THE IMPACT OF MINORITY FAITH ON THE EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: THE PERSPECTIVES OF DEVOTEES OF EARTH RELIGIONS

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY **ALISON NIBLICK** ENTITLED **THE IMPACT OF MINORITY FAITH ON THE EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: THE PERSPECTIVES OF DEVOTEES OF EARTH RELIGION** BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY.

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Abstract

In response to an identified need in the psychological literature for research on minority religion, especially earth-centered religion, this dissertation was developed to 1) present an overview of the three main branches of contemporary earth religion, 2) illuminate the realities of minority religious identity in the United States of America, 3) collect data regarding the demographic and identity variables of devotees of earth centered religion, and 4) solicit feedback from the earth religious community regarding its understanding of psychological distress, preferred ways of coping with distress, and perceptions and experiences of professional mental health services. A total of 64 self-identified devotees of earth-centered faith completed an online questionnaire about their identity variables, experiences of psychological distress, ways of understanding distress, and experiences, perceptions, and fears pertaining to mental health services. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based upon a literature review and consultation of the National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology's developmental achievement levels in diversity. Descriptive and statistical findings pertaining to this religious population are detailed. Additionally, clinical and research implications of the results, as well as limitations and strengths of the current study are identified and discussed.

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The Impact of Minority Faith on the Experience of Mental Health Services: The Perspectives of Devotees of Earth Religions

Earth-centered religions are minority faiths due to both their lack of acceptance by majority culture and by their small number of practitioners. However, they are a significant minority, as research suggests that 6% of the world practices some form of Paganism or earth- centered religion (York, 2003). For the purpose of this paper, Paganism and similar earth-centered religious practices are defined as the "belief in a plurality of male and female gods, [the] efficacy of magic and ritual, the body and nature as mediums of sacred power, and a shared universe in which gods and humans are mutually interdependent" (York, 2003). Due to their minority status, many practitioners of earth- centered religions tend to be cautious when sharing their religious views with others, especially those in positions of power or authority (Yardley, 2008). Moreover, many devotees of earth religions have some fear or uneasiness regarding the possibility of political and/or legal persecution. Study of the age during which those accused of witchcraft were tortured and burned at the stake or executed by other means in the name of Christianity led a prominent author in the field of Pagan studies to wonder if "The Burning Times" might return (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Practitioners of European-based earth religions also know that the names they call themselves, such as Pagan, Witch, Wiccan, or Druid, might be considered eccentric at best, or threatening to others at worst. Similarly, practitioners of Native American spirituality and African diaspora faiths also know that their faith and the labels associated

with their faith might be considered eccentric at best, or dangerous and threatening to others at worst. Individuals in these religious groups fear for their own safety, or for the safety of their family or fellow devotees of earth religions. Subsequently, many devotees choose to keep their religious beliefs secret—a practice that has been nicknamed staying or being in "the broom closet". In contrast, others may be open about their beliefs in some situations, but secretive in others (Barner-Barry, 2005). When children are involved, earth religious parents may be extra-vigilant, as some have suffered religious discrimination at the hands of the American legal system, and subsequently, have lost custody of their children, or had them temporarily removed from their homes (Cookson, 1997). In most cases, misrepresentations of the parents' religious practices were used to justify suspension of their custodial rights.

Some may wonder how the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which asserts that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise of religion (U.S. Constitution) factors into this seeming infringement upon freedom of religion. At the time when the Constitution was written, most United States inhabitants considered citizens practiced Protestant Christianity, therefore, the United States was considered a predominantly Christian country. Neither Native Americans nor enslaved Africans were considered citizens of the United States at the time, subsequently, their religious practices were not protected by the Constitution. The Establishment Clause, cited above, was intended to keep one *Christian* sect from gaining the exclusive support of the government (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Until recent decades, Christianity has been the normative religion of the United States and the United States government. In fact, one might even venture to say that it has

been the established religion of the United States. Subsequently, a belief in the Christian-Judeo God and adherence to Christian religious practices has become conflated with American identity and citizenship. This is especially troublesome, as current immigration patterns and the religious malleability of many contemporary United States citizens suggest that the United States may not remain a predominantly Christian nation in population-terms (Barner-Barry, 2005).

There is a significant dearth of peer-reviewed literature available regarding earth religions, and many helping professionals freely admit to having little to no familiarity with the beliefs of earth- centered faiths. This dearth is of particular concern for psychologists in Australia, Canada, some regions of the Caribbean such as Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil, Europe, and the United States, just to name a few, as research suggests that the number of practitioners of earth- centered religions in these countries is rapidly growing. In fact, some researchers suggest that the number of practitioners of earth-centered religions doubles in size approximately every eighteen months (Robinson, 2009). Some attribute this unprecedented increase to the desire of individuals of African, European, and Native American descent to honor and learn more about their ancestral heritage. Additionally, the recent rise in practitioners of earth- centered spirituality has also been attributed to the paternalism, sexism, homophobia, and insensitivity to the earth which characterizes some of the conservative wings of popular organized religions (Robinson, 2009). In order to better comprehend how the tenets and values of earth-centered religion may alter the approach of clinicians' working with devotees of earth religion, several forms of earth- centered spirituality, including Native American

religious traditions, Yoruban and Dahomey African diaspora faiths, and European and American Paganism are explored.

Aim and Purpose

Most societies, American included, express a preference for cultural homogeneity through racism, ethnocentrism, religious discrimination, and other principles of exclusion. In a society as racially, ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse as the United States, difficulties are bound to arise when this desire for cultural homogeneity is expressed (Green, 1999). These difficulties are especially concerning when members of the majority culture are responsible for providing necessary services, such as mental health services, to culturally heterogeneous individuals. Subsequently, proponents of culturally competent psychological care assert that these services can and should be provided to individuals in ways that are both culturally acceptable to them and that enhance their sense of cultural group membership and power (Green, 1999).

Research suggests that minor daily stressors have direct effects on emotional and physical functioning, and also accumulate over a series of time to create persistent irritations, frustrations, and overloads that can result in more serious stress reactions such as anxiety and depression (Lazarus, 1999; Zautra, 2003). Furthermore, research conducted on dominant groups suggest that common forms of daily stress that can crescendo into more significant psychological distress include interpersonal tensions, representing arguments or avoided arguments (e.g., disagreement with a co-worker over an issue at work); *overloads*, representing having too much to do and not enough time to do it (e.g., unexpectedly having to babysit for a grandchild); and *network events*,

representing events where something happens to a close friend or relative that turns out to be stressful for the individual (e.g., a family member is hospitalized) (Almeida, Stawski, & Cichy, 2010). What is unclear, however, is if these common sources of daily stress that can have long-term impacts on mental health and wellbeing are similar across cultural and religious groups. In short, is our current understanding of daily stress and its relationship with psychological distress culturally competent?

Cultural competence in the diversity domain of spirituality and religiosity is especially important for mental health practitioners, as spirituality and religiosity have been found to impact mental health and perceptions of distress in clinically and statistically significant ways. Overall, clinical literature suggests that spirituality is a major factor in promoting health and wellbeing (Reimer, 1999; Dana, 1993). Additionally, research has also suggested that spirituality can be a protective factor against suicide and alcoholism, especially among Native American populations (Stack, 1983; Moss, Edwards, Edwards, Janzen, & Howell, 1985). Also among Native Americans, specifically the Inupiat, spirituality has been found to be a source of pride and strength, and a helpful aid when coping with stressful situations (Reimer, 2002).

Research with undergraduate students suggests that common ways of coping with stressful events include problem focused coping (e.g. coping by attempting to resolve the stressor), wishful thinking (e.g. hoping a miracle will happen, wishing that the situation would go away), and distancing or detachment (e.g. pretending as if nothing happened, trying to forget the stressor) (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Other common methods of coping identified by the researchers include seeking social support (e.g. talking to someone), emphasizing the positive (e.g. looking for the "silver lining" in the situation),

self-blame (e.g. self-criticism or lecture), tension reduction (e.g. rest, meditation, exercise, etc.), and self-isolation (e.g. avoiding others, keeping feelings to self) (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Interestingly, the researchers in the above study included prayer within the category of social support.

However, problems can arise when the values, worldviews, and constructs of clinical psychology, including the constructs of stress and coping, are exported to and transposed upon disempowered groups. Clinical psychology is heavily influenced by "Western," white, sexist, ableist, and heterosexist thought, thus, it may not adequately capture the experience of individuals who are not "Western," male, able-bodied, heterosexual, or otherwise socio-politically privileged. Though the exportation and transposition of Western psychological values and constructs is usually motivated by beneficent intentions, it can result in the failure to recognize and accurately treat another culture's indigenous psychological distress, the misdiagnosis of something culturally normative as "abnormal," and even the spread of "Western" mental illnesses to cultures where they were previously unknown (Watters, 2010). Moreover, the exportation of psychological constructs is also antithetical to the concept of social justice, or providing underserved populations with the opportunity to explain their own worldview, and what they believe they need.

Thus, the purpose of this text is to understand the worldviews and values of Native American, Yoruban and Dahomey African diaspora, and European/American earth- centered religions through a review of existing literature. Specifically, attention will be paid to aspects of religious worldview that are relevant to clinical psychology: for example, perspectives on suffering, healing, and community and social roles. Then, a

survey was developed centered upon this understanding, and was used to gather information regarding this population's:

- Perception of mental health services,
- Ability to access mental health services
- Beliefs about the acceptability of seeking services, and
- Subjective experience of the impact of their faith upon their experience in therapy.

Finally, data collected from survey was used to highlight:

- This population's indigenous and preferred methods of healing,
- How mental health services can be shaped in a way that is therapeutically meaningful for this population, and
- How clinical psychology can strive towards cultural competence with this population.

In the interest of transparency, accountability, and diversity competence in research, the researcher collecting the above data and authoring this text identifies as a white Pagan bisexual woman in her mid-20s who has multiple invisible disabilities, and was born and raised in the United States of America in middle to lower-middle socioeconomic households. Subsequently, this text is informed by these comprehensions of reality or worldviews.

Literature Review

Basic Tenets of Earth Religion

For the purposes of this study, earth- centered spirituality is defined as the "belief in a plurality of male and female gods, [the] efficacy of magic and ritual, the body and nature as mediums of sacred power, and a shared universe in which gods and humans are mutually interdependent" (York, 2003). Though numerous individual variations exist, most earth religions have basic conceptualizations of divinity, ethics and values, and religious rituals that share overarching similarities. For the purposes of this text, self-identified practitioners of Paganism or Neopaganism are referred to as devotees of European/American Paganism. Self-identified devotees of Candomblé or Umbanda as well as self-identified devotees of Santería, Lucumi, and Ifa are referred to as devotees of Yoruban African diaspora religion. Self-identified devotees of Vodou are referred to as devotees of Dahomey African diaspora religion, while devotees of Native American and aboriginal spirituality, as well as devotees of other earth religions are referred to in the same manner as previously and as they identified themselves. This terminology is intended to simplify and clarify the discussion of various types of earth-centered faith by combining groups based upon geographic and cultural origin and similarity. Additionally, these geographically and culturally similar groups of religions are similar enough to one another to warrant combination through a broader descriptive term.

The two groups combined under the term Yoruban African diaspora religion (Santería/Lucumi, Ifa, and Candomblé) differ primarily in terms of language of devotees

(Spanish v. Portuguese), as well as geographical region of primary practice (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Florida, and some other US states v. Brazil). Similarly, self-identified practitioners of (Neo)Paganism warrant the term of devotees of European and European-American Paganism due to the common European cultural and linguistic influence in the religion, as well as the current geographic concentration of (Neo)Pagans in Europe and the United States.

Conceptualization of divinity. Earth- centered religions generally conceptualize the divine in both feminine and masculine terms, and consider both divine and human feminine characteristics and principles to be at least as important as masculine characteristics and principles. Practitioners of earth- centered spiritualities differ from followers of more mainstream religions in that they usually conceptualize divinity in a polytheistic (belief in many deities) rather than monotheistic (belief in one deity) manner. Subsequently, even when majority culture attempts to discuss earth- centered spirituality in general terms, its use of the term "God" is a specific, denominational reference. "God", in the commonly understood sense, is a personal, male deity—worshipped by monotheistic faiths such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity (Yardley, 2008). Therefore, "nondenominational", nonspecific discussions of religion between devotees of earth religion and members of majority culture can elicit feelings of exclusion and marginalization for Pagans and other practitioners of earth- centered religions. Finally, practitioners of earth- centered religions have no supernatural being in their pantheon of deities who resembles the devil or Satan figure found in Christianity and Islam (Robinson, 2009).

Many devotees of earth religion also conceptualize the divine immediately and primarily as the earth. This deification of the earth means that all living and nonliving parts of the earth are sacred (Barner-Barry, 2005). In most earth-centered traditions, the divine is not transcendent, as God is in the Christian tradition. Rather, divinity is immanent equally in a person, a bird, a tree, a stream, or a stone. Subsequently, humans, other animals, plants, and all earth components usually thought of as nonliving are understood as sacred in the earth religious worldview (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Reverence for the earth and life. Unsurprisingly, earth- centered religions place a strong emphasis upon preservation of and reverence for the environment. In most earth-centered spiritual worldviews, all living things (including humans, animals, plants, rocks, stars, and planets) are considered sacred, and may also be regarded as having a spirit. Many practitioners of these faiths honor the passage of the seasons, and may view the solstices, equinoxes, full and new moons as holy days. Devotees of earth- centered spiritualities usually attempt to meet and hold religious rites out of doors whenever possible. Overall, practitioners of earth- centered religions tend to express a great deal of concern for the environment, and may hold religious ceremonies or rituals to bring harmony and healing to nature (Robinson, 2009, & 2004).

Additionally, at the center of earth- centered religious consciousness is earthly life, procreation, the passing of the phases of life, and the changing of the seasons (which are conceptually and religiously correlated in some traditions). This sanctification of life is not the concept that energizes the "right to life" movement; rather, it is more broad and subtle. Therefore, the central value of earth-centered spirituality is not some absolute

"right to life" for human beings, but the celebration of life in all of its diversity—human and nonhuman. (Barner-Barry, 2005)

Religious rituals. Like most faiths, earth- centered spiritual traditions have their own religious rituals, or spiritual works guided by the culture's symbolic reality. Though there are numerous variations from tradition to tradition, many earth centered -religious rituals are centered around initiation into the religious tradition; rites of passage such as menarche, entrance into adulthood, childbirth, etc.; the healing of mind, body, spirit, and community; the celebration of religious holidays, which sometimes include the full and new moons, days sacred to particular god(dess)es and saints, and some combination of the solstices, equinoxes, and cross-points between each.

Shared Impact of Social Location

Minority religious identity in America. Sigel (2001) delineated identity as an individual's self-concept; what (s)he regards as essential to the nature of human beings is viewed as a self-portrait that is internal, subjective, psychological, and normative More succinctly, one can understand identity as "I, the we, and the not-we'" (Sigel, 2001). The "we" of Sigel's deconstruction of identity can also be understood as one's social identity, which Brewer suggested are comprised of four important aspects (2001). One's social identity, therefore, is comprised of (1) one's sense of self and the meaning derived from that sense of self; (2) one's self *in relation* to others—i.e., one's perception of self as a "certain kind" of person; (3) one's perception of self as an integral or interchangeable part of a larger group or social unit; and (4) one's collective group identity, or shared representations of one's group based upon common interests and experiences; which may

also be actively shaped by the group in order to forge an image of what the group stands for and how it wishes to be viewed by others (Brewer, 2001).

Devotees of earth- centered religion are members of cultural and numerical minorities in most of North America, Latin America, and Europe. Subsequently, both their individual religious identities and all aspects of their social religious identities denote them as members of a minority that is often misunderstood, disrespected, and/or feared. Barner-Barry writes,

> At best, to [practice earth religion] is to have your religion poorly understood or misunderstood completely. At worst, it may mean that you have to be secretive about your religion and your religious practices. This means being very careful about revealing or being honest about one of the most primordial aspects of one's identity. It also tends to engender a consciousness that others, those in more traditional religions, are socially rewarded for being open and honest about their religious beliefs. Comparisons are inevitable (2005).

For some practitioners of earth- centered religion, (especially European/American Pagans,) the "choice" to become a devotee of earth religion involves a separation from one's "inherited religion." Though an increasing number of children have been born to Pagan parents in past decades, many Pagans are born into traditionally religious families, and become Pagan after an intense period of religious searching (Barner-Barry, 2005). In such cases, the devotee is not only adopting a minority religious identity, (s)he is also relinquishing the majority identity into which (s)he was born.

Moreover, an individual's choice to embrace a minority religion by becoming a devotee of earth religion forever changes that individual's relationships with both those

inside and those outside of the religious tradition. Openly departing from one's inherited religion often causes others to accuse devotees of earth- centered religion of "rebelling" or "acting out" against their family's religion, or against particular family members who encouraged or enforced the practice of that religion. While there may be some truth to these accusations in the minority of cases, research suggests that more often, it is an expression of the fact that one's family's religion was not the best one for that individual, and that the search for religious authenticity has led that individual elsewhere (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Unfortunately, the impact of a minority religious identity is not limited to the family and personal domain. For example, imagine an American citizen has said the Pledge of Allegiance countless times, not thinking much about the statement 'under God.' Then suppose that same person becomes a devotee of earth religion, specifically an Isian, or an individual who worships the goddess Isis. Suddenly, the phrase "under God" marks that individual as "other," not wholly American, because the God referred to is clearly the Judeo-Christian God, not Isis (Barner-Barry, 2005). Moreover, should the Isian in question relay her/his concerns to others, (s)he is likely to be told by others that invoking (the Judeo-Christian) God is central to American identity and traditions. This individual will likely perceive that, where devotion to God may lead to acceptance, devotion to Isis results in having one's beliefs trivialized and having the political system into which (s)he was born view Isians as outsiders (Barner-Barry, 2005).

This sense of other and outside-ness was reinforced in 2004 when the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously struck down a circuit court opinion that had called for the removing of the phrase "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance (Elk Grove Unified

School District v. Newdow, 2004). Subsequently, members of many minority religions, including earth- centered religions, continue to be forced to pledge their allegiance to their country in a way that forces them to acknowledge a god other than their own, and that defines them as member of an out-group. When the Supreme Court ruling supported the inclusion of the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, religious leaders from diverse traditions released a statement calling for the removal of the phrase, noting that this would merely return the Pledge to the way it was said before the 1954 addition of "under God," which was intended to distinguish a *Christian* United States from a *"godless"* Soviet Union" (Barner-Barry, 2005). Moreover, at the time of the ruling, many politicians and news commentators characterized the opposition to the inclusion of the phrase as silly or unimportant. However, some argue that this position trivializes both minority and majority religious identities, and also detracts from the gravity of the Pledge of Allegiance (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Minority religious identity and Christian privilege. In the early 1800s, Supreme Court Justice Story asserted that it was the duty of the American government to foster and encourage Christianity (i.e. Protestantism) among United States citizens. This perception of duty led to the creation of a body of statutes and common law that reflected a mission to convert not only nonbelievers, but also those of other Christian traditions (most notably Roman Catholic), as well as Native Americans. Though the law did not provide any specific guidelines at the time, it was also assumed that slave "owners" would convert enslaved Africans to Protestant Christianity. Subsequently, over the centuries, Protestantism became the quintessentially American religion, and gave its followers a sense of entitlement. Eventually, the idea that being a Christian was part of

the tradition of being a "real" American became firmly entrenched in the minds of most Americans—resulting in today's Christian privilege in United States society (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Duncan (2003) neatly summarized privilege as that which has been used historically and currently for the primary purpose of defining and criticizing the advantages that persons acquire as a result of individuals whose ideals and interests mirror their own being in positions of power. Subsequently, in the United States and numerous countries throughout the world, those who practice Christianity are clearly privileged. Duncan continues, "despite a constitutional guarantee that the government of the United States will be faceless when concerning religion, a system has developed that has absorbed Christian practice at every turn…[and] Christians, including myself, have been blind to the privilege we have experienced" (2003).

Moreover, privilege can be conceptualized by two elements. First, the societal norm is defined by characteristics of the privileged group—often in a manner that benefits the privileged group. Second, privileged group members do not experience oppression based upon the diversity variable in which they are privileged, and can choose whether or not they wish to object to the oppression of others (Wildman, 1995). However, this does not imply that members of privileged groups are inherently wicked or bad. Because the societal norm is defined by characteristics of the privileged group, privilege is rarely seen by the holder of that privilege. Nonetheless, silence plays an important role in privilege, as what is not spoken is never talked about, which results in maintenance of the status quo (Wildman, 1995). In the case of Christian, or majority religious privilege, in addition to the silence of those who do not realize that they are

privileged, there is the silence of those who "believe that their privileges of being in a better-treated class are actually affirmative rights guaranteed by the government and by God" (Barner-Barry, 2005). Finally, though silence plays an important role in the maintenance of the status quo, the silence of minority religions in regard to their own oppression should not be interpreted as consent to oppressive acts of the majority. Rather, this silence would better be attributed to the negative consequences of speaking out (Barner-Barry, 2005).

In some cases, those in power may earnestly believe that they have the right to mold others based upon *their* conceptualization of what is normal, and may be unable or unwilling to recognize the rights of the disempowered. This belief in one's own superiority and lack of objectivity has informed the construction of the United States legal system, and in many cases, allowed Christian privilege to continue (Duncan, 2003). As anthropology professor Sally E. Merry observed, "law not only constructs authoritative visions of the social world, but also exerts force behind these interpretations. It not only establishes one way of construing events but silences others, thus channeling and determining the outcome of legal proceedings" (1992). Barner-Barry suggests that both the attempt to impose religious conformity as well as the actual suppression of religious nonconformity arise from the idea that there is only one basic religious orientation that is good, right, and true (2005). Similarly, Post (2003) asserts that law is commonly understood as enforcing the following senses of the community (which most people are thought to entertain): decency, propriety, morality, and common sense.

The minority/majority religious dynamic is heavily influenced by the terms that are used to describe each side's position. Those who oppose strict separation of

(Christian) church and state often refer to their opponents as "irreligious", "against religion," or worse. Similarly, they also refer to cases wherein Christianity and politics intersect as "traditional" or "secular" (Sherry, 1998). Furthermore, though most governmental religious expressions carefully restrict themselves to "secular," nondenominational invocations of "God" solely, (rather than Jesus Christ, or other sacred Christian figures,) it is clear to all that the "God" invoked is Judeo-Christian (Barner-Barry, 2005). However, Warren poignantly asks if "any respectful mention of God or Jesus ever be truly secular? Why would Christians want it to be? When does God stop being the central deity in their worship and become a social choice? And, if God is a social choice, is religious piety mere conformity with a social norm?" (2003).

While most Christians would not evangelize or approach conversion in a harsh or punitive manner, they give Christian privilege and federal "evangelizing" tacit support and encouragement when they remain silent and permit the expression of Christian ethnocentrism in many governmental practices (Barner-Barry, 2005). A mild example of this phenomenon can be seen in recent legislation regarding the Ohio state motto, "With God, All Things Are Possible." The American Civil Liberty Union contested the constitutionality of the motto in the 2001 court case ACLU v. Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board. The court ruled that the motto did not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, so long as it did not attribute the words to their source in the New Testament's Book of Matthew, Chapter 19 Verse 26 (Barner-Barry, 2005).

A more vitriolic example of this phenomenon can be seen in the 1992 Hiaheah City Council deliberations that resulted in a law that prevented Santeríans from building a house of worship in Hiaheah, Florida. During these deliberations, a city council official

stated that Santería "[is] in violation of everything this country stands for." The Hiaheah City Council debated "what the Bible allows," and the Police Department chaplain stated on record, "We need to be helping people and sharing with them the truth that is found in Jesus Christ…I would exhort you not to permit this church to exist." (Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. Hiaheah). Though the case was eventually taken to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, this case clearly demonstrated Christian ethnocentrism and privilege in United States government (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Minority religious identity and ceremonial deism. Former Yale Law School Dean Walter Rostow is credited with creating the term "ceremonial deism" in 1962. Ceremonial deism was defined as public religious activities that were (according to Rostow) so traditional and uncontroversial that they did not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment (Epstein, 1996), which states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (U.S. Constitution). Epstein also asserted that ceremonial deistic practices involve the invocation of "God" (and sometimes Jesus) in connection with governmentally sponsored practices that are "symbolic, or ritualistic," including "prayer, invocation, benediction, supplication, appeal, reverent reference to, or embrace of, a general or particular deity" (1993). These symbolic or ritualistic practices are "created, delivered, sponsored, or encouraged by government officials…during governmental functions or ceremonies, in the form of patriotic expressions, or associated with holiday observances." "In and of themselves…[they are] unlikely to indoctrinate or proselytize their audience" and are not "specifically designed to accommodate the free religious exercise of a particular group of

citizens" (Epstein, 1996). Moreover, most ceremonial deistic practices are "deeply rooted in the nation's history and traditions" (Epstein, 1996).

Epstein continues his exploration of ceremonial deism, and documented the following practices as exemplifications of governmental ceremonial deism in the United States:

1) Legislative prayers and prayer rooms
2) Prayers at presidential inaugurations
3) Presidential addresses invoking the name of God
4) The invocation "God save the United States and this Honorable Court" prior to judicial proceedings
5) Oaths of public officers, court witnesses, and jurors and the use of the Bible to administer such oaths
6) The use of "in the year of our Lord" to date public documents
7) Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays
8) The National Day of Prayer
9) The addition of the words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance
10) The national motto of "In God We Trust."

Moreover, after a thorough investigation of each example, Epstein concludes that all but one of these examples (presidential addresses invoking the name of God) are in violation of the Establishment Clause as it is normally interpreted by the Supreme Court. Presidential invocations of God were considered constitutional, as it is very difficult to legally draw a line between the individual and the office when the President speaks (Epstein, 1996).

Proponents of ceremonial deism suggest that references to "God" are unobjectionable, because the term is "an all-encompassing, unifying national force," and also because official references to "God" have historically been considered unobjectionable and traditional (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Barner-Barry wryly suggests that one try substituting the names "Athena," "Brahma," or "Allah" in official examples of ceremonial deism where the term "God" is

currently used and considered unobjectionable. For example, “Brahma save the United States and this Honorable Court,” or “In Athena We Trust” (2005). Imagine if the president took her/his oath with her/his hand on the Quran, and ended it with “so help me Allah”? To many Americans who are not Christian or Jewish, this is how the current practice of ceremonial deism appears (Barner-Barry, 2005). Moreover, many Pagans have expressed that ceremonial references to a clearly Judeo-Christian God implicitly exclude both them and others who are adherents of minority faiths or no faith at all. Some have also disclosed that these references make them feel like second-class citizens, but most share the sentiment that this is a battle they have little hope of winning. Some devotees of polytheistic religions cope with their feelings about constitutional deism’s religious exclusion with humor, such as joking, “In the Gods We Trust” (Barner-Barry, 2005).

However, Mary Lou Schmidt, a Pagan woman in Topeka, Kansas, objected to Shawnee County Treasurer Rita Cline’s posting of signs declaring “In God We Trust” on the walls of offices in the courthouse and a mall annex. The signs measured 11 by 14 inches, and the word God was printed in bright red letters and was significantly larger than the black lettering on the rest of the poster. Moreover, “the notation that this was the national motto was barely visible” (Barner-Barry, 2005). When Ms. Schmidt contacted Ms. Cline to request the removal of the posters, Ms. Cline responded with a letter saying, “I understand you say you are a pagan, do not believe in God, and refuse to recognize or honor the American flag and our national motto, all while claiming to be an American citizen. Your statements surprised me and caused me to question your patriotism and wonder just how much of an American you really are” (Schmidt v. Cline; Richardson,

May 20, 2000). Cline refused to remove her posters, prompting Schmidt to complain to the American Civil Liberty Union, which took her case. Shortly thereafter, the executive director of the ACLU's Kansas City office then received a letter in which Cline told him she was praying for him (Barner-Barry, 2005).

U.S. District Judge Sam A. Crow dismissed the case on December 6, 2000, and in 2001 ordered the ACLU to pay Cline's legal fees of $8,130. Crow ruled that Schmidt "lacked standing to obtain an injunction, because she failed to meet the burden of demonstrating that she would face a likelihood of future harm as a result of [Cline]'s conduct, as is necessary to warrant injunctive relief" (Schmidt v. Cline; Barner-Barry, 2005). He also ruled that the case was moot, as the signs at issue had been replaced with new (larger) ones that measured 16 x 20 inches, including the bald eagle on the American $1 bill and lettering similar to that on US currency, as well as the date that Congress adopted the phrase as the country's motto (Barner-Barry, 2005; Henrickson, September 20, 2000). Judge Crow also stated that an injunction requiring Ms. Cline to remove the signs could infringe upon her free speech, and that Schmidt's claim that the signs violated the Establishment Clause was "patently frivolous without any basis in law" (Schmidt v. Cline; Barner-Barry, 2005).

Ms. Schmidt responded to the ruling by stating, "The lawsuit had everything to do with…being told that I can't be a citizen of the United States because I don't believe in God. Judge Crow doesn't seem to understand that" (Henrikson, December 13, 2000). The ACLU was left with a debt of $8,130 plus interest for Ms. Cline's legal fees—a sizable sum which was difficult for the organization to raise. Moreover, Ms. Cline became a

local political hero, until she left office under suspicion of alleged misappropriation of county funds (Barner-Barry, 2005).

The acceptance of ceremonial deism has led to many practices that extend its original, intended reach. For instance, the Board of Supervisors in a Virginia county "decreed that Judeo-Christian prayers were constitutional—because they are part of something called 'American Civil Religion" (Barner-Barry, 2005) The Board also included Muslim prayers on their list of constitutional prayers, because they are monotheistic. However, they rejected prayers from non-monotheistic faiths, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Wicca (Barner-Barry, 2005). Generally, individuals who advocate prayer at public functions do not want to include prayers from a range of religions—it's usually a call for *Christian* prayer. For example, ten years after abandoning the practice of regular prayer at council meetings, the Salt Lake County Council voted to re-establish regular prayers. When an assistant county attorney informed the council that they would legally be to include all religions, including Paganism and Native American traditions, the council had second thoughts. They resolved to formally entrust the task to a police or National Guard chaplain who would, undoubtedly, be Christian (Barner-Barry, 2005; Eddington, January 24, 2001).

In Virginia, the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors maintained a list of volunteer clergy. Cynthia Simpson, a practicing Pagan priestess, requested to be added to the volunteer clergy list, and was rebuffed. In a letter sent by the County Attorney, Ms. Simpson was informed, "Chesterfield's non-sectarian invocations are traditionally made to a divinity that is consistent with the Judeo-Christian tradition. Based on our review of Wicca, it is neo-pagan and invokes polytheistic, pre-Christian deities. Accordingly, we

cannot honor your request to be included on the list of religious leaders that are invited to provide invocations at the meetings of the Board of Supervisors" (S.L. Micas, personal communication, September 12, 2002). Ms. Simpson then enlisted the help of the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and took the county to court (Barner-Barry, 2005).

In this case, the U.S. District Court ruled that legislative prayer is not, in and of itself, unconstitutional. However, it did question the "nonsectarian" nature of the prayers given, and noted that between January 2000 and December 2003, 76 individuals had given invocations and only three *were not* Christian. Of the three, one was a rabbi and two were Muslim leaders (Barner-Barry, 2005). Additionally, the court noted that Chesterfield County's "policy, as enforced, has allowed, if not encouraged, the specific mention of the Judeo-Christian deity as well as the name of Jesus Christ…and it precludes the expression of common themes that would still serve the same public interest even though the speaker may be the representative of a religion outside that sanctioned by the policy" (Simpson v. Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors). Therefore, the court ruled that "if government establishes a forum in which it invites a class of speakers for a specific purpose, it cannot exclude some class members because of a difference in viewpoint…Such a policy of exclusion cannot survive constitutional scrutiny" (Simpson v. Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors). Soon after the ruling, Chesterfield County expressed its intent to appeal the decision (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Similarly, the Town Council of Great Falls, South Carolina, meetings also opened with a prayer. In this case, a Council member would lead the prayer. Great Falls citizen Darla Wynne, a Wiccan, objected to the fact that there were frequent references to Jesus,

Jesus Christ, or Savior in the prayers. Moreover, when she arrived late to one meeting in order to avoid the prayer, she was not allowed to speak at the meeting, even though she was listed on the agenda. When Ms. Wynne requested that the invocation of Christ be discontinued, the Council refused. Ms. Wynne took the case to court, which ruled that while legislative prayer was constitutional, "the practice of members of Town Council invoking the name(s) specifically associated with the Christian faith at Town Council meetings violates the Establishment Clause." The ruling specifically prohibited town officials "from invoking or permitting another to invoke the name of a specific deity associated with any one specific faith or belief in prayers given at Town Council meetings" (Wynne v. Great Falls). Great Falls Town Council appealed the decision, which was affirmed by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2004. However, in the meantime, Darla Wynne, who had already suffered years of harassment by town officials and members of the public, came home to find her pet parrot "beheaded and affixed with a note reading 'You're next'." The parrot also had its heart ripped out (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Finally, a similar case is also in the court system in Florida. The Manatee County School Board had a long-standing practice of saying the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of its meetings. Recently, they instituted "nonsectarian" invocations given by local ministers in order to avoid a lawsuit. However, the nonsectarian prayers remained exclusively Christian. When asked about this issue, the leader of Manatee Religious Services stated, "I would simply say to someone who is uncomfortable where they are: move." (Barner-Barry, 2005). At the time of the publication of Barner-Barry's text, the case was still in the court system (2005).

Subsequently, is difficult to disagree with Epstein's conclusion, "if…the court means what it says when it espouses the principle that government may not, consistent with the Establishment Clause, endorse religion and send messages to citizens that cause them to feel like outsiders in the political community, the Court should have the intellectual honesty and fortitude to recognize that ceremonial deism violates a core purpose of the Establishment Clause" (1996).

Differences in Social Location Between Earth Religions

While devotees of earth religions share a minority religious identity, they can vary widely on other diversity variables such as race and ethnicity, national origin, native tongue, socioeconomic status, and education level. Research suggests that European/American Pagans are predominantly white, middle class, and well-educated (Berger, 1999). Most devotees of Native American spirituality do not include non-natives in their concept of the Native American religious community. Subsequently, devotees of Native American spirituality generally have predominantly Native American (also known as First Nations, American Indian, and Alaskan Native) heritage, or a blend of Native American and other cultural heritage. Moreover, approximately 26% of Native Americans live below the poverty line, which contrasts sharply with the 13% of the general population which lives in poverty (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2007).

Even more diverse in its makeup, Yoruban and Dahomey African diaspora faith include (at least) devotees of Santería in Cuba, practitioners of Candomblé in Brazil, and devotees of Vodou in Haiti. Each of these nations has its own unique, painful, and resilient histories of the interaction and blending of African, indigenous, and European cultures (Murphy, 1994). Whereas Cuban Santería is characterized by a blending of

Yoruban African, Spanish, and indigenous American cultures; Brazilian Candomblé is distinguished by the synthesis of Yoruban African, Portuguese, and some indigenous American cultures. In contrast, Haitian (and New Orleans) Vodou is characterized by the fusion of Dahomey African, French, and indigenous American cultures (Murphy, 1994; Fandrich, 2007). Moreover, with some exceptions, the majority of devotees of Yoruban and Dahomey African diaspora faiths in Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil live in lower socioeconomic statuses—and in some cases, extreme poverty (Murphy, 1994).

Yoruban and Dahomey Traditional African Religions

Ancient and recent history. There are three major earth- centered faiths that developed in the Caribbean based upon the religious practices of enslaved Yoruban and Dahomey Africans who were forcibly brought to the Caribbean islands and the Americas. These faiths are Santería of Cuba, Candomblé of Brazil, and Vodou of Haiti. Santería and Candomblé can be conceptualized as Yoruban African diaspora traditions, as they evolved primarily from the religious traditions of enslaved Africans of Yoruban descent; whereas Vodou can be conceptualized as a Dahomey African diaspora religion, as it evolved primarily from the religious traditions of enslaved Africans of Dahomey descent. These three faiths grew out of the slave trades of the religions' early days. In the late 15th through 18th centuries, Yoruban and Dahomey natives were abducted from Africa and unwillingly transported to Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, Trinidad, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic among other Caribbean islands. Enslaved Yoruban and Dahomey individuals brought their traditions and powerful faith in their deities with them to the Caribbean. Though many were unwillingly baptized into Roman Catholicism and forced to officially abandon their traditional beliefs and practices, they creatively fused and concealed their

traditional beliefs by choosing Catholic saints and associating saints to each of the orisha (gods or spirits) of their traditional religious practices (Robinson, 2010; Fandrich, 2007). Through the camouflage of European saints, Yoruban and Dahomey Africans were able to invoke, feed, and celebrate their orishas, in turn hoping for divine protection and assistance (Fandrich, 2007).

Even after the abolishment of slavery, traditional Yoruban and Dahomey faiths have been suppressed in many of their Caribbean homes. Santería has been actively suppressed in Cuba since the communist revolution, especially during the 1960's. However, the official suppression of Santería in Cuba has primarily ceased, and its popularity and practice has significantly increased since the 1990s (Robinson, 2010). Moreover, in the 1970s and 80s, a significant number of African-Americans began practicing Orisha Voodoo, which sought to return to African religious roots. In the style of Marcus Garvey and the Nation of Islam, devotees of Orisha Voodoo sought freedom from the oppression of "white man's religion," or Christianity, and began to seek out traditional African as well as African diaspora faiths. In the spirit of *sankofa* (Akan/Ashanti for "return to the ways of your ancestors" or "go back to your roots"), many devotees of Orisha Voodoo were initiated into Cuban Santerían and Haitian Vodouisant traditions (Fandrich, 2007).

Cosmology and conceptualization of divinity. Most Yoruban and Dahomey African diaspora traditions usually practice some form of ancestor veneration and also worship a pantheon of divine spirits, such as the orisha/orixa of Santería and Candomblé, and the lwa of Haitian Vodou. In most traditions, Olorun or Olódùmarè (the "owner of heaven") is conceptualized as the creator of the universe and a supreme deity (not

dissimilar from the Christian concepts of God or Creator). Olódùmarè is also the creator of the "lesser" guardians, known as ori(sha/xa) or lwa. There are hundreds of ori(sha/xa) or lwa, however, those that actually originated from the Dahomey lands are called Rada, whereas those that were added later and were often based upon deceased leaders in the new world are called Petro. Moreover, each of the ori(sha/xa) or lwa have an associated Christian saint, principle, important number, color, food, dance posture and emblem (Robinson, 2010). In most traditions, the orisha or lwa require food in the form of animal sacrifice and/or prepared dishes, as well as human worship in order to remain effective (Robinson, 2010).

Ethics and values. The Yoruban and Dahomey worldviews value the maintenance of balance within one's life, one's family, one's community, and the world at large. *Iwe pel*e (literally, generous character/personal destiny), or "the gentle generosity of a person who lives according to the traditional way of life" is highly valued. In this worldview, the universal ethical goal is to "achieve a generous or gentle character within the confines of one's destiny," thereby exhibiting both individualism and conformity to community standards (Clark, 2007). Furthermore, one's ancestors, called Ara Orun (People of Heaven), are referred to for moral guidance and example, and are honored at family ceremonies through recitation of their names (Robinson, 2010). Like the traditional Native American worldview, the Yoruban and Dahomey worldview can be conceptualized through the statement *we are, therefore I am*.

Moreover, as the Yoruban and Dahomey worldview conceptualizes the world as singular—that is, there is no this world and another world, but a single world with visible and invisible elements—everything that can be perceived (as well as that which cannot)

is sacred. Therefore, people, animals, plants, rain, the ocean, mountains, rocks, and stars are all considered sacred (Clark, 2007).

Sects and terms.

Lucumi/Santerían. Devotees of Lucumi or Santería may identify with many different labels, not all of which are mutually exclusive. A general practitioner of Lucumi or Santería may identify as a *santero/a,* depending upon the practitioner's gender. *Aleyos* (sometimes also called *aborishas*) are non-priest members of an *ile*, or a group of priests, priestesses, godchildren, and other practitioners who assemble to worship and study. *Iyawos* are non-priest members of an *ile* who are in their first year of initiation. (The word *iyawo* is sometimes also used to describe the sacred room wherein initiation rituals are held). *Babalawos* are Lucumi priests who are also diviners and herbalists, but who do not become possessed by the orisha, or divine. *Babalorishas* and *iyalorishas* are Lucumi priest(esse)s who have initiated "godchildren," or who have initiated other practitioners into the faith. Finally, *brujo/a* is the Spanish word for witch, and is sometimes used to describe individuals who identify with some aspects of Santería/Lucumi, as well as some aspects of *brujería* or *curanderismo* (Latino influenced witchcraft or shamanism) (Clark, 2007, & Murphy, 1994).

Candomblezeiro. As the primary differences between Candomblé and Lucumi are linguistic and geographical, some of the terms used to describe initiates of Candomblé are similar to or the same as those used in Lucumi. A general practitioner Candomblé may identify as a *candomblezeiro*. *Aleyos* are non-priest members of an *ile*, or a group of priests, priestesses, godchildren, and other practitioners who assemble to worship and study. *Iyawos* are non-priest members of an *ile* who are in their first year of initiation.

(The word *iyawo* is sometimes also used to describe the sacred room wherein initiation rituals are held). *Maes-de-santo* are Candomblé priestesses, while *paes-de-santos* are Candomblé priests. *Ogas* and *ekejis* (oga = masculine, ekeji = feminine) are also Candomblé priests and priestesses, however, unlike *maes-de-santo* and *paes-de-santos,* they are not possessed by the orisha. Finally, *babalorixas* and *iyalorixas* are Candomblé priest(esse)s who have initiated "godchildren," or who have initiated other practitioners into the faith (Murphy, 1994).

Vodouisant. Devotees of Vodou may identify with many different labels, not all of which are mutually exclusive. A general practitioner of Vodou may identify as a *vodouisant.* (Robinson, 2010, & Murphy, 1994). Initiates of Vodou who assist priests and priestesses, and may be studying to become a priest or priestess are known as *hounsis*. Finally, Vodouisant high priestesses may identify as *mambos* or *manbos*, while a Vodouisant high priest may identify as *houngans* (Robinson, 2010, & Murphy, 1994).

Rituals.

Santerían initiation ritual. In the Cuban tradition of Santería, an individual is initiated into the tradition through a ritual referred to as *hacer santo*, "to make the saint"; coronación, (crowning); asiento, (seating); or kariocha, (to place the orisha on the head) (Murphy, 1994). However, individuals generally do not simply "up and decide" to engage in a Santerían initiation ceremony—or any initiation ceremony for that matter. It generally takes the form of receiving some sort of call or compulsion which cannot be ignored, which in the case of Santería, an *orisha* (god/spirit) will make his/her presence known in the life of a future initiate, who will then receive confirmation from a *babalawo* that (s)he is being called to service, and by whom.

The initiate then gathers ingredients sacred to the *orisha*, and begins to enter the ceremony which will make them a symbolic spouse of this spirit. Stones known as *otanes* are gathered in places sacred to the specific *orisha*, and the *orisha*'s favorite foods are gathered or prepared. An *iyawo,* or sacred room is prepared for the initiate to be isolated for several days. The initiation ritual focuses on the head of the initiate, which is shaved and receives several ritual incisions. The initiate is subjected to numerous ritual proscriptions, some of which extend for a year after the conclusion of the ritual, (such as the wearing of white, covering of the head, etc.), and is educated in the nature and secrets of her/his *orisha*. Throughout the course of the ritual, the initiate is usually guided by a *babalawo* and/or *santero/a(s*), who provide instruction, and use *dilogun* (divination) readings to determine the course of the ritual and the initiate's path. At the conclusion of the initiation ritual, the initiate is re-presented to the community and to the *orishas* as a new individual *en santo* (Murphy, 1994).

Candombleizero initiation ritual. In the Brazilian tradition of Candomblé, an individual is called to service of the tradition and service of a particular orixá (spirit/god) by some massive disruption in that individual's life. It is generally understood that these unfortunate circumstances or series of circumstances will not cease until the individual experiencing them undergoes an obrigação, or initiation ceremony. In the case of Candomblé, however, it is understood more literally that the initiate must "die" in her/his normal world and consciousness, and re-emerge into a new world and consciousness following this initiation ceremony. The initiate must feed, bathe, and care for a stone which symbolizes the particular spirit by whom they have been called, and also prepares specific foods sacred to her/his orixá. An initiate will then undergo a six-month isolation

period in a special dwelling known as a runkô, with other individuals who are also undergoing the obrigação at that time. Individuals united by confinement in a runkô are said to be "members of the same boat," which may allude to the connection between slave ships and the roots of the African diaspora traditions (Murphy, 1994).

Like in Santería, a focus upon the head of the initiate can be observed in this ceremony, via the ritual cutting, washing, and shaving of an initiate's hair, followed by a ritual cutting of the initiate's scalp. Initiates are subject to numerous ritual proscriptions, sometimes varying based upon their patron orixá, and also receive educations specific to the nature and the characteristics of their orixá. Initiates are often possessed by child-like spirits, which transform into the orixás themselves. Once an initiate has officially been "possessed" by their orixá, it is believed that the orixá has entered the head of the initiate. The initiate is now re-classified as an iaôs, or spouse of the orixá, and re-presented to the community as such (Murphy, 1994).

Vodouisant initiation ritual. In the Haitian tradition of Vodou, an individual is initiated into the tradition through a ritual referred to as *lave tèt,* and more specifically, the *kouche.* In his text *Working the Spirit,* Murphy recounts the *lave tèt* ceremony of 1940s dancer Katherine Dunham (1994). One generally does not simply "up and decide" to engage in a *lave tèt* ceremony—or any initiation ceremony for that matter. It generally takes the form of receiving some sort of call or compulsion which cannot be ignored, which in the case of Vodou, is understood as the initiate being called by a *lwa,* or spirit/god. Oftentimes this call may manifest as a string of unfortunate events, which may be interpreted by a religious figure or seer such as a *manbo* or *houngan* to be the call of the *lwa* to that individual to undergo a *lave tèt* ceremony (Murphy, 1994).

The term *lave tèt* is derived from the French "to wash the head," and this parallel can be seen in the way in which the actual head of an initiate is treated during ceremony. Once the *mèt tèt*, or specific *lwa* who has summoned an individual to undergo the initiation ceremony has been identified, the initiate begins copious preparations related to that specific *lwa* in order to undergo the ritual. In the case of Dunham, the dancer was required to gather "a new nightdress, a new ceremonial dress, a necklace of blue and white trade beads interspersed with snake vertebrae, a pair of white roosters, florida water, barley water, strawberry soda, sugar cookies, eggs, herbs, roots, powders, a picture of St. Patrick, and another of the Virgin Mary," (Murphy, 1994).

Following the gathering of the necessary ingredients, the initiate undergoes a three-day isolation period in which (s)he is confined to the floor, lying in spoon fashion with the other individuals to be initiated, and subject to copious ritual proscriptions regarding movement, the consumption of food, washing, and bodily functions. The physical arrangement of these initiates has been likened by some to the manner in which slaves were forced to lie on slave ships, which some reference as a possible connection to the historical roots of the Vodou tradition. The heads of the initiates are anointed with a poultice which relates to their specific *lwa*, then wrapped with white cloth which will remain on the initiates' heads until ritually removed at the end of the ceremony.

At the conclusion of the three-day isolation and purification period, initiates are often tested in their knowledge of their *lwa,* and if all proceeds well, will frequently "receive" or become possessed by that *lwa.* When the initiate "receives" the *lwa*, that individual's *gwo bònanj*, or psyche, is essentially displaced by the *lwa*, and relocates to a specially prepared container referred to as a *pot tèt*, which generally also contains

ingredients related to that individual's *mèt tèt.* The *pot tèts* are then ritually sealed by the *manbo*, and one week after the closing of this ritual ceremony or ritual marriage to a particular *mèt tèt,* the initiate will have their head poultice ritually removed, the ingredients placed in the *pot tèt,* and will officially re-emerge as an initiate of the tradition, and a spiritual spouse of a lwa (Murphy, 1994).

Native American Spirituality

Ancient and recent history. Even with the passing of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act in 1994, Native American spirituality, as well as Native American life in its totality, is still greatly shaped by European-American power and privilege. Since 1492, the interaction of Native Americans and Europeans has been a harrowing tale of conflict and brutal violence—the vast majority of which was perpetrated by Europeans (Martin, 1999). It is believed that there were somewhere between 1.2 and 12 million Native Americans living in North America at the time of the European arrival and invasion. By the end of the 19th century, however, that number had been reduced to 250,000, primarily due to European disease, slavery, dislocation, mass murder and genocide (Robinson, 2009).

The Civilization Regulations and Courts of Indian Offenses of the late 1800s prohibited Native Americans from practicing their spirituality, and in many ways, completely forbade them from living their way of life (Martin, 1999). The Dawes Act of 1887 attempted to isolate older Native Americans to reservations, and attempted to de-tribalize Native American nations by forcing those on reservations to live in private homes and farm the poorest land—whether or not their culture was traditionally agrarian. Additionally, the Dawes Act also forced Native American children to attend "Indian

schools," where they were "educated" in European ways and forbidden to speak their own language, sing their own songs, wear their traditional clothing, or practice their own spirituality. Perhaps most insultingly, Native Americans were not "granted" citizenship to *their own* land until 1924 (Martin, 1999).

Though there has been and continues to be active Native American resistance to European-American oppression, the colonization of North America by European nations devastated the Native American way of life. Even today, most of the counties where Native American reservations are located are identified as the most impoverished places in the entire country. In some cases, the living conditions on Native American reservations are comparable to those in developing nations, or "third-world" countries (Martin, 1999). Without a doubt, it is of the utmost importance that helping professionals familiarize themselves with Native American history, culture, and tradition, and begin to strive towards serving this highly underserved population.

Cosmology and conceptualization of divinity. Due to the relative isolation of the Native American nations that were spread out across the entire breadth of the North American continent for thousands of years, a great deal of diversity in beliefs and practices evolved between tribes. However, Native American spirituality is often characterized by pantheism, or the belief that God and the material world are one and that God is present in everything; a strong emphasis on the importance of personal spirituality and its interconnectivity with daily life; and a deep connection between the natural and spiritual worlds (Robinson, 2009). However, many devotees of traditional Native American spirituality do not conceptualize their spiritual beliefs and practices as "religion." Rather, they see the whole culture and social structure as spiritual, and

therefore, spirituality is an inherent part of culture, and culture is an inherent part of spirituality.

Most Native American spiritualities espouse the principle of an all embracing, universal and omniscient Great Spirit (sometimes known as Wakan Tanka) (Martin, 1999). Some traditions may also include spirits and/or divine beings such as the First People, White Buffalo Calf Woman or Changing Woman, Kokopelli, Tatewari, Caribou Master, Spider Woman, and others. In some cases, spirits and divine beings are considered spiritual beings "beneath" the Great Spirit, while in other traditions, they may be considered manifestations of the Great Spirit. Finally, connection to the earth through plants, animals, the passage of seasons, weather, the earth itself, water, sky, and fire is paramount in Native American cosmology (Gill, 1982).

Ethics and values. A *worldview*, or a particular individual's comprehension of her/his reality generally includes social or cultural rules, many of which do not vary greatly from culture to culture. The violation of a major social or cultural rule is considered a "taboo," many of which are also similar from culture to culture. Taboos in most human societies include death and "improper" treatment of the dead, murder or unjustified killing, cannibalism, and incest. However, aside from some overarching, seemingly universal cultural rules and cultural proscriptions, individual cultures' societal rules and worldviews may vary greatly from one another (Gill, 1982).

The compilation of cultural rules and proscriptions which may be unique to a culture comprise its symbolic reality. Subsequently, most traditional Native American languages have no word for "nature." The term "Mother Earth" was created to attempt to better explain the Native American relationship with nature; however, in Native

American symbolic reality, there is no schism between humans and nature. In Native American symbolic reality, food is sacred and killing is taboo, therefore, one must ask permission to hunt or harvest another living being. Animals are often conceptualized as four-legged people—and animals and plants give themselves to humans in exchange for respect and permission to harvest or hunt. Native American symbolic reality also includes a belief in spirit animals, or animal beings who possess power and wisdom which they can choose to share with humans through dreams and visions (Gill, 1982; Erdoes & Ortiz, 1984).

In comparison with European and European-American society, Native American culture is traditionally far more collectivistic, and therefore, family and community oriented. Moreover, the Native American concept of family often extends far beyond the nuclear family, and embraces its village, larger culture, and the earth itself (Robinson, 2009). The traditional Native American worldview can be conceptualized through the statement *we are, therefore I am*.

Sects and terms. There are no known terms to identify "general" devotees of Native American spirituality, thus, the researcher-identified term that will be used is *practitioner of Native American spirituality*. However, some members of the Native American community refer to the *practice* of Native American spirituality as "walking the red road" (Glucklich, 2011). In contrast, *medicine women* and *medicine men* are racially and/or culturally Native American individuals who may heal physical and/or psychological disease, promote social and natural harmony, and bridge the natural and spiritual worlds for the benefit of the Native American community. *Shamans*, like medicine people, are trained spiritual individuals who bridge the natural and spiritual

worlds for the benefit of the community. However, in comparison with Native American medicine, shamanism applies to more cultures than just Native American, and also focuses somewhat more on the use of altered states of consciousness to heal physical and/or psychological disease, and to promote social and natural harmony (Gill, 1982, Gill, 1983, & Martin, 1999).

Rituals. Though they vary greatly from culture to culture, rituals can be conceptualized as spiritual works to actively accomplish something. Rituals are guided by a culture's symbolic reality, and usually indicate a wish for spirits and/or the universe to respond in some beneficial way. Some argue that according to the Native American worldview, humans are not inherently human—and that a human being—and that being's social identity must therefore be *created* by learning his/her culture's ways (Gill, 1983). Oftentimes, the cues to "become human" are biological, transitional points in the human life cycle, and accompanied by rituals or rites of passage.

Rites of passage.

*The Kinaalda***.** The four-day Kinaalda ceremony of the Navajo occurs shortly after a Navajo girl's first menstruation. Navajo tradition propounds that Changing Woman, the creator of humanity and daughter of First Man and First Woman, honored her own first menses by creating the Kinaalda ceremony. In the course of the Kinaalda, the girl's hair is first combed, then tied back by an older woman of the tribe, thereby honoring and channeling the visual display of her sexual power. The elder then massages the girl, and molds her body into the shape of a woman's. The girl then dresses in the ceremonial clothing and jewelry of the Kinaalda, which generally includes some element of white shells and/or the stone turquoise, as they are sacred to Changing Woman. Next, the

Kinaalda begins a footrace towards the east, both to prove her strength, and to symbolize her connection with creation, for like the rising sun, she can now create and give birth (Gill, 1983).

After her run, she begins to grind corn for the Kinaalda ceremonial cake, and on the third day, she begins to prepare the cornmeal mush and circular firepit for the corn cake. Once the mush is poured into the firepit and a round cake is formed, the Kinaalda sprinkles cornmeal over the baking corncake to the east, south, west, north, and around the firepit. As the cake bakes, sacred Navajo hogan songs are sung by the nation. Once the cake is ready, the Kinaalda cuts and distributes it to the village—being certain to dedicate pieces from the north, east, south, and west to the center of the firepit, as an offering to Mother Earth. The symbolism of creating a cake or bread speaks primarily of fertility, for grain is symbolic of the fertility of the earth, and also the staple of the human diet; while a round corn cake is highly suggestive of the womb, further enforcing the notion of fertility at the advent of womanhood (Gill, 1983).

The vision quest. Similar to the Kinaalda ceremony, it is the vision quest which transitions boys of many First Nations from childhood to adulthood. The vision quest generally involves elements of ritual purification, such as fasting and/or undergoing a sweat lodge ceremony, and when the quester is considered clean and pure enough, he embarks upon the vision quest (Ridington & Ridington, 1971). Once the boy has been ritually purified, he will usually isolate himself from the rest of society, (often atop a mountain or in a tree,) and eat or drink nothing or very little for a period of several days. During this isolation, the boy is to contemplate his relationship with the Great Creator

(Wakan Tanka) and with all living beings, and is to freely welcome dreams and visions which will explain his purpose in life.

Oftentimes, a vision quester may see and be visited by an animal who is believed to speak to that individual's soul and life purpose. This animal may even appear in the individual's name—either their name given in early childhood, or the adult name they will take at the conclusion of the quest (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1994). However, the dreams and visions that appear to a vision quester during such periods of isolation and purification should not be regarded as the delirious delusions of an isolated, half-starved, dehydrated mind—rather, they are considered highly spiritual entities which may only be accessible to an individual once they are able to drown out the distractions of everyday life which can overpower the voice of the divine (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1994). Visions received through a vision quest delineate the quester's life purpose as a member of their society (Ridington & Ridington, 1971).

Healing rituals. While many Native American religious rituals address transitions in the human life cycle, others seem intended to honor and ensure the flow of life itself. In many hunting Native American cultures, this role is filled by the shaman, or holy person. In Native American culture, the shaman is a nomad of sorts who speaks both the language of the human world and the language of the spirit world (Zimmerman & Molyneaux, 2000). One of the most important functions of the shaman is to act in the best interest of his/her people, thereby living a life of spiritual dedication and service. Subsequently, when there is illness, unrest, hunger, or violence in a village, it is the shaman's responsibility to act as the mediator between the human and spirit world, and divine the cause of trouble (Rasmussen, 2008). The actual ceremonies which the shaman

performs also reveal a great deal about the culture from which (s)he originates; for instance, in the tale of Takankapsaluk (also known as Sedna,) the shaman's travel through and about the sea explains the great importance of the sea in the lives of the Inuit people (Rasmussen, 2008). Finally, by acting as a mediator between the human and spirit worlds, the shaman is not only able to discover the cause of the misfortune that has befallen his/her people—(s)he is also able to provide a solution (Zimmerman & Molyneaux, 2000).

Peyote (mescalito) healing rituals. It has been hypothesized that in some Native American nations, the shaman does not take the form of an actual human being; rather, the role of shaman is at times filled by a sacred plant. In parts of the Plains and Southwest cultural zones of Native America, the sacred plant mescalito, or peyote, is used in Native American religious rituals (Myerhoff, 1974). The Native American peyote ceremony blends indigenous Native American spirituality with Christianity, and is generally a twelve-hour ordeal, beginning around sunset on Saturday, and ending around sunrise on Sunday. The peyote ritual centers around prayer, the eating of peyote buttons, Bible study, the singing of peyote songs, water ritual, and contemplation. The peyote itself generally induces extreme nausea and vomiting, which is followed by euphoria, elevated consciousness, visions, and communion with the divine (Myerhoff, 1974).

Subsequently, Quanah Parker, Comanche spiritual leader and peyotist, has famously been credited with the assertion "The white man goes into his church and talks about Jesus. The Indian goes into his tipi and talks to Jesus" (Martin, 1999). In 1918, Native American practitioners of the Peyote Religion joined to form the pan-nation Native American Church, which remains popular with numerous Native American

nations today. Though peyote is illegal in most of North America, The Native American Religious Freedom Acts of 1994 and 1996 protect members of the Native American Church from prosecution for the use of peyote in religious ceremonies (Zimmerman & Molyneaux, 2000).

The Sun Dance healing ritual. Still popular and practiced today is the Sun Dance, a ritual once outlawed by the United States government, and one which also leaves many non-Native Americans utterly aghast and baffled. For Plains Native Americans such as the Sioux, the Sun Dance is a highly sacred affair that resonates with spiritual power, and is considered essential to the survival and revitalization of their people (Twofeathers, 1994). Like any effective ritual, the Sun Dance draws a great deal of its power from the schism it places between ordinary reality and its own ritual reality. During the four days of the Sun Dance, the dancers consume neither food nor water. They begin to prepare for the four-day-long ritual by purifying themselves first in a sweat lodge. The sweat lodge cleanses both the body and the mind, removing physical impurities through copious sweating, and any mental or psychic impurities through the transcendentally cleansing process of placing the body in a physically trying environment (Glucklich, 2001). Oftentimes, during a successful sweat lodge, participants will receive visions, just as participants in a successful Sun Dance will receive visions (Twofeathers, 1994).

A sacred Sun Dance tree, often a cottonwood tree, is "hunted," then "captured" by the Sun Dancers, and is treated as a sacred captive who has sacrificed its life for the Plains People. The tree is treated with the utmost respect, placed erect in the Sun Dance arbor, and usually crowned with an eagle's nest and buffalo skull. The Sun Dancers will dance barefoot on hot clay around this tree for four long days—partaking of neither food

nor water. On the fourth day, the dancers are pierced with an eagle's claw, and tethered to the sacred tree. It is the Sun Dancer's task to dance him/herself free from the tree. Some suggest that the tether from the sacred tree to the dancer is an umbilical cord, and that the dancer will be reborn once (s)he breaks free of the cord (McGaa, 1990).

The ritually-induced physical pain and mortification of the flesh can be conceptualized as the suffering of one or few for the good of all—similar to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in Christianity. Sun Dancers sacrifice their own bodies via ritual piercing, and thereby generate and dedicate spiritual energy to their tribe, also often transcending ordinary reality and receiving visions regarding the wellbeing of their people (Glucklich, 2001). For many Native Americans, the Sun Dance represents a refusal to kowtow to European-American prejudice and ignorance, and provides a sense of culture, place, and tradition (McGaa, 1990).

European and American Paganism

Ancient and recent history. Barner-Barry observed, "there is a tendency for educated people to dismiss the power of myth. This does not mean that they do not have their own mythologies; it simply means that they are not conscious of their myths, mistaking them for other types of information, commonly either pure fabrication or absolute historical truth" (2005). In the European/American Pagan community, there is a great diversity of myths espoused by contemporary devotees. There are, however, three overarching, historically oriented myths that are pervasive in the Pagan community, and form much of the basis for Pagan reactions to instances of persecution, as well as their fear of future persecution. These myths are those of the Mother Times, the Burning Times, and the Christian Conversion (Barner-Barry, 2005).

For many, it does not matter whether these myths are "true" in the scholarly or scientific sense—though some devotees adamantly assert that they are. However, if people believe them to be true and act upon that belief, then the myth becomes true in the sense that it affects what happens in the real world (Barner-Barry, 2005). Subsequently, when Pagans are harassed or threatened because of their religious beliefs, "they are acutely aware that people like them have been punished, tortured, and even killed for their beliefs in the past. This is reinforced when the person doing the harassing and making the threats claims to do it on the behalf of Christianity" (Barner-Barry, 2005). Starhawk emphasized the importance of these myths to the Pagan community when she wrote, "It is a tragic story that names our condition as one of loss, that gives us a vehicle through which we can feel our pain, grieve, rage, heal, and fight. Without the story, we don't know what's wrong with us" (1987).

The myth of the Mother Times. The myth of the Mother Times describes the world as it is thought to have been before the advent of patriarchy and patriarchal religions. According to this myth, in early human hunting and gathering groups were matriarchal, matrilineal, and goddess-focused. Women were considered to be making a vital contribution to society because their gathering of plant foods was central to the survival of the group, and also because they gave birth to and nurtured children. However, as warfare became chronic, more and more of the social and political order had to be adjusted to meet the needs of war. According to the Mother Times myth, this eventually led to the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy and the rise of religions based on male gods. In the polytheistic variation of this myth, the female goddesses became subordinate to the male gods. In the monotheistic version, one transcendent male

god became the supreme divinity. In both cases, it is believed that a religious framework was used to support the patriarchal social and political order that has continued to the present day (Barner-Barry, 2005).

The myth of the Christian Conversion. The second myth explains how Christianity spread, particularly in Europe, and the way in which the pre-Christian native religions were suppressed and their symbols and deities destroyed or incorporated into Christianity. It is believed that first, Roman legions, and second, Christian missionaries conquered the "Pagan lands," or those in Western Europe. During this period, many Pagan gods and goddesses, as well as Pagan rituals and holy places, were converted into Christian saints, rituals, and shrines. The horned gods such as Pan and Cernunnos, were then associated with Satan (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Based upon this myth, a series of principles arise surrounding the relationship between Pagans and Christians. These principles suggest first, that Pagans are tolerant of other religious traditions, while Christians are seen as intolerant. Second, they note that Pagans do not proselytize, while Christians proselytize vigorously and persistently. Third, the myth suggests that Pagans are basically peaceful, and use violence only in defense and then reluctantly; whereas Christians have no compunctions about using violence to convert or punish non-Christians. Finally, while the Christian Conversion myth also asserts that while Pagans see the virtue of having many gods and goddesses and ways of worshipping them, Christians are determined to stamp out any worship that is not their own monotheism (Barner-Barry, 2005).

The myth of the Burning Times. The third major myth that informs the Pagan worldview is that of the Burning Times, or a period in European (and American) history

that lasted from approximately the mid-fifteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. The Burning Times refers to the purposes, actions, and effects of the Inquisition in Europe. This period is seen as a time of intense witch hunting and executions—usually by fire, but sometimes by hanging. The Burning Times myth suggests that the major purpose of the Inquisition was to eliminate those who held power and status in local communities (primarily women including the midwives, herbalists, and wise women) by accusing them of witchcraft and burning them. It is believed that this elimination of competitors allowed the Christian church fathers to consolidate their patriarchal power over society (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Cosmology and conceptualization of divinity. Many Pagans consider their beliefs to be a revival or reemergence of an ancient nature religion, which is perceived as "the most ancient of religions, in which the earth was worshipped as a woman under different names and guises throughout the inhabited world" (Barner-Barry, 2005). Paganism generally conceptualizes the divine in both feminine and masculine terms, and considers both divine and human feminine characteristics and principles to be at least as important as masculine characteristics and principles. Pagans differ from followers of more mainstream religions in that they generally conceptualize divinity in a duotheistic (belief in two deities), polytheistic (belief in many deities), or henotheistic (belief in one deity among many), rather than monotheistic manner. Moreover, Pagans have no supernatural being in their pantheon of deities who resembles the devil or Satan figure found in Christianity and Islam (Robinson, 2009).

In the center of most contemporary Pagan cosmologies is some concept of the Goddess as central or primary to all that is considered sacred. The Goddess is often

closely associated with the earth or with the totality of nature, and often takes on three aspects, most commonly those of maiden, mother, and crone (old wise woman). Many Pagans also associate these aspects with the waxing, full, and waning moons. The maiden and the waxing moon are usually associated with birth and youth; the mother and the full moon are associated with maturity and nurturance; and the crone and waning moon are associated with old age (usually connoting wisdom) and death (Barner-Barry, 2005). If the divine is conceptualized as nature or the earth itself, as is the case in European/American Paganism, individuals tend to approach the earth more respectfully, since they are interacting with something that is inherently sacred. This differs sharply from the traditional monotheistic conceptualizations of divinity, wherein the divine is considered transcendent, rather than immanent (Barner-Barry, 2005). Barner-Barry also keenly observes, "if you believe a deity presides over the earth from 'above' and gives humans the duty of controlling and exploiting the earth primarily for human welfare, it is much easier to adopt public policies that damage or destroy parts of the earth and its nonhuman living creatures" (2005).

Additionally, most contemporary Pagans consider the God to be the consort of the Goddess, and to represent the masculine principle of divinity. The God is often associated with the sun, green growing things, and the hunt. "He is ritually reborn every Yule (winter solstice), couples with the Goddess at Beltane (May 1) to bring fertility to the world and dies to be reborn at the next winter solstice" (Barner-Barry, 2005). Depending upon the particular Pagan tradition, the God plays a greater or lesser role. In some feminist and/or Dianic traditions, he plays almost no role at all (Barner-Barry, 2005). The centrality of the Goddess in Pagan traditions, however, does not necessarily equate to

monotheism. While acknowledging the central role of the Goddess, most contemporary Pagans also worship and work with a number of sacred, spiritual beings, including a corresponding consort God or any one of a variety of more specific ancient pagan gods and goddesses derived from a host of traditions. Some Pagans may also work with "spirits of the land," such as faeries and spiritual beings (Barner-Barry, 2005).

Conceptualization of afterlife. Though devotees of earth- centered practices vary greatly in their beliefs regarding death and the afterlife, most possess some view which departs markedly from the beliefs of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Some practitioners believe in ancient legends of a "Summerland" where people's spirits go after death, and can reflect upon their previous lives on earth before they are reincarnated into the body of a newborn infant. Some of these individuals also believe that after living enough varied lives, one has learned enough to go on to another level of existence about which we know nothing. Others believe that the influences people have upon their children, friends, and society as a whole will continue to influence posterity, and therefore, those who have passed experience a "life after death." Still others believe that the literal molecules that comprise the human body will be incorporated into other living entities, similarly resulting in a more figurative afterlife (Robinson, 2004).

Ethics and values.

Reverence for the earth. Paganism places a strong emphasis upon preservation of and reverence for the environment. In the Pagan worldview, all living things (including humans, animals, plants, rocks, stars, and planets) are revered, and may also be regarded as having a spirit. Most Pagans honor the passage of the seasons, and may view the solstices, equinoxes, full and new moons as holy days. Additionally, Pagans usually

attempt to meet and hold religious rites out of doors whenever possible. Overall, Pagans tend to express reverence for the earth through a great deal of concern for the environment, and in some cases, the performance of religious ceremonies or rituals to bring harmony and healing to nature (Robinson, 2009, & 2004).

Gender equality. Paganism also differs from majority religious practices as it endorses and propounds an equality of the genders. The Pagan worldview conceptualizes nature as exhibiting polar masculine and feminine characteristics—each of which are integral and honored components of the other. For example, in the Pagan worldview, the earth is often conceptualized as feminine, while the sky and rain are conceptualized as masculine. Humanity needs both the earth in which to plant vegetation, and the precipitation to nourish it. Thus, at a very basic level, both feminine and masculine principles are necessary for survival, and therefore honored. Subsequently, this reverence for masculine and feminine principles in nature frequently translates to a reverence for men *and* women; male *and* female traits and characteristics (Robinson, 2004). Finally, though there are no firmly reliable figures on the Pagan movement as a whole, fragmentary evidence suggests that contemporary Pagans are as likely to be men as women, though women may predominate (Barner-Barry, 2005)

Independence and freedom. Most researchers who have worked with or individuals who know Pagan individuals can attest that they tend to be highly individualistic and independent people. Pagans who were not born into their faith know that they have chosen an unusual, potentially dangerous, religious path. This spiritual path is not the way of conformity. In fact, many Pagans tend to be proudly and adamantly nonconformist, "resisting anything they consider undue influence from inside, as well as

outside, the Pagan movement" (Barner-Barry, 2005). Subsequently, though there has been more emphasis in recent decades upon the Pagan community as a growing, living "tribe," the Pagan worldview can be conceptualized through the statement *I am, therefore we are*.

Sects and terms. The term "*pagan*" literally means "country dweller," and harks back to the time wherein practitioners of Paganism were primarily rural, agrarian peoples. For the purposes of this text, *Pagan* refers to individuals who identify with some form of pantheistic, earth-centered European/American Paganism, and do not feel that their identity is better described by the terms Neopagan, Wiccan, Witch, Druid, heathen, or Asatru. The term *Neopagan* reflects the fact that most modern-day practitioners of Paganism are reconstructing extinct or nearly extinct ancient forms of Paganism, and that these new constructions are inherently different from their ancestral ones. The term *Wiccan* refers to a devotee of Wicca, which is a specific type of modern Neopaganism, generally involving some form of goddess worship, polytheism, and magick. The term *Witch* refers to an individual who practices witchcraft, or magick, which is often more "practice" and "action"-oriented than other forms of Paganism. The term *heathen* literally means "one who lives upon the heath," and generally refers to an individual who practices some form of Germanic Neopaganism. Similar to heathens are *Asatrus*, who are generally individuals who practice some form of Norse or Icelandic Neopaganism. In contrast, *Druids* are practitioners of earth-centered faith who honor the principles of the Singer, or the creative being, the Shaman, or the one who communes deeply with nature and other worlds, and the Sage, or the student of wisdom (Berger, 1999; Robinson, 2004; & Robinson, 2009).

Rituals.

Common ritual ceremonies and tools. Most Pagans consider the solstices, equinoxes, full and new moons to be holy days. On these holy days or holidays, devotees may hold ceremonies alone or with other devotees, and utilize particular ritual tools or objects. The Pagan worldview places an emphasis upon the four cardinal directions of north, east, south, and west, and assigns an "element" to each of these directions—including earth, air, fire, and water, respectively. Ritual tools such as candles, incense, a bowl of salt or earth, a double-sided ritual knife, and a cauldron or chalice are commonly used to represent these directions and elements.

Methods

Participants

Participants were male and female practitioners of earth religion, ages 18 and older. Participants were solicited through online communities and gathering places for practitioners of Yoruban and Dahomey diaspora faiths, Native American spirituality, and European/American Paganism.

Participants who endorsed practicing Yoruban African diaspora faith were provided with the options of identifying as (a) santero/a, brujo/a, babalorisha/iyalorisha, babalawo, aleyeo, mae-de-santo/pais-de-santo, ialorixá/babalorixá, candomblezeiro, iyawo, oga/ekeji, or as someone whose spiritual path was not mentioned. Participants who endorsed practicing Dahomey African diaspora faith were provided with the options of identifying as (a) vodouisant, mambo/houngan, hounsi, or as someone whose spiritual path was not mentioned. Participants who endorsed practicing Native American spirituality were provided with the options of identifying as (a) medicine (wo)man, shaman, practitioner of traditional Native American spirituality, or as someone whose spiritual path was not mentioned. Participants who endorsed practicing European/American Paganism were provided with the options of identifying as (a) Pagan, Neopagan, Wiccan, Witch, Druid, heathen, Asatru, or as someone whose spiritual path was not mentioned. Participants who endorsed practicing a different earth or nature religion were provided with the options of identifying as (a) ecospiritualist, hoodoo

practitioner, initiate/devotee of another earth/nature religion, or as someone whose spiritual path was not mentioned. If an individual indicated that (s)he did not practice earth religion, the survey closed and the respondent was thanked for their participation. All participants were volunteers, and were not compensated for their participation. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to investigate the experience of minority religious clients when seeking mental health services.

Materials

All participants were provided with an electronic consent form. Upon completion of the consent form, participants were administered an electronic questionnaire with open-ended, multiple choice, and Likert-type (1 = Strongly disagree, 3= Neutral, 5= Strongly agree) items. The questionnaire sought to illuminate the influence of minority religious beliefs on service-seeking, the satisfaction of minority religious clients with mental health services, and minority religious client perception of therapist's cultural competence. Additionally, the National Council of Schools and Programs in Professional Psychology's Developmental Achievement Levels were consulted in the item construction process. Finally, the questionnaire was also reviewed by peers within the field for clarity, coherence, objectivity, and its ability to measure the desired constructs. For a copy of the questionnaire, see Appendix A.

Procedures

Each participant completed an electronic consent form that stated the purpose of the study, participants' rights, and the fact that the Institutional Review Board had approved the study. After completing the questions, participants were thanked for their participation.

Results

Results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses of participant-provided data are presented below. Two branches of contemporary earth religion (European/American Paganism and African diaspora faith) had large enough sample sizes to run statistical analyses, however, two (traditional Native American spirituality and other earth/nature religions) did not have large enough sample sizes to perform statistical analyses. Statistical analyses of the European/American Pagan (E/AP) and African diaspora faith (ADF) groups are presented along with all participants' qualitative and quantitative responses.

First, information pertaining to the number of participants who completed the questionnaire, the demographics of those participants, and the participants' inherited religiosity, or the religion practiced by their family of origin is detailed in this section. Next, data pertaining to the salience of specific diversity variables to participants' identities, participants' indigenous ways of understanding distress that interferes with daily functioning, as well as participants' indigenous ways of coping with distress that interferes with daily functioning is also detailed in this section. Finally, data pertaining to participants' ability to access mental health services, their belief in the helpfulness of mental health services, their fear of religious discrimination when accessing mental health services and the impact of that fear, as well as other topics specifically related to this religious population's experience of mental health services are discussed. Within each subheading, results are organized in order of largest group to smallest group.

Total Number of Participants

Sixty-four participants completed the researcher's questionnaire (n = 64).

Number of Participants from Each Type of Earth-Centered Faith

This section describes the religious makeup of respondents based upon their self-identified labels, while the next describes the respondents based upon researcher-identified labels. 45.3% of respondents (n = 29) self-identified as practitioners of Paganism or Neopaganism. 18.8% of respondents (n = 12) self-identified as practitioners of Vodou. Another 17.2% of respondents (n = 11) self-identified as practitioners of Santería, Lucumi, or Ifa. 14.1% of respondents (n = 9) self-identified as practitioners of traditional aboriginal or Native American spirituality, while another 14.1% of respondents (n = 9) self-identified as practitioners of another earth/nature religion. Finally, 3.1% of respondents (n = 2) self-identified as practitioners of Candomblé or Umbanda (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents from Each Type of Earth Centered Faith

Type of Faith	n =	% =
Paganism/Neopaganism	29	45.3%
Vodou	12	18.8%
Santería/Lucumi/Ifa	11	17.2%
Traditional aboriginal or Native American	9	14.1%
Other earth/nature religion	9	14.1%
Candomblé/Umbanda	2	3.1%

Number of Participants from Each Researcher-Identified Categories of Earth-Centered Faith

Researcher identified terms include European/American Paganism (E/AP), Yoruban African diaspora faith, Dahomey African diaspora faith, traditional aboriginal or Native American spirituality (TNAS), and other earth or nature religions (OE/NR). In some sections of the results, Yoruban African diaspora faith and Dahomey African diaspora faith samples are combined for statistical analysis purposes, and referred to as African diaspora faith (ADF).

45.3% (n = 29) of respondents endorsed practicing European/American Paganism, 20.3% (n = 13) of respondents endorsed practicing Yoruban African diaspora faith, and 18.8% (n = 12) of respondents endorsed practicing Dahomey African diaspora faith. 14.1% (n = 9) of respondents endorsed practicing traditional aboriginal or Native American spirituality, and 14.1% (n = 9) of respondents endorsed practicing other earth or nature religions.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents from Researcher-Identified Categories of Earth Centered Faith

Categories of Faith	n =	% =
European/American Paganism	29	45.3%
Yoruban African diaspora faith	13	20.3%
Dahomey African diaspora faith	12	18.8%
Traditional aboriginal or Native American faith	9	14.1%
Other earth/nature religions	9	14.1%

European/American Paganism

Of the sample who identified as Pagan or Neopagan, 30.8% identified as Wiccan (n = 8), and 26.9% of those 22 respondents identified as Pagan (n = 7). 19.2% of the Pagan/Neopagan sample identified as Witches (n = 5), while 7.7% identified as Druids (n = 2). 7.7% (n = 2) also indicated that their spiritual path was not mentioned, and that they identified as Slavic/Baltic Romuva, and as a ceremonial magician and occultist. Finally, 3.8% of this population identified as Neopagan (n = 1), while another 3.8% identified as heathen (n = 1). (See Table 3 and Figure 2).

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Sects of European/American Paganism

Sects of Paganism	n =	% =
Wicca	8	30.8%
Paganism	7	26.9%
Witchcraft	5	19.2%
Druidism	2	7.7%
Ceremonial magic/occult	1	3.8%
Heathenism	1	3.8%
Neopaganism	1	3.8%
Slavic/Baltic Romuva	1	3.8%

Yoruban African diaspora religion

Of the sample who endorsed practicing Yoruban African diaspora religion, 11 (84.6% of this group) identified as practitioners of Santería, Lucumi, or Ifa. Of the Santería, Lucumi, and Ifa subset, 40% identified as aleyos. Another 30% of the subset identified as santeros/as while another 20% identified as babalorishas/iyalorishas. Finally, 10% of this sample identified as brujos/as (See Figure 3). Of the total sample who

endorsed practicing Yoruban African diaspora religion, 2 of this group identified as practitioners of Candomblé or Umbanda. One described her/himself as a babalawo, while the other described her/himself as an aleyo (see Tables 4, 5, and 6, as well as Figure 4).

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Sects of Yoruban African Diaspora Religion

Sects of Yoruban African Diaspora Faith	n =	% =
Santería/Lucumi/Ifa	11	84.6%
Candomblé or Umbanda	2	15.38%

Table 5

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Santerían/Lucumi/Ifa Religious Paths

Santerían/Lucumi/Ifa Religious Paths	n =	% =
Aleyo	4	40%
Santero/a	3	30%
Babalorisha/iyalorisha	3	20%
Brujo/a	1	10%

Table 6

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Candombleizero/Umbandan Religious Paths

Candombleizero/Umbandan Religious Paths	n =	% =
Aleyo	1	50%
Babalawo	1	50%

Dahomey African diaspora religion

Of the respondents who identified as practitioners of Vodou, 44.4% (n = 4) identified as mambos or houngans. Another 33.3% (n = 3) identified as hounsis, and the final 22.2% (n = 2) identified as vodouisants (see Table 7 and Figure 5).

Table 7

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Dahomey African Diaspora (Vodou) Religious Paths

Vodouisant Religious Paths	n =	% =
Mambo/houngan	4	44.4%
Hounsi	3	33.3%
Vodouisant	2	22.2%

Aboriginal and Native American spirituality

Of the respondents who identified as practitioners of traditional aboriginal or Native American spirituality, 55.6% identified as shamans (n = 5), and 33.3% (n = 3) identified as practitioners of traditional Native American spirituality. Finally, 11.1% identified as medicine women or men (n = 1) (see Table 8 and Figure 6).

Table 8

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Aboriginal and Native American Religious Paths

Aboriginal/Native American Religious Paths	n =	% =
Shaman	5	55.6%
Practitioner of aboriginal/Native American faith	3	33.3%
Medicine (wo)man	1	11.1%

Other earth and nature religions

Of the respondents who identified as practitioners of another earth/nature religion, 57.1% identified as devotees of eclectic earth-centered faith (n = 4). 42.9% of the sample (n = 3) indicated that their spiritual path was not mentioned, 1 of whom identified as a pantheist, 1 of whom identified as a shaman with a background in Wicca, and 1 of whom identified as a parapsychologist (see Table 9 and Figure 7).

Table 9

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Other Earth and Nature Religious Paths

Other Earth and Nature Religious Paths	n =	% =
Eclectic earth faith	4	57.1%
Pantheism	1	14.29%
Parapsychology	1	14.29%
Wicca-informed shamanism	1	14.29%

Participant Demographics and Diversity Variables

Respondent age and gender. Respondent ages ranged from 18 to 70, with a mean age of 41.3, and a median age of 42. 60.9% of respondents identified as women (n = 39), and 34.4% of respondents identified as men (n = 22). 3.1% of respondents identified as gender queer or androgynous (n = 2), and 1.6% (n = 1) identified as transgender (female to male transgender). (See Table 10 and Figure 8).

Table 10

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Gender Identity

Respondent Gender Identity	n =	% =
Woman	39	60.9%
Man	22	34.4%
Gender queer/androgynous	2	3.1%
FTM transgender	1	1.6%

Respondent race, ethnicity, and ancestral heritage. Approximately half of the total sample (48.4%, n = 31) identified as white/of European descent only. However, 9 respondents (14.1% of total sample) who identified as bi or multiracial cited white or European heritage, and 7 more respondents (11% of total sample) identified with another

racial or ethnic label, but also cited European heritage. Subsequently, 73.4% (n = 47) of the total sample cited some white or European heritage.

Table 11

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents with White Heritage

Respondent European/White Heritage	n =	% =
White/European heritage only	31	48.4%
White/European and one or more other heritages	16	25%
Total sample with White/European heritage	47	73.4%

Of the respondents who identified some European ancestry, 27.26% (n = 13) claimed Irish heritage, while another 23.4% of respondents (n = 11) cited Scottish heritage. 23.4% (n = 11) claimed German heritage, while another 19.1% (n = 9) of respondents cited English heritage. 10.6% of respondents (n = 5) cited Italian heritage, another 10.6% (n = 5) cited Polish heritage, and 8.5% % (n = 4) cited French heritage. 6.4% of respondents (n = 3) claimed Swedish heritage, and another 6.4% (n = 3) claimed Welsh heritage. 4.3% of the total sample (n = 2) cited Lithuanian heritage, 4.3% cited Russian heritage (n = 2), and another 4.3% claimed Swiss heritage (n = 2). Finally, Byelorussian (n = 1), Canadian (n = 1), Czechoslovakian (n = 1), Dutch (n = 1), Finnish (n = 1), Greek (n = 1), Hungarian (n = 1), Norwegian (n = 1), Portuguese (n = 1), Romanian (n = 1), Saxon (n = 1), Scandinavian (n = 1), Ukrainian (n = 1), and Vlachi (Slovakian Roma) (n = 1) heritage each respectively comprised another 2.1% of respondent heritage.

Table 12

Frequency and Percentage of White, Biracial, Multiracial, and Latino Respondents' Ancestral White/European Heritage

Ancestral European/White Heritage of Respondents	n =	% =
Irish	13	27.26%
Scottish	11	23.4%
German	11	23.4%
English	9	19.1%
Italian	5	10.6%
Polish	5	10.6%
French	4	8.5%
Swedish	3	6.4%
Welsh	3	6.4%
Lithuanian	2	4.3%
Russian	2	4.3%
Swiss	2	4.3%
Byelorussian	1	2.1%
Canadian	1	2.1%
Czechoslovakian	1	2.1%
Dutch	1	2.1%
Finnish	1	2.1%
Greek	1	2.1%
Hungarian	1	2.1%
Norwegian	1	2.1%
Portuguese	1	2.1%
Romanian	1	2.1%
Saxon	1	2.1%
Scandinavian	1	2.1%
Ukranian	1	2.1%
Vlachi	1	2.1%

22% of the total sample of respondents (n = 14) identified as black/of African descent. 50% of this sample (n = 7) identified as black/of African descent only, while 28.6% (n = 4) identified as biracial with some black/African heritage, and 21.43% (n = 3) identified as multiracial with some black/African heritage. Respondents cited Brazilian (n = 1, 7.1% of sample), Congolese (n = 1, 7.1% of sample), Jamaican (n = 1, 7.1% of

sample), Puerto Rican (n = 1, 7.1% of sample), and Trinidadian (n = 1, 7.1% of sample) heritage.

Table 13

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents with Black/African Heritage

Respondent Black/African Heritage	n =	% =
Black/African heritage only	7	50%
Black/African and one or more other heritages	7	50%
Total sample with Black/African heritage	14	21.9%

Table 14

Frequency and Percentage of Black/African/African-American Respondents' Ancestral Black/African Heritage

Ancestral Black/African Heritage of Respondents	n =	% =
Brazilian	1	7.1%
Congolese	1	7.1%
Jamaican	1	7.1%
Puerto Rican	1	7.1%
Trinidadian	1	7.1%

14.1% of all respondents (n = 9) identified as aboriginal or Native American, while 22.2% (n = 2) of this subset identified as aboriginal or Native American only. 44.4% of those who cited aboriginal heritage along with other heritage identified as biracial (n = 4), and cited aboriginal and white/European heritage (n = 3) and aboriginal and black/African heritage (n = 1). Another 33.3% (n = 3) of this group identified as multiracial, and cited aboriginal, white/European, and black/African heritage (n = 2) and aboriginal, Latino, and white/European heritage (n = 1). Tribal heritage among this group included Cherokee (22.2%, n = 2), Apache, Arawak, Cayuga, Mohawk, Shoshone, and

Taino (11.1%, n = 1 respectively). Tribal heritage also included First 6 Nations Canada, and indigenous Georgian, Mexican, and South Carolinian (11.1%, n = 1 respectively).

Table 15

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents with Aboriginal/Native American Heritage

Respondent Aboriginal/Native American Heritage	n =	% =
Aboriginal/Native American heritage only	2	22.2%
Aboriginal/Native American and one or more other heritages	7	77.7%
Total sample with Aboriginal/Native American heritage	9	14.1%

Table 16

Frequency and Percentage of Aboriginal/Native American Respondents' Ancestral Aboriginal/Native American Heritage

Ancestral Aboriginal Heritage/Tribe(s) of Respondents	n =	% =
Cherokee	2	22.2%
Apache	1	11.1%
Arawak	1	11.1%
Cayuga	1	11.1%
Mohawk	1	11.1%
Shoshone	1	11.1%
Taino	1	11.1%
First 6 Nations Canadian	1	11.1%
Indigenous Georgian	1	11.1%
Indigenous Mexican	1	11.1%
Indigenous South Carolinan	1	11.1%

10.9% of respondents (n = 7) identified as Latino, while 42.9% (n = 3) of this subset identified as Latino only. 28.6% of this subset cited Latino heritage as well as one other heritage, and identified as biracial (Latino and black: n = 1, Latino and white: n = 1). Another 28.6% of this subset cited Latino heritage as well as 2 or more other heritages, and identified as multiracial (Latino, white, and black: n = 1, Latino, aboriginal, and white: n = 1). 28.6% of respondents that identified as Latino cited

Mexican heritage (n = 2), while another 28.6% cited Cuban-American heritage (n = 2). Other heritages cited included Cuban, Mexican-American, and Venezuelan (14.3%, n = 1, respectively).

Table 17

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents with Latino Heritage

Respondent Latino American Heritage	n =	% =
Latino heritage only	3	42.9%
Latino and one or more other heritages	4	57.14%
Total sample with Latino heritage	9	10.9%

Table 18

Frequency and Percentage of Latino Respondents' Ancestral Latino Heritage

Ancestral Latino Heritage of Respondents	n =	% =
Cuban-American	2	28.6%
Mexican	2	28.6%
Cuban	1	14.3%
Mexican-American	1	14.3%
Venezuelan	1	14.3%

10.9% of the total sample (n = 7) identified as biracial. Of this 10.9% biracial sample, 42.9% (n = 3) identified as white and aboriginal. The remainder of this subset identified as Latino and aboriginal, Latino and black, or Latino and white (14.3%, n = 1, respectively). Moreover, 9.4% of respondents (n = 6) identified as multiracial. Of this 9.4% sample, 33.3% (n = 2) identified as aboriginal, black, and white, while another 33.3% (n = 2) identified as aboriginal, Latino, and white. The remainder of this subset identified as black, Latino, and white; or as Latino only (16.6%, n = 1, respectively).One individual identified as multiracial, but did not specify her/his racial and ethnic heritage (16.6%, n = 1).

Table 19

Frequency and Percentage of Biracial and Multiracial Respondents

Respondent Racial Heritage	n =	% =
Biracial	7	10.9%
Multiracial	6	9.4%

Table 20

Frequency and Percentage of Biracial and Multiracial Respondents Ancestral Heritage

Ancestral Heritage of Biracial/Multiracial Respondents	n =	% =
Biracial	6	9.4%
White and aboriginal	3	42.9%
Latino and aboriginal	1	14.3%
Latino and black	1	14.3%
Latino and white	1	14.3%
Multiracial	6	9.4%
Aboriginal, black, and white	2	33.3%
Aboriginal, Latino, and white	2	33.3%
Black, Latino, and white	1	16.6%
Latino only	1	16.6%

Finally, 1 respondent (2.2% of total sample) indicated that her/his race/ethnicity was not mentioned, and that (s)he identified as racially Jewish.

Respondent race/ethnicity by religion. As many earth-centered faiths tend to differ from one another based upon not only specific beliefs, but also by devotee racial and ethnic background, respondent race and ethnicity is presented in this section based upon religious path. The majority of European/American Pagans (E/APs) identified as white/of European descent (n = 30, 93.8% of Pagan sample). The minority of E/APs identified as aboriginal/indigenous, black/of African descent, Latino/Hispanic, and/or

biracial (n = 2, 6.3% of Pagan sample, respectively). Finally, one E/AP identified as multiracial (n = 1, 3.1% of Pagan sample).

Table 21

Frequency and Percentage of European/American Pagans' Racial/Ethnic Identity

E/AP Racial Identity	n =	% =
White/of European descent	30	93.8%
Aboriginal/Indigenous	2	6.3%
Black/of African descent	2	6.3%
Latino/Hispanic	2	6.3%
Biracial	2	6.3%
Multiracial	1	3.1%
Total E/AP sample	32	50%

The majority of African diaspora faith (ADF) devotees identified as black/of African descent (n = 11, 47.8% of ADF sample). The next largest group identified as white/of European descent (n = 9, 39.1% of ADF sample). The third largest group of ADF devotees identified as Latino/Hispanic (n = 6, 26.1%). The next largest group of ADF devotees identified as aboriginal/indigenous and/or multiracial (n = 5, 21.7% of African diaspora sample). Finally, 4 devotees of African diaspora faith identified as biracial (n = 4, 17.4% of ADF sample).

Table 22

Frequency and Percentage of African Diaspora Faith Devotees' Racial/Ethnic Identity

ADF Devotees' Racial Identity	n =	% =
Black/of African descent	11	47.8%
White/of European descent	9	39.1%
Latino/Hispanic	6	26.1%
Aboriginal/Indigenous	5	21.7%
Multiracial	5	21.7%
Biracial	4	17.4%
Total ADF sample	23	36%

The majority of devotees of traditional Native American spirituality (TNAS) identified as white/of European descent (n = 8, 88.9% of TNAS sample). The next largest group of devotees of TNAS identified as aboriginal/indigenous (n = 4, 44.4% of TNAS sample). Finally, three devotees of TNAS identified as biracial (n = 3, 14.1% of TNAS sample).

Table 23

Frequency and Percentage of Traditional Native American Spirituality Devotees' Racial/Ethnic Identity

TNAS Devotees' Racial Identity	n =	% =
White/of European descent	8	88.9%
Aboriginal/Indigenous	4	44.4%
Biracial	3	33.3%
Total TNAS sample	9	14.1%

The majority of devotees of other earth/nature religions (OE/NRs) identified as white/of European descent (n = 7, 77.8% of OE/NRs sample). The minority of devotees of OE/NRs identified as black/of African descent (n = 2, 22.2% of OE/NRs sample), and/or multiracial (n = 1, 11.1% of OE/NRs sample).

Table 24

Frequency and Percentage of Other Earth/Nature Religion Devotees' Racial/Ethnic Identity

Respondent Racial Identity	n =	% =
White/of European descent	7	77.8%
Black/of African descent	2	22.2%
Multiracial	1	11.1%
Total other earth/nature religion sample	9	14.1%

Respondent socioeconomic status. The majority of respondents (50.8%, n = 32) identified socioeconomically as middle class. The next most prevalent socioeconomic statuses were lower middle class and upper middle class, characterizing 22.2% (n = 14) and 19% (n = 12) of respondents respectively. Finally, 6.3% of respondents (n = 4) socioeconomically identified as lower class, while 1.6% (n = 1) identified as upper class (see Table 25 and Figure 9).

Table 25

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Socioeconomic Status

Respondent Socioeconomic Status	n =	% =
Middle class	32	50.8%
Lower middle class	14	22.2%
Upper middle class	12	19%
Lower class	4	6.3%
Upper class	1	1.6%

Respondent disability status. 17.5% of respondents (n = 11) indicated that they have a disability, while 82.5% (n = 52) identified as able-bodied (see Figure 10). Of the 17.5% who indicated that they have a disability, 36.4% (n = 4) indicated that their disability is congenital, while another 63.6% (n = 7) indicated that their disability is acquired (see Tables 26, 27 and Figure 11).

Table 26

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Disability Status

Respondent Disability Status	n =	% =
Have a disability	11	17.5%
Do not have a disability	52	82.5%

Table 27

Frequency and Percentage of Disability Types

Respondent Disability Type	n =	% =
Have a congenital disability	11	17.5%
Have an acquired disability	7	63.6%

Respondent sexual orientation. 58.7% of respondents (n = 37) identified as heterosexual. 12.7% identified as bisexual (n = 8), and another 9.5% identified as gay (n = 6). 6.3% of respondents (n = 4) identified as lesbian, 4.8% of respondents (n = 3) identified as omni/pansexual, and another 4.8% of respondents (n = 3) indicated that their sexual orientation was not mentioned. Of these 3, 1 identified as questioning, another identified as bicurious, and the last stated that (s)he is not attracted to cisgendered men. Finally, 3.2% of respondents (n = 2) identified as asexual (see Table 28 and Figure 12).

Table 28

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Sexual Orientation

Respondent Sexual Orientation	n =	% =
Heterosexual	37	58.7%
Bisexual	8	12.7%
Gay	6	9.5%
Lesbian	4	6.3%
Omni/pansexual	3	4.8%
Asexual	2	3.2%
Questioning	1	1.6%
Bicurious	1	1.6%
Attracted to partners other than cisgendered men	1	1.6%

Respondent inherited religiosity. Interestingly, only 6.25% of respondents (n = 4) indicated that they were raised in a family that practiced earth religion, while 93.75% of respondents (n = 60) indicated that they were raised in a family that did not practice earth religion. Of the individuals who were raised in earth religious homes, 2 originated from families that practiced Lucumi (3.1% of total sample), 1 grew up in a family that practiced heathenism (1.6% of total sample), while the other was raised in a family that practices Palo Mayombe (1.6% of total sample) (see Table 29 and Figure 13).

Table 29

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Inherited Religiosity: Basic

Respondent Inherited Religiosity	n =	% =
Raised in earth religious homes	4	6.25%
Not raised in earth religious homes	60	93.75%

Of the respondents who were not raised in earth religious homes, the majority indicated that they were raised Catholic (39.1% of total sample, n = 25). 10.9% of total respondents disclosed being raised in a non-denominational Christian home (n = 7), while 9.4% of respondents (n = 6) stated that they were raised Methodist Christian. Another 7.8% of respondents (n = 5) indicated that they were not raised in any particular religious tradition, while 6.25% of respondents (n = 4) indicated that they were raised Baptist Christian. An additional 6.25% of respondents (n = 4) disclosed growing up in a Protestant Christian family. 3.12% of respondents (n = 2) stated that they were raised in agnostic homes, and an additional 3.12% of respondents (n = 2) described being raised Presbyterian Christian. Finally, other faiths practiced in the homes of respondents included Eastern Orthodox Christianity, fundamentalist Christianity, Greek Orthodox

Christianity, Judaism, Lutheran Christianity, Neo-Christianity, Seventh Day Adventist Christianity, and Southern Baptist/Evangelical Christianity (1.6%, n = 1 for each religious tradition).

Table 30

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Inherited Religiosity: Detailed

Religion practiced by respondents' family of origin	n =	% =
Earth Religion	4	6.25%
Lucumi	2	50%
Heathenism	1	25%
Palo Mayombe	1	25%
Other Religions	60	93.75%
Catholicism	25	39.1%
Non-denominational Christianity	7	10.9%
Methodist Christianity	6	9.4%
No religion	5	7.8%
Baptist Christianity	4	6.25%
Protestant Christianity	4	6.25%
Agnostic	2	3.12%
Presbyterian Christianity	2	3.12%
Eastern Orthodox Christianity	1	1.6%
Fundamentalist Christianity	1	1.6%
Greek Orthodox Christianity	1	1.6%
Judaism	1	1.6%
Lutheran Christianity	1	1.6%
Neo-Christianity	1	1.6%
Seventh Day Adventist Christianity	1	1.6%
Southern Baptist/Evangelical Christianity	1	1.6%

Salience of Spirituality to Respondents' Identities

When asked to rate their spirituality, age, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and sexual orientation in order of salience to their identity, the majority of participants (61.9%, n = 39) rated their spirituality as *extremely* important to their

identity, while 27% of participants (n = 17) rated their spirituality as *very important* to their identity. 6.3% of participants (n = 4) rated their spirituality as *moderately important* to their identity, while 3.2% (n = 2) rated their spirituality as *not at all important* to their identity. Finally, 1.6% of respondents (n = 1) rated their spirituality as of *low importance* to their identity.

Table 31

Frequency and Percentage of the Salience of Spirituality to Respondent Identity

Salience of Spirituality to ID	n =	% =
Extremely important	39	61.9%
Very important	17	27%
Moderately important	4	6.3%
Not at all important	2	3.2%
Of low importance	1	1.6%

Chi square analyses were performed to identify any statistical differences between religious groups' ranking of the salience of spirituality to identity. Participants' rankings of the salience of their spirituality to their identity were averaged, then were divided into "at or above average salience" and "below average salience" groups. A chi square performed on the at or above average salience group revealed no significant differences between European/American Pagans' and African diaspora faith devotees' ranking of the salience of their spirituality to their identity, χ^2 (1, N = 44) = 1.455, $p > .05$. A chi square performed on the below average salience group also revealed no significant differences between European/American Pagans' and African diaspora faith devotees' ranking of the salience of their spirituality to their identity, χ^2 (1, N = 5) = 0.200, $p > .05$.

Salience of Race/Ethnicity to Respondents' Identities

When asked to rank their race/ethnicity in respect to its salience to their identity, the majority of participants (61.9%, n = 39) rated their spirituality as *extremely* important to their identity, while 27% of participants (n = 17) rated their spirituality as *very important* to their identity. 6.3% of participants (n = 4) rated their spirituality as *moderately important* to their identity, while 3.2% (n = 2) rated their spirituality as *not at all important* to their identity. Finally, 1.6% of respondents (n = 1) rated their spirituality as of *low importance* to their identity.

Table 32

Frequency and Percentage of the Salience of Race/Ethnicity to Respondent Identity

Salience of Race/Ethnicity to ID	n =	% =
Extremely important	6	9.5%
Very important	10	15.9%
Moderately important	12	19%
Neutral	16	25.4%
Slightly important	4	6.3%
Of low importance	6	9.5%
Not at all important	9	14.3%

Chi square analyses were performed to identify any statistical differences between religious groups' ranking of the salience of race/ethnicity to identity. Participants' rankings of the salience of their race/ethnicity to their identity were averaged, then were divided into "at or above average salience" and "below average salience" groups. A chi square performed on the at or above average salience group revealed no significant differences between European/American Pagans' and African diaspora faith devotees' ranking of the salience of their race/ethnicity to their identity, χ^2 (1, N = 35) = 0.029, p > .05. However, a chi square performed on the below average salience group revealed

significant differences between European/American Pagans' and African diaspora faith devotees' ranking of the salience of their race/ethnicity to their identity, χ^2 (1, N = 14) = 4.571, p = 0.033. Subsequently, statistically more European/American Pagans than devotees of African diaspora faith ranked their race/ethnicity as of below average importance to their identity.

Respondent Attributions of Distress

The majority of participants who responded to questions asking about their understanding of significant distress that interfered with their daily functioning attributed that distress to mental health diagnoses (n = 15). The next most common attributions were work (n = 12) or relationships with other people (n = 11). The third most common attributions of distress were financial concerns (n = 6), self (n = 6), and trauma/disempowerment (n = 6). The fourth most common attribution of distress was day-to-day stress (n = 5), and spiritual causes (n = 5). Physical illness/pain and imbalance in the respondent's life or the world were tied for the fifth most common attribution of distress (n = 3 for both). Finally, the least frequently cited attributions of distress were bad luck or uncontrollable events, major life changes, and isolation/loneliness (n = 2 for each).

These responses were then grouped into secular and spiritual or oppression-related attributions. Participants who responded to questions about their understanding of significant distress and attributed it to secular causes most often attributed that distress to mental health diagnoses (n = 15). The next most common secular attributions were work (n = 12) or relationships with other people (n = 11). The third most common secular attributions of distress were financial concerns (n = 6) and self (n = 6), while the fourth

most common secular attribution was day-to-day stress (n = 5). Physical illness/pain was the fifth most common secular attribution of distress (n = 3), and the sixth most common secular attributions of distress were the bad luck or uncontrollable events, major life changes, and isolation/loneliness (n = 2 for each).

Spiritual and oppression-related attributions of distress were grouped together and differentiated from secular attributions of distress in this analysis. This decision was made because in numerous cases, respondents cited religious or spiritually-themed experiences of trauma or oppression (e.g., being bullied because of practicing a minority faith). Trauma, oppression, and disempowerment accounted for the most common non-secular attributions of distress (n = 6, fourth most common attribution of distress in reference to total sample). Spiritual causes accounted for the second most common non-secular attribution of distress (n = 5, fifth most common attribution of distress in reference to total sample), while imbalance in the respondent's life or world was the third most common non-secular attribution of distress (n = 3, sixth most common attribution of distress in reference to total sample).

These responses somewhat coincide with Almeida, Stawski, & Cichy's identified common forms of daily stress (2010). Relationships with other people and isolation/loneliness can be re-termed as Almeida, Stawski, & Cichy's "interpersonal tensions;" while work, financial concerns, environmental/situational circumstances, bad luck/uncontrollable events, and major life changes could be re-termed as Almeida, Stawski, & Cichy's "overloads" (2010). Similarly, day-to-day stress, environmental/situational circumstances, bad luck/uncontrollable events, and major life changes, depending upon participant's definition, could also be re-termed as Almeida,

Stawski, & Cichy's "network events." However, mental health diagnoses (the number one participant identified attribution of distress), self (tied for fourth most common participant identified attribution of distress), trauma, oppression, or disempowerment (tied for fourth most common attribution of distress), spiritual causes (tied for fifth most common attribution of distress), physical illness/pain (tied for sixth most common attribution of distress), and imbalance in the respondent's life or world (tied for sixth most common attribution of distress) are not clearly accounted for by Almeida, Stawski, & Cichy's daily stressful events model (2010).

Table 33

Frequency and Ranking of Respondents' Attributions of Distress

Secular Attributions of Distress	n =	Total sample ranking =
Mental health diagnoses	15	#1
Work (excluding work relationships)	12	#2
Relationships with other people	11	#3
Financial concerns	6	#4
Self	6	#4
Day-to-day stress	5	#5
Physical illness/pain	3	#6
Environmental/situational circumstances	2	#7
Bad luck/uncontrollable events	2	#7
Major life changes	2	#7
Isolation/loneliness	2	#7
Spiritual and Oppression-Related Attributions of Distress	**n =**	**Total sample ranking =**
Trauma/oppression/disempowerment	6	#4
Spiritual causes	5	#5
Imbalance in respondent's life or the world	3	#6

Respondents' Preferred Methods for Coping with Distress

Preferred secular coping methods. Coping methods cited by participants were categorized as secular or as non-secular (spiritual). Friends were respondents' most commonly cited secular resource accessed to cope with distress (n = 32). Family and mental health services were tied as the next most commonly cited secular resource for coping (n = 23 for each). Self (n = 8) and partner or spouse (n = 8) were tied as the third most prevalent secular resource cited for coping with distress. Medical professionals and movement and exercise were tied as the fourth most common secular way of dealing with significant distress (n = 3 for each). Journaling and accessing supportive organizations (such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, the Veterans Administration, etc.) were tied as the fifth most commonly cited secular way respondents dealt with distress (n = 2 for each). Finally, solitude, the internet, hobbies, drugs or alcohol, stoic philosophy, and self-hypnosis were the least commonly cited secular coping strategies (n = 1 for each).

Preferred spiritual coping methods. Religion or the divine was the most common spiritual coping method cited by participants who answered questions inquiring about their preferred ways of dealing with distress (n = 23, tied as one of the second most common *overall* coping method cited by participants). Spiritual leaders, elders, and counselors were the second most common spiritual coping method cited by participants (n = 18, accounted for the third most common *overall* coping method cited by participants). Meditation and prayer were the third most commonly cited spiritual method of coping (n = 9, accounted for the fourth most common *overall* coping method cited by participants). Religious rituals (different from those of meditation and prayer) were the

fourth most commonly cited spiritual coping resource (n = 7, accounted for the sixth most common *overall* coping method). Appealing to deceased ancestors and spending time in nature were tied as the fifth most common spiritual way of dealing with significant distress (n = 3 for each, tied as one of the seventh most common *overall* coping methods cited by participants). Finally, seeking out religious peers and/or spiritual community was the sixth most commonly cited spiritual way respondents dealt with distress (n = 2, tied as one of the eighth most commonly cited *overall* coping methods).

Similar to participant attributions of distress, participant identified ways of coping somewhat coincided with research findings pertaining to other population's coping methods. Folkman & Lazarus (1985) identified eight common ways that individuals cope with stressful events: problem focused coping, wishful thinking, distancing or detachment, seeking social support, emphasizing the positive, self-blame, tension reduction, and self-isolation. One could categorize some of the coping methods identified by participants as falling within these categories.

For example, mental health services, medical professionals, accessing supportive organizations, self-hypnosis, and spiritual leaders/elders/counselors (if the problem was conceptualized as a spiritual one) could all be identified as problem-focused coping. Utilizing the internet, hobbies, drugs or alcohol, and referring to stoic philosophy could be identified as distancing or detaching coping methods. Seeking the support of mental health services, medical professionals, friends, family, partners/spouses, supportive organizations, spiritual leaders/elders/counselors, and religious peers/community can all be conceptualized as forms of coping via social support. Referring to stoic philosophy and engaging in self-hypnosis could also potentially be categorized as forms of self-

blame coping; however, this categorization would depend upon how the participant understood and engaged in these activities. Additionally, movement and exercise, journaling, hobbies, using the internet, and drugs and alcohol could be categorized as tension reduction coping, while solitude and internet usage (depending upon the way it was used) could be categorized as self-isolation coping.

Based upon this coping method framework, many of the coping methods identified by participants fell into the categories of problem-focused, detached/distancing, social support, self-blame, tension-reduction, and self-isolation coping. However, none of the coping methods identified by participants clearly fell into the categories of emphasizing the positive or wishful thinking coping. Additionally, participants also identified the religion/divine, meditation and prayer, religious rituals, appealing to deceased ancestors, nature, and "self" (not elaborated upon) as commonly used methods of coping with distress, which are not accounted for by the categories of problem-focused, detached/distancing, social support, self-blame, tension-reduction, self-isolation, emphasizing the positive, or wishful thinking coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

Table 34

Frequency and Ranking of Respondents' Preferred Methods for Coping with Distress

Preferred Secular Coping Methods	n =	Total sample ranking =
Friends	32	#1
Family	23	#2
Mental health services	23	#2
Self	8	#5
Partner/spouse	8	#5
Medical professionals	3	#7
Movement and exercise	3	#7
Journaling	2	#8
Accessing supportive organizations	2	#8

Solitude	1	#9
The internet	1	#9
Hobbies	1	#9
Drugs/alcohol	1	#9
Stoic philosophy	1	#9
Self-hypnosis	1	#9

Preferred Spiritual Coping Methods	n =	Total sample ranking =
Religion/the Divine	23	#2
Spiritual leaders/elders/counselors	18	#3
Meditation and prayer	9	#4
Religious rituals	7	#6
Appealing to deceased ancestors	3	#7
Nature	3	#7
Seeking out religious peers/community	2	#8

Availability of and Respondent Willingness to Seek Mental Health Services

96.7% of respondents (n = 58) indicated that mental health services were available in their community. 1.7% (n = 1) indicated that they were unsure if services were available, and another 1.7% (n = 1) indicated that services were not available (see Table 35 and Figure 14).

Table 35

Frequency and Percentage of Availability of Mental Health Services to Respondents

Availability of Mental Health Services	n =	% =
Services available	58	96.7%
Unsure if services available	1	1.7%
Services not available	1	1.7%

73% of participants (n = 44) indicated that they would be willing to seek mental health services if their first interventions or efforts to relieve distress didn't work. 27% of participants (n = 16) indicated that they would not be willing to seek mental health

services if their first efforts to relieve distress did not work (see Figure 15). Of the 27% who would not seek services, the most commonly cited reasons were feeling as if they had other resources they would use to cope with the distress (n = 5), or that their spirituality/worldview would not be understood (n = 3). Other reasons for not seeking mental health services included: using spiritual sources to cope, privacy/disclosure concerns, not believing in mental health services, not believing that her/his problems can be solved, and not being able to afford services (n = 1 for each).

Table 36

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Willingness to Seek Mental Health Services

Degree of Willingness	n =	% =
Would seek services	44	73%
Would not seek services	16	16%

Table 37

Frequency and Ranking of Reasons Why Respondents Would Not Seek Mental Health Services

Reason	n =	Ranking =
Have other resources to cope	5	#1
Believe spirituality/worldview would be misunderstood	3	#2
Use spiritual resources to cope	1	#3
Privacy/disclosure concerns	1	#3
Do not believe in mental health services	1	#3
Do not believe problems can be solved	1	#3
Cannot afford services	1	#3

Chi square analyses were performed to identify any statistical differences between religious groups' willingness to seek mental health services if their first efforts to resolve distress failed. No statistical differences were found between African diaspora faith

devotees' and European/American Pagans' willingness, χ^2 (1, N = 34) = 1.882, p > .05, or unwillingness, χ^2 (1, N = 13) = 0.077, p > .05 to seek mental health services.

Respondents' Perceived Benefit of Mental Health Services

73.3% of respondents (n = 44) indicated that they believed mental health services would be helpful to them if they were experiencing significant distress that interfered with their daily functioning. 18.3% (n = 11) stated that they did not believe mental health services would be helpful, and 8.3% (n = 5) stated that they were unsure if mental health services would be helpful if they were experiencing significant distress that interfered with their daily functioning (see Table 38 and Figure 16).

Table 38

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Who Believed Mental Health Services Could Help Them Personally

Belief in helpfulness of services	n =	% =
Would be helpful	44	73.3%
Would not be helpful	11	18.3%
Unsure if services would be helpful	5	8.3%

In contrast, 51.7% of respondents (n = 31) indicated that they believed mental health services would be helpful to someone else of the same faith if (s)he was experiencing significant distress that interfered with her/his daily functioning. Another 40% (n = 24) stated that they were unsure if mental health services would be helpful to someone else of the same faith. Finally, 8.3% of respondents (n = 5) indicated that they did not believe mental health services would be helpful to someone else of the same faith if (s)he was experiencing significant distress that interfered with her/his daily functioning (see Figure 17).

Table 39

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Who Believed Mental Health Services Could Help Others of the Same Faith

Belief in helpfulness of services	n =	% =
Would be helpful	31	51.7%
Unsure if services would be helpful	24	40%
Would not be helpful	5	8.3%

Chi square analyses were performed to identify any statistical differences between religious groups' perceived benefit of mental health services. No statistical differences were found between African diaspora faith devotees' and European/American Pagans' belief that services would be helpful to them personally, χ^2 (1, N = 39) = 1.256, $p > .05$, or unhelpful to them personally, χ^2 (1, N = 13) = 0.000, $p > .05$. Moreover, no statistical differences were found between African diaspora faith devotees' and European/American Pagans' belief that services would be helpful to others' in their religious community, χ^2 (1, N = 27) = 1.815, $p > .05$, or unhelpful to others' in their religious community, χ^2 (1, N = 4) = 0.00, $p > .05$.

Religious Discrimination

Respondents' fear of religious discrimination. 23.3% of respondents (n = 14) reported feeling neutral[ly] regarding the fear of religious discrimination when considering seeking mental health services. However, 41.7% of all respondents reported experiencing some fear of religious discrimination when considering seeking mental health services (*very afraid* = 11.7%, n = 7; *somewhat afraid* = 30%, n = 18). In contrast, 35% of all respondents reported not experiencing fear of religious discrimination when

considering seeking mental health services (*not afraid* = 16.7%, n = 10; *not at all afraid* = 18.3%, n = 11) (see Table 40 and Figure 18).

Table 40

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Who Feared Religious Discrimination When Considering Seeking Mental Health Services

Fear of Discrimination	n =	% =
Somewhat afraid	18	30%
Very afraid	7	11.7%
Neutral (neither afraid nor unafraid)	14	23.3%
Not afraid	10	16.7%
Not at all afraid	11	18.3%

Chi square analyses were performed to identify any statistical differences between religious groups' reported fear of religious discrimination. Participants' ratings of their fear of encountering religious discrimination when seeking mental health services were averaged, then were divided into "at or above average fear level" and "below average fear level" groups. A chi square performed on the at or above average fear level group yielded results that approached statistical differences between European/American Pagans and African diaspora faith devotees, χ^2 (1, N = 35) = 3.667, p = 0.056. Specifically, European/American Pagans endorsed fear of religious discrimination when considering seeking mental health services a rate that approached being statistically higher than the rate reported by devotees of African diaspora faith. A chi square performed on the below average fear group, however, revealed no significant differences between European/American Pagans' and African diaspora faith devotees' fear of religious discrimination, χ^2 (1, N = 14) = 0.00, p > .05.

69.2% of respondents (n = 27) indicated that their fear of religious discrimination did not prevent them from seeking mental health services. However, 20.5% (n = 8) stated that fear of religious discrimination did prevent them from seeking mental health services, and another 10.3% (n = 4) noted that they were unsure if fear of religious discrimination impacted their service-seeking patterns (see Table 41 and Figure 19).

Table 41

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Who Did Not Seek Mental Health Services Due to Fear of Religious Discrimination

Impact of Fear of Discrimination	n =	% =
Did not prevent service-seeking	27	69.2%
Prevented service-seeking	8	20.5%
Unsure if fear impacted service-seeking	4	10.3%

Chi square analyses were performed to locate any significant differences between religious groups' service-seeking frequencies due to the impact of fear of religious discrimination. No statistical differences were found between African diaspora faith devotees and European/American Pagans who sought mental health services, despite fear of religious discrimination, χ^2 (1, N = 23) = 1.087, $p > .05$, nor were any differences found between African diaspora faith devotees and European/American Pagans who did not seek mental health services due to fear of religious discrimination, χ^2 (1, N = 7) = 0.147, $p > .05$.

Respondents' experience of religious discrimination. 76.7% (n = 46) of all respondents stated that they have received mental health services (operationalized as attending therapy, seeing a psychiatrist, or receiving services from a social worker) in the past. Conversely, 23.3% of respondents indicated that they have not received mental

health services in the past (n = 14). (See Figure 20). Chi square analyses were performed to locate any significant differences between religious groups' frequencies of seeking mental health services. No statistical differences were found among the number of European/American Pagans and African diaspora faith devotees who have received mental health services, χ^2 (1, N = 39) = 2.077, $p > .05$, nor were statistical differences found among the number of European/American Pagans and African diaspora faith devotees who have not received mental health services, χ^2 (1, N = 8) = 0.500, $p > .05$.

Of the respondent sample who stated that they had received mental health services, 78.3% (n = 36) indicated that they had not experienced religious discrimination or persecution by past mental health providers. However, 13% (n = 6) indicated that they had experienced religious discrimination, and another 8.7% (n = 4) indicated that they were unsure if they were treated in a discriminatory manner because of their religion (see Table 42 and Figure 21).

Table 42

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Who Experienced Religious Discrimination When Seeking Mental Health Services

Experienced Discrimination When Seeking Services	n =	% =
Have not experienced religious discrimination	36	78.3%
Have experienced religious discrimination	6	13%
Unsure if experienced religious discrimination	4	8.7%

Chi square analyses were performed to locate any significant differences between religious groups' experience of religious discrimination. Only European/American Pagans endorsed experiencing religious discrimination when seeking mental health services, thus, a chi square could not be performed. However, groups of both

European/American Pagans and African diaspora faith devotees denied experiencing religious discrimination when seeking mental health services, thus a chi square was performed on these groups. No statistical differences were found between European/American Pagans and African diaspora faith devotees who denied experiencing religious discrimination when seeking mental health services, χ^2 (1, N = 30) = 0.00, p > .05.

Respondents' Experiences with Mental Health Services and Religiosity

Respondent disclosure of religious orientation to mental health providers. Over one-third of participants (39.1%, n = 18) indicated that they disclosed their spirituality to their mental health provider. 21.7% of respondents (n = 10) indicated that they sometimes disclose their spirituality to their mental health provider, while another 21.7% of respondents (n = 10) indicated that they did not disclose their spirituality to their mental health provider. Finally, 17.4% of respondents (n = 8) indicated that their mental health provider did not ask them about their spirituality (see Table 43 and Figure 22).

Table 43

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Who Disclosed Their Spirituality When Seeking Mental Health Services

Disclosure of Spirituality	n =	% =
Disclosed spirituality	18	39.1%
Sometimes disclosed spirituality	10	21.7%
Did not disclose spirituality	10	21.7%
Not asked about spirituality by provider	8	17.4%

Chi square analyses were performed to locate any significant differences between religious groups' disclosure of spirituality. Statistical differences were found between

religious groups who did disclose their spirituality, χ^2 (1, N = 16) = 6.250, p = 0.012, but not between groups that did not, χ^2 (1, N = 8) = 2.00, p > .05, or only sometimes, χ^2 (1, N = 9) = 1.00, p > .05, disclose their spirituality. European/American Pagans disclosed their spirituality to their mental health provider at a statistically significantly higher rate than practitioners of African diaspora faiths. However, no statistical differences were found between religious groups who did not or only sometimes disclose their spirituality to their mental health provider.

Mental health providers' comprehension of respondents' religion. Overall, the majority of respondents indicated that mental health providers' understood their faith *neither poorly nor well* (52.8%, n = 19). 19.4% of respondents indicated that their mental health provider understood their faith *well* (n = 7), whereas 13.9% of respondents felt that their mental health provider understood their faith *poorly* (n = 5). Another 8.3% stated that they felt their faith was understood *very poorly* (n = 3). Finally, 5.6% (n = 2) of respondents indicated feeling as if their faith was understood *very well* (see Table 44 and Figure 23).

Table 44

Frequency and Percentage of Mental Health Providers' Comprehension of Respondents' Spirituality

Degree of Comprehension	n =	% =
Neither poorly nor well	19	52.8%
Well	7	19.4%
Very well	2	5.6%
Poorly	5	13.9%
Very poorly	3	8.3%

Chi square analyses were performed to locate any significant differences between religious groups' perceptions of their mental health providers' understanding of their spirituality. Participants' ratings of their perception of their mental health providers' understanding of their faith were averaged, then were divided into "at or above average understanding" and "below average fear understanding" groups. A chi square performed on the at or above average understanding group yielded results that approached statistical differences between European/American Pagans and African diaspora faith devotees, χ^2 $(1, N = 24) = 2.667, p = 0.102$. Specifically, European/American Pagans rated their mental health providers' understanding of their faith at a rate that approached being statistically higher than the rate reported by devotees of African diaspora faith.

Additionally, a chi square performed on the below average understanding group yielded results that approached statistical differences between European/American Pagans and African diaspora faith devotees, χ^2 $(1, N = 7) = 3.571, p = 0.059$. Specifically, European/American Pagans rated their mental health providers' understanding of their faith at a rate that approached being statistically lower than the rate reported by devotees of African diaspora faith. Subsequently, European/American Pagans rated their mental health providers' understanding of their faith in more extreme terms than devotees of African diaspora faith, and did so at a rate that approached statistical significance.

Mental health providers' religious behaviors and communications. The majority of respondents indicated that they have never had a mental health provider proselytize to them or try to convert them to another faith (82.6% n = 38). However, 15.2% (n = 7) endorsed having a mental health provider who proselytized to them and/or

attempted to convert them to another faith (see Table 45 and Figure 24), while another 2.2% (n = 1) were unsure if a mental health provider ever proselytized to them or tried to convert them.

Table 45

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Who Were Proselytized to by a Mental Health Provider, or Whose Mental Health Provider Tried to Convert Them to Another Faith

Proselytization/Conversion Experience	n =	% =
Did not experience	38	82.6%
Experienced	7	15.2%
Unsure if experienced	1	2.2%

Moreover, exactly half of respondents indicated that the mental health providers they had seen (50%, n = 23) displayed religious symbols, images, or phrases in their office or on their person. In contrast, another half (50%, n = 23) of mental health providers abstained from such practices (see Table 46 and Figure 25).

Table 46

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Whose Mental Health Provider Displayed Religious Symbols, Images, or Phrases

Mental Health Providers' Religious Displays	n =	% =
Displayed religious symbols/images/phrases	23	50%
Did not display religious symbols/images/phrases	23	50%

Finally, the majority of respondents whose mental health providers displayed religious symbols, images, or phrases reported feeling "*neutral[ly*]" about this practice (47.8%, n = 11). However, 21.7% (n = 5) reported feeling *uncomfortable*, and another 21.7% (n = 5) reported feeling *very uncomfortable*. In contrast, 8.7% (n = 2) reported

feeling *comfortable* with their mental health providers' display of religious symbols, images, or phrases (see Table 47 and Figure 26).

Table 47

Frequency and Percentage of Respondent Comfort Level with Mental Health Providers' Display of Religious Symbols, Images, or Phrases

Respondents' Comfort Level	n =	% =
Neutral	11	47.8%
Uncomfortable	5	21.7%
Very uncomfortable	5	21.7%
Comfortable	2	8.7%

Discussion

In the pursuit of this research, the researcher sought to gather basic demographic data about practitioners of earth-centered faith, as well as to discover how salient spirituality is to the identity of this group, if mental health services are available in the communities of this group, if this group believes mental health services could be helpful, and if religious discrimination is experienced when this group seeks mental health services. This sample of devotees of earth-centered faith (n = 64) is fairly diverse in terms of earth religious path, sect of religious path, age, gender identity, racial and ancestral identity, sexual orientation, disability status, and socioeconomic status. Subsequently, the results of this research can be cautiously applied to the earth-centered religious community. While some respondents' primary minority identity status seemed to be their spirituality, others had multiple minority statuses, including their racial identity, gender identity, racial and ancestral identity, sexual orientation, disability status, and socioeconomic status, as well as their spirituality.

The majority of respondents in this sample ranked their spirituality as extremely important (61.9%) or very important (27%) to their identity. Moreover, there were no statistical differences found between the two largest religious groups in how they rated the importance of their spirituality to their identity. It is possible that respondents were primed to rank their spirituality higher in its salience to their identity due to the fact that they were invited to participate in a questionnaire about earth-centered faith. However, many respondents indicated that their spirituality was more important to their identity

than any other variable—including age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability. In fact, in some cases, the degree of importance respondents placed upon the role of their spirituality in their identity was over twice that of other variables. Subsequently, it seems unlikely that the priming effect alone can explain the significant salience of spirituality to the identities of devotees of earth-centered faith. Moreover, the reported salience of respondents' spirituality to their identity contrasts significantly with the percentage of respondents who were not asked about their spirituality by their mental health provider (17.4%, n = 8).

Additionally, while not all practitioners of European/American Paganism (E/AP) identified as having European heritage, and not all practitioners of African diaspora faith (ADF) identified as having African heritage, more E/APs than practitioners of ADF identified as having *European* heritage. Similarly, more practitioners of ADF than practitioners of E/AP identified as having *African* heritage. Due to the social location, power, and privilege that accompany European heritage, or "whiteness," individuals who identified as E/AP and white/of European descent may have had only one minority identity—their spirituality. However, due to the social location, disempowerment, and oppression that often accompany African heritage, or "blackness," individuals who identified as practitioners of ADF and as black/of African descent had at least two minority identities—their spirituality and their race. This principle also applies to other participants of color—including those who practiced ADF and those who practiced other earth religions.

While individuals who have a visible dominant or majority identity often do not have to think about that identity, due to its inherent power and privilege, individuals who

have a visible nondominant or minority identity are more frequently reminded of that identity, and may find themselves noticeably impacted by that identity as they navigate the world (Johnson, 2006). Subsequently, it makes intuitive sense that participants of color find themselves reminded of the salience of their race more often than white participants, and therefore, in comparison with devotees of African diaspora faith, E/AP respondents rated their race as below average in importance. Future research can examine the implication of spirituality as one of multiple minority variables, as opposed to an individual's only minority identity variable; as well as how these variations in social location impact the seeking, engagement with, and receipt of mental health services.

Concerning Aspects of Findings

Nearly one-fifth of the respondent sample (18.3%) indicated that they did not believe mental health services would be helpful to them personally, and even more (40%) indicated that they were unsure if or did not think (8.3%) that mental health services would be helpful to others in their religious community. The facts that 41.7% of all respondents reported fearing religious discrimination when considering seeking mental health services, 13% actually experienced religious discrimination by mental health providers, 52.8% of respondents who received mental health services in the past felt that their providers understood their religious beliefs neither poorly nor well, and that 22.2% of respondents felt that their mental health provider understood their faith poorly could easily contribute to this phenomenon. Interestingly, E/APs rated their mental health providers' understanding of their faith—both the presence and absence of said understanding—in more extreme terms than did devotees of ADF. Subsequently, further research with and outreach to this population, as well as increased cultural competence on

the diversity variable of religion is clearly warranted on the part of the mental health community

Statistical analysis indicated that European/American Pagans disclose their spirituality at a higher rate than devotees of African diaspora faith, yet also endorse fear of religious discrimination when considering seeking mental health services a rate that approached being statistically higher than the rate reported by devotees of ADF. Moreover, in the context of this study, only European/American Pagans endorsed actually experiencing religious discrimination when seeking mental health services. Future research can explore if this finding is due to the single v. multiple minority identity phenomenon and a desensitization to discrimination that occurs after an individual has experienced a critical amount of discrimination, or if this finding can be explained by another phenomenon.

Unfortunately, the very real fear of religious discrimination prevented 20.5%--approximately one-fifth of the individuals who responded to the researcher's questionnaire from seeking mental health services. (Contrast this number with the number of those who have access to mental health services: 96.7%). This is especially tragic when one revisits respondents' attributions of distress. The number one respondent attribution of distress was tied between *relationships with other people* and *specific mental health diagnoses* (e.g. anxiety, depression, PTSD, etc.). Subsequently, respondents' own reports suggest that they realize that a large amount of the distress they experience is due to a mental health diagnosis—which one would ordinarily treat by seeing a mental health provider. This disconnect between attribution of distress and willingness to seek services clearly speaks to the mental health field's failure to

normalize and incorporate majority *and* minority faith in the treatment of significant psychological distress.

Other common attributions of participant distress included spiritual ones, such as imbalance in the participant's life/the greater world, and spiritual causes. Moreover, religion or the divine, spiritual leaders, elders, and counselors, meditation and prayer, religious rituals, appealing to deceased ancestors, and seeking out religious peers and/or spiritual community were also frequently cited participant ways of coping with distress. The spiritually charged nature of these attributions and coping resources clearly calls for more diversity competence in the domain of spirituality when mental health providers serve earth religious clients.

Interestingly, only 6.25% of respondents (n = 4) indicated that they were raised in a family that practiced earth religion, while 93.75% of respondents (n = 60) indicated that they were raised in a family that did not practice earth religion. When one considers that mental health providers frequently consult clients' family of origin or religious community in order to assess the "typicality" of a client's religious beliefs, this presents a very real problem. While clients with mental health issues who also practice mainstream faiths such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam experience the privilege of often having a family who practices their faith or an easily accessible religious community with whom a mental health provider can consult, clients with mental health issues who also practice less common faiths such as earth religion do not experience this same privilege.

Encouraging Aspects of Findings

Surprisingly, the majority of practitioners of earth-centered faith (96.7%) indicated that mental health services are available in their community. Moreover, they

even ranked these services as the second most commonly accessed method (after friends, and tied with religion/the divine and with family) to deal with significant distress. 73% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to seek mental health services if they were experiencing significant psychological distress, and another 73.3% indicated that they believed that these services would be helpful. Across the sects of earth religions statistically analyzed (African diaspora faith and European/American Pagansim), there were no significant differences found regarding religious groups' willingness to seek mental health services when other attempts at resolving distress failed. Additionally, there were no statistical differences found within earth religious groups' willingness to seek mental health services even when they were afraid of religious discrimination. Furthermore, across the sects of earth religions statistically analyzed there were no significant differences found regarding religious groups' perceived benefit of mental health services —neither for themselves, nor for others of the same faith.

While a significant percentage of respondents reported feeling afraid of experiencing religious discrimination when seeking mental health services, another 35% of all respondents reported *not* feeling afraid of religious discrimination when considering seeking mental health services. Moreover, while a significant percentage of respondents indicated that they felt their mental health provider understood their faith poorly, or neither poorly nor well, another 25% indicated that their provider understood their faith well. These findings may suggest that some mental health providers have already made significant strides towards achieving diversity competence with earth religion as an identity variable.

Limitations of Study

This study experienced several limitations. Some of the limitations included logistical aspects, such as the internet-bound nature of the online questionnaire, and the way in which this likely limited the participant pool to individuals with access to computers with internet access, and with the leisure time to complete a questionnaire on said computer. Moreover, the significant dearth of peer-reviewed literature on the juxtaposition of earth-centered faith and mental health significantly limited the research this author could use to inform and compare and contrast with her study.

Additionally, the earth centered religious community is one with some native English speakers, and many native speakers of other languages, including Spanish, French, Portuguese, and others. The construction of the researcher's instrument in one language (English) likely limited the number and diversity of participants. In future studies, it would be highly beneficial to translate the assessment instrument into multiple languages, including as least Spanish, French, and Portuguese. Other limitations of the assessment instrument included the absence of a "not applicable" or "N/A" category on the salience of identity variables question, as well as the absence of definitions of terms used in the instrument (such as religious discrimination, proselytization, etc.). Additionally, questions 31 and 32, pertaining to the behavior, speech, and professional surroundings of mental health providers who are sensitive to earth-centered religion should be clarified or eliminated, as participant responses suggested that participants were confused by or did not understand the questions. Finally, if all diversity variables of the ADDRESSING (Age, Developmental and acquired Disability, Religion, Ethnicity and race, Sexual Orientation, Socioeconomic status, Indigenous heritage, National origin,

Gender) model (Hays, 2007) are to be included in future versions of the assessment instrument, more relevant and sophisticated disability questions should be included.

Strengths of Study

This study also exhibits numerous strengths. These include the trailblazing nature of its construction, as to the author's knowledge, it is the first of its kind that a) simultaneously presents information on the three main branches of contemporary earth-centered faith, and b) explores and illuminates how devotees of these faiths experience and perceive psychological distress and mental health services. Moreover, this study adds data to the field about a poorly understood and often marginalized religious group, and also provides enough basic information on each branch of earth centered faith to inform mental health providers on the fundamental spiritual beliefs of their earth religious clients. Additionally, the study illuminates some of the fears and concerns of this religious group regarding mental health services, which can inform clinicians on how best to intervene, and what to avoid when working with this religious group. Furthermore, the sample size (n = 64) includes enough participants of each branch of earth religion, as well as enough participants with diverse identity variables such as gender identity, racial and ethnic background, sexual orientation, disability status, and socioeconomic status that cautious interpretations about these groups can be formed.

Directions for Future Research

Due to the richness of the current study's data set, numerous future analyses can be performed. Such analyses may include further examinations of variances within earth religious groups, and of how those religious groups describe themselves demographically. Additionally, future analyses can examine variances within earth

religious groups' perceptions and experiences of mental health services, as well as variances within earth religious groups' experiences of and methods of coping with psychological distress. Furthermore, examinations of variance between earth religious groups and dominant religious groups may also be helpful—especially regarding each groups' perception of the salience of spirituality to identity and any interplay between spirituality and the experience of psychological distress.

Moreover, future research can examine the ways in which the mental health community can provide outreach to earth religious communities, as well as how the mental health community can position itself as an ally, rather than an antagonist, to the earth religious community. Finally, it is also strongly recommended that future researchers employ assessment instruments in languages besides English (such as Spanish, French, and Portuguese) due to this religious group's geographic and linguistic diversity.

Appendix A

Questionnaire

1) Do you practice an earth-based religion such as traditional aboriginal/Native American spirituality, Paganism, Santería, Lucumi, Vodou, Candomblé, Umbanda, etc.?

Yes No
(if this box is checked, survey will close and respondent is thanked for their participation)

2) Do you identify as (a)

Practitioner of traditional aboriginal/Native American spirituality ***(redirects to 3a)***
Practitioner of Lucumi, Santería, or Ifa ***(redirects to 3b)***
Practitioner of Vodou/Voodoo ***(redirects to 3c)***
Practitioner of Candomblé or Umbanda **(*redirects to 3d)***
Practitioner of (Neo)Paganism (including Wicca, witchcraft, Druidism, heathenism, and Asatru) ***(redirects to 3e)***
Practitioner of another earth/nature religion ***(redirects to 3f)***

3a) More specifically, I identify as (a)

Practitioner of traditional aboriginal/ Native American/ American Indian spirituality
Medicine (wo)man
Shaman
My spiritual path was not mentioned. I identify as:

3b) More specifically, I identify as (a)

Santero/a
Babalorisha/Iyalorisha
Babalawo
Oga/Ekeji
Iyawo
Aleyo
Brujo/a /ita
My spiritual path was not mentioned. I identify as:

3c) More specifically, I identify as (a)

Mambo/Houngan
Hounsi
Vodouisant
My spiritual path was not mentioned. I identify as:

3d) More specifically, I identify as (a)

Mae/Pais-de-santo
Ialorixá/Babalorixá
Babalawo
Candomblezeiro
My spiritual path is not mentioned above. I identify as:

3e) More specifically, I identify as (a)

Pagan
Neopagan
Wiccan
Witch
Druid
Heathen
Asatru
My spiritual path is not mentioned above. I identify as:

3f) More specifically, I identify as (a)

Ecospiritualist
Hoodoo practitioner
Eclectic
My spiritual path is not mentioned. I identify as:

4) Were you raised in a family that practiced earth-based religion?

Yes No

5) What religion did your family of origin practice, if any?

6) What is your age?

7) Do you identify as (a)

Woman

Man
Intersexed
Transwoman (male to female)
Transman (female to male)
Gender Queer/Androgynous
(My gender identity is not mentioned above)

8) What is your race? (check as many as apply)

Aboriginal/Indigenous ***(redirects to 9a)***
Asian ***(redirects to 9b)***
Black/of African descent ***(redirects to 9c)***
Latino(a)/Hispanic ***(redirects to 9d)***
White/of European descent ***(redirects to 9e)***
Biracial (check 2 ethnicities above)
Multiracial (check 3 or more ethnicities above)
(My race is not mentioned above)

9a) What is your nationality/ethnicity? (check as many as apply)

American Indian/Native American
(please specify nation/tribe(s), if known)
Alaskan Native
(please specify nation/tribe(s), if known)
Australian
(please specify: European/ aboriginal/ _____ descent)
Latino/a
(please specify: Cuban/Dominican/Mexican/ Puerto Rican/etc)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
(_____ please specify)

9b) What is your nationality/ethnicity? (check as many as apply)

Asian (please specify countr(y)(ies), if known)
Asian American (please specify countr(y)(ies), if known)

9c) What is your nationality/ethnicity? (check as many as apply)

African (please specify country/ies, if known)
African American
of African descent [please specify country/ies, if known (e.g.: Haitian, Jamaican, _____)]

9d) What is your nationality/ethnicity? (check as many as apply)

Cuban

Cuban American
Dominican
Dominican American
Mexican
Mexican American
Puerto Rican
Puerto Rican American
My nationality/ethnicity is not mentioned. I identify as:

9e) What is your nationality/ethnicity? (check as many as apply)

European American (please specify countries of origin, if known)
European (please specify countries of origin, if known)
Countr(y)(ies) of origin:

10) How would you describe your socioeconomic status (class)?

Lower class (impoverished)
Lower middle class
Middle class
Upper middle class
Upper class

11) Do you have a disability?

Yes ***(redirects to question 12)***
No ***(redirects to question 13)***

12) Were you born with your disability?

Yes No

13) How do you describe your sexual orientation?

Lesbian
Gay
Bisexual
Heterosexual
Pansexual/Omnisexual
Asexual
My sexual orientation is not mentioned above _____

14) How important are your spirituality, age, gender, race/ethnicity, class/SES, disability, and sexual orientation to your identity? Please rate each below.

My spirituality

My age
My gender
My race/ethnicity
My class/socioeconomic status
My disability
My sexual orientation

15) If you were experiencing significant distress that interfered with your daily functioning, to what/who do you attribute the distress?

16) If your first interventions or efforts to relieve distress didn't work, would you consider seeking mental health or psychological services?

Yes
No
If no, please comment:

17) When you are in distress, where, to what, or to whom do you go for help? (List the 3 resources you use most frequently)

18) Are mental health or psychological services (counseling/therapy, psychiatry, assistance of social workers) available in your community?

Yes
No
Unsure

19) If mental health or psychological services are/were available in your community, do you think they would be helpful if you were experiencing distress that interfered with daily functioning?

Yes
No
Unsure
Services Not Available

20) If mental health or psychological services are/were available in your community, do you think they would be helpful for *someone else* of your same faith who was experiencing distress that interfered with daily functioning?

Yes
No
Unsure

Services Not Available

21) Have you ever been afraid of experiencing religious discrimination or persecution when considering seeking mental health services?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Afraid	Afraid	Neutral	Not Afraid	Not at all Afraid

22) Did your concern ever keep you from seeking mental health or psychological services?

Yes No Unsure

23) Have you ever received mental health or psychological services (i.e. attended counseling/therapy, saw a psychiatrist, received services from a social worker)?

Yes No ***(those who answer no will be directed to 31-33)***

24) Have you ever experienced religious discrimination/persecution when seeking mental health/psychological services?

Yes No Unsure

25) Did/do you disclose your religion or spirituality to your mental health provider?

Yes No ***(redirects to 28)*** Sometimes Not asked by provider ***(redirects to 28)***

26) If you chose not disclose your religion/spirituality to your mental health provider, do you know why?

27) If you have received mental health/psychological services and disclosed your religion/spirituality to your provider, how well do you feel (s)he understood your beliefs?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Poorly	Poorly	Neutral	Well	Very Well

28) Has a mental health provider ever proselytized to you or tried to convert you to a different faith?

Yes No

29) Have you ever had a mental health provider who displayed religious symbols, images, or sayings in their office or on their person?

Yes No

30) If so, how did it make you feel?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	Neutral	Comfortable	Very Comfortable

31) How would a mental health provider who was sensitive to your spirituality behave and speak?

32) What would the office of a mental health provider who was sensitive to your spirituality look like?

33) Is there anything this questionnaire didn't ask that it should have asked to better understand how spirituality played a role in your seeking/not seeking of mental health services or in the quality of the services you received as a practitioner of an earth-based religion?

Yes (please elaborate below) No Unsure

Appendix B

Figures

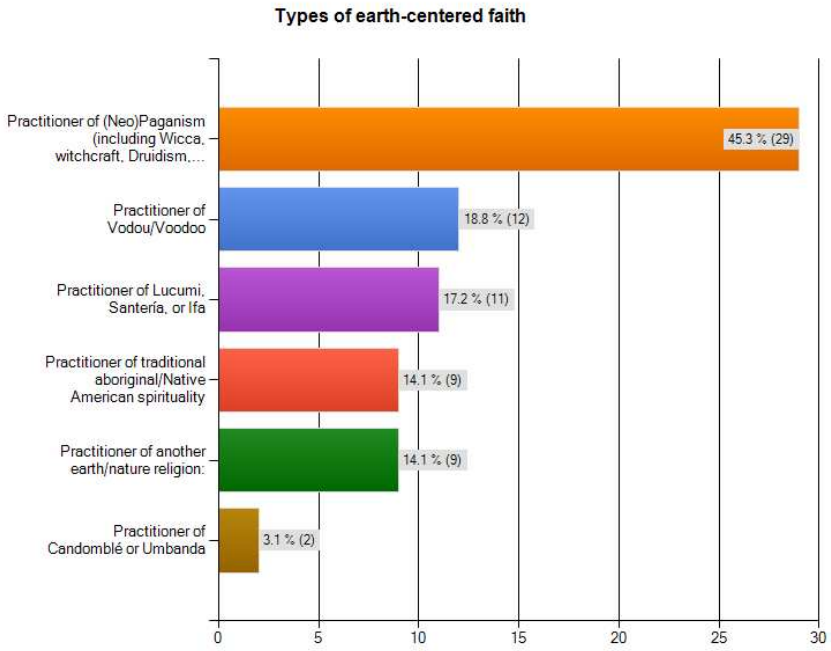

Figure B1. Types of earth-centered faith practiced by respondents

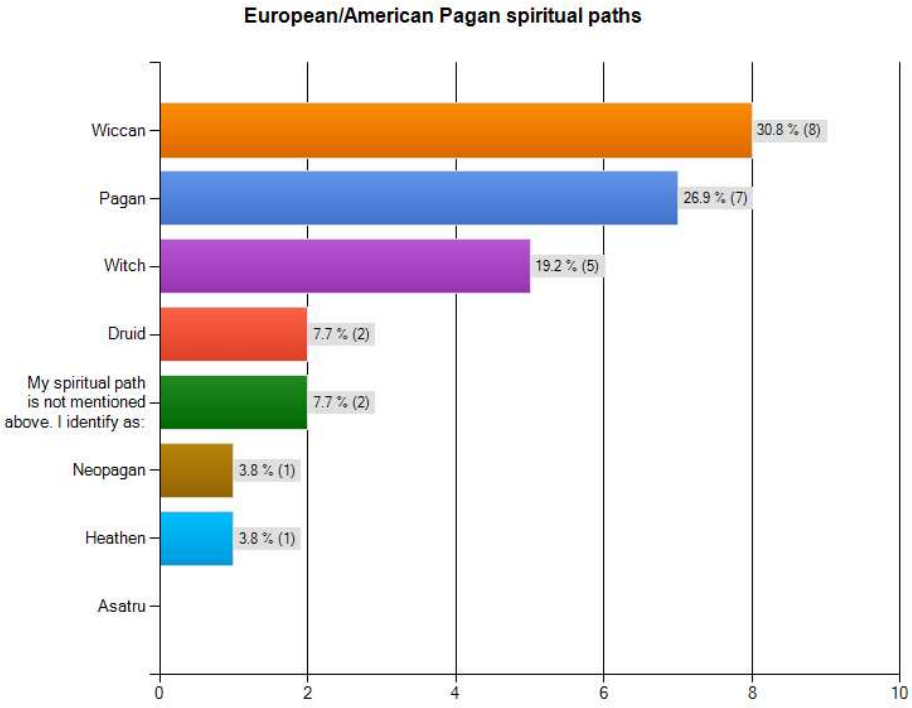

Figure B2. European/American Pagan spiritual paths of respondents

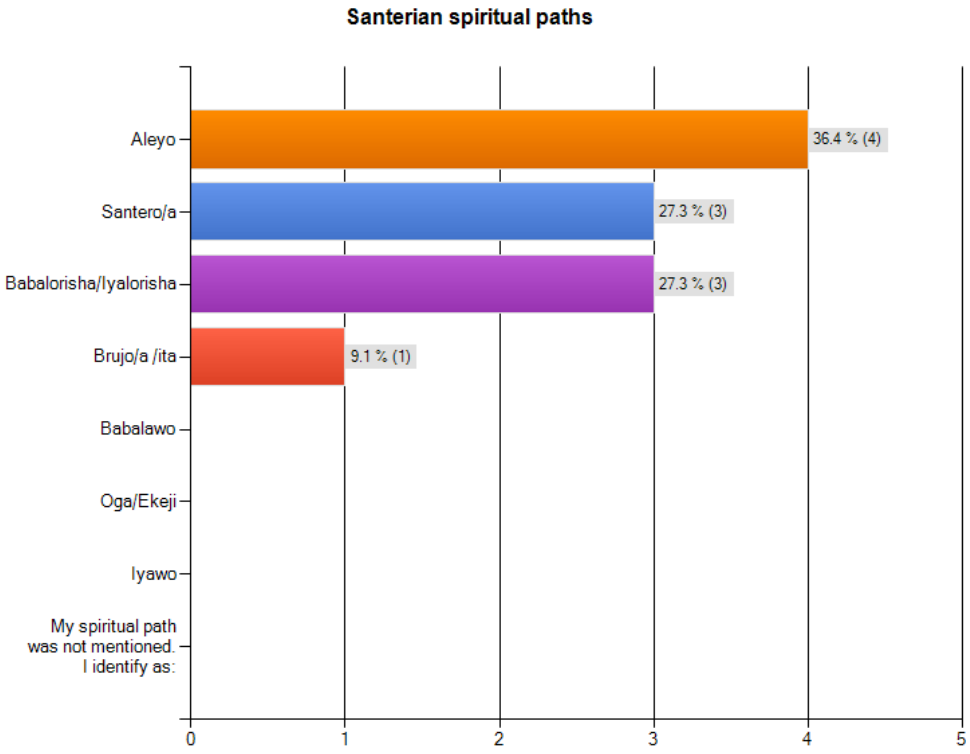

Figure B3. Santerían, Lucumi, and Ifa spiritual paths of respondents

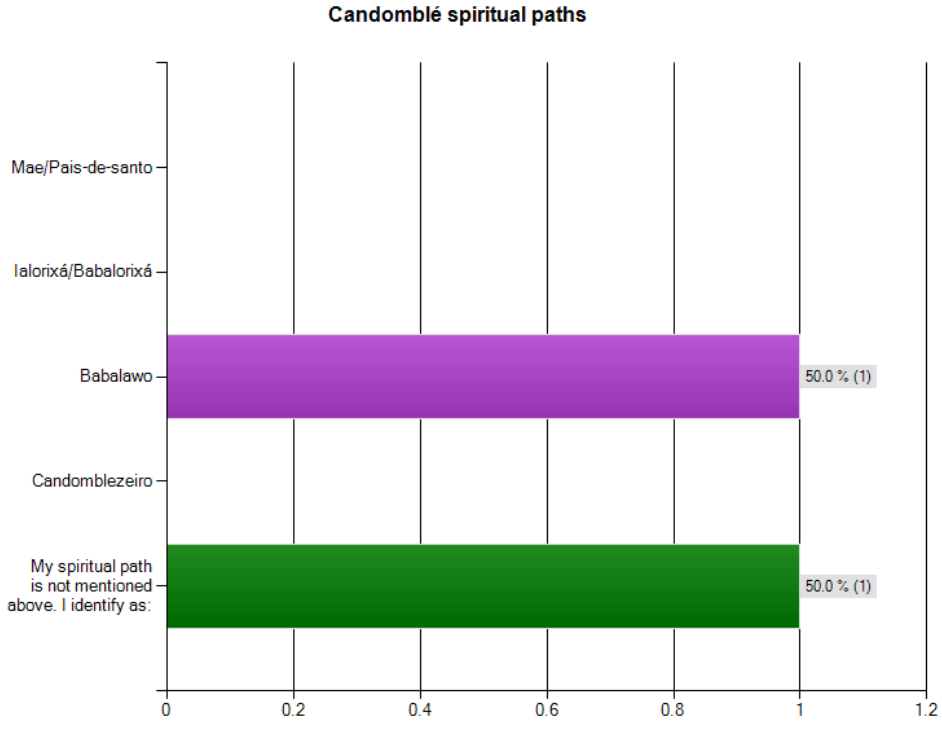

Figure B4. Candomblé spiritual paths of respondents

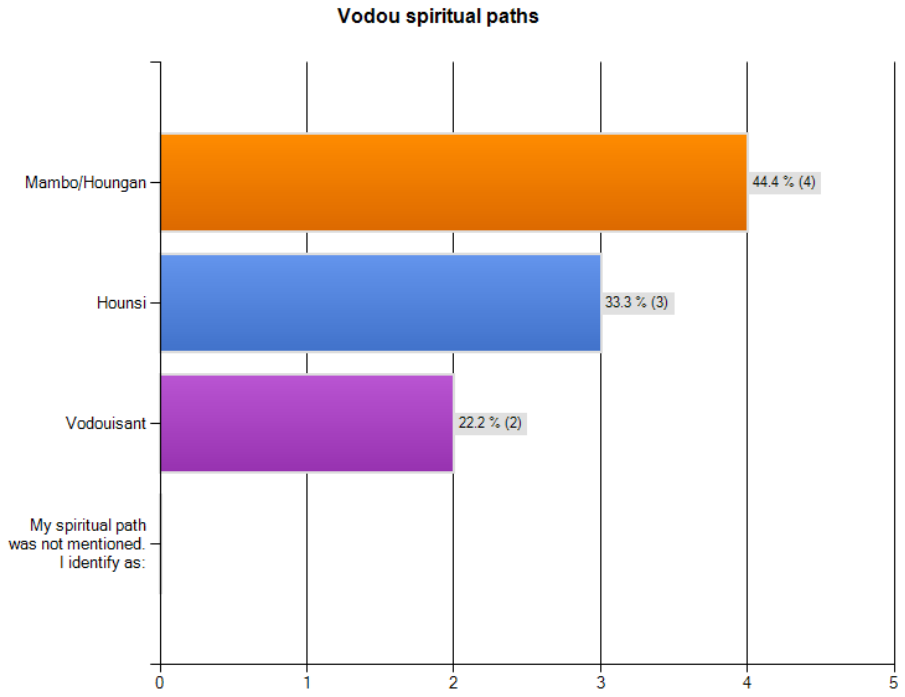

Figure B5. Vodou/Voodoo spiritual paths of respondents

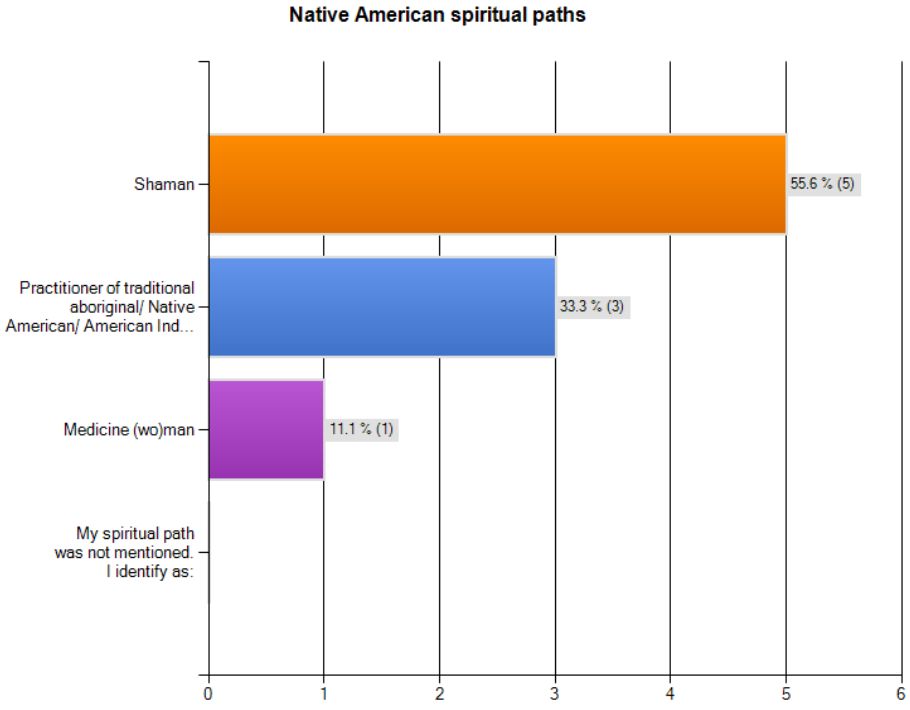

Figure B6. Native American spiritual paths of respondents

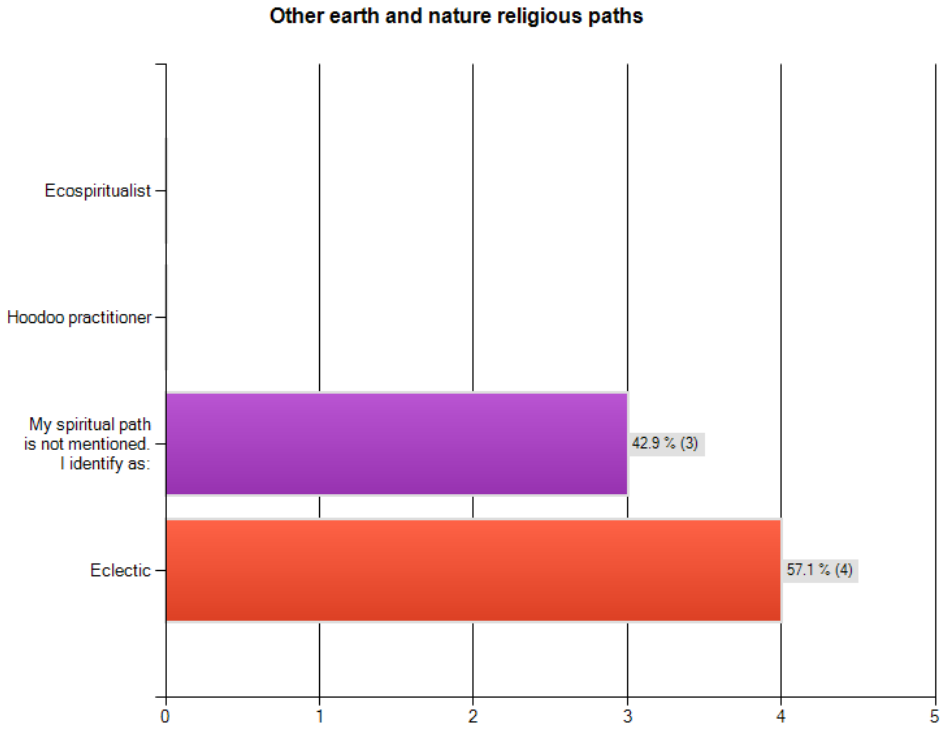

Figure B7. Other earth and nature religious paths of respondents

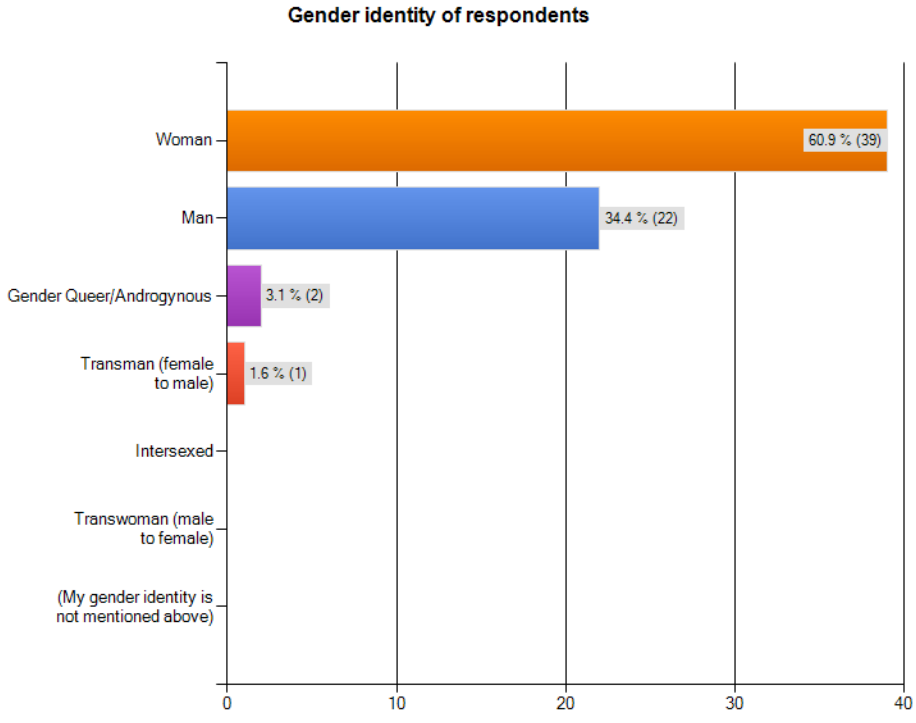

Figure B8. Gender identity of respondents

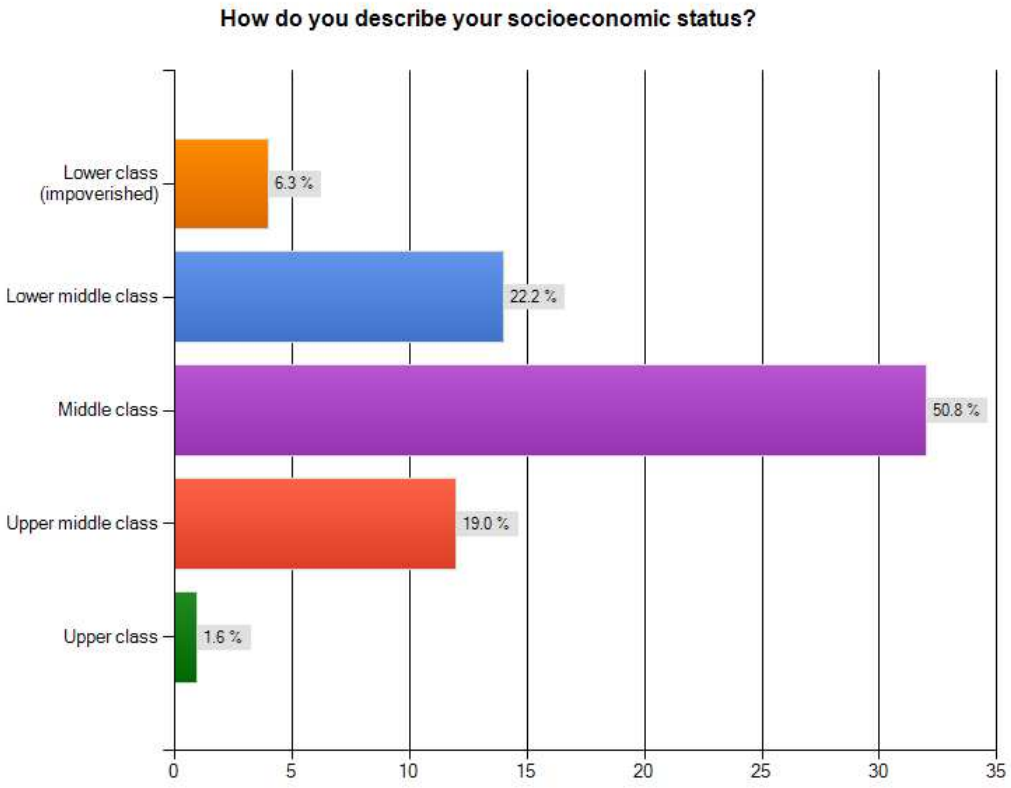

Figure B9. Self-identified socioeconomic status of respondents

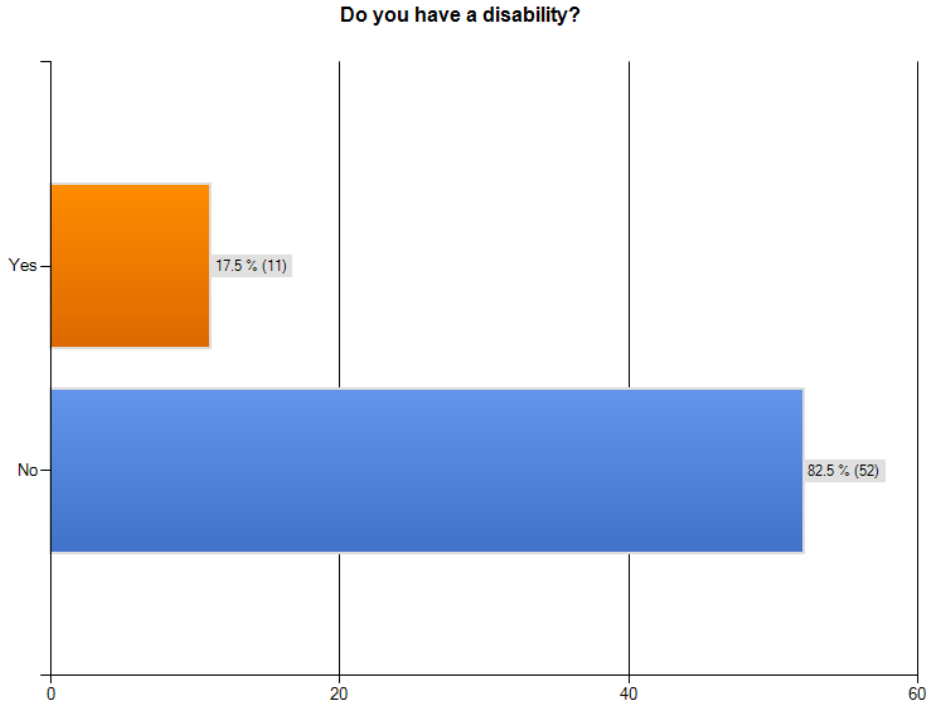

Figure B10. Disability status of respondents

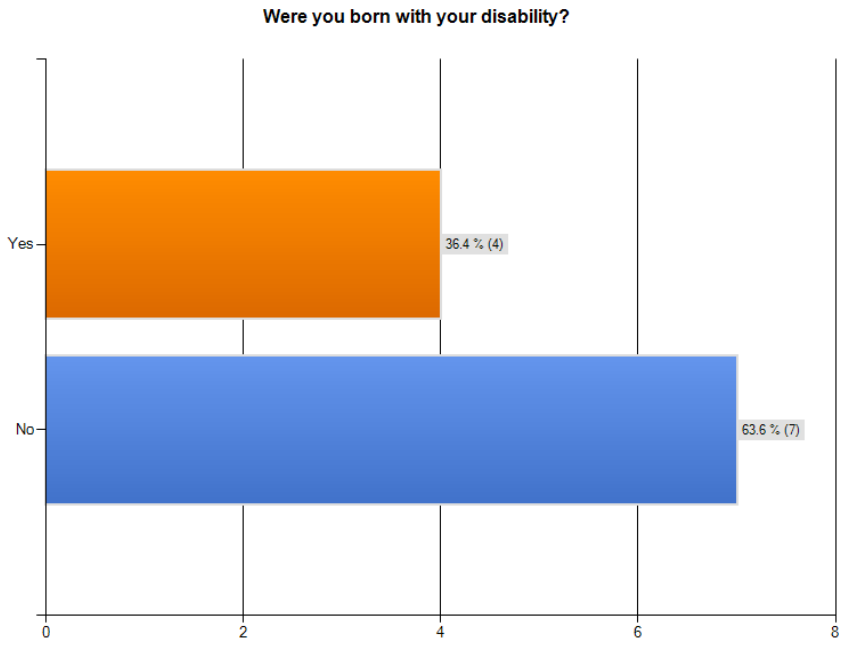

Figure B11. Disability status of respondents: Congenital v. acquired disabilities

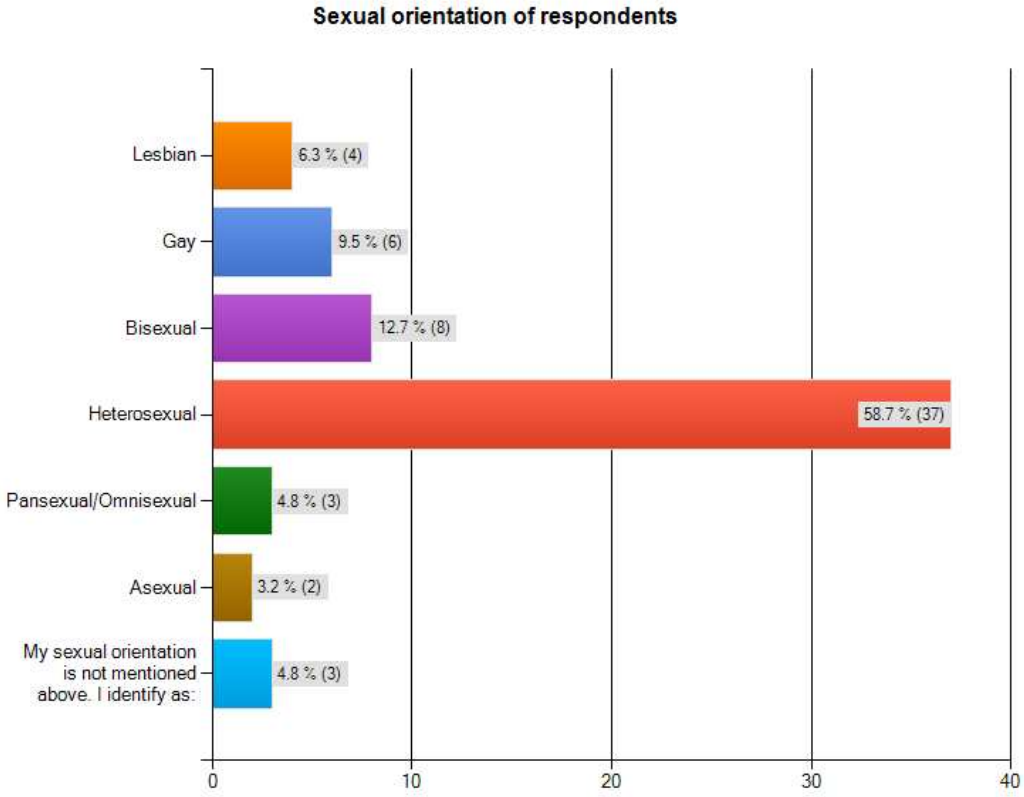

Figure B12. Sexual orientation of respondents

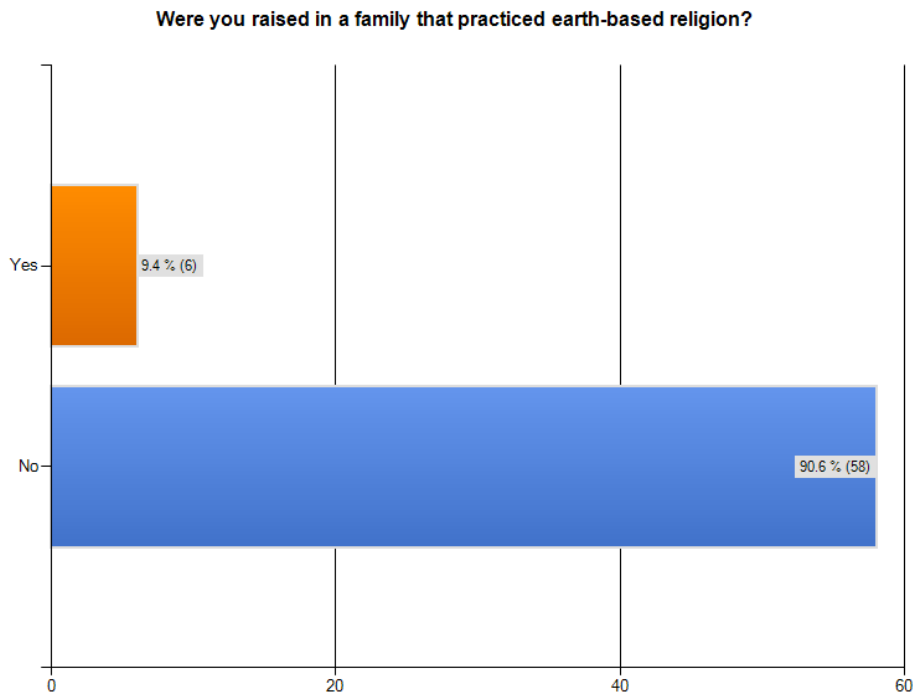

Figure B13. Percentage of respondents who were raised in earth religious families

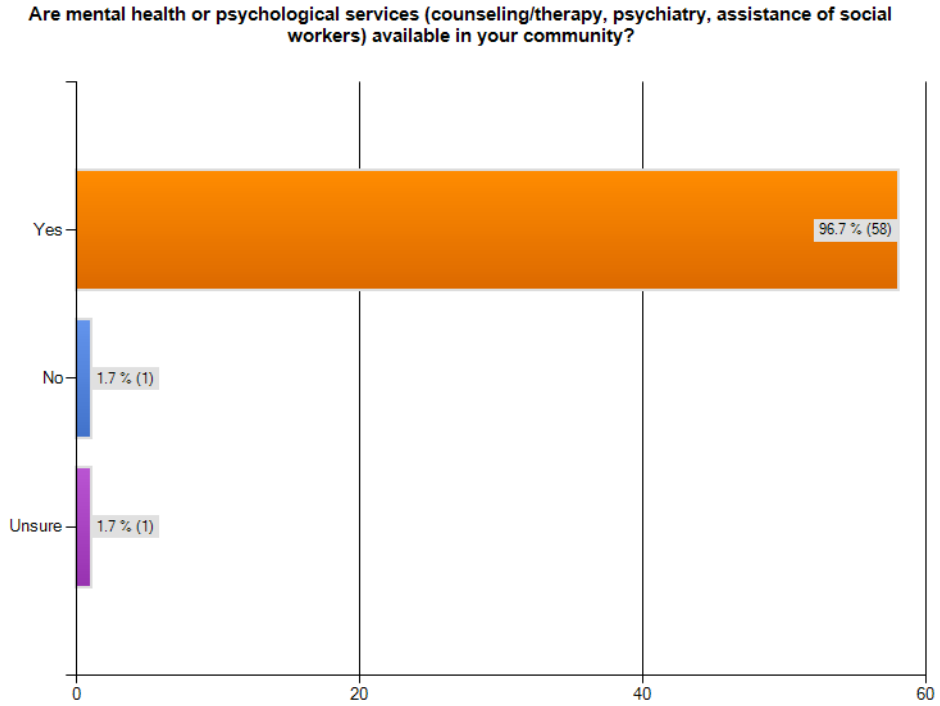

Figure B14. Availability of mental health services to respondents

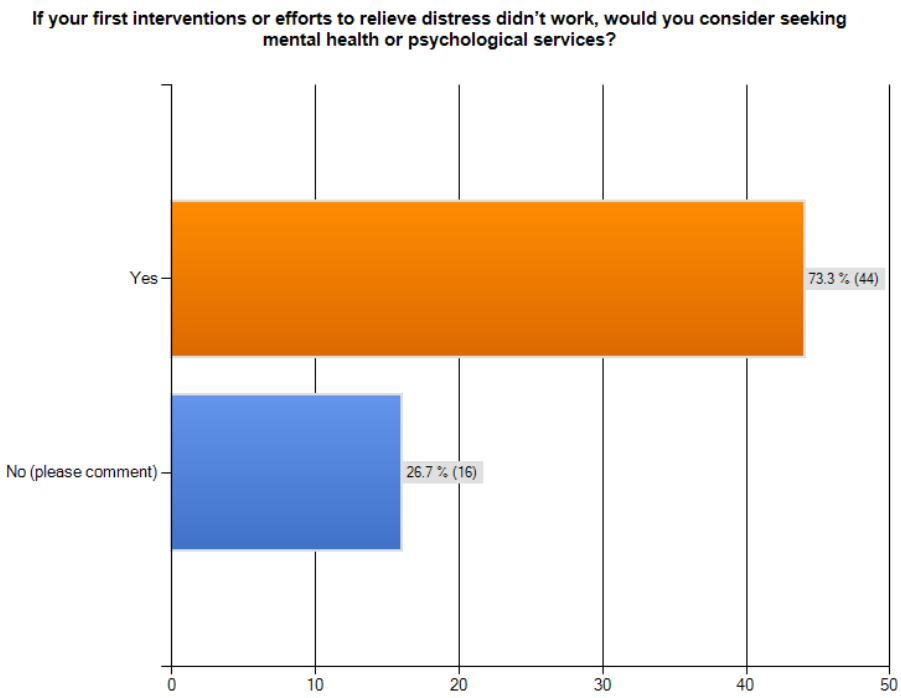

Figure B15. Respondent willingness to seek mental health services if first attempts at relieving significant distress didn't work

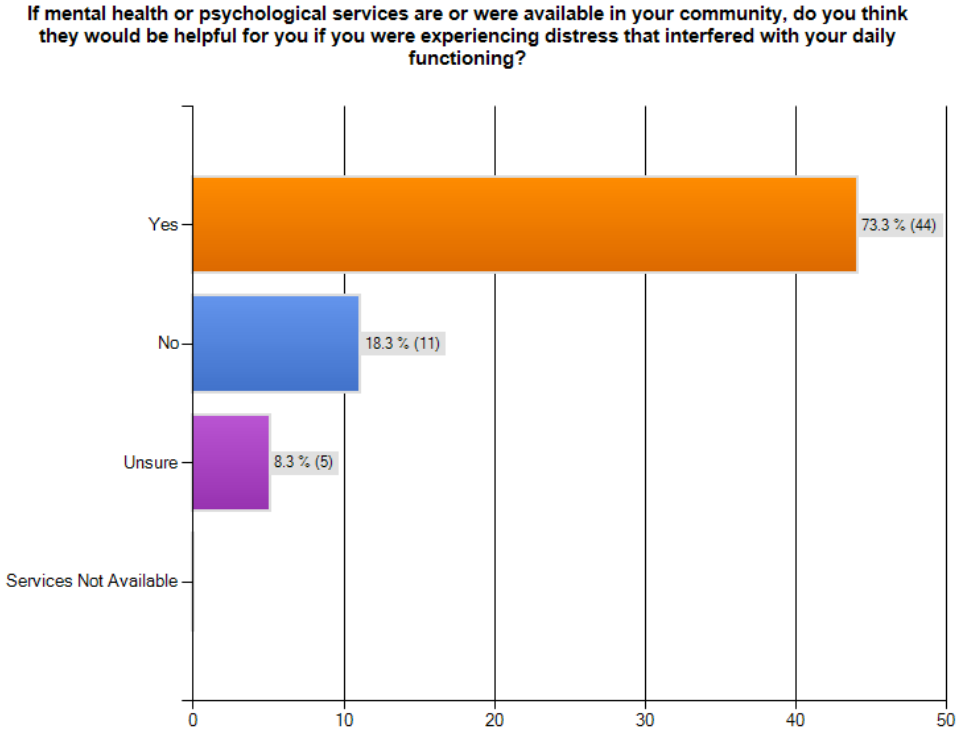

Figure B16. Respondents' belief that mental health services would benefit them personally

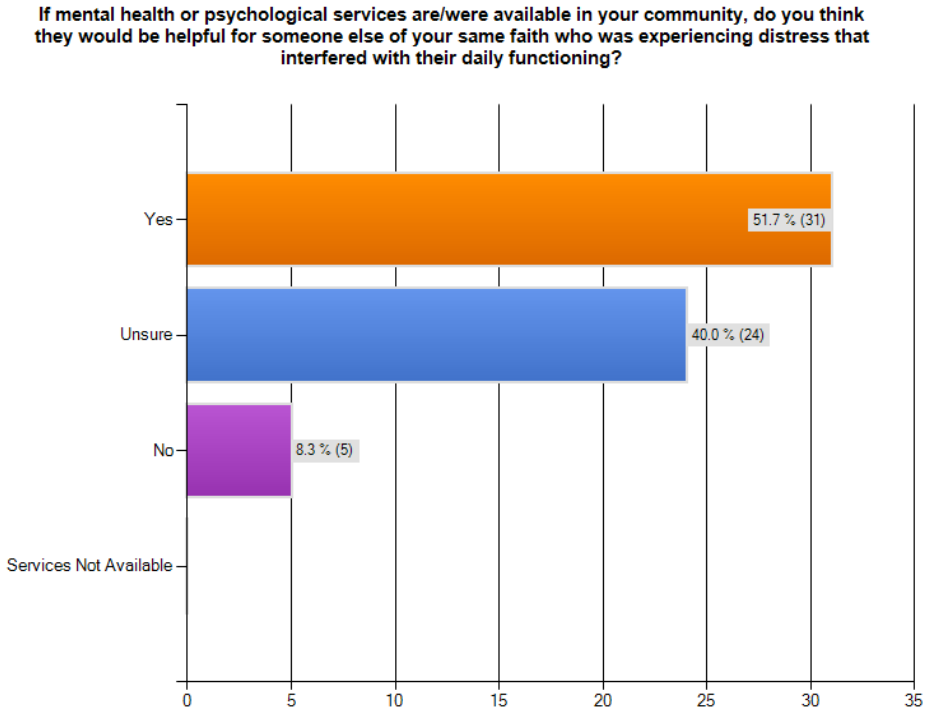

Figure B17. Respondents' belief that mental health services would benefit others of the same faith

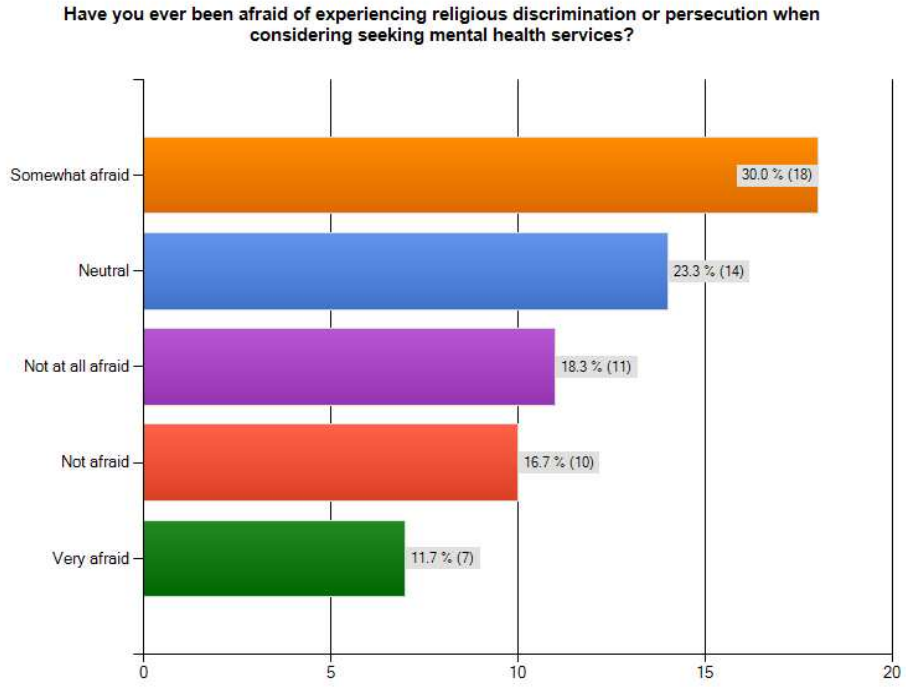

Figure B18. Respondents' fear of religious discrimination when seeking mental health services

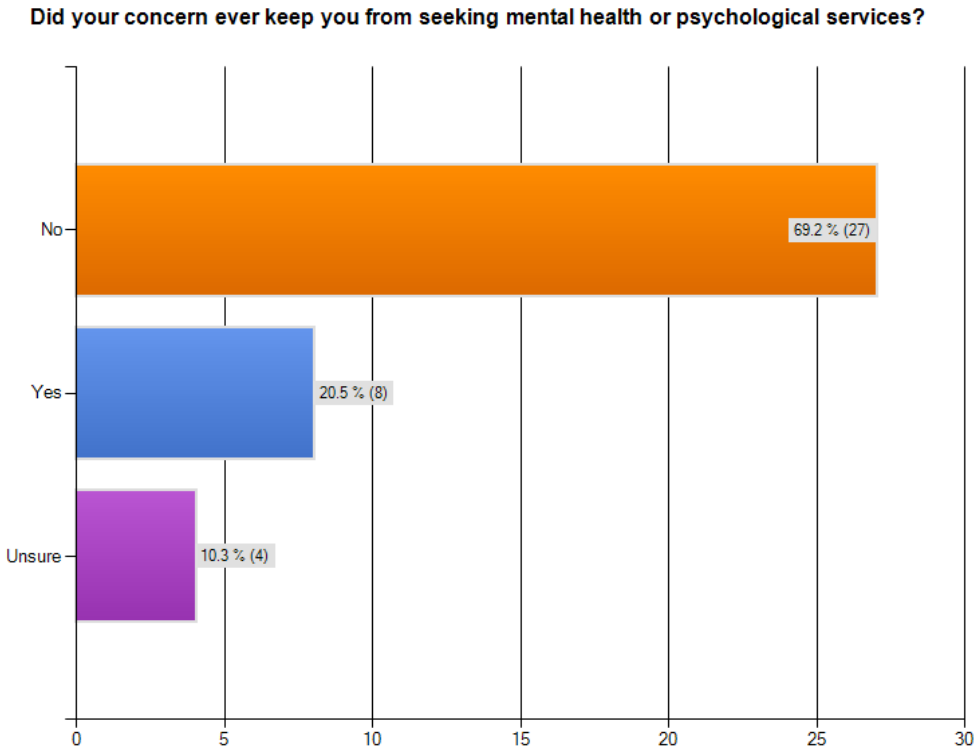

Figure B19. Impact of fear of religious discrimination

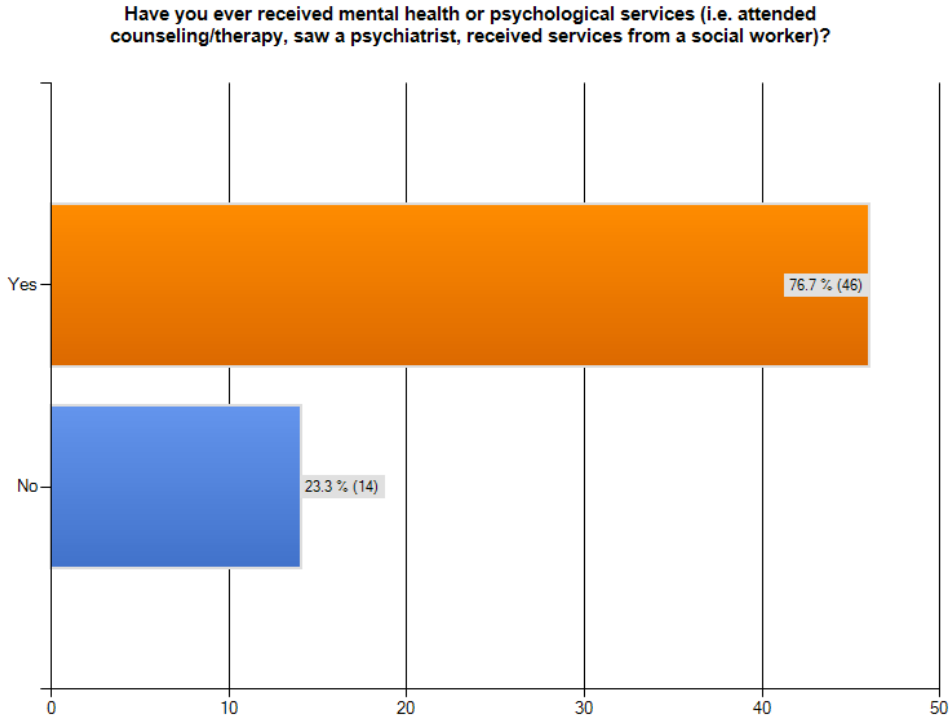

Figure B20. Percentage of respondents who have received mental health services

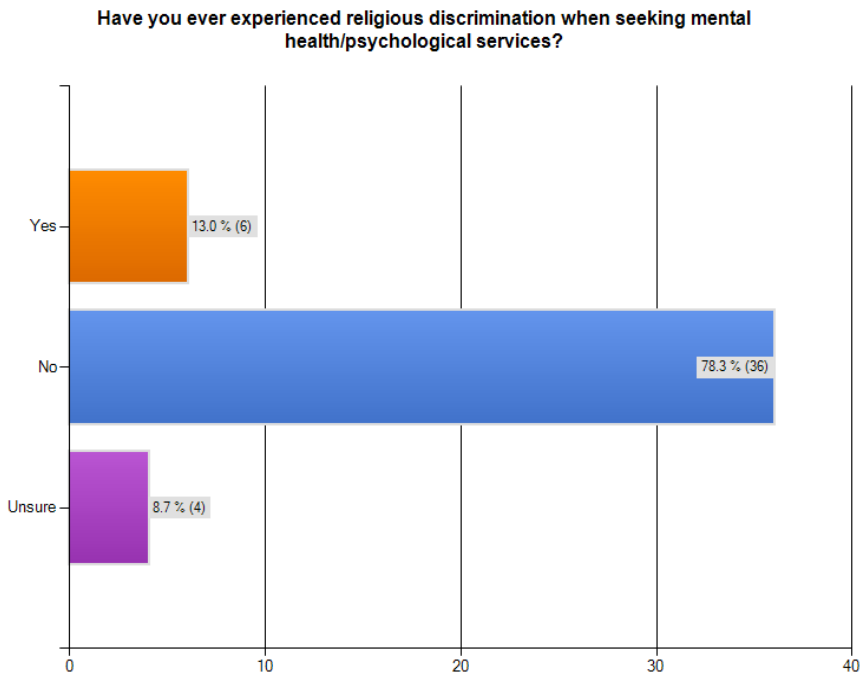

Figure B21. Percentage of respondents who have sought mental health services and experienced religious discrimination

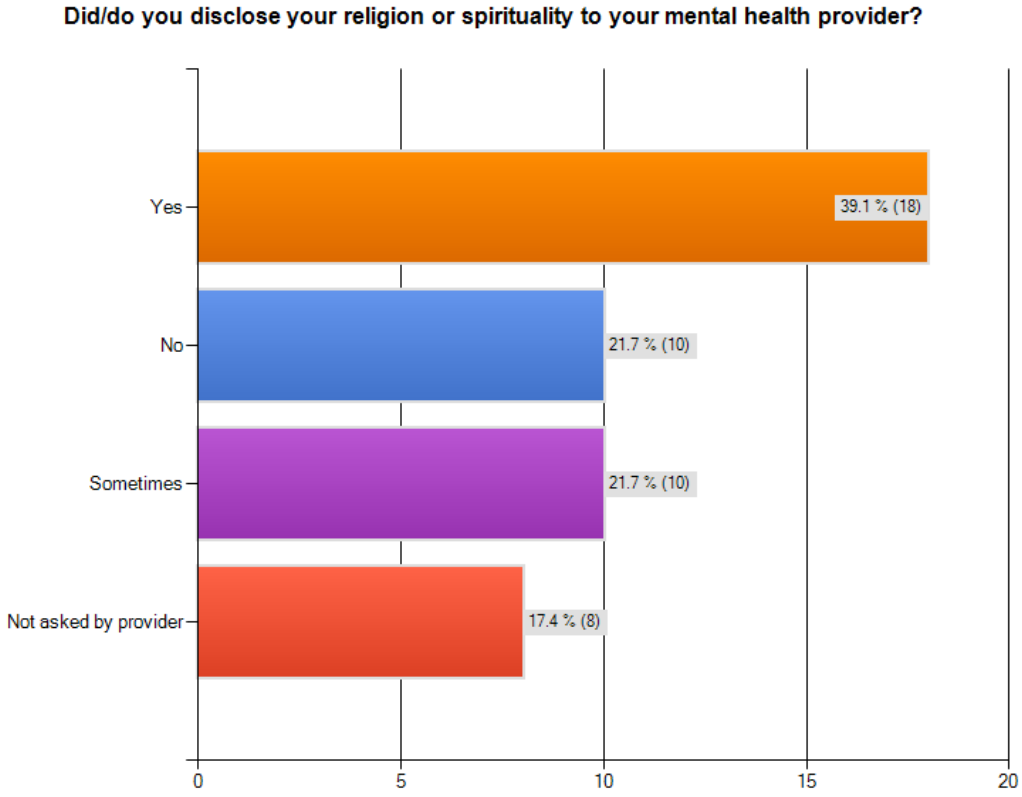

Figure B22. Respondent disclosure of faith to mental health provider

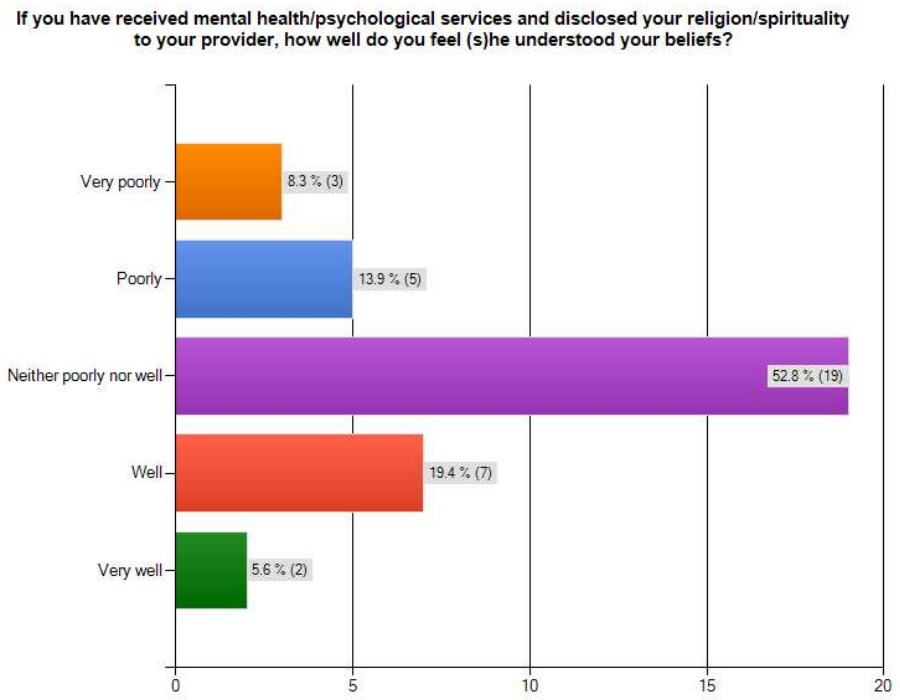

Figure B23. Respondent perception of mental health providers' understanding of their faith

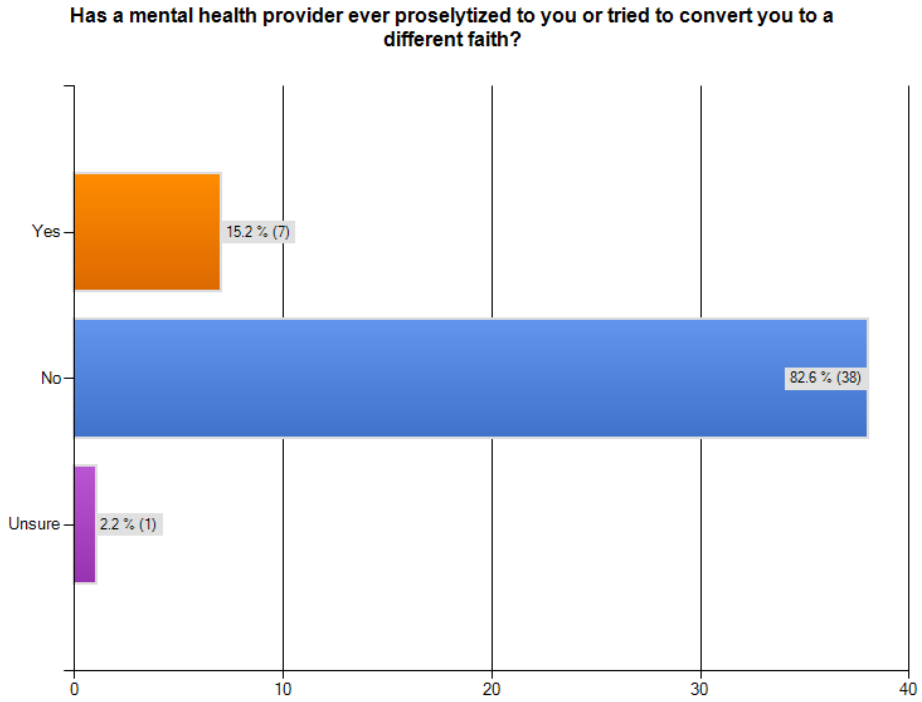

Figure B24. Percentage of respondents who reported having a mental health provider proselytize and/or try to convert them to another faith

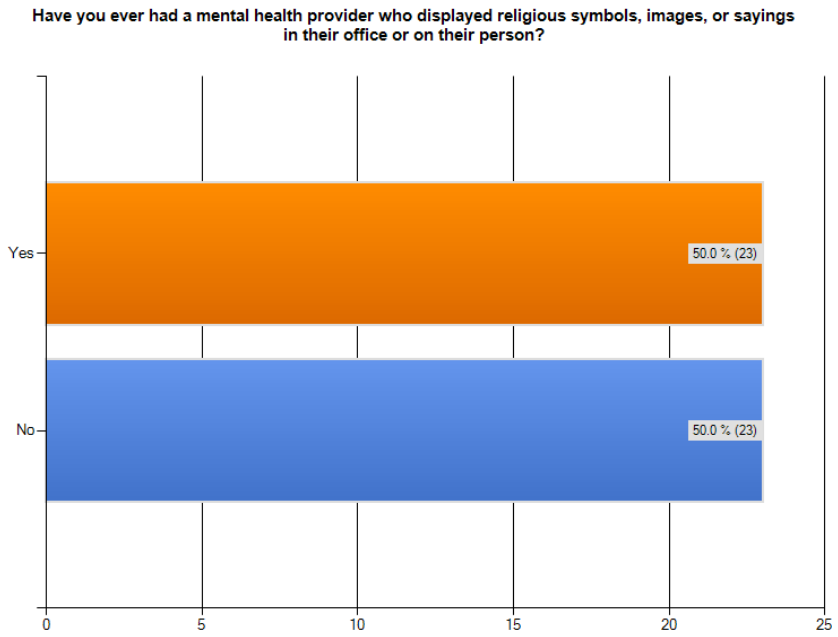

Figure 25. Percentage of respondents whose mental health providers displayed religious symbols, sayings, or images in their offices

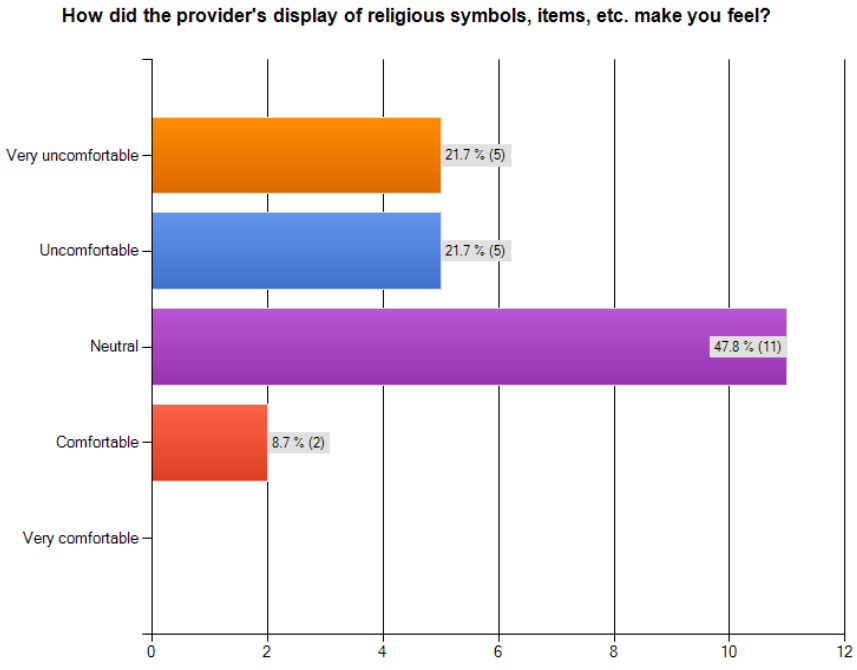

Figure B26. Respondents' comfort or discomfort with mental health providers' display of religious symbols/items/phrases

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