicine can actually start working."

- "You know and being a person who takes medicine daily, you know like, I said, I'm very forward, the combination of medicine, psychiatric medicines, doctors, whatever, with the spiritual…. I'm like you can't have one without the other. You can't think that faith is going to get rid of your bipolar."

- "And my first thing, is like okay, you know, is it a combination of two things? I'm like, I told her, have you gone to see a psychiatrist? Have you had an MRI, blah, blah, blah. Just to make sure there isn't anything there going on."

- "You know, when you combine the spiritual, for example, let's say, you know someone happens to be bipolar, prior to becoming spiritually crowned or just entering the religion, they were on their medicine, but they fought the medicine and ended up like this."

- "And even if the person is bipolar, they might be like... you know, there might be a spiritual clog. You know, or it could be that the person themselves are a spiritual person and they haven't developed anything. And that's why their brain is the way that it is."

- "It's done to kind of help the person aligned themselves spiritually with their ori or their personal orisha."

- "And to me, at least what it does, it is kind of, it's almost like a sponge, you know, where it's just kind of takes all those thoughts that you've been going through, all that stress, all that stuff and just kind of like carrying it out for you, you know? And just kind of stopping it off the next day."

- "At least, my personal experience with rogacion, I always feel at peace, I feel really nice. I feel really good."

- "It's supposed to kind of help declutter, cleanse, align the person, you know, king of align the person and then give them a little bit of energy, you know? To kind of make them feel better."

Personality

- *"But at the same time, I mix it with the spiritual to kind of, you know get rid of any negative thoughts. I mean, negative impurities, to allow the medicine to actually work and hit the way it's supposed to."*

- "Because when you think, when you start thinking negative and you start thinking, you know, I want to kill myself, I want to do this, I want to that, then that's when those entities start coming in and then they start pushing and pushing and pushing more, so they add on to the depression, they add on to the anxiety."

- "You know, thinking, spirituality wise, you can create energy, once you speak and you're manifesting that energy and making that energy take full effect and that will actually manifest it."

- "I believe we exists as separate and this, this is where it can get, it gets very deep because I am an individual. I have my own life; I have my own thoughts."

- "It could be something spiritual but it's also we attracted it, we attracted it because I hate to say it this way, but you know, when we get depressed, we get mopey, we get sad. We want to shut out the whole world. But what we're doing is creating this negative energy. And that's what attracts those types of beings."

- "The first thing they tell you is, you're not crazy. Stop thinking you are crazy, because you are going to make yourself crazy, because they're like, the mind will do that. It will make you crazy."

- "And even with him, I told him, I was like, you have to also put your effort, you know? You have to put your effort, to change your mindset. You can't be mopey, you can be droopy, you can't shut the world out. And I'm like, that's what's creating this energy to come."

Participant 6 Textural Description

P6 was the first of two godsons that were referred to me by P2. P6, was a Hispanic male, initiated as a santero/olorisha and the 2nd participant to report experiences with mental health issues. P1 had briefly mentioned that he had been hospitalized in the past due to suicidal ideation, but this was primarily due to feeling hopeless about economic situations. P6 on the

other hand, while he didn't report a specific diagnosis, reported that he had been hospitalized and put on medication due to a history of depression and experiencing auditory hallucinations. He reported that his family's first response to him experiencing psychosis was to take him to the hospital and get him into psychiatric treatment, however after seeing little improvement with this intervention, they decided to turn to spirituality. P6 reported that his parents were not santeros or involved in this religion, however his grandmother was. It was his grandmother who had suggested having P6 be evaluated by a santero, when he was not responding well to psychiatric interventions.

P6, despite believing that part of his mental health issues was spiritual in nature, continues to take medication and recognizes a need for a both psychiatric and spiritual treatments. According to P6's narrative, the reason that his medication was not initially working was because he was ignoring or unable to interact with the spirits that were attempting to connect with him. Because he was not engaging back, they continued to cause damage and harm to his body and mind. Even though the problem was determined to be caused by spiritual forces, the consequences were physical in nature, specifically damage to the head and brain. P6 goes on to explain, "Someone can send a spirit to you, to drive you mad, even if you get rid of the spirit, she's still going to be the same because the spirit did damage." P6 reported that as a Santeria healer, he comes across cases like this frequently, and always advocated that the person seeks out medical/psychiatric treatment to compliment the spiritual, as the body and mind are connected and require both types of treatment.

P6 goes on to explain that many times, people who are experiencing mental health issues, are experiencing a spiritual clog or disbalancing of their ori. He explains how this neglect could affect the physical brain. That being said, spiritual maintenance in the form of caring for and

aligning the ori, was seen as a beneficial way of not only protecting one's mental and spiritual health but also of their physical health (in regard to the brain). One of the primary ways to practice spiritual hygiene was via the ceremony of rogacion de la cabeza, which was seen as acting as a sponge to remove energetic impurities from the brain and mind.

Participant 6 Structural Description

Because of his personal experiences with mental health issues, P6 placed a greater focus on the brain than some prior participants. He did report a belief in spiritual forces and energies, but this was seen as something outside of himself. The structural themes that emerged from his narrative were those of relationships to self and others. P6 conceptualized the mind and mental processes as being related to personal volition and interactions with others (both the living and the dead). P6 acknowledged the role of the orishas on one's thoughts but described their influence more so to intuitions rather than the source of thoughts or emotions. When it came to thoughts and emotions, P6 conceptualized these stemming either from the individual or from spirits or eggun outside of the person. Regardless of where the thoughts/emotions came from, they were believed to reside in the physical brain and spiritual ori.

Participant 6 Textural Structural Description

Like the participants before him, P6 viewed the mind as existing both in the physical and spiritual plane. There was not much mention of the idea of the mind existing in the heavens or being directly connected to the orishas, rather the mind was conceptualized as being more closely rooted to the individual. Greater emphasis was placed on the brain, possibly due to his experiences and recognition of needing to take psychiatric medication. P6 was adamant that spiritual intervention was necessary for his psychiatric medication to be able to take effect. This aligns with prior reports of other santeros with the idea that the mind exists on three inseparable

levels, the physical, spiritual, and mental. Treating the mind only on the physical (medication) and mental (psychological), left the spiritual part neglected. If the mind was conceived to be a sum of its parts, this approach to treatment would be ineffective. Once a threefold model is implemented addressing all three levels, the santero perceives that his "whole" mind is being treated.

Participant 7 Textural Themes and Meaning Units

Collective Mind

- "I believe and I think the most illustrious will agree, if like, orisha finds its way to you, even if you run from it."

- "Somehow, I do believe that the orisha does affect you. Like I do pray every day, and I asked to let me be more, just lend me, you know, that in depth tracking ability. Let me have that, you know? You have this astral connection."

- "So, I already, I before, I was crowned, yes, I always spoke my mind…yes, it is true, I had that characteristic before crowning"

- "But actually, when it comes to mental health issues, most people should go to the way to the feet of Orunmila or Yemaya, who created the brain. So, anything that has to do with brain issues, she is the one in charge."

- "Or Ochosi, will manifest in me, because I am a manifestation of Ochosi on Earth."

Ori/Liminal Mind

- "I act this way because, this is the way they reach me, my ori."

- "No, because in my opinion, you cannot disconnect your mind, from your body and you cannot divide in my professional opinion, your head. They're inseparable."

- "The mind does not exist in a vacuum. Just as spirituality does not exist in a vacuum. They inform one another."

- "When I'm stressed, I'm thinking let me go, let me calm down my ori."

- "There are different ingredients that are put on your body, that are having a cooling effect. They're fresh, they have this cooling effects. So having that but in your head, obviously you have a physical reaction that is cooling your head. It's like you're putting out a fire…. you feel like it is on fire or like loud or crazy energy."

- "So physically, you are being cooled down and your mind should go into a trance of relaxing."

- "[In reference to rogacion de cabeza] ...it gives me more like energy. When I take it, I feel calm when I perform it, I get that energy boost."

Personality

- "Part of the faith, is like putting all your intentions, in your head, that yes, this is going to happen or yes, I'm doing this for my own good."

- "So yeah, you have to be convinced and that's definitely the mind, you know, if you're not convinced in what you are doing, then it's not going to work."

- "You have some of those characteristics, but you don't have to exploit them."

- Oh, I have a [Romany] spirit so I'm going to act like a crazy person."

Participant 7 Textural Description

P7 was the second participant who was referred by P2. P6 and P7 were both godchildren of P2 and belonged to the same spiritual house. P7 was a Black Hispanic male, initiated as a santero/olorisha. He reported that he had a college education and worked as a teacher. He reported always being interested in the religion but for years being turned off due to homophobic sentiments within the community. He reported that his main motivation for seeking out the religion was an attempt to reconnect with the African part of his cultural ethnicity. After meeting

P2 and being accepted into his spiritual house without any stigma regarding his sexuality, he began his journey into this religion.

P7 reported that he was a child of Ochosi and that he could recognize within himself characteristics that were typical of this orisha, such as being strong willed and straight forward when speaking. He reported that these traits were present well before being initiated and that they amplified after the kariocha ceremony. P7 described this phenomenon as the result of his being a manifestation of Ochosi on earth. He did not claim to be the orisha himself, but rather that an astral connection existed between himself and the orisha. When discussing other spiritual forces and his beliefs on their effects on mental processes, he expressed skepticism and retorted that many times people used this as an excuse for acting irresponsibly. He went on to explain, "You can have some of those characteristics, but you don't have to exploit them."

Participant 7 Structural Description

P7's conceptualization of the mind focused primarily on the relationship to the self, rather than focus on external forces. He conceptualized the mind existing in the physical body, more specifically the brain. He did tie in a spiritual element to the brain, reporting that the ori existed within the brain, and that healing of the brain could be petitioned on behalf of Yemaya, who created the brain. P7 explained, "when it comes to mental health issues, most people should go to the feet of Orunmila or Yemaya, who created the brain." In this instance, while the mind was understood to exist in the brain, it's creation by a spiritual deity, and this deity's ability to change the brain was also included in the explanation.

Participant 7 Textural Structural Description

P7's understanding of the mind, was that it existed mostly in the physical plane, within the physical head and the brain, but also connected to the spiritual plane via the ori. P7

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downplayed the level of influence that either the orishas or spirits had on the individual,

describing the influence to be rather subtle and within the control of the individual. Regarding

the orishas, the influence was seen to be solely a source of healing and guidance. He seemed to

be less convinced about the influence of spirits on the mind, reporting that he felt this belief was

exaggerated by many in order to get away with inappropriate behaviors. He placed greater

emphasis on the power of self-volition, than on the effects of external forces.

Participant 8 Textural Themes and Meaning Units

Personality

- "A person can transmit their energy to another via thoughts and words, why do you think that prayer works? This is energy that is concentrated and delivered to another. Your words and thoughts have the power to manipulate energy for good and bad. Oftentimes people think they are plagued by evil spirits, when in reality, it is their own thoughts, or thoughts of others which are affecting them. The evil eye is another example of people sending dirty energy to another through a concentration of envy or jealousy. At times they don't even know they are doing it."

- "People are like sponges; we absorb everything around us. This is why it is important to follow regular spiritual hygiene to keep our bodies clean and healthy. People should be more mindful of where they go because certain places carry energy that is not good, such as cemeteries and hospitals. If you must go, you have to take precautions such as covering your head and belly button."

Collective Mind

- "After crowning him, I suppose it makes sense that his traits were present in me in childhood, well before I knew who Eleggua was."

- "Once you crown saint, that becomes part of the whole right? There is no distinction between the two. That entity becomes part of your consciousness, your unconscious, your subconscious. The mind is a sum of its parts, you understand?"

- "From my understanding, the patron orisha is selected even before the person is born. There are mythological stories that outline how the person must select their ori and their path prior to being born. And this includes the patron orisha."

- "My father is Eleggua, after I crowned him. I felt like running out into the street and roaming and he is known for this. It is a powerful energy and it needed time to settle. It possesses blessings but also difficulties, in incorporating these energies."

- "Oh, for sure, there are many spiritual forces that can affect the person's well-being, this like obsessed spirits, leaning spirits."

- He won't let you sleep, you can't progress, you can see all sorts of disordered thinking, in a person who has a spirit like this attached to him."

- "And even then, you can observe this phenomenon from Spiritism's perspective with spiritual obsession and issues with family dragging from past errors."

- "At the end of the day, even the difficulties are meant to refine you, so that you can learn and evolve as a result of the lessons you learn from working through this."

- "Until you crown, you can't possibly understand the implications of the effects these forces have over your mind and body. I recognize it even now, working with patients. You can feel the energy, when it is heavy, it clings to you, and you need to cleanse yourself of it. And these energies, they can come from the person's head, from the person, from their disorders and traumas."

- "I can pick up when someone comes in that has a very heavy spiritual load on them I and think to myself, this person's problem is spiritual, and they need to remove that spirit or energy off them."

Ori/Liminal Mind

- "Because even through a consultation, the recommendation may be to go to see a doctor, or a psychologist, if it's determined to be a brain issue. And not a spiritual issue. The first step would be to get a consult done."

- "But of course, the mind and the body are inseparable. If the mind is sick, the body also becomes sick and vice versa."

- "This is all placed on the head to cool it down. It gives you a feeling of peace and mental clarity. I sleep so much better after having it done [rogacion de cabeza]."

- "Maybe they feel agitated, maybe they had a head injury. If you had a fall or car accident and your head was shaken up or hit this is also a good reason to have a rogacion done. You know Santeros cannot get their head wet with rainwater, right? It will disorient their

ori. If this happens, the person needs to have their head cleansed and reoriented through a rogacion."

Participant 8 Textural Description

P8 was a Hispanic female, initiated as a santera/olorisha, who also head a doctorate in psychology and who was a licensed psychologist. She reported that she had entered this religion due to having been diagnosed with cancer while completing her doctorate degree. She reported that she had not been initiated or raised within the religion but that she went to seek out a healer in her time of need. She reported that through divination and the mano de Orunla ceremony it was revealed that Eleggua was her patron orisha. She describes now in retrospect, recognizing that she had traits associated with Eleggua well before she even knew about this religion or this deity. After crowning the orisha during the kariocha ceremony, she reported, "the entity [orisha] becomes a part of your consciousness, your unconscious, your subconscious. The mind is a sum of its parts."

P8 described the human mind as a sponge capable of absorbing energy in its surroundings. She described how thoughts and emotions could create this energy and could heal or harm. She explained that this was how prayer or black magic worked, by concentrating this energy (in the form of thoughts and emotions) and then transmitting them through speech or even concentrated focus. She reported that people could transmit this energy without even being fully aware that they were doing so, such as in the case of the evil eye, where intense envy directed towards another could result in harm coming to the target.

Participant 8 Structural Description

P8's descriptions of the mind focused on two structural themes, relationship to self and others and the concept of space. The phenomenological structure of space was seen in her description of thoughts and emotions, existing in the form of energy that was able to travel from

one object or person to another. This theme is also seen in her perception of the orisha existing in the heavens and yet also enmeshing itself into the person's psyche after the kariocha ceremony. This leads to the second phenomenological themes focusing on relationships with the self and others. P8 viewed the mind as being vulnerable to its environment, including the thoughts and emotions of other people. During the interview, she described perceiving the mind as a sponge that could absorb energetic forces, whether they be positive or negative. The psyche of others had the potential to impart influence on the individual's mind and functioning.

Returning to the theme of relationship to the self, P8, like prior participants, conceptualized the mind as existing in the physical head and brain. She also reported that the ori, or spiritual component of the mind as existing within the brain. Despite the fact that the psyche existed on an individual level, it's mental processes such as thoughts and emotions were not seen as being immune to outside influences, as eggun spirits or the evil eye. As a clinician, she did acknowledge the presence of mental illness and disorders but classified them as a result of energetic contamination (in the form of thoughts or emotions) that were either created by the individual or received from another person (living or dead).

Participant 8 Textural Structural Description

P8's experience within the field of psychology and as a Santeria practitioner ties into her understanding and conceptualization of the mind. She reported viewing the psyche as existing on an individual level but being susceptible interpersonal interactions. Social psychological theory would agree that how we think, and feel is not solely determined by our self but influenced by those around us. P8 further understood these interactions as existing in terms of spiritual/metaphysical terms, such as the transmission of energy from one person to the other. For P8, thoughts and emotions exist in the form of energy, which can be used to manipulate the

physical world. In its more positive sense, it can be used as prayer to heal or in a negative sense as witchcraft or the evil eye to harm. She reported that even though this energy is not visible, one could sense the energetic heaviness around a person who is afflicted with mental illness or the victim of witchcraft or an obsessed spirit.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the data that was collected during the study. The study consisted of eight participants, seven santeros and one babalawo, seven males and one female. The data was analyzed using Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology. The results of the phenomenological reduction were presented in the format of listing the participant's meaning units, organized into patterns and themes. After each set of meaning units, data was organized into textural, structural, and textural-structural descriptions (synthesis of meaning). The four themes that emerged from the participants' meaning units were the collective mind, destiny, personality, and ori/liminal mind. The collective mind and destiny fell under the classification of the spiritual realm and included the belief in spirits, orishas and predestination. The personality was understood to be the part of the mind that was unique to the individual, and which allowed for decision making and personal volition. This part of the mind was seen as being susceptible to spiritual influences, however it still held the principles of self efficacy and personal responsibility in resisting negative or harmful spiritual forces. The final theme, the ori/liminal mind, referred to any meaning units that described the role of the ori, which was seen as a metaphysical organ that connected the individual to the divine. The ori was seen to exist in a liminal space, as it was understood to be present both in the person's physical head and in the heavens (as the soul). Chapter 5 will begin the discussion of the results and implications of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 will focus on discussing and summarizing the findings of the study. The findings will be reviewed under the scope of the theoretical framework of Ken Wilber's quadrant theory and Carl Jung's collective unconscious. A composite textural, structural, and composite structural description will be outlined based on the collective narratives and descriptions of all eight participants interviewed for this study. Limitations and implications of the study will also be reviewed as well as recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Results

The study was conducted with the purpose of collecting data on the phenomenological experiences of Santeria healers and their understanding and perspectives on the psychological constructs associated with the mind. The study sought to answer the question, "How do healers of the syncretic Afro-Cuban tradition of Santeria practicing in the United States, describe the nature and meaning of the mind?" Prior research on this population had been completed with a focus on anthropology and ethnography. There was limited research from the scope of psychology and no prior research covering Santeria healers' perspectives or conceptualizations of the mind. There was a need for this study due to the lack of scientific data available on this population. By increasing what is known of this group, the mental health community can improve cultural competence training and work to develop new treatment modalities that are inclusive of the values and beliefs of these underrepresented groups.

Prior research can be classified as having focused on two major categories, Caribbean spirituality and psychotherapy and ethnographic studies. Studies done on Caribbean spirituality and psychotherapy, mostly focused on the utilization of Espiritismo and or curanderisimo. Santeria was spoken of in passing, as this religious belief is connected to Espiritismo, however
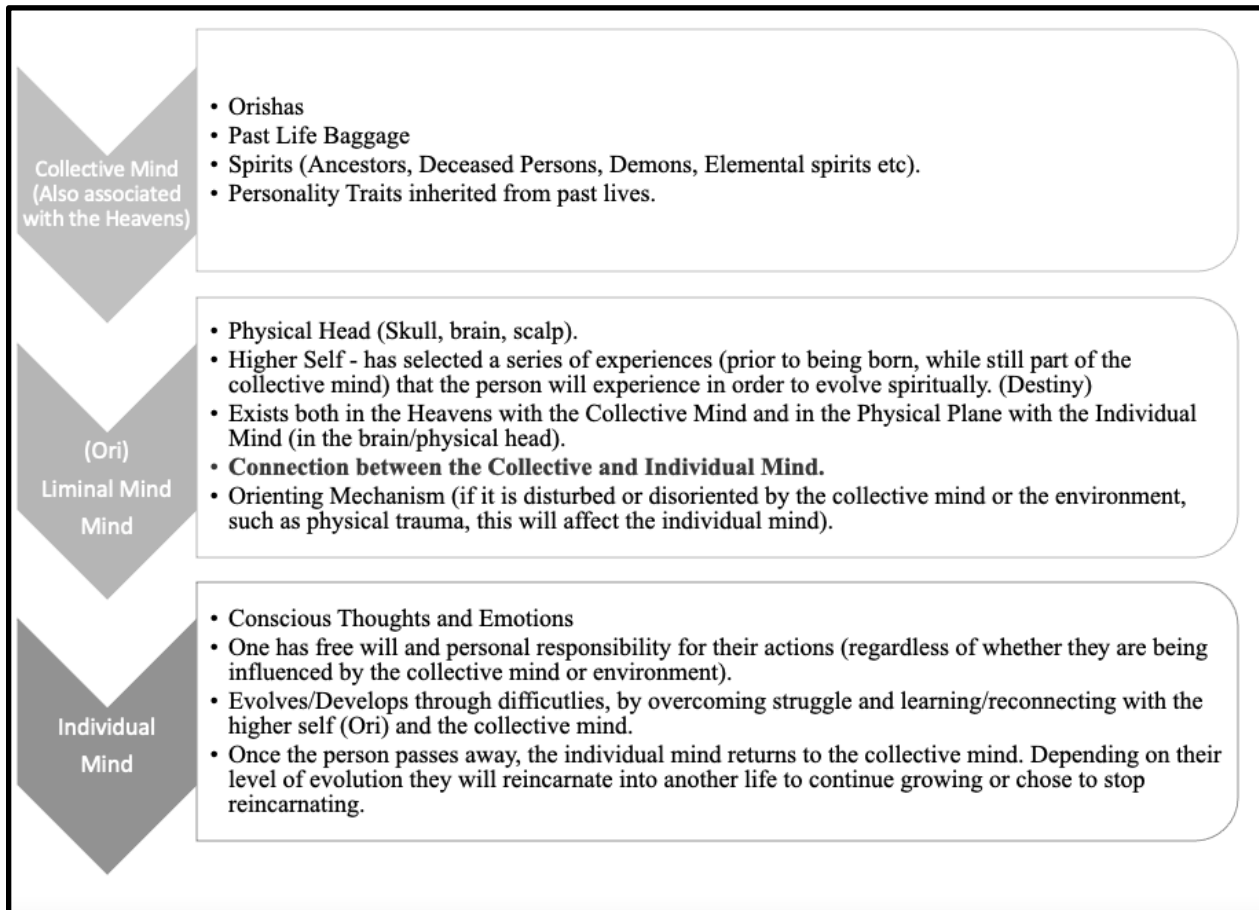
the only details explored in reference to Santeria were to specific rituals and beliefs on magic and a breakdown of their general beliefs (Audet et al., 2017; Blom et al., 2015; Burr, 2013; Clement, 2016; Hernandez-Sutton, 2011; Lewis-Fernández & Kirmayer, 2019; Lucchetti et al., 2011; Moreira-Almeida & Koss-Chioino, 2009; Nxumalo et al., 2011; Pendelton, 2014; Sandage et al., 2020). These studies used populations from Brazil, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Trinidad.

There are no current studies on Santeria practitioners, their beliefs, and perspectives on psychological constructs. The studies that have been done on this population have focused on ethnographic data, such as the orishas, divination, kariocha ceremony and spirit possession (Albus, 2014; Brandon, 1991; Brown, 1989; de Rothewelle, 2021; dos Ventos, 2008; Friedman, 1982; Lindsay, 1996; Loue, 2017; Mason, 1994; Murphy, 2012; Navarro, 2013; Pokines, 2015; Rios, 2010; & Siedlak, 2018b). The study was conducted using Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology and utilized a sample size of eight participants. Data was collected using structured interview questions focused on gathering information on this populations' understanding of the psychological constructs of the mind. Findings determined that participants conceptualized the mind as existing in three levels, the collective, liminal, and personal levels.
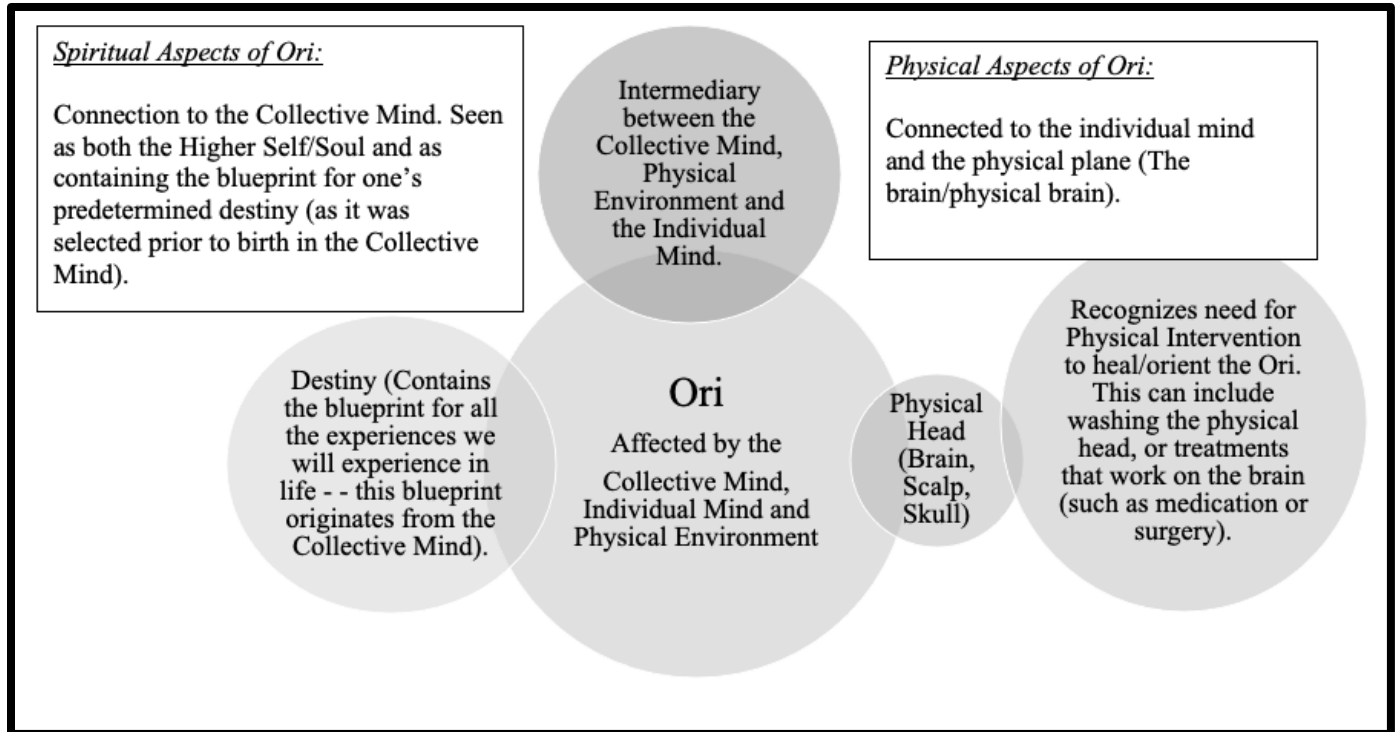
Figure 1

Tripartite Model of the Mind

Collective Mind (Also associated with the Heavens)
- Orishas
- Past Life Baggage
- Spirits (Ancestors, Deceased Persons, Demons, Elemental spirits etc).
- Personality Traits inherited from past lives.

(Ori) Liminal Mind Mind
- Physical Head (Skull, brain, scalp).
- Higher Self - has selected a series of experiences (prior to being born, while still part of the collective mind) that the person will experience in order to evolve spiritually. (Destiny)
- Exists both in the Heavens with the Collective Mind and in the Physical Plane with the Individual Mind (in the brain/physical head).
- **Connection between the Collective and Individual Mind.**
- Orienting Mechanism (if it is disturbed or disoriented by the collective mind or the environment, such as physical trauma, this will affect the individual mind).

Individual Mind
- Conscious Thoughts and Emotions
- One has free will and personal responsibility for their actions (regardless of whether they are being influenced by the collective mind or environment).
- Evolves/Develops through difficutlies, by overcoming struggle and learning/reconnecting with the higher self (Ori) and the collective mind.
- Once the person passes away, the individual mind returns to the collective mind. Depending on their level of evolution they will reincarnate into another life to continue growing or chose to stop reincarnating.

Figure 2

The Ori: Metaphysical Organ

Figure showing overlapping circles describing aspects of the Ori.

Spiritual Aspects of Ori:

Connection to the Collective Mind. Seen as both the Higher Self/Soul and as containing the blueprint for one's predetermined destiny (as it was selected prior to birth in the Collective Mind).

Physical Aspects of Ori:

Connected to the individual mind and the physical plane (The brain/physical brain).

Intermediary between the Collective Mind, Physical Environment and the Individual Mind.

Destiny (Contains the blueprint for all the experiences we will experience in life - - this blueprint originates from the Collective Mind).

Ori

Affected by the Collective Mind, Individual Mind and Physical Environment

Physical Head (Brain, Scalp, Skull)

Recognizes need for Physical Intervention to heal/orient the Ori. This can include washing the physical head, or treatments that work on the brain (such as medication or surgery).

The collective mind was conceptualized as existing in the heavens, where the orishas, spirits and past life data were stored. The liminal mind, or the ori was perceived to be a metaphysical organ, residing in the brain, that connected the individual to the divine. It is through the ori that a person connected with their orisha and received blessings. It was additionally understood that the ori could cause feelings of unrest, anxiety, or depression if it was destabilized by either physical trauma or via emotional turmoil.

The individual mind was seen as the part of the mind that was personal and unique to the person. Within this level, a person's thoughts and emotions would originate. Participants perceived thoughts and emotions as existing as energy, that were capable of healing or harming

the individual and or other people. Although it was believed that entities within the collective mind (orisha and/or egguns) could influence the individual mind through intuitions and suggestions, all participants were adamant that free will trumped any external influences. All eight participants emphasized the importance of free will and personal responsibility when it came to one's mind, thoughts, and emotions. The mind was seen as possessing great power to heal and harm, and therefore required upmost personal responsibility.

Discussion of the Results

The study's purpose was to answer the research question, "How do healers of the syncretic Afro-Cuban tradition of Santeria practicing in the United States, describe the nature and meaning of the mind?" The data collected from the study was analyzed using Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology. This process involved extracting meaning units from the transcriptions. These meaning units were organized into patterns and then into themes. Using imaginative variation, various viewpoints and perspectives were taken in order to gather a composite description and understanding of the beliefs of the participants' interviewed.

Composite Textural Description

Prior to the inception of this study, it was known from prior research that santeros believed in the influence of spiritual forces on the person's mind (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014; Blanchard, 2009; Boaz, 2019; Eyiogbe, 2015; Gonzalez-Wippler, 2007; Hagedorn, 2000; Murphy, 2012; Otero, 2007; Ramírez, 2017; Romberg, 2007; Siedlak, 2018b; Viarnés, 2007). When asked about the extent of this influence, participants reported that before a person is born, they will select a patron orisha and ori while existing in the spiritual realm of the heavens. This orisha, who would continue to reside in the heavens, would guide and influence the individual during their time on earth. Due to this connection, the patron orisha would have influence on the

person's personality and temperament. Participants were adamant about the idea of personal responsibility and the importance of not using difficult personality traits (such as having a temper) as an excuse for bad behavior. Not all personality traits inherited by the orisha were positive, however these cases were seen as spiritual hurdles that the person had to overcome to evolve spiritually while they were here on earth. For the most part, the influence of the orisha on the person was seen to be something positive and meant to guide a person rather than to cause them any kind of harm or distress.

The orishas were not the only entities that were understood as having influence over a person's mind. According to the participants interviewed, all people, including the orishas at one point, lived through various lives prior to their current incarnation. The heavens were believed to act as a registry of all past lives and experiences of the individual and all other human beings. It was explained that even though a person existed physically on this plane, their soul was still present in the heavens. The physical self and spiritual self were connected via a metaphysical organ called the ori.

The ori was described as existing in the physical head (skull, scalp, and brain), and existing as a spiritual "funnel" connecting the individual to the divine. Because the ori was seen as both physical and spiritual, it could be disrupted by physical trauma to the head or through negative thoughts and emotions. A disturbed ori could negatively affect the individual, by disrupting one's thoughts and emotions. Thoughts and emotions were seen to originate from the individual mind and understood to have energetic properties. It was explained that thoughts and emotions had the ability to heal or harm depending on their energetic charge. All participants emphasized the importance of maintaining positive thoughts as holding on to or focusing on

negative thoughts could not only affect the person but could also be transmitted to others, such as the case of the evil eye.

Composite Structural Description

Participants' descriptions of the mind covered the four phenomenological structures of time, space, relationship to self and to others. The structure of space and time was seen in their description of the belief in past lives and the idea that one would drag personality traits from past lives into their current life. This idea was further exemplified by the idea that one would mirror the life experiences of their patron orisha, and therefore exhibit similar personality traits and even physical traits as these entities. The structure of space can also be seen in the description of thoughts and emotions as existing as energy, capable of being transmitted over time and space to other persons or objects in the environment.

Perhaps the most important phenomenological structure spoken of during the interviews was the idea of the mind as it existed in relationship to the self and to others. For Santeria practitioners, the mind did not belong or exist solely to the individual but was rather a piece of a larger collective mind, to which all human beings were connected. This was evidenced by the participants' description of the heavens as consisting of all data from past lives, the person's current soul and the orishas. They went on to explain that there is only one mind, but that it is divided up into parts all connected by the metaphysical organ of the ori. The ability to use one's thoughts and emotions to heal or harm others also demonstrates the phenomenological structure of "relationship to others". Santeria practitioners interviewed, reported a belief in the effectiveness of prayer or witchcraft due to their belief in the transmission of energy through concentrated thoughts and emotions.

Composite Textural Structural Description

When asked to describe the mind, participants reported that there was no distinction between the body and the spirit. The mind was seen as consisting of the physical head and brain, the soul and its astral connection via an organ called the ori. All three parts were seen as existing as parts of the whole. When approaching the mind and healing, participants reported that it was important to determine which part of the mind was being affected to determine the right course of treatment. If a person was depressed, it could be attributed to issues with past life arastros or draggings (the collective mind), due to physical or emotional trauma (to the ori) or due to the person focusing on negative thoughts and emotions (individual mind).

Energy or ashe was the main term used to describe the force behind all three levels of the mind. The orishas were said to use their ashe in order bring blessings and healing down to the individual via the ori. Energy was also attributed to spirits or egguns in the spiritual plane, as well as to thoughts and emotions in the individual mental plane. The nature of energy was seen as taking on the intention of its producer. Thoughts, emotions, or spirits that were deemed to be negative, would hold a negative charge and be capable of harm, whereas positive thoughts, such as prayer were capable of healing. To be able to access this benefit and be receptive to the divine, the ori needed to be calibrated. All three levels of the mind were seen as being interconnected and affecting one another. For the individual to experience optimal health, all three parts needed to be in sync.

Conclusions Based on the Results

The study was designed with the theoretical framework of Ken Wilber and Carl Jung in mind. The following section will discuss the results of the study as they apply to the theoretical

framework of Wilber's quadrant theory and Jung's theory of the collective unconscious. Comparisons between the results of this study and prior literature will also be conducted.

Comparison of Findings With Theoretical Framework and Previous Literature

Wilber's quadrant theory classifies experience into four quadrants, the subjective, objective, intersubjective and interobjective (Marquis, 2007; Paulson, 2008; Wilber, 2006). The subjective refers to a person's thoughts, emotions, and perceptions. From the perspective of Santeria healers, the subjective quadrant would align with the idea of the individual mind. The objective quadrant refers to physical observable phenomenon. The physical part of the ori (the skull, scalp, and brain) would fall under this quadrant. Because the ori is seen as both the physical part of the brain as well as the spiritual connection to the divine, it would also fall into the quadrant of the intersubjective.

The intersubjective quadrant is said to encapsulate shared values, meanings, and cultural motifs, which aligns with Jung's concept of the collective unconscious and the santero's view of the astral realm/heavens which contain a registry of all past, present, and future lives. The final quadrant, the interobjective, could be interpreted as being the religious system of Santeria, which encompasses and organizes the beliefs and practices of this population, both guiding and shaping the nature and understanding of their experiences. The findings of this study most aligned with prior literature that emphasized that indigenous and folk healers saw spirituality and mental health as being interconnected, and therefore requiring interventions that incorporated both aspects into healing (Beliso-De Jesús, 2014; Bettelheim, 2005; Delgado, 1978; Diaz-Quiñones, 1997; Horta, 2004; Koprivica, 2010; Toutaine, 2016; Wirtz, 2009).

Previous literature on Santeria healers, focused on classifying healing systems and illness and the concept of ashe, or spiritual energy. A study conducted by Albus (2014), found that

Santeria practitioners practicing in Miami classified illness into three categories: destiny, spiritual and worldly affairs. This aligned with the findings of this study which found that participants also conceptualized the mind to exist on three levels, the divine or collective (spiritual), the liminal mind or ori, which was tied to destiny, and the physical body, which was connected to the individual. Another study by Navarro (2013) found that Santeria healers conceptualized ashe or spiritual energy as a force not only connecting the individual to the divine but also as a force of manipulating the thoughts and emotions of others. This energy was seen to be connected to the physical body, in the form of hair, nail clippings or other bodily substances. This also corroborates the views of participants interviewed for this current study. Participants in the current study, described thoughts and emotions as carrying an energetic charge that was capable of healing or harming the individual or others.

Interpretation of the Findings

The main consensus of the study was that Santeria healers view the physical and spiritual world as interconnected and in constant symbiosis. Although they existed in separate realms (the heavens and the earth), one could not separate them as they were intimately connected via the ori. This view of interconnectedness was also seen in a study done on Espirtismo healers working in Brazil (Rios, 2010). This perspective of the mind being a sum of its parts, also fits into Wilber's quadrant model, as it too sees phenomenon which can be further broken down into various classifications. In Wilber's case, experience is classified by inner vs exterior and subjective vs objective.

Results from this study found that Santeria healers also viewed the mind as a holistic whole. For the Santeria healer, the mind existed in spiritual, physical, and mental terms, each distinct and yet still a sum of its parts. From their perspective, physical trauma could cause

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emotional and spiritual damage and vice versa. Several participants held held the perspective that persons suffering from mental illness were suffering from long standing, untreated spiritual affliction. Because this spiritual root was never treated, it caused damage to the physical brain which then required medical or psychiatric intervention. Likewise, if the person were to have a head injury or suffer trauma or abuse, this too could affect a person's receptivity to the spiritual realm. All participants were supportive of practitioners seeking psychiatric treatment when appropriate, however there was also a belief in complimenting this treatment with spiritual intervention to address all parts of the person's mind.

When describing thoughts and emotions, participants described the importance of being mindful and conscious of the power behind their thoughts. Participants described how internalizing negative emotions could cause a person to become ill or how these thoughts and emotions could be transmitted energetically to another person. Additionally, Santeria healers placed great importance in recognizing that spiritual forces surrounded them during this life. Participants believed that individuals had a personality that was unique to their own, however their conscious and subconscious mind coexisted with other spiritual consciousnesses, such as the orishas and spiritual entities. The personality was also seen as consisting of traits that were carried over from past lives. Santeria healers classified the mind as existing in three levels, the individual level (personality), the collective level (orisha and spirit influence) and the ori, which connected the two together. The concept of destiny was also included as a theme for the mind due to Santeria healers' view that certain personality traits were predetermined prior to birth or that these traits had been carried over from a past life. This can be seen as being akin to a sort of spiritual heredity. From these descriptions, all parts were seen as part of the totality of the whole mind.

Two participants had direct experiences with the mental health system, one as a patient and one as a licensed psychologist. The person treated for mental health conditions, reported that he did not begin to feel better until he received spiritual intervention in conjunction with his psychiatric treatment. He recognized the importance of continuing to see his psychiatrist and take his medications but still expressed a desire to have been able to integrate both systems of healing earlier on as it made a difference in his perception of his mental well-being. This same participant reported feeling reluctant to share his spiritual beliefs due to fear that his belief in spirits and the orishas would be classified as psychosis. Likewise, the participant who was licensed as a psychologist described being wary of integrating spirituality in her practice, even with patients that she knew practiced the religion due to fear of professional backlash.

Limitations

The study posed a few limitations and suggestions for improvement when it comes to future studies. The main limitations came from the sample size which consisted of only eight participants. All participants reported having been initiated into the Cuban tradition of Santeria, however at least one reported having been dually initiated in both the Cuban and Nigerian traditions. This participant was acutely aware of the differences between the two and was able to articulate which views/beliefs they attributed to the Cuban tradition as opposed to the Nigerian one. Another participant claimed to be initiated into the Cuban tradition, however based on his answers it was suspected that he was either initiated into the Nigerian tradition or a house that more closely aligned to this system that that of the Cuban tradition. Future research done on this population would benefit from including screening questions to rule out whether the person being interviewed was initiated in one or both traditions, as it appears to be a new trend to reinitiate or integrate the traditional Nigerian system into the Cuban tradition.

Another limitation of the study was that seven of the eight participants were santeros, with only one babalawo present. Even though both believe in the same deities and religious system, both titles utilized different approaches and rituals when it came to diagnosis and treatment of patients. Including additional babalawos may have been provided additional perspectives to the data collected. Other limitations stemmed from the lack of diversity. Most of the participants were Hispanic men, the only aberrations being one Black, non-Hispanic participant, one White, non-Hispanic participant, and one Hispanic female participant. If this study were to be replicated, ideally the sample size would be larger and more diverse regarding the titles, sex and race of the participants.

Implications for Practice

The study's findings pose some implications for theory as well as practical professional application. One of the primary findings from the study was that Santeria healers' view the mind, body, and spirit as existing as a single unit and a sum of its parts. They recognized that each part existed as a separate system, however they also emphasized that these systems were interconnected and inseparable. This aligned with Wilber's integral theory and quadrant model, which took into consideration various levels of experience (internal vs external observations, as well as a focus on what pertains to the individual and what pertains to the collective).

All participants interviewed were proponents of seeking psychological and/or psychiatric treatment when necessary, however they were equally hesitant to, mostly out of lack of confidence with mental health professionals in their ability to understand or accept their worldview. Two participants within the study, reported having direct experience within the mental health system. One participant was hospitalized and treated for psychosis and was currently being medicated with psychiatric medication, and the 2nd was a doctoral level licensed

mental health clinician. The participant who had been hospitalized, reported that while he recognized the need to take his medication to think clearly, he also reported feeling that the medication did not truly begin to work until he had tended to his spiritual health and begun to develop his mediumship. From his perspective, the medication was not working prior to him having gotten involved in the religion. In his case, the efficacy of treatment and medication compliance was due to the inclusion of spirituality in his treatment plan. The participant who was a licensed clinician reported wishing she could discuss spirituality with her clients; however, she was fearful of this approach not being well received by the facility where she worked.

Most practitioners of Santeria are members of minority groups (Black or Hispanic). Studies have indicated that these groups are already marginalized when it comes to healthcare and are wary of seeking out mental health services due to stigmas revolving around mental illness and lack of confidence in mental health professionals in their ability to understand their cultural and spiritual beliefs (de Rothewelle, 2021; Jones et al., 2001; Kleinman, 1980; Meyer & Zane, 2013; Nxumalo et al., 2011). By increasing mental health professionals' understanding of these cultural and spiritual beliefs, so will the accessibility to these services for these populations. Additionally, as seen in this study, integrating a patient's spiritual and cultural framework, helps to increase treatment and medication compliance.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study present some areas that could benefit from additional research. While the study explored Santeria healers' perspectives on the mind, it only briefly touched upon clinical issues such as mental health. Recommendations for further research include studying the lived experiences of Santeria healers with mental health systems, their perspectives on mental health (diagnosis and treatment) and their perspectives with experiencing mental health issues

firsthand. Additional research in these areas will help to not only supplement the findings of this study but also increase the current knowledge base on this population in the context of psychology and mental health. This in turn will benefit the community by increasing cultural competency for counselors and accessibility of mental health services to marginalized groups.

Conclusion

This study set out to answer the research questions, "How do healers of the syncretic Afro-Cuban tradition of Santeria practicing in the United States, describe the nature and meaning of the mind?" The study was designed using Moustakas's transcendental phenomenology and Ken Wilber's quadrant theory as its theoretical framework. The study utilized a structured interview format to collect data from eight participants, who were initiated as either santeros or babalawos within the community. The study's findings concluded that Santeria healers conceptualized the mind as existing in three parts, the collective, liminal (ori) and individual minds. The collective mind belonged to the heavens, orishas, and soul, while the ori was seen as a metaphysical organ connecting the individual to the divine (collective mind). The ori was seen as existing both as a physical organ (the head, scalp, skull, and brain) and a connection to the spiritual realm. The individual mind was thought to be able to create thoughts and emotions, both of which were energetically charged and capable of both harming and healing the individual and others. By keeping the ori balanced, the individual mind could receive proper guidance and support from the divine to meet their goals and fulfill their destiny.

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