

Reframing Vodou's Vèvès through Guided Imagery Therapy and Neurotheology as Diasporic Expressions among Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida

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Received: 09.07.2025 | Accepted: 07.08.2025 | Published: 11.08.2025

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.16806637](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16806637)

Abstract

Original Research Article

The Haitian culture is paved with colorful images, intricate symbols, and art archetypes that appear to encounter with the cultural, spiritual, and psychological qualities of the Haitian ethos. Formidable pictorial narratives such as images, music, songs and dance, and arts articulating tools for guided imagery, unknown and not conveyed, exist and bond Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

The constituents of imagery vividness are culturally cogitated to discover whether guided imagery can be salutary. The purpose of this article is to explore how guided imagery as a therapeutic modality of mind-body medicine with its tentacles in neurotheology's deep continuum of spiritual and religious experiences through the discovery of consciousness can help reduce stress, emotional distress, immigration challenges, and socio-economic issues for Haitians. It also highlights the signs of the Haitian diaspora as graphic systems, cultural and religious experiences, and presents vèvès as therapeutic conduits. The theoretical framework is Paivio and Ernest's (1971) work on imagery ability and visual perception, meaning imagery in terms of visual ability, implies a relationship only between imagery ability and recognition of nonverbal stimuli. This theoretical framework deeply fits in the Haitian culture for therapeutic experiences and forms of religiosity. This article proposes an active transformational imagination exercise of guided imagery for three archetypal images as conscious experiences within the culture: 1) The mother, 2) music, songs and dance, and 3) an imagery known as vèvè (pronounced as vehveh). The tools considered: Gestalt Art, and Dialogue with Art Therapies for music, songs and dance, and vèvès, foreshadowed by an inner advisor exercise about the mother are expressed to heighten the imagery experiences.

Keywords: Imagery, Guided Imagery, The Mother, Music, Songs And Dance, Vèvè.

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Various cultural aspects of the Haitian culture in Miami-Dade County, Florida expose distinct themes portrayed as imagery that are highly paramount in the Haitian community of Little. The fabric of the Haitian culture is paved with archetypes, and tools that enhance its beauty in all facets of society (Daniel, 2011; Polk, 1997; Rey & Stepick, 2010). The themes are depicted through visual public art pieces and murals, vibrant images of religious practices such as Vodou and Catholicism that represent components of the daily life of some Haitians, revealed through prayers, songs, music, rituals, stories, mythology, symbolism, and Vodou songs and dances (DiMaggio & Fernandez-Kelly, 2010; Hebblethwaite, 2012; Louis-Jeune & Clio.com, 2018). Records

of oral tradition: stories, myths, legends, and folktales permeate the Haitian culture (Zafenou, n.d).

Elements of color in visual symbolism, personal attire (colorful clothing), visual narratives, and artistic impressions are paramount to understanding how the experiences of diaspora shape the Afro-Caribbean identities of Haitians in Little Haiti of Miami-Dade County are retained (Philogène, 2004, 2015; Zafenou, n.d). However, the concept of guided imagery from imagery, visual narratives, and art expositions is new within this community (Jean-Louis, 2012; Miller, 2016, as cited in Davenport, 2004, 2015, 2016). Guided imagery is a mindful alteration of images and their associations in the mind to rewire the brain in a healthy fashion, burrowing into its neural



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networks to craft a state of self, and societal transformation (Miller, 2016, as cited in Davenport, 2016). Guided imagery is a very effective instrument for health. Patients or clients can design imagery interventions for their wellbeing dealing with difficult thoughts, emotions, and lifestyle effects of stress, and other diseases. Cantwell (2016) defined guided imagery in the following terms:

Guided imagery involves the use of images of all kinds that arise from within, including visual, tactile, aural, olfactory, gustatory, mental, spiritual, and impressionistic images. The imagery itself is both diagnostic—an indicator of physical, emotional, or spiritual aspects of our being that are seeking exploration and healing, and a living pool of therapeutic symbols that hold the key to transformation, which can be unlocked through the guided imagery process (p.32).

From an anthropological standpoint, Haiti's complex religious system in which Vodou plays a vital part in cultural survival (Michel & Bellegarde-Smith, 2006), and festivals such as rara, compas, catholic religious pilgrimages-holidays, and carnivals (people in costumes embracing music with dance movements and parade) are anchors of Haitians' life. Juste-Constant (1994) opined that Haitian culture is not monolithic, and the carnival suits either inside or outside religion. In figure 14a, the painter Patrice Piard shows a carnival scene with the Vodou flag, drum, and other intriguing items.

By considering the material and spiritual aspects of the Haitian culture in Miami-Dade County, Florida, this article proposes an active imagination exercise as guided imagery for three archetypal images as conscious experiences within the culture: the mother, songs and dance, and a nondirective form of guided imagery known as *vèvè* (pronounced as (vehveh)).

Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida: A Population Synopsis

According to miamidadematters.org (2025), there are 2,757,840 persons residing in Miami-Dade County, within Florida's 23,198,503 persons. The Hispanic Latino population consists of 1,941,122 persons. Black African Americans are tabulated at 377,085 persons. The U.S Census QuickFacts (2021) about Miami-Dade County, reported 662,777 individuals, as of July 25, 2021. The US Census (2020) reported 2,701,767 individuals. The percentage of foreign-born individuals in 2021 was estimated at 54%. In fact note (b), in terms of race and Hispanic origin, and Hispanic or Latino percentage, during 2017-2021, the percentage was 31.7% (US Census QuickFacts, 2021). The definition of "Hispanics consists of any race, so are individuals in applicable race categories" (Factnote b). Blacks or African Americans alone consist of 17.4 %. As a result, data about Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida are underreported. The statistics about the total number of Haitians in Miami-Dade County, throughout Florida, the United States are not exact, and there is difficulty in identifying Haitians as a monolithic group (Bojarski, 2021; St.Hilaire, 2021; Stepick et al., 2006a). Two attributable causes

can be immigration status, and the misrepresentation of Haitians as an ethnic group, instead of classifying them with African-Americans.

According to the U.S. Census (2020) estimates, there were more than 300,000 people with Haitian ancestry in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties, Florida, but the number consists of a considerable dent. It also reported 1.2 million Haitians in the United States. The difficulty in providing a current count from the U.S. Census (2020), also stemmed from the Trump administration policy of non-citizens exclusion, although the Census Bureau allowed respondents more options to designate their country of origin (Bojarski, 2021). The span of segregation of Haitians in Florida covers different cities, towns, and villages (St.Hilaire, 2021). To date, it is not plausible to offer an exact number of Haitians living in the United States.

Little Haiti: A Powerful Imagery Portal

According to the official travel and tourism site of Greater Miami and Miami Beach (n.d), Little Haiti represents the crucial point of Greater Miami and Miami Beach's Haitian community, and "shops and other buildings are painted pastel pink, blue, and yellow" (p.1). Little Haiti is a 3.5-square-mile enclave encompassing miles north of the downtown city of Miami, 50 by 10 city quarters. There are the 9,000 square foot Caribbean Market, Libreri Mapou bookstore, and Little Haiti Complex which preserves the Afro-Caribbean culture, art gallery, dance studios, Haitian restaurants, and contemporary modern art galleries (miamianbeaches.com; Stepick & Stepick, 2006b). The diverse Haitian culture, a mix of Africa, French and Spanish inspirations is vibrant and striving (Zafenou, n.d). According to Farrell (2022), Little Haiti faces the dire problems of gentrification since 2009, and there are 30,000 exiles and artists of Haitian descent who can soon be displaced due to higher property values, investors, and developers seeking to move into Little Haiti, considered "the hottest neighborhood in Miami", according to Zillow (p.2). The New Tropic (n.d) highlighted the concerning issue of 'whitewashing.' Other issues such as Little Haiti's cultural identity survival, and the expansion of creative zones of Wynwood and the Miami Design District which borders the 54th street, and 79th Street areas of Little Haiti, are looming (Farrell, 2022).

The artistic representation in this cultural space of Miami-Dade County, Florida, reflects sophisticated designs portraying certain Haitians' struggles to come to America from Haiti, using improvised boats for perilous journeys in the Atlantic and Caribbean seas to America. The symbolism of the sea, boat, the Haitian plea for protection from the spirits guiding the sea and their journey, and the image of the Lady of Perpetual Help, is depicted in murals, and dreams reflecting their experience are painted (Clio.com, n.d; DiMaggio & Fernandez-Kelly, 2010; Rey, 1999; Yahoo.com). Figures a, b, and c below exemplify an aspect of the urban and cultural life in Little Haiti in Miami-Dade County, Florida (www.wlrn.org).

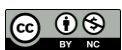




Figure a.wlrn.com. Little Haiti street art

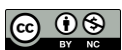
Alt text: a painter standing in front of a mural reviewing his art work including welcome to Little Haiti with visual elements such as a man fishing in a boat, a ladder standing on a building in

construction, the sea with images of a shark, a woman, the sun, and a mountain in the background.



Figure b. Seth Globepainter

Alt text: A image of the enclave of Little Haiti with people as characters.



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Figure c. Caribbean Market. Courtesy of Little Haiti Cultural Complex
Alt text: image of the Little Haiti Market Cultural Complex

Visual Imageries' Consistency with African Diasporic Graphic Systems

The images: murals, paintings, music, songs and dance, and the graphic representations of vèvès are cultural materials deeply incorporated into African diaspora graphic systems. Seeing Haitian art in the diaspora as essential to lived experiences, and their meaning, suggests it is part of the Haitian cosmology. According to Gundaker (1998), indigenous scripts and graphic systems permeate ethnic groups, have meanings, and are associated with a religious ethos. Graphic systems from Africa are found in all fabrics of the Haitian society, and many Latin-America countries. In Cuba, there is a well-documented system termed *anaforuana*: the graphic system of the Cuban secret society (p.165). Furthermore, in Surinam a reproduced written sample during Winti spirit possession, exposed that the unsettled meaning and the symbols associated with the writing are paramount to the individual's spiritual experience (Gundaker, 1998).

The vèvès of Haitian Vodou are emblematic of their deities and are tied with spiritual portals. Daniels (2023) opined that the concept of African spiritual nationhood, accommodates "a religious genealogy of Haitian Vodou's African *nanchon*" (p.68). The Haitian spirits embodied a Pan-Africanism with the Vodou religion as auxiliary and form of liberation, Daniels (2023) contends. Forms of secret societies exist depending on the adherents serving the spirits or *lwa* associated with the vèvès (Brown, 1975). For Mballa (2022), in the traditional Black-African universe, an individual is united to himself, to the visible and invisible worlds, namely the regulation of the cosmos. The vèvès and Vodou songs considered in this article are part of the religious experiences of Haitians, deeply rooted in Vodou theology from African beliefs and various parts of the motherland: Africa (Desmangles, 1992). They are not presented

here to offer a solid discussion of the visual genre, but to inform the scholarly mind of the deep platforms existing within the Haitian culture. The Haitian ethos is permeated by the African universe. Furthermore, a paper on vèvès would require in depth analysis of their geometrical graphic designs and meaning. To date, the best scholarly work on vèvès as fundamental inquiry of visual imagery is represented by Karen Mc Carthy Brown (1975). Ritual art of the Haitian Vodou typifying vèvès is also captured by Turnier Ferere (n.d.)

Elements of Imagery Vividness in Little Haiti

Consistent with imagery vividness, the cognitive imagination depicted by imageries in Little Haiti suggests that the Haitian visualization noted through artworks is a quintessential element of Haitians' imaginative lives in Miami-Dade County, Florida, I posit. The following figure 12.1 portrays the symbolism of the sea, and the Lady of Perpetual Help guiding Haitians during their Journey at the sea to reach the United States by boat (DiMaggio & Fernandez-Kelly, 2010; Haiti-reference.info, n.d.; Rey, 1999).

The Mother. The image of our Lady of Perpetual Help represents the matron of the Notre Dame D'Haiti Catholic Church in Little Haiti, Miami, whom some Haitians worship and see as their spiritual mother (Rey, 1999). Haiti was consecrated to the Lady of Perpetual Help on December 8, 1942 (Sansaricq, 2011), and she is accepted as a caring mother, the equivalent of Mary the mother of Christ.

The symbolism of the mother is also found in Haitian Vodou, a religion in which the Lady of Perpetual Help is venerated as *Èzili Dantò*, a spirit or *lwa*, the mother of freedom during the Haitian revolution (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p.234). Hebblethwaite (2012) explained that the Vodou religion is deeply rooted within Haitian culture, history, identity, and there



is a religious syncretism between Vodou and Catholicism. The term *Vodou* originated from the Fon culture in Dahomey (now Benin), and signifies a *spirit*, and in Yoruba culture, a *mystery* (Hoffman, 1990). The spirit or deity, called *lwa* or

mystè(*mystery*) in Haitian culture partakes in human life and relates to natural powers (Conner, 2001, p.2). The Images of Èzili and Èzili Dantò are shown below in figures 1 and 2 (www.youtube.com).



Figure 1. Èzili



Figure 2. Èzili Dantò

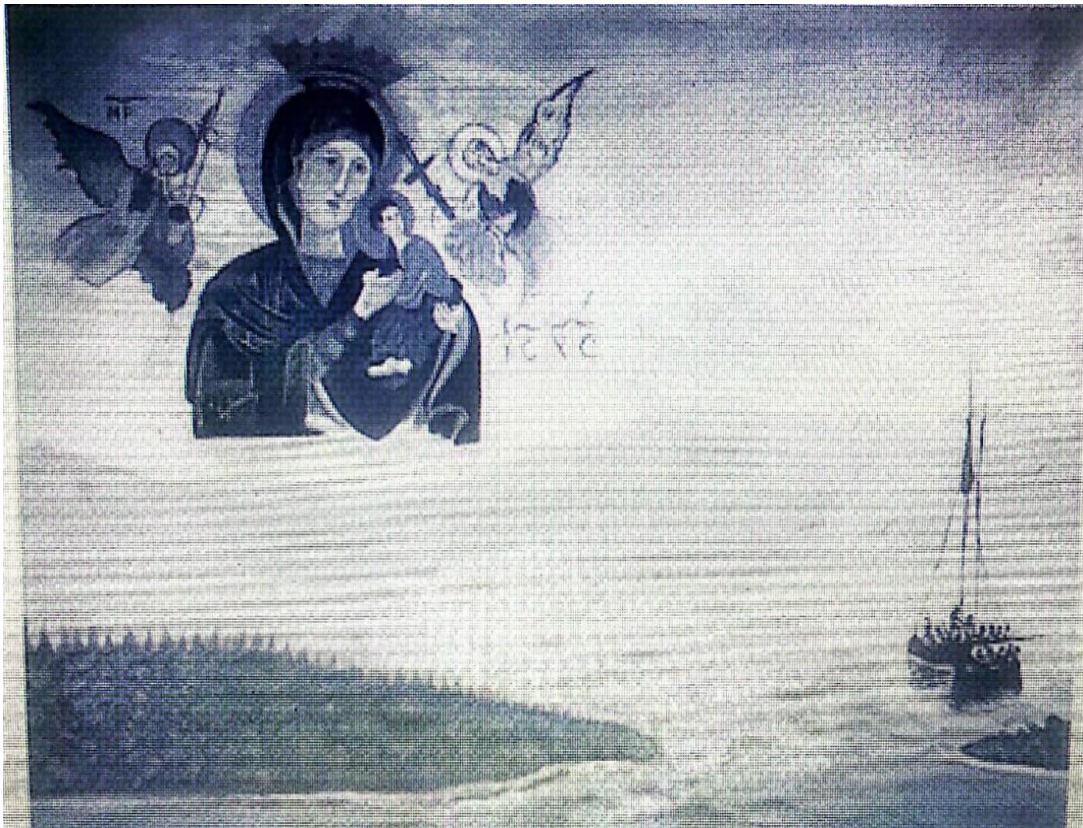


Figure d. Alt text: image representing Our lady of Perpetual Help in the sky while a boat of people is sailing. Photo by Terry Rey (1999).

Additionally, the concept of the sea is also understood through the lenses of the spirits or *lwas* offering protection at sea, such as Agwe Tawoyo, Lasirenn (the Mermaid), a rescuer of victims of shipwrecks. Lasirenn (the Mermaid) has a body of a beautiful attractive mulatto woman (sometimes depicted as such) with a

codfish tail (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p.253). Images of the mermaid and the symbolism of water are captured in the paintings of Patrice Piard (figure 3), Frantz Zephirin(www.artshaitian.com), figure 4, and figures 5, 6, 7a, 8, 9,10 (www.patricepiard.com)



Figure 3. Patrice Piard. Mermaid 24x48. Alt text: The mermaid represent a deity in the sea.



Figure 4. Frantz Zephirin. The Brooks

Alt text: Images of a boat with six individuals standing on the upper deck showing three of them with animal faces, and 12 slaves standing in the lower deck of a boat during the crossing of the Atlantic trade A mermaid deity is guiding them sounding the cor, and holding a musical instrument in her left hand.

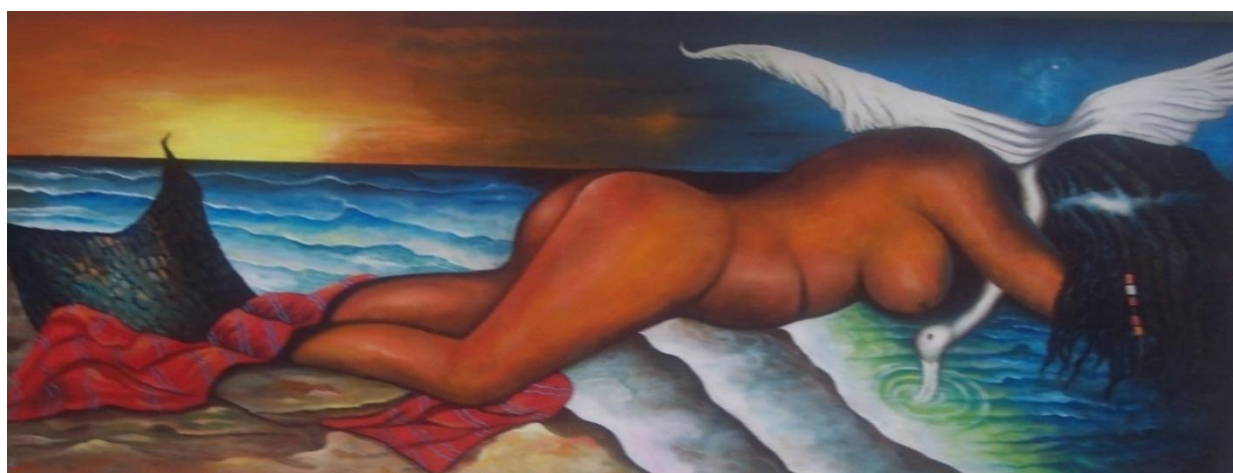


Figure 5. Patrice Piard. Mermaid. Alt text: A Black and naked sleeping mermaid at sea with one breast exposed



Figure 6. Patrice Piard. Irene.
Black woman sitting with feet in the water.



Figure 7a. Patrice Piard. Fisherman
A sea with boats, a fisherman in the background & people standing in the proximity representing business activities.

The painters J. Lundy, Prefète Duffaut, and Patrice Piard presented the symbolism of water as a life element. Their paintings below (figures 8, 9, & 10) expressed the vital importance of water, a metaphor for spirituality, renewal, the spirit of the ancestors, the *lwas* (spirits), such as the spirit Simbi living underwater, and Vodou practitioners can spend time under water to acquire healing power (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p.230). Water in the Vodou religion is understood as a communicative channel to the ancestral spirit or *lwa* and is a form of purification, and reminiscence of pain during the Black people's enslavement from Africa to the new world (Rey &

Stepic, 2010; St.Hilaire, 2021). Jil & Jil (2009, as cited in Hebblethwaite, 2002, p.13) opined that the *lwas* or spirits inhabit three domains: the sky, the earth, and the sea. The following song, translated by Hebblethwaite (2012), typifies that assertion:

vodou tè a, ey Savalou e! (Spirits of the earth, hey Savalou, yeah!)
vodou dlo a, ey Savalou e! (Spirits of the water, hey Savalou, yeah!)
vodou lè a, ey Savalou e! (Spirits of the air, hey Savalou, yeah!)
(p.13).



Figure 8. Village River Scene. J. Lundy. 8 x 6
A river scene showing a man getting off a boat, and a woman carrying a water jug on her head.



Figure 9. Prefète Duffaut. The Bay Collection 12X 16
A man-made community built on a lake, visual elements: two boats and coconut trees.



Figure 10. Patrice Piard. Waiting 24x48. A black woman sitting on a rock with both feet deep in the water.

Songs and Dance. Miami-Dade County is home to an energetic cultural space, trendy nightlife, historical heritage, leisure, romance, and natural outdoor wonders that display its uniqueness (visitflorida.com). The enclave of Little Haiti offers various musical platforms exposing the power and excitement of music and dance. Haitian music such as compas, rara ou rasin (roots music) rhythm, Vodou music, and songs are status quo in this space. Vodou songs and dance, and music are usually heard

in the Vodou temples called hounfò. The hounfò is the sacred place of the spirit or *lwa* where Vodou rituals, worship, spiritual inquiry, and celebration in the forms of prayer, dance, liturgy, music, and possessions occur (Dennis, 2012; Hebblethwaite, 2012, p. 23). The images below express the power of a voodoo manbo (priestess) getting ready for a tarot reading (lecture) sitting in an hounfò (Figure 11), and dancing during a Vodou ceremony [figure 11a] (Daleus, 1981).



Figure 11. The lesson. Patrice Piard
A Black woman reading the tarot.



Figure 11a Wilfrid Daleus. 1981. Ceremonie Vodou 24x36
A voodoo dance ceremony with visual elements: food, a cross, burning fire with a spear.

Elements of Vodou's songs translate imagery and conversation of death to the spirit of the ancestors. In Haitian Vodou, songs are perceived as a hereditary dimension of its tradition and are associated sometimes with joy, pain, mental transcendence, and fortitude (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p. 7). Celebration of life is key under the influence of drumming on songs and dance and worship, and spiritual

protection against sickness. The power of the priest (ougan) as a spiritual healer and singer, is considered a rudiment of beauty with messages (Hebblethwaite, 2012, pp. 33-35). One core assumption of Vodou music is the amalgamation of Vodou songs and dance creating daze and triggering spirit or *lwa* possession, Hebblethwaite (2012) advanced. Spirit possession is defined by Johnson (2014) as:



the standard anthropological classification for ritual events in which a nonhuman entity to displace the human person in a given body, with every invocation renewing, at least implicitly, the perennial problems of how to define the “person” in relation to the body” (p.4).

A type of symbolic property exists in the musical instruments played during a Vodou ceremony. As a result, the sound of certain Vodou musical instruments: drums, ogan [cowbells], and asotò drums provides spiritual cooperation, and singing a Vodou song specific to a particular spirit/deity or *lwa*, creates an invitation to that spirit or *lwa* to manifest itself. Laguerre (1982, as cited in Hebblethwaite, 2012) explained:

The songs express emotions that pertain to the tradition of the *lwa*; they address love, fear, awe, violence, energy, jubilation, admiration, and respect. Vodou songs provide a unique insight into the mythology of the *lwa* or its functions (p.37). Hebblethwaite (2012) stated songs describe familial, friendship, and lovers’ relationships with the *lwa* or spirit. Examples are Papa Legba (Father Legba), Manman Brigit (Granny Brigit), Grann Èzili(Granny Èzili), and Kouzen Zaka [Cousin Zaka](p.37). Images of rara and folk dances obtained in Little Haiti are exhibited below in figures 12, 13, and 14(miamiandbeaches.com; www.patricepiard.com; yahoo.com

Figure 12. Patrice Piard. Rara 48x67
A rara music with men blowing the bamboo



Figure 13. miamiandbeaches.com. Dance
Black women in red and blue colors dancing.



Figure 14. yahoo.com. Haiti: Galleries, food, Indie, music, and more in Little Haiti
A painting depicting Haiti: Galleries, food, Indie, music, and more in Little Haiti

Figure 14a. Carnaval des dieux (gods' carnival) 36x48. Patrice Piard. god's carnival. A woman with a flag directing the dance with a man standing, a girl with a drum, and another woman with a mask.



Beauvoir (2008b) sees in vodou songs, a version in Haitian culture expressing vodou thinking, as part of a broader dogmatic, and anthropological framework. He posited that scholars should be invited to ascertain the cross-sectional spiritual and exegetic methods to appreciate and understand the meaning of Vodou songs. Spirit *lwa* possession is usually accompanied by songs and dance, and serving the *lwa* or spirit can inspire protection, wisdom, social status, and wealth, Hebblethwaite (2012) asserted.

Vèvè (Pronounced as vehveh). Vivid images in the Haitian culture espoused by the Vodou religion are called vèvè. Hebblethwaite (2012) describes the vèvè as a mystical geometrical diagram or portal traced on the ground with corn flour, ashes, coffee ground, hot-pepper powder, sand, and other granulated ingredients by a priest(ougan) or manbo (priestess) to invite a spirit or lwa during a ceremony (p.298). The crossroad or *kalfou* (corner) sign symbolizes the intersection of the living and the ancestors, lwa or spirit. Each vèvè represents a singular spirit or lwa. The Haitian vèvè is found in the Fon term *weke* meaning supplication and is linked to Benin, formerly known as the kingdom of Dahomey (Hebblethwaite, 2012; Hoffman, 1990). In Benin, as well as in Haiti, huge rectangular vèvès provide healing, as spiritual portals to a deity/spirit or lwa. The same concept of vèvè is found in Nigeria, Ghana, and other neighboring African cultures (Hebblethwaite, 2012.p.298). In Miami-Dade County, Florida, and Little Haiti, these diagrams are found in various temples or *hounfòs*, and *botanicas* (figure 24) (Kleinman, 2017), which can be part of Vodou societies, such as the Halouba community, la Société de Saint Jacques Majeur (St. James the Major Society), etc. (Dennis, 2012b; St. Hilaire, 2021).

New Argument. The taxonomy of vèvès as a healing, therapeutic, or protection portal from a Vodouist or non-Vodou practitioner's standpoint, as the initiator, has never been considered. I argue that it is plausible that guided imagery,

using the vèvè symbolism, not considering its protective or spiritual portal during spirit or lwa possession of a person as a horse (*chwal*) can be therapeutic, and open further inquiries into mind-body-medicine. There can also be tremendous psychological avenues for further research to expand sample images of the vèvès as portals for inviting a spirit or lwa. Symbols are presented in figures 15, and 16 below.

It is with this understanding that this article proposes the adoption of a guided imagery active imagination exercise without accessing the spiritual portals in Vodou ceremonies, but using an individual perspective, moving away from the top-down spirit or lwa possessing the person- horse(*chwal*) as understood in the Vodou culture. The concept of *chwal* is grasped as being ridden or possessed by a lwa or spirit (Hebblethwaite, 2012.) During the spirit possession, there is a loss of consciousness, personality departing from the body, and other spirits intending to channel through an individual are chased away with the sound of the *ason* musical instrument [sacred rattle] (p.17).

Gestalt Art Therapy, Dialogue with Art Therapy, and Inner Advisor exercises are considered to help expand the imagery experiences with Focusing-Oriented Expressing Arts [FOAT] (Rappaport, 2016).

Hebblethwaite (2012, pp.205-303) asserted certain vèvès' meanings with the following:

Papa Legba's vèvè is identified as the lwa of the crossroads giving access to the invisible. His vèvè is represented in the image below in figures 15,16, and other vèvès are found in figures 17,18,17, 20, 21, and 22. Erzulie is a lwa or spirit that typifies love, devotion, affection, grace, and beauty. Her vèvè shows a heart (figure 16). The Ogun vèvè is identified as the patron of war and politics (figure 16). His emblems are iron, fire, machete, sword, and saber. Another vèvè: the Ogou Balendjo expresses similar concepts. Additionally, the Gede

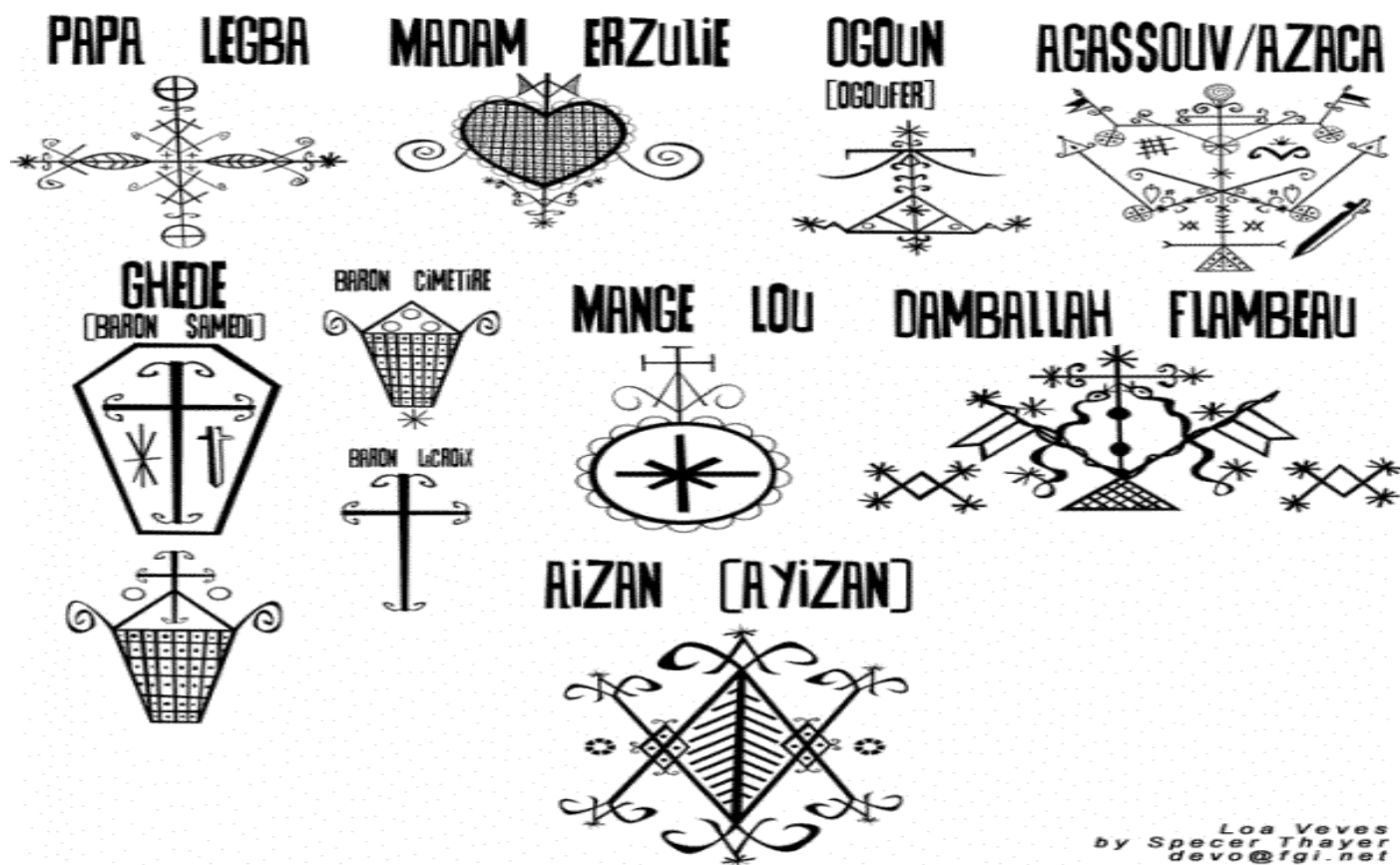
spirit, or *lwa* gede (figure 15) is believed to be the protector of the living and dead.

The Mermaid (la Sireenne) spirit or *lwa*'s vèvè (figure 15) symbolizes she is a rescuer of victims of shipwrecks. Haitian legend contends that this spirit or *lwa* attracts women to the shore and entices them into the sea to grant them healing powers (Hebblethwaite, 2012. p.253). In the same vein, the Simbi spirit, or *lwa* is associated with fountains, springs, ponds, and lakes, and is believed to be the guardian of coasts that captures children going alone to procure water (p.291). Her vèvè traduces the concept of river crossing and healing (figure 15). Azaka as the spirit or *lwa* of agriculture and farming, and protecting travelers is represented in Spencer Thayer's image as Agassou/Azaka (figure 15). The Damballah Flambeau (figure 15) (Thayer, n.d) or Danbala spirit (snake) or *lwa*

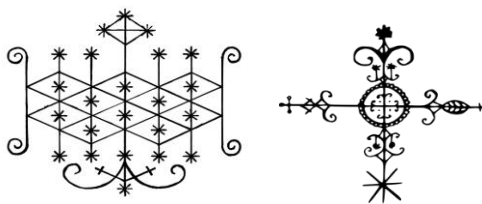
typifies conception, birth, life, family, love, sexuality, fecundity, wealth, movement, permanency, harmony, wisdom, and fate (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p.226). The artist Myrlande Constant (figure 25) presented in one of her Vodou flags, the Danbala spirit or *lwa* during a spiritual exorcism healing by a snake(myrlandeconstant.com). Vodou flags represent authority (Polk, 1997). The Marassa Jumeaux (figure 16) (the Twins) are patrons of justice and represent divine power and human impotence (pinterest.com). Baron Samedi (Lord Saturday) (figure 16) is the patron or guardian of the dead (pinterest.com). In figure 16, Thayer (n.d) presents Baron Cimetiere (Lord of the Cemetery), and Barron Lakou (Lord Backyard). Erzulie Dantor is the matron of love, beauty, dancing, and marriage, and Ayizan Velekete is known as the patron of business and commerce (pinterest.com).

Figure 15

Alt text: Images of various portals for deities by Specer Thayer



Ogou Balendjo



The Mermaid (la Sireenne) Simbi

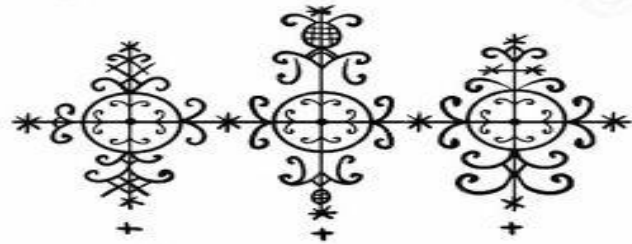
Figure 16



VOODOO SYMBOLS



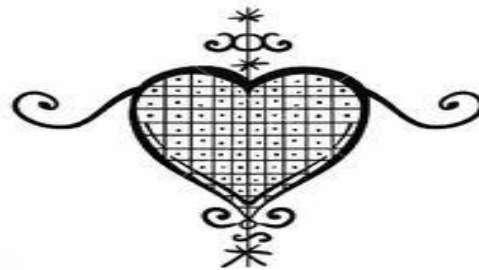
OGOUN
PATRON OF WAR, POWER, POLITICS



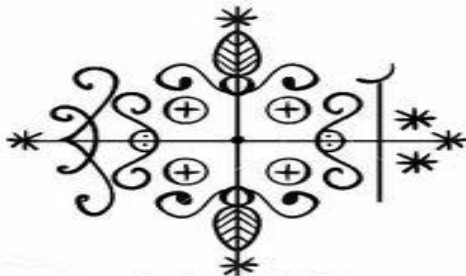
MARASSA JUMEAUX
PATRONS OF JUSTICE, DIVINE POWER AND HUMAN IMPOTENCE



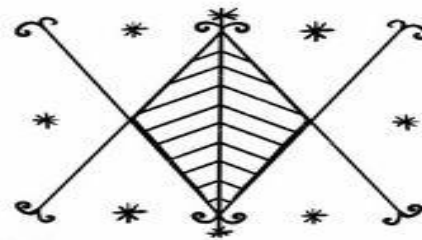
BARON SAMEDI
PATRON OF DEAD AND BLACK MAGIC



ERZULIE DANTOR
PATRON OF LOVE, BEAUTY, DANCING AND MARRAGE



PAPA LEGBA
PATRON OF ROADS, OPENS GATES TO SPIRIT WORLD



AYIZAN VELEKETE
PATRON OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

www.pinterest.com

Alt text: Images of various portals for deities

Spirits as animals, animal spirits, and animal sacrifices.

There seems to be in the Vodou religion reliance on animal sacrifices to the deities or *lwas*/spirits, a form of archetypal symbols enunciated by Jung's concept of power animals or spirit helpers as living images directing to the meaning of the inner world (Davenport, 2016, p.187), an unknown inner sphere. Beauvoir-Dominique (1995, as cited in Conner, 2001) alluded to aesthetic signs and symbols in Vodou as excerpts of the meaning of the inner being relying on the activation of the collective unconscious. Beyond the animal sacrifice as an *object/item* to honor and seek the support of the *lwa*, the animal blood and meat are offered to the *lwa*, then cooked, and served

to the possessed individual and members of the community (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p.287). However, ingesting raw animal blood by a possessed individual implies a devil spirit, according to Marcenat (n.d., as cited in Hebblethwaite, 2012). Epstein (2016) refers to the practice of imagery in the pits of consciousness through the sense of taste.

One can argue that only a Vodou practitioner [Vodouist](Vodouisant) is aware of the invisible. Anthropologist Rene Devish (1973, as cited in Benoit & Delpuech, 2018) sees in elements, objects, and sculptures in Vodou, a profane and sacred reality. The sacred dimension, I argue, could be multidimensional and subjectively expressed.



Citation: St.Hilaire, C. (2025). Reframing Vodou's vèvès through guided imagery therapy and neurotheology as diasporic expressions among Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida. *GAS Journal of Religious Studies (GASJRS)*, 2(1).

There is a deep spiritual dichotomous element in animal sacrifices, meaning, and animal transformation, I further contend. In significant terms, seeing spirits as animals is deeply entrenched in the Vodou culture. Furthermore, animals such as snakes, birds, cows, goats, and insects oftentimes serve as spiritual dwellings (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p.15). There are secret societies called the bizangos, sanpwèl, or champwèl or chanpwèls (Hairless), part of the Bizango society, whose members have the power to metamorphose into animals, and Zobops (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p.288; Hoffmann, 1990). The sanpwèl or chanpwèl and the bizangos are feared. The Sanpwèl bands seek victims to sacrifice and are considered executioners for atrocious infringements, while the bizangos are thought to be protectors or gatekeepers of the community and its cultural heritage (Benoit & Delpuech, 2018; Hebblethwaite, 2012).

Vodou art is also deeply influenced by bizango statues, and museums in France, Haiti, and Europe see them as expensive, and sacred religious art (Benoit & Delpuech, 2018). Hebblethwaite (2012) stated the bizangos of Haiti originated from “Zangbètò in Porto-Novo, Benin, the archipelago near the coast of Kakonda, between Sierra Leone and Cape Verde, and possess magical powers”(pp.219-220). Other Bizangos communities are from Guinea-Bissau’s Bijagos or Bissagos islands, located 48km (30 mi) from the Guinea-Bissau coast

consisting of 88 and other sacred islands that have never been annexed by colonial rulers, due to their distance and resistance to slavery, spiritual beliefs, traditions, and the spirits that govern them (Holloway, 2020. pp.1-3).

The animal spirit concept seems not to correlate with certain aspects of Vodou rituals consciously or unconsciously, and the imagery portals such as vèvè. Nonetheless, there is an element of real fear in the culture related to various and powerful spirits (Deren, 1983; Hurbon, 1995; Planson, 1987, Rigaud, 1953). One aspect of this fear is created by the sanpwèl or bizangos’ powerful spirits metamorphosing into animals, I contend. While there is a deeper connection to human life and spirit, and a quest to understand their synchronicity (Baron-Reid, 2018), the Haitian Vodou mythology and philosophical realms appear to be intriguing. Certain areas with stones, mountains, waterfalls, caves, and impressive natural sites are perceived to be sacred with spirits or lwas residing there and suggest fear or veneration. Images captured in Little Haiti through murals, and paintings from various painters suggest further inquiry is warranted to explore their sensory characteristics. Figures 16-18, 16a, figures 19 and 19a, figures 7, and 23 below show forms of subliminal messages of dove, octopus, turtle, goat, parrot, heron, and butterfly (Highsmith, 2020; Romain, 2017; www.wlrn.org

Figure 16a. Representation of a goat mask.

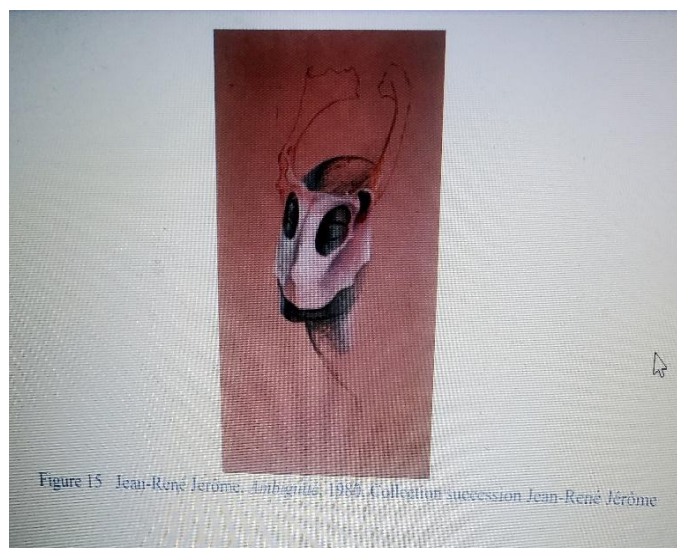


Figure 15 Jean-René Jérôme. *Anthropus*, 1985, Collection succession Jean-René Jérôme

Romain Pascale collection, 2017. Jean Rene Jerome

Mural showing a woman deep in the sea with a boat of her head surrounded by an octopus.



Figure 17. Street art in Little Haiti. Courtesy wlrn



Figure 18. Little Haiti Murals, Wynwood walls
Mural showing 2 women, 1 carrying an animal
mask on her head.



Figure 19. Street Art in Little Haiti, a taste of my life
A woman deeply thinking about the sea in her journey, seeing
turtles.

Figure 19a. Un certain age (A certain age).

Patrice Piard 24x30. Old woman sitting and smoking tobacco holding a container of fruits,. In front of her are a snake biting a man-made lamp with its tail on a heron's head.



Figure 20. Street Art & Graffiti in NYC 720 x 540.

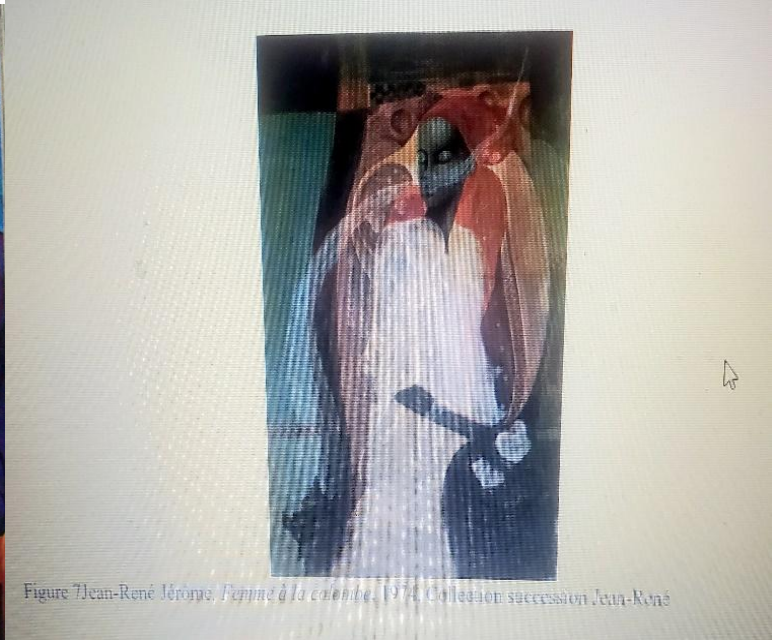


Figure 7. Femme à la colombe (woman with dove). Jean René
Jérôme, 1974. Romain Pascale, 2017



Luis Valle & Ruben Ubiera. streetartnyc.org. Mural of a Black woman holding a Black child. A parrot standing.

Figure 21. Sabrina. Patrice Piard

Depicts a Black woman with three doves on her hat.



Jean-René Jérôme. *Femme chèvre annonciatrice de la mondialisation*, 1980 Collection Maggy

Figure 22. Femme Chèvre (Goat woman). Jean René Jérôme, 1980. Collection Maggy Romain Pascale, 2017.

Figure 23. Wall Art in Miami, FL Little Haiti
Black woman depicting a butterfly with open ears.
ostensibly open towards a wall.



Carol Highsmith, 2020

Figure 24. St. Gerard Botanica. Botanica with 4 images of
Catholic Saints with prayer, incantation and victorious
expressions.



In Compass Quarterly. Mary Beth Koeth, 2017

Figure 25. Exorcism. Vodou Flag by Myrlande Constant. A priest using a snake crawling on a sick man lying to heal him, surrounded
by 5 servants.



Courtesy <https://www.myrlandeconstant.com/>

Artistic animal representations and spirits. An associative stance with the animal representations through symbols expressed in the arts by Haitian artists suggests that imagery practices are profoundly rooted in consciousness, and visual, hearing, and touch senses within this culture (Epstein, 2016). This stance is represented: by a Catholic saint holding her child, images of feet in the water, a woman carrying water on her head, a priestess leaning on the drums with eyes closed in her *ounfò*, a man on a boat fishing people sailing on a boat, mermaid, dove, a snake in a Vodou flag, an octopus in the sea, turtles, parrot, goat, heron, butterfly, and animal mask. The *vèvès* representations are specific images that can be used for Gestalt Art Therapy, a valuable modality of FOAT (Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts) (Rappaport, 2016). Rappaport (2016) explained:

Focusing-oriented expressive arts provide a multi-sensory experience by incorporating focusing as a mindful, inner-directed approach for accessing imagery, in conjunction with the sensory-based arts process (p.248).

Baron-Reid (2018) enunciated that the dove, snake, turtle, parrot, goat, and butterfly spirits help reclaim higher power, intrinsic pure gift, and instinctive awareness. The butterfly spirit entails “transformation is beautiful”(p.35), the dove spirit signifies “be peace” (p.64), the parrot spirit means “watch your words”(p.136), the snake spirit is defined as “time to heal” (p.162), and the turtle spirit means “slow and steady wins the race” (p.182). A connection between the highlighted imagery practices seen in the Haitian culture, and the spirit animal requires further inquiry. One exception is the snake spirit found in Vodou mythology and *vèvè* that considers the snake image and spirit/*lwa* as healing, life, movement, harmony, and the religious syncretism that considers St.Patrick, accepted in Vodou as the spirit of snakes and ancestral knowledge (Hebblethwaite, 2012).

Guided Imagery Relevance to Haitian Health and Mental Health Needs

A considerable number of researchers have indirectly addressed the concepts of health and mental health needs within the Haitian culture (Auguste & Rasmussen, 2019; Meance, 2005; Richardson, 2014). Meance (2005) sees Vodou’s healing as paramount in mental health balance among Haitian immigrant communities. Stress, depression, emotional distress, pain, and anxiety are not limited to a particular culture but are part of the biological and biochemistry process that begins in every individual from the amygdala and throughout the nervous system, releases hormones (endocrine system), and reactions of the immune system. (Karren et al. 2014). The key concern is how communication from these three systems flows to maintain internal balance or homeostasis, and what are Haitians’ cultural perceptions of health, healing, and mental health?

The concepts of pain, depression as an illness, and emotional distress in Haitian culture need to be understood from their emic perspective. Hebblethwaite (2012) presents many vodou songs addressing pain as a concept entangled in Vodou’s therapeutic worldview and anthropological discourses. The emic perspective considers a native’s cultural worldview (Avruch, 1998; St.Hilaire, 2023). For example, the word depression, as a typical human affect can be caused by loss,

conflict or crisis, trauma, or any disruption in life’s normal balance (Karren et al., 2014). In Haitian culture, being depressed means feeling overwhelmed, or “akable” [pronounced as *akablay*] in Haitian Creole (Jeanty, 1993). It can also be tied to health perceptions such as a physical malaise, a sense of weakness, or low energy (Auguste & Rasmussen, 2019) due to strong, obscure expressions, or events, such as internal or external offenses, I posit. Within the Haitian culture, mental health diseases have negative psychiatric implications tied with cultural and religious biases (Catholicism and Vodou faiths) that seem to prevent people to seek help for their psychological problems (Lovell, 2016; Richardson, 2014). Richardson (2014) asserted that depression is associated with excessive worrying, and shame, and can be due to a Vodou curse, which can dichotomously be perceived as a treatment for a mental illness. Additionally, as Auguste & Rasmussen (2019, p.3) explained, one needs to distinguish between depression and *depression mentale* (mental depression) in Haiti. *Depression mentale* refers to a gamut of symptoms, including fatigue, and feelings of desolation, whereas depression, is more clinically associated with major depressive disorders (Auguste & Rasmussen, 2019). The above considerations suggest that a viable platform for guided imagery, built on visual imagination, art archetypes, songs and dance, religious music, and using the *vèvès* can help express an inner sense of self towards self-healing.

Guided Imagery and Health

Guided imagery, as a conscious variant of images and their linkages with our minds, has proven to be effective in neuroscience confirming that relaxing images and moods of belonging cause higher levels of dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin secretion from the brain, which lead to reduced anxiety, and cortisol inhibition (Miller, 2016). Similar images with negative emotions propel releases of chemicals detrimental to bodily tissues, and cultivating new images and ideas leads to relaxed states and positive emotions in individuals/clients or patients’ mind and behavior (p.57). Kapogiannis et al. (2018), in a systematic review of randomized controlled trials of cancer patients, reported based on independent trials that progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) and guided imagery (GI) showed improvement in patient mental states such as moods and anxiety, which are predictors of anxiety and depression.

The literature about guided imagery among Haitians is scant because visual imagery and guided imagery among ethnic minorities have not been extensively researched. There is a failure of understanding the value of images, embracing visual analysis, visual narration among Haitians and Latinos (Philogene, 2015; Weingensbreg et al., 2019), and a lack of knowledge about the role of guided imagery as therapeutic healing and self-healing practices among the culture (Davenport, 2016). Cultural beliefs, context and awareness are essential to assess meaning and values (Cumming & Anderson, 2020; Laroche et al., 2011; Zafenou, n.d).

The emphasis is on assessing the effects of visual imagery variables such as: paintings, music, songs and dance, and art archetypes known as *vèvès* (pronounced as *vehveh*), recognized as spiritual and healing portals to spirit possession in the Vodou religion, or an individual’s role in mental self-healing. Three guided imagery



modalities: 1) Gestalt art, 2) dialogue with art therapies for music, songs and dance and vèvès, and 3) theme directed FOAT (focusing oriented art) for the mother, visual imageries and vèvès (Rappaport, 2016) will help substantiate the veracity of this article calling for an experimental design, as conscious religious experiences and spiritual phenomena or forms of isolation (Newberg, 2023). Using vèvès as forms of isolation for the Haitians' conscious spiritual experiences or practices may help create new paradigms. Newberg and Waldman (2010) posited that spiritual practices affecting the neurochemicals of the brain, decrease anxiety, stress, depression, and foster a sense of peace. Davenport (2016), in the same vein elucidated that the use of visual imagery as essential to guided imagery may lead to an inner element of healing. Kuhn (1971) postulated that all the facts that could possibly pertain to the development of a given science may seem to be relevant due to new predicaments or positions. Thus, deconstructing the vèvès of their unconscious habitus may lead to a vast array of new paradigms.

Literature Review

Stress, Anxiety, Emotional Distress, and Fear. This section considers guided imagery as a relevant modality to Haitians' health and mental health needs. A considerable number of researchers have indirectly addressed the concepts of health and mental health needs within the Haitian culture (Auguste & Rasmussen, 2019; Meance, 2005; Richardson, 2014). Meance (2005) sees Vodou's healing as paramount in mental health balance among Haitian immigrant communities. Stress, depression, emotional distress, pain, and anxiety are not limited to a particular culture but are part of the biological and biochemistry process that begins in every individual from the amygdala and throughout the nervous system, releases hormones (endocrine system), and reactions of the immune system (Karren et al., 2014). The key question is how communication from these three systems flows to maintain internal balance or homeostasis, and what are Haitians' cultural perceptions of health, healing, and mental health?

The concepts of pain, depression as an illness, and emotional distress in Haitian culture need to be understood from their emic perspective. Hebblethwaite (2012) presents many vodou songs addressing pain as a concept entangled in Vodou's therapeutic worldview and anthropological discourses. The emic perspective considers a native's cultural worldview (Avruch, 1998; St. Hilaire, 2023). For example, the word depression, as a typical human affect can be caused by loss, conflict or crisis, trauma, or any disruption in life's normal balance (Karren et al., 2014). Within the Haitian culture, being depressed means feeling overwhelmed, or "akable" [pronounced as akablay] in Haitian Creole (Jeanty, 1993). It can also be tied to health perceptions such as a physical malaise, a sense of weakness, or low energy (Auguste & Rasmussen, 2019) due to strong, obscure expressions, or events, such as internal or external offenses, I assert.

Many Haitians think that mental health diseases have negative psychiatric implications tied with spiritual dilemmas, cultural and religious biases from Catholic and Vodou faiths that prevent people seeking help for their psychological problems (Lovell, 2016; Richardson, 2014). Richardson (2014) asserted that depression is associated with excessive worrying, and

shame, and can be due to a Vodou curse, which can dichotomously be perceived as a treatment for a mental illness. Additionally, as Auguste and Rasmussen (2019, p.3) explained, one needs to distinguish between depression and *dépression mentale* (mental depression) in Haiti. *Dépression mentale* refers to a gamut of symptoms, including fatigue, and feelings of desolation, whereas depression, is more clinically associated with major depressive disorders (Auguste & Rasmussen, 2019).

Immigration Challenges and Socioeconomic Issues

Besides the psychological stressors that Haitian immigrants in Miami-Dade experience (separation from families and friends in home country, learning a new language and culture, discrimination, living arrangements) (Fanfan et al., 2023), immigration-related stress impacts their physical and mental well-being, as well as socioeconomic integration, causing anxiety and depression (Bekteshi & Kang, 2018; Fanfan et al., 2020). Socio-ethnic discrimination and economic disparities are lived experiences of many Haitians in the Miami-Dade County's habitus and structure reinforcing them, coupled with a sense of unequal opportunities and access to self-determination and practices (Bourdieu, 1990; Cela et al., 2022).

The Neurotheological Platform

Constant quests for the brain's activity as a neural substrate for religious beliefs, experiences or spirituality, and even as God's presence in the limbic system when humans deal with emotions (Muller, 2008), are quite biologically, consciously and unconsciously challenging. In making the connection with neurotheology, Vodou spirituality using vèvès as conscious (before spiritual channeling/trance) or unconscious habitus (spirit-possessed individual), it is possible to advance that the use of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to capture brain activities in spirit-possessed Haitians activated by vèvès tracing, Vodou songs, music and dance may help understand whether this spiritual mediumistic phenomenon is essentially dissociative, or can be appreciated as a cognitive phenomenon through neuroimaging (Peres et al., 2012). According to Peres et al. (2012), disassociation is defined as a deficiency of thoughts, feelings and practices into consciousness and memory. There is a salient concern if brain activities processed during the unconscious process of spirit possession can reflect a neurological pathway, perhaps beyond the scientific world. How can this be possible? what would this pathway show? Does it really exist? Using neurotheology as forms of exercising brain activities through meditation, visual imagery, music, songs, and dance may help better understand how neurotransmitters in control and experimental groups can lower stress, anxiety, fear, emotional distress, increase memory recall, and improve cognitive functions (Newberg & Waldman, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Visual perceptions associated with the drawing of vèvès, and other images are important to explore. The task can be difficult since one deals with nonverbal stimuli during a Vodou ceremony when a vèvè is traced. The theoretical basis is



found in Paivio and Ernest's (1971) work on imagery ability and visual perception:

The ability to process visual material at a perceptual level and, if so, whether the ability is general or specific to certain type of stimuli, depends on accuracy of images from cerebral functions of the visual fields (p.429).

The problem is how can one best decipher the type of stimuli in question?

As asserted by Paivio and Ernest (1971), the theoretical and functioning definition of imagery in terms of visual ability implies a relationship only between imagery ability and the recognition of nonverbal stimuli. This is very intriguing since "nonverbal" geometric forms are recognized equally well in both right and left visual fields. Thus, seeing vèvès as portals for spirit possession oblige further neuroscience inquiries, such as the utilization of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) in moment of spirit-possession or trance. A significant number of findings showed that perception which can be unconscious involved unconscious priming (Nanay, 2020). A similar argument can be made for unconscious mental states with mental imagery when a person has no deliberate awareness of his or her mental imagery. According to Nanay (2020, p.4), the unconscious mental imagery primes an individual in the same fashion, conscious mental imagery does.

Methodology

This article sets the foundations for a quantitative experimental research study deciphering the effects of visual imagery and archetypes as experimental and therapeutic guided imagery modalities among Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida dealing with stress, emotional distress, fear, immigration challenges, and socioeconomic issues.

For the quantitative realm of a viable experimental research, three groups from a sample size of 7 (N= 7) Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida are identified: 1) 3 Vodou practitioners with Catholic affiliations (control group), 2) 2 non-Vodou practitioners with Protestant affiliation (experimental group1), and 3) 2 unaffiliated individuals (experimental group 2).

The first group (control group) (Vodou practitioners with Catholic affiliation may use Gestalt art as a technique to experiment music, songs, and dance and vèvès while they are not spirit-possessed. The second group (experimental group1) may be associated with dialogue with art therapy for music, songs and dance and vèvès. The third group (experimental group 2) may use *theme directed FOAT (focusing oriented art)* for music, dance and songs, the mother, and vèvès.

Basic demographic information includes sex (male and female). The reasons for distinguishing Catholics from protestants are due to 1) the degree of spiritual syncretism existing within the faiths, 2) different perceptions of the spiritual experiences, 3) faith habitus, and 4) the role of anthropological colonization, I contend.

Covariates or explanatory variables, such as age, educational attainment, marital status, employment status as socioeconomic will support the statistical analysis. The proposed inclusion criteria for the participants consists of:

- speak either Haitian Creole, French, or English
- are between 25 to 70 years old.

- live in Miami-Dade County, Florida
- were either born in Haiti, the U.S.A, or are Haitian descent from other countries.

The measurements to adopt consist of: 1) the Beck Anxiety inventory (BAI) (Laroche et al., 2011), 2) the imaging ability questionnaire (IAQ) (Kwekkeboom, 2000), 3) the allocentric imagery exercise (AIE), and idiocentric imager exercise (IIE), which are both congruent with *Gestalt Art* and *dialogue with art* therapies (Laroche et al., 2006/2011). Internal consistencies for these questionnaires achieved a Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$, and $\alpha = .89$ consecutively (Price et al., 2018). Additionally, a short survey consisting of three questions aligned with the eventual research questions are proposed (Appendix A).

The three groups' results can offer a comparison of pre and post effects of the therapies after a 2 month-long period.

Variables

There are 4 proposed dependent variables: 1) stress, 2) emotional distress, 3) immigration challenges, 4) socioeconomic issues, and 4 independent variables guided this research inquiry:

- 1) visual imagery, music, songs and dance, (VIMSD)
- 2) guided imagery, music, songs and dance, (GIMSD)
- 3) Gestalt art, dialogue with art therapies, FOAT (focusing oriented art) (GADATFV)
- 4) vèvès.

SPSS (2020.V.26 for Apple MacOS or Windows), or another statistical software is recommended to generate the statistical data and analyses.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The proposed research questions and hypotheses enunciated are:

RQ1: What effect does visual imagery, music, *songs and dance* and art archetypes have on Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida dealing with stress, emotional distress, immigration challenges and socioeconomic issues?

H1: visual imageries, music, songs and dance, and art archetypes have positive effects on Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida *dealing with stress, emotional distress, immigration challenges, and socioeconomic status.*

RQ2: What effect does guided imagery, using music, *songs and dance*, and art archetypes have on Haitians' self- healing in Miami-Dade County, Florida dealing with stress, emotional distress, immigration challenges, and socioeconomic issues?

H2: Guided imageries using music, songs and dance, and archetypes will have positive effects on Haitians' self-healing in Miami-Dade County, Florida dealing with stress, emotional distress, immigration *challenges*, and socioeconomic status.

RQ3: What effect does Gestalt *art, dialogue with art therapies, theme-directed FOAT (focusing oriented art)*, art archetypes have on Haitians dealing with stress, emotional distress, immigration challenges, and socioeconomic issues in Miami-Dade County?



H3: guided imageries using *Gestalt art, dialogue with art therapies, theme-directed FOAT (focusing oriented art)*, using art archetypes such as vèvès will have positive effects on Haitians' socioeconomic status in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

RQ4: What effect does guided imagery using archetypes such as vèvès have on Haitians' self-healing in Miami-Dade County, Florida dealing with stress, emotional distress, immigration challenges, and socioeconomic issues?

H4: Guide imagery using archetypes such as vèvès may have a positive effect on Haitians' self-healing in Miami-Dade County, Florida dealing with stress, emotional distress, immigration challenges, and socioeconomic issues.

Data Collection and Analysis

This article promotes an urgent call for research, which will safeguard institutional board approval prior to data collection. Students and researchers seeking to pursue funding or not must adhere to ethical standards and ensure that informed consents are obtained.

Guided Imagery Therapy

In this article, I consider visuals as essential to guided imagery, and visualization requires sound methods for the mind's eyes to create images. They do not imply a complete sensory awareness encounter with other physical sensations, as Epstein (2016) explained. An imagery procedure needs to be freely guided, perceived, and explored to lead to an inner dimension and healing (Davenport, 2016). As a result, guided exercises with a Vodou, a non-Vodou practitioner can be powerful avenues to healing. It relies on the principles of mind-body medicine (MBM) that an imagery experience can be transformative, free, not spirit-possessed, and provide tremendous benefits such as self-healing (Davenport, 2016). The shared images and values uniting Haitians can lead to therapeutic domains of the physical and mental states, from a modern neuroscience standpoint. Higher levels of serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin diminish anxiety, block cortisol, and improve neuroplasticity (Carlson & Birkett, 2017).

Theme-Directed FOAT (Focusing Oriented Expressive Art): Mother

Haitians in Miami-Dade County of Florida live with visual and mental memories of displacement from their families and motherland due to economic and political instabilities, after seeking refuge in the U.S during the perilous Winward passage (ocean between Haiti and the U.S.) (Philogène, 2004, 2015; Stepick, 2010). A type of uprootedness lingers. Philogène (2004) cleverly stated that two Haitian American contemporary artists constructed a visual diaspora and suggested a cultural memory finding that "various forms of visual culture blur artistic and national boundaries and specificities." (p.85). Nonetheless, the process through which the visual culture impacts national boundaries and specificities is ground for discussion. While a Vodou practitioner may see a Vodou priest or ougan as a therapist enabling psychological qualities linked

with spiritual beings, executing rituals to maintain harmony, and leading to a psychic or transpersonal level of consciousness (Conner, 2001). I offer in this article the following guided imagery therapy model to create relaxation, and a logic of self-efficacy for a Vodou, non-Vodou practitioner, and a person without religious affiliation feeling disconnected from his/her family, the motherland, and suffering from emotional distress or anxiety while adjusting to a foreign country, or from the perilous journey to America. Self-efficacy entails an individual's confidence in his or her ability to accomplish tasks or achieve goals.

Emotional Distress Guided Imagery Therapy. Theme Directed FOAT: The Mother

The following sample is proposed: I invite you to relax and close your eyes. Allow your mind to find a special place, a place that deems itself to be your unique and comfortable space. Whether you are sitting or lying down to enter the inner space of your body, I invite you to take a couple of full and deep breaths. Breathe in, breathe out, and let your breath move deeper and freely into the various parts of your body. I invite you to relax and unwind any tension you may feel in your shoulder, arms, fingers, your abdomen and lungs, the lower part of your body, your right foot, your leg foot, and your thighs. Relax, breathe in, and breathe out. While you exhale, let go of any thoughts or tensions; let go of the emotions that cause you anguish.

Do not worry if you feel it is difficult to face them. How do you feel now about these emotions? Do you feel powerless or uncomfortable? Do you feel this is a painful experience? See what happens when you translate this feeling into peace, calmness, and kindness!

Now, take these emotions and put them aside! How does it now feel since they are outside your body?

Imagine yourself in a beautiful natural site, a beautiful island, far away from the rock cliffs. You hear beautiful birds singing, you see the sea so calm, surrounded by deep springs. You think of rivers and gigantic trees, and you feel spirited. and so peaceful. You are unafraid of the sea; you feel the sea breeze is healing but seems a little lost in this beautiful natural site. You feel this place is so beautiful to explore. The only idea that comes to your mind is your mother. It feels so authentic, you are not alone, and you experience a felt sense of that imagery. How do receive this image? What does it mean to you? Use the art material to naturally draw, in any way you feel, and express your felt-sense image of your mother. When your drawing is complete, take time to reflect on how you have depicted your problem.

Gestalt Art Therapy, Dialogue with Art Therapy Using Vèvès, Songs, and Dance

Using Gestalt Art Therapy is a noble endeavor that may lead to theorizing receptive imagery that facilitates changes, and awareness of unconscious patterns and needs (Rossman, 2000). Using it with vèvè opens a new world for active imagery to settle in, and communicate with our conscious intents. It is a reframing of the role of vèvè since a Vodou



practitioner during a Vodou ceremony is exposed to a purposeful event: a spirit or lwa will come through the vèvè portal to possess an individual (chwal). The purposeful event can be to satisfy the need of the spirit/lwa or to approve a vodouist's quests for healing, fortune, and to gain protection, power, social status, and wisdom (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p18). For Rossman (2010), the goal-oriented achievement is equivalent to a passive state of mind. Thus, using the symbolism of vèvè without its spiritual accessories can be therapeutic in many facets, I argue, contrary to Largey's (2006) claim that Vodou's practices focus on its adherents' emotional well-being. In Gestalt Art Therapy, a person visualizes specific images within an art and brings voice to it by saying, "I am..." what I perceive the art describes to me (Rhyne, 1973, as cited in Rappaport, 2016). While the idea of visual perception has been criticized for not being exploratory in essence (Bruce et al., 2003), both Gestalt Art and Dialogue with Art Therapies are very important tools that mind-body medicine uses to tap into deeper layers of healing, self-healing that may lead to the creation of new spiritual and cultural paradigms, I contend. It could be that a deconstruction of the religious, cultural, and spiritual boundaries of Vodou is necessary, I further argue. For a vèvè exercise with a Vodou priest (ougan), a vodouist (Vodou practitioner or Vodouisant), not spiritually possessed, a non-Vodou practitioner, and a person without religious affiliation looking at a vèvè sign can freely and subjectively generate powerful themes from the visual perception. I look at the Baron Samedi (Lord Saturday) vèvè, which symbolizes the spirit or lwa Baron Samedi (Lord Saturday), the patron of the dead, and I may say (if am not-spirit-possessed) that "I do not have the power not to die, but beyond the grave, I will know or exist". One question lingers: will I continue to serve Baron Samedi (Lord Saturday) when I die? I can speak the voice of the heart and express myself as the voice of the symbol (Rappaport, 2016, as cited in Davenport, 2016). As a non-Vodou practitioner, I may say "I fear death, express my visual perceptions of pain, sickness, etc.". Additionally, if I am a Christian, my visual perceptions may reflect resurrection, seeing death as a sleep, standing on the hope in Jesus Christ since he died and was resurrected. As a person without religious affiliation, I may debe voof id the vèvè experience as wn subjective voice. There is an array of subjective voices to hear and cogitate.

In Dialogue with Art Therapy, a person looks at the art and formulates a question about an image of attraction. The answer is provided through his or her felt sense, then verbalizes the dialogue through a chosen way of expression: verbally or in writing (Rappaport, 2016). Looking at dance imagery, hearing folk music, Vodou songs, and dance through the vèvè may convey dichotomic expressions among Vodou, non-Vodou practitioners, and a person without religious affiliation.

Limitations and Delimitations

This article is limited to Haitians in Miami-Dade County Florida, and the contemplated statistical results can only be consistent with the proposed groups for study. However, it could be plausible to extend intended results beyond other ethnic groups experiencing pathological and non-pathological

dissociation during trance, comparing the form of spirit-possessed individuals, initiated by vèvè tracing and experiences, music, songs and dance during a vodou ceremony, as therapeutic elements (Peres et al.2012). Furthermore, using Gestalt art, dialogue with art therapies, and theme-directed FOAT (focusing oriented art therapy) may also generate different results based on longer conceived timeframes. This article did not intend to study, nor offer a broad spectrum for discussion of the visual genre informed by the topic. The scope of inquiry is immense.

Interpretation and Expected Contributions

It is hoped that this article will help understand active visual imagery, guided imagery essential to neurotheology as conscious spiritual or religious experiences at the forefront of the indigenous culture. It also suggests that the quest for a cognitive approach to the conscious mind, and the unconscious spirituality is quite alive, and warrants further explorations. These modalities can empower Haitians in Miami-Dade County, Florida by giving them a sense of active cognition, or "being cognition" typifying ordinary consciousness (Hamer, 2004, p.20).

It could also be reasonable to create, based on the outcomes, a vèvès questionnaire. Additionally, the use of guided imagery as relevant to mental health therapy relying on the power of images, art archetypes (a Jungian framework), with neurotheology as a benchmark, may also help minimize the enunciated problems beyond the veil of ethnicity or indigeneity.

Conclusion

This article explored guided imagery within a subsection of the Haitian community of Miami-Dade County, named Little Haiti. Guided imagery is one of the mind-body medicine (MBM) therapies that emphasizes mental, spiritual, and physical transformation through authentic impulses to amplify the benefits of imagery experiences. Rich symbols, songs, and dance, music, thoughts, or image-abundant expressions also constitute the gamut of guided imagery, and are plentiful in Haitian culture. Particular symbols such as the vèvès, known as portals for spirits or lwas to possess individual Vodou practitioners, suggest that a spirit-possessed person is not cognizant of the vèvè's tentacles in the conscious realm. Deflating these vèvès from their spirit-possessed components, and making use of them as imagery to Vodou, non-Vodou practitioners, and a person without religious affiliation, as therapeutic elements may open many doors to self-healing, anxiety or fear, and stress reduction. Individuals will have a conscious voice in the process, and such intervention will help reframe the role of individuals devoid of spirit possession or lwas can play in their holism, striving to restore the veracity that mind-body, and spirit are interconnected. Brain MRI studies before and after spirit possessions can reveal further results. A Gestalt Art Therapy, Dialogue with Art Therapy using vèvès, songs and dance, music, and an active imagination exercise are proposed. Further research is needed.



Appendix A

Guided Imagery, Gestalt, FOAT Short Survey

Please Circle One

1. I realized that imagery, music, songs and dance can greatly help me understand guided imagery .

- 1= strongly disagree
- 2= somewhat disagree
- 3= strongly agree
- 4= agree

2. Guided imagery and vèvès helped me with self-healing

- 1= strongly disagree
- 2= somewhat disagree
- 3= strongly agree
- 4= agree

3. I was able to reduce my stress, emotional distress, immigration challenges and socioeconomic issues through Gestalt therapy

- 1= strongly disagree
- 2= somewhat disagree
- 3= strongly

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