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BY SPIRIT POSSESSED:
A FIELD EXPLORATION OF SOME MODELS
FOR SPIRIT POSSESSION AMONG LOCAL
SPIRITUALIST MEDIUMS

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

In the Department

of

Anthropology



Paul D. Biscop 1980

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October 1980

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Approval

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A Field Exploration of Some Models for Spirit Possession among
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ABSTRACT

I.M.Lewis and other theorists have proposed theories or models for spirit possession, based on data from a number of non-western cultures in which spirit possession cults are found. Little field work has been done in regard to these theories in a western context. The religious/philosophical movement known as Spiritualism includes a form of spirit possession in its repertoire of 'psychic phenomena', and accordingly should provide a western context for exploration or testing of theories of spirit possession. This thesis examines the work of four theorists, I.M.Lewis, E.Bourguignon, M.J.Field and W. Sargant in regard to spirit possession, exploring the relationship between the theories and field data collected on a local Spiritualist church and six trance mediums associated with it.

The field work consisted of participant observation in the church, observation from a number of other Spiritualist churches in Vancouver and Montreal, and personal histories of six mediums conducted via unstructured interviews on tape and by notes.

The scope of this paper is such that it cannot be a complete field testing of any particular theory or model, and concentrates in particular on Lewis' position. The conclusions reached are two fold:(1) there are intrinsic problems within the theories themselves that should require some revisions; (2) that given the limitations of the logical/positivist paradigm in which tradition the theories follow, the field data cannot be related to the theories in a way conducive to the creation or understanding of human meaning in regard to the experience of spirit possession for those involved in the phenomenon.

DEDICATION

For Colleen,
and for the mediums who made this possible

O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, o brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

W.B. Yeats, "Among School Children"

NOTE
And Acknowledgements

The field work on which this thesis is based was conducted mainly through one local Spiritualist Church, which shall be called, The Church of the Spirits. In all, there are currently seven churches in the lower mainland, plus four psychic societies. Personal histories were collected from a number of Spiritualist mediums, who may or may not be associated with any particular church, but all of whom serve, at least occasionally, the Church of the Spirits. All names have been changed in order to protect confidentiality.

Footnotes appear at the end of each chapter.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Church of the Spirits and to the mediums with whom I worked, for the cooperation and patience they showed to me, as well as for their trust and honesty. As well, I wish to thank those other friends and colleagues who have lent their support in the writing of this thesis: Dr. Michael Kenny and my supervisory committee; Dr. Robert Harper of Interdisciplinary Studies; and to the secretaries of the Sociology/Anthropology Department.

P.B. }
October, 1980

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

The nineteenth century witnessed, in the Euro-American world, the rise of science as an intellectual and belief system, with an increasing polarization between science and religion: Evolutionists opposed Creationists, and there was a movement in science away from the study of First Causes to an empirical study of phenomena and the relations between phenomena, verifiable by observation and experimentation. Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the French philosopher/social scientist, formulated the 'positivist' approach to science and the social sciences, outlining three prime steps of methodology: observation, experimentation, and comparison. In the social sciences (he coined the term, 'sociology'), methodology would be such as to analyse and compare either existing states, as in much of anthropology, or consecutive states, as in historical sociology. While recognizing that science proceeds by constant redefinition of its hypotheses and laws, Comte later came to feel that science and especially the social sciences would expound invariable laws, thus leading to greater social stability than he then saw evident. Thus, just as there can be no argument over the 'facts' and laws of science, so there would be no argument over religious or political views, once these invariable laws of society were formulated.

Later in his life, Comte attempted to establish a new world religion, without theism, based on positivist scientific principles, a new religion which would further unite all mankind and reconcile religion and science. While this new religion enjoyed a certain vogue amongst his followers, it eventually disappeared after his death. (Mazlish, 1967; pp.173-7) His work was not without flaws, but Comte was an important contributor to the delineation of the scientific paradigm and its application to the social sciences. Later in the century, the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, influenced by Comte, asserted in his Rules of Sociological Method (1895) that the explanation of social phenomena was to be sought in social facts, rather than in individual psychology, the origin of social facts to be found in preceeding social facts. As seen by Durkheim, a social fact is such that it is general throughout a given society, in that given the correct conditions, it will be established, and in so becoming established it will have a coercive and moulding effect on individuals. In The Rules, Durkheim established the logical positivist tradition securely in the methodology of the social sciences. What Comte had begun, Durkheim carried forward in finer detail and demonstrated in specific studies, becoming a major influence on the development of British social anthropology and French structuralist anthropology. Durkheim's approach to the study of society, then, was a functional and relational one, relating the functioning of a social phenomena to other aspects of the society in which the phenomena was found. Later, in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, (1912) he asserted that, in effect, religious concepts were reflections of social relationships, and that what was acknowledged in religion as a Transcendent Being was in reality the transcendent nature of society itself. We shall see the effect of Durkheim's approach in the structure of I.M.Lewis' theory and model for spirit possession,

which asserts that, in general, given certain social conditions, certain social phenomena (spirit possession cults) will occur. For Durkheim, then, the purpose of social science is to discover the functional relationship between social facts - the 'causative factor' - and thereby be enabled to describe the maintenance of social stability.

In the 1840's, the religious/philosophical movement known as Spiritualism had its beginnings, promising to offer scientific proof for the personal survival of bodily death and attempting, like Comte's Positivist Religion, a reconciliation between science and religion. Spiritualism is what might be called a phenomenological religion, basing its claims on the production of 'psychic phenomena' through various forms of mediumship. Beginning with the mediumistic experiences of the young Fox sisters in Hydesville, New York, the movement rapidly spread throughout the country and abroad, capturing the attention not only of the popular imagination but also that of many of the intelligentsia and literatti (Porter, 1958; Fournel, 1964; Nelson, 1969; et al.). For the first two or three decades, the emphasis in the movement was on the scientific aspects of the phenomena, and it was only later that churches were formed. Indeed, throughout its history, Spiritualism has remained divided between church organizations and various societies for psychical research, though it should be noted that psychical research has embraced more than that range of phenomena known popularly as "psychic phenomena", including work on various conditions and mental states.

Many of the early adherents of Spiritualism were interested or involved in what today might be termed 'alternate life styles', embracing early forms of socialism, communitarian groups, political support groups, the women's movement and "free love", the latter of which in itself caused

4.

a number of public outcries. Thus, while Spiritualism began as a scientific/religious movement, it grew to become, in many ways, a movement in opposition to the then current value system of the larger society, though it never became totally opposed to that larger society. Although modern Anglo-American Spiritualism does not attract the same number of adherents it once claimed, observation seems to indicate that many of its present adherents continue to embrace forms of alternate life styles.

Spiritualism includes, as part of its repertoire of mediumistic performances, a form of voluntary spirit possession called trance control, or 'trance', or sometimes simply 'control'. This thesis focuses on aspects of Spiritualism in relation to anthropological theories or models for spirit possession, and problems raised by these models. The methodology followed was participant observation and the personal interview. Brief personal histories of six trance mediums were collected on tape and by notes in an unstructured format, the data then being related to the models or theories with a discussion of the problems involved in such a relating of data to theory.

The apparent anthropological bias with regard to the phenomenon of spirit possession has been that there is nothing involved in the phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained in anthropological terms, perhaps with a smattering of psychology to round out the explanation. While it is difficult to account for personal biases in the literature on possession, one can address the methodological biases and a concomitant problem of the meaning of the data collected.

As our first question, then, we may ask why certain individuals become spirit-possessed mediums, as against anything else? That is to say, what set of unique factors exists that will predispose an individual toward

becoming a member of any particular category or class of individuals, particularly, in this case, that of spirit-possessed mediums? The theories or models current in social anthropology assert that there are observable social and cultural factors of certain societies which predispose toward spirit possession. As such, the theories may explain the interrelatedness of social features, but they are not theories or models of causation: they do not articulate unique factors in an individual development process.

This thesis examines several theories or models for spirit possession. It is not entirely clear whether they are to be regarded as theories or models. While theories commonly present a series of testable hypotheses, models are meant to have an isomorphic or one-to-one relationship to reality. The works in question here appear to present various hypotheses, but Lewis' work contains elements of both theory and model and is meant to be cross-cultural in scope. The assumption of the thesis is that there is some kind of relation between the theories for spirit possession, Spiritualism and trance control mediums. The theoretical aspects of Lewis' work deal with the nature and form of spirit possession cults under given social conditions, while the model within his theory is for the induction process into spirit possession cults. Obviously in a paper of this scope, a complete testing of any particular theory or model is not possible, especially if the theory or model is cross-cultural in scope. Nonetheless, for any such work it should be possible to explore the relation of the work to a field situation, provided that the field situation is within the terms of reference of the model or theory. The implicit assumption of the theories would be that Spiritualism, considered as a spirit-possession cult, will follow the theory as to the nature and categorization of such cults, and that the induction model should fit for the induction of individual Spiritualist trance mediums.

We may ask if a functional proposition, such as Lewis theory/model, can in any meaningful way be tested or explored with data taken from 'real' people and situations. Accordingly, this thesis will explore the relationship between data collected via participant observation and personal interviews and the theories for spirit possession, in a field situation that should provide such exploratory or testing ground. For the present purposes, the theories/model will be referred to as models.

Lewis addresses two levels : the level of cult or movement, and the level of individual, by articulating both the social factors leading to spirit-possession cults and the progressive steps whereby an individual is inducted into the ranks of spirit-possessed mediums. Within Spiritualism, possession mediumship, or trance control, is but one form of mediumship, and probably not the most common one at that. Accordingly, the field situation for this thesis is a two part situation, the first being the context of mediumship, or Spiritualism as a movement; and the second, the personal histories of six mediums; thus both the theory and model aspects of Lewis and the others are considered in a field context. By virtue of the fact that Lewis' work is most complete and cross-cultural, it must receive the most attention. William Sargant, a British psychiatrist, has also attempted a comprehensive view of possession and related phenomena. Since his works continue to be published in paper-back form, for all the limitations of his model, it would appear that he is supposed to exercise some authority in the matter and accordingly is discussed. Field and Bourguignon have worked mainly in specific areas, but some generalizations can be made from their works. Field's emphasis is toward the psychological whereas Bourguignon's is toward socio-economic factors. The four theorists thus represent a kind of continuum with Lewis and Sargant at opposite ends, Bourguignon and Field

in between.

In regard to the field data of the thesis, six mediums were chosen, not as a random sampling but because all six are known as trance mediums who work publicly on the platform of Spiritualist churches in the Vancouver area. That is to say, the range of possible choices, in terms of the models and the field situation, is almost exhausted in these mediums. In fact, while one medium, Rev. Rose, works almost exclusively in trance, the others may or may not perform in trance, since all six mediums also perform other kinds of mediumship. While Rev. Rose usually performs all forms of mediumship that she has developed in trance, the emphasis was on the interviews with her, whereas in the other five cases, the emphasis was on eliciting the main features of their life histories for comparison to the models. In short, this study is an extremely restricted select field study, the objective of which is exploratory. It was felt that comparison with a control group would have been difficult and unlikely to achieve much, since the obvious control group would have to be people with similar backgrounds and experiences who had not become mediums. However, what the life histories show is that for the most part, while they may evince some marginal characteristics, they are certainly not outside the cultural norms and values. As Macklin (1977) has so succinctly demonstrated, data from life histories of Spiritualist trance mediums may be manipulated in such a way as to show them to be completely marginal or even pathological individuals, but equally so may be manipulated in such a way as to show them to be operating within the larger cultural norms and values. In this sense, by implication, the control group is the rest of society. What becomes apparent, as is discussed below, is that the current models, while addressing sociological and cultural factors, fail to account for the uniqueness of this particular category of

individuals. Perhaps more questions are raised in the light of the field data than may be answered by the models.

Lewis, and the other theorists whose works are reviewed here, operate or construct their theories within the frame work of the logical/positivist paradigm as it is applied in the social sciences, following the lead of early theorists such as Comte and Durkheim. Spiritualism and trance mediumship should provide testing grounds in a western context for these theories. While this thesis cannot be a complete field testing of any of these theories, it presents data from a two-part field situation - a Spiritualist church and personal histories of six trance mediums associated with that church - to compare in an exploratory rather than testing nature to those theories. As will be seen, because of limitations intrinsic to the theories, the data can be fitted only to a certain extent to the theories; further broadening of the theories would be necessary for a closer correspondence between data and theory. Further, and in the long run perhaps more importantly, the limitations of the logical/positivist paradigm are such that, while we are given considerable information about the social factors surrounding the development of mediumship, we are not given any understanding of what the experience of spirit possession means to those who experience it - ultimately, the paradigm cannot address itself to the question of human meaning of spiritual (or any other kind) of experience.

CHAPTER TWO
Review of the Literature

9.

I.M. Lewis

For those who believe in them, mystical powers are realities both of thought and experience. My starting point, consequently, is precisely that large numbers of people in many different parts of the world do believe in gods and spirits. And I certainly do not presume to contest the validity of their beliefs, or to imply, as some anthropologists do, that such beliefs are so patently absurd that those who hold them do not 'really' believe in them. My objective is not to explain away religion. On the contrary, my purpose is simply to try to isolate the particular social and other conditions which encourage the development of an ecstatic emphasis in religion. ... The anthropologist's task is to discover what people believe in, and to relate their beliefs operationally to other aspects of their culture and society. (1971, p.28)

Lewis thus states his task. His criterion for spirit possession is one of apparently value-free simplicity: "If someone is, in his own cultural milieu, generally considered to be in a state of possession, then he (or she) is possessed." (Ibid., p.46)¹ In his preface, Lewis argues that, in spite of the vast resources on spiritual experience compiled by anthropologists, "the subject remains as a whole very much where it was left by Durkheim and Weber . . . social anthropologists as a whole [have] been so busy piling up evidence on particular exotic religions that they have scarcely paused to examine the harvest they have garnered." (Ibid., pp. 11,12) Accordingly, Lewis attempts to "apply the comparative method to the study of a variety of culturally distinct forms of spirituality, or religious ecstasy, these being aspects of religion which, ... have been unwarrantably but not unaccountably neglected by the majority of British social anthropologists." (Ibid., p. 14)

An important initial distinction is made between central or main, and marginal or peripheral cults, a distinction which is applied, "without prejudice to the unique existential or phenomenological nature of the

deities or spirits involved. The distinction which refers to the social (and moral) significance of different cults is a sociological one, rather than one based on cultural differences (although it has cultural consequences). "(Ibid., p. 14) Lewis differentiates trance-ecstatic states from trance-possession states, the latter being those in which a spirit entity is involved, as against the former in which trance may be found without reference to spirits or deities. He views main or central possession cults as vehicles for substantiating and reinforcing the mainstream morality code, or shared values, of the societies in which they appear. On the other hand, marginal or peripheral cults are those in which the possessing spirits "play no direct part in upholding the moral code of the societies in which they receive so much attention. . . For typically these spirits are believed to originate outside the societies. . ." (Ibid., pp. 31,32) In fact, he sees in peripheral cults, ". . . a very direct concordance between the attributes of the spirits, the manner in which the afflictions they cause are evaluated, and the status of their human prey." (Ibid.)

The author points out that trance states are not necessarily explained, in any given society, as being of mystical etiology, and he provides a number of examples such as that of Tarantism, or the case of Samburu unmarried warriors (pp. 39ff.) which do not involve such mystical explanations for trance states.² Similarly, he shows that possessed states in which spirits are evoked as explanatory agents do not necessarily involve trance conditions:

. . . in many cultures where possession by a spirit is the main or sole interpretation of trance, possession may be diagnosed long before an actual state of trance has been reached. . . . Spirit possession thus embraces a

wider range of phenomena than trance, and is regularly attributed to people who are far from being mentally dissociated, although they may become so in the treatments which they subsequently undergo. (pp. 45,46)

Lewis also points out that, the "lack of explicit concern with the inner mechanism of possession is, in fact, a general feature of a great many cultures where the doctrine of possession is stressed." (p.48)

Another important distinction is made between voluntary and involuntary possession. He cites the example of Tungus shamanism in making this distinction "between a person possessed (involuntarily) by a spirit, and a spirit possessed (voluntarily) by a person. The first is uncontrolled trance, interpreted as illness; the second is controlled trance, the essential requirement for the exercise of the shamanistic vocation." (p.54) ³

However, he maintains that these are not necessarily opposed states, and that involuntary possession can lead to voluntary possession. He argues that,

All shamans are thus mediums, and, as the Black Caribs of British Honduras so expressively put it, tend to function as a 'telephone exchange' between man and god. It does not follow, of course, that all mediums are necessarily shamans, although . . . the two are usually linked. People who regularly experience possession by a particular spirit may be said to act as mediums for that divinity. Some, but not all such mediums are likely to graduate in time to become controllers of spirits, and once they 'master' these powers in a controlling fashion they are properly shamans. (p.56)

Following various authors, Lewis claims that all shamans have undergone some kind of traumatic initiatory experience, be it illness or otherwise, and that such experiences can be seen as phases in a "forward-going process". (pp.56,57) "The initial experience of possession, particularly, is often a disturbing, even traumatic experience, and not uncommonly a response to personal affliction and adversity." (p.66) In many cases, "the devotee is prone to experience possession in difficult, stressful

situations, from which there is otherwise no satisfactory escape."(p.67)

In time, however, controlled possession is learned through this forward-going process. Yet in some cases, the relationship between spirit entity and medium or shaman is a contractual one, with the element of mystical union being expressed in terms of marriage or kinship. "All over the world, we find this conception of a spiritual union, paralleling human marriage, used to image the relationship between a spirit and its regular devotee."(p.59) Importantly, Lewis maintains that for many of the peoples of the world, "possession is a culturally normative experience".(p.65)

On the other hand, he views the Spiritualist form of possession as, "only marginally normative in our secular culture. . ." (Ibid.)

The curing of the initiatory experience or illness of the shaman or medium, or the integration of that experience into the life of the individual, may only occur with acceptance of the role of shaman or medium. That acceptance, though, may also have side benefits, by increasing status and prestige and may include the possibility of material gain through providing shamanistic services such as healing or divination. "The link between affliction and its cure as the royal road to the assumption of the shamanistic vocation is thus plain enough in those societies where shamans play the main or major role in religion and where possession is highly valued as a religious experience." (pp.70,71)

Possession of different types may also be found in societies in which such experiences are not the dominant form of religious expression. In such societies, then, possession cults are of the peripheral category. In such cases, the possessing spirits are not necessarily upholders of the dominant morality, and may even be amoral if not immoral. Typically, according to Lewis, it is women who are possessed in such instances, and

he argues that, "whatever mystical or psychological benefits peripheral possession confers, it also regularly achieves other more tangible rewards." (p.33) In such cases as sar or zar possession cults, through the personae of possessing spirits women are enabled to exact attention from their husbands, temporarily enhance their status, and even exact material goods and gifts. "Although the spirits, speaking in various tongues, all monotonously voice the same irksome requests, their enunciation in this oblique fashion makes it possible for men to give into them without ostensibly deferring to their wives or jeopardizing their position of dominance." (p.86) Such spirits are usually from outside the group. "They are thus dissociated. . . from the overt social norms of the communities in which they figure so frequently as sources of affliction. This amoral, rather than immoral quality makes them particularly appropriate as the carriers of disease for which those who succumb to them cannot possibly be blamed." (Ibid.) On the part of the possessed women, then, possession is part of an "oblique redressive strateg[y]." (p.88).

The usual cure for such spirit-inflicted illness is for the afflicted woman to join a cult or group of "other similarly placed women under the direction of a female shaman." (Ibid.) While men may endorse the 'official' view of the group activities as combatting spirit illness, the women may find the activities satisfying as religious performances. Thus, says Lewis, "Just as with those other possession cults involving men, which occupy a central position in society and where the royal road to divine election lies through affliction, so also here what begins in suffering, ends in religious ecstasy." (p.89)

He differentiates two phases in peripheral possession: the primary phase wherein "women become ill in contexts of domestic strife and their complaints are diagnosed as possession"; (p.93) the secondary phase being one of the chronicity of the condition, leading to eventual mastery over the possessing spirits, "Like the Tungus shaman, they 'master' their own spirits and use them for the public good, or at least for the good of that public which consists of women." (Ibid.)

Other reasons for joining such cults may be infertility or the inability to make a successful marriage, or perhaps simply having reached the menopause. "Thus those women to whom marriage can offer little, and those who have already enjoyed its fruits as wives and mothers find in the shaman's role an exciting new career." (Ibid.) Cult membership and mastery over the spirits thus provides an alternate life career for such women.

While not really pursuing a diachronic analysis, Lewis nonetheless maintains that, "Often . . . these contemporary marginal movements turn out to be the mainline religions of earlier ages which have been eclipsed by new faiths." (p.96) Inevitably such movements mirror "the wider varying landscape of social experience", (p.99) and Lewis directs our attention to a number of examples, such as in the Sudan Republic "when the first national football team was formed and public enthusiasm for the sport was high among men, women began to be preyed upon by footballer zar spirits." (Ibid.)

Men are not necessarily excluded from such groups as peripheral possession cults, but such men will be from distinct social categories, being "men whose social circumstances were unusually oppressive or

constricting."(p.100) Men may even themselves form such cults, providing a number of services including, at least in the past, the purchase of freedom from slavery; or free food, lodging and protection from oppressing groups; creating a focus for allegiance and social identity; and creating a means of livelihood through divination and healing services. For example, in regard to the Shango cult of Trinidad, Lewis believes that it "enables a discordant mass of humanity to achieve a highly dramatic psychic 'work-out', the possessed giving vent in the rituals to emotions and feeling which in other contexts are held in check."(pp.104,5)

Men in this cult are generally "domestic servants and unemployed labourers."
(p.104)

For the members of such peripheral cults, be they men or women, there must be a common belief and "mutual trust in the symbolism of such peripheral possession"(p.113), a common belief which must extend to those in positions of authority in the larger society, "since otherwise clearly the voice of protest loses its authority."(Ibid.) That is to say,

What we find over and over again in a wide range of different cultures and places is the special endowment of mystical power given to the weak. If they do not quite inherit the earth, at least they are provided with means which enable them to offset their otherwise crushing jural disabilities. With the authority which the voice of the gods alone gives, they find a way to manipulate their superiors with impunity - at least within certain limits. And . . . to an extent that is hard to gauge precisely, this is broadly satisfactory to all concerned, subordinate as well as superior. Yet . . . this is not to say that such limited expressions of protest exhaust the store of revolutionary fervour. However seemingly satisfying the play of such cults, the potentiality for deeper and more radical outbursts of pent-up resentment is always there.(pp. 116,7)

Thus we are presented with a view of peripheral possession cults as being a means of contributing to the preservation of the social order, through a kind of controlled, manipulative drama to which, unwittingly perhaps, all the social actors have given assent. Such peripheral possession dramas are then covert redressive strategies employed by the socially disadvantaged in order to turn adversity to advantage, and which function as safety valves for social tension. In this respect, Bourguignon's view is rather similar, as we shall see later. In turn, both views draw upon Gluckman's Rituals of Rebellion (1954), although he is not specifically referred to; in which he finds certain ritual dramas concerning kingship to incorporate elements of protest which at once reinforce the position of kingship while making it clear to all that kingship in turn depends upon the assent of the society as a whole for its maintenance. Thus protest is ritualized and given safe expression, while both sides acknowledge their interdependency, in similar manner to peripheral cults being a form of ~~protest~~ depending upon mutual acknowledgement in regard to the larger society. Both Lewis and Gluckman assume a certain homogeneity of belief and social consistency, which is difficult to find in industrial societies.

Possession, then, is an oblique or indirect form of attack, and Lewis compares it to the accusations of witchcraft in which it is the accused witch or supposed witch who is actually the victim of "a direct mystical assault"(p.118) as against this indirect attack. While both forms of attack may achieve the same ends, "the fact that the means of achieving the result differ so radically suggests that each strategy might be appropriate to a different set of circumstances from the other. Thus we should expect to find distinct social correlates distinguishing the fields in which these two tactics are applied."(Ibid.) He finds that malevolent

spirit possession and witchcraft or sorcery are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and are, in fact, often found together:

Witchcraft (or sorcery) accusations (and I emphasize that I am talking about the incidence of accusations) . . . run in different social grooves. Typically, they are launched between equals, or by a superior against a subordinate. The rare exceptions to this generalization prove the rule. For where witchcraft charges are brought against a superior by an inferior, the explicit intention is to question the legitimacy of this status difference and ultimately to assert equality. . . . An excellent illustration of the separate fields in which possession and witchcraft accusations operate is provided in the case of the polygynous family situation. Where people believe in both these mystical forces, witchcraft accusations are levelled against each other by the co-wives, and by the mutual husband against any of his wives. Spirit possession, as we have so frequently seen, is, in contrast, the preferred mode of assault employed by each wife in her dealings with her husband. A wife usually only accuses her husband of witchcraft when she seeks to sever their marital relationship and to assert her full independence. (p.120)

Essentially, then, witchcraft or sorcery accusations often aim to break social relationships permanently, whereas peripheral spirit possession serves to ventilate aggression and frustration due to social tension, without necessarily rending the social fabric entirely (p.121). Accusations of sorcery or witchcraft, in fact, frequently act as checks on the balance of power exerted by those possessed by spirits:

These leaders of mutinous women or depressed men who, in diagnosing and treating possession afflictions amongst their colleagues, perpetuate the whole system are the most dangerous agents of dissent and potential subversion. Hence it is they who are held in check by accusations of witchcraft which seem designed to discredit them and to diminish their status. Thus, if possession is the means by which the underdog bids for attention, witchcraft accusations provide the countervailing strategy by which such demands are kept within bounds. (p.122)⁴

While peripheral and central possession cults may exist side by side in the same society, in contrast to peripheral cults main or central cults tend to be vehicles for the reinforcing of public morality:

At ritual séances held to honour the spirits, the possessed shaman exhorts the people of the neighbourhood to shun such evils as incest, adultery, sorcery and homicide, and emphasizes the value of harmony in social relations. In this way, through his attendant spirit, the shaman embodies and gives expression to the sentiments and opinions of the people in his area. Disputes are taken to him for settlement, as well as to the official secular courts, and he is also asked to decide issues concerning succession to chieftancy and quarrels between neighbouring chiefs. In these matters it is the judgement of the guardian spirit, very properly sensitive to public opinion, that is delivered by the shaman. (p.137, in reference to the Korekore of the Zambesi valley)

Lewis views both main and peripheral possession cults as "opposite extremes on a single continuum, rather than as completely different types of religion" (p.144) while showing that, in fact, both achieve the same kind of purpose. In regard to central cults, this morally inspired enthusiasm is as much a social as an individual phenomenon and is just as easily applied to manipulate others as is peripheral possession." (p.148) Nevertheless, the difference is that the spirits of peripheral cults tend to be capricious or to strike haphazardly, whereas those of central cults tend to be conservative and to work through established strata of society.

While differences among central cults may exist, Lewis provides examples from a wide geographic range to illustrate the point that, whatever the differences, central cults tend to act in a certain way: ⁵

Uniformly they act in such a way as to maintain and safeguard social harmony. On the one hand, they chastise those who infringe their neighbours' rights; and on the other, they inspire shamans to act as trouble-shooters and law-givers in community relations. Here the moral code over which these spirits so resolutely stand guard concerns the

relations between man and man. If they have not been invented by men in order to tame and canalize anti-social aspirations and impulses, to a significant extent they act as though they had been. (pp. 162,3)

Though he sees central and peripheral cults as opposite extremes on a continuum, Lewis recognizes that they are not absolute extremes:

...historically the lines which separate the two types of cult are not absolute or inviolable. Cults can change their significance and status over time. Just as so many peripheral cults are discarded established religions which have fallen from respectability and grace, so equally those which began as clandestine curing rites on the fringes of society may evolve into new morality religions. From this perspective, and in a very simplified way, the history of religions can be seen to involve a cyclical pattern of changes in the status and inspirational quality of cults, with movements from and to the centre of public morality according to the circumstances and social settings at different points in time. Sudden outbursts of ecstatic effervescence may thus signal either a decline, or rise, in religious fortunes. Possession may equally well represent the kiss of life or death in the historical development of religions. (pp.173,4)

Finally, Lewis briefly outlines the 'standard' psychiatric or psychologically-oriented explanation of spirit possession as a manifestation of psychopathology, ranging from a diagnosis of simple neurosis through acute schizophrenia to full psychosis, and including shamanistic self-healed 'symptom management'. He argues that because such phenomena occur in cultures where they are normative, they cannot be totally dismissed as pathological, and that, in any event, there is sufficient evidence to show that, while some individuals may be disturbed personalities, most are not:

Some such candidates are undoubtedly people who have found culturally acceptable techniques for controlling private neurotic proclivities. For these, the shamanistic role may well represent a precarious haven within which their eccentricities are tolerated and turned to advantage. Individuals of this kind, however, seem, on

the present evidence to constitute only a small fraction of those who will become successful shamans and the part must not be confused with the whole. Hence, if the idiom employed universally to express the role of the shaman is that of the wounded healer, this is a cultural stereotype, a professional qualification⁶ which establishes the healer's warrant to minister to his peoples' needs as one who knows how to control disorder. It does not necessarily tell us anything about his psychiatric condition. What it does purport to guarantee is that such a person has endured the experience of elemental power and emerged, not merely unscathed, but strengthened and empowered to help others who suffer affliction. (pp.191,2)

Rather is it those who are so psychologically ill that they are unable to enter an abreactive or dissociated state who are unable to reap any psychic 'rewards' from the state, as well as to fail to achieve any of the material or status rewards that may accompany such states.

As recent studies by psychiatrists show, it is precisely these unfortunate people who cannot express their problems in this conventional idiom who are seriously psychologically disturbed. These refractory psychotics and schizophrenics, who do not respond and who cannot satisfactorily enter into the game, are the exceptions proving the rule that spirit possession and shamanism deal essentially not with the hopelessly impaired but with ordinary 'normally' neurotic people. (p. 196)

Similarly, Lewis maintains that much of what applies to peripheral possession cults applies also to main morality religions. "For here, although the patient is in this case regarded as responsible for his plight and is held to be morally culpable, the séance offers abreactive atonement." (p.197) Nevertheless, he points out that one must not carry the concept of shamanism as paralleling psychotherapy too far, for there are often many other disorders, quite physical or organic in nature, that shamans and spirits are called upon to heal. ". . . [T]he parallel applies only in respect of such aspects of the shaman's practice as concern the treatment of tensions, fears and conflicts which are, in reality, readily susceptible to psychotherapeutic control. In a word, the shaman is not less

than a psychiatrist, he is more."(p.198)

Why, then, possession? Ultimately, Lewis argues, that while it may function psychologically and socially, it also functions theologically:

What is proclaimed is not merely that God is with us, but that He is in us. Shamanism is thus the religion par excellence of the spirit made flesh, and this reassuring doctrine is demonstrably substantiated in each incarnatory séance. . . . Shamanistic religions. . . assume from the start that, at least on certain occasions, man can rise to the level of the gods. And since man is thus, from the beginning, held to participate in the authority of the gods, there is scarcely any more impressive power that he can acquire. What the shamanistic séance thus protests is the dual omnipotence of God and man. (pp. 204,5)

We may, then, summarize Lewis' model for possession, presented here in tabular forms as follows in Table 1, 2, and 3. (This author's Tables)⁷

TABLE 1: SPIRIT POSSESSION CULTS General Features

CENTRAL or Main Morality Cults:

1. Found usually amongst dominant segments of society, frequently involving ancestral spirit figures, within which the shared common values are reinforced with spirit authority.
2. Generally the control of the shamanistic profession is in the hands of a spiritual and social elite, which may also hold jurial and economic power.
3. Typically, the candidate for initiation into the ranks of shamanism will experience illness or trauma which is likely to be diagnosed as spirit possession, for which the cure will be initiation, if the candidate is of the right social status, under the tutelage of an established shaman or medium.
4. Mastery over the possessing spirits occurs over time, and will be validated by public response.

PERIPHERAL Possession Cults:

1. Typically arise from socially disadvantaged segments of the society, usually involving amoral spirit entities from outside the group and which are separated from the values of the dominant group.
2. Control of the cult will frequently be in the hands of a female shaman or shamans, or, occasionally, by males from socially disadvantaged groups.
3. Typically, the devotee will experience illness or trauma, often in the form of domestic strife, that will be diagnosed as spirit possession. Repeated occurrences may be treated by inducting the afflicted individual into the cult, under the leadership of the female shaman or medium.
4. Mastery over the possessing spirits occurs over time, and will be validated by group response.

5. Spirit entities and seances are used for purposes of general good - healing, divination, control over the elements, assuring subsistence abundance, and mediating in social disputes or jural matters.

6. Typically, although women may be inducted into the ranks of shamanism, central possession cults are male dominated.

7. The spirits are conservative and tend to work through established strata of society.

5. Spirit entities and seances are used for the purposes of the group - exaction of material goods, status enhancement and prestige, and as redressive strategies.

6. Typically, although men from socially disadvantaged groups may be inducted into the ranks, peripheral possession cults are female dominated.

7. Spirits tend to be more capricious and haphazard and amoral, working through subordinate groups.

TABLE 2: SPIRIT POSSESSION - The Process

CENTRAL or Main Morality Cults:

1. Males primarily affected. Illness or trauma usually the precipitating experience. Individual may be perceived as withdrawn or isolated, restricted in diet and disrupted from habitual patterns. Visions, heightened sensations and perceptions may occur, as well as a sense of detachment from mundane reality, time and space.

2. When males from an acceptable social group or status are affected, the individual may be received for candidacy as a shaman; if the afflicted is from an undesirable group, he may be diagnosed as possessed by undesirable spirits and accordingly be exorcised.

3. Chronicity of occurrence taken as a sign of candidacy. Candidate may be initially unwilling, but the only 'cure' will be seen in acceptance of the role.

4. Through time, mastery over spirits occurs followed by group acceptance and, in some cases, by public acceptance; or, at least, by acceptance until shaman proves himself.

5. Mastery restores individual's harmony and well-being, individually and socially, as well as conferring new status and perhaps material well-being.

PERIPHERAL Possession Cults:

1. Females primarily affected. Illness or trauma, often involving domestic strife, usually the precipitating experience. Unusual or bizarre behavior, perhaps of an obscene nature, may occur. Demands for attention, money or gifts for the spirits may be put upon the husband.

2. Males from socially disadvantaged groups affected. Individuals may be inducted into womens' cults or into special mens' groups. (May be psychologically disadvantaged rather than socially.)

3. Chronicity of occurrence taken as a sign of candidacy. Candidate may be unwilling initially, but the only 'cure' will be seen in acceptance of inductment into the cult.

4. Through time, mastery over spirits occurs, followed by husband's acceptance and group acceptance.

5. Mastery restores individual's harmony and well-being, individually and domestically, frequently aiding in social harmony and material well being as well.

TABLE 3: SPIRIT POSSESSION - CULTS
Levels and Kinds of Functioning*

CENTRAL Cults:

1. Psychological Levels:

(a.) Group Level:

Reassurance of the resolution of social and cosmic harmony because of the manifestation of the intimate contact between matter and spirit, man and god, and the dominance of spirit (manipulable by man) over matter.

(b.) Personal Level:

Resolution of personal and social conflict and disorder; increases intrapsychic integration; increases status and prestige, thus reinforcing or helping to create a positive self-image. Through professional service to others, material well-being and positive self-image may be further enhanced.

2. Social Level:

(a.) Group Level:

Maintains group harmony and moral structure of society; helps maintain social structure and class structure; provides jural authority in small-scale or pre-state societies; provides a sense of continuity and historicity in pre-literate societies.

3. Theological/Cosmological Level:

Both provide a demonstration of the contact between god and man, and the 'reality' of that contact in daily life; both provide a sense of an agency of help from outside sources ordinarily beyond the call of man, thus creating reassurance of the harmony and order of the universe and man's mastery over the elemental forces and ultimate triumph over death.

PERIPHERAL Cults

1. Psychological Levels:

(a.) Group Level:

Provides a sense of group and social identity with concurrent allegiance and sense of security in opposition to dominant society.

(b.) Personal Level:

Resolution of personal and/or domestic crisis and strife; allows for the socially safe release of tensions, frustrations, and the experience of expanded social role potential; allows for the safe expression of aggression and even anger.

2. Social Level

(a.) Group Level:

Provides a redressive strategy for disadvantaged groups, particularly women; aids in balance of power between the sexes; provides alternate life careers where few options otherwise occur; provides outlet in ritual protest dramas at group level; may provide material well-being and support in various aspects of daily living.

*Levels are separated only for purposes of analysis, whereas in actuality they will tend to be more integrated; accordingly, there will be some overlapping of levels.

From Lewis' perspective, spirit possession serves many purposes. It is seen basically as a socio-economic device for the maintenance of social harmony, control and balance, in either the domestic contexts of peripheral cults or the wider contexts of main cults. While spirit possession is mainly socio-economic in purpose, it also answers various psychological and theological needs, as any religion does, but it does so in unique ways by providing concrete evidence for the relationship between man and the universe around him, of which he perceives himself to be an integral part.

Lewis has maintained that, all over the world, the weak are endowed with mystical power by other people. This point he seems to take as a given, with no explanation for it. And yet it is an essential part in his argument, for he sees spirit possession as a kind of socially-balancing mechanism, in which power is granted in a metaphysical kind of way to certain groups who lack power in a physical or social form. At least in the case of peripheral cults, the trade-off is metaphysical for social power. But there is no explanation of why the weak should be so endowed with power of a mystical sort. His paradigmatic group for peripheral possession cults seems to be the sar or zar possession cults of Somali women. We are given no explanation of why any particular power struggle between the sexes should take this particular form, as against any other cultural form. In the case of zar cults, we appear to have a complex symbolic field of interpersonal action between the sexes, a field whose symbolism must be known and accepted by both parties or groups. Lewis states that a mutual trust in the symbolism of spirit possession is necessary, but we are given no indication why this particular symbolism should be culturally acceptable, or of the cultural factors that might allow it to come into being. It would appear then, as will be discussed further below, that Lewis model involves a number of problems as a theory/model per

se, and in regard to the logical/positivist approach of the social sciences, via the works of such theorists as Comte and Durkheim, in the nature of certain limitations of the working paradigm of both sciences and social sciences. Perhaps the most interesting, if not the most important questions of human meaning can never be answered by such a paradigm.

M.J.Field:

Field's (1960) ethnopsychiatric study of rural Ghana includes a chapter on spirit possession. She views spirit possession as being achieved through the psychological mechanism of dissociation, a "mental mechanism, a technique, a vehicle for conveying both the conviction of the prophet or possessed person and the tenets of contemporary thought and ethics. . ." (p.86) Thus, her description is very close to Lewis' description of main morality cults, and reference to Field's study is found in Lewis' bibliography. In the case of Ghana, it would seem that the society at large includes a belief in spirit possession.

While possession might occur through dissociation, Field allows that dissociation ". . . does not dictate what shall be expressed, any more than a painter's brushes and pigments dictate his pictures. A possessed prophet who proclaims the anger of God, the love of God or the depravity of man is one who has, in conscious thought, reflected upon these topics." (Ibid.) Such a statement may be an assumption on the part of a field worker, depending on the kind of intimate knowledge the worker has of the observed subjects.⁸

It is in a state of dissociation that the mind may "indeed be endowed with the ability to concentrate upon a circumscribed set of relevant facts, marshal them and draw conclusions from them more swiftly and ably than the mind beset with the distractions of normal consciousness." (p.57) She concludes that, "it is not unreasonable to grant the dissociated mind an extended awareness similar to that of the dreaming mind." (p.58) This extension of awareness, according to Field, may include precognition of future events, as dreams sometimes do. However, neither sleep nor

dissociation can "make a silly or commonplace mind into a great mind." (Ibid.) Nonetheless, she emphasizes that "paranormal cognition is not the blood and bones of oracular utterances. These, as ethnological observers the world over have often emphasised, are seldom either original or surprising, but are commonly an enunciation of hitherto unexpressed but strongly held public opinion." (Ibid.)

Because her fieldwork was done in a particular cultural milieu, Field's concept of spirit possession is not as inclusive as Lewis' model. For some individuals, Field maintains, possession (ie., dissociation) occurs on a limited basis, and not all those who experience it will feel 'called' to become a professional priest/medium, or okomfo. For those who become professionals, however, the pattern is essentially the same: a 'strong' calling (initiation) followed by a diagnosis of spirit possession, and a period of training under the supervision of a trained and established priest/medium. Following this training period will be the public announcement by the training okomfo that the new candidate is ready to establish a private practice, as it were, independent from the training priest. The new priest/medium will be established in a permanent place to serve the particular deity whom he will incarnate and for whom he will be a mouthpiece. Field says that,

The cardinal sign of this "strong" calling is that the spirit "takes" him or "drives" him forth into the wilderness. He dashes so furiously, so fleetly and so far away into the bush that there is extreme danger that he will never find his way back and will perish. So he is always restrained, if possible, by his friends, from running away or, if he eludes them, he is dilligently sought. (p.61)

Field maintains that such a rush to the bush is likely to cause fear, anxiety, and even hypoglycaemia due to enforced fasting, while the hypoglycaemia may possibly give rise to an hallucinatory experience:

"If he returns, he usually reports, as might be expected after the loneliness, panic, exhaustion and hypoglycaemia, visions and voices." (Ibid.)

The usual precipitating event for an experience of dissociation is a festival, where the sound of "excited drums, gong-gongs, rattles, or rhythmic clapping and singing" (p.59) may invoke a state of dissociation even in someone who has never been dissociated before. In her emphasis on physiological factors leading to dissociation, Field's argument is rather similar to Sargant's, discussed below. However, dissociation "may happen as he goes about his farming or other work. Then, if no one sees him taken to bush, his danger is the greater." (pp.61,2) Occasionally, alcohol or some other chemical may be used to precipitate dissociation, but; "Probably the greatest aid to dissociation is hypoglycaemia. . . . Another aid is conditioning. . . . Though alcohol is taboo to priests on working days, it sometimes precipitates dissociation in laymen." (pp.59,60) A state of "true" dissociation is marked by a vacant, glazed or staring expression of the eyes, unblinking, set in a mask-like face; fine motor tremors which may become more coarse and conclude in jumping, dancing, running or gesticulating; amnesia after the incident itself, so that nothing is remembered of it; often a phase of euphoria is reported following the incident, though it may be masked by exhaustion; depending on what has occurred. Field does not see the state of dissociation as pathogenic, however, maintaining that, ". . . dissociation, whether an hysterical phenomenon or not, can be successfully exploited only in conjunction with self-discipline and by a good personality." (p.74) While there may be no "direct connection between schizophrenia and

dissociation. . .neither are they mutually exclusive and okomfo has probably the same chance of becoming schizophrenic as anyone else." (p.63) That is to say, dissociation neither implies nor excludes the possibility of pathology.

In terms of the functioning of possession, Field states that it adds to the authority of the priest, while exonerating the individual from any personal responsibility for what is said through him. (pp.76,7) It is in fact public opinion "and the moral judgements of society" that find through him "a vicarious utterance." (Ibid.) As for the functioning of possession in regard to the individual seeking assistance from the okomfo, "his own personal problems are weighed, summed up and clarified for him by the possessed priest with complete detachment, and judgement and advice are given in accordance with orthodox tenets." (Ibid.) In fact, seeking advice from a deity through a possessed priest may allow the individual greater freedom of action, since "it is not derogating to the dignity of a supplicant to accept the advice of an obosom when his dignity might compel him to reject the same advice if proffered by his parents or his wife." (Ibid.)

Field views "true" dissociation as an impressive spectacle, and believes that most of the priests are honest men. "The phenomenon of dissociated personality, on which their claim to veneration is based, is genuine and impressive." (p.74) She discusses the phenomenon in conjunction with prophets of the Old and New Testaments, maintaining that, "There can be no doubt about the impetus given to early Christianity by the phenomenon of possession, not only through the excitement, the euphoria and the enthusiasm of the possessed, but also by the conviction and the authority which this dramatic and supposedly supernatural phenomenon conveyed to the

spectator."(pp.85,6)

Thus it is then that Field takes a medical/psychological view of possession, stressing the physiological factors in dissociation. It is through this dissociated personality, at least amongst the Ashanti, that public morals and social values are expounded and reinforced with godly authority. Although she does not state it explicitly, dissociation/possession is seen as a culturally normative experience, at least in certain cultures, and is to be differentiated from pathological psychological states although at times it may appear to be pathological. In her view, it has contributed greatly to the power of the Old and New Testaments, finding perhaps its greatest exponent in the prophet, Jesus, and finding still today an outlet in different religious groups.

Erica Bourguignon:

Erica Bourguignon's approach to spirit possession (1965, 1973, 1974, 1976) is somewhat statistical and social-psychological. She considers dissociation to be the psychological mechanism by which possession occurs, and through dissociation the "impersonation" of spirits:

Possession trance offers alternative roles, which satisfy certain individual needs, and it does so by providing the alibi that the behavior is that of spirits, and not of the human beings themselves. And furthermore, in order for human beings to play such assertive roles, they must be totally passive, giving over their bodies to what are ego-alien forces. (1976; p.40)

In a hierarchical society, such alternative roles as provided by spirit possession, allow change of status, redemption from social disadvantages, and access to power and prestige, similarly to Lewis' concept:

In a hierarchical society, demanding submission to those in authority, one acquires authority by identification with symbols of powers, identification which goes as far as the total assumption of the other's identity, total loss of one's own. In this authoritarian society [Haiti], it is possible to act out dominance fantasies by pretending, to self as well as others, total passivity and subjection. (Ibid.)

In general, Bourguignon views spirit possession as creating a "decision making authority" in the person of the medium, which "allows persons oppressed by rigid societies some degree of leeway and some elbow room. As such, possession trance may be said to represent a safety valve, of sorts, for societies whose rigid social structures cause certain stresses." (1976, p.31) That is to say, possession trance provides an alternate authority structure to the rigid socially imposed authority structure, thus broadening the field of choice for the individual.

Utilizing Murdock's 1967 Ethnographic Atlas, Bourguignon (et al.) investigated a sample of 488 societies, the non-industrialized societies typical of anthropological investigation, and conducted a statistical

analysis of possession. From the statistical analysis it was found that there was a co-relation between types of societies and the appearance of spirit possession, either in trance form or in some other form of presentation or belief:

. . . we found that societies having possession trance are likely to be numerically larger, to be stratified into social classes, to have or to recently have had, slavery, not to be migratory or semi-nomadic but to live in permanent locations, and to have a jurisdictional hierarchy which includes one or more levels of decision making above the local level. Societies having trance only are significantly less likely to have these features. Societies having both trance and possession trance are either intermediary between the other two types or are the most complex of the three types. (1974; p.238)

Bourguignon's explanation for this co-relation is that,

Possession trance, it is suggested here, involves the enactment of multiple roles by human actors. . . The enactment of multiple roles, of the kind involved in possession trance, however, is more likely to exist in more highly complex and differentiated societies than in simpler ones. (Ibid., p.237)

Unfortunately, the statistical sampling does not include industrialized societies, nor does it include the "sub-forms" of possession trance "such as mediumistic possession trance" (1974, p.229) with which this thesis is concerned. However, Bourguignon maintains that,

while . . . altered states of consciousness are widely used in traditional societies, within the context of modern industrial mass society the use of such states appears to acquire a rather special significance. Here such behavior characterizes particular individuals rather than the society as a whole. And within the context of the whole society, such behavior is not approved and supported but considered deviant, pathological, suspect. I should like to suggest that those who utilize these states, then, are most alienated from the total society, most demanding of immediate gratification, requiring immediate experiential evidence of the cult's promise, a down payment, as it were, on the promised celestial rewards. The ethic of altered states, it seems, places itself at the polar opposite to the Protestant ethic, with its postponement of gratification,

of work for the future. Obviously, such immediate gratification makes the present more liveable, whether that involves the submission to the harsh realities of the world or the difficulties of constructing a new society, or perhaps a retreat into such gratification, into "Paradise Now", as a substitute for action. (Ibid., p.243)

It would appear from the above that Bourguignon, for whatever reason, is distrustful of "altered states of consciousness" and of those who use them in modern industrial mass society (read, our society). Such, perhaps, is more in the nature of opinion on her part than of scientific data.

It would also appear from the above that Spiritualist trance mediums must be either alienated and anomic individuals, or, at best, anomalous in a mass industrialized society which considers them deviant, pathological, suspect. Such a viewpoint is testable.

In rather typical psychological fashion, Bourguignon cites studies of child-rearing in Haiti, suggesting how children are socialized into the roles of spirit possession, having been taken from early childhood onwards to the ceremonies. They "hear stories about spirits as they hear anecdotes about people in their families and neighbourhoods. They see dancing and hear songs and music associated with the spirits." (1976, p.17) Thus, according to her, they learn a repertoire of appropriate behavior patterns and roles.

The socialization of children as above, raises certain questions in regard to similar situations in mass industrialized society. More precisely, are the children of trance mediums in the Spiritualist movement socialized into performing trance impersonations of spirits? Observation and field work ^{herein} suggest that such is not the case. Most Spiritualists come into the movement from orthodox religious backgrounds, and even those who have been raised as Spiritualists may not inculcate their children

into the movement at all, let alone actively promote the development of mediumship in their children. In two cases known to this observer of members of the Church of the Spirits, both of whom were raised as Spiritualists with mothers who were mediums, neither individual has become a medium.

In regard to spontaneous possession, Bourguignon asserts that, "in situations of stress, the spirits who possess [those under stress] represent a defensive force whose help is depended on in moments of danger." (1976, p.33) In the long run, ". . .in the role of the spirit, the individual may exercise some control over his own life or over those around him. This is true not only while the supernatural role is being played out but also far beyond the moment of possession trance itself through commands and instructions and their consequences."Ibid.) From her field work observation, Bourguignon portrays the breadth of the spirit roles:

. . .if we as objective observer consider the behavior of the spirit to be in fact the behavior of the individual himself, acting out, unconsciously, the role of the spirit, we see great expressions of digression, mastery, self-assertion, authority, and the likes. Women assume the roles of men and men those of females. Thus we might translate the observation as follows: Possession trance offers alternative roles, which satisfy certain individual needs, and it does so by providing the alibi that the behavior is that of the spirits and not of the human beings themselves. (1976, p.40)

Skilled actors can portray a variety of personalities and the depth of the trance is not readily testable. It would seem, from observation, that there is great variation in depth of dissociation in a single individual over an extended period of time, in one individual from occasion to occasion, and among individuals. The subject who experiences trance with more frequency comes to experience it with greater ease, with less disturbance, and with more control over the process. Also, the more knowledge of the experience is acquired, the greater the control. (1976, Ibid.)

Thus, as might be expected, with time and experience the 'actor' improves his or her performance. And the performance is, after all, a public one:

Possession trance, it must be remembered, is a public manifestation; it occurs among observers and it requires an audience. This audience offers the spirit role of the actor a variety of stimuli to which he must respond: greetings, food and drink and tobacco, music, questions to be resolved and more. All of these require attention, if only selective attention. The phenomenon is in great contrast to the hallucinations of a drug-induced type of trance, where the primary events are intrapersonal private experiences, not interpersonal transactions. (Ibid., p.41)

In summary then, for Bourguignon spirit possession is a matter of individuals under social and/or personal stress finding various forms of compensation through the impersonation of spirits. Such phenomena occur in rigid, stratified societies where access to prestige and power are limited. Spirit possession, in such societies, allows an alternative form of decision making, giving a greater sense of freedom to individuals, and a certain amount of safe release from tensions created by rigid social structures and institutions. Thus, spirit possession functions socially and psychologically in interrelated ways.

William Sargant:

A psychiatrist whose study of possessed states (1973) is based on his initial work with World War II battle-stressed soldiers, Sargant's work is almost entirely physiologically based, in a rather mechanistic and deterministic manner. During the war, he used chemotherapy on soldiers and others to abreact and relieve traumatic battle experiences. Following his wartime work, Sargant continued to investigate nervous states and 'brain-washing' techniques, finding first in religious conversions and later in forms of mysticism and spirit possession, a set of similarities that led him to conclude that all these experiences were nothing more than self-deluded forms of abreactive states, dangerous to society and to individuals.

His field work, if such it can be called, consisted of a number of visits to various tribal societies in which he filmed and recorded tribal dancing and curative rites, speaking at times, through interpreters, with the tribal healers. The longest visit to any of these tribes was in the vicinity of two weeks, but usually a visit was only several days in duration, and at times the ceremonies were arranged for him. To an anthropologist, such visits would not qualify as proper field work from which to base, as he does, sweeping cross-cultural generalizations.

As well, he investigated a number of ecstatic Christian groups in the United States and voodoo groups in the Caribbean. In all, he finds striking similarities between his observations of these groups and his observations gleaned from treating "previously normal" soldiers during the war, who were suffering from dysfunctional nervous conditions. Sargant's

approach is rationalistic and physicalistic; he puts great emphasis throughout this study on physiological methods, chemotherapy and electro-shock therapy predominating.

The present work is designed to teach us all a moral:

However real and vivid personal and apparently remembered experiences may seem, this is no evidence of their reality, if they are brought to the surface under conditions of stress and in states of abnormal brain activity and heightened suggestibility. And the over-whelmingly vivid and convincing nature of so many experiences reported in the same states of brain activity induced by meditation, drugs, sex, hellfire preaching, mob-oratory or other mind-bending agencies, provides no evidence of their truth. (p.135)

Such is the "essential moral of this book,"(Ibid.) In essence, Sargant places in the area of psychiatric suspicion almost all states of being other than the most rationalistic and mundane, including the more sublime experiences of sexuality. Even orgasm itself is suspect. Other psychiatric approaches than his own physiological one likewise, according to him, fall into delusion and fantasy, and "the patient will generally play back to the doctor what the doctor wants to hear."(Ibid.) As for his own work with soldiers, "it soon became obvious that, if pressed to do so, some soldiers would abreact experiences they never had, sometimes made up on the spur of the moment to please the doctor or to put a good appearance on a cowardly act. Every abreacted experience had to be carefully checked on, otherwise it might become all too real to the patient and come to be fully believed by him."(p.134)

The treatment procedure was fairly simple:

Experiments were made with various drugs which enabled previously 'normal' people, suffering from recent battle neuroses, to relive emotionally, or to 'abreact' as it is called, experiences which had led to breakdown. We would inject a drug intravenously or give ether on a mask to the patient. Then we would suggest to him, in his

drug-disinhibited state, that he was back in the situation of terror and stress which was troubling him. If his best friend's head had been blown off into his lap, or he had been trapped in a burning tank or buried alive by an exploding shell, he was made to put himself back into the experience and live through it again. If successful, the effect was to stir up intense nervous excitement which produced violent outbursts of emotion. (p.13)

The usual result was emotional and physical collapse, after which the patient "might burst into tears or shake his head and smile, and then report that all his previous fears and abnormal preoccupations had suddenly left him, that his mind was functioning more normally again. . ." (pp.13,4)

Results could take weeks or months to be obtained, perhaps "only after the failure of other treatments." (Ibid.) Presumably, the soldiers were then returned to battle.

Sargant claims that there was nothing new in this treatment procedure, that alcohol and hypnosis had been used to bring about "states of sudden and violent abreactive emotional release. . ." (Ibid.) and that in fact the technique was "markedly similar to techniques which men have employed for thousands of years all over the world in their dealings with the abnormal: not only in terms of mental illness, but in relation to the 'supernormal' or 'supernatural' agencies - gods, spirits and demons." (Ibid.) Such a statement, however, fails to recognize a number of very important differences between battle-stressed soldiers abreacting specific traumatic experiences through chemotherapy, and individuals being "cured" of spirit possession. The latter are not necessarily in a culturally 'abnormal' condition, and spirit possession in itself may be culturally normative. As well, there is nothing to indicate that such individuals in the course of "curing" are reliving any specific traumatic experiences. Sargant is arguing on the basis of the apparent

phenomenological similarities between two phenomena with totally different cultural contexts and meanings: spirit possession may be a culturally normative experience with meaning to the culture which incorporates it, while it may be argued that the experience of war is not necessarily a culturally normative experience, and trauma associated with it, in this case, was individual and with individual meaning. Sargant's argument is ethnocentric and spurious.

During the war, Sargant and his colleagues eventually found that it was not the reliving of trauma itself that was so beneficial as it was the "release by one means or another of states of really intense emotional excitement, anger or fear." (p.15) Indeed, a release could even be obtained via "incidents which were entirely imaginary and had never happened to the patient at all. . ." (Ibid.) The most important emotions to arouse "were feelings of great anger and aggression, or of intense fear and anxiety." (Ibid.) Other emotions, such as depression or laughter were not sufficiently powerful to obtain the desired results. One wonders, then, why it was so necessary that, "Every abreacted experience had to be carefully checked on. . ." (p.134)

They likewise found that their treatment procedure was ineffective with chronically neurotic, unstable, depressed or schizophrenic patients: "In fact, we soon gave up trying to treat seriously mentally ill patients by abreactive methods, which were far more useful in treating recent neurotic illnesses in previously normal people." (p.16) Later Sargant found that in tribal healing and curative techniques, the traditional healers recognize that while their methods can prove effective in apparently similar conditions, they likewise tend to be unsuccessful with more severe cases, and usually will refer their patients to western

doctors or psychiatrists (pp.139ff):

I was told that if the case was obviously organic in nature, due to some definite lesion or infection such as malaria, they would often send the patient straight on to the Western doctor in the town. They realized that their work predominantly concerned the treatment of functional or nervous illness, often thought to be due to spirit possession. These healers showed a remarkable degree of insight. When I asked how they treated a patient suffering from depression, I was in turn asked if I meant a good man who had recently become depressed, or a person who was always depressed. They could heal the good man who was depressed but found it much more difficult to heal the man who was always melancholic. In other words, they have found what we have proved in our psychiatry, that a patient who is nervously ill is fairly easily helped to get well again with modern methods provided the previous personality was adequate. But it is a different matter when the previous personality has always been a poor one. (p.153)

While Sargant evinces respect for these traditional healers, and seems to want to assimilate them into the ranks of the profession of psychiatry, he does not comment on the fact that the healers, for the most part, heal spirit possession by themselves becoming possessed. According to Sargant, abreactive states "disrupt recently implanted attitudes and fears, and could be curative, especially in recently ill but previously normal patients."(p.21) If so, what purpose the chronic induction of such states on the part of the tribal healers might serve is not explained. Nor does Sargant attempt to make any explanation as to why the 'format' of spirit possession is used, as against any other format. If patients are mentally manipulable by the healers - ie., recently implanted fears, attitudes and beliefs are disrupted- in such curative rites, in order to reinforce group solidarity or for any other purpose, it remains to be explained who or what manipulates the healers. If the healer's "tabula rasa" is wiped, clean also, by what means does he continue in his role?

Sargant has learned from Pavlov's experiments with dogs, the results of which are claimed to be true for humans as well, that the brain when stimulated beyond "its capacity for showing its habitual response", follows these "distinct but progressive stages" of trans-marginal inhibition:

The first is the equivalent phase of transmarginal brain activity. In this phase, all stimuli of whatever contrasting strength produce the same sort of result. For instance, normal people, during periods of great fatigue following stress, may find that there is little difference between their emotional reactions to important and trivial experiences. (p.23)

Under stronger stresses, the second phase, the paradoxical phase, occurs:

Here weak and formerly ineffective stimuli can produce more marked responses than stronger stimuli. The stronger stimuli now only serve to increase the existing protective brain inhibition. But the weaker stimuli produce stronger positive response, as there is less resulting brain inhibition. In this state a dog will refuse food accompanied by a strong stimulus, but accept it if the stimulus is a weak one. . . .As a simple example, the harder you try to remember something the less you succeed. When you stop trying to remember consciously, the forgotten name or incident soon comes to mind. (Ibid.)¹⁰

It is in the third stage, the ultraparadoxical phase, in which:

positive conditioned behaviour and responses suddenly start to switch to negative ones, and negative ones to positive ones. . . .In both men and dogs, after great stresses, one set of behaviour patterns can thus be temporarily replaced by other diametrically opposed ones. This is difficult to achieve by persuasive intellectual arguments alone, but can be done quite simply by imposing intolerable stresses and strains, either physical or psychological, onto a hitherto normally functioning brain. (p.24)

What is important to his argument here is that,

when transmarginal inhibition begins to supervene in dogs, a state of brain activity results which is similar to that seen in human hysteria. This can cause greatly increased suggestibility (or sometimes equally great counter-suggestibility). The individual suddenly starts to take

notice of happenings and influences around him, to which he would normally have paid little or no attention. In this 'hypnoid' phase of brain activity, human beings become open to the uncritical adoption of thoughts and behaviour patterns, present in their environment, which would normally not have influenced them emotionally or intellectually. (Ibid.)

Collapse is the final inhibitory phase, which brings a "wiping clean" of the brain slate as regards recent happenings: this is often called the 'little death', preceding rebirth to a new life, in primitive tribal rituals." (Ibid.)

Sargant sums up for the reader as follows:

Transmarginal inhibition, once it sets in, can produce three distinguishable phases of abnormal behaviour -- the equivalent, paradoxical and ultraparadoxical phases. And finally, stresses imposed on the nervous system may result in transmarginal protective inhibition, a state of brain activity which can produce a marked increase in hysterical suggestibility (or, more rarely, extreme counter-suggestibility) so that the individual becomes susceptible to influences in his environment to which he was formerly immune. (p.25)

It is this condition of marked increase in hysterical suggestibility that gives Sargant cause for concern and fear for the demise of society. He, along with many of the 'older generation', finds the music and dancing of the 'youth culture' to be potentially dangerous:

I was now beginning to understand better how Hitler, for instance, had been so successful in using mass rallies, marching and martial music, chanting of slogans and highly emotional oratory and ceremony, to bring even intelligent Germans into a condition of intellectual and emotional subjection. Or how the new 'youth culture' of the West, based on frenzied dancing to the pounding repetitious beat of very simple music played at almost intolerable volume, has helped to create the 'permissive society' and to bring down in ruins a whole structure of beliefs and conventions cherished by the elders of our society. We see in Western countries today, in fact, the same dancing and whirling to a powerful beat, carried sometimes to states of exhaustion and semi-trance, which is little different from what I saw

in Africa, though in our society it is not under the control of the elders but ranged on the opposite side. (p.143)

Or again,

From the Stone Age to Hitler, the Beatles and the modern 'pop culture', the brain of man has been constantly swayed by the same Physiological techniques. Reason is dethroned, the normal brain computer is temporarily put out of action, and new ideas and beliefs are uncritically accepted. (p.236)

Even he himself is dangerously swayed, as he describes in a near bout with what might be called 'contagion by association':

The mechanism is so powerful that while conducting this research into possession, trance, and faith-healing in various parts of the world, I myself was sometimes affected by the techniques I was observing, even though I was on guard against them. A knowledge of the mechanism at work may be no safeguard once emotion is aroused and the brain begins to function abnormally. (Ibid.)

Sargant's argument is a kind of "intellectual McCarthyism": in the 1950's supposed Communists were being found everywhere and many groups or individuals were under suspicion. Similarly, Sargant finds the possibility of hysterical suggestibility almost everywhere, from spirit possession and tribal dancing past and present, through faith-healing, religious conversion, Eastern and Western mysticism, sexuality and orgasm, meditation and quietism, to the Beatles, pop music and the discos of the '70's. With one stroke of psychiatric insight based on battle-stressed World War II soldiers, he has reduced human cultures to a mass of uncritical hysterics. At best, it is difficult to take him seriously.

Summary:

Lewis has presented a model for spirit possession that is essentially socio-economic with psychological underpinnings. It is a model based, however, largely on the small-scale traditional societies studied by anthropologists, and therefore somewhat lacking in testing in regard to Western culture. Field's approach is largely psychological, but with consideration of social and economic factors, but based on a study of one society. On the other hand, Bourguignon's model is statistical and psychological, but with considerable emphasis on socio-economic factors in regard to a number of societies, especially Haitian, while Sargant's study attempts a psychiatric approach on a cross-cultural scale, with a severely limited data base.

Accordingly, these four theorists may be said to represent four overlapping approaches on a continuum, moving from Lewis to Bourguignon to Field to Sargant, from socio-economic to psychiatric. Lewis' model is the most complete and detailed, and therefore the most useful.

Within Western society, there are two main groups or movements which include spirit possession as part of their belief systems. Pentecostals experience possession by the Holy Ghost, or third person of the Trinity, resulting in trance states and speaking in tongues, or glossolalia. Both Lewis and Sargant make reference to Pentecostals, but such a form of possession as the Pentecostal is relatively restricted, all those possessed being so by the same Spirit. Spiritualism, or spiritism as it is known in Latin America or other Romance cultures, includes the possibility of possession by multiple spirits, the 'guides' or 'helpers' of mediums. This possession by a multiplicity of spirits puts Spiritualism rather closer to those tribal groups experiencing possession by various spirits.

Spiritualist trance control, as it is called, is not a phenomenon in isolation. It exists, and is demonstrated in, a socio-religious context embracing a formal church organization as well as an informal social network of mediums, clients and adherents or members of churches and psychic societies. Connected with the phenomenon of spirit possession are various other 'psychic phenomena' and the Spiritualist philosophy which provides an explanatory system for the phenomena, as well as a set of teachings about the nature of the after-life and the theological implications of death or transition from one phase of life to another. While it is beyond the scope and intention of this paper to examine that philosophy, some observation of the socio-religious context of the phenomena is necessary, in order to explain both the differences and the similarities between Spiritualist trance control and the anthropological models for spirit possession in other cultures.

CHAPTER TWO:

Notes

1. In her study, Macklin (1977) has utilized a similar value-free definition: "...I shall accept the definition of trance given by the subject, her clients and the Spiritualist Manual: she is in trance when she and her clients say she is." (p.77) This definition, like that of Lewis, solves a dual problem, the necessity of otherwise categorizing various types of trance performances or of seeking some kind of way of validating such states. In other words, it simply avoids the situation and focuses on the social situation. There seems, unfortunately, little choice in the matter of determining the validity of trance states.
2. Lewis also distinguishes trance possession states from possession states in which there may be no trance involved: "in other cultures people are frequently considered to be possessed who are very far from being in a trance state." (p.30) However, it is with possession in general that Lewis is concerned, whether it includes trance or not.
3. Lewis uses the term, trance, in a medical sense, derived from the Penguin Dictionary of Psychology, as: " 'a condition of dissociation, characterized by the lack of voluntary movement, and frequently by automatisms in act and thought, illustrated by hypnotic and mediumistic conditions.' So conceived, trance may involve complete or only partial mental dissociation, and is often accompanied by exciting visions, or 'hallucinations', the full content of which is not always subsequently so clearly recalled. . ." (pp.38,9) Again, this definition of the trance state, as against defining when a person is in trance as above (note 1), is somewhat problematical, in that not all forms of trance acknowledged by the trancers may fit this description.
4. In regard to Lewis' discussion of witchcraft accusations, it should perhaps be noted here that he seems to be speculating without much evidence, and in fact there is considerable evidence to the contrary, much of which points to witchcraft accusations as a levelling device between social groups of differing status.
5. In regard to Tungus shamans, which seem to be paradigmatic for Lewis' category of main cults (as zar cults seem to be paradigmatic for peripheral cults), Lewis quotes Shirokogoroff (1935) wherein he describes the rhythmic music, clapping, dancing and drumming of shamanistic seances. In contrast, Spiritualist seances tend to be more quiet and subdued.
6. It might be noted that similarly the professional qualifications for psychiatrists and other psychotherapists usually include a period of personal psychotherapy. However, this does not likewise tell us anything about the emotional or psychological state of the individual therapist. We merely assume a reasonable level of psychological health and competence.

7. Tables 1,2 and 3 are my synthesis of the features of Lewis' model into tabular form in order to utilize a working model for comparison to the field group.

8. Field's intimacy with individuals comes via observation and case histories, reconstructed, in some instances, from hospital records, and psychiatric interviews. However, often the case histories seem more in the order of behavior notes, and do not seem to indicate the kind of conscious reflection that she indicates here. But since behavior notes may not reveal the depth of understanding a therapist has of a patient/client, we here assume her greater intimacy.

9. While hypoglycaemia may be an explanation for some cases of supposed hallucinations, visions and voices, it is not necessarily the only explanation. Genuine paranormal phenomena may be involved - Field does not seem opposed to this possibility- or there may be other, more mundane explanations.

10. This example seems rather fortuitous, since, in fact, it concerns memory and concentration in a strictly internal process, rather than the direct stimulus-response process in the case of feeding dogs.

CHAPTER THREE:

The Context of the Field Work

Few anthropologists have seemed inclined to pursue E.B. Tylor's early attempt (1872), however brief and incomplete it may have been, to do field work amongst Spiritualists. (vide Stocking, 1971; cf. Krause, 1971) Yet the history and nature of Spiritualism is such that it should provide an interesting and even important source of data, especially in view of the present popular interest in such groups and in 'psychic phenomena'. Unlike most of the data sources in the anthropological work on spirit possession, Spiritualism arose in a Western context, with origins in the eastern United States and spreading from there to England and beyond. It includes groups from small, independent churches to relatively large international organizations, besides an uncountable number of small "home circles" which may have little, if any, contact with formal church structures.

Related to Spiritualism and often overlapping with it, are the various "psychic societies" which, though they profess a more 'scientific' attitude toward the phenomena, nonetheless share many of the same beliefs,

practices, and even personnel. While at present it is difficult to accurately estimate the numbers of people involved in such groups and organizations, Spiritualism claimed, in the mid 1800's, as many as 20 million adherents in the United States (Fornell, 1964; but cf. Nelson, 1969, p.24) Whatever the actual numbers involved, it is certain that Spiritualism had captured, at least in its early decades, the attention of a great many people from all categories of society. It should also be noted that the present espiritista movement in Brazil and other Romance cultures, which is related to Spiritualism, includes very large numbers of adherents, from the working class through to the intelligentsia and is very wealthy, I am told by a psychologist who has done field work there.

The early history of Spiritualism is well documented in regard to the United States and Great Britain (Hardinge, 1870; Doyle, 1926; Porter, 1958; Fornell, 1964; Nelson, 1969; Kerr, 1972) The same is not true for Canada, although at this writing there are some attempts to remedy this situation. Personal observation (which has included at least 10 churches in Montreal and Vancouver over a period of 11 years) and informant's comments suggest that there are some differences between the practice of Spiritualism in those two countries and in Canada. (See Appendix for a brief discussion on Canadian and American Spiritualism.)

Spiritualist churches in all three countries, however, share a common set of Principles, though wording may vary slightly, which are as follows:¹

1. The Fatherhood of God
2. The Brotherhood of Man
3. Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels²
4. The Continuous Existence of the Human Soul
5. Personal Responsibility
6. Compensation and Retribution Hereafter for all the Good and Evil Deeds Done on Earth

7. Eternal Progress Open to Every Human Soul
(Spiritualist Hymnal)

It is particularly the 3rd. and 7th. Principles that distinguish the Spiritualist movement from orthodox Christian or mainstream groups. Number seven implies that Spiritualism does not accept the standard Christian notion of Heaven and Hell and that in the Spiritualist system there is no eternal damnation. The principle of Personal Responsibility can be taken to reject the idea of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, implying that each individual must seek his or her own form of atonement.

³
It is under the third Principle that mediumship is found, which includes the Spiritualist form of spirit possession, called "trance control", "trance" or "control". All the mediums interviewed for this paper had their training in Spiritualist churches, and all serve the various local churches. Some may also 'work' at the psychic societies, some are associated with particular churches, others are independent. All have served the Church of the Spirits. The working context of mediumship provides a background for terminology, social structure and the setting for the phenomena.

Communication with those "on the other side", or in the spirit world, is achieved through mediumship of two kinds: physical mediumship⁴ and mental mediumship. Table 4 classifies and describes the various types of mediumship.

TABLE 4 MEDIUMSHIP

PHYSICAL:

- **Materialization:** in which spirit entities become solid and substantial to the point of being touchable and vocal. Plants and objects may also be materialized, however.
- **Etherialization:** similar to materialization, but the entities, while clearly visible, are not fully substantial and solid.
- **Trumpet mediumship:** in which a slim, open-ended cone or funnel of lightweight metal (the trumpet) is used to produce spirit voices. The trumpet is reported to float about the room, touching people, while the voices come from it.
- * **Transfiguration:** wherein spirit entities are enabled to project themselves onto the features of the medium in a mask-like, objective way.
- **Direct Voice:** the producing of spirit voices without any physical means or instruments, the voices appearing to come out of the air, sometimes from a globe of light.
- * **Apport mediumship:** the producing or materializing of small objects, such as semi-precious stones, through a trumpet.
- ** **Scotographs:** the production of spirit photographic portraits on photographic printing paper which is held to the participants' stomach and then passed through the same processing solutions as negatives. 5
- ** **Psychometry:** the ability to "tune into" a person through holding an object such as a piece of jewelry that has been in contact with the person; or, tuning into the object itself.
- ** **Psychic Art:** usually done by a person with artistic ability, but not necessarily so, wherein he or she clairvoyantly sees a spirit entity and then proceeds to draw a portrait of it.
- ** **Automatic writing/piano playing, etc.:** wherein the hand or arm of the medium is "taken over" to produce writing in a script different from his or her own, or to produce musical compositions and recitals by spirit musicians.
- **Spiritual Healing:** usually accomplished by the "laying-on" of hands as in more orthodox churches, but also includes "absent" or mental healing accomplished by "sending thoughts" to the sufferer.

MENTAL:

- ** **Clairvoyance:** the ability to see spirit entities either "objectively" (similar to physical sight, but the entities appear to be transparent) or "subjectively" by means of mental images or impressions
 - ** **Clairaudience:** the ability to psychically 'hear' the voices of spirits, either objectively or subjectively as in clairaudience. Spiritualists claim that some schizophrenics who hear voices have actually "opened up" clairaudiently. Clairaudience does not seem to be common; probably because of the similarity with schizophrenic experience, it is not much desired.
- Clairsentience:** a general term that can be used to cover the psychic equivalent of any of the five senses, or to mean the ability to "sense" the presence of a spirit entity much the way one can "sense" or feel the presence of another person in a darkened room.
- Inspirational writing/Speaking:** wherein spirit entities transmit messages, ideas or thoughts directly to the consciousness of the medium without trance being involved.
- **Trance control:** voluntary and temporary spirit possession, wherein the body of the medium is utilized by spirit entities to speak to people on the "earth plane"; there are degrees of trance, and in the deeper degrees, the medium is not conscious of what is being said, though most of the time the or she will have some awareness of the contents. (See below for a fuller description.)

* Indicates trance performance.

** Indicates that it may be performed in trance, but usually is not.

There are three places where phenomena are usually demonstrated: the church service, the "development circle" or special séance for the development of psychic ability, and the séance for the development or demonstration of a specific type of mediumship, usually one of the forms of physical mediumship. Some churches hold open "message circles", usually with several clairvoyants 'working' in them, assuring every 'sitter' of a 'message!'. 'Private readings' are usually done in the home of the medium, although most of his/her clients will have been exposed to Spiritualism and its phenomena first through the churches or psychic societies, in a 'public' setting.

At a church service, there is no guarantee of a message, though some mediums have been trained to try and give as many messages as possible, virtually to all the congregation. Messages may be given from departed relatives, friends, or spirit 'guides' or 'helpers'. Occasionally a message will be given to someone by a spirit person who does not quite fit the above categories, being someone unknown to the person and yet not a spirit guide. Such spirit personages seem to be in a liminal category, perhaps on their way to becoming a 'guide'. It is said that everyone has at least one spirit guide or helper.

It is generally felt amongst Spiritualists that neither churches nor ministers are absolutely necessary to Spiritualism, but serve a social need and an organizational format to present the philosophy in an acceptable setting with which people can readily identify; in other words, they use a culturally acceptable structure, that of formal church organization.

A differentiation is made between 'psychic' and 'spiritual': one can be developed psychically but not spiritually, and vice-versa. Ideally, however, the two are combined.

The typical Canadian Spiritualist church service consists of two main parts, the address or sermon, and a demonstration of clairvoyance, interspersed with hymns and announcements. Spiritual healing is usually available after the services for those who wish it. The Church of the Spirits always has tea, coffee and cookies downstairs after the evening services, encouraging attendants to socialize after the service and "get to know us". The demonstration period may include some other form of mediumship than clairvoyance, such as psychometry or psychic art. It is not unusual for a church to be without a minister, though many churches have one or more ministers associated with them. Some ministers work independently, and while most ministers are mediums, they are not necessarily so. The Church of the Spirits is a registered Society, governed by an annually elected Board of Officers, and has been without a minister for three years. Established originally in 1911, it is unique locally in that it is specifically constituted as a non-Christian church as well as being the only Spiritualist church to own its own land and building, all others operating out of rented space.

What in Christian churches would be called the altar or pulpit, in Spiritualist churches is referred to as the "platform". Thus, the term 'platform workers' refers to mediums and speakers (who may not be mediums). While it is made clear that those who lecture represent only their own point of view, a loose but effective form of social control assures that platform workers present material that is deemed appropriate, though it may not necessarily be Spiritualist philosophy per se. Speakers not known to the congregation may be invited to speak, but on the advice of one of the Executive or on the recommendation of someone known to the Executive and whose judgement they feel they can trust. If, in retrospect, it is felt that

a speaker has not presented appropriate material, he or she will not be invited to return as a speaker. The same will be true for clairvoyants, if either the style or the quality of the clairvoyance is not of acceptable standards.

Internal control of platform workers from the membership itself is likewise achieved loosely but effectively, in that workers will have gone through a Spiritualist philosophy class after which time they are invited to sit in a development circle (see below).⁷ The classes themselves are arranged in a progressive series, but only roughly so, in terms of the experience of the sitters. Not all sitters are expected to become platform workers or healers, but any who show potential will be encouraged to continue and will be given the opportunity to commence platform work at the Sunday morning service, under the tutelage of more experienced workers. When the Executive feels that an individual is ready, he or she will be moved up to the evening service, which is seen as the main service. In recent months, however, attendance at both services has tended to be balanced, with the morning service occasionally exceeding that of the evening service attendance. Visiting mediums and speakers are always assigned to the evening service, and the newspaper announcement lists only the evening workers. A small honorarium is tended to visiting mediums, who usually return it to the church. Visiting mediums who do private readings may be assisted in scheduling the readings with individuals, fees or 'donations' for which vary from \$20.00 to \$35.00. There is no charge for spiritual healing, however.

The continuity of any Spiritualist church is largely dependent on its production of new mediums, accomplished mainly through the psychic development classes or circles in the church. Some workers may, however,

have developed through sitting in a 'home circle', the main advantage to which is the opportunity to 'hand-pick' the sitters, so that harmony, which is seen as essential, is assured.⁸ There are at present four classes or development circles in the Church of the Spirits, with a rescue circle (see below) as well. On occasion there may be special 'workers' circles for those already engaged in platform work.

A typical development circle may be conducted in this manner: the circle leader, usually a clairvoyant, opens the circle with a prayer and a request for protection (ie., protection from "negative vibrations" or "unenlightened" spirits). A period of silence may follow, or a guided meditation in which the circle leader will verbally direct the sitters in a guided fantasy with the purpose of "coming into contact" with a spirit guide or helper. Thereafter, the sitters may be asked to "give off" or relate any experience they may have had during the guided meditation. 'Concentrating' on the sitters in turn may follow this, wherein the members are asked to "send energy" or 'concentrate' on one individual at a time, for a period of several minutes. It is explained that in this way the individual receives a 'boost' from the group energy and is thus enabled to "raise their vibrations" easier in order to make contact with spirit entities easier. Following this 'concentration', the sitters will again relate any mental impressions they have had or anything else they may have experienced during the exercise. When several individuals report a similar experience, this is taken to indicate that it was 'received' psychically and is a confirmation that more than imagination is involved. The rationale is that through a process of shared experience and feedback, the novice sitter learns to differentiate what is likely imagination or unconscious material from that which is received psychically.

A variety of psychic exercises may follow the concentrating. For example, a sealed envelope whose contents are unknown to the sitters may be placed in the circle and the sitters asked to "tune into the contents". Or an object may be passed around and people asked to try and psychometrize it. Finally, the circle will be closed with a short, informal prayer. Usually the circles are held under low lighting, often colored red or blue. A snack may be served afterwards. While some churches hold 'open circles' in which anyone can sit, the Church of the Spirits frowns on such practices, maintaining that "sitters should have a proper understanding of what they're doing and why they're doing it" before sitting in a development circle. Some danger is seen in open circles, in that the medium or circle leader, as well as the sitters themselves, may be exposed to "unknown or negative vibrations",⁹ whereas following the procedure of the Church of the Spirits, such dangers are lessened or eliminated by the Executive or circle leaders having had contact with the sitters previous to sitting, thus knowing "who's ready to be sitting and who's not".

'Rescue circles' are special circles designed for the assistance or 'rescue' of 'earth-bound' or 'lost' spirits who are "remaining close to the earth plane", not having realized that they "have passed on" and "should be progressing to higher planes". Such spirit entities may become attached to an individual or even to a place, resulting in a variety of complaints, such as the phenomenon known as 'poltergeist' activity. A somewhat specialized form of trance control mediumship is involved in 'rescue work', wherein the medium's guide or 'door-keeper' allows these lost spirits to use the medium's body to speak to the sitters. A dialogue then ensues, wherein the sitters will attempt to counsel the entity to the effect that he or she should be moving on to higher planes and not clinging to the earth plane.¹⁰

An attempt will be made to get the spirit person to identify himself or herself, before which the sitters will have attempted to 'tune in' psychically in order to gather information about the spirit and any other spirits who may have been in attendance. Considerable correspondance is usually seen between what the sitters 'pick up' and what the spirit later reveals. Ordinarily, in the course of a sitting, several entities will be helped in this fashion, but occasionally a more determined spirit enters, with the possibility occurring then of involuntary possession. To date, this has not yet happened.

Rescue mediumship is seen as specialized because the medium needs, supposedly, a relatively strong personality so as not to be affected by the 'lower vibrations' of the temporarily possessing spirits. As well, it is felt that the medium needs 'a strong connection' with his or her spirit helpers, in case difficulty should be encountered. Sometimes, however, it is felt that an individual with a less strong personality might be suitable for rescue work, since such individuals experience trance easier than those with a strong personality. However, few churches have rescue mediums, since rescue work is seen as difficult and unpleasant, with some danger as well.

Those churches that have rescue circles may take requests from individuals outside the circle for help in determining if they are being "bothered by" an unwanted spirit influence. If this is so, then the circle will attempt to clear the individual from the spirit influence. The spirit guides will be asked if there is a 'negative influence' around the individual and the guides, if such is the case, will attempt to bring the spirit into the circle and 'through' the medium. If any sitter 'tunes into' other spirit entities who have come with the troublesome spirit, such as friends, relatives or guides of the troublesome spirit, they will be asked to help also,

and the attempt is then made to get the troublesome spirit to "go with these other people" for understanding and assistance in "making the transition to higher planes". At times a rescue circle may go into the private home of someone who has requested assistance, if there have been physical phenomena such as poltergeist activity of a recurrent nature.

The congregation of the Church of the Spirits is divided between regular or occasional attendants and the membership itself. There are between forty and fifty members currently. The sponsorship of two members is needed for any applicant, and there is a waiting period of up to three months before an application will be placed before the membership for ratification. Very seldom is anyone refused membership. A refusal would only occur on the advice or opposition of one of the Executive, only then for serious reasons such as the applicant being perceived as a potential 'trouble maker' or of such an unstable character so that it would be inadvisable to encourage the person to pursue psychical development. In fact, there are no functions of the church, other than the monthly membership meetings and the right to vote in the election of officers that are not open to non-members.

Among the members of the congregation, a wide range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds is found, with the majority falling into the middle class range. Of the members, eight hold one or more university degrees including engineering as well as in the humanities; two are R.N.'s, and three individuals have backgrounds in mental health work. That is to say, just over 21% of the membership have university and/or professional status. In addition, the membership includes skilled labourers, service occupations, management and technological occupations. Ages of the membership range from adolescence, eighteen being the minimum age for full

membership, to post retirement, with the majority in the thirty to fifty years bracket. (cf. Nelson, 1969; pp.153-173, 256-273) Many, perhaps most, of the membership are involved to some extent at least, in facets of 'alternate life styles'. For example, not a few of the members are vegetarians; some are knowledgeable in regard to herbal remedies and vitamins, as well as various massage techniques such as reflexology or acupressure. Many include chiropractic care in their medical needs, and some prefer it to standard medicine, feeling it to be a more natural way of healing. Some members are actively involved in animal welfare groups and the ecological movement.

In terms of political and social ideals, though various political parties might be supported, there seems to be a general tendency toward a socialistic perspective, irregardless of political affiliations. There are several open homosexuals in the congregation, and the general attitude toward them is accepting. Many of the women have been influenced, at least to some degree, by the feminist movement, and the membership tries to be non-discriminatory in all these regards. Some executive positions tend, however, to be filled by women, notably the two secretarial positions, though men have filled these positions at times. Other positions are likely to be filled by either men or women.

The majority of platform workers are women, whereas the majority of healers are men. Table 5 following is a table of platform workers by sex and numbers for the year 1979, including both evening and morning services, showing clearly that women are in the majority, especially in regard to mediumship where there is a two-to-one ratio of women to men.

TABLE 5 PLATFORM WORKERS, 1979

Men:		Women:	
Speakers:	40	Speakers:	64
Clairvoyants:	56	Clairvoyants:	128

Table 2 is formulated from the working of 7 men and 15 women, and includes as separate numbers those occasions when an individual may perform both as speaker and clairvoyant. All the men but one are clairvoyant mediums and three were visitors (i.e., non-members); of the women, all but three are clairvoyants, and seven were visitors.

In addition to the platform workers, the Church of the Spirits had, until recently, one male rescue medium who operated only in the rescue circle but was also a healer. The other rescue mediums are regular platform speakers and clairvoyants. At the services, the chairperson is usually a member of the executive but may be drawn from the membership at large. The current president of the church, a woman, conducts the philosophy class, and of the four development classes, three are led by women and one by a man. The rescue circles do not have leaders as such.

Spiritual healing through laying-on of hands (magnetic or contact healing) is done after the Sunday services and at a special healing hour on Tuesday evenings. At times, small pets are also brought for healing. Absent or mental healing will also be done at the healing service, or during the Sunday service when all the congregation will be asked to participate. This is done by 'entering the silence' and sending or directing healing thoughts to the sufferer.¹² Such absent healing may be sent for more than physical illness, and may, for example, be directed toward one who is recently deceased, much as the Roman Catholic church prays for the departed.

As well, absent healing could be sent for purposes of upliftment, for help with difficult situations or even with material conditions, though these variations would not be done publicly. There are at present 14 authorized healers in the church, 8 of them men and 6 of them women. In addition, there are several helpers or assistants, who act as 'batteries' to help provide extra 'power' and who will themselves become authorized healers. While there have been few legal difficulties with healing in Vancouver Spiritualist churches, at least one Montreal church suffered the embarrassment of a police raid, in which the church and its healers were charged with the illegal practice of medicine. Though the number of persons seeking spiritual healing may vary, it is not uncommon on Tuesday evenings for there to be more healers than clients.

While it is admitted that the effectiveness of healing is often difficult to estimate and there are therefore no expectations on the healers, there are reasonably clear expectations for speakers and mediums. A neat, clean appearance is expected of all platform workers, though style of dress is left to individual taste. Usually attire at the evening service tends to be a bit more formal than at the morning service. For the congregation, attire is usually very casual, with the younger members mainly seen in the standard blue jeans and top.

For speakers, the general expectations for good public speaking are prevalent. Speakers of an evangelical cast, which is not common amongst Canadian Spiritualists, will not be invited to return, nor is it likely that those speakers of a more Christian persuasion will be returned. In general, it is felt that the philosophy presented should be along Spiritualist lines, but 'New Age' philosophy or that drawn from the more 'esoteric'

groups, such as Theosophists or Rosicrucians is also acceptable. A fundamentalist Christian approach would not be seen, since those groups consider Spiritualism the work of the devil, as does, apparently, the Roman Catholic church. The Anglican church, at least in England, has conducted its own research into mediumship and psychic phenomena, but references are not available at this writing. Trance speakers whose spirit 'controls' exercise too great an accent or other peculiarity will also not be invited to return. For example, one regular but not well-known attendant had asked to speak at a service, claiming that he was a trance medium. It was decided to try him on a Sunday morning. When his spirit 'control', a young boy, began to speak, he did so with a loud, high-pitched voice which visibly startled the congregation. The Executive of the church felt that such a performance was unnecessary, and so informed the man. He was apparently embarrassed, or annoyed, because he has not since returned to the church.

In terms of clairvoyance, it is felt by the church that first and foremost, clairvoyance should be evidential - that it should provide material indicative of proof of survival of the personality beyond bodily death. This is seen as being accomplished by the medium's ability to accurately describe the spirit entities coming forward to communicate with particular individuals. The description may include a first name, or, more rarely, a last name as well. It is claimed that it is "difficult to get names" but many messages are given with names. The description may also include information on the manner of dying, the physical health of the individual at time of death, personality and character traits, relationship to the person receiving the message, details of personal contact that the recipient may have had with the spirit person, or, as sometimes happens,

details about the spirit person that the recipient may not know and must corroborate by asking another family member or someone who might have known such information. In general, evidential material is of a trivial nature, the claim being that, "if you haven't seen someone for years, you don't talk about philosophy or art or the state of the world. You talk about those personal little details, such as, 'Do you remember when. . . .'"

It is recognized that not all mediums are of the same quality or level of development, nor of the same interests, and allowance is made for this. Some mediums are known for specializing in certain areas, such as evidential material, or in spiritual counselling or in dealing with 'material conditions'.

Secondly, the messages themselves should be relevant and helpful to the recipient, encouraging a positive attitude to life and demonstrating that, "we are never alone". Messages should be uplifting, and if a medium receives information of a negative nature, such as personal difficulties or possibilities of an accident, it is felt that such information must be relayed in as positive a manner as possible, avoiding anything resulting from the 'power of suggestion'. It is sometimes said that the only time a medium should receive such information is when, in fact, the recipient is in a position to do something about it; that is, when the individual concerned can avert the situation.

Thirdly, presentations should be reasonably quick in deliverance, so as to avoid boredom on the part of the rest of the congregation. The demonstration of clairvoyance is, it is understood, a public demonstration, and should not become tedious to those not receiving a message at that time. Messages should also be as precise as possible yet not overstep the boundaries of personal privacy or of good taste. It is claimed that messages from spirit entities will never reveal any secrets

or cause undue embarrassment, but if such is a possibility, mediums are requested to speak privately to the individual concerned after the service. The general atmosphere of the church, particularly during the demonstration of clairvoyance, is relaxed and even casual, with witticisms, anecdotes and even jokes quite common. It is said that, "laughter helps to raise the vibrations" and thus aids in clairvoyance, although mediums are admonished always to work with dignity.

Some mediums are reputed to be quite theatrical in their performance ¹³ and this is tolerated to a point, again, to the point where taste is not insulted nor dignity lost. One service at which I was present was temporarily interrupted by a swooning spell on the part of the medium, a well-known local man, and a visiting medium at the church. The faint occurred dramatically during the clairvoyance, and in the confusion briefly ensuing, some of the congregation were overheard to express concern that perhaps he had, literally, "fallen into trance", until it was explained that he was asthmatic and occasionally suffered from lack of oxygen. He resumed the demonstration however, and afterwards was lightheartedly asked if henceforth it could be said that his clairvoyance was delivered 'after the fall'!

Conflict in the Church of the Spirits tends to be centered around the seeking of personal power, rather than over doctrinal matters. Since there is not official doctrine or dogma, and no central authority figures, it seems that, for the most part, individuals with various philosophical perspectives can cooperate together in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. However, it has happened on a number of occasions in the past decade that individuals, or sub-groups, have sought to take a dominant position in, or outright control of, the church.

There are few ways in which personal or group power can be obtained. Personal qualities or charisma, combined with the electoral process, is perhaps the only legitimate way. The late pastor was such a person, having been both pastor and president. Although deceased four years ago, one still hears frequent mention of him.

Some years previously, a group of individuals who were of a more Christian orientation than the rest of the membership, challenged the position of the Church and brought legal action against it, arguing that since the church had not stated otherwise, it could be expected that in a predominantly Christian culture a church was Christian; if so, then various Christian symbols and objects, such as crucifixes, Bibles, etc., should have a prominent place in the church. The suit was dismissed by the court, but the result for the church was a new constitution, drawn up with legal assistance, in which it is clearly stated that it is a non-Christian church. As well, in case of a dissolution of the society, the constitution unalterably provides for the dispersal of all assets to certain charitable organizations. It is felt that this is some protection against any individual or group seeking power for material gain, since the property, by present standards, is valued at close to a quarter of a million dollars.

Struggles for personal power of a non-material nature can and occasionally do take place. There are few mechanisms to deal with such struggles, other than through personal interaction. Internal personal conflict usually results from such struggles as well, since individuals express conflict between the felt need for action and the desire to deal with the situation in as spiritual a manner as possible. (A number of such interpersonal conflicts have been resolved only through time by the determination

on the part of an individual or sub-group not to yield to the other individual or group while not taking counteraction in turn.) Such a method of determined passive resistance seems, at best, precarious, but it has been successful in the past, while other solutions have not been forthcoming. ¹⁴

CHAPTER THREE:

Notes

- 1 . Elsewhere, as in France, a Principle concerning reincarnation may be included, where groups follow the teachings of Kardec (1970) which were first promulgated in the 1850's. When asked as to why Canadian Spiritualist churches did not contain such a Principle, I was informed that, "Reincarnation can't be proved. At least not yet, not in the way that life after death can be proved - through mediumship. Spiritualists are split on reincarnation. Some accept it, others don't. It's up to the individual, but since we can't prove it, we don't teach it. At least not from the platform."
- 2 . Although the language suggests some kind of Christian concept, 'Angels' here refers to spirit guides or helpers. I am informed that the language of the Principles is old-fashioned and should be revised.
- 3 . Spiritualists distinguish between mediums and psychics by saying that "All mediums are psychics, but not all psychics are mediums", meaning that mediumship involves spirit beings, but psychics do not necessarily work with spirits.
- 4 . Few informants had even witnessed physical phenomena such as materializations or trumpet séances. I was informed that such phenomena are not common today, at least partly so because of the fraud that has occurred in the past. Several informants said that they would be highly skeptical of such phenomena unless they were very sure of the genuineness and sincerity of the medium.
- 5 . One informant showed me a scotograph which included, I was told, a picture of his late grandfather. There will usually be several blank spaces on the paper which, if it is left in a dark place for a few weeks, will later fill in with more portraits. Another informant showed me several scotographs which, she claimed, were made under bright light. Unlike the first scotograph which was quite clear, these were rather nebulous but several faces could nonetheless be seen in them.
- 6 . A number of variations of psychometry might be seen, such as 'sand reading', wherein a person places his palms face down in a shallow tray of sand, usually unseen by the medium, who then psychometrizes the prints. Such variations, it appears to this observer, are merely more theatrical arrangements of the basic performance.
- 7 . I have seldom heard the term, 'séance', used. I was told variously that, "it's old-fashioned" or that, "it really only applies to physical phenomena circles where there's one specific medium", or even that, "it's only used in the movies!" Basically, the terms circle and séance are the same.

8. Most Spiritualists seem to have sat in home circles as well as in church circles.

9. The word, 'vibration', is a common word in the Spiritualist argot. In essence, it is explained, everything vibrates. Life on the earth plane is seen as a slower rate of vibration than that of the spirit planes, which becomes increasingly 'finer' the higher one goes. In contacting spirit entities, "they lower their vibrations and the medium raises his or hers". Objects likewise vibrate. 'Picking up' or 'tuning in' is seen rather like adjusting a radio to different channels, each person or object having a personal rate of vibration to which the medium attunes. (vide Zaretsky, 1974, for an analysis of the language of Spiritualist churches in the United States; and Tschanz, 1980 (forthcoming) for a brief analysis of Spiritualist language in a Canadian church.)

10. The counselling technique of rescue circles is somewhat similar to that of group therapy.

11. The Church of the Spirits is well aware of what is referred to as, 'the nut fringe'- persons claiming psychic experiences or ability which are quite possibly the result of delusions of a psychological or even pathological basis; or, persons who might not be pathological but who are strange or eccentric. Usually, in the course of a year, several individuals who will be so characterized will make an appearance. Some are tolerated, if they do not disturb the service, but others will be asked to stay away. One or two individuals who had been regular attendants for a period of time were eventually 'carted off' or 'taken away' for psychiatric treatment.

12. This is done by visualizing the person in the best of health and so forth.

13. This is mentioned in the literature on Spiritualism, either written by Spiritualists or by those outside the movement (cf. Macklin, 1977) as it is often noted in regard to shamans and mediums in other cultures. But perhaps if an observer is to make a valid judgement of theatricality, it should be apparent as such to the believers as well; otherwise such a judgement is perhaps only ethnocentric.

14. The section on conflict and resolution is not as complete and detailed as it might have been, out of respect for the fact that individuals involved in some of these conflicts are still active in local Spiritualism, and because there has been legal action in the past.

CHAPTER FOUR
Trance Control and Personal Histories

Such then is the social context for the demonstration of mediumship and trance control. The church or churches provide a means of introduction to the philosophy and phenomena of Spiritualism, as well as a training ground for the development of psychic ability and mediumship, and an opportunity for the demonstration of the same. Public validation of such abilities is thus provided, and a shared, group perspective on the nature of 'reality' provides psychological reassurance of the experiences of the phenomena, as well as a meaningful interpretation of those phenomena and experiences: "You know you're not crazy when other people 'see' the same thing and understand what's happening. But if you are crazy, there sure are a lot of other neat, crazy people here."

Demonstrations of trance control on the platform are not that common, however. Most mediums work 'inspirationally' when speaking, or only in light trance. The particular medium on whom this paper focuses most, is known for her trance performances, giving both the address and demonstration of clairvoyance in trance. She is the only local medium known to this observer to claim to demonstrate clairvoyance in trance.

The Church of the Spirits operates from a basis of mediums and workers drawn from the membership or congregation of the church itself. The services are also supplied with visiting mediums, some from the local area, or from elsewhere in Canada, or England or the United States. The Rev. Rose is a visiting medium at the Church of the Spirits, of which, by her own admission, she is particularly fond of serving. While delivering the address, the Rev. Rose usually remains standing in one position, as do most mediums when delivering a trance address. During the clairvoyance, however, Rev. Rose moves about, and may even walk down the aisle of the small church. Unlike when delivering the address, her eyes will then be open, and there appears to be little difference between her trance state and her normal waking state, except for some difference in voice and speech patterns and an initial period of apparently deeper trance. At home, however, trance performances will usually be done sitting in a chair, with partially or completely closed eyes, little physical movement, and a more noticeable change in voice and speech patterns.

The second interview with this medium included a 'private reading', done in trance, a brief description of which follows. The description is presented as a particular example of what might be termed a 'genre' of performances. In keeping with ethnographic tradition, it is written in the present tense. While a public church demonstration of trance control might be considered, in sociologist Goffman's terms, a 'frontstage' performance, a private reading permits a closer look 'backstage', though it is difficult to decide the exact boundaries of the two. In general, then, the description which follows could fit for the private trance performances of most of the mediums interviewed here, although a private reading from them may not include a trance performance.

Trance Control

The Rev. Rose meets me at the door of her home, a split-level bungalow of recent construction, in a predominantly middle class suburban community some miles from Vancouver. The Rev. Rose is an attractive, dark-haired woman with expressive eyes, in her late 40's. She is the mother of four sons, a housewife who finds time for considerable spiritual and volunteer work. Casually dressed in slacks and sweater, she takes me into the lower 'rec room', which is dominated by a large pool-table and filled out with TV, stereo, and an aquarium of tropical fish. An amiable cat is perched on the arm of a comfortable couch, of the type so common in basement 'rec rooms'. She tells me that this is where she usually does her readings, unless it is filled with teen-agers, her sons ranging in age from 16 to 20. I have long ago given up my expectations of crystal balls, darkened rooms with strange sounds and eerie lights, the paraphernalia so loved by films, radio and television and even commercials. The only strange sound in the room is the bubbling of the aquarium.

Rose sits in a chrome kitchen chair, and I sit opposite her on the comfortable couch, the taperecorder placed on the floor between us. She explains that she does all her readings in trance, and that she remembers nothing of what is said. She suggests that perhaps I should take notes as well, just in case something happens to the taperecorder. Not wishing to take any chances with my field work, I had planned to do so anyway. I had used the taperecorder previously with no problems, but this time it stuck, and not one word of the reading was taped. I was later thankful for my notes.

She crosses her legs, her hands in her lap, relaxes, asks if I'm ready, and begins. She closes her eyes, takes a couple of deep breaths

. . . and a voice which is like hers, but not like hers, deeper, more resonant, commanding yet gentle and somehow kind, introduces itself to me as 'Yuen', Rose's Chinese guide. He bids me good-afternoon, and I return the greeting.

After about an hour and a half, 'Yuen' bids me good-bye. The period has included a question and answer session, and some rather interesting information. Throughout it, Rose's eyes were only partially open, with a glazed quality about them yet obviously, there was a definite personality present. Now Rose pauses, slumps forward slightly in her chair and seems to relax the slight stiffness in posture of a few minutes previous. She takes a deep breath and opens her eyes. Smiling now, she reaches for a cigarette and says that she hopes it was helpful.

I have seen trance performances before, and I will see others later. In each instance, they have not particularly been quite as I might have expected from the anthropological literature on spirit possession. There has been no unusual bodily activity, other than one or two deep breaths and a gently closing of the eyes. In some instances, the body has appeared somewhat rigid, or perhaps the eyes have been partially open. And I have witnessed this medium, while supposedly in trance, move about freely. Although the voice has not been radically different from her own, yet there have been phrases, intonations and patterns of speech one does not hear in her usual speaking manner.

The same has been true for trance performances by other mediums. The voice is not radically different though other aspects of the speech may be. Different personalities, often quite different from that of the medium, have asserted themselves. One 'senses' the difference between male and female, young or old, educated or uneducated, etc. Yet few of these differences are

conveyed by voice alone; rather is there a whole range of subtle expressions, such as tone, posture, expressions of the face, gestures and movements, which help convey the impression of different personalities, different characters: a complex panopoly of the human condition.

In general, then, when dealing with Spiritualist mediums, one's expectations will not usually be met, if such expectations have been formed by the popular media or by the anthropological literature. The same tends to be true of personal histories. As Macklin (1977) has so succinctly shown, the data of personal biographies of Spiritualist mediums may be analysed in such a fashion so as to portray such individuals as hallucinatory, delusional and pathological individuals; or, the same data can be analysed in contrary fashion, showing that mediums, like most people, are the product of the interaction of culture, environment, and personal experience. But such information can be gathered only by taking a personal history, as well as by observation. The biographies of the Rev. Rose and five other mediums follows, with an analysis of the data in comparison to the models for spirit possession. Spiritualism itself is also considered in view of the same models, and some suggestions made for expansion of the models.

Personal Histories: Case Number OneThe Rev. Rose

At forty-eight, the Rev. Rose is a quiet, attractive woman whose salt and pepper hair is usually worn across her face in such a way as to make her seem shy than she is. Like many other middle-age, middle class housewives, she is somewhat self-conscious of the fact that she has added a few pounds to her weight over the years, and that perhaps she smokes too much. The mother of four sons whose ages range from sixteen to twenty, she lives in a rented split-level bungalow in a suburban community outside Vancouver. Her eldest son is a student at the local community college, while the others are either finishing high school or working. Since her husband, a former psychiatric nurse, has left his work for re-training in a new career, Rose has been charging \$15.00 for a private reading, "to help with the bills".³ The number of readings she will do will vary from week to week, though she won't do more than three per day. The length of a reading may vary from forty-five minutes to an hour and a half, "depending on the needs of the person" and on the background of the client: "it's so much easier to read for those who are seeking spiritual things." Her main 'control' is a Chinese spirit guide, 'Yueng':

I won't do more than three a day, unless they come from afar in a group, such as from Seattle. If it's desperately needed, then OK. I've been fortunate because most are seeking spiritual truths rather than the material. I rarely get someone who exhausts me but I did one for two and a half hours the other day, which depleted me. Two men come for business advice every so often, and Yueng has helped greatly. He was once a business man. It's \$15.00 for readings because people don't like it if you do it for nothing. But \$15.00 is good because people were leaving \$20.00 and \$30.00, and this makes everyone even. Money is the least thing I'm interested in. One lady brought a beautiful jewelry box she made instead. At first I was reluctant to charge, but spirit said, "You're giving time and energy", so now I do.

Born in England, Rose is the middle child of three, with a younger brother by three years and a sister older by four years. Her father was a major in the British Army, who had risen through the ranks. While her mother was Catholic, her father had been Church of England, and so the family was of mixed religious background, though the children were raised as Catholic.

Father had a beautiful philosophy of life. He always talked to the kids, and allowed us our own free will, at least to a certain extent anyway. He always emphasized personal choice. Mother was a Catholic, and we were raised Catholic, though Father was Church of England. He started working in a coal mine at age thirteen. He was a very compassionate person, and always said, "If you can help someone, do; but if you can't help them, don't push them down."

At first the family lived 30 miles from London, but because of her father's army career, Rose lived variously in Malta, Germany, Wales, and elsewhere in England. Thus her education was acquired in various places, and her socialization included exposure to many different people:

I never had any shyness. I'm used to mixing with people and fit easily with any material level.

As a child she had little responsibility, and from age fourteen to seventeen, had been "rather selfish" and "very materialistic". But at seventeen, she began to learn compassion, first by leaving school and "doing children's nursing in a Catholic nursing home." Rose sees herself as a non-conformist: "I'm a bit of a maverick. I don't like being tied down." Her dislike of being tied down brought her into conflict with the nuns in the nursing home at her first job, and accordingly she left it soon: "I didn't get on with the nuns because of the requirements of going to daily Mass and everything." Because she has moved about a great deal, she says, "I must be a bit of a gypsy."

Rose had always been close to her father, and his death when she was eighteen was a loss to her, though it brought changes and spiritual growth for her. Her mother suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized for ten weeks, while Rose, who could "only cook eggs and chips", took over the care of the family:

I was resentful, because I had to give things up socially. But I might have continued to be selfish and not used my gifts. The responsibility taught me patience and compassion.

Upon her mother's recovery, she returned to work, "for the money, to continue to help mother", as a nurse's aid. At twenty, she began psychiatric nursing which she did until marriage at twenty-four. Following the birth of her children, she returned on a part-time basis to psychiatric nursing. Rose had met her husband, who was also a psychiatric nurse, at the hospital where she had begun working.

While her early religious training was in Catholicism, nevertheless Spiritualism was not far away. Rose had "seen spirit" from age two and a half. Other family members had not seen them, and attributed her visions to imagination. Her father, however, seemed understanding, and "never said it was imagination." From the beginning, she was "always aware of Yeung" and had also seen a Persian spirit guide. In her early years, she "couldn't tell otherwise" if they were spirit beings, unless she "saw their spirit robes." Later, her mother's sister became interested in Spiritualism, and eventually became a medium herself, becoming quite influential on Rose when Rose was a young woman. Rose's mother had also occasionally attended a Spiritualist church, and when Rose was thirteen, her mother had received a message concerning the eventual death of her husband, which was to be confirmed five years later by the unusual circumstances of his death. Rose

herself had a premonition about the death of her father two days before the event, and told her mother of it. Her father was then semi-retired, working for the Hydro safety commission; ironically, he died as the result of an accident at work:

At 9:30 that morning, I suddenly heard the sound of a flock of birds, but there were none there. And I felt a hand on my shoulder. I knew then that my father had died. I told my sister, and she was very upset, saying, "no, you're wrong". When the policeman came to the door later that morning, I put my fingers in my ears so I couldn't hear what he said. But I knew.

Three weeks later she "saw" her father in "ordinary clothes":

He came to tell me that there were really no accidents, but only personal choice. And that he had work to do on the other side. You had to work twice as hard, but mentally, not physically. He told me that he would not return to earth, that there was no Heaven or Hell, and no accusations - self-judgement only. I was still confused from my Catholic upbringing. He said he could help me more from the spirit plane. He showed me his spirit robes then, that were blue and gold, and said that he was in a rescue group for war conditions, appearing in the uniform of whatever group, helping them, especially if their physical body had been blown apart. He's still doing this.

Thus it was that her first exposure to Spiritualist philosophy was received in the setting of a highly charged emotional experience of clairvoyant communication with her deceased father. The power of this experience piqued her curiosity and she "wanted to find out more." Her aunt had become a deep-trance medium, and Rose went to a circle the next Saturday evening, in which she "saw spirit people", and in which her aunt informed her as to the identity of some of her own spirit guides, including the ones of whom she was already aware. "She told me that one day I would do the same thing. (Trance) But I was adamant, and said, 'no way'." Shortly thereafter, however, Rose joined her first psychic development circle. Her own mediumship was initiated, and her move away from Catholicism reinforced:

The first time I sat in a circle, I felt the chair moving under me, which was quite strange. There was an old man in the circle who loved to argue with the priests. I got intrigued with his trance lecture, then I 'went away' to a beautiful garden with birds and flowers that was much more vivid than anything on the earth's plane. I was very happy, just sitting there, then I heard someone calling me, then calling more urgently. Then I made what felt like a backward flip, and came back into my body. I thought I had fallen asleep and had a dream, but everyone in the circle was laughing at me. They told me that my nun had 'come through' and played the organ. I certainly don't play the organ but I play a bit of piano in the waking state. They explained to me that it was trance, so I thought it was OK after all. I usually don't remember where I go now when I do trance, it's just a blank. It always feels good afterwards, but I have no memory of it.

When at twenty-four she married, her husband was Protestant, and his mother was "upset at first", but later relaxed her apprehensions about Rose's Spiritualist involvements. Her husband was skeptical at first, even after one of her spirit guides had informed him that he would not only pass his nursing exams but win a prize, which later proved correct. Gradually her mediumistic experiences began to provide a new structure and comfort to her life, with confirmations in 'reality' of her psychic experiences. Childbirth proved a difficult and traumatic experience for Rose: she was in labor four days with her first child and "should have had a caesarean, but there was no one near to do it." Her father appeared to her, and told her not to worry, that the delivery would be successful. "Ned was allowed into the delivery room because he was a nurse, but it was a difficult delivery, and they thought he was still-born. But Ned knew he was alive, though, and they went to work on him and everything was allright."

Because of her first birthing experience, the second pregnancy was faced with apprehension:

But spirit said it would be allright too. I put myself on Harry Edward's healing list any way. (Harry Edwards is a well-known British healer) In the meantime, my guide said there would be complications, but that they would use ectoplasm to stop the hemorrhaging. The delivery itself was no problem. Harry Edwards had said it would be a boy, and it was. But I started hemorrhaging the next day, and had to have transfusions. I went home when the baby was ten days old, though the doctor thought it was too early. Three days later I passed some blood clots which I took to the doctor. On my way home, I started hemorrhaging again, and I was on my own for three hours, hemorrhaging intermittently. I went into surgery that night at 10:00 pm., and I told the doctor that I'd die in the OR, but the doctor said no. At 3:00 am. when I came round, the doctor said I had a lot of work to do and would stay around for a long time. I dont know why he said that. Six months later they did a D&C, and damaged the uterus. That was when they put the ectoplasm in, because there were three more kids to come.

During the first two pregnancies, Rose had reduced her involvement with Spiritualism, but when her first-born was ten months old, they moved to Lancashire and Rose joined a local circle, her development and learning continuing:

I sat in several circles, a materialization circle as well as a trumpet circle and a development circle. I was really intrigued with materialization. Police would inspect the room and everything when Jimmy (the medium) was being tested. The best materializations were when he was being tested. Jimmy was tied down in the chair with a whole bunch of different knots and ropes wound all around him. One person sat on each side of him with their legs touching his. He had no shirt on, only trousers, no shoes or sox. The door was locked from the inside. At the end of the circle, there was banging at the door, and when it was opened, it was Jimmy, outside in the rain, half-dressed and soaked. He had been dematerialized and rematerialized outside the building. All the ropes were still tied to the chair, and the people testing him hadn't felt a thing!

Rose was hoping for a materialization of her father, but in eight years of sitting in the circle, he failed to materialize.

But a young man who was a Catholic came to the church. He lived with his seventy year old parents, looking after them. He sat for six months and had everything - psychic art, materializations, transfigurations, everything. My father came

through in the first materialization circle, and in the first trumpet circle. I asked him why it took eight years for him to materialize, and he said that he needed the right person to come through, that Jimmy wasn't quite right and that Joe's ectoplasm was like silk. Another time Father and his brother both came through.

She remained at "Jimmy's church" another four years, before moving to Canada with her husband and children. She records some unusual experiences around this move:

About eight years before we came to Canada, the guides told me that we'd be moving to Canada. I said there was no way I'd go to Canada, but they said yes, and that we'd be near where Golden Cross (an Indian spirit guide) is from - Harrison. Ned eventually applied for a job in South Africa, and it came through. Then the embargo troubles began and no immigrants were being taken, so we couldn't go. Three weeks later, the Canadian Embassy wrote us, though we hadn't applied there. But Ned said, "Spirit must have a reason, so let's go." Ned used to like to ask me, "What do the spooks have to say?" But he was developing as a healer, and doing some clairvoyance.

Adjustment to a new country, a different culture, and even a new kind of Spiritualism was difficult:

There were lots of times when I said something must be wrong, it's too difficult. I got fed up with the churches, there was too much jealousy on the part of other workers.

The family first lived in Brandon, Manitoba, where there were no Spiritualist churches. Although there were some in Winnipeg, they did not visit them.

After the first year in Canada, the family moved to British Columbia, and Rose went to work as a nurses' aid.

A year later we came to B.C. I was very disillusioned with Canada, with the materialistic people. It bothered me very much. It's really only in the last two years that I accepted we'd be staying here.

Rose became pregnant again, and this next child was still-born:

I hemorrhaged from four and a half months on, and I was in and out of the hospital til the eighth month. Then finally I was two days in labor. I told the nurse it would be a boy and that it wouldn't live.

Rose still could not understand why there had been so many difficulties in this new country and with her pregnancies:

I was angry at spirit. I could have adopted a baby, but I decided that would have been for me, not for the child's sake. So I didn't do it. The guides told me that he was a high soul who wanted the connection but didn't want to remain on the earth plane. I couldn't understand why they didn't at least bring him for me to see (clairvoyantly). I knew the child wouldn't remain, but I couldn't accept this physically.

Later, another medium told her that in seven years she would be doing platform work and be very happy, and that she would 'see' the still-born child when she had physically let him go - that is, when she had released her emotional attachment.

Three days later I saw him. And exactly seven years to the month, E.M. opened her church. I was working at the hospital at that time, but got to church occasionally.

During that seven years, two other pregnancies were carried to term with no problems, and her spiritual work continued, the rest of her guides making themselves known to her.

I took the service one Sunday when — took off, and E. was upset. I went into trance and did the service. Ned helped in the healing room for a couple of weeks, then he said that E. needed me in the healing as well. So I went, and my Japanese doctor came through. Then Simba, my witch-doctor, and even a veterinary came through. But I still know nothing about healing, though I do it occasionally when I'm impressed to do so.

Rose continued to serve this new church for five years, then moved onto other churches, including one in Washington, as well as to the Spiritualist 'camp' in Washington. Her awareness of jealousy amongst mediums precluded her staying with any particular church (cf. Macklin, 1977). She was ordained and certificated through the second church she consistently served, but had not received marriage rights before the church was disenfranchised from the local governing body. Accordingly, she would require re-ordination through

that body in order to receive marriage rights. Rose continues to serve the various local churches and societies, and to enjoy a growing reputation for the quality of her work and private readings.

Case Number Two:

Mary McL, L.M

Mary is a Licentiate Minister, the final step before ordination in a process that takes at least two years. The middle child of six, she has four sisters and one brother, he being the youngest. At fifty-one, Mary is a warm and affectionate woman, whose caring nature is very quickly perceived by anyone who meets her. Quiet but witty, Mary has only recently remarried, for the second time, after many years.

The daughter of a motor mechanic who "had apprenticed on the Clyde, and was very proud of the fact that he had helped put in the engines of 'The Hood'", Mary was born in Birmingham, England, and raised during the Depression.

We had a good but strict upbringing. Even though my father always worked, we never had a lot of money. We always had hand-me-down clothes. With six kids, it was a struggle in the 'thirties.

The situation was such that all "the kids left school at fourteen to go to work. Of course, you start school at four in England."

We certainly knew hard times. I remember having "Daily Mail" shoes, supplied by the local Council. I was born in 1929, and we were all born close together. There's only five years difference. The first got best dressed.

Mary's mother belonged to the Church of England, and her father was Scottish Presbyterian. All the children went to Sunday school. Though the father was quiet and strict, the children "had a happy childhood" and both parents were very loving:

We weren't allowed to talk at the table during meals, and up until I was seventeen, I had to be in at 10:00 pm. at the latest. Actually we were lucky to have had a strict father. We had the basic teachings and were a very loving and close family, very helpful to one another and to others. We got along well. We had to be together, three or four to a bed. We slept in the cellar during most of the war, but we learned to give. I wouldn't like to go through it again. We were luckier than the kids of today - we had more to be thankful for: we appreciated things as luxuries that are taken for granted today. Father also had a bad sinus condition, and got terrible headaches. Because of them, he had an eye that twitched a great deal, and they eventually had to paralyze a nerve in his neck to stop the twitching. But looking back on it, I'm glad we had the upbringing that we did. And with five girls, all close in age, and the war-time conditions with soldiers everywhere, we never gave him any trouble. But he was brought up strict, too, in the Highlands' tradition.

In 1949, Mary joined the R.A.F. and served for three and a half years as a Radio-Telephone Directions Finder officer. It was while in the R.A.F. that she met her first husband, who was a radio mechanic in the Signals Corps. They were married in 1953. Later, they left the R.A.F. and moved to Manchester, where he was employed as a draughtsman. Together they bought a Green Grocery and Fish Shop.

- It was four years of very hard work. We started at 5:00 am. every morning to get the produce, and then he went to work and I ran the shop.

It was illness and disability that contributed to Mary's interest in Spiritualism:

When I was working in the shop one day, I slipped a disc in my back. I spent three weeks in the hospital, then four months in bed. Then I was given a corset with steel straps that I was supposed to wear forever. We sold the shop and moved to Blackpool, where I worked as a switchboard operator at the Blackpool Hotel. He went on the buses as a 'clippie', a ticket retriever, and I got clipped! He met a lady clippie, and we were finally divorced in 1966.

When they had been not long married and living in Manchester, they went to a Spiritualist church, initially "for a laugh". But the laugh turned out to be more serious than they had expected:

We got interested in the philosophy, and more so in healing. Then when we moved to Blackpool, we went to a church there. But it wasn't until the divorce, when I went to live with two very fine healers that I got more involved. They had letters from the cancer clinic in regard to people whom they had healed. He was a Councillor for the municipality, and they owned what would be called over here a 'Do It Yourself Shop'. I worked in the shop and lived in their home. I had a healing every week, and within six months I could really say I had no pain in my back. I removed that corset and I've never worn it since. So I was interested in healing.

The couple with whom she lived in Wales for just over a year were mediums as well as healers, and Mary sat in a circle with them and others. "It's just been the only religion since." Mary left Wales after her divorce was finalized in August of 1966, and in November she emigrated to Canada, coming to Richmond, B.C., to join her sisters. She soon sought out a Spiritualist church, and eventually came to sit in a circle run by a woman who had been on one of the local governing bodies of Spiritualist churches, and who had been a medium of some reputation in England herself before coming to Canada.

Until her recent marriage, Mary had worked mainly for wholesale lumber dealers doing office and clerical work, but since her marriage has given up her work to remain at home. Her husband is an active Spiritualist himself, and a healer. Mary herself is a co-pastor of a church, though she serves other churches as well.

While she has been doing trance speaking for some years now, it has only been in the last two years that she has been demonstrating clairvoyance on church platforms as well. Unlike Rev. Rose, Mary, does not claim to have had childhood psychic experiences. Indeed, her involvement with Spiritualism began at a time of happiness and fulness of life, though it was reinforced later by disability and stress, especially domestic stress. It has never been a 'full-time career' for her, though it has shaped the course of her life.

Case Number Three:

Diana T.

Vivacious, auburn-haired Diana T. is thirty-four, tall and attractive. She is a clairvoyant, a trance speaker, and a rescue medium. Born in Port Moody, B.C., she is the younger of two children, her brother being eighteen months older than her. Her mother was a psychiatric nurse, and her father, frequently absent during her first year, was a merchant seaman, aboard the ship of which his father was captain. After the birth of his two children, the father took employment ashore, in a smelter.

My mother was a psychiatric nurse, although she didn't work when the children were born. When I was six or seven, she went back to work because my father had injured his back and couldn't work for a while. But even when he went back to work, she continued to work.

Diana followed her mother's occupation, and has been a psychiatric nurse (RPN) in the same institution for fifteen years:

I remember I always wanted to be a psychiatric nurse, from four or five years old. Maybe it was from

seeing my mother in her uniform, and seeing her in the hospital. I don't know why, but I never changed my mind. I'm just as happy today doing it as when I began.

In fact, Diana is hoping to avoid future promotions as such would remove her from the contact with both patients and staff which she now enjoys as a Charge Nurse. Her upbringing she describes as family-oriented:

Jack and I typically fought a lot, like most brothers and sisters, but when it came to someone else, we always stood up for one another. We didn't have a great deal of money, even though both parents were working, but they provided a good home for us. My father was extremely family-oriented. I remember thirty and forty relatives at Christmas, and lots of family picnics at my grandparents' on weekends.

Her high school experience was "a relatively sane time", although she was "very shy and exceptionally sensitive, til people got to know me."

I was never athletic and never will be, but I had a lot of other interests. Everyone used to say I seemed older than I was, but I was always written up in the yearbook as the one with the best sense of humour. The only scheduled activity I got into in high school was the nursing club, and I was president a couple of years. I never wanted to do general nursing, though, always psychiatric.

Both parents were compassionate and caring people. Her father befriended a local resident who suffered from a grotesquely disfiguring condition and concordant speech defect, in the face of opposition from neighbours who were petitioning to have him removed from the neighbourhood.

My mother later worked at Woodlands (for the mentally retarded) and she made sure we were very understanding of all kinds of people, especially people with problems.

Upon graduation from high school, Diana went briefly to work as a hair-dresser, "just to fill in the time" until she became old enough to start training in psychiatric nursing, and it is only after fifteen years of psychiatric nursing that now she is considering, at least, some other kind of nursing:

I've never considered leaving the hospital or going into some other kind of nursing, til the last year or so, when I've been thinking I might like to work in a burn unit or cancer unit. I was promoted quickly. I was quite young to be a Charge Nurse. I guess people watched me grow up there, in the hospital.

Her commitment to a career was such that she long rejected the thought of marriage:

I never really wanted to get married, I was too committed to my job. I went out with a lot of guys, usually for a long time until they started mentioning marriage. I was about twenty-seven when I reached the point where I started to think about marriage. I had accomplished a lot of the things I had wanted to do. The year I was married I was promoted to Charge Nurse, so that was quite a year for me.

Diana's childhood was not particularly troubled with illness but one traumatic experience led to her first psychic experience, although it was many years later before she "realized the significance" of it.

The traumatic incident was one of sexual molestation by a neighbour:

When I was about eight years old, give or take a year, I was molested by a 'dirty old man' next door. After that I was quite apprehensive of men for quite a while, even of my father. I became afraid of the dark, and always wanted the light on and my bed in the corner against the wall, facing the door. I was in my teens before I lost my fear of the dark and moved my bed out from the wall. I used to 'see' an Indian in the room at night. I told my mother, and she said it was my imagination of course, so it eventually stopped happening.

As a maturing adult, she was aware of a growing sensitivity, beyond that which she normally experienced, and with it a 'sense of protection'. For example,

I always used to know when someone was crying or stressed on the ward, and I knew when to go down the hall just at the right time. People used to wonder how I knew where to go. I never had any fears either. Even driving my car I never thought anything would happen to me. But I never put it down to me being psychic or 'having protection' or anything.

Then I worked on a locked ward with acting-out patients. One night I remember a patient came up from behind me, I didn't hear him but I knew he was coming. He attacked me and got me down onto the floor. There were no staff near by anywhere. He was a lot stronger than me, but somehow I managed to get out from under him and even dragged him by the hands into a day-room, where I could call for help.

Religion had been important in her Background, a mixture partly of Roman Catholicism and partly of Baptist "hell - fire and damnation": "my mother was a Catholic and my father a Baptist. She said she'd raise the kids in which ever church was the closest, and it happened to be the Baptist church.

You had to pray at night, on your hands and knees."

As a young adolescent, Diana was involved for some time in the religious atmosphere:

I was president of the Young People's group. The kids used to say I'd be a missionary. Then I met a medical missionary who was over from India, and I thought I could go and do both things - nursing and missionary work. I used to get used to bring up other young people 'for Jesus'. They used to say to me, "Perhaps if you came up first, that would be an incentive to the other young people."

But she was already questioning the belief system:

I'd get up there and be shaking, because something inside me kept saying, 'this is such a lie.'

Diana's observations of the people in her family and of others for whom she cared made her realize that, according to the doctrines which she had been taught, they were all in danger of 'hell-fire':

I realized one day my parents, because of their life, would be going to hell, and that didn't make sense, just because they didn't go to church. They were the warmest, most loving people I knew. My mother was everybody's mother. And I idolized my grandfather because he was so like my father. The thought of him going to hell too didn't make any sense to me.

Thus her attachment to fundamentalist Christianity was left behind, along with her fear of the dark and apprehensiveness of men.

Diana was thirty when she finally married, and she had known from the first time she met her husband-to-be that she would eventually marry him.

The minute I saw Rick I knew I was going to marry him. I wasn't even going out with him for a long time. We just used to talk at first, but I knew at some point I'd marry him.

Her husband is also a psychiatric nurse.

It was a friend who introduced Diana to Spiritualism, and her progress as a medium took the usual course of development.

I used to think how marvellous it would be to do that. (mediumship) Now look at me. What happened?

Case Number Four:

The Rev. Cynthia B.

At forty-one, the Rev. Cynthia B. combines a career as a Spiritualist minister with being a mother, housewife, psychic reader and co-teacher of a college parapsychology course. In addition, tiny, petite Cynthia lectures locally and is currently writing a book for children. She hopes eventually to write a book on mediumship, unless her university degree program, which she is just beginning, becomes too demanding.

An only child, Cynthia was born in England, where her father was a 'master builder' who had entered the trade at fourteen. She recalls some family history:

My father's mother died when he was four, and his father remarried a very cruel, nasty woman, who was very cruel to her step-children. Then his father started to drink, but eventually he got wise and kicked her out. Then, because he felt

unable to bring up the kids himself, he put them out into 'homes', which in those days were pretty bad. . . Mother's father was a disciplinarian, but mother was very gentle. She had a confrontation with her father when she was a teenager, and, shall we say, communication was quite poor for a while.

They considered my father beneath my mother in social class, and you know how class conscious they are in England. But eventually they came around. There were seven children in my mother's family, so she often used to run the house. She was always helpful, always loving. And she was intelligent, you know, she had been a good student.

Now my Dad is an inventor, and he's enjoying himself, putting patents on all kinds of things. He's very clever, with the most magnificent ideas.

They were both very supportive of me.

As a child, she says, "the expectations were to be very lady-like". While her grandfather was very 'Victorian', her mother allowed her more freedom than she had herself as a child. And there was psychic ability in the family.

My mother was quite psychic, so my father was open-minded about such things. Mother didn't particularly want anything to do with it, however. And my grandmother was also quite psychic, but she was scared of it. My father went to work in South Africa, and we all followed. That was our first connection with Spiritualism. Mother went to a Spiritualist church in Durban, and she got a message from her grandmother. I had 'seen spirit' myself, so I was very interested: when I was about nine years old, a lady appeared in my bedroom, and frightened me silly. She smiled at me, and showed me her arm, which was - you know, distorted. When I described her to my mother, she said it was her grandmother, who had a misshapen arm.

Cynthia began to experience precognitive visions, which disturbed her:

I started having feelings about things happening, in advance. It always took exactly two days for it to happen, so I'd go through hell for two days, not knowing what to do about it, if it was something unpleasant or negative. Finally I asked for it to be taken away, and it stopped for a year or so. Then it started again, but it was only good things. Often there were times when Mother and I had the same experience at the same time.

As a young adult, one of the precognitive experiences that disturbed her most was connected with her mother's death:

Mother and I sometimes did things deliberately, to experiment. One day we decided to read tea-cups, though we had never tried it before. She gave me her cup, and I 'saw' that she was going to die. I tried swishing it around to change it, but I just kept seeing it. A few days later, we were invited next door when the neighbour was having a Spiritualist medium over to read tea-cups. She told me I could read her cup, but I said no. However, she insisted, so I did it, and she confirmed the things I was picking up. And she told me I'd be a medium myself one day. So I was more upset than ever about seeing my mother's death.

Shortly after that, Cynthia emigrated to Canada, and within her first year in Canada, her mother died.

It was a great loss for me. I lay in bed for several days, feeling sorry for myself and unable to sleep. Then at one point I felt her hands on mine, and I 'heard' her say, "I'm fine. Every thing's all right. Go to sleep." So I did finally go to sleep, and everything was fine. You see, we had arranged to do this, to contact one another, whoever passed first.

She returned to England and discovered that other family members had also seen or felt her mother's spirit presence:

When I was coming down the walk, I felt this 'energy' come rushing out of the house and cuddle me - it was very bizarre - then I realized it was my mother. When I went in, I told my father, who said, "Yes, she's been around a lot." Then I went to my grandmother's, and she told me that one night she had gotten up to go to the bathroom. Now, my aunt, her other daughter, shared the room with her. Granny saw my mother full length, standing in the corner of the room. She shouted to my aunt, who woke in time to see her also, but just as she was fading. Other family members saw her too.

Cynthia married while she was in England, and she and her husband both returned to Canada, where Cynthia gave birth to a daughter. She had not sought out a Spiritualist church in Vancouver, but by a series of interesting coincidences, eventually became involved with the local churches and psychic societies, and began to develop her mediumistic abilities.

Many, many different things had happened before and since. I think having parents who were open-minded helped, because

I wasn't programmed to think it all strange.

She claims that as a child she disliked school:

I hated school from day one to the end. I liked English, drama, history and such. But math or physics- forget it. I wasn't terribly keen at sports, and also didn't enjoy some of the 'games' teachers used to play with some of the kids. I was quite introverted, I guess you'd say, but I had lots of friends, though I still don't make friends easily.

Her hopes for a future career were disturbed by the family's move to South Africa.

When I got to the age of making a decision to stay in school or not, I wanted to go into the salon of —. He was dress-maker to the Queen. But we moved to Africa, and I took business training because there wasn't much else. The blacks did most of the other things, including dress-making. So I went to a business college for two years, and worked as a secretary for an insurance company. When we returned to England, I worked for lawyers, which I enjoyed, because I felt I was doing something helpful.

The desire to be of more help to others prompted Cynthia to choose certain directions in Canada:

When I came back here, I wanted to do something helpful. I worked for a lot of animal societies, then I went to work for doctors, which I've done ever since. But eventually I decided that I couldn't do the psychic work as well as the ministry, so I quit, as my time is quite taken up.

Cynthia's husband is a healer, and well known among Spiritualist groups as a speaker. Often Cynthia and her husband work together on the platform.

Since her school days, Cynthia's interest in science has increased, and she hopes to include work in psychology and the social sciences as part of her degree program.

Case Number Five:Adele G.

Adele G. is also a British medium who has settled in Vancouver. Born in 1920, Adele is stylish and carefully groomed, appearing younger than her years. Her apartment, on a quiet residential street not far from a bustling shopping center, is filled with Egyptian-inspired bric-a-brac and fine old prints.

I like old things. I love history. I suppose being a medium is what gives me such an interest in the past.

She had what she describes as "a happy normal childhood", being the middle child of three sisters, although there "was never a lot of money" especially during the depression:

My father was a first class signalman on the London railway. There was never a lot of money, but we were always fed and clothed. He worked shifts, so he was away a lot, but we always managed to go to the sea during the summer for a family vacation. He was a quiet, sensitive personality. I think I take after him a great deal. He was a very nice man. My mother was very independent. During my teen-age years, there was a little, shall we say, 'cross vibes', with us - I think because I was a sensitive, funny child, whereas my sisters were very out-going. Maybe she didn't understand me. But that passed, because when we all got married, we were all very close.

Adele began school at five years of age, the usual age for beginning school in England, and left at fourteen, partly because of the Depression and a greater need for work, partly because she had failed the exams needed to qualify for continuing education. It was discovered that Adele suffered from curvature of the spine, and as a result, missed a considerable amount of time away from school:

Because of my back, I attended hospital three afternoons a week, for four years, so I missed a lot of schooling. So I didn't take the exams for grammar school.

Upon leaving school at fourteen, Adele had wanted to go into hairdressing, but her parents were unable to afford the training fees. "So I went into the nearest thing, which was wig-making." She stayed at that occupation "three or four years, til I got fed up with it." She then thought she might like nursing, but in order to train for it, it was then necessary for her to leave home.

I wanted to become a nurse - but only lasted a month. I was a very sensitive child and didn't like being away from home. When I came back home, I went to work as a shop assistant, and I took First Aid classes because I was still interested in helping the sick and injured.

The onset of the second World War was to provide her with the opportunity to utilize the first aid training, and became the arena for gathering a knowledge of death and dieing:

With First Aid, I was called into the ambulance service in London. So I drove an ambulance in London all through the war. ...We used to do shifts of twenty-four hours on and the same off, on the ambulance. And we would rest laying on the stretchers.

As the war drew to a close, Adele was able to leave ambulance driving, but the experience proved the opportunity for her next occupation:

In 1944, when the war was ending, we could leave, and I went driving for the New Scotland Yard in London. I was with them for two years. I had gotten married in 1945, and I left Scotland Yard because I was pregnant.

But marriage was to prove a time of trial and difficulty for her:

My husband was from Bristol, so we moved there, and my son was born there. The marriage was wrong right from the beginning. He had been in the Regular Army during the war, in India and Burma. But he turned out to be an alcoholic, so there were years of struggle. He was always in trouble with the police, and finally he served some time as, "a guest of His Majesty". So gradually I realized the marriage was not going to work. I don't know why I hung in at it so long. I suppose it was fear of failure or whatever. I divorced him and went to work for the Post Office in London, where I stayed till not long before I came to Canada.

Prior to her marriage, however, the war had also brought Adele's first interest in Spiritualism, though, like so many other mediums report, she "had been aware of spirit" from a young age.

I was aware of being psychic as a child of three or four years, though of course I didn't understand it. I would see spirit forms and colored lights dazzling on the ceiling. I told my parents but they put it down to dreams or nightmares.

Later, when it was discovered that Adele had curvature of the spine, her visions were attributed to a physical cause and dismissed. But they returned during the war:

We would rest laying on the stretchers. During that period of half asleep, half awake, I was aware of this figure standing beside me, and this light glowing around it. It happened three times, on three separate nights and it scared me. At first I said, "go away!", but by the third night I was not afraid. I heard a voice clearly say, "You will be protected."

It seemed to her that indeed she was protected.

My parent's home was bombed three times, but not with a direct hit. The ambulance station was bombed five or six times, yet I came through the war absolutely unscathed.

Her curiosity was aroused.

During the war there was quite an impact from Spiritualism, I suppose because of the war conditions and so many 'going over'. We used to sit with the glass and boards (Ouija Boards) and got good evidence (of survival). I suppose this was when the real impact on Britain came. I was fascinated and wanted to find out more. So I started going to a little church and after two or three months I joined a development circle.

Adele's development as a medium at first was "spasmodic, in a way," since by then she was "coping with personal problems. So it took a few years, but development was going on." By the end of the war she had begun to "work the circuit" of London Spiritualist churches.

Then I went up to the S.A.G.B. (Spiritualist Assoc. Gt. Btn.) to join a circle with a well known medium. I needed something

else to finalize my training. I sat for three years and really developed, and started to go out to the churches. Then, like everybody else, you're learning gradually and developing self-confidence. And you see changes in yourself. You're accepting more, and having less doubts. You're seeing objectively at times (objective clairvoyance) and you get more proof. You know that there's a rhythm going on.

Some of the experiences of those early days were of sudden healings, and because of one of them, she became aware of a particular guide, a North American Indian, Gray Eagle. "That was the first indication of Gray Eagle. I accept this personality. I have seen him and nobody can take that away from me." Adele has also had thyroid problems. "I have to take thyroxin for the rest of my life. I had a goiter when I was twenty, and had an operation."

In 1970, her son was married, and he and his wife emigrated to Canada. "I thought my world was dropping apart then." Adele visited them in Vancouver in 1973, and served the Vancouver Psychic Society. Later, she was invited by the psychic society to visit Vancouver and serve them again. Finally, she herself emigrated to Canada in 1976. This, too, had been predicted.

Fifteen years ago, Dorothy Smith, a British medium then living in the States, told me I'd go to Canada and America, and appear on TV and radio shows. I thought, 'bunk', but everything came true.

During her adolescence, Adele had become involved in several different churches, going from the Church of England to the Baptist church to Roman Catholicism, but it was finally Spiritualism that held her. "I guess I was seeking something, but I didn't find whatever I was looking for there." It was ultimately her own life and psychic experiences that convinced her of the claims of Spiritualism, which in turn gave personal meaning to her

life:

Most mediums have been through the same pattern of experiences - as most people - finding out the hard way what life's about. But you couldn't work at mediumship without the experience of life and suffering. All those experiences enrich you in the end. Even bitterness goes. Particularly when you've had a happy childhood, you're coping with a condition you know nothing about. It's surprising how you come out of it. And with your development your attitude towards those experiences changes. You have to make your choice, and trust that you'll be looked after.

Case Number Six:

Vincent M.

The youngest of the mediums interviewed, Vincent was born in Vancouver in 1952. Fair-haired and slim, he presents some of the stereotypical features usually attributed to homosexuals, and he is employed in an occupation that is frequently known to employ gay men. As such, then, he falls into the category of "psychologically disadvantaged", according to Lewis' category. However, most homosexuals would probably see themselves as 'socially disadvantaged', but object to being viewed as 'psychologically disadvantaged'. Within the Spiritualist groups in which he moves, Vincent claims that it is generally known that he is a homosexual, but that he is accepted for himself. (Indeed, while it may not be publicly acknowledged by Spiritualists, for obvious reasons, it is not uncommon knowledge amongst Spiritualists that the history of the movement has provided more than one homosexual medium.)

Vincent describes a close family relationship:

I had a good relationship with my parents. The whole family is close, especially on my mother's side of the family. It's run like a matriarchy, though, my grandmother pulls the strings. It's not so close on my father's side, though. Both my parents are extremely sensitive people. My mother is psychic and knows it, and my father is very sensitive. He doesn't trust it though.

Vincent's maternal grandmother, he claims, "is very psychic". He has one sibling, a sister who is younger by a year and a half, married with two children. He describes a close and understanding relationship with her, though it was not always as supportive as it presently is:

My sister is younger by one and a half years. She left home when she was seventeen. I left when I was nineteen. She's probably more mature than I am. There was lots of sibling rivalry, probably encouraged by my parents. I remember being pitted by our parents, one against the other.

Vincent describes his family background as "working class", with a rural farming background on the mother's side.

My father got as far as grade nine or ten, but my mother finished high school. My father lacks confidence in his intelligence, he's probably more intelligent than he thinks he is. He's a truck driver. My mother used to be a key-punch operator, usually in supervisory positions or some kind of responsibility.

As a child, he was "extremely sensitive", and had "too strong a tie" with his mother, which included "too much over-protection". His father "was there, but I don't think he had a lot of affect on my life. I was probably a day-dreamer, living in another world." As for peer relationships, Vincent states that, "I've never really had a lot of friends. I don't think that's changed much. Most of the kids I played with were pretty much the same kind of nature."

Although he finished high school, Vincent feels that he could have done better academically:

Maybe my overshyness contributed to not having grades as good as I could have. I didn't ask questions and I didn't have much confidence. I ended up being steered into a commercial program because I can't do math. And anyone who couldn't do math got steered that way.

Music was important in the family, although Vincent feels he was a disappointment in this respect:

My parents wanted musical kids. My mother plays the piano and my father plays the horn. My grandfather plays practically anything. So I had to learn the clarinet and the hand-organ. They expected some kind of musical accomplishment so I did some. My father sings Barber Shop Quartet, and we were always taken to various concerts. My parents hoped I'd be a tenor, because my father sings baritone, and they hoped we could have a family quartet with three generations, because my grandfather sings too.

His work history has been varied, starting with clerical work, then hair-dressing.

I couldn't handle the chemicals. I broke out in blisters. Then I went back to my job with the government, filing and running from one office to another. Then I worked for another department but I didn't like that for long. . . . I don't know how many professions I'll go through before I croak! Something I want to do is become an airline steward for a few years, then maybe a jeweller. I'm taking courses in it right now, but the business is kind of suppressed because of the economic situation. At one point I had some friends who were trying to get me to go to college, but it seems foolish unless I had something definite in mind, something practical. But I wouldn't mind taking Religious Studies.

Vincent's exposure to religion in his early life was liberal and non-dogmatic, though part of his family was involved in Spiritualism, and he was aware of religious conflict.

My father is an agnostic, my mother's an atheist. Susan and I were brought up in the Unitarian church, so we were brought up to know a lot about other religions. My mother is interested in comparative religion and that's had an influence on me. Father doesn't like to talk about his beliefs, but my mother does. My mother's family is either agnostic or atheist, and my father's family are Baptist. Quite a combination! Now, my grandfather's sister and brother-in-law are Spiritualists. And there was a Protestant-Catholic split back away in the family, and in an Irish family that can be disastrous. There were constant problems because of the two religious views. But the odd thing is, no matter how far back on my father's side they trace, there's Spiritualists or healers or psychics of some sort. Even something that's quite bizarre - my family is quite old and goes back to some Celtic king. There's a

family curse which supposedly is very powerful. And there's been violent deaths and all sorts of very unpleasant things.

As a child, Vincent had experienced precognitive dreams, but it was only as an adolescent that he became involved in psychic phenomena and the development of mediumship.

Mother never encouraged my involvement with Spiritualism, but it came about anyway. One of my cousins had predicted that I would be the next medium in the family. . . An uncle who is not a blood relative but who is a Spiritualist predicted a lot of things about my life, including my being gay. My cousin also predicted a lot of things.

His first formal exposure to psychic phenomena was through a local psychic society:

I saw an ad for the V.P.S. and went to one of their meetings. I was seventeen when I started with them. I sat in my first circle with them. They had a lot of hopes for me, but I got discouraged for various reasons, but that was where I got my first training and exposure to Spiritualist ideas. It was the -- (two mediums) who got me going to the churches.

When Vincent was between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, the family experienced poltergeist activity in the house.

When the house was first being built, we were living in the basement while it was being finished. We would hear someone walk up the front stairs, open the front door and slam it, walk down the hall and into the livingroom. This happened at 5:00 pm. almost everyday, for about three or four months, until the house was finished. Of course, there was never anyone there, at least not physically. Then when the house was finished and we moved upstairs, the basement door would slam and we'd hear the flick of the lightswitch, and no one was there. Or, between 6:00 and 6:30 pm., quite regularly, we'd hear footsteps coming up the back stairs, but never going down. We tried to catch someone, but there was never anyone there. Once Susan and I finished adolescence, it stopped.

NOTES

* Chapter Four

1. Although Rev. Rose had not been known to me personally before the start of this field work, by the time I taped the first trance performance of this medium, I had already taped several hours of interviews with her, and had, accordingly, some familiarity with her speech patterns and habits. Throughout the field work, I taped several more hours of trance performances, which were usually preceded by a period of relaxed conversation, also taped.

2. When I say that various personalities assert themselves, it should be noted that this is an impression, and one that is open to interpretation. Ultimately it is impossible to verify what is the exact nature of these transformations. The Spiritualist explanation is that they are the personalities of the spirit guides 'over shadowing' the personality of the medium. The concept of 'multiple personalities' has also been used to explain such transformations, but it would appear that this explanation can be explained as much or as little in a logical positivist manner as the Spiritualist explanation. While there appear to be differences between Rose's 'normal' personality and those of her trance personalities, the differences are not complete. The Spiritualist explanation for this is that because of the Law of Attraction - Like Attracts Like - the spirits drawn to a medium will have some features in common with the medium. Bourguignon invokes the idea of compensation to explain these personality differences. Compensation is an ego-defence mechanism, wherein the ego compensates for personality defects by developing other areas of the personality. This is not necessarily an unhealthy mechanism, but it seems to me that it is invoked out of context and in -again- an unverifiable manner. What Bourguignon is saying is that social 'defects' are compensated for by psychological mechanisms in creating 'pseudo' personalities. However, one way a therapist may look for signs of compensation is in terms of the individual's functioning in regard to social norms and expectations. It would appear from the interviews here that the six mediums 'function' reasonably well in general terms, being employed, or involved in on-going relationships, raising children and so forth. It is difficult, therefore, to see them as compensating, but likewise it is not possible to say that this has not occurred. It seems to me that each explanation above is as plausible as any other, given one's perspective and belief system.

3. Fees for mediumistic consultations vary somewhat, the average being about \$25.00, though some may charge as much as \$40.00. One reason that Rev. Rose charges less, she says, is that people must drive a considerable distance for a consultation with her, which increases the cost to the client.

CHAPTER FIVE
Analysis and Conclusions

Thus we have a certain amount of raw data in the form of brief biographies of six mediums, all of whom do trance control mediumship. The data are not large, but a review of the biographies suggests a number of features in common, features which, as we shall see, are relevant for the anthropological models for spirit possession, particularly in regard to Lewis' model. Perhaps the most striking feature of the biographies is the element of stress, appearing in various forms, that runs as a kind of sub-theme throughout the very diverse personal histories. In reviewing the biographies, three main forms of stress can be perceived: socio-economic stress (Cases 1,2 and 5) resulting from the Depression, war-time conditions, or personal factors such as re-location due to employment; religious differences (Cases 1,3 and 6); and general psychological stress in various forms such as trauma (Case 3) and parental expectations (Cases 4 and 6). These forms

of stress may be over-lapping, and one or more forms may be found in any particular biography.

Illness may be seen as a form of stress as well, as in Case 1 (pregnancies), Case 2 (back injury), and Case 5 (spinal curvature). Domestic strife is seen in Cases 2 and 5, and we might group stress from illness as well as domestic strife under the heading of general psychological stress.

For Lewis, illness or trauma is seen as the precipitating factor in the induction process for both central and peripheral cults, but usually in the form of domestic strife in regard to the peripheral cults. One might be tempted to view the three forms of stress seen in the biographies above as variants on a theme of domestic strife, since they are mainly focused within the family. Thus, they would have relevance for peripheral possession cults. However, Lewis' model for peripheral possession cults applies to the husband and wife, particularly to the wife, since it is she who will become possessed. His model does not include effects on the children. Yet in the cases of the mediums interviewed here, we are, in fact, concerned with the effects of stress or domestic strife in some form on the children: the mediums themselves. The exception to this is Cases 2 and 5, where domestic strife occurred when the mediums were adults. Yet in both 2 and 5, there was a contact with Spiritualism prior to the period of domestic strife. Thus at this stage of analysis it is difficult to directly connect the three forms of stress to the development of mediumship and to the model.

However, we may be able to isolate two other important stress factors: bereavement, which seems to be an important factor in the induction of adherents to Spiritualism, as discussed further below; and anomolous early psychic experiences. Bereavement emerges as a clear factor in Cases 1 and 4; and five of the six mediums all reported early psychic experiences.

In all cases, recognition of mediumistic ability was made early in the contact with Spiritualism, by a recognized and established medium.

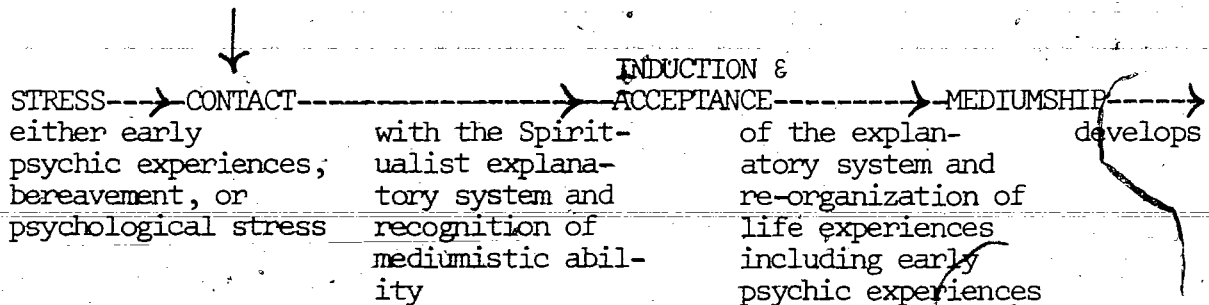
At the time of these early psychic experiences, however, the background of the mediums did not include any cultural referents for the understanding or explanation of these experiences. Generally the parents attributed them to the imagination of the young medium. Case 6 is a possible exception to this, where there was a history of contact with Spiritualism at least in the wider family, and Case 4 presents a more open minded attitude towards such experiences on the part of the parents. While it may be argued that a child would not necessarily have a felt need to explain such experiences in order to integrate them into a meaningful whole in relation to the overall life experiences, such a need would probably manifest itself in adulthood. What is important here is that later in life, the individuals concerned eventually accepted the explanatory system of Spiritualism, and began the active development of mediumship. We may reasonably speculate that, at the time of the acceptance of the Spiritualist explanatory system, the previously anomalous early psychic experiences were assimilated into that system, and accordingly the overall life experiences began to be re-organized into a meaningful whole.

To return to the model for possession, we see that, in either main or peripheral cults, the process of development of shamanism or mediumship occurs in a series of forward moving phases, which we might simplify as follows:

TRAUMA/illness → DIAGNOSIS of possession → INDUCTION & ACCEPTANCE of role → SHAMANISM

What is being articulated here, then, is a similar sequential series of steps leading to the development of the Spiritualistic shamanism, mediumship.

In the case of Spiritualist mediums, the recognition by established mediums of the individual's own ability, may be likened or equivalent to, the diagnosis of spirit possession in other cultures. We may then outline this series of steps in a forward going process as follows:



Obviously, then, in both cases - of shamanistic induction and that of Spiritualist induction - the process is essentially the same. Yet we have not answered the question as to whether this Spiritualist induction process is one of main or peripheral cults. As it stands, the hypothesis as to the induction into Spiritualist mediumship, which appears to apply to at least some mediums (further testing would be useful), allows us a continuing relationship to the main anthropological model. Stress or trauma is now seen in a broader perspective, and the acceptance of the explanatory system is seen perhaps more clearly. As well, for those individuals involved, the hypothesis does not invalidate, nor does it validate, the actual experiences in question; that is to say, it makes no value judgements - it merely articulates the process of induction, while tying it to the anthropological model. A closer look at the biographies in terms of the model is perhaps called for here.

Case number 1 is illustrative of point 4, Table 2 (p.19):

"mastery over spirits occurs, followed by husband's acceptance and group acceptance." In this case, Rev. Rose's husband began as skeptical of his wife's involvement in Spiritualism, but as her mediumship developed, he not only came to accept it but continued to be fully inducted himself. As well, in Case 1 we find reports of early psychic experience followed by bereavement.

Case number 2 illustrates more clearly a possible relationship between illness and mediumship. In this case, the medium was affected as a young adult by chronic back problems, necessitating the use of a support. Spiritual healing, according to her testimony, resulted in her being able to live without the support and without the pain she had known. This experience re-inforced her acceptance of the Spiritualist position, and her exposure to healers who were also mediums undoubtedly contributed to her own development of mediumship. As well, we see in this case domestic strife, which a contact with Spiritualism helped to resolve.

Trauma seems to have played a part in Case 3, followed by early psychic experiences and fears resulting from the trauma. Religious conflict also played an important part in the development of this medium. At present, her husband, who began as a skeptic, is becoming more interested in mediumship and the Spiritualist explanatory system.

A combination of early psychic experiences, stress from parental expectations, and bereavement seem to be important in Case 4. An open minded attitude toward otherwise anomalous experience may have helped as well.

Economic and domestic stress were both factors in Case 5, and the stress of war time conditions brought early psychic experiences.

In Case 6, we find stress in the form of parental expectations and possibly sibling rivalry. As well, we find religious differences and early psychic experiences, along with early contact with Spiritualism. This medium would apparently fit Lewis' category of 'psychologically disadvantaged' (Table 3, section 2, Peripheral cults), since Lewis specifically mentions homosexuality as illustrative of psychological disadvantage. However, it is not clear in what way Lewis perceives homosexuality to be psychologically disadvantaging, since attitudes toward, and even concepts of, homosexuality vary so much from society to society. (cf. Tripp, 1972) A same-sex orientation is not ipso facto a 'psychological disadvantage'. What the present study seems to indicate is that, as would be expected in the society at large where one finds a percentage of homosexuals in all social categories, it stands to reason that some mediums will be homosexual.¹

The sample of mediums in this study could have included other men and women who are publicly known as mediums, but not necessarily as trance control mediums, with whom this paper is concerned. Of the six mediums interviewed, only one (Case 5) is a full-time professional medium, earning a living from her mediumship. All the others are either fully employed (3,6) or partly employed (4) or at home as housewives but having been fully employed in the past, after the development of mediumship. Case 1 and 4 supplement family income from private readings. Cases 2,3 and 6 do not usually do private readings, but may do so, under various conditions, without charge. Mediumship of the Spiritualist nature can, then, be a full time alternate life career, but such will be true for only a few. For those who so choose, a full time career, as with the shamans of central cults, may enhance self-image and material situation through professional service to others. As well, for all involved, induction into Spiritualism and the development of medium-

ship aided, apparently, in the resolution of personal conflict or domestic strife, as well as having increased their intrapsychic integration by the assimilation of anomalous early psychic experience into a meaningful explanatory system. From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that Spiritualist mediums, as individuals, undergoing a process of induction into mediumship, evince characteristics similar to those who are inducted into central cults as well as to those who are inducted into peripheral possession cults. It remains, then, to consider how Spiritualism as a movement fits into the anthropological model for possession cults.

) Macklin (op.cit.) considers Spiritualism to be a cult of the peripheral type, as according to Lewis' model. Clearly, it is not a main morality cult, the main morality tradition of Euro-American society continuing to be tied to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, if only in some secularized version. Spiritualism counts among its members both individuals and churches who call themselves Christian Spiritualists, preferring to identify, if only partially, with the Judaeo-Christian tradition. (cf. Nelson and Zaretsky, passim) While a number of the features of peripheral cults are found to be true of Spiritualism, a number of other features are more appropriate to main or central cults.

Amongst Spiritualists, the number of female mediums in comparison to male mediums, as well as a slightly higher proportion of women to men in the general membership, would tend to indicate the dominance of women, typical of peripheral cults. Yet the differences in over-all numbers of men and women might be typical of most church attendance at present time. Table 5 indicates that -in the Church of the Spirits at least- there are twice as many female mediums and speakers as male platform workers.

As the personal histories have shown, illness and trauma may or

may not play an important part in the development of mediumship. Typically, while there may have been early psychic experiences, it was only after exposure to some form of Spiritualism that such experiences were incorporated into a meaningful gestalt, and the development of mediumship begun. Recognition of potential ability by established mediums undoubtedly aided in the induction process, yet, as Macklin noted, such recognition is common in Spiritualist services, while obviously the bulk of those so recognized do not develop mediumship.

More importantly, Spiritualism has never drawn its membership entirely from 'socially ~~dis~~advantaged' segments of society, as its history shows. The composition of the membership of the Church of the Spirits testifies to the diverse nature of the membership, while Nelson argues, in relation to British Spiritualism, that "Spiritualism was never a sect of the socially disinherited" (p.220) and that "membership ... has always been socially mixed in class terms, though the majority appear to be members of the lower middle and artisan classes." (p.266) Nelson finds that forms of deprivation other than social deprivation are more important in the motives for membership in Spiritualism, and in particular three forms of 'deprivation' or 'disadvantage' seem to be found: the desire for comfort after bereavement; curiosity about the after-life; and reassurance of personal survival of death. He argues that these three motives are not class-determined, and that Spiritualism has recruited members from all social classes. (p.220) Here, in contrast to Lewis, Nelson's concept of deprivation seems clearer and less bound up in possible cultural factors.

Nelson further discusses and clarifies the concept of deprivation, maintaining that the majority of the members are drawn to Spiritualism because they seek an alternate set of ethical values to guide the way they organize their lives, since, having rejected the ethical values of the larger society to some extent at least, they feel deprived of a set of ethical values. My own observations and discussions with Spiritualists in Vancouver and Montreal are in agreement here with Nelson. It would appear that few members have been raised as Spiritualists, whereas the majority had been raised in some other, more orthodox religion which they had rejected, usually at some period prior to contacting Spiritualism. Some had actively sought an alternative belief system, some wanted 'knowledge' rather than faith, and some had merely stumbled upon Spiritualism by chance. (One medium (not interviewed here) who had been raised a Catholic and had become an atheist, had his first contact with Spiritualism in a pub where a developing medium whom he happened to meet gave him a spontaneous 'private reading', thus piquing his curiosity.

The main appeal of Spiritualism, according to Nelson, is for those suffering a particular form of deprivation, "psychic deprivation... a condition in which an individual feels that life and the universe has no meaning..." (p.266). But psychic deprivation, in turn, may be derived or resultant from "the death of a close relative, or more rarely, of a friend." (Ibid.) Indeed, he argues, "The loss of a close personal associate (through death) is probably the most common stimulus to membership of the Spiritualist movement, but the problem of death as an abstract concept may also stimulate an interest in the study and investigation of psychic phenomena, and lead to membership in the Spiritualist movement." (Ibid.)

Of the six mediums interviewed, it is apparent that the backgrounds of all six are either working class or lower middle class, and formal education reflects the socio-economic background.³ This observation is in keeping with Nelson's observation of the present membership of the Spiritualist movement in Britain being from lower middle and working classes. There are, of course, exceptions.

Macklin claims that, in keeping with Lewis' model of peripheral cults,

spirit guides who direct Spiritualist mediums fall into the category that I.M.Lewis (1970,1971) has termed 'peripheral': they are not "morally charged powers held to be responsible for upholding public morality" (1970, p.204). Many are representatives of societies and cultures alien to that of the medium and her clients. They even may be frivolous and a little silly. As is true of the spirits found in the diverse areas from which Lewis (1970) draws his data, our spirits regularly expressed a "marked predilection. . .for women in general, and . . . for certain depressed and despised categories of men" (1970, p.294).

A number of considerations in this matter should, however, be noted, as the situation in regard to spiritguides may not be quite so simple. One of the "Natural Laws" so frequently referred to by Spiritualists is that of "The Law of Attraction" which states that "Like attracts like". This means, according to Spiritualists, that mediums attract spirit guides who are reflective in some way of themselves. Thus, mediums who do not espouse reincarnation will be found to have spirit guides who likewise do not espouse reincarnation, and vice-versa for those inclined to the idea. This emic explanation makes perfectly good sense sociologically and psychologically: that which is projected (through mediumship) reflects that which is 'within' one's own personality and background. If those who join the Spiritualist movement are

"psychically deprived" or "ethically deprived" individuals who have rejected the dominant values of society, it therefore stands to reason that the spirit guides of mediums should reflect that rejection of socially dominant values, and accordingly espouse an alternate value system. Thus, here there is no incompatibility between emic and etic explanations - they both express the same concept. It is not that the spirit guides are 'amoral' - a reading of Spiritualist philosophy confirms the opposite - but rather that their morality is an alternate one.

That many of the 'communications' in Spiritualism are received from 'departed' relatives and friends suggests that these spirits, as separate from the spirit guides, are analogous to the ancestral figures of main or central possession cults. These spirit beings are looked upon with considerable authority, it being felt that, since they have 'passed over', they are more able to gather information and, at times, to foresee future events than those "remaining behind". It is conceded, however, that such may not always be the case, and as a rule of thumb, so to speak, it is advised that a person accept direction from spirit relatives in the same manner he or she would do if that relative were still living "on the earth plane". If it would have been felt that the relative's advice was useful, then the novice is admonished to heed it. But otherwise, the novice adherent is told to consider it thoroughly, that "just because they've passed over, it doesn't mean they know it all." Likewise in similar fashion to the spirits of main morality cults, the spirit guides serve the particular good of individuals through healing, counselling and perhaps even, indirectly, mediation. But they may serve larger groups as well, while the 'philosophy' espoused by the spirit guides is meant, not just for Spiritualists, but for the general good of society, though it be expressed through the vehicle of Spiritualism. While that philosophy may not be that

of the dominant society, it is meant as a helpful alternative to it.

The philosophy of Spiritualism is a received or revelatory one, received through mediumship 'from the other side', ie., through Spiritualist type of psychic phenomena. While on the one hand it stresses the universal and therefore absolute nature of certain experiences (death and the nature of the afterlife), it invariably does so through the language and terminology of the culture in which it rises - it could not do otherwise. "Like attracts like" on a cultural or social level as well as on an individual level. So it is that Nelson hypothesizes:

that the origin of religion is to be found in the experience of genuine psychic phenomena, and that this experience is moulded and shaped by geographical and social forces. The superstructure of religious belief and practice is firmly based on psychic experience, but its form is determined by the influences of the physical and social environment and by the development of autonomous religious institutions. (p.xi)

The biographies of the mediums interviewed herein tend to confirm that this is so, at least for them, with five of the six reporting early psychic experiences.⁴ Later contact with Spiritualism gave form, coherency and meaning in a kind of post-hoc reorganization of life experiences along Spiritualist lines. Thus, for them, Spiritualism provided a meaningful explanatory system for those early psychic experiences and experiences following the development of mediumship.

As Nelson clearly states,

Spiritualism appears in the 19th. century as a religion based almost entirely on what its proponents claim are empirical facts, the facts of psychic phenomena. These facts have indeed been disputed, but the weight of evidence seems to indicate that, at least occasionally, psychic phenomena are quite genuine. In some fields closely related to the phenomena of Spiritualism (namely the field of the study of extra-sensory perception) the existence of certain human mental facilities such as telepathy and psychokinesis have been established if not explained. (Ibid.)

We may ask, then, what is the dominant attitude in 'our' society, ie., the society in which Spiritualism has arisen, toward psychic phenomena? Nelson offers an indication of such attitudes:

Psychic phenomena have been a familiar feature of the legends and folk tales of the human race and are clearly based on certain personal experiences. The explanations of such experiences have varied with the ethos of the place and time and with the orientation of the culture in question. In predominantly settled religious situations these experiences tend to become assimilated to the religious beliefs of the society. In mediaeval Europe they tended to be interpreted as the result of the visitation of angels or devils, and there are numerous accounts of the encounter of saints and holy men with such beings. The Roman Catholic church continues to view psychic experiences this way.⁵

On the other hand a secularized and scientifically based society such as the western world in the later 19th. and 20th. centuries tends to reject such experiences as 'unreal', to view them as a result of illusion or hallucination, and to seek for explanations at the material level in the psychological and biological structure of man. (p.258)

Nelson recognizes that the phenomena of Spiritualism are not unknown in other cultures and at other times, a fact which is often recognized by Spiritualists themselves :

. . . phenomena similar to the Spiritualist manifestations had long been familiar in many parts of the world, and . . . it was only the interpretation put upon such phenomena that was new in the Spiritualist movement so that the interpretation can be said to have spread outwards from Hydesville. (p.6)

Some Spiritualists, however, would maintain that their 'interpretation' is not so new, referring to a passage in St. Paul (1st. Corinthians, 12;v.8ff) wherein he refers to the 'gifts of the spirit' as meaning various 'psychic gifts' such as healing (laying on of hands), clairvoyance (the discerning of spirits) and 'speaking in tongues' or 'prophecy' as being trance control.

Some Spiritualists claim, referring to the writings of St. Irenaeus, that psychic phenomena and mediumship were features of the early Christian church, as was a belief in reincarnation, and that through political factors these features were gradually removed from mainstream Christianity. As well, as mentioned earlier, Spiritualists recognize that the phenomena with which they deal are found in many different cultures and times, and that they have no unique claim to these phenomena. In fact, some would claim that there is ultimately no need for the formal organization of Spiritualism, and that eventually it will phase itself out if and when people come to experience and accept the phenomena and the interpretation of the phenomena. The role of the formal organization is seen as essentially a social one but spiritual in focus, providing a focal point for people who are 'seeking' alternative answers to the orthodox explanations of questions relating to death, dieing and one's purpose in life.

Nelson notes a difference between the Spiritualists' concern for "communication" with the dead, compared to that in 'primitive' society:

In primitive society men are generally more concerned to avoid the spirits than to communicate with them. Their belief in the powers and influence of the dead are often very real, but since they usually attribute misfortune to the envy and malice of the departed, they tend to fear and avoid them rather than to love and seek to communicate with them. Such communication as they undertake is usually only for the propitiation or exorcism.

However, as Lewis' model shows, Nelson's statement is not entirely true, since 'communication' can provide, in similar fashion to that of Spiritualism, advice, counselling, healing and even material gain. The difference is one rather of philosophical input; in other cultures, communication with the dead is generally not sought after for philosophical revelations. This is perhaps the truly unique aspect of Spiritualism, one which is, however, quite

in keeping with the Euro-American society's 'search for meaning' in existential terms. Science itself, initially a product particularly of Euro-American culture, produces 'phenomena' by means of experimentation and in the creation of technological products, while being, for many, a philosophical or belief system creating 'meaning' out of the apparent chaos of the universe. There is thus an over-all analogy between science and Spiritualism, an analogy of which Spiritualism has long been aware (cf. Nelson, p. xi, as quoted above).

Spiritualists would claim, then, that psychic phenomena and mediumship are replicable events, analogous to the phenomena with which science deals, and that just as science elucidates an explanatory (and belief) system to explain these phenomena, so too Spiritualism elucidates a philosophy that is an explanatory system as well as a belief system. The basic premisses of the two systems may be different, but just as scientific theory grows and changes through time, so too does the philosophy of Spiritualism grow and change through on-going revelation. Thus, neither explanatory systems are fixed and rigid, though individuals within them may operate at any given point as though they were fixed and rigid. And as conflicting notions are found in science in regard to the same phenomena, so also one finds conflicting approaches in Spiritualism to various items of belief. In regard to both science and Spiritualism, conflicts may be resolved in time with the availability of new data or the reinterpretation of old data. Science, as a practice, is not available to everyone, yet the results of science may be available to many people. Likewise, for Spiritualists, the practice of mediumship may not be available to everyone, but the results of mediumship are available to those who desire them.

Psychic phenomena are common to human society as are artistic phenomena or criminal behaviour. Like these phenomena, they are not universal to all human beings. Not all men are artists or criminals, but no human society exists that does not include art and criminality among its activities. So no human society exists without some psychic phenomena, though there are certainly individuals in all societies who do not experience such phenomena. The proportion of individuals who experience such phenomena varies considerably from society to society and only rarely is it the case that the majority of individuals within a society have personal experiences of such occurrences. (Nelson, op.cit., p.48)

Macklin, interestingly, finds that the success of the medium with whom she mainly worked was due to the medium's failure as a scientist:

. . .the trancer and her set of assumptions can be regarded as the end products of normal social, cultural and historical processes; therefore she is, like most other Americans, a scientist manque: her faith in science, its methodology and techniques is unlimited. Finally I shall suggest that her success with her many clients accrues precisely from her failure as a scientist: she combines the orderly, predictable, and replicable with the unique, nonrecurrent and individual; through ritual possession she effects the union of the eternal with the temporal. (Macklin, op. cit., p.42)

Although Mrs. M. and her fellow mediums are attempting to emulate the scientific model, and Spiritualist literature constantly cites those same heroes of science to bolster their arguments, perhaps they offer something science cannot. As a medium, she repeatedly emphasises our human uniqueness, allows for the individual case, and urges that we are neither pawns in a huge chess game, nor merely cogs in a great, complex machine, masterminded and manipulated by experts. One can affect his own destiny, and his own acts of will do make a difference. Although Mrs.M. is a technician, she also is an artist; she knows that she was born with a gift and has the authority which accompanies this conviction. (p.75)

In her study, M.J.Field, like Bourguignon, has emphasized the process of dissociation as being the psychological mechanism by which 'possession' operates. She admits the possibility of paranormal phenomena or special abilities in the dissociated state, including precognition and the rapid gathering and processing of information. In this sense, then, there appears to be

no basic incompatibility between her theory and Spiritualist mediumship, except in some details. The people that Field studied apparently used external stimuli such as drums, gongs and 'festival atmosphere' as aids to the production of dissociated states, though this was not necessarily done consciously. Such devices are not found in Spiritualist churches, though, as in most churches, singing and music are used to help create a religious or spiritual atmosphere. At times, singing may be used in seances, though a period of quiet is more common, "to help raise the vibrations." In regard to hypoglycaemia, which Field indicates as a possible factor in producing visions and hallucinations, Spiritualist mediums do not seem to fast or prefer any unusual dietary practices, though some may be vegetarians, that are particularly different from those of the population at large.

Bourguignon's study emphasizes personal and social stress factors, leading, at least in industrial mass society, to alienation and anomie. Altered states of consciousness she sees as employed for "immediate gratification." She also emphasizes the "impersonation of spirits" as providing a decision-making authority. Of the six mediums interviewed, only three (women) are not presently employed full time, and they have been employed for much of the time that they were mediums. Only one makes a living from mediumship. It is difficult to see these individuals as alienated and anomic. While the shared values of this group of mediums may not entirely be those of the mainstream society, in a complex society such as this, that does not that such such individuals and even groups of individuals are at

total variance with mainstream society - rather are those shared values alternative variants from a field of many possibilities.

Like most individuals in this society, the six mediums are limited in their options, lifestyles and careers, but these limitations are not entirely fixed and rigid, but are relative to changeable factors such as education. Bourguignon seems to stress the compensatory aspect of multiple-role playing that is open to mediums, as well as the decision-making aspect. There is little to indicate in the present study that the mediums appeared to be compensating for lack of other opportunities, while yet all would undoubtedly agree that their mediumship was a most valuable and helpful activity for them, as well as for others. While both mediums and their clients may turn to the spirits for assistance, guidance and direction, the philosophy of Spiritualism stresses 'personal responsibility', and it is a commonplace saying in Spiritualism that, "The guides can't make decisions for you. The most they can do is to help you implement your own decisions." The decision-making factor per se, then, cannot be stressed in this case. The usefulness of the consultation with a medium may come from the ability of the dissociated mind to 'rapidly gather and process information' that can be used by the client in making or implementing a decision, when questions of decision are involved.

Sargant, on the other hand, stresses the abreactive factors in possession, fearing the state of hysterical suggestibility that can result in such experiences as mediumistic possession. While he perceives to some extent the healing benefits of certain possession states, he rejects the possibility of any validity to such experiences, seeing them as pathological and to be avoided at all costs. There is simply nothing in this present study to vindicate Sargant's point of view which, to this writer, seems

extremist and in the nature of personal opinion masked with medical authority and constructed on a very limited and questionable data base.

Of the four theorists reviewed, Lewis' work is the most complete. Yet it contains little material in regard to spirit-possession groups in western society, briefly mentioning Pentecostalism and voodooism, with only passing reference to Spiritualism. It therefore cannot be regarded as complete cross-culturally, though it is nearly so. This present study of a particular Spiritualist church and six mediums associated with it, which, by ~~most sociological estimates should not be a sufficient enough size to produce~~ any kind of meaningful data, nonetheless - perhaps because of the uniqueness of the situation - indicates that only by broadening the model can Spiritualism and trance control mediums be assimilated to it. One may question the whole concept of deprivation, and by what standards a group or an individual is labelled as deprived, since, ultimately, the concept can be viewed only in regard to the culture in which the groups or individuals are found. In other words, it may be ethnocentric to view groups or individuals as deprived if they themselves do not see themselves as such. From the data collected for this paper, it would appear, that if one is going to apply the deprivation concept in this instance, it must be broadened to include such factors as early anomolous (presumably psychic) experiences, bereavement or even a personal response to the abstract notion of death. Lewis could also clarify his concept of psychological disadvantage, as it is not clear what exactly is meant by the term and how it relates to other forms of deprivation. The present study, limited as it is, indicates that Spiritualism and its trance mediums are not so much to be characterized as peripheral, as Macklin so characterizes them, but rather can be seen to be sharing of characteristics of both peripheral and main possession cults.

There are a number of more serious problems with Lewis' model. He maintains (pp.113-117), as quoted above, that there must be a common belief, in the society at large, in the possibility of spirit possession for spirit possession cults to exist, either as main morality cults or as peripheral possession cults. Further, the weak are especially endowed with mystical powers to "offset their crushing jural disabilities." His model is one of power distinctions and balances, leading, in the Durkheimian tradition, to the maintenance of social stability. Spirit possession is a way for the weak to "manipulate their superiors with impunity -at least within certain limits". This manipulation is "broadly satisfactory to all concerned." There seems to be a contradiction here. On the one hand we have societies which overall believe in spirit possession and which produce main or central possession cults, and societies which produce peripheral cults, or societies which produce both types of cults. Yet in cases where peripheral cults exist independently of any central or main cults, there still must nonetheless be a "mutual trust in the symbolism of... peripheral possession " between the weak classes and the superior classes. Such being the case, then, it would seem that Spiritualist trance mediums should not exist at all, or are outside the pape of his model. In other words, either the model is inaccurate or incomplete as it stands, or Spiritualism, even seen from such a limited basis as here, is an anomoly in itself. Yet Spiritualism and trance mediums seem to share characteristics of both central and peripheral cults, and should be able to fit into Lewis' model intracategorically - he allows for such possibilities. Unless we are to admit a belief in the society (ie., western society) at large in spirit possession, which is highly debatable at this point in time, logically it follows that Spiritualism should not exist at all.

The first problem would seem to appear in the basis of the model in its idea of social deprivation being balanced in institutionalized power relationships, ultimately creating social stability. While such factors may play a part, even a major part, in the existence of spirit possession cults, they obviously do not address themselves to an ultimate causal situation. Should they do so, then we might be enabled to better understand the trance mediums of Spiritualism, and why they chose to become mediums, as well as to better understand the continuing existence of the movement itself.

There is also a deeper problem here as well, if you will, one that is based on the logical/positivist paradigm of the sciences and social sciences. In the last analysis, that paradigm gives us only incomplete answers to the fundamental existence of any phenomenon. It may tell us how a phenomenon exists and how it relates to other phenomena, but it is unable to tell us why a phenomenon exists. While it may be argued that such is not the mandate of science or the social sciences, it may also be argued that in dealing with human beings, including that realm of human endeavour known as knowledge, one must, at some point, address the problem of meaning in any given area. Here is where the theories reviewed in this paper cannot ultimately address the existence of the phenomena of the forms of spirit possession, or of any other social phenomenon for that matter. One must eventually seek beyond the limitations of the logical positivist paradigm if any phenomenon is to have, in itself and for those involved in it, human meaning. In his remarks on the cosmological/theological aspects of spirit possession, Lewis seems to be making some attempt in this direction. But it is a limited and generalized attempt, telling the reader nothing of the experience and its meaning for the individual. A broader paradigm, or a different one, is needed, or perhaps an additional one, which goes beyond the parameters of the logical/positivist paradigm, a change which is occurring in the physical sciences.

Finally, the more general question of psychic phenomena might be raised. Anthropologists, however aware they may be of their own possible ethnocentrism, may still fall prey to biases and prejudices. Familiarity, at least in general terms, with the field of parapsychology could lead to a greater understanding of the phenomena of spirit possession, and to the ecstatic features of religion in general. Van de Castle (1974) has argued that, "The vast majority of anthropologists have been unwilling to entertain the hypothesis that genuine parapsychological events may be seen occurring in some magical or religious ceremonies." (p.269) He goes on to say that, "it might be said that anthropologists also rely upon explanations that are culturally acceptable to alleviate the anxiety that results from a confrontation with phenomena that are, as yet, inexplicable to Western scientists. The approved explanation possesses elegant simplicity; all of the accounts of apparent psychic manifestations among primitive groups are greatly exaggerated, and they can be readily explained as caused by suggestion or sleight-of-hand." (p.273) Van de Castle briefly reviews the ethnographic literature while pointing to many instances wherein observations of the apparently genuine occurrence of psychic phenomena were reported, and goes on to suggest that,

Since anthropologists have not generally, until now, seriously considered the possible reality of psychic events, they have been reduced to explaining the persistence of magical practices primarily on the basis of sociological principles involving intragroup tensions. An equally plausible explanation would be that magical practices persevere because a learning schedule is established that is maintained through the aperiodic reinforcement provided by the occurrence of genuine psychic events. Acceptance of psi would also cause a reassessment of how the shaman or any other practitioner is perceived by anthropologists. (p.283)

If Nelson and Van de Castle are only partially right, a broadened paradigm

permitting the anthropologist to ask new questions should provide a considerable new area of investigation, leading, as well, to the reinterpretation of old data. The result may be, not so much a conflict with existing theory, but in the articulation of a more insightful and inclusive theory.

Perhaps of all scientists and social scientists the anthropologist most of all recognizes that every culture, including his or her own, is a construct of itself, and that 'reality' as we experience it, is as much a product of the culture as any other structure or institution. We might then give thought to Zukav's (1979) witty tautology:

'Reality' is what we take to be true. What we take to be true is what we believe. What we believe is based on our perception. What we perceive depends on what we look for. What we look for depends upon what we think. What we think depends upon what we perceive. What we perceive determines what we believe. What we believe determines what we take to be true. What we take to be true is our reality. (p.328)

CHAPTER FIVE

Notes:

1. Macklin notes (note 24) that while she was told repeatedly by Spiritualists in both Connecticut and Indiana of the homosexuality or effeminacy of male mediums, she had no "independent quantifiable evidence" as to such. Likewise while I do not have quantifiable evidence either, personal acquaintance with mediums in Montreal and Vancouver suggests that gay male mediums form a large minority, at least, of all male mediums.
2. Nelson separates economic disadvantage from social disadvantage, though it is not clear what he means by the latter term. I use the term to refer to economic-related factors, as distinct from purely economic factors of income, such as lack of social mobility, educational opportunities, employment alternatives, and lack of access to socio-cultural resources that are more open to middle and upper level income groups.
3. The term social class is used in the dual sense of socio-economic group and a concomitant value system. Studies have shown that there is a differing value system for differing socio-economic groups, at least in regard to the major socio-economic groupings of working, middle and upper classes. However, this does not necessarily mean that individuals from one socio-economic group may not hold values similar to some other socio-economic group. In other words, the relationship between socio-economic group and value system is a flexible one, at least for individuals. For example, university students may fall into a lower socio-economic class, whereas individual value systems will probably reflect the value-system usually associated with the socio-economic class in which they were raised. In the present study, it would appear that the mediums share the same basic value system of the larger society (probably the system usually referred to as 'middle class'), or at least that the values are not so far removed from mainstream society. This is illustrated by Rev. Rose's message from her spirit father. He stated that, "You had to work twice as hard, but mentally, not physically." This is in keeping with Macklin's observation that, "work emerges again as a specific instrumental value through which Americans strive not only to master a mechanistically conceived universe but also to reach the goal of their own perfectibility. Official Spiritualism and Mrs. M. completely endorse this value." (p.69) However, the recognition of homosexual mediums in Spiritualism may perhaps also reflect an understanding that the values endorsed by the movement and by individuals within it, are not quite mainstream, and that Spiritualism can include categories of individuals and viewpoints that are not quite socially acceptable in the mainstream society. Observation does tend to indicate that, in general, Spiritualists are well aware that by the standards of many people they would be considered a bit odd, at the very least.
4. As suggested above, Spiritualist mediums probably go through a kind of post hoc reorganization of life experiences after induction into mediumship. This would particularly apply to their understanding of early anomalous - presumably psychic - experiences. The investigator has no way of analysing the precise nature of these experiences, and thus we can only say that such experiences tend to confirm Nelson's hypothesis as to the influence of genuine paranormal experiences on the development of religions.

5. While this may be the official view of the Roman Catholic church on the matter of psychic phenomena, it may not be the complete view, in that some information given to me - unfortunately I cannot confirm it - indicates that seances are held in camera within the Catholic church. My informant claimed to have been contacted by a Catholic priest who said that he was a trumpet medium and was about to depart for the Vatican where he would be sitting in a circle there. He said that he had been sitting in a circle in a certain monastery and that all the sitters in the circle were either priests or religious. While I have no way of confirming this story, I also have no reason to disbelieve my informant.

6. It should be noted that compensation is, according to psychological theorists such as Adler and Anna Freud, one of the ego-defense mechanisms. Bourguignon seems to feel that given the stratified hierarchical societies that she studied, compensation for social immobility and limited access to resources may take the form of creating pseudo personalities, guised as spirits, who make up for social shortcomings. While such may be the case in the societies she studied - although I think it a difficult question to decide - there seems to be little evidence to suggest the same for Spiritualist mediums. One must, however, consider the differences in societies. In this less rigid and stratified society, compensation, if it exists on the part of the mediums, would have to be looked for in individual psychology and then be demonstrated as having a causal connection to mediumship.

APPENDIX
Canadian and American Spiritualism

Observation of ten or so Canadian Spiritualist churches, when compared to American churches as described by Zaretsky (1974) and to a lesser extent by Macklin (1977; op. cit.), suggests some differences between the practice of Spiritualism in these two countries. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to do so, these differences can probably be related to greater social differences between the two countries.

Zaretsky maintains that in the churches he observed in the greater San Francisco area (Bay City, as it is conventionally referred to), an argot was used to communicate between the members of the churches. This argot consisted of standard English terms used in non-standard ways, creating an 'in' communication system for those using it, and an apparently ambiguous, incomprehensible communication system for the uninitiated. This argot reveals the social and hierarchical structure of the various churches, with some differences from church to church in the usage of the argot, this additional difference reflecting, among other things, the organizational affiliation of the churches involved.

While it is also apparent that Canadian Spiritualist churches likewise employ the usage of a number of more or less standard terms in less than standard ways, observation here suggests that this is done much less than in American churches. Terms like "vibration", for example, are in common use, but this term in particular is in relatively common use in the larger community, probably as an effect of the 'counter-culture' movement. Other terms are more Spiritualist-specific, and do indeed require an understanding of the Spiritualist lexicon. Often, however, the novice to Spiritualism has the opportunity to ask the meaning of such terms, as at the post-service period

over tea or coffee, at the Church of the Spirits. Other churches follow the same practice, thus creating the possibility of a contact period in which the novice to Spiritualism has the opportunity to become more familiar and comfortable with the proceedings.

One does not seem to find so rigidly defined a hierarchical structure in Canadian Spiritualist churches as Zaretsky describes for the churches he observed. While there is a kind of division between mediums and non-mediums, and while some mediums have their 'following' who travel from place to place to hear them, these divisions seem more along the lines of social divisions than hierarchical divisions. Mediums may have nothing more than a superficial contact with their 'followers'. In Canada, not all ministers are mediums, nor all mediums ministers. In the United States, mediums must be certified or ordained to demonstrate publicly, which perhaps creates an additional basis for hierarchical divisions. In Canada, mediums who are not attached to any particular church may run development circles with sitters of their choice, but mediums who operate through particular churches, if leading circles, may not have as much choice of sitters.

While observation suggests the language difference between Spiritualists and non-Spiritualists, there is no evidence to suggest a hierarchical usage of the argot within the movement itself, such as Zaretsky describes for the United States. Certain mediums may have their 'pet' phrases, but such is a matter of individual taste or preference.

Since there is no central doctrinal authority in Spiritualism, individual interpretations will occur in regard to the philosophy. Zaretsky suggests that in the case of American churches, individual minister/mediums

seem to put authoritarian emphasis on their particular point of view or interpretation. In Canada, there seems to be a more standardized interpretation of the philosophy, even if it is not expressed as being standardized. Usually the novice is soon given to understand that interpretation is individual, and that he or she should accept what makes sense to him or her; nonetheless, no great differences are seen between Vancouver and Montreal.

In regard to the governing bodies of Canadian churches, there seems to be less distinction between them than is evident in the United States. No Spiritualist church in Canada, to my knowledge, gives communion as part of the service, though a few years ago one local minister who was also the president of his church, attempted to do so. This was not well received by the members and the practice was discontinued. None of the governing bodies in Canadian Spiritualism officially espouse reincarnation, nor do any individual churches officially teach it - again, to the best of my knowledge. This does not mean that it is not mentioned, nor that it is not considered, or that individuals do not believe in reincarnation; it means that it is not officially a part of the Spiritualist organization in Canada.

In general, it seems that Canadian Spiritualist churches are less "Christian" oriented than American churches, with less emphasis on the use of the Christian Bible for readings on the platform or in general. Some churches, such as the Church of the Spirits, may be specifically non-Christian, while others may call themselves Christian Spiritualist churches.

Zaretsky maintains that, "Although each church has an official name, all churches are referred to by the names of their pastors."(p.177) Many Canadian churches do not have a pastor, and thus are not referred to by a pastor's name, though this is occasionally done so if there is a pastor.

Where there is a pastor, he or she may not always be the president of the board of directors, whereas Zaretsky says of American churches that, "the pastor is always president of the board. The members of these boards are usually the pastor's spouse, personal clients who come to the pastor to receive messages, or personal friends who are not likely either to usurp power or to impose their will in church decisions." (p.177) Such does not seem to be the case in Canadian churches, although I am thoroughly knowledgeable in this regard in respect to only two Canadian churches. Certainly it is not true for the Church of the Spirits, though, as it has been indicated, power struggles do occur.

Zaretsky maintains, that in common with metaphysical and occult movements, as well as with the current youth culture, American Spiritualism uses a particular lexicon, and that "Spiritualists speak of the 'power of the spoken word' in both the religious and secular spheres. Their claim is that words, once uttered, have the power to create or effect the referent which they symbolize." (p.190) They use the phrase, "Words are things", and that "once spoken, they are deposited into the ether and will be picked up by like-thinking people." (Ibid.) Canadian Spiritualist churches do not seem to put the same emphasis on the 'spoken word', but certainly they do put emphasis on the power of thought, saying, in similar fashion, that "Thoughts are things" and that, by the Law of Attraction, once released into the universe, draw to themselves "a similar vibration". Here the emphasis seems to be less specific than in the American case. Further observation and comparative work on the similarities and differences between American and Canadian Spiritualist churches might point to interesting but subtle cultural differences between two countries that in so many ways are interconnected and apparently so similar.

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