THE NATURE OF PUERTO RICAN FOLK HEALTH PRACTICES
THROUGH HEALERS PERCEPTIONS
AND SOMATIC ASSUMPTIONS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree Doctor in Philosophy in the Graduate

School of The Ohio State University

By

Fanny Santiago-Saavedra, M.S.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
2004

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Seymour Kleinman

Professor Cynthia Dillard

Professor Fiona Travis

Approved by

Adviser

College of Education
ABSTRACT

This study presents Puerto Rican Folk Healing Practices (PRFHP) as a cultural experience in an attempt to understand attitudes towards health from the healers’ perspective and illuminate factors that resonate with the field of somatics studies, which regards individuals as whole (body-mind-spirit connection).

Case studies were used to present the nature of six Puerto Rican folk healers and the practices they perform in the island of Puerto Rico. Qualitative research methods were used to gather the information. Semi-structured interviews, video observations, active participation, journals, and field notes were the tools used to capture the experiential approach of this research.

Culturally grounded analysis was done in order to find common themes among six Puerto Rican folk healers and their practices. From the culturally grounded analysis, five major themes emerged. They are service, reverence to nature and natural cycles, the concept of medical mestizaje, physical and spiritual world as a continuum and the sense of embodiment.

The second analysis explored how assumptions of the somatic framework relates to Puerto Rican Folk Healing Practices. The assumptions explored are a) perception of the world through the body. b) First person experience is privileged. c) Sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance. d) reality as determined by the perception of the
individual e) existence in the world as holistic f) The individuals as simultaneously interconnected with the world. g) The individual as a multi-dimensional being which transcends time and space.

Findings from this inquiry present how the first three somatic assumptions, *perception of the world through the body, first person experience as privileged and the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance*, gives discursive logic and a clearer explanation to the cultural theme of *embodiment* in PRFHP. However, culturally grounded research greatly expands the other four somatic assumptions, especially the last two, *the interconnection of the world and the multidimensionality of time and space*.

Examples from the data that connect the cultural themes of *reverence to nature and natural cycles* and *physical and spiritual worlds as a continuum* add the cultural dimensions critically needed to expand the explanations of the last two somatic assumptions. This inquiry presents a possibility of developing a new paradigm for viewing folk health practices as an experiential cultural phenomenon and expand a discursive vocabulary for health and illness that describes experiences and practices for PRFHP and somatic studies.

Furthermore, this investigation will open the door for scholars to compile and revise traditional practices from Latin America and the Caribbean region in order to expand the exploration of the rich legacy traditional and indigenous Latin cultures offer the areas of education, cultural studies, and traditional and alternative health.
To Carla

*Mamita te amo, sigue pa’lante!*
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank my adviser, Dr. Sy Kleinman, for his professional support, encouragement and enthusiasm, which made this dissertation possible, and for his patience and motivation during this time from the beginning stages to its final draft. Thank you also for encouraging me to present in various forums ideas and praxis from the dissertation in order to test and clarify which direction to take. The fact that I have become an accomplished presenter I owe to you Sy!

To Dr. Cynthia Dillard for her support and guidance, teaching me about culturally grounded research and other wise approaches to pursue this project with love and patience. Your professional integrity and responsibility advising me went beyond the expected. My hat goes off to you Dr. Dillard.

Dr. Fiona Travis for encouraging me to follow my dream in pursuing this project you gave me courage to complete the difficult task of putting together my love for Puerto Rican culture, the human body and folk healing in one stage.

To my friends Dianne Kadonaga and Ernest Choi, whose supports led to the completion of this dissertation. Thanks Dianne for your input, conceptualizing and helping me assemble the puzzles of earlier drafts. To Ernest, who patiently read some of my drafts and helped me with the presentation of the data stories and organization of Chapters 2 and 4.

To my parents, Fanny Pineiro and Nicomedes Santiago who from a distance -yet from so close- were actively involved, especially during the fieldwork stage of the dissertation. You encouraged me to follow my dream no matter how far fetched it seemed. Gracias Papi y Mami por creer en mi.

To my informants, Milagros, Mildred, Hector, and Jose for helping me with the contact and driving to the participants’ interviews and demonstrations. You were wonderful! To the participants in this study, thank you for show me your love for
healing. Without you, this project would not be possible. Los quiero muchos, y les estoy agradecida!

Finally, to the two close to my heart. First, my loving husband Harold whose immense love and patience has prevailed all this years, experiencing too close by the growing pains of dissertation for the second time, -his being the first-, Thank you for being part of my life. Second, to my daughter Carla whose love, laughs and inspiration move my heart. Los llevo en my corazon a los dos.
VITA

April 22, 1965 ...............................Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico

1987..............................................B. A., Universidad de Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, PR

1992..............................................M. S., University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

1991-1992.................................Graduate Teaching Associate, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

1994-1996.................................Adjunct Faculty, University of Cincinnati, CCM, Cincinnati, OH

1996-2000....................................Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

2001-2002....................................Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: College of Education
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................................................. ii
Dedication ............................................................................................................. iv
Acknowledgments ................................................................................................ v
Vita ........................................................................................................................ vii

Chapters:
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
  1.1 Purpose of the study ..................................................................................... 4
  1.2 Theoretical Framework of Somatics ................................................................. 5
  1.3 Puerto Rican Folk Healing Practices (PRFHP) and Somatics Studies: could relate? ...................................................................................................................... 6
    1.3.1 Somatics and PRFHP perceived reality through the body .............................. 7
    1.3.2 The use of the first person experience is privileged as well as the perception of reality as an internal activity ............................................................. 7
    1.3.3 The concept of sarcal consciousness as powerful guidance ......................... 9
    1.3.4 Reality is determined by the perception of the individual ............................ 9
    1.3.5 Existence in the world is holistic ................................................................ 10
    1.3.6 Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world .................... 11
    1.3.7 Individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space .......... 12
  1.4. The contributions to this research ................................................................. 13
  1.5 Delimitations of the study .............................................................................. 14
  1.6 Limitations of the study ................................................................................. 16
  1.7 Definition of terms and concepts ................................................................... 15
1.8 Chapter organization...........................................................................19

2. Literature Review.............................................................................21

  2.1 Western influences in the Latino health care literature..............22

  2.2 Alternative ways to study and research
     Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices: Somatic Studies...............24
       2.2.1 Theoretical Background..............................................25
       2.2.2 Somatic theory and Inquiry........................................27

  2.3 Somatics notions in two non-western folk traditions: Traditional
     Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Mexican Curanderismo MC)...29

  2.4 Literature found about Puerto Rican Folk Practices..............32
     2.4.1 Cosmological influences in PRFHP: Where do these
        practices come from?..........................................................34
     2.4.2 PRFHP Causes of Illnesses............................................48
     2.4.3 PRFHP Diagnosis......................................................48
     2.4.4 PRFHP Therapeutics...................................................51
     2.4.5 Traditional health roles performed on this
        particular investigation......................................................56
     2.4.6 The Healer formation..................................................58
     2.4.7 The need to study Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices....59

  2.5 Summary..................................................................................62

3. Methodology...............................................................................65

  3.1 motivation for the study.........................................................65

  3.2 The purpose for this research................................................68

  3.3 Theoretical Framework..........................................................69

  3.4 Case studies............................................................................71

  3.5 Method of obtaining the data................................................72
     3.6.1 Healers’ selections and Interviews...................................73
     3.6.2 Observations and Active Participation...........................76

  3.6 Interpretation and analysis.....................................................78

  3.7 Chapter Summary.................................................................80
4. Data Stories

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Healer’s profiles

4.2.1 Jose Raul Rivera Rosado
4.2.2 Ursula Nieves
4.2.3 Chago Garcia
4.2.4 Manuel Batista (Mano Santa)
4.2.5 Jose Luis Romero Osorio, (Josean)
4.2.6: German Lugo (Tio G.)

4.3 Analysis and interpretation of healers’ profiles

4.3.1 Service
4.3.2 Reverence to nature and natural cycles
4.3.3 Medical Mestizaje
4.3.4 Physical and spiritual world as a continuum
4.3.5 Embodiment

4.4 Data analysis using the Somatic assumptions

4.4.1 PRFHP as well as Somatics perceives the world through the body
4.4.2 The use of the first person experience is privileged
4.4.3 PRFHP uses the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance
4.4.4 Reality is determined by the perception of the individual
4.4.5 Existence in the world is holistic
4.4.6 Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world
4.4.7 Individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space
4.4.8 Somatic Assumptions Summary

4.5 What do the culturally grounded and somatic analyses offer?
Commonalities and differences

4.6 Chapter Summary

5. Discussion and future Directions

5.1 Discussion
5.2 The nature of Puerto Rican Folk Healers
within his own culture.................................................................148

5.3 Exploring somatic framework to create a discourse for PRFHP.........154

5.4 How the investigative experience of theory and
practice becomes one.................................................................158

5.5 Future developments on the investigation of PRFHP......................162

Appendices:
A. Descriptions of three Western Somatic Practices.........................165
B. Informed Consent Form and Member Checks materials.................170
C. Materials related to field interviews and schedules....................173
D. Healing Demonstrations Transcripts........................................178
E. Field Journals........................................................................187
F. Discussion of two Non-Western Healing Traditions Traditional
   Chinese Medicine and Mexican Curanderismo..........................217

Bibliography...............................................................................247
LIST OF TABLES:

Table 4.1 ........................................................................................................ 145
Table 4.2 ........................................................................................................ 146
“Well, I mainly play the role of a social worker, sometimes I am like a psychologist, other times we must be doctors because we know about remedies, I administer remedies and know which plants can cure. But nobody is obligated to take my advice or take my medicine…People have come here, taken the medicine and it worked for them. So far, nobody has poisoned themselves, nobody has died!”

Jose Luis “Josean” Osorio, Babalu Aye, Santero Healer,

1. Introduction:

The comments of this folk healer represent the different roles he plays as a healer within a cultural context that allows him to work in the natural, social, and spiritual
world. His ideology and methodologies might look different from western medical procedures, yet the practices he uses are what I intend to investigate, by using a culturally grounded analysis and exploring seven somatic assumptions in order to give the discursive logic critically needed to further the understanding of Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices (PRFHP).

PRFHP share ancestral ideologies with indigenous, European and African traditions and not-so-ancient ideologies. Although these practices come from an array of cultures, each shares similar ideologies and epistemologies that culturally unify them.

The lack of literature in recent decades has caused a gap in investigating Puerto Rican folk health as a comprehensive system and its possibilities for complementing and integrating some aspects of PRFHP into western medicine. Furthermore, the need to understand the health attitudes of Puerto Ricans and other minorities has become critical in the area of anthropology, public health, and education (Benedetti, 1989; Koss-Chioino, 1992; Newmanginger & Davidhizar, 1991; Sanchez, 1987; Spector, 2002). Attempts to understand the correlation between culture and health have been explored, creating a new paradigm that revises folk traditional healing systems. However, there is still a need to pay attention to the cultural and religious healing aspects these systems use in order to see, "their impact on the well being of cultures" and, "to attest the importance of the discourse of illness and healing in addressing issues of colonialism and dependency in the Caribbean region" (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, p.1). In the case of Puerto Ricans as well as other Latino minorities, it is important to consider the substantial role that culture plays in the health of individuals. According to Nunez-Molina, "All cultures develop specific ways in dealing with issues of illness and health in their own cultural context." (Nunez-
Molina, 2001, p.115). This study is about raising awareness of the unique ways Puerto Rican healers practice and bring appreciation and practical applications in the delivery of health care on the island as well as in the United States.

For this investigation I will present literature that links Puerto Rican Folk Health practices from the rich historical and cultural heritage the island of Puerto Rico experienced beginning from the indigenous origins, and passing through Spanish, African and contemporary global influences of health and spirituality. I will also integrate the field of somatic studies on this inquiry in an attempt to explain how PRFHP are practices that embody the body-mind-spirit connection in order to create a common ideological language that could further the understanding of existing folk healing practices in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, I will present theoretical and practical concepts from a culturally grounded analysis and by exploring seven somatic assumptions in an attempt to create a theoretical model that shows how PRFHP comprises a systemic way of healing within the Puerto Rican cultural context.

The study will present ideologies and epistemologies PRFHP share based on a review of the literature on this topic, and through the voices of six folk healers from the island of Puerto Rico who shared their personal philosophies and healing art with this investigator.

Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices (PRFHP) are implicitly intertwined with different aspects of the Puerto Rican physical, social, and spiritual realms. From the body work of a huesero (bone setter), to the herbs prepared by the natural pharmacist or yiervera, to the realm of protector spirits that come to give advice, these folk practices all represent an important aspect of the island healing culture. This wisdom enhances and
even completes a unique cultural tapestry that identifies Puerto Ricans as the constant negotiators between the mechanistic ways of modern living and the non-linear, even paradoxical, ways of experiencing life. My intention is to bring to the surface these healing practices and points of view using somatic theory and practice in order to give the reader a language to understand how these practices work.

1.1. Purpose of the study:

The purpose of the study is to a) understand the nature of Puerto Rican folk healing from the healers’ perspective and b) to explore how Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices (PRFHP) extend the somatic assumptions presented in the literature of Greene (1997) and Hanna (1970).

Constructivism and phenomenology are the ontologies used to present the experience of Puerto Rican folk healing from the culturally grounded perspective. The literature founded in Holstein and Gubrium (1994) about constructivism in addition to the phenomenological account of the experience presented by Hanna (1970) and Kleinman (1974) frame the purpose of understanding the experience of the body. The culturally grounded research found in the literature of Dillard (2000), Fernandez-Olmo, (2001), and Ladson-Billings (1994) present a critically important perspective that allows PRFHP to be honored and is presented specifically within the Puerto Rican perspective.

By understanding the nature of Puerto Rican healers and its modalities from their own cultural perspective I will help develop a discourse of health and illness critically needed in cultural studies, social sciences, health, and education that will further
My motivation to investigate Puerto Rican folk Health Practices (PRFHP) comes from my exposure to the somatic theory and its application in western and eastern practices. However, these discussions fail to include information of other non-western practices such as the one I experienced in Puerto Rico. For this reason, I wanted to explore whether the seven assumptions from the somatic framework could further the understanding of the nature of healing on the island. The exploration of the somatic theory and assumptions will be used in an attempt to create a common language that explains the holistic processes of PRFHP. The next section will discuss the theoretical framework of somatics for the reader to familiarize himself with the somatic theory and its possible correlations with PRFHP.

1.2 Theoretical Framework of Somatics:

The theoretical background of Somatic Studies includes ideas from pragmatism, phenomenological thought, and critical theory, among others. It comes about as a reaction to modern western views of health in which the mind is considered superior to the body, allowing a fragmented approach to addressing illnesses. Silow argues that according to the modern western approach of health, "the body is considered a vehicle that can be repaired without investigating into other contributing dynamics" (Silow, 2002, p.14). The field of somatics reminds us to look constantly for the dynamics that cause the illness in the first place. Somatic studies also embrace feminist and post-colonial thought.
by acknowledging experiences, practices, and holistic approaches that honor "one's subjective experience of the body" (Stephenson, 2002, p.9). The term *soma* is derived from the Greek language meaning, "bodily being". Thomas Hanna expanded the term in order to identify an emerging field in the social sciences which addresses issues from the body-mind connection. “Somatics is a matter of looking at oneself from the ‘inside out,’ where one is aware of feelings, movements, and intentions, rather than looking objectively from the outside in” (T. Hanna, 1988, p. xiv).

Thomas Hanna explained *soma*, "It does not describe an object but a process. Soma is living; it is expanding and contracting, accommodating and assimilating, drawing in energy and expelling energy" (T. Hanna, 1970, p. 35). In short, somatics has also been defined as "experiencing the body from within" (J. Hanna, 1990, p. 131). This definition of somatics presents a living example of how Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices is a process that is constantly expanding and contracting, accommodating the needs of the patients, and assimilating new information and practices from different ancient philosophies. Furthermore, PRFHP, like somatic practices, draws energy from the universe, manifested in what some have called *Espíritus guías*, *Santos* or *Orishas* to create a new way of healing that is expelled in the form of personalized treatment that addresses the individual as a whole. The theoretical framework of somatic studies and its assumptions have allowed me to develop a common language that honors traditional healing with the rigor of qualitative research. This common language will allow me to present PRFHP as a holistic system of health.
1.3 Puerto Rican Folk Healing Practices (PRFHP) and Somatics Studies: How do they relate?

The somatic literature and PRFHP suggest ideological commonalities that can be applied in order to create common discourse that allows PRFHP to be formulated as a health system. There are various assumptions in the field of somatics that relate to the precepts that Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices (PRFHP) follow: a) PRFHP, like the field of somatics, perceives the world through the body; b) PRFHP privileges the first person experience; c) PRFHP uses the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance; d) Reality is determined by the perception of the individual; e) Existence in the world is holistic; f) Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world; g) Individuals are multi-dimensional beings, going beyond time and space.

1.3.1 Somatics and PRFHP perceive reality through the body.

The body is not just a body. The body is an actively engaged entity that is alive and defined as soma. Greene (1997), elaborated about the body-mind connection, identifying the body as well as the soma: "Humans are understood in its wholeness as an embodied living organism, a soma, rather than a body" (p. 65). PRFHP deals with the body as a soma, not only in the healing modalities but also within the healers’ own personal practices. When one goes to a consulta with a Puerto Rican healer, they address issues of the physical, emotional, and spiritual nature. Depending on the individual healers’ philosophical and systemic background, some use stones, cowry shells, or coconuts to "read" what is wrong; others call their guardian spirits, or lay hands over the head or body parts of patients to perceive what is afflicting them.
1.3.2 The first person experience is privileged.

The somatic field honors the first person experience because it gives individuals a holistic view of the self. "First-person perception refers to the subjective stance of perceiving oneself from the inside out. The focus of awareness is on the inner feelings, sensations, intentions, and internal functioning" (Greene, 1997, p. 51). Lord (2002) argues that by focusing our attention inside, we can refine our awareness of our own sensations and inner realizations. “First person perception is where true knowledge of the body/self comes, as opposed to the external observation or ‘objective’ analysis” (p. 17). PRFHP allows just that by making the patient focus on the inside to investigate what the lesson she or he needs to learn. On the other hand, when one is perceived or examined from the outside (as is normally done at the doctor's office), the examination comes from the third person perspective.

The third person perspective refers to looking objectively from the outside in. When a client goes to a folk healer, especially if that healer is intuitive, the individual illness is perceived from inside the soma of the healer. Furthermore, the information comes from the experience, not from scientific analysis. As Kleinman (1979) suggests, “Knowing one’s body is not revealed by scientific analysis or observation. We just do not come to know our bodies in this way” (Kleinman, 1979, p. 178). By using a first person perception, the healer makes the process easier for the patient because the healer creates a close relationship by feeling the same pain, anxiety, and sorrow that the patient is feeling. Chan (2002) states that as those stimuli are brought to the surface, each stimulus presents a phenomenological example of experiences that come from the core of the individual.
As sensation, though, and raw stimuli are brought into consciousness by the system of awareness, we come to a new understanding of self and its relation to the world. This kind of somatic knowledge involved in a process of bodily knowing gained through the personal and situational embodied inside-out experience of being-in-the-world (Chan, 2002, p. 58).

To summarize, the intuitive abilities of the folk healers clearly show the concept of first person perception by the attention they pay to the body’s signals and messages. This is usually done without any outside or objective inquiry as is normally done at the doctor’s office.

1.3.3 The concept of sarcal consciousness as powerful guidance.

Sarcality is the desire for a certain degree of ease and comfort; sarcal consciousness is similar to a genetically ordained resting state of experiential inwardness.

Greene argues that sarcal consciousness provides powerful guidance in looking for that feeling of inward calmness we experienced when we were inside our mother’s womb. Then, after we are out of the womb, all experiences are compared and evaluated in terms of comfort or discomfort. For Greene, when something or someone prevents us from the free-flowing state of effortlessness, then our bodies experience tension in all levels, from the cellular all the way to the organ systems and that is how we suffer disease (Greene, 1997). One way somatic practices help find sarcality is to create a pause so the person realize what is causing the disharmony and can find the way back to the state of sarcality. Johnson (1983) calls this process of sarcal consciousness finding one’s own sensual authority. PRFHP also uses the concept of sarcal consciousness as powerful guidance. A conscious pause to find one’s own sensual authority is created through
reflections, prayers, and a series of rituals including massage, santiguos, herbs, dry or wet baths, and other rituals.

1.3.4 Reality is determined by the perception of the individual.

Greene argues that if one is conscious about the choices one makes, then the reality of the person changes: "the act of purposefully changing reality is accomplished by changing the self" (Greene, 1997, p. 50). She quotes Saraydarian to explain that when one thinks of a new thought, experiences a feeling, or allows sensation to come into their realm of awareness, one is mobilizing energy. In short, "energy follows thought" (Saraydarian, 1981 in Greene). In PRFHP, the energy healer, the herbalist, the bonesetter, the Santero or Espiritista goes through a procedure to consciously move the energy and create a state of balance in the soma (body-mind-spirit). As a result, the new energy creates new thoughts that change the stressful state to one that is balanced and inwardly calm. This reality is culturally embedded in the notions and actions that individuals make.

Csordas (1993) explains that somatic perception of the healer does indicate that the reality of illness is specific to each culture. In an article titled, “Somatic Modes of Attention,” he explains how healers from different philosophical backgrounds use their soma (body-mind connections) in order to determine patients’ ailments from a cultural perspective. He gives detailed descriptions about somatic modes of attention from two healers: one a Charismatic faith healer, and the other a Puerto Rican Espiritista. Csordas argues that different healers have their own repertoire to deal with sensations that are culturally constituted. His somatic modes of attention are defined as, “culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surrounding that includes the embodied presence of others” (Csordas, 1993, p. 138).
1.3.5 Existence in the world is holistic

The ontological assumption that our existence in the world is holistic does not limit somatics to just the body-mind but also to its reality. As Hanna states, “There is a simultaneous recognition of man, his body, and the ultimate reality of all existence as, essentially, one” (Hanna, 1970, p. 162). For Hanna, existence is holistic because its means that bodily structure and living function affect other aspects of reality as well.

The soma, and the environment where the soma is immersed, affects not only the physiological aspects of the body and our thoughts, but also the energetic aspects of the self. Existence in the world is holistic because whatever thought or action we perform from the inside, that thought or action also influences the world that surrounds us. This assumption states that we cannot merely observe our relations to the world; we influence our engagement to the world. The way Csordas explains the holistic existence of the world is through a social vision of the self. Since we are not isolated to only what is happening to our own bodies, a somatic mode of attention means “not only attention to and with ones own body, but includes attention to the bodies of others” (Csordas, 1993, p.139). This view of existence as a whole is always present in PRFHP. Notions about the environment we live in, the people we interact with, what we eat, and how much stress one is experiencing at work are part of the inventory of questions Puerto Rican Healers ask. These questions determine if one is living in harmony with the universe, nature, and/or God. Puerto Rican folk healers watch out for negative environments, such as violent environments, high crime areas, polluted areas, and eating junk food, because these environments could negatively affect the way the physical body recovers from illness.
1.3.6 **Individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space.**

This assumption relates to the application of quantum physics to the field of somatics and the apparent unexplained phenomena that occur in psychic healings. Greene describes these phenomena as energy. “Energy creates matter and … we are multi-dimensional beings of subtle energies that vibrate at varying frequencies beyond light velocity” (Greene, 1997, p. 52).

The quantum mechanics principle, called Bell's theorem, explains that the reality of the universe is non-local. Greene further explains, "All objects and events in the cosmos are interconnected with one another and respond to one another’s changes" (p.54). Bell's theorem creates the basis of Einstein’s theory of relativity, allowing an explanation of how a phenomenon that happens faster than the speed of light is manifested at the same time in different places, or the same information is manifested in different instances. The quantum theory then presents reality as non-linear, explaining experiences in psychic phenomena such as telepathy.

Within this perspective, there is the assumption that we as somas have different vibratory frequencies and energy fields. We do have a physical body with internal organs, bone and muscles, but our bodies also have subtle energy fields. This explains the notion that Chinese medicine has about meridians, or Aryuvedic medicine has about chakras and nadis. This assumption definitely opens the doors to other systems that mostly operate from the energetic realm, such as Santeria and Espiritismo, identifying PRFHP as somatic in nature.
1.3.7 Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world:

The esoteric side of PRFHP, such as Santeria and Espiritismo, foster these notions about the non-linear multidimensional side of reality. For the Espiritista and Santero, the world of the spirits and Orishas and the physical world are the same. Healers have the ability to see the spiritual world via rituals, sessanes (spiritualist meetings), and through divination. Examples of the multidimensional exertion of energy include trance states, vision quest rituals, and communication with ancestors or deities. All of these examples present a relative concept of time and space, making the experience one that could last seconds or hours, depending on who is experiencing it.

The preceding discussion of some of the assumptions of the somatic theory allows the reader to see the commonalities somatic studies and Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices share. The similar processes of knowing and healing and the praxis both disciplines use to tap into the individual's own reality, makes an attractive invitation to investigate theoretically and practically the questions that this researcher wants to ask of Puerto Rican Folk Health and the healers who presently practice on the island of Puerto Rico.

1.4 The contribution to this research:

To be honest this research serves me –as a Puerto Rican-first. There are many people around who are not aware of the rich legacy of healing in Puerto Rico. These, healing traditions has been in practice even before colonization and has been historically recorded for five hundred years.
Secondly, this study will provide an opportunity to explore somatic assumptions in a non-traditional health setting. This will help create a common language that could bring future theoretical and practical applications in the area of somatic studies, Cultural studies, health education, Latino and Caribbean studies.

Thirdly, it serves those (i.e. somatic practitioners, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, etc) who want to understand how non-western cultures (as opposed to saying indigenous) experience the body-mind-spirit connection in folk healing. The understanding of PRFHP will provide professionals a discourse that explains the relationship between health and culture in order to revise health attitudes and practices from a culturally grounded and phenomenological stance. This will provide an avenue for bringing forward future theoretical and practical applications of health care for Puerto Ricans and other minorities in the US and the Caribbean region.

1.5 Delimitations of the study:

This study concentrated on healing aspects of herbalism, energy work, Espiritismo, Santeria, Congo (Palo), bodywork, and Christian faith healing.

I limited the number of participants to six in order to get accurate and extensive data that reflects the philosophical and epistemological notions of each healer’s practices.

1.6 Limitations of the study:

Of the six healers who volunteered to participate in this study, only one is female. Availability at the time of the study was crucial in deciding who could participate. Various female healers where approached before and during fieldwork. Most female
healers where approached declined to participate due to health, schedule conflicts, or philosophical positions. The fact that female healers were not available at the time of this investigation does not indicate gender bias for this investigation.

The role of the mid-wife in PRFHP was not included in the investigation. At the time of the investigation, I could not find a mid-wife who was willing to share experiences and demonstrations for the study.

These two limitations affect how PRFHP is presented on this inquiry and give limited exposure to a female point of view towards folk healing. In order to present an accurate presentation on how Puerto Rican folk healing happens from a cultural view it is important to have representation from each role and gender. It is the hope of this investigator to encourage readers to explore this inquiry in order to propose creative ways to address these limitations in future research.

1.7 Definitions of Terms and Concepts:¹

The following terms and concepts are arranged by healing traditions and in alphabetical order.

**Ashe:** Also spelled as *Ase* or *Ache* is defined by Canizares, (1993) as the “ultimate source of everything” (Canizares, 1993, p.5). Others compare the concept of Ashe with the Japanese *Ki* and the Chinese *qi*.

**Babalocha:** Male initiated from the Santeria Tradition.

**Babalao:** Santeria High priest.

**Bohique:** Indigenous shaman from the Island of Puerto Rico during the conquest era.

---

¹ Terms in *italics* indicates the word is in another language.
Botanica: A botanica is a store where one can find herbs, candles, pictures of saints, images, and remedies. A botanica is not only a pharmacy, but also a candle shop, herb shop, and religious items shop.

Ch’ulel or oo’l: Translated “wind of life”, it is a term used by Mexican curanderos to describe the universal life energy inside the human body, identified by the Chinese as qi.

Consejero: Folk counselor from the Mexican and Puerto Rican perspective. Some consejeros are also spiritualistas (mediums) or Santeros.

Curandero total: A healer from the Mexican platform, who masters several healing skills and employs all four levels of medicine: “education, bodywork, medicine, and sacred tools” (Avila, 1998, p.84).

Despojo: The equivalent of the Mexican Limpia. A despojo is an aura cleansing done with plants and blessed herbs by a Puerto Rican Folk Healer. These cleansings are also known as dry baths.

Espiritismo: A 19-century, philosophical practice originally from Europe and practiced in Puerto Rico that consisted of calling the spirits to ask for help, communicate, and administer healing via the spirits.

Five phases: A TCM concept that relates the phases of the seasons and outside environment and its applications with what happens to the human body-mind-spirit.

Fundamento: A sacred object that responds to the questions the healers ask in order to receive answers from the spirit (Congo tradition).

Healing or medical mestizaje: This term refers to the use of health practices and concepts that are mixes of other modalities, an example of that is Santerismo, which is a mix of Santeria and Espiritista practices.
**Hierbero:** A Latino curandero who uses herbs in one way or another, whether as remedies for particular illnesses or in cleansing rituals such as *limpias* and sweat lodges.

**Huesero:** Folk bone setter.

**Iyalocha:** Female initiated in the Santeria tradition.

**J’meen or H’men:** Is the indigenous term for Mexican shaman.

**Medium:** Also known as *media-unidad* in Spanish, these practitioners serve as intermediaries when communicating with the spirits in the practice of Espiritismo.

**Mayomberos:** Also known as *Paleros*, they based their practices from the Yoruba pantheon of Congo.

**Mexican Curanderismo (MC)** Avila defines as “an earthy, natural, grounded health-care system that seeks to keep all of the elements of our being in balance” (Avila, 1998, p.19). There is a mix of several philosophies from Indigenous, Spanish, and African cultures involved. Arvigo, (2001), Avila, (1998), Maduro, (1983) identified various assumptions that form the philosophy behind Curanderismo. There is no separation of the spiritual and physical realms; reverence to plants and natural cycles; there is life energy or Ch’ulel; mind and body are inseparable; healing is a team process; and energies in the natural world are manifested into hot or cold. Based on the diagnostic given, treatments vary from pulse diagnosing to observation inquiry to asking the spirits guides. Among the treatments are massage, herbalism, counseling, acupressure, and energy work.

**Nganga or a fumbi:** A practice done by some Yoruba sects, consist of the collection of the spirit of a deceased person or a supernatural force (*mpungu*) – who will mount or climb the healer for consultation and ritual purposes (Cabrera, 2001).
**Ocha:** Refers to the deities of the Santeria and Yoruba Pantheons. The members of Ocha are also initiated of Santeria religion.

**Orisha:** The orishas are the deities of the Yoruba pantheon. Various authors spell the word orisha as Orisa (Yoruba), Orixa (Portuguese) or Oricha (Spanish).

**Otan or otanes:** Sacred stones used in Santeria practice that belong to the Orishas. These stones are bathed in herbs, sacrificial blood from animals in a ritual then put into soups to keep on an altar.

**Partera:** Mid-wife.

**Qi:** Literally translates, as “vapors rising from food,” is an energetic concept used in TCM (Ergil, 1997, p.294). Young (2001) also defines qi as both substance and matter. Qi is fundamental in TCM to determine the degree of energy inside the body.

**Santeria:** An 11-century religion developed in the new world by African Slaves, syncretizing the African deities with the catholic saints.

**Santiguo:** A belly massage done by a Puerto Rican folk healer. The healer recites Catholic prayers while massaging the lower abdomen.

**Sobador or sobadora:** Latino folk healer who performs massages on the stomach, on the back, or to accommodate the uterus.

**Syncretism:** Refers to the cultural adaptation of practices sometimes to masquerade and adapt to the terms and conditions of the dominant religious culture. An example of this is how the African slaves hid the worship of Yoruba deities behind the Catholic saints’ images (Canizares, 1993, Gonzales-Wippler, 1999, Zorlak, 2000).

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)** A holistic practice that finds its origin in Taoism (Dougnas & Ellis, 1992; Young, 2001). The philosophical principles and
processes of Chinese medicine promote the maintenance of harmony in all aspects of life. The system encompasses notions about energy such as qi, Yin-Yang, and the five phases. The use of energy currents in the body called meridians are part of its diagnosis system. Based on that acupuncture, herbalism, massage, and energy work is performed on clients.

**Winds:** A term used by Mexican curanderos to define energetic influences that affect humans somatically. According to some curanderos a physical manifestation of the winds are colds and flu.

**Yin–Yang:** Part of the Chinese cosmology, the Yin and Yang are dualistic dynamic qualities of the universe that are in constant flux.

### 1.8 Chapter organization:

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and background of the study, and outlines the objectives of the study. This chapter provides the theoretical background of the study, and postulates the assumptions of the somatic field used to test theoretical and practical backgrounds for PRFHP. Finally, Chapter 1 outlines the expected contributions of the study, the limitations and delimitations of the study, definitions of terms and concepts, and chapter organization.

Chapter 2 includes literature that revises historical notions about western health, and explains how the field of somatic studies presents alternatives to health attitudes. There are also examples of somatic theory, inquiry, and praxis. Following that, Chapter 2 presents examples from two non-western health traditions, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Mexican Curanderismo (MC), with ontological and epistemological bases that share common ideological grounds with the somatic framework and its assumptions.
Lastly, chapter 2 reviews Puerto Rican folk health with definitions, cultural influences, and the healing modalities found in PRFHP.

Chapter 3 will concentrate on the methodology used for this investigation, starting with the theoretical background including this researcher’s personal stance about research, purpose, theoretical background about constructivism, and culturally grounded research. Following the theoretical backgrounds of inquiry, I will present how I chose the participants and the methods used to gather the data and how the data will be analyzed.

Chapter 4 includes data stories using case studies with the themes that emerged from the culturally grounded analysis. Following that, I will analyze the data using the seven somatic assumptions. At the end of this chapter, I interpret different themes that arise from the data stories.

Chapter 5 includes a summary of the entire project and implications for the work. I present how the investigative experience of theory and practice becomes one and end with the future directions of this investigation.
CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

| Tambien traigo la albahaca,       | I also bring basil                     |
| Pa’ la gente flaca                | for thin people,                       |
| Tengo apasote,                    | I have apasote                         |
| Para los brotes,                  | for skin breaks,                       |
| el vete y ve,                     | the seeing plant                       |
| Para el que no ve,                | for those who are blind,               |
| Y con esa yerba se casa usted!    | And with this herb,                    |

Fragment of a song from *El Yervero Moderno* by N. Mili.

This chapter includes a literature that revises historical notions about western health, literature about the field of somatic studies and Puerto Rican Folk Heath Practices (PRFHP). The literature review presented in this chapter is limited to PRFHP in relation to the social, historical, cultural, and spiritual aspects of healing. Somatic theory and inquiry, examples of two non-western health traditions in relation to somatics as well as the historical influences for PRFHP are also included in this chapter. The literature of PRFHP presents limited epistemological notions regarding Puerto Rican folk healing including diagnosis, therapeutics, and the different roles healers assume while performing healing.
2.1 Western influences in Latino health care literature

In the last thirty years, western researchers have developed a plethora of inquiries keen on alternative, complementary, and integrative health. This interest in research resulted from an increasing popularity among Americans of non-allopathic forms of medicine (Chopra, 1994; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Lord, 2002; Siegel, 1986). There is also an increasing interest in other cultural forms of health and wellness in the fields of ethnomedicine, cultural studies, and Latin and Caribbean studies (Cohen, 1972; Fernández-Olmo, 2001; Núñez-Molina, 2001). The areas of study mentioned above defend post-positivist positions of addressing illness from different cultural points of view. Each argue that the positivist paradigm embedded in western medicine still resists other protocols of diagnosing and addressing illness due to political, social, and systematic ideologies that structure how the idea of health is constructed as an absence of disease.

Mishler (1981) & Klatt (2002) argue that the way western physicians categorize the practice of medicine could be perceived as a way of social control for the masses and as a way for the medical class to promote the lifestyles and ideologies of their own establishment. Mishler explains that medicine is socially constructed so that it promotes and enforces the politics of self-regulation: “physicians have a critical role in determining who is sick or not according to certain symptoms and have the power to determine if one is sick or not and to label individuals as patients” (Mishler, 1981, p. 12).

The politics of self-regulation and the western physician’s power to certify illness have been superimposed across non-western healing practices and individuals. When dealing with minority groups, western health care has failed to address the need to
understand the cultural, social, and communicational differences these groups have toward health and illnesses (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001; Wilson-Schaef, 1995). This disparity is prevalent due to the lack of training and cultural understanding western health care practitioners and physicians might have towards minority groups.

The literature found regarding Latino and Caribbean health care presents a critical view towards western medicine by arguing how historically, positivist views about health and illness have always been an issue that white Creole and elite classes’ favors. When the white Creole favor western values then non-western traditions are considered primitive, outdated, and sometimes too savage for modern medicine to understand (Jung, 1996, Sheets-Johnstone, 1966; Sparshott, 1983; Wilson-Schaef, 1995).

Similarly, in western views of medicine, particular attitudes toward health and the social idiosyncrasies of specific groups are discouraged and are de-legitimized. An example of one such western view that Cohen (1972) comments that the reasons Puerto Ricans look for traditional folk healing usually include financial, linguistic, and social miss-adaptation to western values. She explains that health organizational systems are based on “traditional middle class values,” implying that Puerto Ricans should emulate post-industrial health care notions in order for this problem to be addressed, by “a large ethnically heterogeneous, low socioeconomic groups that is increasingly critical of their function” (Cohen, 1972, p.1530).

However, Fernandez-Olmo (2001) has a critical view of how western medicine sees traditional folk healing and argues that as an area, folk healing has been historically disregarded and misunderstood by scholars. She argues that there are two reasons the west has marginalized Caribbean health practices: 1) There is very little known about
Caribbean folk healing, and 2) Western researchers do not want to pursue research in Caribbean folk healing because the nature of research would need to be expanded beyond the scientific method, preventing the social democratization of healing knowledge.

“Caribbean folk healing is rejected by mainstream culture because those who cannot withstand the scrutiny of scientific empirical investigation are precisely those that claim the most tenacious hold on the Caribbean cultural imagination” (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, p.2)

Fernandez-Olmo proposed that since Caribbean folk healing ought a plethora of practices that are considered both art and science, these particular practices to be studied as such. As a researcher attempting to honor the diverse, pluralist, and democratic ways that Caribbean healing is performed, I have taken Fernandez-Olmo’s advice on inquiring about Puerto Rican Folk health practices and it’s practitioners as artists and healers from an alternative point of view.

2.2 Alternative ways to study and research Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices:

Somatic Studies

Somatic studies present an alternative to western health care in its ideological stance and its practices. In this section, I will give a summary of the ideological and epistemological influences of somatic studies and will explain how the somatic approach is being used as a mode of inquiry in health, wellness, and ethnic studies. This overview will help the reader to appreciate how somatics is applied in the field and how the somatic framework and praxis could be use to explore PRFHP as a post-positivist approach of inquiry that is more suitable for this investigation.
2.2.1. Theoretical background:

Somatics is a field of study that according to Thomas Hanna (1970) is not a new intellectual understanding, but a new view, a new attitude, a new Gestalt. Greene (1997) argues that contrary to Cartesian ideology, the field of somatics embraces wholeness, sensual authority, interdependence, and present-moment awareness. These notions about perceiving the individual not as dualistic (mind and body), but as a connection of body-mind-spirit grew out of the need to explain phenomena that western sciences were not able to prove or that were simply not addressed through positivist inquiry. Somatics is an evolution that draws on the ideologies of pragmatism, phenomenology, and critical theory.

The pragmatic side of somatics sees the body-mind-spirit as a function. According to John Dewey (1969), the relationship of the physical and psychical is part of a whole. Dewey argues that the body through the nervous system is not only a physiological, but a psycho-physiological organism Dewey established the apparent dualism of the body and mind is just a division of labor, "In order that the whole task, the development of the organism, may be the more speedily and economically affected" (Dewey, 1969, p. 104). Pragmatism shows the first attempt to explain how the body-mind is connected and how it works synergistically. "The physical process awakens the mind, it incites its action; the mind, thereupon, spontaneously and, by its own laws develops from itself a sensation" (p. 106). For pragmatists like Dewey, the body is the organ of expression of the soul. The body transcends its material existence because it has expressed and manifested its nature. In pragmatism, like in somatics, the body-mind acts according to the environment and adapts according to changes in the environment and the goals that it needs to achieve.
Other theoretical notions inherited by somatics come from phenomenology and critical theory. These ideologies recognize that humans are living beings, experiencing our bodies-minds-spirits and the world from a subjective point of view. According to these two perspectives, the body-mind is not separated and is part of a reality that affects the way the world is experienced. As Densan states, “There is consciousness which, if it wants to be in the world, ought to be the body… consciousness, for itself exists it’s instrument in the whole complex of utensility which is the world; this instrument is the body” (Densan, 1960, p. 70). Coincidentally, somatics and PRFHP promote ideas and practices of health care and self-cultivation by getting into a phenomenological experience that situates the body-mind as one with the experience. According to Sheet-Johnstone:

Phenomenology is not mere introspection, is a simple reportorial rendering of a sequence of events [...] Nor speculative, does not examine a given experience with the purpose of generating ideas, descriptive or explanatory, about it [...] is non theoretical: no theories emerge from phenomenological accounts. (Sheets-Johnstone, 1984, p.5)

Somatics relates to phenomenology because its focus is on experience rather than thought. As Kleinman (1966) declares, “Phenomenology is an effort to return to unadulterated phenomena” (p. 7). The effort to experience the unadulterated phenomena provides an internal aspect of the Somatic approach that identifies both the body and mind as one.

With reference to critical theory, somatics has adopted the revolutionary stance of pushing the envelope by identifying western and non-western practices that acknowledge the social and cultural bodily aspect of the self. Somatics, as well as other non-western practices, has promoted and maintained the body as an integral aspect of the self that historically has been neglected and/or adjudicated as non-essential or too subjective for the
objectivity of western sciences. Jackson (1983) suggests a revision of notions about the body that could enrich the work scholars is doing, arguing that the body could be “an object of understanding or an instrument of the rational mind, a kind of vehicle for the expression of a reified social rationality” (Jackson, 1983, p. 329).

These attempts to revise inquiry that addresses the body not only as an instrument of the rational mind but paying attention to the body beyond being an expression of social rationality is what somatics stands for. Since the late 80s and 90s, social scientists have become more concerned with the human body as a symbolic representation and its function within a social and cultural context. For example, Nunez-Molina (1987, 1989, and 2001) investigated the somatic aspects of a Puerto Rican Espiritista healer and the socio-cultural underpinnings of being a folk healer in modern society. Csordas (1993) did a cross-cultural comparison of different somatic sensations experienced by folk healers while performing healing. Koss-Chioino (1992) analyzed Puerto Rican women healers from a feminist perspective by acknowledging their somatic modes of attention as idiosyncratic and distinctive because of their social condition as female healers.

The above studies have placed emphasis on the body as an important assessor in finding cultural meaning and social identification. These open an avenue of interpretation that presents bodily aspects of the self in socially empowering ways that have traditionally been overlooked in social sciences.

2.2.2. Somatic Fundamentals and inquiry:

New notions about the practical distribution of body-mind labor, experiencing being in the world, and attributing social meaning to bodily experiences is developing into a
concept wherein there is not just a connection between body and mind but a total integration of body, mind, and spirit.

Applications of these notions are being revised in areas such as psychology, nursing, medicine, and physical therapy as well as in other fields such as social science, engineering, and education. These applications are also known as somatics, a word recaptured by Thomas Hanna in 1970. He used the word soma “because it has certain freshness and because it is easier to recognize new wine when it is put into new bottles. Soma does not mean body; it means me, the bodily being” (Hanna, 1970, p. 33). Mirka Knaster has a clear explanation of this term:

The late Thomas Hanna made a distinction between body and soma and introduced the term somatics in 1970. The difference between perceiving ourselves from our personal point of view, that is, from inside. It is like being a first-person narrator in a novel: I tell the story through my own eyes, through I and me. As a body, we are examined ourselves from a third-person perspective, from outside, and we are noticed and acted upon as an object – measured, diagnosed, and treated. When we look ourselves in the mirror, we see a body; when we feel ourselves from within, we are a soma (Knaster, 1996, p. 56).

Echoing what Knaster and Hanna said, the term somatics talks about experiencing the body from within. Thomas Hanna also perceived the term soma as a regaining of consciousness, as our true nature as humans. Influenced by phenomenology, social sciences, and other fields of cultural studies, somatics also addresses and influences notions of learning through experience, body praxis, and experiencing change of consciousness in order to integrate an individual’s body-mind-spirit (Oliver, 1994; Stinson, 1993; Shapiro & Shapiro, 1995; Green, 1996; Hanna, 1990). Inquiries that also reflect somatic ideology, ontology, and epistemology can also be seen in the works of Theresa Silow (2002). Her work compares kinetic sense with learning and spirituality; works regarding gender issues
(Stinson, 1993; Green, 1993, 1996); studies in ethno medicine (Csordas, 1993, 2002 Nunez-Molina, 1987, 1989), health education, and wellness (Lord, 2002, Klatt, 2002); examining Eastern traditions (Liu, 1999; Sun, 1996); and also studies in multicultural education (Chan, 2002). According to Knaster (1996), there are hundreds of western and non-western practices that involve the uses and connection of the body-mind-spirit. For more information about some of the Western somatic practices, please see Appendix A.

In the following section, I will discuss two non-western health traditions that align with somatic epistemology. However, I want to point out that these two non-western traditions serve also as examples of the way health and illness is addressed within a specific culture. My reason for bringing these examples is to allow readers to further the understanding of PRFHP and its possible relationship with the somatic epistemology. The two examples come from the practices of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Mexican Curanderismo (MC).

2.3 Somatics notion in two non-western folk traditions: Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Mexican Curanderismo (MC).

Practices such as Mexican Curanderismo (MC) and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) are based on philosophical standpoints that embrace the human concept of the body-mind connection. Both practices believe that health is a balance that involves harmonious interaction between body and mind. The first person experience is privileged, as well as the perception of reality as an internal activity. For instance, TCM privilege the first person experience through the Yin-Yang qualities as described by Dougans & Ellis (1992) in terms of temperature, feelings and other qualities such as hot-cold, strong-soft,
slow-fast, and the energetic concept of qi, referring to the meridians (Young, 2001). In MC, the first person experience is privileged through seeing spiritual and physical realms as one as discussed by Lenniger (1995) & Maduro (1983) through the ch’ulel, and hot-cold qualities of nature discussed by Arvigo & Epstein (2001).

Both MC and TCM also share other assumptions basic to somatics. For example, they both believe in the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful form of guidance. In Chinese medicine, different therapeutics—including energy work, chi-kung, and other practices—enhance the ability to find sarcality. In Mexican Curanderismo, sarcal consciousness is created through prayers and shamanic rituals such as herbs, limpias, and bodywork in order to find harmonious balance. For detail information about the philosophy, diagnosis and treatments of these two practices please check Appendix F.

Another assumption both MC and TCM share with somatic studies is the belief that the world is holistic and simultaneously interconnected. Both traditions acknowledge natural cycles and the relationship the body-mind has with the environment. The Chinese related the interactions between the soma and the five seasons, the six external excesses, and the seven effects, while the Mexican curanderos point out the natural cycles of the year, spirit helpers, and the winds. In MC, the quantum concepts of multiple realities and energy creating matter are not unusual, but are highly disregarded among western researchers.

Another reason these two traditions can be examined using the somatic assumptions is because both health traditions struggle to give discursive logic to phenomena related to the energetic and spiritual side of healing. For example, although information and classification of medicinal plants have become important parts of
western pharmaceutical research in the last decade, western researchers tend to disregard the energetic and spiritual function of curanderismo. Garcia et al. (1999) defended the ritualistic part of healing with or without plants and feel, that there is space for curanderismo because it fills a gap that western medical knowledge has failed to cover. “For spiritual illnesses, whether they are of human or divine origin, modern medicine presents no alternative” (p.153).

Traditional Chinese Medicine also encountered similar disregard by western researchers due to the way energy and matter is perceived in TCM. Although recent research by Chan (2002), Lin (2000), and Hsieh (1998) brings us closer to understanding the high levels of energy experienced during practice, there is still skepticism and trivialization of the benefits of TCM from the western medical point of view. As Garcia et al. (1999) comment, “Similarly, a prejudice against anything ‘unscientific’ makes it difficult to open a space for understanding concepts so radically different from those whose fundament is in the west” (p.156). This statement creates an invitation for more investigations using alternative paradigms that allow issues such as spirituality, energy, and multidimensionality become important parts of the folkloric legacy of healing non-western traditions share.

The somatic notions founded on these two non-western healing traditions as well as the cultural uniqueness these health traditions have is one of my motivations to develop a paradigm of healing that could further the understanding of PRFHP in its own right and motivate the exploration of Puerto Rican healing practices from the phenomenological stand point.
2.4 Puerto Rican Folk Practices:

Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices (PRFHP) are an amalgamation of practices that are sometimes aligned with particular or various philosophies and are sometimes performed without any religious or philosophical connotation. These practices have been developed through and have evolved by crossing over different philosophical points of view for more than five centuries.

Fernandez-Olmo (2001) gives an accurate description of PRFHP by comparing it with the metaphor of a botanica cultural. A botanica is a store where one can find herbs, candles, pictures of saints, images, and remedies. A botanica is not only a pharmacy, but also a candle shop, herb shop, and religious items shop. Fernandez-Olmo describes it in more sociological terms: “Part herb shop and folk clinic, more than a ‘poor man’s pharmacy’, the botanica is a curative promise” (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, p.1). Fernandez-Olmo explains her metaphor of healing by adding that in PRFHP, as in a botanica store, there are pluralistic and eclectic views of healing as a “palpable representation of medical mestizaje or syncretism” (p.1). Mestizaje refers to the use of health practices and concepts that are mixes of other modalities, as in the case of the hot-cold classification where Puerto Ricans added the concept of cool reflecting the embracing and holistic nature of PRFHP. “The very fact that new items are still being incorporated into the hot-cold classification attests to its vitality in Puerto Rican culture” (Harwood, 1971, P. 1153). Another case of medical mestizaje is Santerismo – a mix between Afro-Caribbean Santeria and European Espiritismo philosophies- a practice discussed by Canizares (1993), Harwood (1971), Nunez-Molina (2001), and Romberg (1996). Another example of cultural mestizaje is the concept of syncretism. Syncretism refers to the adaptation of
practices sometimes to masquerade and adapt to the terms and conditions of the dominant religious culture. An example of this is how the African slaves hid the worship of Yoruba deities behind the catholic saints’ images (Canizares, 1993, Gonzales-Wippler, 1999, Zorlak, 2000).

Although Canizares (1993) describes syncretism as more of “an act of dissimulation” (p.38) than mixture, Zorlak (2000) argues that syncretism enriches the spiritual legacy of the new world. “Syncretism is enriching because it includes new socio-cultural ingredients and spices. It adapts to the modes of a new land and age and contributes to the fraternization of cultures” (Zorlak, 2000, p.xxxviii).

These cultural notions of *mestizaje* and syncretism help explain the historical and cultural reasons for the plethora of healing modalities practiced on Puerto Rico. This *mestizaje* comes because of the cultural and historical moments the island experienced, first during the four hundred years of Spanish colonization and then during the last hundred years of North American influences on the island. Within the historical and political changes the island has experienced, there has also been an inside eclecticism that has formed out of need in healing individuals and communities in order to be effective and survive. As Fernandez-Olmo describes, “There are also diverse ranges of holistic/artistic and spiritual remedies that Caribbean people have drawn upon for centuries whenever the need has arisen for individual and/or community healing” (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, p.1).

These social and historical influences of eclecticism are similar to those experienced by Chinese medicine, and especially by Mexican Curanderismo. However, Chinese medicine has the advantage of having developed an empirical tradition that
began thousands of years ago and also managed to be recorded in the 1950’s, giving TCM validity and uniformity among practitioners (Ergil, 1997; Garcia, 1999; Hsieh, 1998; Young, 2001). However, Mexican Curanderismo and other Caribbean healing practices such as PRFHP have not had the opportunity to be investigated and seriously reported yet. According to the literature I found related to this study, there are several sociological and historical points in the history of Puerto Rico that show indications of how Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices came to be. Again, the reader needs to remember these practices are in constant flux and evolving according to the needs and perspectives of individuals on the island.

2.4.1 Cosmological influences in PRFHP: Where do these practices come from?

Four major influences make historical marks in the folk practices performed on the island. First, there is the indigenous influence of rituals, bodywork, and an extensive knowledge of medicinal plants recorded since the conquest era. Second, there is the European influence, which brings western medical knowledge and, during the 1800s, the Kardecian Spiritism or Espiritismo. Third, we find the African influence represented in Yoruba (Ocha) and Congo philosophies. Last, there are the American and global influences of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Indigenous influences:

The Taino Indians were the original inhabitants of the island baptized by Christopher Columbus as “San Juan” (now known as Puerto Rico). For the Taino Indians, the island was known as Boriquen. The Tainos showed extensive knowledge of herbalism and medicinal plants. Documents from the conquest era present evidence of information
about plants and medicinal herbs the Tainos used. Fernandez-Melendez (1995) argues that in the book *La historia General y Natural de las Indias*, written in 1535 by Gonzalo de Oviedo, there is documentation of the use of plants such as the lignum vitae (*guayacan*) tree for medicinal purposes. Gonzalo de Oviedo also documented the existence of other medicinal plants and trees such as oranges, grenadines, lemons, limes, and aloe. He also mentions other medicinal herbs and their uses. Other information about the daily life of the Taino Indians--including healings, rituals, and community-related behavior--were recorded by Fray Roman Pane. In his writings, he describes how the *Bohique* or shaman was chosen: “The candidates will take hallucinogens and have a series of dreams. The person who describes their visions with accuracy is the chosen one” (Ballesteres, & Gomez, 1976, p. 47). According to Ballesteres & Gomez the *Bohique* were not only divinatory, they also performed healing rituals with herbs, roots, and seeds (p.48). For example, father Bartolome de las Casas--an Indian advocate who studied and recorded Taino culture--describes other functions the shaman or *Bohique* performed in his healings:

“Bartolome de las Casas gave detailed descriptions of therapies the healers performed which consisted of a soft massage, initiated on the shoulders, arms and continuing through the rest of the body. Every now and then the healer will blow different body parts on the belief that the illness or evil was inside the body of the affected person and has to be blown out of the body” (Ballester & Gomez, 1976, p.48).

**European Influence:**

The European influence came with the Spanish conquest. Puerto Rico was claimed by Spain on November 19, 1493, during Christopher Columbus’s second voyage.
At that time, Spain itself had inherited medical notions and practices from Greek and Roman medicine, combined with influences from Arabic medicine and Judeo-Christians traditions (Avila, 1998, Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, Harwood, 1971).

During the time of the Spanish conquest, humoral medicine was the most practiced method of health care in the Americas. Humoral medicine assumed that the human body was composed of four elements: black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. Each humor caused sickness. For example, “black bile caused melancholy, and its characteristics were cold and dry, yellow bile caused bad temper, and its characteristics were hot and dry” (Avila, 1998, p.25).

Other characteristics for humoral medicine included the classification of blood as hot and wet, and of phlegm as cold and wet. Mental and physical illnesses developed when these humors were not in equilibrium. Another concept inherited from the colonial era is the concept of the hot-cold theory. For example, food is considered hot or cold in essence rather than in actual temperature. The same applies for certain physical conditions that are considered hot and cold and should be treated accordingly.

In 1971, Harwood identified the theory of hot and cold, and added a Puerto Rican variant, “cool,” as part the diagnostic system to treat illnesses. In this system, health is conceived as a state of balance among the four humors, and is manifested as wet, warm body. “Illness, on the other hand, is believed to result from a humoral imbalance which causes the body to become excessively dry, cold, hot, wet, or a combination of these states” (Harwood, 1971, p.1153). In the Puerto Rican cultural variant, the hot-cold dichotomy became a trichotomy by adding the concept of “cool” (fresco). Harwood emphasizes the fact that for Puerto Ricans, the foods they eat or drink needs to be the
opposite of the condition. For example colds are caused because of a draft (a cold condition), so a hot medicine, such as penicillin, is prescribed to counteract the cold.

Cool substances are prescribed for hot ailments such as constipation, diarrhea, rashes, and ulcers. Prenatal and postpartum women are also sometimes given “cool” foods, such as barley water, milk, fruits, honey, raisin, salt-cod, and watercress. The idea is to keep the mother’s body in a cool state to promote a speedy recovery and to pass the cool quality to the baby by breast-feeding.

Other ideas inherited from the conquest era include the European concept of the evil eye (mal de ojo), hexes (brujeria), and illnesses caused by immorality (Avila. 1998).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, historians presented evidence of a belief system brought about by Puerto Rican liberals, known as Espiritismo. Espiritismo promoted liberal ideals “about transformation of the individual as well as the community” (Nunez-Molina, 2001, p. 116). Because Puerto Rico was on the verge of gaining autonomy from the Spanish government, the intellectual elite of the island popularized the doctrine of Espiritismo as one of the ways of reforming the future political system. During that time, Espiritismo was thought of as “an ideal doctrine that would liberate the oppressed community from Spanish colonialism” (Nunez-Molina, 2001, p.116). The philosophy come from French educator Leon Denizarth Hippolyte Rivail (1804-1869), whose pen name was Allan Kardec. Kardec’s studies presented the intellectuals of the island with avenues to explore the world of the spirits. “Books such as The Book of the Spirits (1857), The Gospel According to Spiritism (1864), and The Book of the Mediums (1859) were brought to Puerto Rico clandestinely due to the Spanish government’s opposition to Espiritista philosophy” (Nunez-Molina, 2001, p.116).
In spite of this repression against Espiritistas, the movement grew rapidly and centers were organized in different parts of the island. By 1903, the Espiritistas Federation was formed, and that organization still holds an annual convention on the island today (Nunez-Molina, 2001).

Koss (1972) and Nunez-Molina (2001) agree that Espiritismo’s central belief is based on the communication of the spirit world through intermediaries who are called mediums or *media-unidad* in Spanish.

In the Espiritista cosmology, there are two worlds: the material world (the one we can see) and the spiritual one. The spirits are categorized into spirits of light and ignorant spirits. Koss (1972) adds that a human being is composed of two major dimensions: a material body and a spirit. When the body dies, the spirit leaves the body but continues living at another level of existence. Nunez-Molina (2001) explains that part of the Espiritista theory is the concept of reincarnation. The way reincarnation is explained is by the fact that when one life is not enough to evolve spiritually, then the spirit comes back to learn the lessons that it needs to learn in the next life in order to achieve moral perfection. That is why “problems and conflicts in a present life are strongly determined by one’s actions in past lives” (Nunez-Molina, p.118).

Koss (1972), Nunez-Molina (2001), and Rogler & Hollingshead (1960) agree that even though the Espiritista movement started as a middle class movement led by intellectuals and the academically oriented, there was another group of Puerto Ricans whose interest was more applicable to their lives. As Nunez-Molina (2001) explains, “these Puerto Ricans were interested in Kardec’s *Spiritisme*’ not because of its scientific
and philosophical orientation but because this system offered framework for understanding healing and treating illness” (p.117).

The curative aspect of talking to the spirits was adopted by the masses and syncretized with other beliefs and healing techniques already practiced on the island. Koss, who wrote extensively about the sociological underpinnings of Espiritismo in Puerto Rico, explains that “low class Puerto Ricans adopted this [healing] aspect immediately, syncretized the Kardecian practices and beliefs with those of the traditional Catholic ideology and Curanderismo” (Koss, 1972, p.69)

**African Influence:**

The African influence in Puerto Rico comes mostly through the slave trade. In 1999, Gonzalez-Wippler found direct evidence of the presence of the West African tribes of Yorubas in the island. “The Yorubas were first introduced in Puerto Rico, possibly through contraband, in the second half of 18th century. But it was not until the end of the 18th and the beginning of 19th century that the importation of Yoruba slaves was full force” (Gonzalez-Wippler, 1999, p.292). Gonzalez-Wippler found records of Yoruba slaves in the *Archivo General de Puerto Rico* (the General archives of Puerto Rico) from 1827 to 1872 at the height of the Yoruba trade. These records describe each slave’s physical appearance, his or her parents, and the name of his or her owner. In addition to this research at the General Archives, Gonzalez-Wippler interviewed various scholars specializing in Puerto Rican studies, who attested to the Yoruba presence in Puerto Rico. However, most of them emphasized that Yoruba presence was not as obvious and strong as in Cuba or Brazil, due to the small size of the island. However, there is evidence of Yoruba traditions that were inherent in island culture, including the plethora of rhythms.
in Puerto Rican music, the celebration of Saint James (Chango, syncretism of the Yoruba) from the town of Loiza and linguistic Yoruba immersions founded in the popular language used in Puerto Rico (Gonzalez-Wippler, 1999, p.294).

Other scholars, such as Canizares (1993), Du Toit (2001), and Fernandez-Olmo (2001), argue that African influence was more notable in the Caribbean during the second half of the 20th century due to the Cuban revolution, when many Cubans were forced into exile. Because Cuba and Puerto Rico share similar geography, weather, and belief systems, many Cubans found the island of Puerto Rico a desirable place to settle.

Canizares (1993) explains that the Yoruba civilization goes back a thousand years to the founding of Ile-Ife, the holy city of the Yoruba and center of their empire. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European merchants and Fulani tribes arrived in West Africa, contributing to the disintegration of the Yoruba empire and resulting in thousands of Yorubas finding themselves in chains and being shipped to the new world as slaves. Canizares adds that in certain parts of the world, such as the Caribbean, the Yorubas retained and preserved important elements of the faith. This resulted in the development of Santeria (Canizares, 1993, p.2).

According to Zorlak (2000), Santeria cosmology sees the world as alive and dynamic. Every living thing is interconnected and influenced by a superior intelligence, believing “that we proceed from it and that someday we will return to it” (Zorlak, 2000, p.xxx). Nature is important for Yoruba people, which is venerated and respected. Part of the Santeria cosmology also presents the idea of everything being energy. “The philosophic attitude prevailed that everything is energy, that the universal spirit is similar
to it, and that it is found everywhere” (p.xxx). Some authors relate this universal energy as Ashe.  

For Canizares, the concept of Ashe is a pluralistic one. “The concept of Ashe is central to understanding right and wrong in Santeria. Ashe – from the Yoruba Ase--is like the Hindu dharma, a dynamic and hard to define concept” (Canizares, 1993, p.5). For Canizares, the word has various meanings. Although people use the word Ashe to mean luck or charisma, the word does have a much deeper meaning. Ashe refers to a sense of order and balance in the universe. Ashe is the ultimate source of everything. Canizares describes the Ashe concept as the energy in everything and every person. “Santeros believe that each person’s Ashe internally inspires him or her to act harmoniously, in a manner congruent with the avoidance of imbalance. Imbalance is caused when a person has difficulty accessing his or her Ashe” (Canizares, 1993, p.6). A way to restore the ashe is for the person who is having difficulties to go to a high priest in order to contact that individual’s Orisha or eleda’ and ask for help to restore the ashe back into the person. For Moreno-Vega (2000) and Gonzalez-Wippler (1999), Ashe or Ache’ is compared to the Asian concept of universal energy known as Chinese qi or Japanese ki.

Despite popular beliefs of Santeria as a polytheistic faith, old Yoruba traditions believed in one god with a tripartite conception of the holy trinity. “This energy they called Olodumare (the principles of principles), generated by three parts, essences or detached energies and these they called Nzame, Baba Nkwa, and Olofi” (Zorlak, 2000, p.xxx). Another Santeria concept inherited from Yoruba traditions is the concept of two

---

2 I have seen the word Ashe spelled in various forms such as Ase and Ache.
kingdoms or worlds known as *Aye* and *Orun*. Zorlak describes the *Aye* world as the place “living things dwell” and he explains that it is “the more concrete, material, real or tangible of the two” (p.xxxii). The *Orun* is “the world of invisible things, intangibles and abstractions” (Zorlak, 2000, p. xxxii).

Zorlak explains that these two kingdoms, which represent the cosmos, co-exist at the same time and cannot be separated. The concept of the invisible and visible worlds as interconnected, and the belief in a supreme being manifested into three forces, is what lead the Yoruba cosmology to seek spiritual and material equilibrium. In the *Orun* world, there is Olodumare the creator. He is the one who supplies the energy for all living things. Then there are Olodumare’s helpers, known as Orishas, who come to the *Aye* world to intervene with humans and the terrestrial world.³

Zorlak’s translation of the word orisha comes from the Yoruba term “supernatural being” (Zorlak, 2000, p.xxvi). He argues that the Orisha is pure energy -- energy detached from a greater energy of all things. Zorlak sees the Orishas as manifestations of God’s energy and manifestations of nature. For instance, Yemaya –the orisha of salt water or the sea -- represents the characteristics of life and nature. For Neimark, Orishas also represent the energies of the universe within nature and us. Within the Yoruba tradition, there is a specific energy Orisha that is predominant within us. “We call this our guardian Orisha” (Neimark, 1993, p.14). In some Santeria circles, this is also known as being the son or daughter of an Orisha-Saint. According to our spiritual stage of development, an Orisha protector is assigned to us to guide us and to teach us a lesson. Even physical attributes and psychological archetypes are assigned to the person, matching the

³ Various authors spell the word orisha as orixa, (Portuguese), orisa (Yoruba), oricha (Spanish).
individual to the attributes of the specific Orisha. Moreno-Vega (2000) and Neimark (1993) give descriptions of the most important Orishas and the humans’ arquetype in nature. Ellegua,\textsuperscript{4} who represents will and safeguards journeys, is also the messenger of the Orishas and the lord of the crossroads. Anyone, whose orisha protector is Ellegua has a childlike personality, is a practical joker and a trickster. Obatala, who represents the father on earth, represents the intellect. Obatala sons and daughters are calm, and their orientation is toward intellectual activities. Yemaya, who represents the mother and nurturer on Earth, is also the patron of salt water. Yemaya’s children are nurturers, highly value home, and family. Chango represents justice, male virility, and is the lord of dance. He owns the Bata drums and his children are physically strong, people-oriented, and good leaders. Ogun represents machinery, computers, electricity, and metals. Ogun’s children have a strong sense of right and wrong. They are excellent warriors and protectors. Ochun is the goddess of love. She represents female sexuality, but also represents diplomacy, community, individual's self-esteem, and vital energy. Oshun’s daughters and sons are physically attractive and good diplomats. Babalu aye’ represents the healing of the physical and mental aspects of the self, and Orisha Oko represents the energy of the earth, agriculture, and the food we eat.

In addition to characterizing human personalities and their manifestations in nature, the energy of the Orishas is also manifested and concentrated in certain stones gathered by Santero initiates. These stones are known as otan or otanes. The otanes are stones that after being prepared are considered the link to the energy of a specific Orisha.

\textsuperscript{4} There are various ways to spell the names of the orishas. For example, Ellegua could be Elegua, Elegbara, Esu-Elega, Òleleba. Chango can be Shango, Sango. Oshun, Ochun, Osun. Yemaya, Yemonja, Yemalla. Ogun, ogun, oggoun. Sometimes authors spell the names in Yoruba, English, Spanish, Creole, or Portuguese.
Zorlak explains, “The energy is concentrated in them; they are the receivers of the living and latent forces of the natural elements” (Zorlak, 2000, p. xxviii). Zorlak explains that preparation consists of the careful choosing of stones, which are then prepared with the Orishas’ proper attributes and symbolic objects so that the Saints can work and act with them with respect to the different areas and subjects to be dealt with. These *otanes* are placed inside soup tureens of the Orisha’s favorite color and bearing their favorite symbols (Gonzalez-Wippler, 1999; Neimark, 1993).

The Santeria tradition has a series of initiations that culminate in the final stage: Babalocha for the male and Iyalocha for the female. This initiation prepares the devotee to become a priest or priestess in Santeria. There is also a higher rank of *Babalao*, which is the high priest. This initiation process requires a lengthy period of preparation. Canizares (1993) expresses that those called to be Santeros undergo an extremely complex initiation involving several highly trained practitioners. “The culmination of the ceremony, which is also called *Asiento* or *hacer santo* (making the saint), is a three-day feast during which the neophyte is presented to the community as a new brother or sister” (Canizares, 1993, p.33). The novice is called *Iyabo* and during the one year novitiate that follows iyabos must wear white and observe numerous taboos, some of which they must continue to follow for the rest of their lives.

A similar philosophy, also coming from Africa, is Congo. Congo cosmology embraces some of the deities of the Yoruba pantheon and has others from the Congo pantheon. Congo cosmology has similar views about energy and the two worlds (the spirit and the concrete). Practitioners who follow the Congo philosophy are known as *Mayomberos* or, as they are called in Puerto Rico, *Palo mayombes*. According to
Gonzalez-Wippler (1999), Mayomberos mainly use the moon cycles and perform rituals under the Ceiba Tree. The difference between the Santero and the Palero is that Paleros have an *nganga* or a *fumbi*—which is the spirit of a deceased person or a supernatural force (*mpungu*)—who will mount or climb the healer (Cabrera, 2001). The Mayomberos use *fundamentos*, which are sacred objects that respond to the questions the healers, ask in order to receive answers from the *nganga*. While the Paleros have their *nganga*, the initiated Santeros have the energy of their ruling orishas in their *otanes*, which acts as intercessor between the natural and spiritual worlds to answers questions and receive graces from the deity.

In Puerto Rico, one will find that there are healers who use beliefs and practices from African traditions, but are not yet initiated. There is also the healer who is initiated in both African practices: Santeria and Congo. Lastly, there is the type of healer who uses the wisdom and practices from Santeria and Espiritismo and does not declare any affiliation to either.

**Twentieth century influences.**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Puerto Rico went from being an autonomist government of Spain to being a United States territory. After the U. S. invasion in 1898, Puerto Rico went through political and social changes that contributed to the hybridization of cultures and ideologies. This hybridization slowly affected philosophical, religious, and psychological attitudes toward health and illness on the island. (Koss, 1972 & 1992; Nunez-Molina, 2001).
During the first hundred years of U.S. occupation, one of the primary goals of U.S. and local politicians was to transform the island from a third world agricultural society to a first world industrialized one.

Part of the acculturation process was to bring ideologies that promoted industrial capitalist values, including the spiritual values of Protestantism (Cohen, 1972). The Protestant movement spread very slowly during the first fifty years of North American occupation. However, during the second half of the twentieth century, Protestantism “became the fastest growing Christian movement in Latin America” (Goodman, 2001, p.4). Goodman (2001) explains that Protestantism’s appeal to Latin Americans was due to its attitudes toward constant testimony, religious militancy, and the idea that one experiences the Holy Spirit through the body as a somatic reality. This is especially true within the Pentecostal sect of Protestantism. As a result, new forms of trances influenced by Protestantism, such as goglossalia (speaking in tongues) and faith healings, started to become part of the Puerto Rican healing experience as new ways of experiencing well being. These phenomena accepted under the Protestant cosmology appealed to the sense of experiencing spirituality closer to the self, and stand in contrast to the values and experiences presented in the rituals and teachings of the Catholic Church.

Along with Protestant values, the decade of the 1960s brought a renaissance of cult movements and world religions, sparking interest in the public as a reaction to social injustice. On the personal level, these cult movements and world religions offered explanations for phenomena that western sciences were not able to explain through positivist reasoning. Koss (1972) mentions that cult movements such as Yoga, Astrology, Rosacross, Vendata, Espiritismo, Santeria, and Umbanda (Brazil) are examples of the
growing interest of Puerto Ricans in world philosophy, because what a cult does is create a new ideology that offers direct contact with a “higher reality” (p. 62). She also expresses that cults work as cognitive functions, providing their followers with explanations to phenomena that otherwise make no sense in daily life.

The interest in world philosophies and cult movements has also brought somatic practices to improve health in individuals from a holistic perspective. Rodríguez-Malave (1999) argues that since the late eighties, many articles pertaining to these philosophies and movements have appeared in the written press and other media on the island, creating a growing interest in these forms of health care. In his book Medicina Natural, Retorno a Nuestra Essencia (Natural Medicine, Return to our Essence) he discusses practices such as naturopathy, Aryuvedics, Homeopathy, Green Medicine, bodywork, and Chinese Medicine and giving a glimpse of the most popular practices Puerto Ricans engage in at the present time.

Other indications of the growing interest in alternative forms of health and self-help in Puerto Rico are reflected in the extensive proliferation of naturopaths, chiropractors, massage therapists, and other health practitioners, in addition to the folk practitioners that live and work on the island.

The historical, sociological, and spiritual immersions the island has experienced during five hundred years of recorded history is what makes the Puerto Rican folk practices a unique blend of medica modus operandi that enriches and gives a distinctive character to the health attitudes of Puerto Ricans. That is why it is not surprising to visit a healer who is also knowledgeable in African, western and eastern techniques, or who combines practices and ideologies from different sources. Romberg explains this
phenomenon in her article about the way Puerto Ricans experience cultural practices. She describes Puerto Ricans as “cultural chameleons” because “people who live as cultural chameleons on a daily basis manage their lives through the combination, merging, or shifting of different cultural strategies” (Romberg, 1996, p.17). PRFHP is a perfect example of the cultural chameleon phenomena that is experienced in the island. Duharte-Jimenez (1997) describes the cultural chameleon phenomena as the ability to adapt to different cultural experiences as a way to connect with an ancestral essence. He concludes, “That maybe this is what connects us with the pre-enlightened world and also what could be useful for dreams to become reality in the future” (Duharte-Jimenez, 1997, p. 36).

2.4.2 PRFHP Causes of Illnesses:

Causes of illnesses may be diverse and vary according to the ideologies of the healers. There are organic causes, caused by imbalances in physical or terrestrial phenomena such as diet, weather, excessive heat and cold, posture, wounds, excess work, weakness, injuries, lack of rest, and stress. There are also supernatural causes, such as malicious intent from other humans who cast spells, spirits interfering with the person’s judgment, envy, Karma from past existence, and other supernatural causes. The physical symptoms of these illnesses may be the same, but they may differ in cause.

2.4.3 PRFHP Diagnosis:

In PRFHP, there are various ways of diagnosing. The physical diagnosis includes inquiry of the signs and symptoms, palpations, and intuition by the emphatic healer. Diagnosis by divination includes various methods according to the philosophical and training background of the healer. These include reading the Coconut on the Ifa table
(done by Babalao, a Santeria High priest), reading cowry shells, calling the spirits, and reading tarot cards. All of these methods can be used in conjunction with each other or with the physical methods mentioned before. Counseling can occur as the divination happens or after the divination is over, depending on the healer.

**Physical diagnoses**

**Palpation**

Palpations are usually done by bonesetters and sobadores. The healer palpates the affected area and sometimes the surrounding tissue in order to find the origin and insertion of the muscles. As Arvigo (2001) explains, sometimes palpations are also done on the abdominal area to pinpoint empachos (intestinal problems).

**Inquiry**

The healer usually asks for symptoms, eating, movement, and lifestyle habits (Garcia, 1999).

**Intuition**

The healer places his or her hands, stones, or plants close to the body of the patient. Some healers feel changes of energy, emotional distress, or pain on the affected area (Csordas, 1993).

**Diagnoses by divination**

**Coconut**

Moreno-Vega (2000) describes how the coconut divination happens on the Ifa table. Only a Babalawo uses this form of divination. The system is interpreted by a yes-no questioning systems in which the healer interprets the divining signs. “Based on these
signs, the Babalawo selects a *Pataki* (Yoruba story) that offers a solution to the client” (p.143).

**Oguele or Opele**

The *Oguele* or *opele* is a divining chain with eight pieces of coconut. This chain performs a similar function as the coconut on the Ifa table. Only Santeria high priests use the opele.

**Cowry shells**

The seashells (cowries) constitute a vital part of divination in Santeria. They are considered “the mouth pieces of the orishas” (Gonzalez-Wippler, 1999, p.78). The shells are also known as the Dilogun. Both females and males initiated into Santeria use this form of divination. Gonzalez-Wippler (1999) explains that there are eighteen shells, but only sixteen are used. Each orisha has his or her set of shells numbers to be read. After shaking the shells in the hand, the healer throws the shells on the straw mat and, according to how they fall – on the open or closed side--the diviner reads the pattern and draws conclusions for the reading.

The coconuts, *opele*, and shells are divination tools exclusively from the Santeria tradition. Only initiates are allowed to divine in these forms.

**Calling the spirits**

Calling the spirits is usually done in a group sitting in front of a table with a white cloth known as the *boveda*. The gathering is also known as a *misa espiritista*. Canizares describes a typical *misa espiritista*: “Mediums and visitors, usually dressed in white, sit in chairs that have been placed so that all participants can see the glasses on top of the *boveda*. Many Espiritista’s practice the art of water gazing. This form of divination is
similar to gazing into a crystal ball. Those present take turns stepping up to the table (boveda) and put some of the holy water from the glasses on the temples, hands, and other parts of their bodies” (Canizares, 1993, p.79). This action prepares the participants for the session and cleanses them of bad vibrations. Prayers are then recited from the Kardec’s “Selected Prayers” and the spirits begin to possess the mediums. Finally, if the spirits are elevated ones, the mediums communicate messages and advice. Ignorant spirits are healed with prayers and incantations of the participants, and the mass ends with closing prayers. Healers from different philosophical backgrounds communicate with spirits using these and other forms of communication such as feeling changes of energy, hearing voices, or having flashes of events presented to them in the form of a movie (Canizares, 1993, Csordas, 1993, Gonzales-Wippler, 1999).

**Tarot cards**

Tarot cards are the most common tool used in divination, and are usually used by non-initiated Santeros and other healers. The healer shuffles the cards and lays the cards in various positions to read the current state of the patient. The healer usually makes some sort of invocation or prayer before each diagnosis. Some healers cleanse the aura of the patient before the tarot card reading.

**2.4.4: Therapeutics**

**Herbalism:**

Puerto Rico, like the rest of Latin America, has a long and extensive legacy of medicinal plants that started before the conquest era (Benedetti, 1989, Nunez-Melendez, 1982, DeStefano, 2001). Medicinal plants are used to treat different ailments ranging from indigestion, to sleeping disorders, to despojo (aura cleansing). The hot-cold theory
is also used in order to achieve balance and harmony in the body. Plants are also classified by hot or cold; for example, a cathartic way of getting rid of a cold (a cold condition) is to boil anise (a hot plant) in water and drink it to get rid of the phlegm. Cool substances such as sugar cane are prescribed for ailments such as constipation, diarrhea, rashes, and ulcers, which are all considered hot conditions (Spector, 2000, p.251).

Nunez-Melendez (1982), in his book *Plantas Medicinales de Puerto Rico*, compiles thousands of medicinal plants on the island and classifies them according to their medicinal properties and uses. He includes their Latin, Spanish, and occasionally their English names. In some cases, he gives instructions on how to use each plant in different preparations. The book presents black and white and color pictures of the plants, and is arranged according to which plants that is more commonly used (such as basil, oregano, aloe, and congo-root), to which plants are of lesser importance.

Another book that represents the plant and healing legacy of the island is *Earth and Spirit: Medical Plants and Healing Lore from Puerto Rico* (1989), written by Maria Benedetti. In this book, she presents recipes and healing methods through the voices of healers she interviewed. Toward the end of the book, she classifies the different herbal remedies by conditions and ailments. She also gives the Latin, English, and Spanish names of each herb.

The extensive legacy of herbs on the island is not limited to the physical healing aspect of the medicinal plants, but to their spiritual healing powers as well. In the Santeria tradition, herbs are an important element for healing and for ritual purposes. Herbs, or *ewe* as they are called in the Yoruba tradition, are compounds of roots, leaves, and flowers. Gonzalez-Wippler (1999) explains that every Orisha has his or her ruling set
of plants, and plants are prescribed according to the patient’s ruling Orisha, or according to his or her ailments. Herbs can be used in tea, for physical and stomach ailments raw, to cleanse the aura or in vapor, for physical, emotional or spiritual well being. Herbs can also be used in infusions, tinctures, or curative baths.

**Massage:**

Massages are done for various purposes and conditions. If the patient has indigestion, healers usually give a special tea of anise seeds and coffee senna, and then massage the lower abdominals. Anise and coffee senna are good for relieving gas and intestinal pain (Benedetti, 1989, p.28). Other forms of massage are to adjust tendons and joints. Adjustments are done with a soft palpation at first, then rubbing the area with oil, alcohol, or special alcholated lotion fortified with lots of fresh plants (p.28). Another type of massage is known as santiguo. “Santiguo in Spanish means, “to bless” or “to heal by blessing” (Gonzalez-Wippler, 1999, p.29) Gonzalez-Wippler, describes the process of santiguo done by folk bone setters, sobadores, and Santeros. The healer blesses the body of the sick person, usually concentrating on the solar plexus or the abdominal area (p.30). Usually prayers before, during, and after are recited, representing the divine light of healing.

A type of bodywork that is disappearing is Ventosa, also known in English as cupping. Ventosa means taking the wind out. The practitioner places a copper coin on the affected area (usually the back), with a small lit candle on top, and then places a crystal cup on top of the candle and the cent. After a few seconds, when the candle blows out, the cup creates a vacuum effect sucking air and lifting the skin inside the cup. The practitioner immediately moves the cup toward the outside parts of the body sucking the
Ventosa is a legacy that has been passed down in my family from three generations, I learned by first observing my grandfather, who was a bonesetter, and then in apprenticeship with my mother and father, who learned from him. Even though Arvigo (2001) and Garcia et al. (1999) all mention this technique in Mexican curanderismo, I could not find written evidence about this form of bodywork in Puerto Rican folk healing.

**Energy work/ Despojos:**

A very common form of bodywork on the island is the sweeping of the aura, known as despojo. The despojo, or sajumeiro if working from the Santeria perspective, is the Puerto Rican version of the Mexican limpieza or limpia. The practitioner may use plants and herbs; the plants may be alive or burnt. The despojos can also be done with incense, tobacco, and bare hands.

According to Moreno-Vega (2000), Despojos can be done to people, animals, and spaces. For example, when one is moving to a new house or apartment, a despojo can be performed to clear out old energies and imprint renewed energy for the new owners or inhabitants.

The same principle of cleansing can be used in special spaces chosen to honor ancestors, family portraits, or altars with images of saints and spiritual teachers.

**Counseling:**

Healers use counseling with their clients in several ways. Benedetti (1989) presents examples of some of the ways healers counsel their clients. She reports that healers usually give counseling for anxiety and life related stress (p.72). Healers usually give advice in a relaxed tone; they may give the patient a glass of water, burn incense, or
light candles to create an environment that enable the client to talk. The healers give advice on anything the client needs to talk about, such as shyness, relationships, marital problems, difficulties with children, health problems, fears, job problems, etc.

Most Espiritistas give this kind of counseling by gazing at a glass of water and communicating intuitively with spirit guides. Nunez-Molina (2001) argues that Puerto Ricans prefer to seek the advice of the Espiritista because they do not feel the Espiritista stigmatizes the client with the problem. In some cases, it is quite the opposite: “Rather than the manifestation of illness, it is the signal that the client is developing faculties” (p.125). Healers interpret these symptoms as a gift instead of being labeled as mentally ill. Mexican curanderos also practice this no-fault assumption. However, despite the fact that the client is not blamed for his or her illness, the client is still responsible for the recuperation of that illness. Clients usually feel more comfortable going to the folk healer than to a psychotherapist because “they can relate to healers who live in the same community as they do, therefore experiencing similar conditions and similar situations day by day” (Nunez-Molina, 2001, p.125).

**Baños:**

*Baños* or baths are treatments that most healers prescribe for different purposes. For some healers, the bath is the wet version of the *despojos*. It sometimes also involves plants and herbs that have been mixed and boiled. The bath may happen in the bathtub, or, after the mix cools down, one may be “baptized” in the shower. Baths are prescribed to alleviate physical pain such as back or joint pain, or it may be used to reduce swelling or relieve soreness after fixing a dislocated joint. Montenegro, (1996) explains that a prayer is usually done before the bath, according to the purpose of the bath. In the
Santeria tradition, there are ritual baths for specific purposes, for instance to find a job, get de-stressed, find a wife or husband, etc.

2.4.5. Traditional health roles performed on this particular investigation:

As Avila (1998), Garcia, et. al (1999), and Arvigo (2001) argue, and as previously discussed in this chapter, Puerto Rican healers perform more than one role as healers. Therefore, in order to identify their healing practices, I divided the roles into categories to discuss the healing roles these healers assume.

Hierbera:

Herbs, described by Benedetti (1998) as the jewels of the earth, have been the vocation of many Puerto Ricans, with evidence of this practice dating back to before the Spaniards arrived on the island (Gonzalez-Wippler, 1999; Harwood, 1971; Koss, 1972, Nunez-Molina, 2001;). Hierbero, yerbetera, or Odosain--inside the Santeria tradition--Cabrera (2001) are healers who cultivate and prepare recipes for health and medicinal purposes. They prescribe the method of using the plants in teas, tincture, and baths or in a dish. Sometimes plants are also used for rituals and cleansing known as despojos. Even though hierberos do not have formal training, they are wonderful botanists and excellent ethnographers in their own right. As Benedetti puts it, these are people “who are proud of their heritage, knowledgeable about traditional agriculture and healing… [are] Inventive and resourceful” (Benedetti, 1998, p.35).

Huesero or sobador (ra):

The huesero performs massages, adjusts dislocated joins, does cupping (correr ventosa), and, in some cases, performs santiguos (a form of blessing on the stomach). These body workers are experts at treating muscle spasms, backaches, sprains,
overworked muscles, and general aches and pains. *El Huesero o Curioso* – a bonesetter or folk chiropractor--works more on pulled ligaments and sprained muscles. Some body workers only do one of the three treatments others do two. Very few of them perform the three ways of bodywork, which are massage, bone setting, and *ventosa*.

**Espiritista:**

Usually performing as the role of counselor, the Espiritista gives advice to clients’ problems. Most of these healers are mediums, which communicate with spirits, perform energy work such as *despojos* and cleansing of the aura, and prescribe treatments and herbs according to what their spirit guide advises them to prescribe for healing. The Espiritista may work one on one with the client or in a group session known as *sessanes*.

**Santero:**

The initiated Santero or Santera is devoted to the energies of the orishas. He or she performs healing work from the Santeria framework, diagnoses by divination, and performs a number of healing techniques, including counseling, herbalism, massage, *santiguos*, cleansings, baths, and other shamanic rituals. In addition, as Cabrera (2001) explains, “not all Santeros who are initiated are healers. Some individuals initiated in Santeria for spiritual purposes only” (p. 32).

**Palero:**

Paleros perform duties similar to those of the Santeros, however, they have an *nganga* or a *fumbi* (the spirit of a deceased person), or an *mpungu* (a supernatural force), which will mount or climb the healer while diagnosing. The Palero as well as the Santero perform a number of healing techniques including herbalism, massage, *santiguos*, etc.
cleansing baths, and other shamanic rituals. Paleros work with the phase of the moon to perform most of their rituals.

**Energy Worker, Sanador con energia:**

The energy worker works with the patient’s body energy either through his or her own hands, through plants, or through gemstones or water. Some energy workers are also faith healers, and work from a Charismatic or Pentecostal religious perspective; however, energy workers can also be eclectically oriented, as is the case of one of the healers interviewed for this investigation. Some of these healers use plants to “feel” the aura, or human energy field, of their clients; others use gemstones and their own hands in a very similar fashion to the Japanese energy healing known as Reiki.²

2.4.6 The healer’s formation

The way the Puerto Rican healer is formed varies from person to person. The literature found about the healer’s formation also varies. Koss (1970) and Nunez-Molina (2001) gives descriptions about the formation of the mediumistic capacities of an Espiritista. Moreno-Vega (2000), Canizares (1993), and Gonzalez-Wippler (1999) wrote about their own personal experiences in the Santeria tradition as they were initiated.

---

2 According to Horan (1989), Reiki is an ancient healing art rediscovered about a hundred years ago by Dr. Mikao Usui. The word Reiki translates from Japanese as "Universal Life Force." The technique allows transferring of the energy of the universe, also known as "ki" or "chi," from the Reiki practitioner to the client. The energy that is transferred through the practitioner's hands goes naturally to any area in the recipient's body where it is needed. This universal energy connects to the body's innate power to heal, promoting clarity of mind and overall well-being. Healing can occur on a physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual level. The practitioner sets the stage for healing through his or her intention and commitment to be a compassionate conduit for the life force, always honoring the sacredness of the experience. Practitioners usually lay their hands close to the seven main Chakras, or energy centers, and/or the meridian system Chinese medicine uses. Reiki is also used as a form of meditation, self-help, and personal improvement program. Reiki's popularity and proven effectiveness have increased over the years, making it one of the alternative healing systems the National Institute of Health (NIH) and National Cancer Institute (NCI) are investigating in the area of pain management, stress reduction and mental health.
However, there is limited literature showing evidence of how bonesetters, energy workers, and herbalists become formed as healers. In spite of the limited information about the formation of healers in Puerto Rico, it is public knowledge that folk healers do not have any formal schooling or preparation.

Arvigo (2001) argues that the knowledge is handed from parent to child and is often considered a divine gift. Sometimes healers learn by apprenticeship or through empirical experience. For some of them, healing comes naturally, and is part of their daily existence. Some of these healers work during their free time, making their practices invisible, “but no less valuable” (Benedetti, 1989, p.xii).

2.4.7 The need to study Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices

Recording and investigating the embodiment of healing is critical in order to understand the healing experience of the Puerto Rican people. The history, cosmology, and modalities presented here are an example of how these practices have become part of a culture that has learned to embrace, mix, and adapt through the length of its recorded history. However, there is a body of literature criticizing the lack of research from a post-modernist and Puerto Rican perspective about health attitudes. Benedetti (1989), Duharte (1997), Du Toit (2001), Fernandez-Olmo (2001), Harwood (1971), and Nunez-Molina (2001) have all commented about the need to investigate cultural notions of healing. Additionally, they all argue that such an investigation would benefit the way traditional folk beliefs and practices are viewed by health care practitioners and the public in general. Fernandez-Olmo (2001) emphasizes the need to investigate these practices from a post-positivist perspective in order to look at them within specific cultural views:
“Some of these practices and illnesses when looked at through western lenses are viewed as a personal deficit however, the role of the folk healer in the Latino communities allows for alternatives where the cultural resources of the healer help individuals to cope through rituals or spirit therapy. Allowing both healers and sufferer to deal with the latter’s problems within a shared symbolic framework” (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, p. 13).

Du Toit (2001) agrees with Fernandez-Olmo on the fact that these practices have been part of the historical legacy of the Caribbean and they need to be studied as such (Du Toit, 2001, p.27).

Benedetti (1989) argues that the lack of research and promotion of these practices has to do with the ways in which post-colonial notions of health negatively influence the way folk practices are perceived. She argues, “The unfortunate tendency to associate Puerto Rico’s traditional medicine with ignorance, plus economic structures which have led to growing dependence upon non-indigenous products and practices, contribute to the rejection of a tremendously useful system of human exchange and mutual aid” (Benedetti, 1989, p.160).

Scholars such as Duharte (1997), Harwood (1971), Nunez-Molina (2001), and Benedetti (1989) all see the benefits of investigating folk health practices.

Duharte (1997) argues that visiting folk healers is not limited anymore to the lower classes, but that is becoming the practice of other classes as well. “Working with the ‘Santos’ does not circumscribe only to the lower classes, but that every one is either involved, getting help from a Santero or at least ‘respects those things’” (p. 33). These attitudes allow for more freedom in investigating the reasons and possible benefits that can be transferable to other areas of health care.
Harwood (1971) sees the benefits of understanding the structure and ideological background of these folk practices. He advocates that western doctors need to be able to understand the cultural underpinnings of Puerto Rican folk health practices to communicate effectively with patients and to anticipate their needs. “In order to treat patients of a different background effectively, the physician must therefore develop a special understanding of their medical beliefs and practices” (p.1153). Harwood emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting cultural practices to serve better the patient. “Respect for the patient’s tradition and an ability to work with the therapeutic choices inherent in it allows for development of a treatment regimen with the patient which does not contravene his deeply held ideas about illness and will therefore stand a much better chance of success” (p.1158).

Nunez-Molina (2001) sees PRFHP as a way to create a support system for the community, and as a form of empowerment for those who practice and use it. He presents one Espiritista’s spiritual cleansings and use of spells on a property owner who refuses to replace the heating system as an example of social empowerment. Nunez-Molina also advocates for more research on these systems in order to learn more about culturally diverse communities. “From indigenous healing systems such as Espiritismo, we may learn how to offer better preventive human services to culturally diverse communities” (p.129).

The cultural and health benefits of folk health practices can also expand to other areas, as Benedetti (1989) points out. She argues that these healing systems do more for humanity than people think. “One of the most important aspects of folk medicine is its basic dependence upon healthy natural surroundings. Traditional healing practices help
maintain the integrity of the natural world, and folk healers educate others about the environment through harvesting, planting, and related lore” (p.160). Other scholars such as Arvigo (2001), Garcia, et al. (1999), and Nunez-Melendez (1982) denounce the critical need for more ethno-ecological research by studying the benefits and interactions of plants and environments used by humans for healing purposes. The knowledge acquired from these ventures could bring about consciousness about the need to create a support system that allows the preservation of natural and human resources of folk health practices.

2.5 Summary:

Chapter 2 begins with a synopsis about traditional western and alternative attitudes toward health. Somatic theory helps define the search for alternative views of health care, attempting to find models that help explain the experience of healing for PRFHP.

The presentation of the somatic assumptions observed within two non-western healing traditions such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Mexican Curanderismo (MC), illuminate factors that could explains how PRFHP functions within somatic practice and on its cultural context.

After that chapter 2 discuss the literature review regarding the origins and contributions of PRFHP and present cosmological vision of the diagnosis, and treatments so far recorded.

PRFHP has four cultural influences that define the way folk healing is practiced on the island at the present time:
1. The indigenous influence that prevailed during the conquest era, leaving an extensive legacy of medicinal plants.

2. The European influence, first with 16th century humoral medicine and then with 19th century Espiritismo practices.

3. The African influences that have fluctuated and mixed from the conquest era to the present time.

4. The twentieth century influence, including the importation of Protestantism early in the century and the globalization of world spiritualism after the 1960’s.

The presentation of the four influences help explain Fernandez-Olmo’s concept of “medical mestizaje” (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, p.1) and Romberg’s “Cultural Chameleon” (Romberg, 1996, p.17), presenting the fact that Puerto Rican healing is a mix of cultures, religious beliefs, and practices adopted and adapted from the four historical and cultural influences the island has received during five hundred years of recorded history.

Following that, there is a literature review presenting PRFHP causes and diagnosis of illnesses, and the therapeutics involved in the healing process. Between the two causes of illness identified in the literature, one is organic causes, which is caused by the imbalance in physical or terrestrial phenomena such as diet, weather, excessive heat and cold, posture, wounds, excess work, weakness, injuries, lack of rest, and stress. The other is supernatural such as malicious intent from other human who cast spells.

PRFHP literature identifies two types of diagnosis: physical diagnosis that includes palpation, inquiry and intuition; and diagnosis by divination with instruments such as the coconut, Oguele or Opele, cowry shells, calling the spirits, and tarot cards.

Among the therapies in PRFHP there is herbalism, bone setting, massage, and
Santiguo (belly massage). There is also energy work in the form of baños (herbal wet and dry baths) and despojos (aura cleansing). Counseling therapy is considered the most practiced under folk healers.

After that there is a discussion of the healing roles this investigation covers, including the Hierbera (herbalist), Huesero or sobador (ra) (bone setter and masseurs), Espiritista (Spiritist), Santero (Ocha initiated), Palero (Congo initiated), Partera (midwives), Sanador con energia (Energy worker).

Finally, Chapter 2 ends by identifying the critical need for research in Puerto Rican healing modalities from various scholars who in the past have specifically researched PRFHP. These scholars stress the need for research about the benefits of folk healing, including the understanding of diverse cultural attitudes toward health, health issues of minority groups in the U.S. and the creation of sustainable systems that promote the conservation and promotion of folk medicine as an important cultural legacy in the healing arts.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Motivations for the study:

When I envisioned this project, I wanted to understand the nature of healers and their work in the island of Puerto Rico. I take a constructivist and somatic stand, following Holstein and Gubrium (1994) and Kleinman (1979), which proposes that reality is known through human interaction. I also borrowed ideas from Dillard (2000), Fernandez-Olmo, (2001) and Ladson-Billings (1994), searching for an approach to understanding knowledge that depends on the consensus of the community from where the knowledge was grounded. This approach allows me to present the nature of that reality as a socially constructed one that goes according to the community, who understand the meanings of folk healing in Puerto Rico.

My motivation to do this research comes from the explorations and discussion of somatic practices in the somatic program at The Ohio State University. During class discussions and readings I could see how philosophical stances about the body-mind connection and perceptions about the first person experience were similar to the notions and praxis that Puerto Ricans hold about life, the human body, movement, and personal wellness.
My problem with the body of literature somatic studies had was (and still is) that even though it holds profound notions about the greatest potential of humans starting from the body, it lacks research on other non-western traditions and PRFHP. For this reason I started to use the term “non-western” in my lectures since 1999 in an attempt to bring awareness to the fact that there are other cultures besides western and eastern who also share the notions of somatics.

My training in somatic studies here at OSU included seminars and experiential content that focused on both western somatics such as Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, Laban Movement Analysis, and eastern traditions such as Chinese Medicine, martial arts, and yoga. As a result I began to question how the somatic notion of *soma* (as the connective embodiment of body-mind-spirit) could explain the healing phenomena I have experienced first as an observer through my childhood (being the granddaughter of a bone setter) and later, as a seeker of alternative forms of health, due to my personal illness as a chronic fatigue patient.

I also noticed that somatics addressed the embodiment of praxis, which is one thing I was interested in exploring, since there is very little written about that aspect in PRFHP. I find this aspect important since I believe it could illuminate why these folk practices have been invisible to other scholars.

This brings me to a second motivation for this study. I was looking for literature that would give me a Puerto Rican epistemological base to frame this inquiry. However, I was frustrated looking for such literature. Not having enough written documentation about Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices initially led me to look for other traditional health models I could follow to create a discursive logic critically needed for my work,
which is to expand the discussion of somatics to include PRFHP. However, I found that while the non-western health traditions were helpful, they were insufficient in explaining the Puerto Rican healing reality. In addition to critical perspective somatic studies denounce how the soma is regarded in western society in different aspects of our modern life including schooling, media, and medicine/health care.

From a cultural standpoint, I knew that I wanted to investigate Puerto Rican healing traditions up close and personal. And I believe that the topic needed to be investigated by someone culturally close to the healers, someone who the Puerto Rican healers would trust. As a Puerto Rican islander myself and as the granddaughter of a healer, I could gain easy entrance and earn the trust of the practitioners I wanted to interview.

Thus, because studying the healers’ practice from the Puerto Rican way of knowledge is an important undertaking, being part of the ethnic group (Puerto Rican) played a role in this study. However, being someone who appreciated their art was just as important in gaining entrance to the Puerto Rican folk healing world. Besides being Puerto Rican, and the granddaughter of a healer, I am a somatic practitioner and educator of self-cultivated practices such as Yoga, Pilates, energetic practices such as Reiki, and apprenticing in Santeria and Espiritismo. Being an educator and practitioner of these practices qualified my entrance as a person who appreciates the kind of healing art these healers perform.

Maybe equally important was the way the investigation needed to be conducted from a culturally grounded stance. Using that as my foundation for inquiry, it made methodological sense to ask community members to identify the folk healers and where
these folk healers lived. Healers were recommended by members who knew them within their community and had received treatment from the healers, drawing on the concept of “community nomination” used by Ladson-Billings (1994) that will be discussed in detail later.

3.2 The purpose for this research:

The purpose for this inquiry is to understand the nature of Puerto Rican healers, how the healers practice their healing modalities, and to make connections between their practices and the body of literature on somatic studies.

Since I wanted to understand the nature of Puerto Rican healers, I used the constructivist notions of experiencing folk healing and borrowed ideas from Holstein and Gubrium (1994), following the somatic notion of honoring the first person experience by Kleinman, and cultural groundings found in the literature of Dillard (2000), Fernandez-Olmo, (2001), and Ladson-Billings (1994). Their literature helped me frame the healers’ experience from interpretivist, somatic, and cultural perspectives.

3.3 Theoretical Framework:

The Interpretivist/Constructivist approach allows for various interpretations of the data being gathered and present a merging of realities and experiences of both the investigator and participants during the data gathering process. Holstein and Gubrium (1994) argue that in Interpretive/Constructivist inquiry, the experience is also interpreted based on the previous experiences of the researcher and participants. In the Interpretivism/Constructivist paradigm, the inquirer is in the middle of the stage in order to make sense of the subject's world. As Schawandt (1994) points out, in this paradigm,
the researcher is not merely describing the events and the people but "taking that rich
description as a point of departure for formulating an interpretation of what actors are up
to" (p. 124). Using this approach of inquiry allowed me to observe deeply the behaviors
and actions that from the outside might look strange, even illogical.

Somatic studies also uses interpretive approaches that come from the
phenomenological account of knowing that life is subjective for both the researcher and
the subjects. Phenomenology addresses the study of the self from a subjective point of
view. According to Kleinman (1974), investigating the experience of the self -- in the
case of this study, the healing experience -- is an ongoing act and a necessary condition
for discovery. “A self is displayed in several different ways. It may turn inward in order
to capture its nature but it must lose itself in ‘otherness’ in order to do so. Thus, the
finding necessitates a losing and the loss becomes a found” (Kleinman, 1974, p.1).

The concept of “endarkened feminist epistemology” formulated by Dillard (2000)
presents research as responsibility. She argues that the endarkened feminist epistemology
is “an invitation to the reader to become aware of multiple ways of knowing and doing
research available to those serious enough to interrogate the epistemological, political,
and ethical level of their work” [emphasis added]. (Dillard, 2000, p. 663) The way of
knowing Dillard proposes encouraged me to pursue this inquiry with the awareness of the
social, political, and ethical notions within Puerto Rican culture and how they are
experienced. Echoing Dillard, Fernandez-Olmo (2001) argues about the disinterest of
anthropologists and other social scientist in studying Caribbean folk healing because of
the rigid scrutiny western values impose on these culturally oriented practices. Her
critical views encourage a cultural stance for research that comes from the native culture instead of the scrutiny of scientific empirical research.

“Caribbean folk healing, if rejected by mainstream culture is because those who cannot withstand the scrutiny of scientific empirical investigation are precisely those that claim the most tenacious hold on the Caribbean cultural imagination” (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, p.2)

Both Dillard and Fernandez-Olmo call for a form of inquiry that presents aspects of the culture that has been historically invisible in order to further the understanding of cultural phenomena, as is the case of Puerto Rican Folk Healers.

Cultural congruence in epistemological stance of research attracted me to the literature of Ladson-Billings (1994). The research design in her book *The Dream Keepers* presents who are the effective teachers for African American students. She used the concept of community nomination originally presented by Foster, (Foster, 1991 in Ladson-Billings) in order to nominate whom she would study for her inquiry. The way Ladson-Billings chose her participants was by asking community members from the church and other community organizations who were the effective teachers for African American students. Using the community nomination concept, I also asked community members who were the best folk healers in the area. People and family members who were treated by these healers in the past nominated the healers. The Ladson-Billings approach allowed me to continue with the culturally grounded approach of research by facilitating the process of nominating participants within their own community.

Their literatures helped me frame my purpose in studying these healers’ experience from the Puerto Rican perspective. Following Ott (1995) and Davis (1995), I spent time with these healers, witnessing their work and even experiencing firsthand their
healing rituals. In this way I am putting myself in the middle of the stage, performing a role instead of just being a mere spectator.

3.4 Case studies:

Since each healer presented a unique portrait of Puerto Rican healing, I decided to focus on each particular healer as a case. Following Stake (1994), I made a choice of presenting each of them individually for the reader to see the diverse and pluralist points of views and praxis that exists within the Puerto Rican folk healing medium. As Stake mentions, “Case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied. We choose to study the case” (Stake, 1994, p. 236). By concentrating on the object of study, which is what the nature of these healers and its practices is, using case studies allow me to present each healer’s uniqueness individually in order to present an accurate portrait of each healer’s reality. According to Stake (1994), the use of case studies allows the inquirer to illustrate a particular trait or problem making it an ideal choice to present data. When a number of cases are studied together as is the case of PRFHP, they are known as collective case studies. The reason for doing collective case studies is to find common characteristics that enable one to understand a specific phenomenon.

“Individual cases in the collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest the common characteristics. They may be similar or dissimilar, redundancy and variety each having voice. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding. Perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases”.
(Stake, 1994, p. 237)

The collective case study approach allows me to explore the particular differences in healing styles and point of views and, at the same time, to look for
commonalities that will develop a culturally grounded theory for Puerto Rican folk health.

For this particular inquiry, I decided to call each case “healers’ profiles”. The term profile is used in this case as a portrait. This portrait or retrato in Spanish, represent a personal profile or perfil of the healers’ life. The use of a profile for this presentation is a more personal and intimate way to know each healer’s case.

3.5 Method of obtaining the data:

This section will discuss how the healers were selected as well as the methods of obtaining the data including Semi-structured interviews, observations, and active participation.

3.5.1 Healers selections and interviews:

Healers were recommended by members of the community who knew the healers and/or had received treatment from the healers, using the concept of “community nomination” used by Ladson-Billings (1994) and explained in previous sections. I approached some of the participants six months before the fieldwork investigation started. Some of the healers were contacted by phone, others through informants who would personally introduce the healer to me. After six months, I arrived on the island of Puerto Rico and paid the healers a visit, either reminding them about the investigation or, if the healer was a new contact, explaining the reason for the investigation. If they agreed to participate, we scheduled a day and time for the interview to take place. The actual interviews and healing demonstrations were conducted on the island of Puerto Rico from
June 26, 2001 to July 16, 2001. In order for me to be more efficient, I limited the interviews to the northern coastal region of the island. The locations of the healers ranged from the northwest to the northeast coast of the island of Puerto Rico. Healers were from the towns of Carolina, Quebradillas, Canovanas, Loiza, Barceloneta and Manati. This allowed me to transport myself quickly and efficiently during the time I gathered the data.

Accommodating to each healer's way of working and re-adapting to the island’s lifestyle were part of the lessons I was learning at that time. Due to schedule conflicts, healers were sometimes difficult to contact. On various occasions, I had to re-schedule the interviews, due to the health of the healer or deaths in the family. In spite of that, the healers I met with showed a lot of interest and shared lots of information about their healing arts.

The participants were six alternative folk healers from the island of Puerto Rico who practiced different modalities, including massage, bone setting or Huesero/a, herbalism or Hierbera/o, energy work, and counseling or consejeria. The average age of these healers was fifty-two years. Some of the healers have other occupations and at the same time practice healing. However, two of the healers practiced healing "full time."

Most of the healers work their art at home or in a small building close to their house. Most of their treatments are performed in front of their altar or in a reserved space inside the house. During the study, only two healers performed work outside the house, the herbalist who had a big backyard where she cultivated her plants and the body worker/faith healer who has a ranch by his house to receive patients and conduct Christian worships on the weekends.

73
Semi-structured interviews were the focus for collecting my data. Before each interview, I asked the participants for verbal and written consent. I videotaped the interviews and the settings where they conducted their healing. The videotape allowed me to remember details of the interview and demonstrations they performed and to remember what the healing space looked like. I also videotaped conversations about any procedures and medicinal recipes they shared with me.

On some of the occasions, having the camera allowed me to fully participate as part of the healing process; then, after watching the video, I could remember the feelings and thoughts I experienced during my interaction with the healers. The videotaping did enhance my experience as an active participant, allowing me to be in the middle of the experience, and allowed me to make detailed accounts of the experience. Videotaping was a useful tool for getting accurate information while transcribing the interviews.

I chose semi-structured interviews because they gave me the flexibility to ask questions in different orders and to elaborate more on the work each individual healer was doing instead of a pre-set series of questions that sometimes could limit how the question was received. Fontana and Frey (1994) argue, “interviewers must be aware of respondent differences and must be flexible enough to make proper adjustments for unanticipated developments” (p. 364). Accordingly, I asked each healer the same four basic questions 1. *How did you become a healer?* 2. *What is your philosophical view?* 3. *What personal practice or practices do you do?* 4. *What kind of healing modality do you practice?* Then, elaborated with more questions according to the answers the healers gave me. These answers also helped me develop more questions in relationship to what
they were telling me or I was observing. Marshall and Rossman (1995) also present a concise and clear definition that summarized the way I proceeded for my interviews:

“The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 82)

The interviews varied in length. They ranged from one hour and fifteen minutes to five hours long. The five-hour long interview was conducted on two separate days due to time conflicts. Four of the healers gave a healing demonstration, and all six of them gave medicinal recipes and descriptions of their work.

Transcripts were made after all the interviews were over. After each transcript was completed, I sent a copy to the participants by mail, thanking them for their time and asking them to read over and verify the accuracy of the information. Each participant was invited to make any revisions or additions to the transcripts. Participants responded to the transcripts by mail or telephone. I followed up the transcripts process and revision with a telephone conversation to ensure proper response.

3.5.2 Observations and Active Participation:

Marshall and Rossman (1995) explain, "Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for the study"(96). I used field notes, journals, and videotaping to record my observations. Video recording was used with a Panasonic 23x Hi-Definition camcorder. Informed consent was requested in order to videotape the healing space/altar, the healer persona, any demonstrations, as well as the interview process.
As I arrived to each participant’s location, I assessed the place where the healer worked. I took notes about the room and any artifacts such as an altar, images of saints/deities, rocks, candles, plants, or any other furniture used by the healer. If the interview was in a room different from the one the healers used to perform healing, I asked permission to see the healing space and video taped it. Healing demonstrations were videotaped with consent of the clients and the healers.

Following notions of the active observer inspired by Reason (1994), I was an active participant during two of the healing demonstrations. By actively participating in the process of healing, I constantly questioned and analyzed what was happening at the time of the investigation. As Marshall and Rossman explain, "Immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do" (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p.97). However, in four of the healing demonstrations, consenting clients were videotaped while getting treatment.

Echoing Clandinin & Connelly (1994), I wrote field notes during my meetings with the healers and wrote additional journal entries -- sometimes twice a day, sometimes at the end of the day -- because they helped me to remember the important events and to reflect upon what I was experiencing and learning during the process.

The notes and the journals allowed me to honor my first person experience during the investigation process. In the journals, I included everything I did, including activities from my personal life at that point. On some occasions, the activities recorded in the journals, videotapes, and field notes converged with my personal life.

I also recorded how I planned the schedules and at times re-scheduled. I also recorded interviews, participation in the activities the healer might perform, my own
somatic practices, theoretical notes and other activities. In order to make some sense of how both my internal and external experience was happening, I divided my active participation as follows:

1. Activities related to the investigation (such as being the videographer/interviewer, playing the role of the client, and journaling).

2. Activities outside of the healers’ settings related to my personal life such as doing my own somatic practices (performing energy healing on others, practicing Hatha yoga and Pilates and myself), journaling, and other family related activities.

The use of journals in conjunction to the field notes I was taking helped me to immediately reflect upon the events of the day during the data gathering process. The journals served as a reflexive tool to keep myself focus on the process while at the same time being attentive to my body-mind-spirit.

3.6 Interpretation and analysis:

After obtaining the information from the interviews, field notes observations and journals I proceeded to transcribe and organized the data I gathered in the field.

Interview transcripts were sent to the healers by mail after I returned to the continental U.S. . They were asked to read over and verify the accuracy of the information. Each healer was invited to make any revisions or additions to the transcripts. The healers responded to the transcription by telephone. I followed up the transcription process and revisions with a telephone conversation to ensure proper response.
In order to be reflexive I divided the journal entries into two fonts: journals related to the investigation (written in Times New Roman font) and journals related to my personal life (written in italics). The different fonts would guide me and any other reader to make a reflective distinction between my experience as a researcher and my experience as a woman wearing different hats (mother, daughter, sister, practitioner, etc.).

The journals were used for various purposes, to reflect upon the days events, and to start discussing the themes that later emerged on the grounded analysis and somatic assumptions. Themes such as respecting nature in Ursula’s comments, the medical mestizaje in the demonstrations and comments of the healers, experiences of physical and spiritual world as a continuum from Chago, Tio G, and Jose Raul, and the sense of service these healers showed throughout the field work experiences were already weaving their way in my journal reflections. The journals were also used as a scrapbook of field notes, healing procedures and medicinal recipes from the healers. The recipes I wrote on my field notes are enclosed in a text box as part of the journals.

Since I was looking to organize the presentation of the data in a coherent way I organized the data by healers first, then by the basic interview questions and last by the seven somatic assumptions.

Out of that process, I organized the data stories into healers’ profiles and the somatic assumptions. The healers’ profiles included personal information about the healers including the four basic questions previously discussed and information about healing modalities and examples of each healer’s process. The presentation of the healing modalities s guided by the literature of Arvigo (2000), Dougans & Ellis (1992)

After that, I started to analyze the healers’ profiles from its cultural groundings. I went over the data looking for common themes that all of the six healers had. I color coded answers to questions in the interviews, healing demonstrations, and recipes in order to find commonalities in what each healer said and did. For example, I would look for every time the healers used herbs or referenced to natural elements in their practices. I used the color green to highlight the vignettes and healing demonstrations then put the word “nature” on the side for identification purpose. After that, I grouped all the data related to “nature” in order to develop a discourse that identify one of the main characteristic of PRFHP. Out of that process, I developed five major themes that emerged from the data. They are service, reverence to natural cycles, medical mestizaje, physical and spiritual world as continuum, and physical intuition.

The somatic assumptions are the second analysis presented. I also color-coded the themes for the somatic assumption by matching the descriptions from the interviews, journals and notes. The literature review about the somatic assumptions found in Csordas (1993), Greene (1997), Hanna (1970) and Kleinman (1979) helped organize the data for this analysis.

3.7 Chapter Summary:

Chapter 3 focused on the design and methods of the study. This chapter began discussing the personal stance about the research. Followed by the purpose of the research, which is to interpret reality following a constructivist/Interpretivist approach of

Following that, I present the contributions of the research and the areas that it serves including Puerto Ricans, other Latinos, and professionals in the area of health, somatics studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education. The contributions of this study will shed light to those who need to know about attitudes toward health and illness from the Latino and Puerto Rican perspective in order to create a cultural understanding and engage in those cultural practices to better serve those populations.

Chapter 3 continued by discussing the case study approach of presenting the data in order to effectively look for commonalities in the culturally grounded research and somatic assumptions. The methods of obtaining the data shows the healers’ selections, semi-structured interviews, active participation procedures and observations including the tools for gathering the data such as videotaping, field notes, and journals.

Chapter 3 ends with the discussion of the organization used for the analysis and interpretation of the data that is going to be presented as follow: 1. Healers’ profiles 2. Somatic assumptions 3. Analysis and interpretation.
4.1 Introduction:

The presentation of the data corpus is divided as follows: Healers’ profiles, cultural analysis, interpretation of the healers’ profiles, and testing the somatic assumptions with the data collected from the investigation. As reported in chapter 3, the data was categorized and from the categories identifiable themes emerged for analysis and interpretation from a culturally grounded perspective. Then, the data was interpreted using the seven somatic assumptions to see the relationship to PRFHP.

Excerpts from the data will be presented as follows: Spoken words from the healing demonstrations and interviews will be shown in Italics. Actions from the healing demonstrations will be shown in regular font inside brackets “[]”. These allow the reader to read examples of the data as it happened in the field. The healers’ demonstrations included here will be presented in the form of a script for the reader to understand the discourse and actions of the demonstrations.
4.2 Healer’s profiles:

4.2.1 José Raul Rivera Rosado

José Raul is a healer from Carolina, Puerto Rico. He performs healings using energy work, mother water (water from the river and the sea), and gemstones.

**Philosophical view:**

He believes that humans are an accumulation of energy. He believes that we are solidified energy, and that universal energy manifests itself, for example, when a man and a woman form a new life in a baby.

“Because we [he exhales as if looking for the right word to say] humans as matter are solidified energy, our spirit is also energy, we cannot accept matter alone. We have to accept that matter -our body- is moved by a mystery and that mystery is energy. We know that when a man and a woman conceive there is a new being forming inside the womb. A supernatural force, a special energy, moves this form and that energy is the mystery of life. The mystery is within us and that spirit is with us. This mystery I cannot see it but you can feel it! Therefore, the Universe is there, but manifested in a baby. The energy is within us. The energy fields we have around us help us to perceive where we are. The energy can tell us what our path is and how far we can go”

Jose Raul believes it is not he who heals, but that it is God who heals through him. He alludes to disembodied beings as helpers in the healing process. In order to heal in the physical his body is the intermediary of the spiritual world. His philosophical stance goes
in accordance with the Espiritista, African, and Santeria epistemology that recognize the spiritual and the physical plane as part of their universe.

“Well it is not me, it is really the light beings that have accompanied me for all of these years to help this brother [referring to the client in front of him] and others. It is not me, it is the beings through my person that can speak and say everything that they need to say. There is nothing to hide in here because all this comes from the heavens and from nature. We are only passing through this existence, we are life and we are here like angels to help others. The word angel is very big for me. But in humility I don’t consider myself an angel, but an instrument of God for people to feel better, and if that is what can I bring, then God is using me in the right way. Here are my hands, my heart, and my mind. That is what I am here for.

His love and reverence for nature is manifested by the way he talks about nature, his treatments, and his natural recipes.

“OK, nature is perfect and has given us what? Balance. Humans, because of our own limitations, look for imperfections in nature. But because nature is the great mother, our guide, we need to look for solutions. Furthermore, we need to come back to nature. I am sure we can come back to that. In ancient times, there were no medicines, nor doctors, our ancestors could cure themselves. Therefore, what we need to do is to balance the modern medicine with the folk remedies of the past in order to find balance in health and to find well being and happiness.”

**Personal practice:**

His personal practice is a reflection of how energy is a manifestation of God. Part of his personal practice includes meditation, eating natural foods, cleansing, and energy rituals, giving thanks for the food he eats, the house he lives in, the people he interacts with, etc. He also does rituals with the elements and does rituals in different natural settings such as mountains, beaches, rivers, etc.

**How he discovered his abilities:**

He grew up Catholic, but was always curious about mysticism and the occult. He first grew interested in the Rosicrucian, then, in the European Espiritismo. He follows the
teachings of Santeria although he does not practice animal sacrifice rituals. He has developed his own philosophy because he likes to read and study a variety of religions and healing traditions from all over the world. His latest interest is in practices of ancient cultures, including Eastern ones.

**José Raul’s Healing modalities:**

Energy work, gemstone therapy, massage therapy and Santiguo, counseling, water cleansing, nature and energy rituals.

**An inside look at Jose Raul’s healing process:**

Depending on what kind of healing he is performing, he might be using either hand palpation, or inquiry. His therapeutics includes massage, water, and food as medicine, herbalism, and despojos. (For more information about PRFHP by diagnosis and therapeutics, please see appendix G).

**Example of Jose Raul Despojo using the elements of earth (gemstones), fire (candles), and water.** For a complete video demonstration, please see Appendix D.

[Healer touches the client’s hands and opens them]

*Healer: I present divine light in these hands.*

[Healer moves the client’s hands toward the candle]

*Healer: Give him strength, give him light.*

[Healer places index and thumb finger on the candle flame, then touches the palms as if putting the flame onto the client's hands]

*Healer: Look.*

---

**Stomach Ache recipe by Jose Raul**

Pure aloe could be too strong but you can take it in a juice. In our countryside there is a plant known as black nightshade (matagallina). This plant grows wild. One boils it, puts it in the fridge, and drinks that instead of water. It is good for the stomach. At the same time, it helps to relieve stress.
Healer places the agate on the flame in circular motion, and then places it on the person's right hand.

_Healer: I ask in this hour for more strength and light to this body_

Then he performs the same action with the second stone placed on the person's left hand.

_Healer: Let the light go through the whole body healing any imperfection that it might find_

While placing hands on top of the client.

_Healer: In the name of the universal God._

The healer cleanses the stone in clear water. Then, he places the onyx on the patient's right hand and the agate on the left hand while saying:

_Healer: Now let us take this rock and you are going to take it and close your palms._

Client closes hands with one stone on each hand.

_Healer says to client_

_Healer: You are going to repeat mentally, I inhale God's presence in the form of health, I inhale God's presence in the form of nature, from head to toe, I am restoring every tissue, my whole body, and any imperfection that I am experiencing until now. Open your hands slowly._

Client opens his hands slowly.

_Healer asks the patient_

_Healer: What do you feel? In both your hands?_
Client: They are cold
_Healer: How do you feel?_
Client: More peaceful, less tired.

Healer is cleaning the stone in clear water. Then, he places the onyx on the patient's right hand, and the agate on the left hand while saying:

_Healer: Now take this one and this other stone and close your hands._

Client closes hands with one stone in each hand.

_Healer: Then, you tell me what you feel after you close your hands. What do you feel as I take the stone from your body?_
[Healer pulls the stones away from client’s body.]

*Client:* I feel peaceful.

[Healer nods while cleaning once more the stones on the wooden vessel.]

*Healer:* Any pain?
  *Client:* What I had started to disappear, disappear, disappear.
  *Healer:* So you still have it.
  *Client:* No

### 4.2.2 Ursula Nieves:

![Ursula Nieves](image)

Ursula is a healer from Quebradillas, Puerto Rico who loves to cultivate and talk to her plants.

**Philosophical view:**

She is a devoted Catholic who also enjoys the clean country life. Ursula likes to help people in need without asking for anything in return. She charges very little for her plants because she believes they are for healing purposes only. She says plants are her life and she loves to spend time in her garden and nursery farm.
For Ursula, the plants are only effective if the client has faith in God to heal. On one occasion while questioning the effectiveness of a treatment, she alluded to the power of God as the ultimate healer.

FSS: Is this really effective?
Healer: Yes, and if you let it happen in the name of God and Virgin Mary even a glass of water that you drink will cure you.
Healer: With faith, forget it, you are healed!

**Personal practice:**

Her personal practice includes praying, being in contact with nature, and gardening, doing crochet, and talking to her plants. She recycles and collects rainwater for her plants and personal use. She says her plants are sacred to her and she greets them every day.

**How she discovered her abilities:**

She used to follow her grandmother and later her mother and they would ask her to help them cultivate and showed her the names and benefits of the plants. When her mother was bedridden, Ursula took care of her, during which time Ursula began to ask her more about the benefits and uses of the plants.

"Then after she [mother] could no longer do it I took over and took care of her but I learned from her because the contact I have with my mother. When she was bedridden I started to talk to her and asked her questions you know, when one is confined within four walls what can I do? Ask! So I learned a lot from that, and I also have my own plants and like to cultivate them, so in time I just put out a sign outside and that is what I do now."

She naturally carried on this tradition as an adult. When Ursula’s two daughters got sick, she used her knowledge about plants instead of going to the doctor. She started
to take care of neighbors and friends, and then people started to call her for recipes and plants. She decided to cultivate the plants on a larger scale for sale at reasonable prices.

**Healing modality:**

Her work is the cultivation and administration of medicinal plants. She could be called a folk pharmacist.

**An inside look at Ursula’s healing process:**

Here is a list of some recipes and plant she uses.

**Fennel (foeniculum vulgare):** boil the flower for intestinal gas, the whole plant can be boiled as tea for colds, or infused with white vinegar for external cysts.

OK, this is Fennel **(inojo)**. The fennel plant is for colds and the flower is for gas for skin ulcers. One can put the fennel plant with warm water on the body part that needs it. For colds, one has to boil it and make a tea.

**Noni:** Some of the healers have adopted this South East Asian plant due to its energetic properties and ability to renew organic tissue. From stomach aches to skin problems, some healers argue that Noni can help cure anything. She gives an explanation on how to prepare it.

*Noni is the latest thing in natural medicine. It cures everything. It is a small fruit. You cleanse it, put it in the blender, and drink it as a smoothie. It cleanses your body and cleanses your skin. You can mix it in orange juice because the flavor is strong. You can also put it in acerola or grape juice; any fruit juice will do for the [noni] fruit to be mixed.*

**ROSEMARY:**

“Rosemary has many uses. People use it for headaches, to wash eyes when one has pink eye, and for hair to keep the hair shining and with no grey hair. It is good for cooking meats and vegetables. It helps ease indigestion when you mix it with oil. Oh! In addition, it is also good to wake up the intelligence.”

*Ursula Nieves, Herbalist*

**Arnica** for joints and sore muscles.

This is arnica for inflammations of the joints and tired muscles. You fill the bathtub with arnica leaves and warm water. You can also use it to thin out coagulated blood.
**Aloe Vera:** Various healers shared Aloe Vera recipes for different ailments. Aloe is considered antiseptic for the skin, and it helps balance the acidity of the stomach. This is what one of the healers said about Aloe:

*Aloe Vera* *(savila)* has many uses. *It is good for thinning hair. It is also good to purify the blood. It is good for coughs. I also combine aloe with Rosemary, put it in the blender then put it on my head once a week in the morning then I wash my hair in the afternoon. That helps you to maintain your natural hair color without going grey. That is why my hair is shiny!*

**Sweet scent:** sweet scent is mostly used for headaches. The following is a recipe using the poultice method of preparation, which is used to treat headaches.

*The poultice you prepare like this: take the sweet scent and smash in a mortar and pestle. The juices from it, mixed with the leaves and roots of the plant, create a paste. For example, you do that with sweet scent *(salvia)* and put it on the fore head for headaches. That also applies for other body parts where the pain is.*

**Citrus cocktail:** to get rid of bad colds and coughs, especially for children.

*I once prepared a cocktail of pink grapefruit, grapefruit, and orange with honey for my grand children and they were cured of a coughing cold they had had for months. A small glass every day until the coughing and the phlegm is gone, and that is it!*

**Ursula identified various herbs that have double uses for physical and spiritual purposes:**

**Congo root** has many uses, the roots are used in tea to cure prostate cancer, and the leaves are use in tea to abort and for stomach problems.

Garlic weed or Congo root *(anamu)* grows wild. This is one of the best medicinal plants found around here. Is good for prostate cancer. The roots are good to get rid of bronchitis. The leaves are abortive; the anamu is also used in teas for the stomach. Santeros use this herb for spiritual baths against negativity.

**Lemon balm** is used for indigestion and for spiritual baths.
This is lemon Balm *(torongil)* two weeks ago was very beautiful. This is for the stomach, is also used for Baths, some people use it for spiritual baths [she did not specify].

**Wormseed** is used for spiritual baths and to get rid of parasites.

Wormseed *(pasote)* is used by the Dominican to cleanse and for despojos; they use to dispel negativity away. Is also good for worms and getting rid of parasites. It is also used for the skin when the skin itches to calm the itching.

### 4.2.3 Chago Garcia:

Chago is a forty-nine-year-old healer whose full time job is as a priest of the Orishango sect religion. He serves others through the Yoruba traditions of Ocha (Santeria) and Congo (Palo).

**Philosophical view:**

Chago comes from a lineage of high priests and priestesses in African traditions. His title is *Olowa Kalifaa-Chago Omeba de Oggun Zarabanda Baeimba, Omeba de OxalaOobomoro Omo-nisisim of the rule of Ocha and the rule of Kongo. Kalifaa of the Gaga Ocha African OrishasOrishango Beri Gabna Ocha, Beri Gabna Kongo Gaiseyu (guide) and counselor, Palero, muertero and channeled of egugun (dead spirits) - AMPA.*
His philosophical views were influenced by post-colonial ideas about his education as an anthropologist, his knowledge of western sciences, and his spiritual education from a very young age. He believes that all native practices and the occult sciences should be made public so people can be educated and do not think that one practice is better than the other or that one is devil worshiping, or that western medicine is better than folk medicine. He clearly states that all these practices work for different purposes and situations. "What is good for one person might not be good for another."

He uses Yoruba philosophy and practices that belong to the African sect of the Orichangos. His rituals and practices are the ones Santeros and Paleros use in the Caribbean. He is an advocate of conserving natural resources and taking care of the land.

Chago demonstrated extensive knowledge of African philosophy and epistemology. He explained that the universe presents various aspects of nature represented in a psychic force of the Orishas or Saints. For Chago the universe is flexible with different manifestations, but with one primary force that orchestrates who we are and where we come from. The following vignette clearly explains the syncretism between Yoruba and Catholic philosophies and the different paths in nature that represent the manifestation of the same universe.

_Fanny Santiago-Saavedra (FSS): OK, and, and I recognized last night the names of some of the Orishas from Candomble religion in Brazil._

_Healer: Because they all, they all are one. What happens is that religion comes from man not from God. Because God is only one. God does not have a face does not have a body. He just is. When the African slaves, the Lucumi, came here to the Caribbean, they syncretized the deities behind the Saints to protect themselves from persecution. There was a reason for this because the slaves’ owners punished whoever worshipped anything other than the Catholic Saints. At this time, the slaves were segregated in Haiti, Dominican Republic, Brazil, and they adapted to the culture. Instead of putting on African clothes, they dress them with what will become Brazilian robes, etc._

91
Sometimes, instead of robes like the catholic saints, they put jackets on the images, but they are the same Saints and the Congo ones are not far from the Ocha ones.

Coming from the Yoruba perspective it is not surprising that his notion of existence goes beyond traditional western and Christian notions of death and birth. This is what he said about death including the personal responsibility he has to take care of his body.

“I am not afraid of death and I accept it because it is not an end, it is just a change. There is another life besides this one but do not look for it before your time. Because people believe [waving his hands away] shu, shu I am leaving this world do not do that, you are making a big mistake. God gave life to you, who are you to take it away. Moreover, you are responsible because you can take your own life away by doing drugs, rum, alcohol, and smoking. Hey, I smoke tobacco for the Saints but then I blow it out, some of them like rum and tobacco, so I blow them to the candles because this is for them not for me.”

**Personal practice:**

As a Kalifaa (high priest), he performs cleansing rituals, meditation, being in contact with nature, altar offering, and worshipping of the Orishas. He believes that a true healer needs to have "his own house clean," and he feels the healer needs to feel and look healthy and be in good standing with God.

**How he discovered this abilities:**

His family was involved in various occult practices such as Kardecian Espiritismo, Santerismo, and Santeria. He discovered his clairvoyant abilities when he was six years old and began practicing before an audience at the age of eight.

*I was initiated at eight and a half years old. First, I became what they called ‘Ciero’. I was there. I would be in a room with lots of glasses and crystals on the altar. All this was almost like a ‘sesane’ there were many people sitting down and I would channel entities that talked to the people in the room. That was a fascinating thing since I did not have any control of what was happening.*
**Healing modality:**

Chago practices Shamanism from the Yoruba (*Regla de la Ocha, Santeria*) and Congo (*Regla del Congo*). He also performs divination by intuition, throwing the coconut, and he uses three different types of tarot cards. Other treatments include herbalism (prescribing herbs), massages, cleansing rituals (despojos and baths), fertility rituals, and counseling.

**An inside look at Chago’s healing process:**

Chago has various methods of diagnosis: the coconut, different tarot cards, spirit guides and his intuition. The following vignette presents an accurate view of his way of diagnosis.

“*This is the consulting room. It is called the consulting room because the person comes and consults with Ifa. The table of Ifa is an essential element in this tradition. In addition, one works with the four elements and performs other oracles according to the reason and person’s condition. There are also books and guides I use and the “libreta”-my notebook- that indicates how much to charge, the laws of consulting and the laws of the Orishas (Ocha) and Congo. This kind of oracle tells me your balance between bodies, mind and spirit. Understand? I determine through the oracle your vibrations and life forces. It is not that I want to see really all that, but is what the table is showing me. Through that I can tell if you have an internal problem or if it is environmental or you are just gathering negative vibrations from somebody else. There are sensitive people, and/or people who are weak or have gone through an illness and they are more sensitive to negative vibrations.*”

**Chago’s therapeutics:**

Chago’s therapeutics includes massage, despojos, water, and specialized rituals done for specific purposes such as fertilization or for karma liberation. (For more information about specific healing diagnosis and therapeutics done in this investigation please see appendix D).

Chago combines massage with energy work. After putting oils on the affected areas, he barely touches the person. The vignette explains how he proceeds.
Healer: Here are the oils and ointments I use for the massages. This bed is here to perform the massages. I put the person there and I recite the incantations and prayers, then very similar to the Asian techniques, I barely touch the person. It is almost like some Asian techniques but I use mediumistic abilities to communicate with the spirits who tell me where it hurts.

[He put his hands over his notebook as if he were doing a hand imposition or Reiki treatment -above the body, not touching it.]

Healer: We put the hands on top, but we do not touch the person.
FSS: Why?
Healer: Because you are touching the person’s aura. When one is touching another’s aura, you are changing the energy field of the person. You are charging it with positive energy.

Despojos:

Chago’s despojos are grounded from the Yoruba perspective. The reader could notice the reverence to nature and how he identifies the elements for the preparation of the despojo. The despojo happens using the earth (herbs), water, and air (prayers) as part of the treatment.

[The healer picks up the herb branches he has in the small bath with water and prepared oils, and softly passes them around my head, arms, body and legs while reciting and chanting the Yoruba prayer]

Healer: I am cleansing you aura, lower your arms slowly.

[I lower my arms slowly]

[Then he recites another prayer in Yoruba]

Healer: Father I say it in Creole for the protection of her parents and her family. Maferifu, Saint Barbara (Chango), Our Lady of Charity (Oshun), Our lady of Regla (Yemaya), Our lady of Mercy (Obatala), Saint Francis of Assisi, San John the Baptist, Saint Martin of Porres, Saint Hubert (Ogun), Saint Lazarus (Babalu Aye) and Our lady of Canellas (Oya) Give light to our daughter who has come here with the purpose of learning about the universal truths of this extinct grand religion.

[While doing the signal of the cross toward me, he recites these words]
Healer: Bawa in the name of the Father, Oxala the son, and Olofi, the holy ghost.

[He signals me to sit on the floor. Then he comes to my back and softly hits me with the herb branches]

Healer: You are going to take notes, right?

[Then he picks up my notebook and hits my notebook with the herbs and gives the notebook to me]

Healer: You know these are man made materials, Do you understand what I mean? That is why I am cleansing them.

[Then he proceeds with his prayers in Yoruba while sitting at the table facing me with his book]

Healer: This is the “our father” [prayer] in African.

[Then he proceeds to say the Our Father in Yoruba, and then shows me that his spiritual guides say the names in Yoruba and Spanish]

Healer: Ade se wua sarabanda, Ade se wua Cabo rondo, Ade se wua the death, Ade se wua Palero unigi ganga, Ade se wua the moon, Ade se wua All mighty God, Ade se wua the spirits of this plane, Ade se wua my respects and honor to the Congo, sala malenco, malenco sala . Please, repeat what I say in reverse I say salamalenco

[Pointing at me, he signals and responds]

FSS: malenco sala.
4.2.4 Manuel “Mano Santa” Batista.

Lovingly called Mano Santa (which means Saint’s Hands), this fifty-six year old healer lives in the countryside between the towns of Manati and Ciales, Puerto Rico.

**Philosophical view:**

Manuel comes from a Protestant background. He argues he does not have the power to heal; the real healer is the Lord. "Only God and his legions of Angels are here to do the Lord’s work."

Mano Santa tells me that God gave him this ability and that he is his servant. He believes that one needs to be humble and not showy about the blessings God has given; otherwise, God could punish one. As he said, "one has to be humble and small, small, small in front of God."

“I give God thanks because people come here even from the states! Looking for medicine and even mutes can talk yes, mute people. I said this with all the love of God because I cannot even cure a roach, not even, that I could heal. Nevertheless, God can do big things. He could do that with those apostles. I am happy, because I am in the environment of God’s medicine and healing.”
He emphasized, "Without God we cannot function, we need the energy of God in our lives... God is like the fuel for the car, without it, one cannot run."

Mano Santa insists he does not have any power to cure, and that only forces beyond his control can do that.

*Healer:* God’s things are very big, serious, and special to me. If you really look at medicine, at science, scientists can make mistakes, but God does not make mistakes. Because each and every one of us can see how every day people come here with crutches, wheel chairs and come out walking, they come with twisted feet and come out straight. I cannot do that, only God can do that. As I already told you, I only have second grade education.

FSS: So you think God is the healer.

Healer: I am telling you. Please do not think I am illiterate.

FSS: That does not matter to me. One does not need schooling or university degree when the calling is there.

Healer: Well I am telling you that because people might think I am a liar! I really have no powers. The powers come from God and if God has given me blessings then I use those blessings for the benefit of human kind, my child. This is how I have conserved these abilities for fifty-six years it is not easy!

**Personal practice:**

His personal practice consists of living close to nature, not drinking, not smoking, limiting exposure to places and people who have bad influences, fasting, praying, reading the bible every morning before breakfast and before giving healings, and regular worshipping at his church. He has also constructed a ranch where he holds a monthly worship with guest ministers and testimonials of people who have been healed by their faith in the Lord.

**How he discovered this abilities:**

As a bonesetter, Manuel began to fix injuries in the middle of the road when he worked as a Machinist for the Roadway Authority.

“I used to work in road construction and heavy machinery making roads around the island. Once someone got hurt, I came down, used machine oil, and
massaged the ankle, and he got better! So then, I got a reputation and other workers and bosses called me to fix twisted ankles, shoulders, and other things right in the middle of the road with the oil from the machines for massage.”

Then in 1979, an Angel showed up at his house, and talked to him about giving him the ability to perform faith healing for others. From that moment on, he has performed faith healing. He also developed empathic and intuitive abilities and began to counsel clients, and became more actively involved in church functions.

**Healing modality:**
Bone setting, faith healing, and counseling.

**An inside look at Mano Santa’s healing process:**
Mano Santa’s way of diagnosis is through hand palpation and observation while doing bone setting and massage. When he is giving counsel, he explains it is through divine inspiration:

**Mano Santa’s therapeutics:**
The following healing demonstration shows how Mano Santa performs his healing massage.

[He points to the client and invites him to sit]

*Healer: come here.*

[He makes the client roll his left pant leg up. Then touches the knee joint, grabs the foot, and puts some oil on it, all while moving the knee and ankle joint simultaneously. Then he asks me to touch].

*Healer: *"toca mamita, toca" [touch, honey, touch]*
*FSS: aha,*

[I come close and touch the knee joint]
[Then the healer bends the person’s knee outward while placing the ankle on top of the other leg. Then pushes gently on the worked knee. After that, he asks the client to stand up]

Healer: Put your shoe on.

[The client puts his shoe on]
[Then the client starts jerking his leg and whole body].

FSS: hey, it is reacting.

[The client starts walking again. The client’s wife looks astonished]

Client’s wife: he came down limping and now he is walking straight.

[Healer looks at me]

Healer: You see?
Client: I feel much better
Healer: Now what you need is cow cream and warm water on the foot.
Do you need to work some more?
Client: Well I am feeling heat from the waist down.
Healer: This is part of the reaction.
FSS: What kind of oil is this?
Healer: This is ginger oil.
FSS: Do you prepare the oil?
Healer: Yes, I attuned the oil and prepared it for healings.

**Mano Santa’s special space for healing:**

Mano Santa is the only healer I interviewed that created a ranch for preachers and evangelist to come and once a month celebrate healing. He provided the space to enable people from all over to come preach and receive healing. The following vignette tells us a story about a woman who could not walk and was healed in one of these healing worships.

*The reason why I provide these healing worships is so people find faith in the Lord again. You cannot find that in churches now days. In these meetings, there are eighty, a hundred, even a hundred and forty people in here. People come from all over.*
Caguas, Humacao, they come here, there have been people in wheelchairs or in crutches, born like that and have ended up walking straight. Last Saturday, there was this lady in front of me and I noticed the lady could not walk. Two others were carrying her by the arms. Once I started to predicate, I looked at them and the invalid woman fell down. The other two looked at each other and me. I though that she was unconscious but all of the sudden the woman looked at me and told me, “Oh God my hips are healed”. I put my hand on her and she started walking. This is the kind of thing God does, not me.

4.2.5 Jose Luis Romero Osorio, (Josean):

Josean is a Santero from the town of Loiza, Puerto Rico, famous for its African traditions and its Rumbas.

**Philosophical view:**

Josean is a Santero initiated into the Babalu Aye path. He personally believes in divine intervention and the intervention of the Orishas. He is a great advocate of medicinal plants and nature. As an employee of the department of natural resources for the state government, he encourages developers to work around trees when constructing houses, shopping malls or roads. His political and social agenda reflects his commitment to his community and his culture.
“People need to believe, conserve, and sponsor natural resources. Please take care of them. If you are going to develop or do a construction, please find any possible way to save a tree or nature. Because what is happening is that, we are losing our nature, do not destroy it, and do not touch it. I would like to see that people make construction harmonize with the plants as a way to honor planet Earth. If we do not take care of our land and the planet, the planet will be destroyed, and us with it. Please be guardians of nature!”

His position as a healer is one of humility. Josean sees himself as an instrument of the divine while prescribing and treating clients. In this vignette, he talks about “amares,” a ritual to keep couples together. He expresses that he really has no power over them. He only performs the ritual and if God and the universe allow, the couple will stay together.

“As long as the person wants to conserve his marriage, I advocate for the couple because what God united man should not separated and I have to be on God’s side because of my vows, I only perform the ritual, the rest is God’s will. Remember God is the greatest!”

As a teacher and caretaker of the land, he feels he has a personal responsibility by advocating for the conservation of natural resources. The following excerpt clearly show the love and concern for conserving nature:

“...I am also an environmentalist. I believe in conserving our natural resources, and will fight anyone tooth and nail to conserve the soil, water, trees and of course, the plants. Everything that is nature for me is important because without nature we cannot eat, produce and have the natural medicine we need for healing.

**Personal practice:**

Being in contact with nature, cleansing rituals, altar offering to Orishas, dancing, drumming for "rumbas," teaching drumming and dance, and designing costumes for the Saint James festival.
How he discovered his abilities:

Josean was born in his mother's house instead of the hospital. He told me, "Apparently I couldn't wait to come to earth." An old mid-wife attended the delivery. He was born in the amniotic sack. The midwife saw that as a sign. Then the mid-wife who happened to be a Santera became his godmother and with her sisters, they taught Josean the secret of the religion. He calls them *las brujas* (the witches). One of them is still alive.

"The midwife and her sisters always want me around. They became my godmothers. Here in Loiza they taught me everything. They always said that I have the faculty and ability to cure and they are never wrong. I really owe her a lot."

He started to heal when he was six years old. He said he had thought of being a healer since he was very young. "Apparently the witches were right," he said, "I am a Curandero."

Healing modality:

His healing modalities are divination through cowry shells, stones and his own intuition, herbalism, massage, and counseling.

An inside look at Josean’s healing process:

Josean uses mostly intuition to diagnose. He also uses the cowry shells and some inquiry and hand palpation when dealing with physical injuries. The following passage gives a clear explanation of how he diagnoses and treats people.

"My way of working is that I don’t let anyone explain or tell me anything. I usually tell them 'you sit down quietly and let me do my prayers.' I get in contact with the saints and they tell me what is wrong with the client. There have been cases when a woman has come because she suspects the husband has cheated but when the spirits tell me, she has cheated on her husband too! They get scared and pay attention to me...

"...Sometimes people come here on the verge of suicide, they are about to hang themselves and when I talk to them, God gives me the blessing to talk to them in a way that I can. Then, I tell them why they wanted to kill themselves and that the Lord is..."
sending them here to give them another chance. Then I proceed to explain things to them and that all problems have solutions. They believe me and come out more positive.”

Cowry shells

Cowry shells are another form of divination from the Yoruba traditions of Western Africa used by Santero initiates. Josean describes how and when he uses the cowries’ shells to diagnose and predict what is happening.

“The shells on the table are the way we Babalu Aye initiates work with. Only consecrated initiates can work with the cowry shells. What is done is that after prayers, the practitioner throws the shells and depending how they fall is how the reading will go. The initiated can see if a person has problems at the present or in the near future.”

Josean Therapeutics:

Part of Josean’s therapeutics involves working in collaboration with the spirits. Following the Santeria traditions, he prescribes according to the ailment and the corresponding orisha who is ruling the ailment. Josean explains this collaboration in the following passage.

FSS: Is there any other way you use for diagnosis and treating people?
Healer: Well, what I already explained to you about the plants. However, that is not me it is the beings [referring to the spirits and saints] they are the ones who know. Sometimes they tell me this plant or this preparation. Sometimes they ask me to go to the forest and they throw and show me where the plant is and that is how I find the plant. You know this is like that. I know a little bit, but they really are the ones who know. I learned when I was little about some plants, but other prescriptions and preparations the spirits have taught me and that is how I know about them.

EXOTIC RECIPES FOR ASTHMA:

Rum and turtle oil: I have prepared a mix of rum and turtle oil, which is very good for asthma. One can rub it on the chest and it works well.

Centipede in alcohol: place a centipede inside the jar. Leave it in alcohol for three days. The alcohol extracts the body liquids of the centipede. This is used for the chest on asthma patients.

By Jose Luis Osorio
4.2.6: German Lugo (Tio G., Uncle G.):

Tio G. works for the government during the day and for the spirits at night.

**Philosophical view:**

Tio G, as everybody calls him, grew up Catholic, but practices Kardecian Espiritismo. He is also knowledgeable about Santeria and Santerismo (the mix of Espiritismo and Santeria). Like every Santero and Espiritista, he believes in reincarnation. For Tio G., the world of the spirits and the world of the living is the same. His concept of hell is not necessarily a place you go, but "A state of mind. You can have your own hell here on earth." He understands that his mission in this life is to help others.

“Yes, I know a lot about my past life. I also remember those regressions I did with another Espiritista telling me why I am here. I came to this existence to change my past karma and to do well to others.”

He tells me that Espiritismo has helped him to understand others and himself, and has helped him learn to work with difficult people.

“Espiritismo has given me a lot, thankfully I can work with all types of people from all lifestyles. The important thing is that I developed an intuition to work with these people and to disarm them if they come with anger toward me.”
For Tio G. the physical and spiritual worlds are a continuum of life including notions about karma and re-incarnation also used in Eastern philosophies.

FSS: So, do Espiritistas believe in past lives?
Healer: Yes, the fact that there are changes in time and space is not new. It can also come as a revelation. In addition, you can see spirits and dead people...
...Yes I know a lot about my past life. I know I was a slave driver and I have seen myself whipping slaves. So now, I control my temper. There are days that the secretary tells me “hey control your whip” so I take it easy with my employees. I also remember those regressions I did with an Espiritista because I do not want to come back as a slave. I came here to change that and to do good.

**Personal practice:**
Praying, being in contact with nature, meditation, dream interpretation, avoiding negative people and places.

**How he discovered his abilities:**
During his twenties, he was a young executive working for the government. He and other friends would go to a "consulta with a senora." After a while, he would to sessanes and sit in the back. Once the table president\(^5\) asked him to come forward and sit on the table. Later on, he became a table president.

"The lady who made me sit at the table is from Guaynabo. I learned a lot from her. I used to sneak out with my friend to go to the sessanes. They were at nine AM but because we were the bosses of our respective offices, we could sneak out for an hour and then return at ten AM. I liked to go to those meetings because I usually would get information that served me well in confronting problems at the office later in that day."

After that day, the other mediums noticed his potential abilities and asked him to sit at the white table with them. From then on he was part of the "crew of mediums" learning how to channel spirits and perform healings until he became table president.

---

\(^5\) Table president refers to Kardecian Espiritismo. In this style of Espiritismo, there is a white table, various mediums, and the rest of the audience. The table president is the intuitive who ask questions to the mediums while in trance.
**Healing modality:**

Tio G. performs diagnosis by intuition, palpation, and dreams. He channels spirits, and through the spirits, he treats and prescribes patients. He also performs cleansings (*limpias and despojos*), and treats with herbs.

**An inside look at Tio G’s. Healing process:**

Some of Tio Gs’ ways of diagnosis includes dream intuition, empathic experiences, intuition, and working in collaboration with spirit guides.

Tio G. expressed that he uses dreams as a tool to help solve problems in his daily life. Here he describes that when he is worried about a situation at work, he goes to bed and he receives the answer in a dream and wakes up in the middle of the night. Then the problem will be solved at the office later on.

“*Sometimes the way it happens is that I am looking for a solution at work then I come home and go to bed and have a dream or just fall asleep. Then around four o’clock in the morning I wake up and ah! I find the solution this is like this, this, and this. Then the next morning when the people ask me, I tell them ‘it is already solved.’ They look at me all weird, but that is how I approach problems from work. Some times, I also dream with mom or dad who is on the other side*.”

**Empathic experience:**

Of all the healers interviewed for this investigation, he is the only one who talked about his empathetic abilities (the ability to feel the pain and feelings of his clients). In this particular excerpt, Tio G. explains an experience he had earlier that day in the hospital. He explains why he had to leave the room of a patient before he could help her again because he felt overwhelmed by the patient’s pain and suffering. He also explains how he overcame the situation.

[Speaking to his wife]
Healer: What was that I told you after we arrived, how did I feel?
Wife: Yes, he felt as if he was drowning.
Healer: I felt as if a press was pressing my chest. Therefore, I said hello and told my wife that she had to take over because I could not talk. I went outside because I felt so stiff I had to let go of whatever I got from her (the patient). Then my wife asked me if I was ok.
Wife: Yes, I know, you looked as if you were drowning.
Healer: But I got rid of it outside.
FSS: So are you empathic?

[Shaking head]

Healer: Uhuh!
FSS: What you describe is a case of being empathic, what you lived and felt what the other person felt. It was not happening to you but you were feeling it.
Healer: It is like if someone puts a press on the sides of my trunk and was squeezing me. But when I came back to the lady’s room she looked much better.
The good thing is that I have the prayers of the divine Child with me always and I started to recite them and told the lady that when she feels bad to pray.

In this vignette, the healer describes the term “causa” (cause) and what it means in Espiritista terms.

Healer: “Cojiendo causa” [graving the illness] is a way to diagnose the client who might have a cause to feel depressed or ill. The very diagnosed is for example Milly here has an illness, is having too many problems, or cannot sleep, one of those. I would try to help her by giving her despojos [energetic passes around the aura] but I noticed that the negative discharge she has was too much for me. That means she has “causa” and her cause is too strong so I need a group two or more Espiritistas to meet in a sesane and in a way divide the energetic work to heal the person.
FSS: What are the common causes?
Healer: Well it could be that she was cursed by witchcraft, so three or more “media unidad” or mediums could do the job for you.

**Tio G’s therapeutics:**

Tio G’s therapeutics includes counseling, despojos, and herbal remedies. He also performs despojos to spaces as well as people.
Some healers perform cleansing on houses and rooms to create a peaceful environment.

Healer: Well, the baths are used to cleanse energetically and for protections, there are baths to pick up bad influences in houses. There are specific rituals for house cleansing.

FSS: What would be a good plant for these kinds of baths?

Healer: Congo Root is an excellent plant for that. In addition, you buy the San Michael bath and cleanse the house, then cleanse again with clear water. Then get psychic nut (tartago) crosses in the house for protection. Physic nut is good to have in the house. It is good to have a tree of physic nut in front of the house and one in the back for protection. These prevent bad influences from entering the house.

FSS: So, what do I do with the Congo Root (anamu)?

Healer: Well, take a branch and hit the house. Then take the San Michael liquid and spread it out around the house especially on the corners of the house. In addition, get sugarcane it is very good to create a good mood.

Tio G. seems to be very committed to helps others. He seems to understand people’s character, personalities and problems. He said his specialty is working with difficult people.

Sometimes people come here and I do not have to do a thing. They just come here to be listened to. That is the best medicine one can have to be heard and acknowledged...

...You just have to use your common sense. When someone comes aggressive and trying to torment you, calm the person down and relate with him in a positive manner. That is why I even get along with the crazy people. When someone comes toward you like that, instead of asking what is happening you try to understand the person by putting yourself in that person’s position.

4.3 Analysis and interpretation of healers’ profiles:

In this section, I will discuss emerging themes that are seen throughout the profiles of the six healers. Each healer shows their unique experience and discusses their
healing modus operandi within themselves. However, each of them shared common ground when it came to their philosophical stances, ways of experiencing reality, and healing performance.

Following the arguments of Dillard (2001), Fernandez-Olmo (2001) and Ott (1995) of the importance of using culturally grounded research in order to understand the healing reality from a native perspective, I am using a culturally grounded interpretation based on the healers’ experience. These themes are culturally grounded because the information comes from the data that is framed within Puerto Rican culture. In a future section, I will explore how the somatic assumptions extend or constrain the interpretations of the healers’ experience.

4.3.1 Service:

One of the themes that permeated throughout the data stories is the sense of service these healers have not only provided through social activism, but in the spiritual sense as well. The sense of service through social activism is manifested in their personal responsibility to taking care of themselves first, and then helping others through various activities they did in their community.

Personal responsibility: For Jose Raul, personal responsibility comes in taking care of himself by meditating, eating natural foods, and his cleansing rituals. For Ursula, it is in terms of doing a practice that helps her focus such as crotchet, praying, gardening, and recycling rainwater in order to keep herself and her plants healthy. For Chago, Tio G, and Mano Santa it is about “keeping his own house clean,” which includes not smoking, drinking, and avoiding negative places and people. Josean’s personal responsibility goes first to worshiping the Orishas, then, to the community as an advocate of nature and as an
According to the data, the personal responsibility of these healers was manifested through their honesty to the self. This means that their honesty starts with their own body-mind-spirit. The more they understood what they needed to do to keep serving others, the more awareness about their personal responsibility they expressed.

**Social service:** The data showed examples of the healers’ social service through the professional and community roles they play. Jose Raul is a schoolteacher, serving the community as an educator. In his personal practices, he includes meditation, spending time in nature, etc. Ursula is a homemaker and full-time herbalist, her function in the community is to provide a service of cultivating and selling plants and instructing the public about their different uses. Chago is a hospital administrator and a full-time Orishango priest. His role as an administrator for the town hospital as well as his role as an Orishango priest demonstrated his commitment to service in his community. He shares a deep commitment to himself by keeping himself clean and through his personal practice. Mano Santa, who is a retiree from the Roadway Authority, continues with his tradition of service in the community as a healer and provider of a space where healing worships can take place free of charge, open to all philosophies and religious denominations. His job as a facilitator expands the idea of service as a concept that goes beyond the community. Josean’s service is also manifested three fold: as a healer, artist/teacher, and as an employee for the Natural Resources Department. Finally, Tio G’s, whose service, is manifested through his job as a housing coordinator looking for affordable housing through government subsidies for under privileged communities and as an Espiritista.
The social aspects of service presented a side of them that indicate that they are folk healers twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. For these healers there is no such thing as a part time healer or a part time professional. For them, they are who they are and service is what they do.

**Spiritual Service:** The spiritual side of service comes from the way each of the healers see themselves as servants of God. They all pointed out that their practice of healing come as divine intervention and they only acted as instruments of the divine for the healing to become manifest. This could be due to their cultural upbringing and philosophical stances. For example, the practices of Santeria and Congo have traditions of passing down knowledge and training. It is not surprising to hear Chago, who comes from a family of Santeros and Espiritista practitioners, was primed and inculcated into the sense of service by experiencing the service he saw in previous generations, which created a logical path for him to follow. For Josean, being born in the amniotic sack was a cultural indication (a sign) that a new healer was born. Furthermore, the sense of service was inculcated as part of his education to become a healer. It is not surprising Josean is a Babalu Aye initiate since Babalu Aye is the Orisha saint of health and illnesses in the Santeria tradition. Other healers such as Ursula also present a similar willingness to serve since she was the one who took care of her mother, who was also a healer. Observing and living around her mother was Ursula’s most influential experience in becoming an herbalist. When Ursula’s mom was bedridden, both of them saw the opportunity for the healing legacy of plants to be passed on from mother to daughter.

For Jose Raul, Tio G., and Mano Santa the sense of service comes when they seek spiritual truths that can help explain life situations. For example, when I asked Jose Raul
how he became a healer he responded that he was always interested in spirituality and ancient cultures. He studied with elders from different backgrounds, including Santeria. He learned the concept of service and personal responsibility by apprenticeship and his own self-study about ancient cultures. Tio G has a similar story. When he responded to my question about his beginnings with Espiritismo, he answered at first that it was to satisfy his own curiosity. However, he realized he could use the espiritista knowledge to serve others.

For Mano Santa, service first came as a necessity then, it became a vocation. He gave massages and bone setting out of need for a masseur when an employee was injured in the middle of the road while he was a machinist for the Roadway Authority. However, later on, a visit from an angel gave Mano Santa a purpose and a mission to be a servant of God through his healing, whether he was performing bone setting, being a counselor, or as faith healer.

To summarize, these healers’ sense of service is part of who they are and what they do. Coming from a culture where cultural values are shifting constantly due to our colonial condition, seeing a consistent approach to healing as a service, is a revealing notion that Puerto Rican folk healers demonstrate. The fact that they do not charge or charge very little, and don’t show off their abilities or who they are as healers, and their openness and willingness to spend time with me was indication enough of how important service is for them.

**4.3.2 Reverence to nature and natural cycles:**

The data shows examples of the great respect and reverence for nature each healer has through their praxis and attitudes toward conservation. From the use of herbs
(all of them referred to some herbal recipes), to being in contact with nature as part of their personal practice, to their own healing modalities (either in their rituals or as part of their healing therapeutics) nature is an ever present and a very strong element in these healers’ lives.

For Jose Raul and Ursula, nature is part of them and is very much involved in their daily lives. Jose Raul believes that one should return to nature to answer the questions we have in order to heal.

“OK, nature is perfect and has given us what? Balance. Humans, because of our own limitations, look for imperfections in nature. But because nature is the great mother, she is our guide, we need to look for solutions. Furthermore, we need to come back to nature”. Jose Raul.

Nature is one of the ways Jose Raul connects with his healing. For him nature is perfection and our guide. Being close to nature enables one to learn from her and is important because this is how he learned to take care of himself first. This enabled him to be able to take care of others. Ursula, being the folk pharmacist, is very connected and committed to the care and cultivation of plants. Her response before I asked permission to video tape was, “yes, you may videotape, but before, you must ask permission from my plants”. For me this was an indication of her respect and reverence for nature. Josean and Chago’s healing rituals and preparations follow the Yoruba traditions where the spirit guides tell them what herb is needed and what herbs each Orisha rules. However, Chago’s use of the elements (including humans as the fifth element) in his healing demonstration shows this deep connection to the natural world. This excerpt from the healing demonstration show how nature is honored by asking permission from mother earth and the presentations of the elements.
Chago: For the African the straw mat is sacred. They will always ask for permission. In other words “ago.”

[While bringing the Ifa table to the center]

Chago: Why water?

[He shows me a crystal glass with water].

FSS: Purification, cleansing…
Chago: It is an element. The earth…

[Showing me the earth element in a center hole beneath the table -there is another white table with a hole in it under the Ifa plate-]

FSS: Another element.
Chago: Uhum

[While he is placing a candle with a hurricane-style candleholder on the right of the table, he picks up a metal stick that looks like a pencil and makes a sound with the crystal glass]

Chago: Where do sounds come from? Air. There you have the four elements. You are the fifth element!

[Pointing at me]

In Josean’s case, his deep commitment to the land is part of his daily routine as a natural resources employee and political advocate. This statement reveals his deep commitment and how resentful he seems when people do not seem to understand why nature is important.

“Because I tell you, the real religion is nature because we are nature, right? However if we live in nature we need to understand it, not try to conquer it. People obviously do not know how to live with nature in this country because Puerto Rico is becoming a concrete island” Josean.

For Mano Santa and Tio G, reverence to nature comes into their personal practices such as living close to nature and the healing modalities they practice. Mano
Santa uses natural oils for his massages and practices in natural surroundings in the countryside, while Tio G’s personal practice is to spend time close to nature and prescribe herbs, water, and other natural recipes he uses in his healing modality. For these healers, nature is important because it is where healing comes from. Nature is what feeds these healers’ practices and is their primary source of medicines and food.

4.3.3 Medical Mestizaje:

The reader will remember that the concept of medical mestizaje comes from the way that Caribbean healing traditions are a mix between indigenous, African, and European practices due to colonialism and the type of agriculture produced in the Caribbean region (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001). During the course of this investigation, I found diverse ways of treatments that originally came from a myriad of backgrounds including the Taino Indians, sixteenth-century Spanish medicine, nineteenth century Espiritismo, West African, Modern Protestantism, and global holistic influences in the twentieth century. Most of these influences are now intertwined. The practices I observed are now part of the medical mestizaje Fernandez-Olmo speaks of in her article, “Caribbean Folk Healing: Ars Medica, Ars Poetica.” For instance, all of the healers participating in this inquiry used herbs. Originally, this was a tradition we inherited from the Taino Indians as native plants grew on the island. These practices then were mixed with Spanish herbalism and African medicine that have a plethora of herbal remedies and preparations. I was not surprised to see Ursula identifying plants for spiritual purposes as well as other healers identifying herbs for similar reasons. For example, Aloe Vera and Congo root were the two most mentioned herbs during this investigation.
The praxis of despojos, practiced by five of the healers, consisted of cleansing the aura and clearing away negativity and was observed and recorded from the Orishango perspective as well as from Jose Raul’s new age perspective and Tio G’s Espiritista perspective. Talking to the spirits was another skill present in healers either as Angelic guidance, Orishas, or spirit guides telling them what to do and what to prescribe. The use of oracles of some sort, such as the shells from the Santero, the coconut and Ifa table from the Orishango as the calling of spirits by the espiritista are elements used and adopted by these healers. I want to point out that during the interviews and healing observations sometimes the same healers will refer to their spirit as “guide” and sometimes as “el santo” indicating the language influences Santeria and Espiritismo have on each other. Another sign of medical mestizaje comes with the practice of massage and bodywork. Three of the healers interviewed practiced similar versions of bodywork even though they came from different platforms such as Santeria, Orishango and the Christian religion.

Another phenomenon observed during this investigation was the formation of the healer. Most of them argue that they work from specific philosophic platforms such as Christianity, Santeria, or Espiritismo. However, the data presents elements of their praxis as similar. Healers are aware of other practices and forms of healing from the different platforms even though they argue that what they do is not the same. The data show instances where some of the healing practices such as despojo (aura cleansing) were very similar. What differentiated the healers was the person performing the healing and the ideological stance the healer operates under.
Ideological stances about God and the nature of healing seem to also share a medical notion of mestizaje. The concept of service, the ideological continuum of the physical and spiritual world, and the concept of embodiment that will be discussed in a later section in the somatic assumptions, are also examples of healing mestizaje.

4.3.4 Physical and spiritual world as a continuum:

No matter the philosophical platform, these healers seem to have personal notions about the physical and spiritual world, seen as a continuum. For Chago, Josean, Tio G, and Jose Raul the physical world and the world of the spirits is one. Chago’s ideological platform directly addresses the spirit world as part of the physical one. During the interview, Chago also explained this continuum using the concept of death as a change and not as an ending.

“I am not afraid of death and I accept it because it is not an ending, it is just a change” Chago.

Chago acknowledged the continuum of life as a change not as an end. Similarly, Josean explained this relationship with the spirit world in terms of how he communicates with the spirits while looking for herbs. Tio G’s modality also addresses the fact that life is a continuum and for him, there is no difference between time and space in the physical and spiritual world. The following statement demonstrates that for Tio G, there are no spatial and temporal limits in his world.

FSS: So, do Espiritistas believe in past lives?
Tio G: Yes, the fact that there are no changes of time and space is not new. It can also come as a revelation. In addition, you can see spirits and talk to dead people.

Jose Raul explained this continuum in terms of an energy that is part of the same universe and with his communication with the spirits guides. Mano Santa shows similar
notions of the physical and spiritual world as a continuum when he tells the story of the angel who showed up with a message. For Ursula the plants have a certain sensibility that connects with the other healers’ idea of the physical and spiritual world as a continuum. The fact that she asked me to ask the plants for permission is an indication of the energetic and possible spiritual dimensions the plants have. This ritual of asking permission from plants by Mexican Curanderos was reported in the literature of Arvigo (2001) and Avila (1998) and on Huichol Indians by Cowan (1995). The spirit of the plant is the one who actually teaches the healer, while dreaming or in trance, how to use the plant and for what purposes.

The notion of the physical and spiritual world as a continuum is also presented in the data through special rituals coming from the African traditions. As described by Gonzalez-Wippler (1999), Zorlak (2000), and Neimark (1993) intercommunication with the spirit world is used in order for healing to happen. The use of an “Ibo” or “Ebbo”, which is a combination of herbs, sacrificial blood, and other elements, is used to solve health problems such as infertility.

There are rituals of fertilization. If a woman has been to the doctor and has found nothing wrong but she still cannot have children then I give her a reading on the Ifa table to see what is going on. Then when I know what is happening Accordingly, I ask for a permission to do an “Ibo” for the woman. The problem might be biological or chemical. They [the Saints] through divination, tell me what and how to do the Ibo. I already have two godchildren who could not have babies and now they are having babies because I performed an Ibo on them. It gives me pleasure and is an honor for me to do it. Chago.

The data of this investigation presents evidence of other rituals that prove the interconnection between the physical and spiritual world. The use of a Nganga or fumbi as described by Cabrera (2001), Canizares (1993), and Gonzalez-Wippler (1999).

---

6 An Ibo is a mix of herbs, stones and animal sacrificial blood offered to the Orisha.
Nganga\textsuperscript{7} or fumbi -- the spirit of a deceased person -- or an mpungu -- a supernatural force -- can mount or inhabit the healer who is performing the healing. Chago gives a description of a Nigiganga.

Nigiganga is a cauldron that is prepared with sticks, certain herbs, and other things. There are various types of nigiganga. For example, Sarabanda, cape round, seven rays, mother water, mama chola, Cabo llende, great arm to mention a few. There are African statues that one prepares with charge –the ningiganga- the charge is the ritual used with the herbs, the sacrificial blood, etc. All that is put inside the images. An example of that is the Ellegua the Cubans prepare from cement. Then there are prices for each of these different nagnas. The nigiganga could be spiritual prepared with a Saint or a Congo or with a dead body.

These data reveal strong evidence of these healers’ connection with the physical and spiritual world as seamless. The preparations of Ibos and Nigiganga are examples of devices that are created to connect the physical world of the body with the spiritual world. For these healers there is no such thing as two separate worlds, but a continuous one that goes from the concrete to the more abstract.

4.5.5 Physical intuition:

The notion of physical intuition comes with each healer’s healing modalities and the way they engage their bodies in all aspects of their lives. For example, Tio G. presents a direct example of how his body is engaged when he tells me about the empathetic experience he feels when he is healing. However, the notion of embodiment is not limited to just feeling what the other feels. Josean, Chago, Mano Santa, and Jose Raul also show examples of embodiment in their personal practice while performing healing rituals. Josean’s personal practice includes dancing, drumming, and mask construction. That indicates a high degree of physical intuition in communion with his commitment to

\textsuperscript{7} The word Nganga is also spelled as Nigiganga.
the Ocha Saints and nature. Body-mind-spirit and nature are important in the African traditions where dancing, drumming and other body rituals (such as tattooing and marks) are part of the higher initiations of becoming a priest. Chago has a similar background of embodiment. However, the data in the investigation showed his embodiment while explaining his bodywork technique—a combination of massage and energy work—and when he explained his second initiation as templar where he had to learn to massage people’s feet.

The technique is very similar to what is now known as reflexology. The practitioner touches your feet and can tell you what is biologically wrong with you. That was the second initiation. Chago.

For Mano Santa, since he is a bonesetter, embodiment is very apparent. The healing demonstrations show the way he touches his clients first in a compassionate way, then going precisely to the origin and insertion of the muscle and around the joints, showing a mastery of embodiment. For Jose Raul embodiment is also reflected on the way he carefully touches the client using water, stones, and his own hands.

The videos and my own observations also show the proximity of healers in relation to the client’s personal spaces. From personal experience, I know Puerto Rican culture accustoms one to have a close personal space, while other cultures prefer a physical distance of at least three feet apart in order to be comfortable. This fact could be one reason people prefer to go to a folk healer first before going to a western doctor. The closeness and familiarity expressed not only in the praxis but also in the amount of physicality by touch feels more connected to what people are accustomed to in their daily lives.
The issue of embodiment along other related themes about healing was what motivated me to follow this inquiry. However, these healers operate within a cultural framework that goes beyond unification of body-mind-spirit.

As the grounded analysis reveals cultural information that shows the uniqueness of Puerto Rican Folk Healers, I will now analyze the data stories to see how they connect with the somatic assumptions.

4.4 Data analysis using the Somatic assumptions:

The data give examples of how the Somatic framework relates to PRFHP. The seven somatic assumptions were used in order to relate the somatic theory to the Puerto Rican folk healing phenomena:

1) PRFHP perceives the world through the body.
2) The first person experience is privileged in PRFHP.
3) PRFHP uses the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance.
4) In PRFHP, reality is determined by the perception of the individual.
5) For PRFHP existence in the world is holistic.
6) In PRFHP, individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world.
7) In PRFHP, individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space.

4.4.1 PRFHP perceives the world through the body:

The data brings to the surface various examples of how the body plays an important role in PRFHP. The healer’s personal practices as well as healing methodologies (diagnoses and treatments) present various ways the body is involved.
Personal practices and training:

While sharing their personal practices and training, some of the healers in this investigation demonstrated the belief that they perceive the world through the body. An example is the way Chago prepared himself before his initiation as a Santero. The process of preparation from novice to initiated Santero presents a number of practices and rituals that attest to the centrality of the body. “Templarismo” is an example of how the initiated is prepared through a series of exercises that teach methods of hands-on healing such as foot diagnosis.

The way the initiated are trained in my tradition is through one's own family. For example, each family and each of them learned templarismo. Templarismo is a way of safeguarding well, I mean, they are trained to counsel people when they come with problems, they perform hand impositions and touch one's feet also. The technique is very similar to what is known now as reflexology. The practitioner touches your feet and can tell you what is biologically wrong with you. Chago.

The healers’ methods of practice and treatments demonstrated the importance of the body in their personal practices. The practices include meditation, prayer, kneeling, fasting, being involved in healthy recreational activities such as crotchet, mask making, dancing, drumming, and swimming. One recurrent theme in this regard was the fact that each perceived the body as an instrument that needs to be well maintained. An awareness of the energy and the gifts God or the universe has given them is important, because they believe that the body is the vessel that harnesses the universal energy for them to heal. The following passage shows evidence of the important role the body plays in conserving the power to heal.

Jesus, the great master, could heal with his shadow. For us the energy field can be augmented through prayers, meditation. If we do not have physical energy and psychic strength, we will not have enough for healing and doing well. As the great master
once said, if we have faith in what we are doing, nothing is impossible, we can all do it. However, this energy cannot be wasted! Sometimes people do not understand. This energy has been and always will be. However, it needs to be harnessed and conserved. Jose Raul.

For Mano Santa, the perception of the world through the body was expressed in terms of his faith, motivation, and joy of serving others. While conversing with me, he made comments on the physical process of being a healer and the somatic practices he usually goes through in order to conserve his ability to perform faith healings and bone setting.

FSS: What personal practice do you do to conserve this ability?
Mano Santa: Through kneeling, fasting, and praying.
FSS: Aha. So fasting and praying, what about spreading the Lord’s word?
Mano Santa: Oh, yes!
FSS: OK, I understand that the ability comes from God and God is manifested every time you perform healings. Nevertheless, I would like you to tell me if you feel anything while you are performing healing, anything you feel or note in yourself?
Mano Santa: But, child, what can I tell you? For me it is very clear!
FSS: Yes but I am referring to the physical aspect.
Mano Santa: Well, I feel God’s presence. This presence bestows upon me with happiness and joy. How many of you have come here in the afternoons? With the same joy that I start in the morning, I end up in the afternoon.

His “joy and happiness” is the motivation he needs to keep going and the energy he needs to physically attend to an average of seventy clients he receives every Saturday at his ranch. Having the physical and mental stamina to attend to his clients’ needs is important, and is the key to his success as a healer.

**Healing Methodologies:**

The idea that one perceives the world through the body was present in the healing methodologies that each healer used. Some of their diagnostic methods, as well as their
treatments, show physical contact in terms of acquiring information, modes of attention, and actual manifestations of the cure.

This is clearly presented in this vignette, in which one of the healers diagnoses and treats a dislocated shoulder.

*Mano Santa: Let see,*

*[He moves the client's arm softly in circular motion holding her from the hand and shoulder joint].

*Mano Santa: There, there, there, higher, higher, higher.*

*[The healer touches her shoulder blade. Then he pulls her arm from her hand. After that, he takes her wedding band off and gives it to her so he can pull freely. He proceeds by putting some oil on his hands and massaging her hands, going through all the carpal fingers and wrist muscles.]

*Client: I have treated this condition for years and the doctors have not found what is happening. They say the ligament is short or something!*

*[Then, looking at me he says]*

*Mano Santa: Oh no. Look!*

*[Then joking with other observers]*

*Mano Santa: I am in pain, I am in pain, and she is brave right?*

*[He said this while holding a pressure point on her elbow very tight.]

*Client: I am all right thank God. I was telling you I could not sleep last night because of the pain.*

*Mano Santa: Close the fist.*

*Client: It does not close. I feel no circulation.*

*[The healer interlaces his fingers with hers and moves the hand in circular motion].

*Mano Santa: Can you move it now?*

*Client: Yes.*

*Mano Santa: Then, keep the hand warm at all times so you can move it. OK! (Healing demonstration 3)*

*(For a complete view of the healing demonstrations, please go to Appendix D)*
Mano Santa actively engages in the process of healing with kinesthetic sense as a bonesetter. For him it comes naturally to find kinesthetic solutions by interlacing his fingers with the client’s when the client responded that she could not move her hand. For other healers like Jose Raul the body is present by the active participation on the client’s part and is an acknowledgement of the body by making it present in the healing process.

The healers’ personal practices as well as their healing processes present strong evidence that support the perception of the world through the body. The data reveals examples of body involvement through the personal practice of Templarismo (foot massages), diagnostic tools such as physical palpation, and kinesthetic treatments such as pulling and manipulating shoulder and hand joints. Other manifestations of perceiving the world through the body are demonstrated by the healers’ assessment, guidance imagery and touch, in addition to the active participation of the client repeating affirmations as a way to guide the healer, enabling him to receive correct treatment.

4.4.2 The first person experience is privileged in PRFHP.

The first person experience is manifested in the way the healers perceive the reality of illness within themselves and within the patients. As Csordas (1993) explains, somatic modes of attention are the ability to translate messages into feelings, body sensations, and mental images that attend to the body “not as an isolated object, but to attend to the body’s situation in the world” (Csordas, 1993, p.244). These data show an example of how in the cultural world of PRFHP, some of these healers use their bodies as an antenna to receive first person information through intuition, or the spirit guides. Healers honor the first person experiences of their clients instead of extracting information through objective examination.
The intimate information the healer reveals through intuition or divination allows for more understanding of the client’s malady. Tio G. shared with me how this happens in him.

*Tio G.:* When one is that sensitive, one feels the client’s sickness and pain. Even when you step into the door, you feel it.

*FSS:* How do you feel it? Do you feel it in your body or inside your head?

*Tio G.:* Sometimes there is a person who comes towards you, you start feeling a big squeeze, and what one has to do is to relax and get in contact with the spirit guides. Because sometimes there are people who dedicate themselves to spreading negativity, others have the ability to cure and do good but there are some who do not and one feels them too.

These data also demonstrated notions of first person experience during diagnosis and while working with clients. For Josean, the first person experience happens because of his intuitive abilities and his capacity to connect with the client. This allows for the process of healing to be personal, in contrast to the impersonal and distant process that traditional health care sometimes provides.

*They [clients] come here because they have been in other places and have not found the help they want and they come here, I explain what is happening and they seem to understand better and when they get out of my healing room, they are in a different state. Because the principal goal is that, they change their outlook in confronting their problems. Look, there have been people who have come here in a suicidal mode. The Lord has given me the blessing of counseling them, I tell them what they have been planning in secret from my intuitive abilities and I tell them that the Lord is giving them the change, the opportunity to save themselves by coming here. I even tell them why the person wanted to commit suicide. They are surprised because I am telling them what they are thinking and then explain to them that all problems have a solution and then they believe even more in me. Josean.*

These data demonstrate how the first person experience gives these healers a subjective and personal stance that allows them to perceive themselves from the inside out. As Greene (1997) stated, the focus of internal awareness, sensation, and inner feeling is more refined because they come from the inside. This facilitates the healer’s processes.
to better serve the clients because, as Chan (2002) stated, “the process of bodily knowing is gained through personal and situational embodied inside-out experience of being-in-the-world” (Chan, 2002, p.58).

4.4.3 PRFHP uses the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance.

Sarcal consciousness happens when clients experience internal calmness during the consultation or treatment. This is created by allowing a space for the person to realize what is causing disharmony and to look for a state of inward calmness. Sometimes the state of sarcality happens as the client is being treated. Jose Raul presented the perfect example of sarcality as he treated a client for chest and abdominal pain.

[While performing the treatment with gemstones, the healer asks the client to follow his instructions]

Healer: Please, inhale, exhale, and let me bring light to our chest. Only peaceful liberating thoughts will take away all disharmonies in your being. In the name of God and the universe, I inhale and exhale. Inhale and exhale slowly bringing peaceful thoughts to my mind, liberating it from all tension.

[Then the healer exchanges the stones and places them on the patient's forehead.]  

[The healer makes an energetic pass with his right hand placing the onyx stone around the client’s neck, upper back and upper chest, while holding the second stone on the client’s forehead with his left].

Healer: I inhale and exhale slowly and bring peaceful thoughts to the spine and having only peaceful and healthful thoughts for my whole being.

[The healer places the stones on the water vessel and asks the client]

Healer: What do you feel when I take away the stones?  
Client: I feel more peaceful.  
Healer: Any discomfort in the body?  
Client: What I had slowly reduced reduced, reduced.  
Healer: You do not have it anymore do you.  
Client: Most of it is gone.  
(From healing demonstration 1)
Sarcal consciousness happens as the healer leads the client through guided imagery and conscious breathing. When the healer asks the client how he feels, the client describes changes in terms of his feelings, “I feel more peaceful,” and in terms of the reduction of pain and discomfort in the chest.

Most of the healers argue that the inward calmness sarcal consciousness brings usually starts when the clients come to the consultation room or at the opening ritual. As described by Benedetti (1989), Canizares (1993), and Nunez-Molina (2001), clients are received in a room usually with an altar of saints and/or orishas or a white table with objects representing the four elements of nature. The environment of the room as well as the mannerisms of the healer motivates clients to find the inward calmness they are seeking. Certain behaviors, such as taking the shoes off and/or performing cleansing rituals, also set the mood to find sarcal consciousness in clients. The following vignette presents my active participation as a client looking for the inward calmness that would allow me to find clarity and purpose in choosing the right questions for the interview. The minute I entered the consulting room, I knew I was stepping into a sacred space. This by itself made me feel at ease and positive about the task I had to accomplish for the weeks ahead doing fieldwork around the island. I also came to the inner realization that being surrounded by nature and its elements should become an important part of my life if I want to find balance. It reminded me of how the ancient cultures of the world revere the elements of nature and my personal need to incorporate these ideas into my daily life if I wanted to go onto the path of wellness.

[While preparing the space the healer comments]

Chago: You know, Africans never step into the world in sandals. They were barefoot. That is why he or she steps onto a straw mat. For them the straw mat is sacred. They will always ask for permission by using the word “ago”.

128
[He brings the Ifa table to the center of the room] [Then he brings a glass of water and puts it by the table]

*Chago:* Why water?

[He shows me a crystal glass with water].

*FSS:* Purification, cleansing  
*Healer:* It is an element. The earth

[He shows me the earth element in a center hole beneath the table -there is another white table with a hole on it under the Ifa plate]

*FSS:* Another element.  
*Chago:* Uhum.

[He responds while he is placing a candle with a lantern style candleholder on the right side of the table. Then he picks up a metal stick that looks like a pencil and makes a sound with the crystal glass]  
*Chago:* Sounds come from? Air. There you have the four elements.  
[Then pointing at me]  
*Chago:* You are the fifth element!  
(Healing demonstration 2)

As the vignettes demonstrate, PRFHP present a variety of practices, diagnostic methods, and treatments to help clients find sacral consciousness. These rituals and practices are a constant reminder of our need to find internal balance and inner peace. The whole package of healer, candles, room, and use of herbs, elements, incense, and the healing ritual serve as map that guides clients to that internal state of sarcality. Going to a folk healer is an opportunity for clients to find powerful guidance through the state of sarcality that humans inherently seek.

**4.4.4 Reality is determined by the perception of the individual in PRFHP.**

In PRFHP, the healer goes through the task of consciously moving energy that creates a state of balance in the soma (body-mind-spirit). As a result, new energy creates new thoughts that change the stressful state of the client into a more balanced and inwardly calm state. The healer creates a new reality as he or she changes the energy of the client using his diagnostic and treatment tools. Each healer has a different system that allows clients to experience that new reality. For instance, as explained by Josean, in the
Santeria traditions, healers say the Orishas are the ones who guide the healer to look for herbs and medicinal plants.

*Well, the plants I already explained. What happens is that it is not me but them [the spirits] the intermediaries, the ones who know and sometimes they tell me to use this or that plant. Sometimes when I need a plant, they show me where the plant is. You know this is like that. Josean.*

This healer perceives reality according to his intuition and his ability to solve problems in his environment. Among the Santeria tradition, there are specific herbs that rule each Orisha; each Orisha also rules an aspect of life and a body part or system in the body (Canizares, 1993, Gonzalez-Wippler, 1999, Moreno-Vega, 2000). The healer feels that the reality of his intuition and the Orisha guidance allow him to relate a particular herb to a particular situation and body system he might be treating.

Other healers such as Jose Raul sense their reality by feeling energy. Mano Santa uses his hands to palpate muscles, Tio G. and Ursula by observing the person. Another instance in which the reality of the illness is changed is in the following passage, in which after placing stones around different body parts, Jose Raul changed the energetic aura of a person who was in pain. Note the responses of the client when the healer asked how he felt by having him describe his physical discomfort in emotional and somatic terms.

[The healer is cleaning the stones in clear water. Then, he places the onyx on the patient's right hand and the agate on the left hand while saying]

*Jose Raul: Now take this one and this other stone and close your hands.*

[The client closes hands with one stone on each hand]

*Jose Raul: Let's take the stones*

[Healer removes the stones from the client’s hands and refreshes it again. Then, he places the stone in a crystal water base and puts them back in the patient's hands].
[Reciting out loud]

Jose Raul: Come divine force and cover this human being.

[Healer places the third stone -- onyx -- behind the head, (occipital bone)]

Jose Raul: Let us touch the occipital groove as an important part of the spine. I do this because the body absorbs energy through the five senses.

[Then, reciting out loud]

Jose Raul: At this hour, we ask the gemstone to absorb all imperfection.

[Healer moves his own left hand over the top of the patient's open hands, while holding the onyx behind the head with his right hand, then the healer removes the two stones from the patient’s open hands].

Jose Raul: I now ask, light beings, that as I remove the stone all disharmony comes out of the body.

[Healer slowly removes the onyx stone from the back of the head. Then asks the client]

Jose Raul: How do you feel?
Client: More peaceful, less tired.
(Healing demonstration 1)

As Jose Raul changes the energy systems of the client from disharmony to harmony, the reality of the client also changes from illness to health. In the ritual, the energy passes through the body and prayers are part of the reality the client and healer experience and create a new awareness that mobilizes energy into a new reality. (Greene, 1997, p.50). When Jose Raul asked the client how he felt, the client responded in terms of his reality at that point, “more peaceful, less tired”. Being more peaceful for this client is definitely a change of mood and a change of reality that allows him to assess his bodily situation of feeling less tired.

This change of reality is also culturally embedded in the healers’ beliefs system. The guidance of advanced spirits in Espiritismo, the charismatic notions of Holy Spirit healings,
and the divination tools some of the healers use, and the empirical experience while performing healing practices attest to the healers’ realities when they perform healing, which creates a new energy that become new experiences.

4.4.5 For PRFHP existence in the world is holistic

Greene (1997) states that the somatic approach recognizes that there is a synergistic process that goes between biological function and the environment. “This perspective legitimizes the simultaneity of our capacity for awareness, our functioning as biological entities and our relationship with our environment” (p.51). This theoretical assumption touches the body, the emotions, and the energetic aspects of the self. The data confirm beliefs that the world is holistic, as shown through specific behaviors that healers engage in, such as their constant reference to nature in their healing modalities, the uses of herbs (all six healers use herbs), honoring the natural cycles such as the moon, the use of the four elements in rituals, plus the uses of natural materials such as stones, water, and fire.

PRFHP also stresses the notion that in order to find well being, one needs to be in an environment that is nurturing and supportive. Environments and people that promote negative influences must be avoided as much as possible in order to maintain a healthy balance. When I asked healers about their personal practice, Chago and Mano Santa expressed that in order to heal others one must be healthy and clean. Mano Santa, however, was very specific about how the soma is influenced by the environment. He emphasizes that in order to maintain his ability; he needed to avoid negative places.

One also has to stay away from places of negativity. If I go to one of those places where darkness exists, even if I do not drink alcohol, I stay clear from those places because I feel I cannot be there. I can enter a store and say hello to everybody
in the name of God. If someone is not doing what he or she is supposed to be doing, I feel an electrical current and then I know I should be out of there.

Mano Santa’s level of sensitivity shows that he perceives the reality of existence in this world as holistic. The inside and outside environment influences the soma physically, emotionally, and energetically.

4.4.6 Individuals in PRFHP are simultaneously interconnected with the world.

This somatic notion comes from the quantum physics idea that energy is spread through the universe, making reality non-linear with flexible time and space. The data reveals these notions through the healers’ voices, alluding to the idea that we humans are part of a whole that is multi-dimensional. The data revealed evidence of those notions for all the healers. For example, Jose Raul believes life is a continuum, his praxis is based on the assumption that time and space has no limits. Ursula regards her plants as living and sensible beings beyond the physical, as she asked me to ask permission to the plants before videotaping them. Mano Santa demonstrated how his world goes beyond time and space as he tells me the story of the Angel who convinced him to serve the Lord in his practices.

For Chago, Josean, and Tio G., who operated from energetically sensitive practices such as Santeria and Espiritismo, the time-space continuum is clearly shown in the data. For example, Tio G. explains this time-space phenomenon as he gives answers to how he could physically describe a person who was affected by an illness without ever meeting him.

Tio G.: Yes, it happens because some times I do not know the person and the conversation starts and I start telling things to the person.
FSS: How?
Tio G.: Well sometimes, I am transported to that place. It is like a movie in front of me. I do not know the person, or the place, but I can describe it. This happens because the spirits let me see. It happens as long as they let me see.
FSS: Besides seeing people and places what else do you do?
Tio G.: Well sometimes, I hear. I also feel the pain.

The previous passage demonstrates how Tio G connects to the life of his clients by sensing and receiving visions due to the highly developed awareness of the healer’s own soma. His own energy allows him to transport himself into the situation. Other ways he goes beyond time and space are through ritual tools such as sessanes, meetings, and divination tools. The energy of the client and the healer are interconnected, creating a conduit for the healer to “see like a movie” what is happening in the life of the client.

For all of these healers the physical and spiritual worlds are part of the same continuum. Not matter from which platform each healer operated, the data show evidence of the interconnection with the world.

4.4.7 Individuals in PRFHP are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space.

This assumption is an extension of the previous one, getting further into how the soma has different vibrations and energy fields. Santeria and Espiritismo foster the notions of the non-local transmission of energy shown in the last two passages. In addition to the examples and notions presented earlier, the data show additional examples of non-local transmission of energy. For instance, Chago told me that when a woman is unable to conceive, the Yoruba practitioners perform a practice that includes chanting, prayers, and
the preparation of an *Ibo* with herbs and other components asking Yemaya, the goddess of motherhood, to allow the woman to conceive.

*Chago*: There are fertilization rituals. When a woman has gone to all the doctors and found nothing wrong with her she gets a reading at the Ifa table to see what is going on. Then, I go to the saints’ room (the altar) and ask permission to get an *Ibo* for her so she can have a baby.

*FSS*: So she can conceive.

*Chago*: Exactly, understand? Maybe the problem is biological or her chemistry. They [the saints] tell me what to do. Thanks to the deities and almighty God that two of my godchildren⁸ can have babies! It is an honor for me to help that way.

According to Yoruba cosmology, the world is divided into the Aye (the physical) and *Orun* (the spiritual). These two aspects of the world represent the cosmos and they cannot be separated (Zorlak, 2000, p.xxxii). Furthermore, for the practitioner of the Yoruban traditions, it is easy to call the natural archetype of motherhood, represented in Yemaya as the mother goddess, to ask permission so the woman can conceive. Looking at the Yoruba and Espiritista traditions, in which the world of the Orishas, or spirits, is publicly acknowledged, gives individuals the license to experience the subtle energies to transform disharmony into harmony within a socially acceptable frame.

Josean explains an experience he had with one of his clients that clearly presents the notion of time and space as multi-linear. He performed the healing by putting the client into a regressive state in order to return to the time when the trauma happened.

*Well there was a person who had dementia and walked somewhat funny. His problem was very simple. His problem happened when he was a child. Therefore, I worked with him by asking him questions about his current life, his relationships with people and started to go back to his childhood. In one of the sessions, I went into trance and found the situation in his past so I called him and we both solved the problem in the past, and now he is healed. Now he walks normally and is mentally stable.*

⁸ A student who is under the teachings of a Santero is called godchild.
For Josean, time and space is a continuum that allows him to go back to the client’s past allowing healing to happen.

To summarize, the practices Puerto Rican folk healers perform clearly present a plethora of examples that explain Greene’s presentation of the Bell theorem: “all objects and events in the cosmos are interconnected with one another and respond to one another’s changes” (Greene, 1997, p.54). The non-local phenomena of clairvoyance, time healing, and multi-spatial interactions, and the internal experiences of empathic feeling and energetic disharmonies inside the body are part of the somatic experience that shows the body-mind-spirit experience as a whole. Table 4.1 gives a summarized version comparing PRFHP with the somatic assumptions.

4.4.8 Somatic summary:

The data corpus presented examples of PRFHP and the somatic assumptions sharing common grounds. The perception of reality through the body is demonstrated through the healers’ training, such as is the case of Templarismo and healing methodologies including physical palpation, inquiry, and active participation of the client. This acknowledges the client’s body-mind-spirit connection, recognizing the body as a soma instead of a separate entity to be objectively addressed.

First person experience is manifested in the way the healer perceives the reality of illness within themselves and within the patients. The intuitive ability of the healer allows him or her to receive information first hand, through his or her body via intuition, empathic feeling, or divination. This allows the healers to make a direct connection to the source of the problems. The first person experience approach brings understanding and honors the client as a soma with more than a symptom or singular problems that affect
their well-being. The first person approach also calls for clients to look within themselves and to refine their own awareness to find their own sensations and inner realizations.

The concept of sarcal consciousness as powerful guidance is demonstrated while the client is treated. The sense of ease and comfort is experienced before, during, or after the treatment happens. The two instances presented in this section attest to the resting state of inner peace. The responses of the client in the first example of feeling more at peace, and my own experience as an active participant, attest to the sense of sarcality felt and of realizing the need for more inner peace. My personal experience during that particular demonstration also made me realize the need to spend more time close to nature.

The assumption of reality being determined by the perception of the individual is demonstrated by the way the healers attend to patients’ soma. By either manipulating, moving energy, or performing rituals these healers move energy around to provoke change. The change of reality was manifest in each of the clients after treatments and transforming disharmony, stress, and pain to inward calm, release, and lesser pain.

The notion of existence in the world as holistic postulated by Greene (1997) as “what we do affects everything and everybody else in the universe” was demonstrated by the healers through their references to and uses of nature and natural cycles and by showing the sensitivity and refined awareness they exhibit when sensing others. Existence in the world is holistic because individuals are not mere observers, but also participants as well. As Csordas (1993, 1999) suggested, the healers were also observers and were attentive to the bodies of others.
These last two assumptions of somatic theory attempt to give us a western explanation that goes beyond the modernist views of the world. However, the culturally grounded analysis in for this inquiry expanded on the last two somatic assumptions with examples that extend these assumptions. The notion of individuals being simultaneously interconnected with the world explains reality as multi-linear and multi-spatial, such that healing can happen in other spaces and beyond time. Two of the healers, one from the Santeria tradition and the other from the Espiritista tradition, presented indications of those notions. As I asked practitioners what they felt when using intuitive abilities, one of them responded as being transported to the place, or seeing a movie with the affected person in it. Another healer responded that he went back in time to heal the client. These and other examples in the data show healing methods that further explains these two assumptions from the culturally grounded analysis. By looking at the data from a culturally grounded perspective expands and give concrete meaning to the somatic issues of time and space.

Some of the healing methods that are culturally constituted by the healing culture such as Santeria have treatments for infertility. One of the healers explained this treatment as it is done within the Yoruba traditions. Asking for an Ibo and performing a ritual for the Mother goddess, Yemaya, is part of the transference of energy that goes beyond time and space. The examples of culturally grounded healing about energy creating matter and the interconnection of the world found in this inquiry, expand the notion of going beyond the physical world. The theme of the physical and spiritual world as a continuum is a great proof of that. The assumptions that postulate that energy creates matter and that individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world also support
these notions. However, PRFHP showed the expansion of this assumption by giving examples of how these healers connect beyond the physical world. The culturally grounded analysis could open up possibilities to develop a discourse that would expand on the somatic assumptions regarding notions of the time-space continuum and their interconnection with life. This helps to better describe and ultimately explain somatic assumptions and cultural practices beyond the scientific paradigm of health. A table on page 146 illustrate the somatic assumptions illustrated in the data stories.

### 4.5 What do culturally grounded and somatic analyses offer? Commonalities and differences:

Culturally grounded analysis offers a coherent explanation of the experiences these healers have within their cultural context. As Dillard (2000) formulated, culturally grounded analysis is done to enable people to become aware of the multiple ways of knowing in various aspects of society. Working from the culturally grounded stance allows me to see the rich legacy and the deep commitment these healers show in their work. Presenting this legacy of service these healers have shown the important role they play to keep their communities healthy and in good spiritual shape.

The culturally grounded analysis also shows the historical legacy resulting from the mixture of cultures and political situations, which have enriched our healing practices. The green medicine traditions the island had before the conquest era and that have evolved up to this day through a mix of traditions has made the healing practices stronger and more apparent. Following Fernandez-Olmo (2001), the tradition of medical mestizaje identifies us as part of who we are as members of the Caribbean region where historically
there has been a mix of cultures due to colonization and migration across the region. It is not surprising to see a mixture of ideologies and healing practices in Puerto Rico, when Puerto Ricans have a rich legacy of culturally mixed practices such as food, dress, music, art, and architecture.

One interesting theme found in the data is that the physical and spiritual world is considered to be unified. This is one of the legacies medical mestizaje brings into the Puerto Rican psyche. The popular expression “in the Caribbean the spirits never left” suggests the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds is very much alive.

Culturally grounded analysis keeps the integrity and constitution of the folk healing experience unique, yet opens the door for others to explore similar ways of inquiry, advancing the work already established by previous researchers. In addition, culturally grounded analysis helps investigators learn previously invisible lessons about culture that have been waiting to emerge.

The framework of the somatic assumptions helped to explore the cultural analysis of the theme of physical intuition by giving detailed accounts of the body-mind connection as healers perform their own personal practices as well as when healing others. The first three somatic assumptions, *Somatics perceive the world through the body, the first person experience is privileged and the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance* helped me to interpret the body-mind connection these healers experienced during the investigation. These three assumptions helped me interpret my observations and comments from the healers in relation to the phenomena of experiencing the embodiment of the practices. The first assumption clearly helps explain how Puerto Rican Folk Healers engage in healing through the body and how they honor
the first person experience by trusting the information they are receiving through somatic signals. The concept of sarcal consciousness helps explain on a personal level how clients feel as they enter the consulting room when first making contact with the healer. These three assumptions complement the cultural understanding of how these healers are recognized as healers in the community and why people come back to them when they need help.

However, the four and fifth assumptions of somatics, reality is determined by the perception of the individual, and that existence in the world is holistic felt forced in the interpretation from the somatic perspective since the cultural interpretation gave a rich background of how these healers interpreted reality and found an interconnection between the spiritual and physical worlds. The notion of service in the cultural analysis allowed me to explain how these healers’ realities are shaped and why without having to disconnect them from their cultural perspective as the somatic assumption of reality is determined by the perception of the individual does. The fifth assumption of existence in the world is holistic presented a general view of how the healers’ existence connects who they are to interactions to their environment and community service. This assumption matches the cultural themes of respect of nature and physical and spiritual world as a continuum in the cultural analysis. The cultural richness shown on those two themes gives validity of how the practices and the healers’ notions of the world are present in PRFHP and that there is no doubt the existence of the world is holistic. The somatic assumption of interconnectness of life, attempts to explain how these healers connect within themselves and their environment. However, the cultural analysis gives a
profound understanding that relates to individual’s realities within the socially constructed realities of their communities.

The last two assumptions of somatics, *individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world* and *individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space* attempted to explain the Puerto Rican healing phenomena from the western perspective. These two assumptions serve a purpose for those readers unfamiliar with Puerto Rican culture giving a contemporary language to a phenomenon that has existed in most healing cultures all over the world. The cultural interpretations of the last two somatic assumptions could also be founded in the themes *reverence to nature* and *physical and spiritual worlds as one*. The assumptions complement the explanations discussed through the culturally grounded themes in relation to Puerto Rican healing, allowing readers to have a framework of where to start understanding the concept of multiple realities in relation to healing.

Identifying these two approaches of culturally grounded research as well as the somatic assumptions enables us to see information from two lenses. This honor the phenomenological account of Puerto Rican folk healing experiences from more than one perspective. Neither way is more important or better than the other is. The table in page 147 shows a visual example of that.

Since my primary reason for this investigation is to understand the nature of Puerto Rican healers, it is my responsibility to present the diverse responses explored in the analysis and interpretations of this inquiry. These two approaches helped me see how Puerto Rican healing is perceived through diverse lenses. The two interpretations helped me expand the discourse of healing knowledge, that historically has been limited, in
order to better explain Puerto Rican folk healing as part of a legitimate whole. It is the hope of this investigator that by making the cultural legacy of Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices more visible, this legacy can be recognized as an important element to help us understand attitudes about health, illness, and the cultural psyche of Puerto Ricans as an ethnic group.

4.6 Summary:

Chapter 4 concentrated on the interpretation of the data of this study. Two major analytical sections were developed for the data stories: analysis based on culturally grounded research, and from the seven somatic assumptions.

After presentations of the healers’ profiles, the culturally grounded analysis found five major themes that described the healers’ experiences. The themes that developed during the culturally grounded analysis are 1. service, which includes personal responsibility, social service and spiritual service, 2. reverence to nature and natural cycles, 3. medical mestizaje, 4. physical and spiritual world as a continuum, and 5. Physical intuition.

I proceeded to analyze the data by doing a comparative analysis using the seven somatic assumptions previously presented earlier in the investigation. Presentation following by discussion demonstrated how somatic theory and PRFHP connected leading the way to theoretical discourse on how two interpretations, culturally grounded analysis and somatic assumptions both complement or differ from one another.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Somatic theoretical assumptions</th>
<th>(PRFHP) in the investigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. PRFHP as well as the field of Somatics perceives the world through the body.</td>
<td>Personal practices: such as “templarismo”, prayers, meditation, crotchet, drumming, dancing, and masks construction. Healing modalities: physical contact and palpation, massage and inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The use of the first person experience is privileged as well as the perception of reality as an internal activity.</td>
<td>The data shows examples of how some of these healers used their bodies as an antenna to receive first person information through physical palpation, intuition, or the spirit guides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PRFHP uses the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance.</td>
<td>In PRFHP, the state of Sarcality happens while the client is receiving treatment. The data reveal this with various examples of clients feeling change during and after treatment. The healing demonstrations show clients descriptions of their sensations from no pain to “more peaceful, less stress” to realizing that more balance in life is need it to achieve this state of tranquility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reality is determined by the perception of the individual</td>
<td>Healer creates new realities for clients using different diagnostic, treatment tools, and the cultural and physical environment. Examples come from the Yoruban, traditions (Santeria &amp; Congo) the Orishas and saints guide the healer to look for different herbs and remedies. In Espiritismo the spirit guides helps find solutions to clients’ problems. In Christian Faith Healing, the Holy Spirit changes clients’ perception and heal physical problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Existence in the world is holistic</td>
<td>The data in this investigation demonstrated reverence to natural cycles, tools, and resources these healers’ uses as part of their healing craft. Healers were also aware about the influence of their environment and the interactions with the outside world, through their integrative personal practices and attitudes toward health and illnesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world.</td>
<td>The investigation reveals notions of simultaneous interconnection between healers and clients. One particular healer describes these experiences as he describes objects, places and other people actions. The data revealed this through various sources such as the healer’s own soma and some of the ritual tools they use such as sessanes meetings, orisha divination tools, and rituals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space.</td>
<td>The more energetic traditions such as Faith healing, Yoruban traditions and Espiritismo foster these notions of non-local transmission of energy. Examples in the data shows ritual for fertilization, talking to spirit guides, seeing auras and feeling energetic low points.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Testing the Somatic Theoretical Assumptions with PRFHP in this investigation.
SOMATIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. PRFHP as well as the field of Somatics perceives the world through the body.

2. The use of the first person experience is privileged as well as the perception of reality as an internal activity.

3. PRFHP uses the concept of sarcal consciousness as a powerful guidance.

4. Reality is determined by the perception of the individual.

5. Existence in the world is holistic.

6. Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world.

7. Individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space.

CULTURALLY GROUNDED ANALYSIS

Table 4.2 comparative analysis between the culturally grounded analysis and somatic assumptions.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Yo tuve una revelacion
que San Miguel me hablaba
“Ya no tienes que temer
Pues yo te vine a proteger,
Y a quitarte esos fluidos,
Pues te quieren envolver”.

I had a revelation
That San Michael talked to me
“You don’t have to be afraid
Because I come to protect you
and take away the bad influences
From the ones who want to harm you.”

San Miguel Archangel, popular song by Ismael Rivera

5.1 Discussion:

In Chapter one, I proposed the objectives of this investigation. The first objective is to investigate the nature of Puerto Rican Folk Healers within their own culture and the second objective is to explore somatic theoretical assumptions in Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices in order to develop a common discourse that allows readers, researchers, and practitioners to understand concepts of illness and health within the Puerto Rican cultural context.
The culturally grounded analysis and the somatic framework presented heuristic tools from constructivism and phenomenology that helped frame this investigation. These heuristic tools developed a research methodology that allowed inquiry and the theoretical background based on experience, in contrast to the objective scrutiny of positivist research.

Qualitative research methods were used to gather the information. Semi-structured interviews, video observations, active participation, journals, and field notes captured the experiences that are contained in the research endeavor. Culturally grounded analysis as well as the exploration of seven somatic assumptions was used to create a data story that reflects the healing modalities in Puerto Rico.

To discuss the findings I will divide those into two categories:

1. *To investigate the nature of Puerto Rican Folk Healers within their own culture.*

2. *To explore somatic theoretical assumptions in Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices.*

### 5.2 The nature of Puerto Rican Folk Healers within their own culture:

Comparisons between the PRFHP literature and the actual phenomena observed during the fieldwork stage reflect the need to formulate a discourse that explains the roles of the folk healer as a cultural experience. There are various aspects where the fieldwork stage of the investigation helps illustrate concepts that reflect the unique heritage of PRFHP.
1. Service:

The culturally grounded analysis revealed the theme of service as the main reason why these healers perform healing. The theme of service is manifested in various forms such as personal responsibility, social service and spiritual service.

On the personal level, healers interpreted the notion of service starting with their own practices. Taking care of themselves first and avoiding negative places was their way of acknowledging the personal responsibility they have towards their community in order to be able to serve others.

Another well-documented manifestation that surfaced was their social service presenting a cultural perspective of the healers’ ideologies, their personal practices, and healing modalities as natural extensions of who they are and what they do. On the social level, healers showed a moral responsibility through the healing demonstrations, and environmental views towards conservation. The healers’ professions also revealed a social dimension of service through jobs such as government official, teacher, and religious counselor, alluding to the fact that they are healers twenty-four hours a day. Social responsibility extended towards nature and natural cycles, demonstrated through practices done with natural elements, practicing natural medicine, the use of natural elements for diagnosis and treatments, critical views toward urbanization and development of the island.

The spiritual aspect of service is evident in their belief system and their vision of themselves as humble servants of God. They all pointed out that their practice of healing comes as divine intervention and those they only acted as instruments of the divine for the healing to manifest. Their cultural upbringing and philosophical stances about nature,
God, and the interconnection of physical and spiritual worlds are part of these healers’ belief system that connects them to the notion of service as their spiritual calling. They serve because for them it is their life mission. The Christian, Espiritista, and African traditions support the idea of service as part of the spiritual process of existence. It is not surprising to see these healers serving their community and God as part of their divine mission here on earth. The calling into service was different for each healer. Some of the healers started from birth, during childhood. Others started healing later in life out of necessity or as a spiritual calling. Examples of that are Mano Santa who tells of how an angel showed up and spoke to him and Tio G, who was actively encouraged to pursue Espiritismo when the espiritista president called him in front of an audience to help her. Regardless of how these healers got their calling, their testimony and healing examples in this inquiry demonstrate. The divine realization of why they came to this life of serve.

2. Reverence to nature and natural cycles:

The theme about *Reverence to nature and natural cycles* is another reflection of the cultural healing heritage of PRFHP. Healers showed different manifestations of the reverence and commitment to nature in their praxis and points of view. The use of herbs is one of the practices that stand out because all of them practice herbal medicine. The practice of herbalism reflects the rich green medicine traditions inherited from the Taino (indigenous), Spanish and African cultures, which have been practicing herbalism for more than five hundred years in the island. In addition to that, the healers’ ideological positions towards nature such as the use and reverence of the four elements seen in rituals performed by Chago and Jose Raul, the deep respect for plants that Ursula exhibited during her interview, and Josean’s advocacy towards the conservation of
nature. For these healers, nature is what sustains their practices and maintains the
tradition of folk medicine alive.

3. Medical mestizaje:

The concept of Medical Mestizaje originally brought by Fernandez-Olmo (2001),
attests to our Caribbean historical reality of more than five hundred years of cultural
mixing. Green medicine is the most outstanding example of medical mestizaje because
Taino, European and African traditions have a plethora of herbal recipes that were
adapted and/or adopted as they came to the new world. According to Benedetti (1989),
the fertile grounds of the island also enabled for medicinal plants to grow in the wild.

Other practices such as despojos, practiced by five of the healers, consisted of
cleansing the aura and clearing away negativity. Despojos were observed in the healers’
practices from the African, Christian, and Espiritista traditions indicating an adoption of
the same practice from diverse philosophical platforms.

Other examples of medical mestizaje were found in the diagnostic practices in the
form of oracles with the use of cowry shells, coconut, and tarot cards. Other forms of
diagnosis such as communication with the spirits as practiced by Josean, Chago and Tio
G. or divine inspiration as Mano Santa describes his intuitive experience, demonstrate
that healing mestizaje is utilized to effectively diagnose illnesses. Canizares (1993)
explains that healing mestizaje starts when one practice replaces another out of necessity
or special circumstances. For example, Canizares explains that the reason espiritista
practices of communicating with ancestors started in Cuba because spirit communication
from the Yoruba perspective declined. “Apparently, not many egungun [spirit possessors]
were brought to Cuba and few Cuban-born blacks learned the ways of the egungun”
Canizares describes that as the slaves found out how their white owners experienced spirit possession and communication with their ancestors, Santeros started to adopt the espiritista practices of spirit communication.

Canizares’ statements confirm the notions of medical mestizaje in practices such as spirit communication and possession discussed by the healers in this inquiry. Furthermore, the data analysis in this investigation found the concept of medical mestizaje to be recurring theme. The ideological stances of service, reverence to nature, physical and spiritual worlds as continuum, and the concept of physical intuition are concrete examples of how healing is constantly evolving and intertwined with ideas that are acknowledged and recognized by the culture. The Caribbean, specifically the Puerto Rican way of healing, is the product of a combination, of different cultural strategies used by the healers in order to connect with the healing ancestral essence. The pluralistic modalities, philosophies, and personalities of the healers also attest to the syncretistic way in Puerto Rican healing. This includes the use of tools and practices from Christian, Santeria, and Espiritismo that sometimes are incorporated, even though the healer’s personal tendencies are to operate under another healing platform.

4. Physical and spiritual world as a continuum:

The theme of physical and spiritual world as a continuum showed us that these healers do not distinguish between the physical and spiritual world. They see reality as one continuum that addresses illnesses in a holistic way. Examples from the data show how these healers perceive reality as a continuum. The notion of death as a change, not an end, the rituals for fertility, communication with ancestral and other spirits via possession or dreams, and asking permission from plants are examples that attest to these
healers experience of reality holistically. For these healers there is another side of the world that is very much alive and holds important information needed to perform healings. These healers posses the spiritual maturity to experience other aspects of reality that are normally invisible to western standards due to dualist notions of realities that separate the concrete and subtle world into two distinct entities. Within the Puerto Rican healing culture, the concept of the spiritual and physical world is one that is inseparable.

5. Physical intuition:

The theme of physical intuition shows cultural aspects of PRFHP that relate to the healer’s physicality. For example, Tio G’s empathetic experience with a client, along with the healers’ personal practices, and the actual healing modalities of massage and bone setting are the physical evidence of how folk healing manifests and differentiates from western medical approaches to healing. These healers possess the body awareness and consciousness that allow them to connect through the body to experience their client’s needs. The behaviors observed while performing healings during this investigation and discussed by Csordas (1993) present clear evidence of this intuitive physicality. The concept of somatic modes of attention coined by Csordas confirms the notions of physical intuition as an important element in PRFHP. However, I have to point out that the somatic framework was able to articulate this theme in better terms, since somatics attempts to address an epistemology of finding well being which starts with the body.
5.3 Exploring somatic framework to create a discourse for PRFHP:

The literature proposing somatic theory helped to interpret the role of the folk healers and their healing modalities. Seven somatic assumptions found in the literature and the themes found in the data corpus allowed me to develop a somatic/phenomenological discourse to explain the ontological and epistemological aspects of Puerto Rican healing that shed light into PRFHP as a group of practices that addresses health and illness from the body-mind-spirit perspective.

The Somatic theoretical assumptions are

1. **Reality through the body.**

2. **The use of the first person experience as an internal activity.**

3. **The concept of sarcal consciousness as powerful guidance.**

4. **Reality is determined by the perception of the individual.**

5. **Existence in the world is holistic.**

6. ** Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world.**

7. **Individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space.**

These assumptions were explored in order to clarify the nature of Puerto Rican healers and their healing modalities.

**1. Reality through the body.**

The literature and data analysis shows evidence of experiencing the world through the body in various forms. The healers’ personal practices give a deeper understanding of the corporeal nature of healing from within. When the healers address their clients, they not only attend to the client’s physical symptoms, but also to the emotional and spiritual aspects. The healer’s personal practices as well as practices such
as bone setting and massage are examples found in this inquiry that attest to the physicality and concrete perception of reality while palpating muscles, joints and body systems and/or experiencing the same pain and feelings the client is experiencing.

2. The use of the first person experience as an internal activity.

The first person experience was present during the diagnosis and treatments in PRFHP as revealed by the perceptive and intuitive abilities of the healers. Examples of healers attending to the first person experience are physical palpation while fixing a sprain ankle as well as palpation through internal feelings, and sensations that allow the healer to understand the nature of the illness. The data also confirmed Csordas somatic modes of attentions using Bureau’s phenomenological notion of body as animus and experiencing the world from within. The first person experience is also a cultural manifestation that allows healer and clients to understand each other because the healer speaks in terms of the same cultural language, easily understood by the client (Nunez-Molina, 2001). Various examples in the literature (Arvigo, 2001, Canizares, 1993 & Nunez-Molina, 2001,) and the data for this investigation attest to the phenomena of intuition, body empathetic and clairvoyance from the healers’ part creating an immediate connection to the clients’ needs.

3. The concept of sarcal consciousness as powerful guidance.

Sarcal consciousness is manifested either when the client enters the healing space, during the treatment or afterwards. The internal calmness that the client experiences is what makes the client believe that there must be a way to change what is wrong with the individual. Sarcal consciousness promotes personal responsibility on the client’s part to change the behavior that is causing the pain, illness, or disharmony in the
first place. Similar notions about personal responsibility on the clients’ part were found by Nunez-Molina (2001) when he studied an Espiritista healer. Nunez-Molina argues that in espiritista healing, the client’s problems are not stigmatized; however, it is the responsibility of the client to take care of the illness.

4. Reality is determined by the perception of the individual.

The somatic notion of reality determined by the perception of the individual applies to PRFHP since within the action of healing; there is also a culturally constituted understanding of how it happens. The healer creates a different reality for the client to find answers to the questions and issues presented. For some healers the reality of healing comes with the herbs and the Orisha saint that rules that particular herb, dictated by the archetype of that particular Orisha. The data also shows practical examples that change the reality of individuals such as the use of gemstones to cleanse the aura, massages to warm up muscles and set joints, energetic passes (despojos) to clear the energetic field of clients, counseling divination, and other rituals that allow healers to consciously change the individual’s perceptions of reality.

5. Existence in the world is holistic.

In resonance with other non-western folk healing traditions such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Mexican Curanderismo (MC) found in the literature of Arvigo (2001), Avila (1998), Garcia, et al, (1999) and Young (2001) existence in the world is holistic because it recognizes the synergistic process between the healer, the healing process, and the environment. The healers’ soma is constantly engaged with the environment, as deducted by their constant reference to the culture of healing, their practical uses of nature as tools for healing and their internal perception from the signals
they experience within their bodies. Healers are in constant negotiation between what is happening to the clients and the clues they receive from the diagnosis. The therapeutics involved in PRFHP support the holistic notions of existence as a continuum instead of separate entities.

6. **Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world.**

The literature found on PRFHP and the data from this inquiry presents strong evidence that healers are simultaneously interconnected with the clients’ beyond the mere physical aspects. The data revealed that experiencing empathic pain from clients, receiving messages and/or signals from spirit guides and/or from intuition allows that interconnection. This particular assumption is congruent with the cultural theme of *physical and spiritual world as a continuum*, confirming that PRFHP envisions the individual as whole (body-mind-spirit).

7. **Individuals are multi-dimensional beings going beyond time and space.**

Experiencing reality as non-linear and multi-dimensional is also part of the ontology and epistemology that PRFHP have to operate beyond the notions of time and space. As already discussed in the cultural themes, this notion is also shared with other cultural practices such as Mexican Curanderismo as discussed by Arvigo (2001), Avila (1998), and Garcia, et al (1999). The data for this investigation presented examples of non-local visions, healing in the past, and ritual healings for extreme cases such as infertility. These examples help support Bell’s theorem of temporal relativity discussed by Greene (1997) and Silow (2002) explaining how events happen at the same time in different locations and how they interconnect.
The assumptions described above help PRFHP further a discourse for healing that gives visibility and understanding of the healing praxis within the island. The *modus operandi* the Puerto Rican healers have as well as the phenomenological notion of *corpus animus* -exercising the healing experience- is what this investigation brings in order to present, develop, and establish a paradigm of folk healing for non-western practices in the western hemisphere, specifically in the Americas.

### 5.4 How the investigative experience of theory and practice become one.

Revising historical and cultural notions about health and illness from the literature found for PRFHP and the somatic point of view, allowed me to understand post-colonial and phenomenological reasons of why PRFHP has not been considered, studied, and formulated as a system. As Mishler (1981) points out, health care systems maintain separatist attitudes and assume that health care is improved based on the objectification of technical and research advancements. However, in reality what is happening is that medicine is influenced by society. "Society is an arena of conflict over power and resources, they assert further that the health care system not only pursues its own special interests but, at the same time, aligns itself with dominant groups and classes in the society, thus serving their special interests as well" (Mishler, 1981, p.196).

Agreeing with Mishler, Fernandez-Olmo (2001) echoed this sentiment by specifically pointing out two reasons why there is a lack of literature and studies done in the Caribbean about folk health. “One is due to the fact that there is very little known about the practices and two, the gap that scientific paradigms presented deciding not to
study and pursue this direction because it prevents the democratization of healing knowledge” (Fernandez-Olmo, 2001, p.2).

Using Mishler and Fernandez-Olmo’s assessments, I ventured on this investigative journey determined to uncover the mysteries of Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices by using culturally grounded analysis and my somatic experience as a researcher, practitioner and student. As I advanced in the data analysis for this study, I comprehended what Dillard (2000), Fernandez-Olmo (2001) and Ladson-Billings (1993) proposed: to investigate non-western cultures from their cultural grounding, not based on other parameters that might hinder their cultural richness. I was looking for a cooperative and culturally centered approach to investigate the human experiences involving issues of the body-mind-spirit in relation to Puerto Rican folk healers.

The presentation from the healers’ perspectives allows the reader to see the experience of folk healing from the practitioner’s point of view. The healing modalities, diagnostics, and treatments show the physical evidence of the healing experience long overdue for their acknowledgement as an important legacy of the Puerto Rican healing culture. In this instance, the theory and practice cannot be considered as separate entities; they need to be evaluated and analyzed in a holistic fashion. The combination of theoretical and practical elements found in the culturally grounded analysis and the somatic assumptions facilitated that process.

With the help of the constructivist and phenomenological perspectives, the qualitative methodologies, and the data analysis, I finally realized what my advisors tried to convey during my academic training, and summarized by my yoga teacher Saghaguru Jaggy Vasud “the path is the destination and the destination is hidden in the path”
(Saghaguru Jaggy Vasuded, personal communication, March 2003). As I developed the themes from the culturally grounded perspective, I began to see commonalities that unified these healers that share similar purpose of healing, in spite of the apparent philosophical differences and diverse ways of their healing modalities. The themes started to develop common epistemological grounds for Puerto Rican folk healing.

The combination of literature reviews and the fieldwork methodology shows recurring themes that brought me to the following findings about PRFHP:

1. There is a deep sense of service from the physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions in the healers who participated in this inquiry.

2. All of the healers participating in this inquiry revere nature and their natural cycles.

3. For all of them the physical and spiritual world is a continuum, is not separated, and the physicality of their healing traditions is manifested in their personal practices as well as their healing modalities.

4. The medical mestizaje notion brought by Fernandez-Olmo (2001) was confirmed through practices such as herbalism and notions about spiritual service and personal responsibility towards their community regardless of their spiritual background.

The Somatic Theory, which brings the experiences of the self from inside the body, expands the explanation of the cultural theme of embodiment. This theme was extended by the first three assumptions of somatics which address issues such as how healing starts as a physical phenomena, the first person experience through body sensations and the notion of sarcal consciousness.
However, other assumptions diluted the essence of PRFHP by forcing them to lose important aspects that complete the culture of Puerto Rican healing. Assumptions such as *Individuals are simultaneously interconnected with the world* and *Individuals are multi-dimensional beings, going beyond time and space* discussed by Greene (1997) and Silow (2002) from a western perspective were extended from the cultural perspective with examples of time traveling, psychic visions, contact with spirit guides, and fertilization rituals. The cultural theme of *spiritual and physical worlds as continuum* and *reverence to nature and natural cycles* captured examples of the body-mind-spirit connection in a holistic and concrete manner that expanded on the explanations of other somatic scholars.

The cultural analysis and the somatic assumptions permitted the understanding of the experiences of Puerto Rican folk healers. The culturally grounded analysis revealed the richness of Puerto Rican healing culture through the voices of these six healers. Finding commonalities among the behaviors, feelings, and thoughts of these healers is what validated the data stories by giving a discursive scheme of a cultural healing tradition historically obscured by colonialism and western attitudes toward health. The somatic explorations allowed me to gain further the understanding of embodiment in Puerto Rican healing culture and to confirm cultural belief systems regarding the multidimensionality of life. Culturally grounded analysis and the exploration of the somatic assumptions allowed me to understand the nature of Puerto Rican healers without having to separate the healers from their healing. These healers as individuals and the practices they perform go together. That togetherness extends from their internal self to their physical and spiritual realms. The somatic assumptions presented these
healers as individuals who are one within themselves, while the culturally grounded analysis presented these healers as whole who become one with the universe.

The lessons I have learned from this is that having different interpretations increased my discursive flexibility and allowed me to present diverse perspectives on the same phenomena. I have come out learning lessons about my own culture and about myself that reaffirm “mi orgullo Boricua”, “my pride as Puerto Rican”, and makes me aware of the responsibility that I have in researching and reporting experiences about my own culture. My thanks to Jose Raul, Ursula, Chago, Mano Santa, Josean and Tio G, I learned the importance of our cultural healing legacy and the need to become an advocate for the particular values and wisdom contained in PRFHP.

5.5 Future developments in the investigation of PRFHP.

This study will serve to provide impetus to research in the area of health education. One theme to follow is regarding attitudes toward health and illnesses in minorities, specifically Puerto Ricans. The see attitudinal correlations of Puerto Rican and other minority groups who traditionally rely on folk healing as their primary source of health care due to cultural interpretations of health care management and financial strife.

Other areas which this study may encourage to explore include investing in the understanding how cultural practices are affected by colonialism, cultural and sociological issues of gender, and analyzing the effects of imperialism, economic systems, social, and cultural differences. This inquiry helps promote the presence of
PRFHP as diverse, creating a bridge that presents the pluralistic notion of cultural and healing mestizaje in our modern world.

This inquiry also takes somatic theory beyond the realm of eastern and western traditions. Exploring somatic assumptions from the PRFHP perspective expands the scope of limiting examples only to western or eastern culture. The data examined for this investigation also expands on somatic assumptions on issues of interconnection of life, time-space continuum, and other notions of the body-mind-spirit connection.

Future development of this investigation includes extending a discursive vocabulary for health and illness that describes experiences and practices for PRFHP. Since this inquiry was focused on identifying the nature of healers and their practices, I would like to further the development of a theory for PRFHP.

Other avenues to pursue may be to investigate those healing modalities that were invisible and/or not represented in the literature such as the role of the mid-wife (Partera) and practices such as ventosa performed by some bonesetters and folk masseurs. Issues of gender and socialization of the healer in Puerto Rican culture is another important issue I will investigate in the future.

Future investigations may include comparisons and compilations of folk healing practices from other parts of the Caribbean such as Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic and other Antilles islands in order to see commonalities, differences and possible migrations of these practices.

The contributions of this investigation invites the pursuit of questions associated with the field of Latin American and Latino/a studies, Caribbean and Puerto Rican studies, cultural studies and other social sciences. The sociological state of the healers
and healing modalities, social issues of gender, socialization and the formation of the healer, and the clientele they serve, along with the rate of success are some of the themes this investigator proposes.

It is hoped that this investigation will open the door for scholars to compile and research traditional practices from Latin America and the Caribbean region as part of the rich legacy these traditional and indigenous cultures offer in the areas of education, cultural studies, and traditional and alternative health systems.

Finally, the development of a program that records, preserves and promotes these practices will allow educators, health professionals and healers to interact and discuss theory and practices as part of an initiative to promote integrative practices of health care.
APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTION OF THREE WESTERN SOMATIC PRACTICES
Western Somatic Practices:

This section presents three practical ways of finding body-mind connection from the Western perspective. Some aspects of these practices share some of the notions Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices (PRFHP) have.

1. The Alexander Technique:

The Alexander technique is a method of movement education based on the principle that states "better use of the self means learning a conscious discipline of mind/body awareness and control in all life's functions-sitting, standing, walking, using the arms, hands, voice, tools, et cetera" (Batson, 1993). The technique basically teaches individuals to first be aware of inappropriate habits and then inhibit them "in order to facilitate the capacity for coordination, focus, and clarity in performance" (Richmond, 1994). According to Lidell (1987) this technique promotes a way of relearning skills a person had as a youngster, such as maintaining balance and poise with minimal tension. In a series of one-to-one sessions, the Alexander teacher observes the student/client lying down, standing, sitting, and walking. The concept of primary control describes that particular relationship between head, neck, and back/torso, which influence the coordination of the rest of the body (Drake, 1991). In his book, The Resurrection of the Body, Alexander talks about the holistic process of the technique. Being aware of a specific situation is one of the skills he teaches in the method. His method of releasing
tension consisted in "inhibiting" the impulse of moving the old distorted way described by him as "downward pull" and then introduces "primary control", which is the inherent and intrinsic mechanism for balance and support in the body (Alexander, 1974, Conable, 1995). The Alexander Technique presented points of views that are pluralist instead of dualist in nature. He realized that his rationale of seeing the body was dualistic and imposed. One way to eliminate this rationale was by "inhibiting" the actions of doing to achieve a goal and only give the directions of the new "means-whereby" without actually doing it. This inhibiting action is very similar to what some Puerto Rican folk healers do while consulting and administering treatment. His book is very honest and explicit describing the way he went through his somatic process. He identified the stages he and his students went before achieving the body-mind connection and saw it as an important part of the learning process to get to the holistic approach.

2. The Feldenkrais Method:

The Feldenkrais Method consists of two approaches of movement re-education. One is Functional Integration (FI) and the other Awareness through Movement (ATM). Functional Integration consists of hands on experiences given by a Feldenkrais practitioner. The practitioner uses his or her hands to communicate movement in a way that new sensory configurations and new motor organizations will be experienced and learned by the student. Baniel (1994) said that the students learn to recreate the new sensory and motor patterns which then creates a new movement organization beyond his or her previous repertoire of movement; learning these additional movements give the students more freedom of choice and action. "The lessons are given extraordinary
gentleness and sensitivity to students who range from a few days old to people of advanced age. The purpose of touch is to communicate movement" (Baniel, 1994). Awareness through Movement (ATM) is the second way of learning this method of movement re-education. ATM classes are group classes and the instructions are given verbally by the practitioner. "Each [instructions] contains highly sophisticated movement sequences that created new movement’s skills in the individual or improve existing ones" (p. 3). The classes consist of paying attention to any signal the body gives. The lessons usually are concentrated on an area of the body according to the theme of the day. During the class process the students are reminded to scan themselves on different occasions to see how the rest of the body is doing.

One of the basic concepts that Feldenkrais used with his students was to separate action from intention. He wanted his students to concentrate for example on the feelings while one was on the way of sitting on the chair, no how to get there. "It must be fully realized from the start that the learning process is irregular and consists of steps and that there will be downs as well as ups"(Feldenkrais, 1972).

3. **Body Mind Centering:**

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen created body-Mind Centering (BMC). She brought influences from dance, yoga, Aikido, Laban Movement Analysis, voice, and other eastern techniques such as Zen and Katsugen Undo to develop her technique (Knaster, 1996). This somatic technique uses the physiological systems of the body such as the skeletal, muscular, organic, nervous, glandular, and fluids of the body (blood, synovial, cerebro-spinal). It also looks for attention and detail while exploring movements and teaches the
individual to use the systems of the body to enhance and have efficient movement. According to Bainbridge Cohen, underdevelopment or inefficiency in any of the systems of the body affects all the others and can lead to postural or movement difficulties; obstacles in perception, organization, memory, and creativity are reflected in how humans develop early in life (Bainbridge-Cohen, 1993).

In this technique the person is encouraged to speak during a session in order to give the practitioner insight about the limitation of movement. For Eddy (1995), the BMC practitioner constantly investigates how the client feels in order to work in accordance with the need of the moment. "The therapist/educator, much like a qualitative researcher, can add needed perspective by posing key questions, asking to see varied movements, touching body tissues, or listening to the resonant quality of the voice, to name a few of the most typical interactive assessments techniques" (Eddy, 1995, p. 270).

The three practices mentioned before work with clients form the holistic perspective of addressing the human body as non-dual. They all look for client’s cues to address issues of the body as the physical manifestation of the overall state that an individual is in. They all honor the first person perception and the exchange of energy either through touch, movement or sensation. These three practices share some of the same exchanges PRFHP has specially for the body worker, huesero, and Santero where he or she interviews the client asking what is wrong and besides treatments he or she gives alternatives to prevent those physical ailments from coming back. The following section will address other particularities PRFHP share with somatics through two non-western health traditions. The diagnostic methods of these two traditions, the communication with the energetic and spiritual realm in order to find a cure and its
process shares other somatic characteristics making PRFHP a unique blend between Western and non-western Somatics.
APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM AND MEMBERS CHECK LETTERS
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Research Title: THE NATURE OF PUERTO RICAN FOLK HEALTH PRACTICES THROUGH HEALERS PERCEPTIONS AND SOMATIC ASSUMPTIONS

Dr. Seymour Kleinman, principal Investigator, or her authorized representative Fanny Santiago-Saavedra has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, how she will use the video taping and why, and expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described, as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has given to me. For more information about this study please contact Ms. Fanny Santiago-Saavedra at santiago-saavedra.1@osu.edu 614-840-8483 Or write to the Principal Investigator Dr. Seymour Kleinman Kleinman.1@osu.edu 614-688-4126at The Ohio State University, School of Educational Policy and Leadership, Cultural Studies/Somatic Program, 29 West Woodruff Ave. 121 Ramseyer Hall, Columbus, OH.

______________________ _________
Signature of the participant   Date:

________________________ _________
Signature of Investigator/representative:   Date:

____________________________
Witness:
Muy estimado ________:

Aquí le mando la transcripción de la entrevista que hicimos el verano pasado. Espero que la lea y si tiene algo que anadir o eliminar por favor dejeme saber. También me gustaría mucho si usted firma la forma oficial de la Universidad que encabeza "Consent for Participation in Research". La original es para usted y la copia para mí. Yo me voy a comunicar con usted muy pronto para saber si hay que hacer algunos cambios o no. Dejeme saber su Teléfono con Mis padres y cuando la puedo llamar. Por favor acepte este humilde regalo de mi parte y Espero que lo disfrute mucho. Muchísimas gracias por el tiempo, la información y el agradable rato que usted y su esposo nos brindaron aquella tarde de verano. Le estoy muy agradecida.

Carinosamente,

Fanny Santiago-Saavedra, estudiante de Ph. D. 
Escuela de Educación , The Ohio State University
Departamento de Estudios Culturales
APPENDIX C

MATERIALS RELATED TO FIELD INTERVIEWS AND SCHEDULES
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:


2. When did you start working as a healer? How did you get interested in healing? How old were you when you did your first healing? Did you discover your ability by accident? Revelation? Intuition?

3. Can you describe what you do while you are working with a patient? a) Any blessings or prayers? b) Divinidation rites? c) Aura cleansing?

4. Do you use any instruments, props, oils or ointments on the patient's body?

5. Does the use of props, oils, and herbs vary with the situation or case?

6. Can you show me the space you do your work? Is consider that particular space just for healing? Do you use the space for other purposes?

7. For those who work with herbs: For what purpose you use these herbs and how do you prepare it?

8. For those who consult some kind of oracle or perform divination: What kind of oracle do you use and for what purpose?

10. Is there any kind of preparation or rite you follow every day?

11. Is there any particular behavior you follow in order to keep your ability to heal going?

12. What are the most common cases that come to you?

13. What is the most peculiar case or the most difficult case you have encountered so far?

14. Have you had to tell a patient to go to an allopathic doctor because it is necessary?

15. Do you receive any referrals from other healers or health professionals such as allopathic Doctors or Naturopaths?

16. Have you treated life-threatening illnesses such as Cancer, AIDS, or heart disease?

17. For those who work with counseling; what are the most common cases you treat?
   a) Couple's counseling?
   b) Money matters?
   c) Parenting problems?

18. Do you charge for your services? If so, how much?

19. Do you feel healing is your vocation/mission in life or do you feel healing is your duty?

20. Who are your teacher(s)? What sources did you use in learning to heal?
21. Is there anything else you want to add or any messages you want to end this interview with?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>WEEK 2</th>
<th>WEEK 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Interview with Don Carlos @ 6:00 pm <strong>(Canceled)</strong></td>
<td>2. Interviews with Chago in Canovanas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Travel back to Manati (north-central part of island) for another</td>
<td>3. Travel back to Barceloneta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>interview.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2.</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, June 26, 2001: Library search at the UPR in San Juan</td>
<td><strong>Day 9,</strong> Tuesday July 3, 2001: 1. Meeting with two other informants.</td>
<td><strong>Day 16,</strong> Tuesday July 10, 2001:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Set appointments with Dona Ursula and Don Ramon.</td>
<td>1. Schedule three other appointments: a) Mano Santa Thursday. b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. First interview with herbalist Dona Ursula in Quebradillas, PR</td>
<td>Milagros Wednesday or Thursday c) Mirtha Wednesday or Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(North/west coast of island)</td>
<td>2. <strong>Reiki Afternoon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Second interview with spiritualist/ Curandera Mercedes Galindes</td>
<td>3. Schedule with Odette Pineiro for advice and survey meeting (next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Manati PR)</td>
<td>Sunday).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 3.</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday, June 27, 2001:</td>
<td><strong>Day 10,</strong> Wednesday July 4, 2001: <strong>1. Morning Reiki</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 17,</strong> Wednesday July 11, 2001:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. <strong>Morning Reiki upper body.</strong></td>
<td>2. Reiki healing</td>
<td>1. Calling to re-schedule Mirtha's and Milagros interviews for Thursday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Interview with German Lugo (Kardecian Spiritualist) Barceloneta PR</td>
<td>2. <strong>Afternoon Reiki</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Library search UPR</td>
<td>-North Central coastal part of island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4, Thursday, June 28, 2001:</td>
<td>Day 11, Thursday, July 5, 2001:</td>
<td>Day 18, Thursday July 12, 2001:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Calling for appointments.</td>
<td>1. Interview Ramon Reyes sobador (massage therapist) at his home (Florida, PR) North central mountainside of island.</td>
<td>1. Interview with Mirtha Martinez Naturopath. 10:30 am, Manati PR.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pilates session</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Interview with Milagros Ruiz @ 9:30 pm Barceloneta, PR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Free afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 5, Friday, June 29, 2001:</th>
<th>Day 12, Friday, July 6, 2001:</th>
<th>Day 19, Friday July 13, 2001:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Full Reiki session</td>
<td>1. Morning Reiki</td>
<td>1. Interview with Manuel Batizta &quot;Mano Santa&quot; in Ciales, PR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Traveling to Canovanas P.R (Eastern Side of island)</td>
<td>2. Reiki Attunement</td>
<td>2. Small Reiki session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Meeting with one of my informants. To plan the weekend.</td>
<td>3. Travel to Canovanas</td>
<td>3. Free afternoon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 6, Saturday, June 30, 2001:</th>
<th>Day 13, Saturday, July 7, 2001:</th>
<th>Day 20, Saturday July 14, 2001:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meeting with other two informants.</td>
<td>1. Interview with Cuban Babalao. (Canceled)</td>
<td>1. Reiki full treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Setting a pre-interview meeting with the Cuban Babalao (Santeria bishop)</td>
<td>2. Re-schedule interviews with Babalao</td>
<td>2. Get organizes and Last minute errands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Schedule interview with Santera healer Rufina in Loiza.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 7, Sunday, July 1, 2001:</th>
<th>Day 14, Sunday, July 8, 2001:</th>
<th>Day 21, Sunday, July 15, 2001:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Morning Reiki.</td>
<td>1. Meeting with informant.</td>
<td>1. Morning Reiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Setting of video taping of Santeria Ritual &quot;house cleansing&quot; (canceled)</td>
<td>2. Interview with Rufina in Loiza, PR. (canceled)</td>
<td>2. Go to Orocovis the heart of the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Afternoon Hata Yoga</td>
<td>3. Interview with Josean in Loiza, PR. (canceled)</td>
<td>3. Meeting with Dr. Odette Pineiro About the possibility of implementing a Caribbean version of holistic clinic/outreach program using holistic education from western, Eastern and native practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Morning Reiki.</td>
<td>Depart to Ohio.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D
SCRIPTS OF HEALING DEMONSTRATIONS
Healing demonstration 1, Jose Raul:

Healer: There is water.

[Putting the hands in the wooden bowl]

Healer: The water I use here I called Mother Water, because it comes from the mountains, is spring water, is sweet water, the water that comes from the mountain has a path that goes from the mountain to the valley until it meets the sea. Furthermore, I recognize it as Mother Water. Once the two waters meet then there is life. The planet is compound of ¾ of ocean and ¼ of river water, sweet water, the ocean put the salt. The salt element puts purity into this water. Water is what fertilized the earth, water is what gives us energy, fills us, and fills us with health. This has been happening since our ancestors. All generations and civilizations have used water in different forms, baptism is one of them, enchanting, cleansing and giving counsel are other ways. I also have the stones to unify the element of water with the element of earth. I bathe the stones in this water

[Showing the bowl with water and the stones inside]

Healer: Because the water refresh and cleanse any negativity the stone-absorbed from the sick people I am treating.

[Healer starts with an invocation while he is lighting a candle]

Healer: Let it not be me, but you divine beings, that give us the light to distinguish truth from untruth and let us illuminate this brother that comes here in search of the light in this place. Oh, divine light illuminate this face, illuminate this being, blessed him all over his body so that light can reestablish each and every cell, every organ and every part of his being.

[Healer touches the client’s hands and opens them]

Healer: I present divine light in these hands.

[Healer moves the client’s hands toward the candle]

Healer: Give him strength, give him light.

[Healer places index and thumb finger on the candle flame, then touches the palms as if putting the flame onto the client's hands]
Healer: Look.

[Healer places the agate on the flame in circular motion, and then places it on the person's right hands].

Healer: I ask in this hour for more strength and light to this body

[Then he performs the same action with the second stone placed on person's left hand]

Healer: Let the light go through the whole body healing any imperfection that it might find

[While placing hands on top of the client].

Healer: In the name of the universal God.

[The healer cleanses the stone in clear water. Then, he places the onyx on the patient's right hand and the agate on the left hand while saying]

Healer: Now let us take this rock and you are going to take it and close your palms.

[Client closes hands with one stone in each hand].

[Healer says to client]

Healer: You are going to repeat mentally, I inhale God’s presence in the form of health, I inhale God’s presence in the form of nature, from head to toe, I am restoring every tissue, my whole body, and any imperfection that I am experiencing until now. Open your hands slowly.

[Client opens his hands slowly]

Healer: Now I ask to cover my stomach, my chest, my heart, inhale and exhale, because there is only healthy energy covering my whole being.

[Healer placed one hand over the patient's upper chest, then says]

Healer: I am directing energy to the head, forehead, the energy goes down in every bone, back, joint, etc, because only life energy will give me health.

[Healer does a series of cleansing of the gemstones and places them on the patient’s hands and other body parts]
Healer: well lower your hands now. Sit straight, please.

[Client sits straight]

Healer: OK. Let’s go,

[Healer picks the wooden vessel and shows to the camera]

Healer: I am cleaning so we have clear water again.
Client: Uhum.


Healer: how do you feel?
Client: More peaceful, less tired.

[Healer is cleaning the stone in clear water. Then, he places the onyx on the patient's right hand and the agate on the left hand while saying]

Healer: Now you will take this stone in one hand then the other rock in the other and close your hands.

[The patient closes hands with one stone on each hand].

Healer: Now you are going to repeat mentally I inhale God’s presence through my health, I inhale God’s presence in nature from head to toe, all tissue, and body parts are being restored. Please open your hands

[The client opens his hands]

Healer: Now I ask the energy to go through the stomach, the chest, and heart. Inhale and exhale because only healing energy goes around my whole being.

/[The healer places one hand over the patient’s upper chest, then says]

Healer: I am redirecting healing energy to the head, forehead, and bringing down everywhere, every bone, joint, back, because only this life changing energy can give me health.

[While cleansing the gemstones, the healer asks the client to follow his instructions]
Healer: Please, inhale, exhale, and let bring light to our chest. Only peaceful liberating thoughts will take away all disharmonies in our being. In the name of God and the universe, I inhale and exhale. I inhale and exhale slowly bringing peaceful thoughts to my mind, liberating it from all tension.

[Then the healer exchanges the stones and places them on the patient's forehead.]

[The healer makes an energetic pass with his right hand placing the onyx stone around the client’s neck, upper back and upper chest, while holding the second stone on the client’s forehead with his left].

Healer: I inhale and exhale slowly and bring peaceful thoughts to the spine and having only peaceful and healthful thoughts for my whole being.

[The healer places the stones on the water vessel and asks the client]

Healer: What do you feel when I take away the stones?
Client: I feel more peaceful.
Healer: Any discomfort in the body?
Client: What I had slowly reduced, reduced, reduced.
Healer: You do not have it anymore do you.
Client: Most of it is gone.

Healing Demonstration 2 Chago Garcia:

[While preparing the space the healer comments]

Healer: You know, Africans never step into the world in sandals. They were barefoot. That is why he or she steps onto a straw mat. For them the straw mat is sacred. They will always ask for permission by using the word “ago”.

[He brings the Ifa table to the center of the room] [Then he brings a glass of water and puts it by the table]

Healer: Why water?

[He shows me a crystal glass with water].

FSS: Purification, cleansing
Healer: It is an element. The earth

[He shows me the earth element in a center hole beneath the table -there is another white table with a hole on it under the Ifa plate-]
Healer: Sounds come from? Air. There you have the four elements.

Healer: You are the fifth element!

[The healer picks up the herbs branches he has in the small bath with water and prepared oils, and softly passes them around my head, arms, body and legs while reciting and chanting the Yoruba prayer]

Healer: I am cleansing you aura, lower your arms slowly.

[I lower my arms slowly]

[Then he recites another prayer in Yoruba]

Healer: Father I say it in Creole for the protection of her parents and her family. Maferifu, Saint Barbara (Chango), Our Lady of Charity (Oshun), Our lady of Regla (Yemaya), Our lady of Mercy (Obatala), Saint Francis of Assisi, San John the Baptist, Saint Martin of Porres, Saint Hubert (Ogun), Saint Lazarus (Babalu Aye) and Our lady of Canellas (Oya) Give light to our daughter who has come here with the purpose of learning about the universal truths of this extinct grand religion.

[While doing the signal of the cross toward me, he recites these words]

Healer: Bawa in the name of the Father, Oxala the son and Olofi, the holy ghost.

[He signals me to sit on the floor. Then he comes to my back and softly hits me with the herb branches]

Healer: You are going to take notes, right?

[Then he picks my notebook and hits my notebook with the herbs and gives the notebook to me]

Healer: You know these are man made materials, Do you understand what I mean? That is why I am cleansing them.

[Then he proceeds with his prayers in Yoruba while sitting at the table facing me with his book]

Healer: This is the “our father” [prayer] in African.
[Then he proceeds to say the Our Father in Yoruba, and then shows me that his spiritual guides say the names in Yoruba and Spanish]

Healer: Ade se wua sarabanda, Ade se wua Cabo rondo, Ade se wua the death, Ade se wua Palero unigi ganga, Ade se wua the moon, Ade se wua All mighty God, Ade se wua the spirits of this plane, Ade se wua my respects and honor to the Congo, sala malenco, malenco sala. Please, repeat what I say in reverse I say salamalenco

[Pointing at me, he signals and responds]

FSS: malenco sala.

**Healing Demonstration 3 Mano Santa:**
[He points to the client and invites him to sit]

Healer: come here.

[He makes the client roll his left pants up. Then touches the knee joint, grabs the foot, and puts some oil on it, all while moving the knee and ankle joint simultaneously. Then he asks me to touch].

Healer: "toca mamita, toca" [touch, honey, touch]
FSS: aha,

[I come close and touch the knee joint]
[Then the healer bends the person’s knee outward while placing the ankle on top of the other leg. Then pushes gently on the worked knee. After that, he asks the client to stand up]

Healer: Put your shoe on.

[The client puts his shoe on]
[Then the client starts jerking his leg and whole body].

FSS: hey, it is reacting.

[The client starts walking again. The client’s wife looks astonished]

Client’s wife: he came down limping and now he is walking straight.

[Healer looks at me]

Healer: You see?
Client: I feel much better.
Healer: Now what you need is cow cream and warm water on the foot.
Do you need to work some more?
Client: Well I am feeling heat from the waist down.
Healer: This is part of the reaction.
FSS: What kind of oil is this?
Healer: This is ginger oil.
FSS: Do you prepare the oil?
Healer: Yes, I attuned the oil and prepared it for healings.

**Healing Demonstration 4 Mano Santa:**

Healer: Let’s see,

[He moves the client's arm softly in circular motion holding her from the hand and shoulder joint].

Healer: There, there, there, higher, higher, higher.

[The healer touches her shoulder blade. Then he pulls her arm from her hand. After that, he takes her wedding band off and gives it to her so he can pull freely. He proceeds by putting some oil on his hands and massaging her hands, going through all the carpal fingers and wrist muscles.]

Client: I have treated this condition for years and the doctors have not found what is happening. They say the ligament is short or something!

[Then, looking at me he says]

Healer: Oh no. Look!

[Then joking with other observers]

Healer: I am in pain, I am in pain, she is brave right?

[He said this while holding a pressure point on her elbow very tight.]

Client: I am all right thank God. I was telling you I could not sleep last night because of the pain.

Healer: Close the fist.

Client: It does not close. I feel no circulation.

[The healer interlaces his fingers with hers and moves the hand in circular motion].

Healer: Can you move it now?
Client: Yes.

Healer: Then, keep the hand warm at all times so you can move it. OK!
APPENDIX E:

FIELD JOURNALS
Field Journals:

Journal #1, Monday, June 25:

Woke up around 4:15 AM. My stomach hurts. Went to bed again and woke up at 6:10. Harold looked at me and told me "today you go home" I did not tell him anything but home is here in Columbus. Our trip from Columbus to St. Louis MO was with no mayor incident. However, when we arrived to St. Louis we found that close to our gate most of the passengers were "Boricuas". I already noticed by the noise, the dress code and the extra luggage I immediately knew I was amongst my people. In fact Carla and I looked too Americanized for that crowd. It is so amazing how spiritual believes is so ingrated in Puerto Rican culture. As I study more about Latino spirituality I can see who does believe in Santeria, Spiritism and Christians by how they look like and what people wear. I can’t wait to arrive to the island to find out more about the subtle differences I didn't notice before!

Journal #2, Tuesday, June 26:

Today is my first official day here in the island. It is extremely humid, although is not at hot as I expected. I woke up at 4:00 AM, went to bed again and woke up at 7:00 AM. I woke up hearing my father-in-law talking to a neighbor about his

---

9 The term Boricua comes from the Arawak Indigenous people -our first residents of the Island of Puerto Rico- also known as the Taino Indians. They called the island Boriken wich means the "land of the ultimate lord of riches" from the term Boriken came Boricua as an individual from that island. Other Latino countries uses their native names to identify their people such as the Dominican Republic "Quisqueya" the people are known as quisqueyanos, and Mexico such as Aztec an to name a few. (Fernandez-Mendez, 1995)
home garden. In his front garden he has tropical flowers in the back he has herbs, some vegetables and medicinal plans. I overheard him saying that Aloe Vera was a wonderful plant. He said the plant is so good that it grows everywhere even in the desert! He also mentions the names of other plants I did not recognize. For the way he talks, he knows lots about the plants he owns and its uses. The other voice recognized him as an expert. As I hear it, make me think of how I am working in this project looking for specific people who work as healers. It made me wonder if the previous generation just knew how to take care of themselves by learning within the family and having a healing garden. My parents generation comes from the transition between the agrarian society to the industrial one. They were the last generation to work the land while preparing to become more industrialized. My parents as well as other people of their generation see the knowledge I am seeking as common knowledge.

The morning reflection gives me the impression that I have to be open on how I acquire my data and what my sources are. I have to remember that "the experts" can be the person that I less imagines. The healing wisdom from the island could come in many shapes and forms. Being a healer now a days, as a profession is a modern invention society has made in order to control and manipulated the knowledge, the politics and the economy of health.

Afternoon:

I spent my afternoon going to the University of Puerto Rico Library. To my surprise, I found the library going through renovations. I felt funny in there, especially when they asked me my student identification # (the student number has the year one enter UPR, in my case 1983 yaks!). The librarian was very helpful especially when I told her I was alumna. She also showed me how to look
for books on line, in a database that connects with Latin America. I also spend around 4 hours looking for the old stuff in form off index cards (they have not updated to computers). Over all the day was well spend I would give the UPR library and F for waiting so long in renovating the infrastructure and A for the knowledgeable and wonderful people they have in there.

The evening:

The evening went better than expected. I will use a different fond for this because is more personal but related to the events of my trip to the island. My primary purpose for this trip was for research. However, when I arrived I heard bad news about my brother being sick and not knowing what he has. I wanted to see him as soon as I could so my parents and I managed so I could see him and give him a Reiki Treatment. I also arranged to give Reiki attunements to a few people who were interested in pursuing this form of healing and train them as Reiki 1 practitioners.

Therefore, we went to my brothers house to find out he was in a conference. Since he was not home we decided to go eat. As we were eating Mom, Dad and I talked about Hector's (my brothers') situation and how the doctor is giving him all kinds of test. I felt very uneasy and commented that if I knew where the conference was held I would go visit. Therefore, the three of us venture at 9:00PM to the next town east of Canovanas -never being in there before- asking for the Rio Grande Plantation Resort and after 45 minutes asking directions, we made it! Hector was very happy to see the three of us. He indeed was not feeling well and was praying to God to give him strength and send him a signal he will complete the training in the next two days. I gave him a Reiki treatment and then left. We planned to see each other during the weekend because he wanted to be my informant. He also commented there was going to be a Limpia in his house to see if they can get rid of bad influences! (You see, this is so cultural, professional people using ancient native wisdom to get rid of bad influences).

Journal #3, Wednesday, June 27:

This is my second day at UPR. I woke up tired! I did some Reiki on myself but not a whole treatment. I need to remind myself to drink a lot of water. Is around one o'clock but I am stock here. I feel I am not accomplishing anything. I think I will follow my instincts and go explore on campus.
I went on exploring and looking for one of my old professors. I was greeted warmly and the secretary told me he was leaving to the US tomorrow for training. Then I headed to the library again. My research went well today. I copied lots of papers and stuff in Spanish. I decided to take the information on the bibliography in English since I knew I could find it in the US. The decision was base on the amount of information in Spanish and that I was running out of cash for copying. Since I had a long day the day before I decided to end the search for the moment and head home. (40 kilometers away).

**Journal #4, Thursday, June 28:**

*Free day for me, it is too hot to be doing mental stuff. I am drinking water like crazy. My body feels sluggish so I will take it easy. Temperature is rising to middle 90s. I finally did more Reiki on me! Then I went to San Juan with Carla and my parents.*

**Journal #5, Friday, June 29:**

*Spend the morning doing a long session of Reiki. Today is going to be a long day although an easy one…
In the afternoon, we attended the 25th wedding anniversary of my second cousin Vanessa.
After that, we traveled to the other side of the island to start my interviews and contacts. My brother Hector greeted us with a lot of enthusiasm. It was around midnight when we arrived. We spent two more hours talking about the research, the type of people I would like to interview and what is going on with him being all the sudden so sick. I offered him a treatment and told him I will give him an attunement in Reiki 1. So he can start healing right a way. We planned to do it the following week.*
Journal #6, Saturday, June 30:

Wake up at 7:00. Hector looked bad. He was very pale and has two black eyes I sense he is very stressed and weak.

Woke up early, I could not sleep because of the heat. Had breakfast and went on the street with my brother Hector. Running errands in PR, what a pain! At noon we went to a botanica\(^\text{10}\) in Carolina to make more contacts about healers. I met two magnificent people Dona Jenny and Don Albert. We also met a real life Babalao\(^\text{11}\) known as "El Negro"\(^\text{12}\), his name is Joe. Jenny invited us in to greed him as ask him if he might be interested in an interview. He indeed agrees to have an interview. He interviewed me first, asking me the purpose of the study. He also warned me that there were procedures the initiated Santero use to treat diseases that he cannot reveal to me unless I get initiated. He also told both my brother and I things about our past, present events in our lives and why and how my health has been the calling I needed it to get to where I am at this point. He warned me that my path was an arduous one because many people do not believe in this practices and mainstream society calls all this "primitive". However, if the Orishas\(^\text{13}\) wanted this to happen it will happen any way.

\(^{10}\)As described by Fernandez-Olmo, (2001) a botanica is a store that sells herbs, candles and images of the saints, they also sell, books, ointments, oils, incense, soaps and specially prepare baths for different purposes such as health, attract money, love, and guard against evil or ones enemies. Botanicas are very popular in Latin America and some parts of the US People from all walks of life come to buy products. In the US, I have seen the Christians, Wicca, Mexican/Aztec practitioners, Voodooist, Yoruba practitioners and Santeros in the same store!

\(^{11}\)Babalao or Babalawo is a High priest in the Santeria Tradition.(Canizares, 1993)

\(^{12}\)If someone in the Caribbean call you Negro or Negra is good omen, even a distinction among the Santeros. (Don Jose, Personal communication)

\(^{13}\)Orishas are the deities of the Yoruba Pantheon, also worshiped in Santeria and Candomble (Moreno-Vega, 2000).
The Babalao told Hector right on the spot -Compadre, you have something in there under your belly, is very small right now, check that out before its spread out all the way and you are dead before the year's end-. 

After we agreed to meet next week, my brother decided to have a consulta with him. Then we pay a visit to Don Carlos, a contact I made six months ago. He was sick today so we agreed to meet Monday.

**Journal #7, Sunday, July 1:**

Woke up at 7:00 AM. I did my Reiki practice so I have the energy I need it for today's activities. I helped clean the house for the *Limpia*. Hector bought utensils and special white clothing for the occasion. However, the Santera never showed up. We waited for her all morning and part of the afternoon. I did yoga with my nephew Hectmil. Our parents came to visit to see how Hector was doing and if I needed a ride. I told them to come tomorrow due to Don Carlos appointment.

**Journal #8, Monday, July 2:**

*Spent the day in Canovanas, My sister-in-law Mildred asked me to accompany her to town. We walked around and I noticed the peculiarities of the town. I went to a small store and bought oils and beauty products hard to find in the States. In the afternoon I agree with my parents to go for Santeria Artifacts. We went to a store called Choices, they sell images, stones, candles and all kind of things from different philosophies of the world. I was quite impressed with the variety and great selections of Chinese, Indian, Japanese and African* 

---

14 As described by Gonzalez-Wippler (1999), Consulta or platica the practitioner uses the hand of Orula, cowrie’s shells, tarot cards or the coconut. They also ask the deities for divine intervention on the task ahead, the consulta could be for counseling or for physical health since the Yoruba tradition believe that spiritual health is linked with the mental and physical. They find solutions to get rid of the root of the problem instead of the symptoms.

15 Arvigo, (2001) and Avila (1998) Describe Limpia o despojos as a ritual Santeros and other Latino Shamans use to spiritually clean a place, house or business. Despojos refers more to a person although I heard practitioners using both terms interchangeably.
artifacts and instruments for anyone to choose from. Then went to Borders book store. It was a pleasant afternoon having my parents along at Borders.

I went back to my appointment with Don Carlos. However, he was actually looking worst than when I left him last Saturday. I decided not to interview him tonight. On my way back to my hometown, I reflected how a healer like Don Carlos looks in such bad shape. Then I decided that sometimes is better no to question the unquestionable. I have to remember that in order to move on in life sometimes one needs sickness in order to see the new path ahead. For some healers and religious leaders sickness brings then closer to enlightenment, for others is just simply that the body is decaying and is time to make the transition to the other side.

Journal #9, Tuesday, July 3:

I spend last night at my Aunt Magdy’s house. To my surprise, my other Aunt Iris lives next door. She recently separated from her husband of 30 years. She told me she could not stand him anymore. I found out he hit her and that he was losing his mind so she decided to move away from him. My cousins are divided by her decision but I supported her for being so brave. We talked. Well, I listened to my Aunt Iris until 2:00 AM. I felt that for the first time in her life Aunt Iris had her own voice and that my way of supporting her was by hearing how she finally realized that after all this years she can finally stand on her two feet. She is an inspiration to me and to others!

Morning:

Coordinating and making more phone calls to schedule other healers in the area.

My mom got word that there are two healers I might find today. However, I have to pay a visit to a relative that I have not seen in years so I can get the addresses. I thought this would be a drag but to my surprise it was not, I found a second
cousin I have not seen in years. She was getting ready to go on vacation. However, she stopped what she was doing to greet us, give us the addresses and a cup of Puerto Rican coffee! She suggested going to the woman in Quebradillas. She even let us make the phone call from her home! We left my cousin’s house at 1:30 PM, grabbed a quick lunch and arrived in the town of Quebradillas around 3:30 PM. Ursula -the natural Pharmacist- and her husband greeted us warmly. I was happy that I was finally interviewing someone since I had no luck during the weekend! I asked her if I could take video and she say "yes but with one condition: you need to respect my plants" So knowing that I was in front of no ordinary woman and from what I learned about the Universal life Energy I respected her wishes and threw the Reiki symbols to her garden as a sign of respect and to let the plans know that my intentions were to honor them as well as their caretaker, Mrs. Ursula Nieves.

The interview went very smoothly and the questions I had set for her were answered in a very natural way almost without me having to ask. My informant and chauffer (Mom) was even more exited that I was of being there. I also know she was excited because I finally got an interview.

The rest of the afternoon, we went back to my hometown (Manati) to interview an eighty-year-old Curandera. Her name is Gladys Galindes. She refused to be interviewed on neither camera nor tape! I tried to take notes the best I could. She also was not as cooperative as Mrs. Nieves was; she told me she belongs to a secret sect that practice Spiritism and African religion. She told us the way she healed people was through communication with the spirits and they communicate
what to do or which herbs to use. She also did santiguo\textsuperscript{16} and correr ventosa\textsuperscript{17} like my grand father did. I told her who my grand father was and she told me she knew who he was. She also talked a couple of terms associated to the Spiritism and Creole Santeria Religion I did not recognize. I took notes of those terms to ask around later. Another observation worth noting was that even if we are in the next millennium there are people who still live like early 20\textsuperscript{th} century lifestyle. This particular healer lives on the outskirts of my hometown by the highway. However, to get to her house one has to park far away and walk a sand trail to her house. She told me that she lived there since 1950's and that she got electricity in the 1980's. Her house is made of wood painted in Red. The site looks like a trip back in time from the post-industrial town I grew up to the sugar cane era my parents grew up.

\textbf{Journal #10, Wednesday, July 4:}

\textit{Morning:}

Since is the Fourth of July there are places that are closed so I decided to take it easy and did more Reiki work on me. Frances (sister in law) children came to see us and I found out one of them Rafael Jr. had an ear infection. Frances asked me to check on him because he was complaining of earache. I sat with him and told him that I will be just checking his ear and then I will be putting my hands over his head and on top of the ear. He asked I if that would hurt and I

\textsuperscript{16}Santiguo or santiguar is special way of massage therapy using alcamphor, eucalyptus, and menthol oils usually in the abdominal area although could be performed in the back or other injuries areas of the body. The santiguo is still performed when there is indigestion, parasites, intestinal problems and gas. After the massage with some special prayers either Christian, Yoruba or both the patience need to drink special herbal tea to allow the "bad food" go to the intestinal track. (Lugo, 2001, personal communication)

\textsuperscript{17}Correr ventosa is special way of getting rid of intestinal gas and also treat muscle spasm in the back. Is done with a penny, small crystal glass and small candle. The practitioner place the small candle on the penny and place on the affected area, then the glass is put on top of the candle and absorb the air to the glass. The practitioner "runs" the glass-candle-penny across the back until the skin is lifted inside the glass leading the glass run towards the outside of the back. This could be a dangerous process due to burning of the candle. Only an experienced practitioner should perform a ventosa on you! (N. Santiago, 2001, personal communication)
responded no, but that just in case I will ask the angels to make sure that there was no pain in any way. As I continue talking to my nephew Rafael I realized that he carries the name of the Archangel of healing. I told my mother and sister-in-law that he carries with him what he needs to get well. I noticed that he looked more at ease and relaxed when I made that comment. We lay him with his head on my lap and invoked the Archangel. The Reiki treatment lasted for around twenty minutes. Then after that, Rafaelito stood up and continued playing the rest of the afternoon as if nothing had happened the night before. Frances was intrigued and got interested in the practice. She wants to joint us Friday for the Reiki 1 attunement.

Afternoon:

I got an appointment to interview Kardec Spiritualist German Lugo. Mr., Lugo happens to be my mother in law’s uncle. He wanted to see me but late at night around 9:00 PM. I personally though it was a little late but my in-laws commented that psychics and spiritualist are like night owls. They usually work at night or do consultations after dark.

Evening:

We went on with the interview. I got more that I bargain for in this interview. First, they offered us coffee, chocolate and traditional crackers. Second to my surprise Mr. Lugo's wife is a Santera follower and knows very well the commonalities and differences of the two systems. Third, my mother-in-law, German's wife Milagros and German started talking and making inquiries about my brother's health without me telling them about it. They even gave me a consulta without me asking them. Uncle G -who we affectingly called- was very precise about my brother's situation and told me that he need it to consult "la
" Mesa" so see how the spirits can help him heal. Mr. Lugo also clarified some of the terms Ms. Galindez mentioned. He also told me that the Kardecian Spiritism is very much alive in this side of the island. In fact, there are a lot of professionals, politicians, and medical doctors who used as an alternative or with modern sciences in their daily life.

**Journal #11, Thursday, July 5:**

Today I interviewed Ramon Reyes, a folk masseurs from Florida, PR. He started massaging people while injured at work. Then became known by his community. Since some of the minor baseball, leagues are sponsored by the different pharmaceuticals in the Island the top executives of the company heard about him and gave him a grant to study massage therapy in the US. He was certified and besides being the official "Company sobador", he became part of the sport medicine team of the AA base ball team sponsor by MERK industries in the Island. After he retired from the company he work full time as masseuse for different baseball teams in the regions and still benefit from the trips the teams made to the US, the Caribbean and the rest of Latin America. He said that players and others prefer him to other massage therapist because he still uses the traditional healer's ways but that he has the modern medicine knowledge to determine what his limits are.

---

18 According to Nunez-Molina (2001) la Mesa is the table Kardec Spiritualist uses to attract the sprits for consultation and to ask for answers. Lugo (2001) describes the white table is compound of three legs. The three legs shows the three forces of the universe neutral, female, and male. (Lugo, 2001 personal communication)
He talks about different cases where he would not touch a person if he suspects fracture and when to go ahead. He was very detailed in the way he proceeded and how many treatments a patient needs. He even demonstrated with a neighbor—a former athlete and customer of Mr. Reyes—about which points to touch and which are not advisable because of an artery or nerves that could be damaged. I got a good impression about Mr. Reyes he obviously knows his craft. I wish that I would tape one of his real life cases so I could really see how he mingles the ancient art of touch with modern sport medicine.

Reflecting back into the interview I think is wonderful that there are people who are acknowledging the Latino way of massaging with modern science. At any point, I did not see this man hesitating or even putting one way over the other as a better one. I feel that we need more people like Mr. Reyes who has the gift and the open mind of serving people using and benefiting from what is out there without prejudice of what is better. I think that this is about what works better at times and how to use the knowledge and practices for the benefit of all!

After the interview, I went to visit my grandparents. I was determined to make sure they both recognized me this time (last time they didn't) I went to my grandpa kissed him, and put the master empowerment symbol on his crown Chakra. When I told him who I was, he recognized me. Then, I went to the bedroom and did the same to grandma. She immediately recognized me. We talked and about my research and how I am interviewing people around. She commented that this

Ramon likes to massage with small strokes.
His recommendations include:
1. Orange leaves to calm the body after a hard day of work or before the massage.
2. For insomnia: four leaves of Llanten star Anis, yerba mora.
3. For insomnia also Ginger with warm milk.
was important knowledge that is dying because people are not documenting or even conserving it. My jaw was so wide open when I heard such eloquence! We were talking for around half an hour. I was thankful to the universe because I have to see a very important person in my life, who recognized me and who encouraged me in such a way! Now, if she dies I will be proud I have to see her one last time and she indeed remembered me. (By the way, Mamami made her transition to the world of the spirits on September 25) *Que Dios te tenga en la Gloria, Amen*

**Journal #12, Friday, July 6:**

I planned today to give the Reiki initiation to my In-laws and my parents so they start to understand the kind of work I do and for their own benefit. I prepared all morning and part of the afternoon. I also meditated and prepared the space. The first to arrive were my parents. I started with the history and the de-mystification about Master Usui and the fact that he never went to the US to investigate about the life of Jesus. I also talked about the different schools of Reiki and how they all look for finding transcendence through self healing and healing others through the Universal life force also known as Ki or Chi. I explained about the attunement process and how this is a unique personal and spiritual experience. This was a wonderful way to connect to my parents, my mother in law and sister-in-law. All of them told me they experienced a great sense of peace.

I personally think that attuning them was a wonderful experience and a sign that my apprenticeship as a healer is officially beginning. For me, looking of alternative Puerto Rican ways of healing as part of my dissertation is the excuse in my long journey to self-realization. I am aware that with a dissertation I am just scratching the surface of a universe where the energy continuum is eternal. After the Reiki Attunements, I travel back to Canovanas for my weekend interviews. I hope I can interview more people. I am getting nervous about not getting enough people to choose from.

**Journal #13 Saturday, July 7:**

Waiting like a paparazzi reporter, Hector got very sick in the botanica, one tire blew; I met "Dona Gladys", a mysterious healer who refused to be interviewed
but healed Hector when I asked her. After a morning of wait, I finally interviewed
Jose Raul, who heals with the elements of nature.

Today was an interesting day! I had scheduled two interviews, one with a Babalao
other with the Santera. The babalao’s wife passed away last night at 3:00 am. He
showed up all dressed up and ready for the interview. He had sunglasses. I could
not believe my eyes when he told me that his wife passed to the next dimension.
We decided to cancel the interview with the Babalao until next week. The other
lady who I was supposed to interview had trouble with high blood pressure that
morning and her children moved her to another house until she recovered. So, my
brother and I were stranded in the botanica for few hours. I felt like a paparazzi
reporter waiting to see what would happen next. I started making conversation
with the owner of the Botanica -Jenny- Then this mysterious lady showed up to
give special treatment to the owner of the building. Jenny asked her if I could
interview her for my research and she emphatically declined with a big NO. She
came to me and told me that she was sorry but that she did not believe in
payment, fame or recognition and that is why she said no. She also told me that
God gave her the gift to heal and that she wants to make sure her abilities stay
with her, for good use. At the time, I noticed that my brother was not looking very
well and that he was feeling suddenly ill. I went to her and asked her if she could
help my brother. She responded, well, yes I will help you because I feel I can trust
you! She indeed gave a santiguo to him and gave him special ointment to put on
his stomach, shoulders, and neck. After the session was over, we asked her how
much we owe you and she again responded nothing! I asked her "would you at
least tell me your name?" She pointed with her fingers full of rings and said
“people call me Dona Gladys that's all I am telling you, bye".
Hector was looking better, so he insisted on waiting to see if another healer
showed up. I wanted to call it a day because it was too hot, and he still was not
looking well. I want to make sure my
informant was healthy so we could go on.
Jenny called another healer in Carolina and we
decided to pay him a visit.
Jose Raul is a medium built male of about 45
years old. He was very courteous and
immediately said yes to our interview. He
noticed my brother and commented, "you guys
are not here only for an interview… he needs a treatment" referring to my brother
Hector. He let me tape his procedures and explained everything in detail. He was
very thorough and methodic in his movements and words. Then we found out he
was a teacher! Jose Raul also invited me to follow him for special rites at the
beach when I come back! I told him that I would. He was very open, honest, and
explicit about the methods he uses. He admitted that he started with the Santeria
tradition and evolved from there using Rosicrucian methodology as well as
shamanism, and knowledge from ancient medicine from Asia, China, and Egypt.
He said that he uses his own instinct and that is how he developed his system of
healing. He as well as others believes that this is a gift from God and that it is his
mission to heal people. He also charges what the person can give and that is how

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some of Jose Raul suggestions included:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Smoothies of Aloe Vera and any citrus juices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Putting “Mata de gallina” herbs in water to drink and clean the digestive system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To eat spinach, carrots and leafy green vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To come back in contact to nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To give thanks for the food we eat. In addition, to thank God for everything we are and do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
he has made friends and has clients who pay for his plane tickets to the US and other places to do healing work as well as divinidation. I was impressed with this healer because he looks like a simple person (no robes, no big images, and no big gismos) just him, and the elements Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water!

Journal #14 Sunday, July 8:

Today I went running errands with my brother Hector and to find other contacts through one of his friends name Jose Crespo. Crespo happens to know many people around Canovanas and adjacent towns. He is also very interested about alternative healing and the connection of spirituality and the body. After picking, him up, things got very interesting.

First, we went in search of the great Rufina who has become a famous healer in the last few years making appearances on TV, radio, and books such as Healing in Puerto Rico by Maria Benedetti. We contacted her son first and he told us she was at her home for sure because it was Sunday and she does not go anywhere. So we ventured for the town of Loiza, very famous for the highest concentration of African descendants on the island, where the drums are played day and night, and where the highest concentration of Santeros, Shamenes, brujas y curanderos is.

My new informant -Crespo- tells me that the town of Loiza is also different because of completely different social phenomena where women go to work outside and men stay at home. There are also parties called Rumbas19 by the

---

19 According to Boggs (1992) Rumba is a musical form originally from Cuba that shares various rhythms and speeds. However, for the people of Loiza Rumba in this case means a party with six drums or more, by the edge of the street or a garage house. (Crespo, 2001, personal communication) The term Rumba is also used to separate a non-religious party to a religious
streets during the weekends. We finally make it to Rufina's home. She was courteous however, she asked me to come later that week. I have the feeling that she did not want to be interviewed and I decided not to press the issue.

We went back to the car and I asked if they knew of anyone else I could interview or schedule for earlier in the week. Crespo told us of another healer known as Josean that he lives right in the middle of Loiza. We decided to try it.

While on the main road to the other side of town, we encounter a Rumba going on. I ask my driver to stop, got the camera and started filming. The drummers were like in trance. The cadence of the drums was inviting. People took turns to dance inside the circle. Men and women of all shapes and sizes participated in the "sacred" rhythms the drums were playing. They were young and old some of them very experienced some of them not as experienced. While I was observing I thanked the heavens for giving me this opportunity to see dance as its purest form of expression. There is no technique, choreographer or dance master that can deny the beauty and mastery of the movements each one of the participants were doing. I felt very tempted in joining in, but I was afraid a stranger like me would not be accepted into the inner circle. When I saw nobody was in the circle I ventured in and decided that if this is meant to be the crowd will let me dance. Otherwise, they will say something. I had nothing to lose. Indeed, I went in and danced in the center of the circle. The space was charged with energy. My heart was pounding very fast. I did not care how I looked; all I cared was how I felt. It felt great. Then a big woman joined me into a "challenge" We ended the dance when the drums ceremony such as "Bembe" which is a celebration for the Orishas with the same drums but in a disclosed location or Santero/a home (Moreno-Vega, 2000).
faded their rhythms. After that I was in a euphoric state! Crespo and Hector were impressed and told me that I was very brave in getting into the circle just like that. After that the rest of the evening went, let’s just say, MY WAY!

Evening:

The evening went even better because we could contact two more healers. One is a Curandero\textsuperscript{20} from the Afro-Boricua and Santeria tradition, the other is a "Califa" high priest from the Orishango-Congo-Candomble Tradition. Since we were in Loiza we decided to pay a visit to Jose Luis Romero (the Afro-Boricua Santero) and He said yes on the spot. He even dressed up and showed us his altar and tools he uses to work on healings. He told us about the different ways he proceeded, the most common ailments -which are from the heart- and the different herbs he used. After the camera was off, we came back to his living room and talked about how society and politics puts down the way of nature. Josean (that is how friends call him all the time) also is a political advocate for the natural resources on the island; he also works for the department of Natural Resources. He informally commented of a need of a book or some source of data gathering that present the Puerto Rican "Santeria" as one that has its particularities, owns herbs and ways of healing and worshiping nature! Mr. Romero was a very articulated and educated young man that impressed me because of his authentic knowledge of the Afro-Puerto Rican ways of healing and his other public life as a social advocate for nature! After the interview, we headed back to Canovanas to talk to another

\textsuperscript{20} Curandero or Curandera is another term used for healer. The Puerto Rican curanderos uses religion as well as herbalism, divinidation, drums and chanting according to their religious background either from the African or Christian traditions.
healer. It was 8:30PM already so I was concerned about the time. My informant - Crespo- told me this person liked to work at night. Therefore, we decided to go ahead and pay a visit. Mr. Garcia receives us with a rather cold shoulder. My two informants decided to play a practical joke on him. They told Mr. Garcia we were looking for donations for a political party he belongs to. He answered “it was too early to be asking for money” In a very serious tone. Then he noticed me and asked who I was. Then Hector and Crespo started laughing saying that the real reason for being here was to get an appointment with him for an interview. He interviews me first. He happened to be the former Hospital director of town. He is now the one who writes grants to seek federal money for health programs, equipments, training and personnel for the area hospitals. We talked about alternative healing and the great impact that it is having in the US. Mr. Garcia's tone and postures changed from cold and distant to more open and friendly. I could tell he was interested. Then I asked him about "the special training he did in Africa" He responded,” Do you really want to know about that?” I said YES! Then, he took a bunch of necklaces from under his t-shirt. Our jaws were wide open! I noticed seashells, tiger teeth, horns, beats, and a pentagram from the Magi tribe that I just happened to carry with me also. Went I saw the talisman I showed to him. He pronounces some words in Yoruba

---

21 According to Gonzalez-Wippler (1998) the Magi Tribe is an ancient mystic religion that traces its symbols back to India. Some believed that two of the wise men belonged to this sect.
language. Stood up left and came back with a round table and four coconuts pieces. He commented that I was sent here by the divinities and that he will help me and gives me any information that is needed. He also commented that this is the right time to spread this kind of information in public forum. "People need to know about this sacred and simple way of living so others can find healing not only of the body but the spirit as well" (Garcia, S. 2001, pre-interview conversation). The meeting ended with the permission and blessing of the African divinities specially Oggun -the deity guardian of metals and war- to get the interview tomorrow Monday at 3:00 PM.

Wow, what a day! We finally left Crespo at his home and returned back to my brother Hector. When his wife Mildred asked us how was everything we both didn't know where to start! We finally summarized everything by saying that even though we could not interview one healer we interviewed another and arranged to interview a second one and as a bonus, we experienced a Rumba dance on the way! Hey, that's the beauty of working in the field. Sometimes unexpected surprises happen!

**Journal #15 Monday, July 9:**

I spent all morning catching up with my journals and preparing for this interview. Mr. Garcia told me that I must show up at 3:00 PM the hour of Oggun (the god of metals and war) by two thirty I was worried because I thought I could not make it. My sister-in-law came with me because I didn't know the address of the Califa. She didn't either so we had to look for Crespo again. We found him around 3:30 by the central square talking with someone. We reminded him of the promise he made us the day before to be on time and he got inside the car. Then, we started to work on a story we would tell Mr. Garcia for being late. We arrived at the house and he looked at each of us, then he pointed to Crespo saying "its all your fault right" So I guess one shouldn't be dishonest with a person who works with the spirits.
This interview was the longest but the most revealing of all. This guy was very generous, he was most knowledgeable and knew lots about healing. Today I finally could understand the "mysteries" of how Yoruba Priests and Priestesses of all the way from Ifa to Vodun, Camdomble, and Santeria heal and counsel others. He explained to me about honoring the Eguns (our ancestors) and honoring the Santos or divinities before starting any consultation, for spiritual or healing purposes. He described the symbols and preparation rituals he uses before each "consultas" and how he determines if the person needs a consulta or not. He uses various systems of divination with the deities. He also told me that he is trained to use two pantheons of divinities; one is the Ocha which most of the Puerto Rican and Cuban Santeria use and the other is the order of Congo which is very similar to the Voodooist Pantheon. He said he has been involved in the religion since he was eight as part of his Arab and African heritage (his father was Arab his mother Afro-Puerto Rican). He was born and raised in New York City and came to the island as an adult. He has been practicing all his life but really got the calling after his forties. Since then, he and his wife have worked together as Kalifaa and Kalifee. Mr. Garcia also told us about three forms of divination he uses. The Ifa Table that priests in the Yoruba tradition uses the shells and two sets of tarots cards. One is the Spanish tarot that a lot of psychics use, and the other Orisha tarot which give divination using the secrets, rituals and divinities of the Yoruba Pantheon. He said that he has to study herbs and oils that can help heal

---

22 I heard is normal for mystic traditions especially in the African and Eastern discipline to become initiated or achieve "mastery after the "middle age" it could be earlier or later but most of the time is between 35-55 years of age.
but that it is really the "Santos" who dictates what is needed and how the healing is prescribed. He uses the divination as tools only. Mr. Garcia commented that he does energy work on himself, meditation and prayer in order to keep his sense of intuition and sensibility to any disturbing energy that he might encounter in him or others. He treats illnesses ranging from cancer to back pain, infertility disorders, and mental diseases. He also knows when surgery is needed for the person to go to an allopathic doctor to be diagnosed.

During the interview, he gave me an example of a consulta about my professional future doing this kind of work. He even told me things about my personal/spiritual life that were presently unfolding these days. The readings on the table showed about how I got my Master Reiki training and the attunements I performed in the island. He also read on his Ifa table how I was one of the people chosen to spread this kind of knowledge in order to open up the new era in which African and Latino ways of healings are presented as part of the rainbow of therapies and healing ways the world can offer. He even read about my new acquired black kitty that just showed up at our doorsteps on May 1. According to Mr. Garcia, he is "one of Eshu-Elegua protectors".

The interview got so long I ran out of videotape and grabbed the cassette player to continue. We ended the interview with him showing us his "Santos" room (he does not have an altar anymore, he has too many images!) and identified every images and artifact he has in there including a cremated dead relative!
With the entire interview I have to say I am very content and honored, I found a healer whom seemed very serious and eager to show me what the "mystery" is about.

**Journal #16 Tuesday, July 10:**

I finally made one contact with the naturopath. She said yes to the interview. I tried to contact "Mano Santa" another healer, but he is still sick. From the looks of things, I am afraid I will not be able to interview him. My in-laws invited me to go with them to the countryside for the day. They probably picked up that I was tired.

*Later that day… I am glad I went to the countryside. I was tired for all the things that happened last weekend so I needed a break, I got a tour of the farm and the beautiful land. It was a breathtaking experience, very peaceful and energizing. Frances and her kids came along with us. We had a great peaceful time. We talked about Reiki and the things one can do while doing self-healing. Frances and Milagros are very interested in learning more about it. I am pleased they are into it.*

**Journal #17 Wednesday, July 11:**

*Making phone contacts. I could not find anybody to interview until tomorrow. Mom and I ran errands, then end up at Rio Hondo and San Patricio Plaza malls.*

**Journal #18 Thursday, July 12:**

Today was a busy day. I spent the Morning with Mirta Martinez, a licensed Naturopath and daughter of the Martinez family, pioneers in Naturopathy in Puerto Rico. During the evening, I interviewed Milagros Ruiz, Santeria practitioner (informal focus interview) with Milagros Lugo, German Lugo - Milagro's uncle at 9:00 pm over hot cocoa and vanilla cookies.
Ms Martinez’s interview was very professional and to the point. She talked about the different things Naturopathy offers specially in a tropical Island like Puerto Rico. "Here in the island it is very easy to be a naturopath because of the variety of fruits and vegetables one can find here", she commented, she also talked about how she learned to diagnose by reading the iris. She gave me a pamphlet that includes at least ten ways to start taking care of one health such as waking up early and going to bed early, drinking lots of water, a balanced vegetarian diet, deep breathing, and thanking the Creator no matter the belief the person has. In summary, she presented the ideal way of having a balanced life by balancing body, mind and spirit.

She also talked about things she learned with her famous parents, how to use mud therapy to heal wounds, stomachaches and other ailments. I thanked her a lot for her time and generosity!

Evening:

I was a little tired already because after the morning interview I went with mom to run some errands. It was hot (as usual) and my energy was running out by five o'clock.

Around 7:30, Milagros called me to see if I will show up. My mother-in-law insisted and offered to drive me there and be by me. I owe her so much. I am sure if she had not insisted I would have canceled.
To my surprise, Milagros was waiting for us with hot coco in one hand and cookies in the other. The food inspired me to set my camera and start rolling. Since she was part of a previous interview with her husband German, I wanted to concentrate on other aspects of Santeria as a religion. I knew I was diverting from my main purpose, which is alternative healing. However, I am very interested in pursuing Santeria as one of the major ways of healing in Puerto Rico and may pursue this as another independent study later on. She was very gracious in telling me what she was allowed to tell me as an outsider about some of the rites and processes used for healing. The focus was more on mental health and how people deal with every day situations such as money problems, relationships, how to succeed in school, and finding a job. In addition, we discussed the fact of how some practitioners are for real and what to look for if one is trying to fool you. She was very generous and told me that in the future we could arrange to meet other Santeros and high priests if I was interested. We finished late at night. I was dead tired but happy because I got two more interviews under my belt!

**Journal #19 Friday, July 13:**

Today I had one of the most waited interviews. I was happy to get the interview although I was worried about Mr. Batista’s health, since he was still sick. I called
before and we had to re-schedule. I woke up at 5:30 so I could be one of the first people to come visit him, since I heard one had to wait. We arrived to Ciales around 7:00AM. The space was empty and there were a couple of other people arriving after us. Mr. Batista's wife came out of the house and told us he was still very sick with bronchitis. My mom persuaded her by saying that we have talked to him over the phone couple of times and that he said that was OK to come since it was for an interview.

She advised us to wait for him until he got ready and had breakfast. I send my parents to the nearby town since they have not had breakfast either. Half an hour later this 6 feet, blue eyes, light blonde sixty-seven-year-old man came to the ranch were I was waiting. Around five other clients were following him even though he was telling them that he was not working today that he only came out to be interviewed by someone. One of them commented that even if he could not lay hands on her she would stay because "his words were equally healing". He started with a prayer. Then told me to turn on the camera, that he was ready for me. That man began talking like a prophet. He mentions the Bible passages and told me his story about how he discovered he had the ability to heal by touching. He said he emulates Jesus Christ and that he heals in his name and the Holy Ghost. He belongs to the Disciples of Christ sect and that every other Saturday he worships here in the ranch. He also commented that the construction I see is because the people who come here to be healed give him money to re-construct the space. Since he believes that he should not earn that for him, he constructed the ranch so people come worship God. Once more, this reveals how real healers
do not charge or wait for anything in return. The way abundance comes to this man is through more blessings and material goods that he shares with others.

Afternoon:
After the interview, I was famished so I asked my parents if we could go eat something. We ate then visited Hector once more. I decided I was too tired to stay with him so I returned to Barceloneta to my in-laws but first I have dinner in one of my favorite restaurants “El metropol”.

Journal #20 Saturday, July 14:
All day in Barceloneta by myself. Carla and my In-laws went out to the west side of the island to a beach. I decided that I was so beat up by the late interviews that I wanted some time alone before I leave back home. So I did a two hour Reiki treatment, slept late, organized videos and notes, watched TV in Spanish, took my time, etc.

Journal #21 Sunday, July 15:
Today as we agreed before we came to my cousin Odette's house in Orocovis. I arrived at her beautiful home around 10:00 AM. She received us in her kitchen talking about what she wants to do next in her life. She just happens to be the first lady of the town. Her plans include to create a resort or center where farmers and other people from different healing and body-mind disciplines could come for conferences, retreats, and later on create a resort area were people could come offer classes in organic farming, healthy cooking, well being, health foods, yoga, massage and the like. She is really thinking big. She asked me for a couple of suggestions. I told her that she needs to check her market and know who will be willing to come to the center of the island to get this service when people in PR are so spoiled by going to San Juan or to the hotels to get the royal treatment. She needs to study all that more in-depth. I encourage her to start by giving seminars
to the people she works with such as the Department of Education and the Universities.

*My cousin hinted to me that I would be a great asset in a business like that one. I openly told her that at this point in my life I needed to finish my immediate goals and then I will think about what will be the next step. I really do not want to get ahead of myself especially now that I am in a crucial point of my career. In my personal opinion, I feel I need to finish my degree, and then I will think about what to do next.*

It was good experience visiting her because the visit was due a long time ago and because it gave me a taste of how alternative healing is viewed in the island.

**Journal #22 Monday, July 16:**

Today Carla and I return to the continental US. My father-in-law planned to be at the airport very early because the new Miss Universe -who happens to be from Puerto Rico- arrived today at 11:00 AM! When we arrived to the airport, I asked the front desk if we could take an earlier flight. We did.

I have mixed feelings about this trip. Many good things happened. My family and relative helped me a lot. I still have an uneasy feeling about my brother. He does not look too good. I hope all the Reiki work and spiritual work with the healers we encounter help him in any level. He was one of my informants on the east coast of the island. I owe him for the many hours he spent looking for people, phone contacts, and traveling with me. We always have been close; however, this is the first time I felt he reached out to me for help as a healer and to find solutions for his own turmoil. I feel fortunate to have my big brother asking me for help. Carla also behaved like an adult. She understood when I had to stay in other cities or places in order to get an earlier interview. She also was very good
at understanding when our plans were interrupted because the priority was to interview or witness a healing. I would leave her with my in-laws, she would just move her head, and saying is OK Ma I know this is for your research. She was also pleasantly surprised when interviews or visits did not happen I would show up at 1:00AM to where she was staying. She will wake up and hugged me like saying good to see you even if you could not make the site!

I am extremely tired from all the running, sun, heat, tension and excitement of the three weeks. Tomorrow I will start my new summer session teaching in Columbus. I do not know if I will be able to do it. All I know is that my students are going to ask me about the trip and my answer is going to be "it was INTENSE"!
APPENDIX F

DISCUSSION OF TWO NON-WESTERN HEALTH TRADITIONS

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE (TCM) AND

MEXICAN CURANDERISMO (MC)
Two Non-Western traditions: Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Mexican Curanderismo (MC).

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Mexican Curanderismo (MC) are the two non-western traditions I have chosen as a backdrop to establish a link between somatics and Puerto Rican Folk Health Practices. They both share assumptions with somatic studies, and also share some of the same philosophical and therapeutic wisdoms. Using both Chinese Medicine and Curanderismo as reference points will help the reader understand ideological and somatic principles that can only be explained within specific cultural contexts. My intention is to present two non-western practices: TMC, which is becoming popular in the United States; and MC, which has always been present in the Americas and is starting to be revised from a critical and post-modern point of view.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TMC):

Traditional Chinese Medicine is a holistic practice that finds its origin in Taoism (Douglas & Ellis, 1992; Young, 2001). The philosophical principles and processes of Chinese medicine promote the maintenance of harmony in all aspects of life.

According to Ergil (1997) the origins of Chinese medicine began around 2900 B.C. Three of the five legendary rulers were said to have associated with the establishment of Chinese medicine. They were, *Fu Xi* (The Ox-tamer), *Shen Nong* (The divine Husband), and *Huang Di* (The yellow emperor). Fu Xi’s contributions to medicine and Chinese culture include the creation of the *Ba Gua* and the *I Jing*, upon which “many
of the principles of medical philosophy were based” (Ergil, 1997, p.281). Shen Nong has also been identified as the legendary author of the first material medica, the Shen Nong Ben Cao, and is also known as the father of Chinese herbalism. However, it was Huang Di, the yellow emperor, who according to legend, compiled most of the material medica that Chinese doctors still use today. The books Simple Questions and Spiritual Axis are part of the legacy the yellow emperor left behind. Simple Questions deals with medical theory such as the principles of yin and yang, the five phases, and the concept of qi.23 Spiritual Axis focuses on techniques such as acupuncture and Moxibustion. The five phase theory, the concepts of yin-yang, and qi are also explained as the fundamentals for diagnosis and treatment.

**Philosophical principles of Chinese Medicine: Five phases, yin-yang, and qi**

Garcia, Sierra, and Balam (1999) present the myth of how the Chinese Universe started with four corners and the Tree of Immortality as the center of the universe. This indicates how Chinese philosophy connects with the natural world. “Chinese cosmology gives us a vision of the tree of immortality standing at the axis of the world -- uniting the earth with the heavens -- and atop the heights an enormous rice plant, symbol of nourishment” (p.3). Human beings are part of the cosmos where nature and humans interact and are “inextricably linked” (p.3). The way the cosmos manifests inside the body is through the five phases, the yin-yang qualities, and the universal energy in and outside the body known as qi.

**The Five Phases:**

23 Some of the authors spell qi as Chi. You will see both spellings as you read this document.
The concept of five phases relates the phases of the seasons and outside environment with what happens to the human body-mind-spirit. Ergil (1997) argues that the five phase theory is used in order to explain imbalances in the universe of the individual who might be experiencing sickness. “Five-phase theory is closely related to Confucian thought in that it is based entirely on definite lines of correspondence into which all things in the universe can be placed. If the proper relationships between these lines of correspondence are maintained, then there is harmony in the universe and health in the body” (Ergil, 1997, p. 292).

Young (2001) presented the five phases theory as part of a natural cycle of life instead of just the actual elements that it portrays. “The five elements are wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. They are more accurately called phases since they describe changes and relationships within and between living things rather than actual substances or elements” (Young, 2001, p.94). Young sees the phases as productive, supportive or counteractive, inhibiting, and destructive depending on how they are used. She also explains that in some cases, there is a mother-child relationship between the phases and the different organs. For example “the liver is the mother who nourishes the heart, the heart the mother of the spleen, the spleen the mother of the lungs, the lungs the mother of the kidneys and the kidneys the mother of the liver, which gives nourishment to the heart and receives nourishment from the kidneys” (p.95).

The complex descriptions and causes of each of the five phases are what give Chinese practitioners, along with other diagnostic tools, a clear picture of the somatic (body-mind-spirit) state of individuals. In 1992, Dougans & Ellis described specific characteristics of the five elements, giving clear understanding of how each of them
functions and what kind of organs, systems, or emotions are affected by each of the elements. They start with the wood element. Wood is related to the spring season where everything grows and comes alive. They compare these elements with a tree and how it relates to human health. “A healthy well rooted person will move effortlessly through the cycles of life. A strong wood element is evident in a flexible approach to life – a person will not become uprooted when confronted by life pressures” (Dougans & Ellis, 1992, p.133). They also add that when the wood element is disrupted there is a sense of being stuck, manifesting itself in tightness in the diaphragm, chest, and throat.

The fire element represents summer, which in turn represents the maturation of fruits and the activation of the growth process. The fire element represents everything that is vibrant and changing. According to Dougans and Ellis, “a person with a strong fire element is caring and capable of great enthusiasm and excitement. A deficiency in the fire element, on the other hand, may show up as a lack of enthusiasm or an inability to generate warmth for others” (Dougans & Ellis, 1992, p.134).

The earth element relates to the late summer season. This element has to do emotionally with roundedness within ourselves. A person with a strong earth element is said to be well integrated and feel at home with him or herself. Incorrect diet affects this element greatly. “Sign of distress in the earth elements manifest in nervousness, instability, disconnectedness, insecurity” (p.135).

Dougans and Ellis add that problems conceiving, sterility, and difficult birth has to do with the fire elements. In Chinese medicine, there is a saying that applies to this concept: “A seed planted in deficient soil will have difficulty taking root, growing, and coming to fruition” (p. 135).
The metal element relates to the autumn season, and represents substance, strength, and structure. In other words, it represents the storage of energy. Dougans and Ellis explain, “a person who is weak in the metal element will be slow and lethargic, will tend towards depression and lowered resistance” (Dougans and Ellis, 1992, p. 135). Inability to control liver and gall bladder function is also a metal element imbalance.

The water element is related to the winter season. The water element refers to the fluidity of the human body, and is ruled by the kidneys, bladder, genitals, urethra, and anus. As Lin (2000) comments, the fluids within the body are very important for maintaining health. Dougans & Ellis agree with Lin that fluids must flow freely for efficient body function. Emotionally, the water element relates to self-confidence, courage, and vitality. She adds that fear is one of the main reasons people’s vital energy gets depleted: “Fear has its place in certain critical situations, but if constant, it has a seriously debilitating effect.” In addition, all kinds of phobias are also related to this element. Dougans and Ellis also argue that sexual and fertility problems arise from the lack of water element. She concludes that “if energy is flowing well, we experience life like the flow of a river; if not, life is experienced like a nightmare, feeling overwhelmed and sinking into despair” (Dougans & Ellis, 1992, p.136). Dougans & Ellis’ holistic model of the five elements includes relationships between the emotional and spiritual sides of illness, and their relationship with the human body.

**Yin-Yang:**

In Chinese cosmology, the Yin and Yang are dualistic dynamic qualities of the universe that are in constant flux. Dougans & Ellis (1992) describe Yin and Yang as forces that constantly interact and change. “Neither can exist in isolation from the other”
Dougans & Ellis also describe the Yin-Yang qualities based on the Taoist principle of medicine where Yin and Yang are two energies influencing the body: “microcosmic energy (Ly-yang), which is the energy of the universe, and the internal energy (chi-yin) which is the energy within the human body” (p.127). Yin and Yang are mutually influencing each other. One example of this is that Yin is constantly influencing the energy of Yang with the potential of becoming Yin and vice versa. That explains the way Chinese see the influences of the outside universe inside the small universe of the body in order to find harmony and balance.

Young (2001) gives some details of how Yin and Yang manifests in the human body. The Yin aspects of the body are described as being passive, contracting, dark, cold, and feminine whereas Yang is active, expanding, light, heat, and masculine. Yin and Yang must work in harmony in order for the body to be healthy (Young, 2001, p.93). Young also explains organ function according to Yin-Yang qualities. The Chinese organize organs into twelve sections inside the body. For each of the twelve organs there is a channel which runs through the body known as a meridian. The meridians are organized into Yin or Yang. Organs that create and store vital essences and fluids are Yin in nature. Organs that receive and transform nutrients and excreting waste are considered Yang in nature. Each organ works closely with each of the others and is seen in a much wider sense than in the west.

Qi or Chi:

Qi, which literally translates as “vapors raising from food,” also has a deeper meaning: “breath, life and that which makes up all tangible matter” (Ergil, 1997, p.294). Young (2001) defines qi as both substance and matter. “This paradox hints at the
indefinable nature of qi -- it is both substance and non-substance, present yet moving, real yet elusive. It can be transformed and it can cause transformation” (p.97). In addition, Chan (2002) describes the concept of qi as the fundamental energy that moves the cosmos. “In the field of Chinese medicine, qi is referred to as the fundamental energy which makes up the living body and supports its vital activities” (p. 27). Chan also presents the paradoxical nature of qi by describing it as psychophysical energy because “qi energy circulates within the interior of the body along the twelve primary meridians and eight extraordinary meridians, while at the same time intermingling with the qi-energy pervasively present in the environment including that of other creatures and humans” (Chan, 2002, p.28).

Lin (2000) furthers this notion of qi as fundamental for life in more physical terms. “When a person is in good health, the chi flows smoothly. When a person is sick, the chi is blocked” (Lin, 2000, p.159) He also mentions that chi can also dissipate to other organs, and points out that the absence of chi indicates death.

Lin explains this foundational idea of how chi flows and circulates through the body when it is activated. “The chi together with the blood circulates in the channels in a definitive order, starting from the Lung channel of han-taiying via other channels to the liver channel of foot-jueyin, and then another cycle begins” (p.160). Lin concludes that chi and blood are the basic nourishment for the living activities of the human body. The chi flows through the body via pathways known as meridians. As I explained above, meridians are energetic pathways that go from head to toe, connecting with the inner organs. According to Young (2001) “the channels carry qi to each of the body’s organs… Stimulating or realizing qi at the acupoints is the basis of acupuncture treatment” (p.99).
The relationships established by the five phases, the Yin-Yang qualities and the concept of qi are the foundational theory upon which diagnoses and treatments are based in Traditional Chinese Medicine. In the next section, the reader will see some of the different diagnostic methods and treatments Traditional Chinese Medicine uses to maintain and restore health.

**TCM Causes of Illnesses:**

Ergil (1997) identifies three categories of causes of illnesses in Chinese medicine. The three categories are: (1) the six external excesses; (2) the seven affects; and (3) other causes that are neither external nor internal. The six major external causes of illness are cold, dryness, dampness, wind, heat, and fire, all of which are classified within the Yin-Yang aspects and characteristics. Young (2001) identifies these causes as holistic:

“Chinese medicine sees a clear link between emotional and physical health. Under normal circumstances, emotions do not lead to disease; however, if an emotion is felt either excessively or very rarely, or arises suddenly, this can lead to disruption of the corresponding inner organ function and eventually to disease” (Young, 2001, p. 101).

The seven affects are joy, anger, anxiety, thought, sorrow, fear, and fright. When these emotions are excessive, persistent, or out of the ordinary, they may disturb the balance of the Yin and Yang and affect the body’s internal organs (Ergil, 1997). According to Garcia et al, (1999) these seven affects are reflected in the human body. For instance, anger is located in the liver, joy in the heart, worry in the spleen, grief and sadness in the lungs, and fear and terror in the kidneys.

The third category, other causes of illness neither internal nor external, includes dietary irregularities, sexual intemperance, taxation fatigue, external injuries, and
parasites. Doctors of Chinese medicine attribute these illness-causing phenomena to the depletion of the body’s chi.

**Diagnostics in Chinese Medicine**

Diagnostics in Chinese medicine consists most commonly of inquiry, listening through pulse, and tongue diagnosis.

The inquiry includes all aspects of the person’s bodily functions and emotions. Listening refers to the practitioner’s observing, hearing, and smelling any abnormalities the patient might have (Ergil, 1997, p.301). After questioning the patient, practitioners of Chinese medicine then proceed to pulse diagnosis.

Pulse diagnosis is performed by placing fingers in the region of the radial artery on the wrist. Different positions and degrees of pressure correspond to different organs to be examined. Young (2001) extensively describes the method of pulse diagnosis, mentioning several factors that could affect the patient’s pulses: “gender, age, activity prior to pulse examination, and even the time of the day are all taken into account” (p.104). She also adds that there is a difference between normal and abnormal pulse. “A normal pulse pattern is smooth, even and strong, and beats four to five times per breath. An abnormal pulse pattern has qualities that reflect internal dysfunction” (Young, 2001, p.105). For an accurate pulse diagnosis, practitioners have to go through considerable practice and gain much experience in order to master this particular skill.

Observation and examination of the tongue is another method of diagnosis in Chinese medicine. Ergil (1997) explains that the practitioner not only examines the tongue, but also looks for other visible signs of illness. “Patient’s demeanor, spirit, complexion and especially tongue are examined” (Ergil, 1997, p.301). However, he
argues tongue examination is very important because the Chinese believe that most illnesses start in the stomach. The tongue diagnosis is done in order to gather information about the condition of certain internal organs and as a preventive measure. “Observation of the tongue will indicate the condition of the inner organs, while the coating gives information about the effect on the organs of the pathogenic factors” (Young, 2001, p.106). By observing the tongue, practitioners can determine certain conditions that might be developing without the patient yet exhibiting any other symptoms. Young argues that examination of the tongue can play an important role in preventing illnesses. “Examination of the tongue can play a role in preventive medicine as changes in the coating often manifest before actual symptoms” (Young, 2001, p.107).

**TCM Therapeutics:**

The therapeutics of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TMC) consist of herbalism, massage, acupuncture in its varying forms, application of cups, Moxibustion, and Chi Kung.

**Herbalism:**

The Chinese have an extensive list of herbs and plants they use with other animals and minerals which are systematized in a book called the *Shen Nong Ben Cao* (Ergil, 1997; Garcia, et. al, 1999; Young, 2001). Each herb is classified according to its nature, taste, use, and effectiveness. The nature of the herb is classified by temperature such as hot, cold, or neutral. For example, warming herbs treat cold conditions while cooling and cold-inducing herbs treat hot conditions. Most of the time, herbs are compiled into medicinal formulas according to their effects and compatibility. The herbs are also
classified by a hierarchy of their effectiveness according to the ancient book *Shen Nong Ben Cao*. In Chinese medicine, there is also a classification of plants according to their function. For example, one herb may be classified as having the ability to clear heat and drain fire. Herbs are also classified by their flavors: the pungent herbs clear and expel, nourishing the tendons; bitter herbs contract and nourish chi; sweet herbs condense, and so on. (Garcia et al., 1997, Young, 2001).

**Massage:**

Chinese massage usually is performed with clothes on. In a typical massage treatment, the client is first made warm and comfortable. Young (2001) describes the process: “Whole body treatment may be given or just local symptomatic treatment – for example, on the neck and shoulders” (p.118). The primary purpose of massage is to stimulate circulation of blood in the capillaries, facilitating movement of the lymph and the cleansing of lymph channels, relaxing tense muscles, and increasing flexibility on muscles and joints. Garcia, et al, (1999) explains that massage also allows the skeleton to find its natural posture, improves and stimulates internal organs, stimulates pressure points, and balance the chi.

Other methods of Chinese massage include the application of fingertips on acupoints of the body and a technique known as cupping, both of which aid the flow of qi in the body.

**Acupuncture and Moxibustion:**

These two techniques have become well recognized throughout the world. The goal of acupuncture is to regulate the qi in the body. The treatment consists of determining where the disharmony is located, then, placing needles in specific meridian
points throughout the body to help move, supplement, and drain the qi from the channels, thereby reestablishing the balance of qi around the body (Ergil, 1997). There are 365 principal points on the basic twelve meridians for the practitioner to choose from according to the diagnosis made.

Moxibustion is another popular practice that consists of burning of the herb *Artemisia vulgaris* on acupuncture points and certain areas of the body. Ergil argues that Moxibustion is used near the skin to affect the movement of the qi (Ergil, 1997).

Knowledge and information about the meridian system and the movement of qi has led to the development of other techniques such as cupping, which consist of sucking air with a glass cup from various acupoints in the body, and the use of intradermal needles or plum blossom needle hammers (Young, 2001).

Twentieth century technology is also helping to prove the existence of the meridian system by recording electrical impulses of the body. Since the 1950s, there have been experiments that have proven the existence of electrical impulses inside the body. Voll and Nakatani were some of the first to systematically record the electrical energy of the human body (Hsieh, 1998). They used electrical probes to measure electrical resistance at points all over the body. They discovered numerous points of low electrical resistance, which connected into specific pathways in the human body. Hsieh (1998) argues that the electrical points found by these two scientists correspond to the meridian system in Chinese Medicine. “The electrical pathways these two men discovered are in almost complete accord with the meridians of traditional Chinese medicine. Moreover, the points of low electrical resistance exactly correspond to the acupuncture points of traditional medicine” (Hsieh, 1998, p.22).
**Chi Kung:**

Chinese energy work is based on Chi Kung practice. Chi means life energy, and Kung means art, work, or practice. Garcia et al. (1999) classify various aspects of Chi Kung into three categories. One of them is Tai Chi Chuan, a series of exercises designed to balance the body and spirit and thus prevent illness. Another method used specifically as a therapy for ill people takes the form of a series of exercises designed to strengthen organs and meridians. The third form is known as external chi healing, and it is performed by a therapist – similar to Japanese Reiki -- with a series of concentration and breathing exercises during which the therapist projects her own energy into her hands and then sweeps them over the patient’s body to stimulate circulation, balance the body energies, and expel pernicious influences.

The practice of Chi Kung, in addition to the other therapies, completes the holistic circle of personal wellness bringing together the three pillars of Chinese medicine and philosophy which are the balance of *chi* (energy), *jing* (essence) and *shen* (spirit) to transform these vital energies into more subtle energy for personal and spiritual growth (Lin, 2000; Young, 2001).

Chan (2002) defends the importance of energetic cultivated practices because such practices are one way humans experience oneness and connect themselves in their personal growth. One of the reasons these practices are encouraged is because eastern traditions generally treat humans’ embodiment (mind-body) as an achievement, rather than an essential relation. The connections of these physical and energetic practices enhance the life energy and the universal consciousness of the individual. “It is believed that through the achieved ideal of self-cultivation, humans can relate to each other, and to
the environment, through accommodation while harmonizing the qi-energy shared between ‘I’ and ‘the other’” (Chan, 2001, p.27). Chi Kung, as well as other therapies, makes this unique system a holistic one which takes care of the body, mind, and spirit in its totality.

**Mexican Curanderismo:**

Avila (1998) defines Mexican Curanderismo (MC) as “an earthy, natural, grounded health-care system that seeks to keep all of the elements of our being in balance” (Avila, 1998, p.19). Originally from the Yucatan peninsula, these practices are now being performed from Central America to the southwestern area of the United States.

The roots of curanderismo are a mix of several philosophies and practices that come from different sources and have evolved for more than five hundred years. Lenniger (1995) explains that Curanderismo originated as a mix of native wisdom and practices, Meso-American spirituality and Spanish beliefs from the Catholic faith. Others, like Arvigo and Epstein (2001) and Garcia, Balam and Sierra (1999), found similarities to Asian practices. Arvigo and Epstein inferred that even before the Europeans set foot in Mesoamerica, the Mayan may have exchanged ideas and practices with traders from the Pacific. “There are remarkable similarities between Mayan and Asian ideas about medicine, some which can be attributed to the Asian origin of the Mayan people. It is also possible that myths, rituals, and concepts from India and China traveled to the islands of the Pacific, and from there to Mesoamerica” (Garcia, et al, 1999 p.23)
However, Avila (1998) argues the roots of MC are a mix of African, European, and native wisdom that started thousands of years before the Spanish colonization and evolved over the last five hundred years to its present form (p.20). Avila explains that after the Spanish conquest, other medical concepts such as the humoral medicine, some of the cold and hot theory, spiritualism, and other practices were adopted by the mestizo populations. Furthermore, millions of African Slaves came to Mexico between 1500 and 1870, “bringing spiritual beliefs and medical practices that were incorporated into curanderismo” (Avila, 1998, p.22).

Despite arguments about MC adopting or already having similar rituals and practices from African or Asian medicine, what I want the reader to understand is the pluralistic notion of colonization. Hundreds of years of trade and, in the new millennium, the concept of globalization, have brought these practices together and formed a unique blend of ideologies that reflect the wisdom of the specific region in the Americas. Furthermore, I want to point out that MC literature reveals concepts most non-western health traditions share that are universal for the holistic maintenance and for the well being of holistic practitioners and patients.

**Philosophical principles of Mexican Curanderismo:**

Garcia et al. (1999) contend that the relation the Mayans have with the cosmos is that every aspect of existence is interconnected. “No individual is isolated from the world; everything one does affects other people, animals, and objects, as well as spirits or supernatural beings” (p.1). According to Avila (1998) the Meso-American ancients believed in four major cosmic energy forces that completed the universe. “The universe is
divided into four quadrants with *Ometeotl*, the sum of all this energy, in the center (p.33). Garcia et al. (1999) add that in the Mayan’s vision of the world, the Ceiba tree is the center and the sacred ground of the universe. This is where the universe starts and expands, giving each corner of the universe a property and a particular quality that is manifested in the natural world. This ancient idea of the Mayan universe, joined with adopted post-colonial values, makes MC a unique blend of holistic practices that perceives humans as part of a world that is not only natural, but also spiritual.

Arvigo & Epstein (2001), Lenniger (1995), and Maduro (1983) have identified various assumptions that form the philosophy behind Curanderismo. They are as follows: *There is no separation of the spiritual and physical realms; there is a reverence to plants and natural cycles; there is life energy or Ch’ulel; mind and body are inseparable; healing is a team process; and energies in the natural world are manifested into hot and cold.*

**There is No separation of the spiritual and physical realms**

In curanderismo, the body-mind-spirit is not separated nor treated separately. “To curanderos the spiritual and physical realms are a continuum separated only by what I imagine as a translucent gossamer veil through which the *H’men* (Mayan term for shaman) has the power to penetrate” (Arvigo et al., 2001, p.7). Arvigo explains that for the healers, the realm of the spirits is part of their reality. According to Arvigo, the spirits are God’s helpers and are a manifestation of the universal energy or Ch’ulel. It is very common to hear about the nine benevolent spirits who help the *H’men* or *J’meen* in their healing.

---

24 The Ceiba tree is considered sacred in various cultures, including Native American culture and other cultures of Latin America, Africa, and India.
Maduro sees this relationship as a holistic one. The natural and supernatural worlds are not distinguishable. This interpretation is not always conscious, but always, to some extent underlies the native thinking (Maduro, 1983). The extension of the supernatural world goes as far as having spiritual deities and guardians that assist healers and shamans in their healings. There is also a god and goddess of healing in the Mayan lore.

“Ix Chel, for instance, is the goddess of medicine, childbirth, weaving, and the moon, the queen of all the goddesses…Itzamna, the male god of healing, is thought to be the consort of Ix Chel. Both Itzamna and Ix Chel wear snakes on their heads, the symbol of medicine” (Arvigo, 2001, p.10).

**There is a reverence to plants and natural cycles**

In Curanderismo there is a reverence to plants and natural cycles. Garcia et al. (1999) explain that the cosmic influence among Mayan healers is to revere and respect nature. Garcia explains that in places where this tradition is still strong, healers pray to plants before treating a person with those plants (p.15). Another example of reverence to nature is the Ceiba tree, which I already indicated in Mayan culture represents the center of the universe and is a very sacred tree in India, Africa, and the Caribbean. The tree is connected to a major source of Ch’ulel (universal energy). Curanderismo also believes that everything that comes from the soil is embedded with energy. “As a result, all that springs from the earth has a soul” (Arvigo et al., 2001, p. 12). Arvigo argues that Mayan healers have a very personal relationship with plants. They talk to them, ask for permission when cutting the plants, etc. For curanderos, “plants are part of the web of healing, and their role is revered” (p.12).
There is a life energy, Ch’ulel or Ool

According to Garcia et al. (1999), the ool or ch’ulel is considered the universal life force in Nahualt, and is translated as “the wind of life.” Garcia explains that the ool or ch’ulel is gathered in the body by way of the breath and is distributed throughout the body in the blood. The ool is concentrated in the heart, but affects the head and also has the job of maintaining the will. Furthermore, the Mayan recognizes this energy force and honors the sacred within all forms of life. “Everything in creation is permeated with what the Mayan call ch’ulel—a vibrant energy force that the Mayan believes emanates from a divine spiritual source. The Mayan sees the entire cosmos as imbued with ch’ulel—houses, mountains, springs, sacred places, the sky, the earth” (Garcia et al, 1999, p.5).

Arvigo (2001) considers the ch’ulel or ool as the equivalents of chi in Chinese medicine. The way the ool is observed through the body is via channels or meridians. In Mayan therapies, chu’lel or ool is recognized by the existence of a series of points on the body that a curandero manipulates through applications of needles or bleeding. According to Mayan lore, if this energy is weakened, the person could be susceptible to countless illnesses including fear (susto) and the evil eye (mal ojo) which are categorized as emotional-spiritual illnesses. (Garcia et al., 1999, p. 34).

Mind and Body are inseparable

According to Maduro (1983), MC acknowledges that there is a connection between the emotional and spiritual state of the patient and the physical manifestation of the illness. An example of this is a disease known in Spanish as bilis. Bilis manifests physically as vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, migraine headache, nightmares, and loss of

---

25 Indigenous language of pre-Colombian Meso-America.
appetite. “On the emotional level, bilis is a rage, a reaction to the systematic stress some Mexican-American and other Latinos face” (Maduro, 1983, p.870).

Garcia et al. (1999) also make connections about the body-mind relationship and the relationship with the environment. According to the Codex Vaticanus, written by sixteenth century Spanish priest Miguel de Sahagun, the Mayans identified particular organs that are susceptible at different times of the year. “The implication is that in each given month, a particular organ will be specifically sensitive, or susceptible to the influence of the gods and the natural world, and thus will be that much more likely to become weakened or ill” (Garcia, et al, 1999, p.23).

These assumptions of relating physical illnesses to emotional, seasonal, and spiritual influences are also seen in other non-western health practices like Traditional Chinese Medicine (TMC), where organs are affected according to the five seasons, the seven affects, and the five elements throughout the year.

**Healing is a team process**

Healing may manifest itself as a team process in the form of prayer, human interaction, or family intervention. Arvigo & Epstein (2001) declare that the healer, patient, plants, and the spirits are an important part of the healing process. “No true healing occurs unless the spirits and plants are included and revered through prayer” (Arvigo & Epstein, 2001, p.15). Like most traditional treatments, prayer is an important element in the healing process. For some of these patients the spiritual and physical are manifested through somatic modes of attention. “Some patients have said that when they receive healing prayers they experience a physical sensation of tremendous energy, a
force they describe as a strong, pushing wind passing through their body. Such is Ch’ulel” (p.16).

Sometimes the interaction of the healer makes the patient feel at ease, allowing the healing to happen in an organic way. Maduro (1983) argues that the way the curandero or curandera behaves is what attracts patients and makes them feel more responsible for their well being, which for lots of non-Anglos is a critical factor in the delivery of health care. “The healer is expected to be warm, friendly and personal… and more attention is paid to a healer’s connection to the sacred” (p.873). Maduro refers to the healer’s involvement as personalismo. This refers to the fact that the healer needs to be actively involved with the patient’s care, not merely asking questions and dispensing treatment. Shaking hands and establishing friendly rapport is also expected from the healer.

Maduro expands the concept of healing as a team process to include instances in which the curandero involves family members to take care of the patient. In such instances of team healing, the responsibility for getting well rests not only with the patient, but also with the family. The emphasis on interdependence is encouraged while the patient is recovering and has to do with the fact that Latino families rely on each other for help (Maduro, 1983, p. 872).

**The theory of Hot and Cold**

According to Arvigo & Epstein (2001), Central American and Caribbean healers believe that quick changes in temperature are the root of many physical ailments. In MC, hot and cold do not refer to temperature only, but also to certain characteristics healers look for while diagnosing.
“When the Mayan use the word cold in a therapeutic setting they mean closed and congested. When the Mayan uses the word hot, they mean open and flowing” (Arvigo & Epstein, 2001, p.18) she explains that cold ailments exhibit chills, cramping, paralysis, or constipation. Hot aliments exhibit fever, diarrhea, vomiting, and boils. According to the ailment and the classification of hot or cold, a plant or remedy that exhibits the opposite properties is prescribed.

Garcia et al. (1999) compared the Mayan hot-cold theory and with the yin-yang theory of traditional Chinese medicine, finding similarities in the conceptual vision of hot-cold, administration of herbs, and other prescriptions that contain the opposite properties in order to achieve balance. For example the principle of Yin-yang, yin is cold and Yang is heat. However, Chinese medicine insists that in yin-yang theory they are both connected and yin is part of yang and vise versa.

For the Mayan the hot-cold theory is part of the actual equilibrium due to internal and external factors. These standards of achieving balance between hot and cold revolve around nutrition, weather, and behavior. For example, when the air is cold this can cause cold conditions such as colds and flu. Water should be taken lukewarm, not cold, in order to avoid chills. Combining hot and cold food can cause twisting of the stomach. Conditions such as pregnancy, drunkenness, and exhaustion are considered hot. Garcia, et. al (1999) mentioned that another duality Curanderismo employs is the concept of dirty and clean. “These conditions apply to the internal organs, which can tend to become ‘dirty’ due the nature of their function and thus provoke illness” (p.27). He adds that in order to clean out dirty organs, infusions of teas believed to have cleaning characteristics are used to reestablish cleanliness in the body.
Causes of Illnesses:

Causes of illnesses are diverse and are interpreted in various ways. Garcia et al. (1999) acknowledge that causes for illness are complex and have to do with the syncretism of cultural systems due to their historical interactions during the conquest era. The diseases are identified by their organic and supernatural causes.

Organic causes are those that relate to imbalances in physical or terrestrial phenomena such as diet, weather, flux of heat and cold, posture, wounds, excess work, injuries, lack of rest, and bad hygiene. Supernatural causes can either result directly from supernatural beings such as gods, saints, and spirits, or can come from influences of the “winds” produced by animals, plants, or objects.

The physical symptoms could be the same but the causes could be different. Garcia argues that “an action that shows lack of respect for familial, common or cosmic law can generate harmful energies in the protagonist” (Garcia, et al, 1999, p.41). According to Garcia, curanderos can find the cause of illnesses because they have an understanding of illness that comes from an intimate relation with the natural world and the social community, a firm understanding of natural and social law, and an intricate understanding of the working of the human body.

According to MC, the main reasons for illness are heat-cold imbalance, digestive and nutritional disorders, posture and movement, injuries, excessive work, contamination, lack of preventive care, weakness, emotional state, involuntary human actions, malicious
intent from other humans who cast spells, and what the Mayan called *los vientos*, which translates as “the winds.”

Diagnostics in Mexican Curanderismo

There are two main categories of diagnostic methods in curanderismo: diagnosis by the patient’s signs and symptoms and diagnosis by divination. The symptomatic diagnosis includes signs of the winds, the rhythm of the *tipe* (viscera), and pulse diagnosis. The divination diagnosis may be through a sastun (*J’meen*/shaman divination prop), an egg, reading the entrails of an animal, kernels of corn, burning copal, reading needles in water, and tarot cards.

**Diagnostics by patient signs and symptoms**

Some herbalists, masseuses, and midwives generally base their diagnoses on the symptoms presented by the patient.

**Pulse diagnosis:**

Pulse diagnosis is one of the most common methods of diagnosis. Arvigo & Epstein (2001) call this process “asking the blood.” They explain, “Mayan believe that the blood contains *ch’ulel*, and they use the blood for both the treatment and diagnosis of physical and spiritual problems” (p.16). The pulse diagnosis is done on the radial artery, and is very similar to the Chinese pulse diagnosis. For example, to identify a hot state, etc.

---

26 The wind is a term used by curanderos to define energetic influences that affects humans somatically. According to some curanderos a physical manifestation of the winds are colds and flu.
Looking for air:

Looking for signs of air or wind is another method of diagnosis used when the patient describes pain in the head and limbs. “The J’meen or masseuse will proceed to perform a series of ‘listening palpations,’ palpating for sounds that will give a clue to the source and type of illnesses” (Garcia et al., 1999, p. 17).

Palpating:

Another way to look for symptoms in patients is to look for the rhythm of the tipe, or viscera. This process is done by palpating the abdomen. Using the thumb, the curandero palpates the two sides of the umbilicus for smoothness or not. Throbbing running toward the right, left, up or down signifies that there is something wrong (Garcia, 1999, p.66).

Divination diagnosis

Sastun:

There are various forms of divinations that Curanderismo uses to diagnose illnesses. One particular form of divination tool comes from the Mayan J’meen known as the sastun. “A sastun is a tool of the Maya healer, a kind of supernatural “hot line” to the spirits that tells a healer if an illness is rooted in natural or spiritual forces” (Arvigo, 1994,p. 183). The sastun is usually spherical and crystal clear. The Shaman/healer places the sastun in front of a flame in order to read the shadow the crystal projects. Through the shadow, the healer is able to determine what kind of illness the patient has.

Egg:

Another method of diagnosis is using an egg to detect an evil wind. The healer recites prayers and mentions the patient’s name in order to determine what is wrong. The
egg is then broken into a glass of water for the healer to interpret what is happening with the patient.

**Reading the entrails of animals:**

Another form of interpretation and diagnosis is performed by reading the entrails of an animal. Healers perform formal rituals singing psalms and prayers while passing the animal and a plant over the patient. Garcia et al. (1999) describes this form of diagnosis in detail. “At the end [of the treatment], after the animal dies because it caught the evil wind’, it is cut open to reveal the entrails. Then, according to what is found in the animal’s entrails, the curandero makes his prognosis” (Garcia, et al, 1999, p.70).

**Reading the corn:**

Using a kernel of corn is another way of diagnosing illnesses. The curandero strips forty grains of the corn from the cob while invoking the gods and reciting the name of the patient. The grains are shaken in the hand and then released. The appearance of the corn, and the way the corns land together--such as in groups of three, seven, or nine--represent different diagnoses.

**Tarot cards:**

Diagnosis by tarot cards, which Garcia refers to as an example of “rituals borrowed from another culture” (Garcia, et al, 1999, p. 72), is done through card reading. The healer calls the name of the patient while shuffling the cards, then the healer interprets according to what the cards tell her.

In most occasions, healers use more than one method of diagnosing an illness.

“On other occasions, it is difficult to distinguish between diagnostic observation and
divination: the two seem to be often combined” (Garcia et al., 1999, p. 68). An example of this combined diagnosis might include a pulse diagnosis and also a consultation of the corns or the entrails of an animal to get an accurate statement of the illness.

**MC Therapeutics:**

There are various therapeutic practices in Curanderismo, from physical ones to spiritual ones. Physical practices include herbalism, massage, body work/bone setting, acupressure and acupuncture, cupping, and the application of poultices and plasters. Emotional and spiritual practices include counseling, energy work, cleansings, dream visions, and rituals. (Arvigo, 1994, 2001; Avila, 1998; Garcia, 1999; Maduro, 1983)

Some of these therapies will be discussed in this section in order to establish a relationship with PRFHP later on.

**Herbalism:**

DeStefano (2001) argues that the three major civilizations of the pre-Columbian era--Aztec, Mayan and Inca--were very sophisticated in all cultural aspects, including healing practices, and particularly in their knowledge of medicinal plants. “The ancient Maya, Aztec, and Inca cultures had developed their own sophisticated systems for using medicinal plants before the Spanish Conquest in the early part of Sixteenth century” (DeStefano, 2001,p.37) Proof of this sophistication is the extensive knowledge of herbalism and medicinal plants.

Documents from the conquest era present evidence of information about plants and medicinal herbs the Meso-Americans cultivated. A book written in the 1600s, *La Historia General de Asuntos de Nueva Espana* (A History of the Affairs of New Spain),
written by Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, documents the existence of 1200 herbs and their uses. Medicinal plants are used in many ways, from treating ailments like indigestion to inducing labor in women to cleansing the aura of a patient. Hot-cold theory is also used in order to achieve balance and harmony in the body. Plants are classified by hot or cold. For example, cold plants grow near water, and their effect on the body is to inhibit illness by increasing the cold element in the body. Plants that are hot are usually dry, heavy, and have a general heating and drying effect on the body (Garcia, et. al, 1999, p.78). Maduro (1983) presents another example of treatment is when a woman has a baby (considered a hot condition), she is instructed not to ingest pork, which is also hot. She should eat cold foods such as cilantro.

**Massage:**

Massage is usually done to calm muscles and tension, or to relocate tendons and bones. Examples of massage therapy include suction in the form of cupping (ventosa) and massage for a pregnant woman before and after delivery to put the uterus back in place. There is also massage in the belly to accommodate cirro (intestinal problems) in conjunction to the administration of herbal tea (similar to the Puerto Rican santiguo). Avila (1998) argues that curanderos use massage not only for the body, but also for the soul. “Curanderos use massage not only to relax the body and the muscles, but to touch the soul, to draw forth and begin to heal emotional and physical pain”. (p.71)

**Acupuncture:**

Mayan acupuncture is also known as tok and Jup. According to Garcia et al. (1999), “these acupuncture techniques are practiced with the spines and thorns of several varieties of plants and several animals” (p.109). There are two ways of practicing
acupuncture. One technique is puncturing on the same spot three times the other is lifting and folding the skin and applying the spine with the other hand. For the Mayan, the point between the eyebrows is the most important point in acupuncture. Garcia points out that the Mayans in Campeche--on the Yucatan peninsula--pierce the point between the eyebrows of small children on Holy Saturday to prevent illnesses and protect them from evil eye (p.111).

Other important acupuncture points are the suprasternal notch (the superior part of the sternum), the shoulder, behind the ear, between the upper lip and the nose, beneath the lower lip, at the hair line on either side of the head, and other parts of the body. The Mayans do not have as many points as the Chinese do. However, the points the Mayans use also happen to be important points for Chinese acupuncture.

**Energy work:**

Mayan energy work consists of incantations and limpias. The incantations are prayers and spells invoking the Mayan gods, which ask permission to cure illnesses and lift evil winds and diseases. The curanderos also use Christian prayers and invocations; it is not uncommon to hear a curandero invoking in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Other invocations call for the four directions of the world. Avila (1998) also adds that curanderos--especially shamans or he-men--perform a shamanic ceremony, known as soul retrieval, which calls the person’s soul back to his or her body.

Cleansing is another type of energy work used in Mayan medicine. Cleansings can be done to expel evil winds, to balance energy, and to restore balance in the thermal conditions of the body. Cleansings can be done with eggs, tobacco, or plants. There is usually a ritual and prayers accompanying the *limpia* (cleansing). Garcia (1999) explains
that some of the cleansing rites are done under the Ceiba tree, which is sacred to the
Mayan and Aztec. (p.135).

**Platica and counseling (consejeria):**

Avila (1998) argues that the most popular roles the curanderos have is the *platica.*
Platica, which means “to converse,” is used by curanderos who mostly perform
counseling. Curanderos give advice on anything the client needs to talk about, such as
shyness, relationships, marital problems, difficulties with children, health problems,
fears, job problems, etc.

The *spiritualista* is a curandero who mainly submits his or her body in trance in
order to contact the spirit world. This is also known as a *medium.* The medium channels
either a particular spirit guide or various spirits. The spirits tell the medium what to do,
where to perform the healing, and what kind of plants, rituals, or actions the clients must
perform in order to get well.

Maduro (1983) argues that the role the curandero performs during the platica is
that of an advocate. The healers act as intercessors of the ancestral family and they help
the patient to understand the nature of illnesses and/or personal events that happen within
a cultural context. “An ill person is not blamed for being ill. Rather he or she is viewed as
having some sort of disruption of internal order” (p.872). During the platicas with the
curandero, the patient is surrounded by unconditional love, care, and support because of
this “no fault” assumption.

Maduro adds that for Latinos, consulting a curandero and having a culturally
related illness identifies them with their ancestral land and people. The illness allows
them to look deeper into their ancestral origins and to reaffirm the values and ideologies of their particular ancestral groups.

**MC Traditional health care practitioners**

In Mexican Curanderismo, there are various specialties and particular ways that curanderos treat patients. As Garcia et al. (1999) point out, “practically all healers know something about herbalism and most of them make an invocation and/or prayer to god and/or other Mayan spirits” (p.139). Garcia also warns us about the tendency westerners have of oversimplifying the practices these practitioners perform. “Researchers often tend to identify the different indigenous medical practitioners with occidental medical specialist, explaining, for example, the herbalist would be the general practitioner, the midwife the gynecologist, the bone setter the trauma specialist, and the curandero the psychiatrist. This analogy is overly reductive and has little bearing in reality” (Garcia et al, 1999, p.139).

Indeed, in reality, these practitioners know something about herbalism, and know how to do limpias, and other practices. Also, in some cases, there is no distinction made between curandero and lay-person. A person could know how to perform what is known as domestic medicine, which is only for his or her family.

Avila (1998) agrees with Garcia that sometimes healers perform more than one health care role. However, she categorizes the traditional health workers into the following:

1. The *hierbero*, who “uses herbs in one way or another, whether as remedies for particular illnesses or in cleansing rituals such as limpias and sweat lodges” (Avila, 1998, p. 69).
2. The *sobadora*, who performs massages in the stomach, in the back, or to accommodate the uterus.

3. The *partera* (mid-wife), who nurtures the physical and emotional state of clients. *Parteras* also extend their services to include visits to the mother and child for nine days after the delivery to take care of their needs.

4. The *consejero*, who gives advice to clients’ problems, is one of the most popular roles the curanderos fulfill. Some *consejeros* are also *spiritualistas* ( mediums).


6. The *curandero total*, a healer who can perform all the practices and employs all four levels of medicine: “education, bodywork, medicine, and sacred tools” (Avila, 1998, p. 84).

Both Garcia et al. (1999) and Avila (1998) identify the same roles curanderos perform; however, Garcia’s researchers also describe an additional role: the traditional role of shaman, also know as *J’meen* or *H’men*. The *J’meen* has an important role in Mayan society. “The social function of the *J’meen* is to maintain equilibrium among the spiritual and the supernatural forces that surround the Mayan community and are manifested on both and individual and collective level” (Garcia et al., 1999, p. 142). Garcia argues that in traditional Mayan healing the others healers might choose the personal practice via apprenticeship or learn from a parent or relative in the *J’meen* case “it might happen at birth, in strike of lightning bolt or other natural sign or it might be revealed in a dream” (p.143).
The way a curandero is formed varies from person to person. Sometimes a lay person “might take up further study, develop a more extensive practice, and learn from other curanderos until they become known as healers among their community” (Garcia et al., 1999, p. 140).

Garcia points out that there is no formal training for the curandero. “There is no school which organizes a curriculum of study and certifies that a healer indeed is a healer” (p.140). He also comments that curanderos do not charge their patients unless it is necessary, and when it is necessary, they charge a modest fee that can be paid in other ways besides money.
REFERENCES


251


Community healing among Puerto Ricans: Espiritismo as a therapy for the soul in Fernandez-Olmo, M. & Paravisini I. (Eds.), Healing cultures: Art and religion as curative practices in the Caribbean and its diaspora. New York: PALGRAVE.


