

PRESENTATIONS OF THE PARANORMAL: THE IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND PROFESSIONALIZATION TACTICS OF PSYCHICS AND SPIRIT MEDIUMS*

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of psychics and spirit mediums. It focuses on concepts of deviance neutralization and professionalization. Using a literary ethnography, it identifies five types of psychics and mediums. They are charismatic, intraorganizational, cross-occupational, interorganizational, and charlatans. The findings show that each fight off the stigma associated with working with the "paranormal." This often involves various impression management strategies and professionalization tactics. These strategies and tactics have created acceptance by the dominant culture in traditional fields. They have also opened the door for a "psychic liberation movement" that is seeking to further the use of metaphysics in everyday life. This analysis builds on other studies of paranormal beliefs. It specifically complements a recent study by Evans, Forsyth, and Foreman (2003) examining stigma management among psychics.

Over the past few decades, people in the United States started giving more credit to beliefs in the paranormal (Ogden 1999). This led to a certain amount of acceptance for the metaphysical. In the 1980s, psychic Jeane Dixon advised President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy (Kelley 1992). In the past few years, spirit medium John Edward gained prestige providing "readings" in private and on his television show (see Edward 2002; Edward & Stoyhoff 2003). Daily, thousands of people pay several dollars per minute to talk to people working for organizations such as the Psychic Readers Network (FTC 2002). One study even shows that 35 percent of police departments use psychics in criminal investigations (Sweat & Durm 1993). Paranormal occupations are gaining favor. With the public being the final arbiter of legitimacy, those associated with the paranormal, once marginal, are getting a positive reception (Emmons 1981, 1982; Bruce 1996; Steward 1999; Steward, Shriver, & Chasteen 2002).

This study focuses on psychics and spirit mediums. It is not concerned with ontological claims. Moreover, the exhaustive history of these groups is beyond the scope of this work.¹ As with previous research in this area (see Evans, Forsyth, & Foreman 2003), it seeks to identify how psychics and spirit mediums have generated a higher level of cultural acceptance. Using theories of deviance neutralization and professionalization, it does two specific things. First, it identifies different groups of psychics and spirit mediums. Second, it analyzes impression management strategies and professionalization tactics

these groups use to gain cultural legitimacy.

DEVIANCE NEUTRALIZATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION

Deviance Neutralization

The work of various scholars addresses how marginal groups neutralize the stigma of deviant activity (Mills 1940; Scott & Lyman 1968; Sykes & Matza 1957). One of the most beneficial perspectives involves Erving Goffman's work. It indicates that social action is a performance. People and groups, especially those dealing with a devalued social identity, seek to control the impressions they convey. They do this to neutralize negative images and create a favorable view in order to gain social acceptance (Goffman 1959, 1961, 1964).

Research in this tradition often focuses on illegal acts. Studies look at dog fighting (Evans & Forsyth 1997; Forsyth & Evans 1998), prostitution (Jackman, O'Toole, & Geis 1963), child molestation (McCaghy 1968; DeYoung 1989), and rape (Scully & Marolla 1990). Others focus on deviant behavior; specifically looking at sexual acts (see for example Skipper & McCaghy 1970; Luckenbill & Best 1981; Blinde & Taub 2000). Few focus on the neutralization of a deviant stigma in legal social arenas (for exceptions see Turner & Edgley 1976; Thompson 1991; Ulsperger & Paul 2002). However, some do deal with issues of deviance neutralization with psychics and mediums. They look at occult knowledge, the sociology of the paranormal, parapsychology as a deviant science, specialists in spiritualism, and spiritual read-

ings as deviant work (Wedow 1976; McClenon 1984; Heeren & Mason 1990; Goode 2000; Hodges 2002). One recent study looks at the accounts of psychics in the Jackson Square section of the French Quarter in New Orleans (Evans, Forsyth, & Foreman 2003). Regardless, these studies are either exploratory or only speak generally of the legitimation of psychics and mediums. They also fail to clearly review professionalization.

Professionalization

Professionalization involves the process of an occupation claiming the status of a profession. A profession is an occupation with high technical and intellectual expertise and usually autonomous. Common examples would be law and medicine. Research on professionalization implies occupational groups often seek to professionalize to better their economic status by securing niches for their work (Ritzer & Walczak 1986; Jary & Jary 1991; Roos 1992).

The process of professionalization involves various components. Freidson (1984) points out three specific elements: expertise, credentials, and autonomy. Expertise involves mastering a special skill. Credentials involve education. This can include informal pedagogy. However, it most often involves formal education and the receivership of some sort of diploma or degree. Autonomy concerns the presence of a self-regulating organization arranged around an occupation.

When applying concepts of deviance neutralization and professionalization to the work of psychics and spirit mediums, several questions exist. How do psychics increase their legitimacy? Do they alter the presentation of the paranormal to suit the public? What impression management strategies do they employ to frame their occupations in a positive way? What tactics do they use to professionalize their work? Are professionalization tactics ultimately impression management strategies? This work provides insight into these types of questions.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, we used a literary ethnography.² A literary ethnography involves deep reading. Documents focus on a defined subject. After reading the documents, patterns of experiences are identifiable. Repeated themes reflect features of a social group. They provide insight into actor thoughts and

patterns of interaction. This is not a quantitative method. The researcher engages in an interpretive process. This helps to focus on thick descriptions. These descriptions generate themes that represent a consolidated picture of a social phenomenon. A literary ethnography has six stages. They include developing a scope of literary sources, reading the sources, identifying textual themes, classification of textual themes, developing analytical concepts, and contextual confirmation (see Van de Poel-Knottnerus & Knottnerus 1994, 2002; Knottnerus & Van de Poel-Knottnerus 1999).

Step 1: Scope of Literary Sources

In this project, the literary sources included over one hundred works by various authors from 1900 to the present. All of the documents concerned psychics, spirit mediums, and related phenomena. The documents included scientific studies, autobiographies, biographies, interviews of psychics, materials from groups devoted to different psychics, and transcripts of popular television shows involving psychics or spirit mediums.

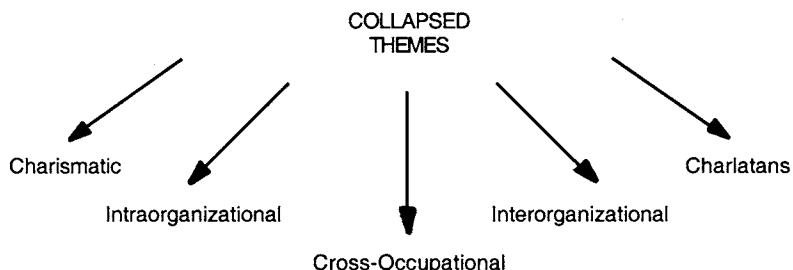
In terms of our sampling, the literary texts that we used were collected through a snowballing method. With an initial base of popular books on psychics and spirit mediums, we specifically looked for references to previous works we could analyze. In addition to the sources this snowballing method yielded, one researcher had extensive experience with the work of psychics and spirit mediums. This researcher's prolonged engagement in the field also yielded numerous sources of data collected since the early 1970s – many of which corresponded with the list comprised through the snowballing technique. It should be noted that not all of these sources were used. We could not feasibly analyze all psychics and spirit medium books, so we narrowed down the list by focusing only on those that had information related to professionalization.³

Step 2: Reading and Interpretation of the Documents

After gathering our base of documents, we read and reread each one several times. The first few readings involved building on our general knowledge of psychics and spirit mediums. The next few involved an interpretation. With sources being examined by each

Table 1: Sample of Initial Themes

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| epistemology creation | book writing | utilization of the media |
| intraorganizational contact | profit seeking | informal training schools |
| formal training schools | health care | religious ties |
| entertainment | altruistic intentions | law enforcement |
| con-artists | knowledge sharing | parapsychology |
| links to medicine | degree granting | research publications |

Figure 1. Categorization Based on Literary Ethnography

researcher for inter-coder reliability purposes, we discussed ideas and concepts in the documents involving subtle nuances, informal phrases, and technical jargon. With common themes established, we then identified textual themes.

Step 3: Identification of Textual Themes

During and following the reading of documents an identification of themes was possible. The themes involved recurring issues. Here, elements initially found in only a few documents started appearing in others.

As Table 1 indicates, these themes included issues on a wide range of topics such as epistemology creation, publishing, utilization of the media, intraorganizational contact, profit, and informal training. Additional themes involved schools, health care connections, religious ties, entertainment, altruistic intentions, law enforcement, con-artists, knowledge transmission, parapsychology, links to medicine, and degree granting.

Step 4: Classification of Thematic Elements

In this step of a literary ethnography, the researcher collapses textual themes into a classification system. This indicates certain themes are appearing often, but have a degree of similarity. We collapsed our themes into categories of different types of psychics and spirit mediums. With different variations of psychics and spirit mediums identified, we could focus better on themes relating to

impression management strategies and deviance neutralization. In the documents, five main classifications of psychics were salient. As Figure 1 indicates, they included charismatic, intraorganizational, cross-occupational, interorganizational, and charlatan types.

The charismatic category involves psychics and spirit mediums that start a career in the paranormal after a significant event. This usually involves a spontaneous experience such as predicting an event, seeing something identified as "otherworldly," or having a supernatural dream identifying them as "special." Intraorganizational psychics and spirit mediums are involved in paranormal occupations through some sort of educational means. This could be formal or informal. Often the education involves the epistemology established previously by a charismatic. Cross-occupational types are psychics and spirit mediums that actively use their "abilities" in conjunction with an already legitimate profession. They usually start in other occupations and later blend paranormal beliefs with their jobs. For example, consider psychics working in fields such as psychology (as parapsychologists) or psychiatry (as hypnotherapists). Interorganizational psychics and spirit mediums are those involved with other occupations in order to achieve a shared goal. This happens because of some altruistic desire to help others. An example here would involve psychics working with law enforcement to help solve

a crime. Charlatans are people claiming to be psychics or spirit mediums only for entertainment and profit purposes.⁴

Step 5: Development of Analytic Constructs

Developing a set of analytic constructs gives a greater degree of structure to a literary ethnography. The constructs give better understanding to the categories generated in previous steps. The constructs link to theoretical ideas external to the study. This makes for an improved knowledge of the subject being studied. In this work, to better understand the categories of psychics and mediums that emerged in the literature, we focused on the concept of impression management while also emphasizing Freidson's (1984) three elements of professionalism: expertise, credentials, and autonomy. This process corresponds to what some refer to as typological analysis (see Lincoln & Guba 1985).

Step 6: Contextual Confirmation

Contextual confirmation involves reading the documents one last time. This helps the researcher or researchers decide whether the documents correctly relate to the coding scheme and analytic constructs being used. In our study, we took our psychic and spirit medium categories and read back through the sources. As we read back through them, category comparison still took place. It appeared that we reached a point of exhausting all possibilities of a new category emerging. The rereading confirmed that the categories accurately represented the major themes identified. It also allowed us to focus on aspects of impression management and professionalization again. By each author rereading selections from the documents, we again did our best to ensure a high level of inter-coder reliability. Cases disagreed upon were excluded for validity purposes. In the following section, we elaborate on our identified groups of psychics and spirit mediums. We also analyze impression management strategies and professionalization tactics these groups use to generate legitimacy.

FINDINGS

The strategies and tactics used by psychics and spirit mediums are best explained by separating them into the categories we discovered. Again, these concern charismatic, intraorganizational, cross-occupational,

interorganizational, and charlatan classifications. The first group to be discussed will be the charismatic psychics. This group is looked at first because the other groups are in some ways dependent upon them for the establishment of psychic ways of knowing that lead to therapies and ideologies (the expertise) used or subsumed by the other groups. The charismatic group also often creates theories and epistemologies for the other groups to be discussed, and therefore are the foundation to understanding those groups beliefs and motives.

Aside from charlatans, the purpose of this study was to review psychics and spirit mediums that have taken their belief systems very seriously as alternative ways of knowing. Though aspects of entertainment cannot be discounted among the general public viewing the groups looked at in this study, we believe many do see themselves as genuine practitioners of occult arts. Though there are charlatans that cause grave problems of stigma and legitimacy, the more serious groups are using professionalization to address some of those concerns with deviance neutralization while at the same time establishing these groups as professionals with respectable occupations. In this study, charlatans are the same as they are in any profession. They make use of fraud to establish their credibility and are problematic for other groups seeking legitimacy.

Charismatic Psychics and Mediums

Successful charismatic psychics and spirit mediums develop their occupations along similar lines. There are usually four stages to their development of expertise. In the first stage, they develop their own specific area of expertise, usually following some spontaneous experience. In the second, they temper their experiences with scientific training usually from contacts with parapsychologists. With the third stage, they develop a career outside their psychic occupations to complement their special talents and lifestyle. With the fourth stage, they establish an autonomous institution that sustains and promotes their life work. It is in the last two stages that "professionalization" becomes important. The development of a career outside their psychic and spirit medium occupations often involves establishing credentials of their knowledge. This is linked with the individual psychic's epistemologies, and

how they understand themselves and their talents in relation to their life world. Consider the work of Edgar Cayce, Arthur Ford, and Eileen Garrett.

Cayce established his own health clinic at Virginia Beach (Sugrue 1967). Ford stayed in the area of Religion and did a lecture circuit as well as preached in Christian Churches (Ford & Harmon Bro 1958). Eileen Garrett was an editor and writer of occult books and magazines (Garrett 1968). Men like Ford and Cayce saw their talents and abilities associated with their religious beliefs as a vocation or ministry. In his work with Harmon Bro, Ford expresses the paradox of his situation:

In my dilemma my knowledge of psychic things was of no help to me. At the time I thought of my psychic ability as something that had come to me unsought and I resented the fact that nearly everyone I met looked upon me as a charlatan or a lunatic, or at best a guinea pig to be used for interesting experiments. To me it seemed that the fact of ongoing life and of communication (with the dead) were so plain, that a person who could not see their religious significance, must be mentally retarded. In our culture that made me the odd-ball, calling the majority crazy. (Ford & Harmon Bro 1958 150)

Finding an occupation that is compatible with psychic abilities is not an easy task. Psychics and spirit mediums tend to go through a lot of cognitive restructuring in order to establish themselves as "professionals." Garrett, because of her advanced training and work with parapsychologists, correlated her talents and abilities with psychological states. She wondered how much of her own personality, or impression management, was involved in her psychic trances. Garrett (1968 93) indicates:

From time to time I was assailed by doubts lest the subconscious was "playing games" of its own accord, and that one day I should hear myself speak, as those in lighter trance states were supposed to do. This I felt, would reveal that I had inner needs and tendencies to "put on a show." If this were indeed my subconscious path of action, it might be folly to continue.

Regardless, her experiences could be ex-

plained through a systematic examination of symbolism. Garrett (1968 93) points out:

A further word about the controls (spirit guides) may here be in order, I long ago accepted them as working symbols of the subconscious. Even today, however, the related disciplines for research into the depth of the subconscious are somewhat split by terminology difficulties; and depth psychology, which was my last effort to discover meanings, has unfortunately not supplied any answers.

Each charismatic psychic or medium, therefore, develops a different epistemology and associated occupation. These then are often grafted into established epistemologies and occupations of other disciplines. They ultimately compliment a psychic or spirit medium's way of knowing. This provides a type of deviance neutralization and a degree of professionalization.

Educational Tactics. The most common tactic used by charismatic psychics and spirit mediums involves preserving their knowledge with literary publications. If successful with the publications, they then seek media coverage in the form of radio and television talk shows. At some point, the published literature of the successful psychic turns from knowledge about the area of expertise to how this expertise is possible through training to the general public. This is achieved in workshops, seminars, mystery school courses, and publications. Some of the most famous charismatic psychics to achieve this kind of professionalism in the last century were the aforementioned Edgar Cayce, Arthur Ford, and Eileen Garrett.

As mentioned, the fourth stage of a charismatic psychic's career involves autonomy. With this research, this concerns the establishment of an institution to preserve and sustain a psychic or medium's life work. Autonomy requires a body for the self-regulation of the professional occupation (Wilensky 1964; Freidson 1984). Usually, charismatic psychics are too entrepreneurial and highly independent to adjust to this type of regulation, but there are exceptions. For example, Garrett (1968), at the end of her life, established the Parapsychology Foundation. This foundation is carrying forward her beliefs and has established a professional journal. The journal promotes communication between

psychics, mediums, and psychic researchers and the scientific community. It does not regulate the psychic industry, but continues a legacy and exerts an example of behavior and action for others to follow. Garrett (1968 169) points out:

The foundation has, in these years, consistently sought to encourage parapsychological research within universities and among scholars with firmly established scientific reputations. To this end, we shall continue to give grants for the pioneer work that will be continued by young and individual researchers.

Similar to Garrett, Cayce established a health clinic and a research center. Located at Virginia Beach, Virginia, it promotes his lifetime of psychic readings for healing and spiritual purposes. It also provides classes and seminars on a variety of occult areas of interest. Cayce has passed, but his daughter continues his legacy by publishing works on his experiences and healing practices. Two modern psychics and spirit mediums, which have achieved similar status, are John Edward and George Anderson. The major difference between these two individuals and earlier psychics and spirit mediums is that they have been able to achieve legitimacy with the general public faster than their predecessors.

John Edward (1999) employs a full range of media support to promote his psychic and mediumistic practices. Earlier mediums often had to create their own institutions of support. He has published books, performed on radio shows, and currently has his own television series, called *Crossing Over*, in which he communicates with the dead. He has created videos, workshops, seminars, and classes to teach others how to become a medium. He employs grief counselors for the benefit of his audience on his television series.

The educational strategies he employs are established along traditional professional educational lines that are familiar to the general public. His workshops, seminars, and classes are conducted in a traditional lecture form. Tactics and behaviors associated with the processes of professionalization then become, in these instances, a form of deviance neutralization. For instance when John Edward hires a grief counselor for his

television show, it takes on the subtle appearance of a professional hiring another professional to provide a service in the form of grief resolution to the general public, which in this case is his television audience. There is a blending here of the paranormal with educational and medical perspectives. Hodges (2002 62) terms this the "halo effect." By suggesting that mediumship can be learned just like any other area of interest through education, being a psychic does not seem to be quite so strange or different from anyone else. For Edward, this is a skill that can be achieved by anyone with skill and practice. Edward (1999 221) explains:

One of the workshops I regularly give is called Building Bridges. In it I teach people how they can discover their own psychic potential and connect with their loved ones who have passed to the other side. I firmly believe that most people can tap into their psychic energy; it's just a matter of practice, patience and attention.

Here, again, we see a tactic of deviance neutralization. Edward implies that he is not divinely gifted, but he is a talented individual that can teach anyone this same skill. When this talent and skill is framed as behaviors that are ordinary and typical then by definition it is no longer deviant. The other psychic groups use these same tactics and strategies as well. Each group, as will be seen, portrays their expertise as something that other individuals can learn (for more on this process see Evans, Forsyth, & Foreman 2003).

Comparison to the Chiropractic Profession. Comparisons between the deviance neutralization and professionalization of charismatic psychics and mediums can be made to chiropractors. Interestingly, chiropractors and psychics gain legitimacy in similar ways. In terms of chiropractors, Wolinsky (1980) indicates that they are highly questioned by traditional medicine, and remain an alternative healing art pretending to be related to medicine. Because of the American Medical Association the practice of chiropractic is illegal in some states and restricted in others. They have developed associations, but these associations are quite different from the professional associations of physicians in that they exercise little, if any autonomy over their sphere of expertise. Hodges (2002)

contends chiropractors, like the charismatic psychics, are highly independent. This independence leads to problems establishing consistent theories and epistemologies that would allow them to codify and regulate their occupations. As Bruce (1996 215) states

the sociological important observation about the themes of New Age is that they are not limited or censored by having to accord with any master principles (or regulations) which shape a coherent ideology.

Intraorganizational Psychics and Mediums

Intraorganizational psychics and mediums are hierarchical in nature. They usually form after the loss of a charismatic leader. As a group, they take the knowledge pioneered by a charismatic psychic or medium and form an organizational structure around that knowledge base (Truzzi 1974; Stein 2000). With Freidson's (1984) work on professionalism in mind, credentials become more important. Bruce (1996) implies that psychics and mediums in this category are in favor of codification and regulation of their expertise due to their goals of professionalization. This includes individuals involved in astrology, aromatherapy, iridologists, radionics, and Reiki, that are being influenced by the modern professional model. In terms of Reiki, Ellis (1999 40) makes the following statement:

When Dr. Usui first received the Reiki vision and empowerment on the top of Mount Kurama it was an enormously powerful experience. The energy was so strong that it rendered him unconscious. At the time, he made the choice to accept the levels of energy that he received. He later decided that, in order for Reiki to be passed on in a safe and responsible way, he would need to develop his teaching in stages. These different levels would be supported with an initiation, or series of initiations, that would facilitate a change in a person's energy field. The idea was that while this initiation would be strong enough to facilitate a transformation it would not knock the student out.

Along with Reiki, other types of alternative healing groups use spirit guides to assist in their alternative healing practices. In our study, it was not uncommon for an intraor-

ganizational psychic or group to incorporate additional psychic ways of knowing such as additional oriental or other alternative healing practices into their group's knowledge base if they felt it was compatible with their own epistemology. Consider the Sancta Sophia schools. In the Sancta Sophia of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the academic dean points out that they encourage the blending of psychic abilities, healing and health in the following ways:

Students at Sancta Sophia Seminary become caregivers as a part of their developing ministries. Specialties are chosen that "fit" the student's psyche. Skills may be developed in such disciplines as Reiki, Reflexology, Esoteric Healing, Ayurvedic Healing Touch, Psychography, and others. (Parish-Harra 2001)

This tactic of linking alternative ways of healing together gives students a practical purpose to their profession as well as legitimizes it to the individual by tying it spiritually to the respectability of the medical profession by a venue of accredited education (Newton 1999, 2000; Hodges 2002).

Educational Tactics. The primary tactic used to achieve credentials among intraorganizational psychic groups involves the passing down of knowledge in increments. The hierarchy keeps and maintains the knowledge and or expertise. In this strategy there are usually levels or grades to be achieved to gain status within the group. As Stein (2000 17-18) explains:

Reiki is divided into three degrees. In Reiki I, the attunement itself heals physical level diseases in the person who receives it.... The Reike II attunement measurably increases the amount of healing energy, and the attunement focuses upon emotional, mental and karmic healing in the person who receives it....Reike III includes two more symbol keys, more esoteric information on the symbols, and the method of passing attunements.

As with other forms of educational attainment, psychic and medium training can be expensive. Training and attunements in Reiki at the third level cost approximately \$10,000 in the 1990s (Stein 2000).

The most consolidated form of the intra-

organizational psychic groups is found in the aforementioned mystery schools across the United States. These "universities" of the occult teach a full range of courses in various New Age areas of interest concerning psychic ways of knowing. The previously discussed Sancta Sofia mystery school in Tahlequah, Oklahoma has existed for 25 years. There, they teach an array of courses devoted to occult practices. These courses are designed around traditional college level course structures (Hodges 2002). Parrish-Harra (2001) explains:

The seminary is continuing what mystery schools have done through the ages, but as a contemporary mystery school for the 21st century, Sancta Sophia presents an esoteric interfaith Christian message. Our broad and unique approach blends ancient spiritual techniques and Aquarian transpersonal concepts. Providing a distinctive approach, Santa Sophia welcomes individuals seeking personal growth in spirituality or those preparing for a spiritually oriented vocation.

As with Reiki training, the Sancta Sofia courses are expensive and exclusionary in nature, just like traditional higher education.

Intraorganizational psychic groups circumvent the traditional educational system and achieve a measure of autonomy by using the tactic of religious credential services rather than educational or medical sources. Their educational institutions use the tactics of handing out certifications and diplomas in alternative belief systems, much like a classical educational institution. The Sancta Sophia brochure states:

The completion of the transformational process guided by the dean and facilitated by a personal advisor earns certification, ordination, or post-graduate degrees in keeping with the goal of the seminarian. Sancta Sophia is accredited through the ACI, Inc., the world's largest accrediting society serving religious institutions, Bible colleges, and seminaries. (Parrish-Harra 2001)

Here we have a set of deviance neutralization tactics that give the appearance of traditional educational legitimacy to members, as well as the general public. Their approach to this effort is rational, planned, accordingly

organized, and patterned to fit the educational and medical professional behavioral process models. This educational strategy gives the group credentials and the religious accreditation granted to their degree plans provides a source of legitimate autonomy for a professional appearance.

Comparison to the Osteopathic Profession. Intraorganizational psychics and mediums are similar in development to other alternative healing groups, such as osteopaths. Wolinsky (1980 294) says that osteopaths are the most physician-like of the alternative healers for the three following reasons. First, they have a unifying principle as to the cause of all disease and illness as a result of dislocation of the bones in the spinal column. Second, like physicians, osteopaths receive extensive training, which is university based and results in the receipt of the Doctor of Osteopathy degree. Third, osteopaths have developed professional associations—the American Osteopathic Association serves the same purpose as the AMA does for physicians. It took a long time, but as early as 1953, the AMA began to co-opt osteopathy as a "specialty of medicine." Intraorganizational psychics and spirit mediums are following a similar path of development. They are not at the point of being subsumed, but they are however using the various strategies based on those found in higher education and in professional associations to organize their group to further their goals and establish greater credibility. They, like the osteopaths, have a working theory about healing usually from a charismatic leader. Second, they build a belief system around those working theories and apply modern educational strategies and economic exclusionary tactics to establish their expertise and credentialism. Third, they circumvent the traditional system of achieving autonomy by using religious credential services rather than other educational or medical sources.

Cross-Organizational Psychics and Mediums

We consider cross-organizational psychics and spirit mediums the most professional category in this study. As stated earlier, people in this group pursue traditional educational degrees in established professional occupations. They then expand out and incorporate various aspects of psychic healing and research into their professional

occupations. Examples from our data included psychologists, parapsychologists, and psychiatrists. They also concern hypnotherapists. Hypnotherapists incorporate psychic ways of knowing into their medical practices in order to help clients. This is done largely through hypnosis. Cross-organizational psychics, like hypnotherapists, could be considered the antithesis of charismatic psychics and mediums. Whereas the charismatic opposes the accepted culture's ideologies and practices, people in this category immerse themselves in the beliefs of the dominant culture, specifically the scientific community. They then incorporate belief systems of psychics and mediums. Moreover, cross-organizational psychics and mediums are the least interested in professionalization processes. With their training in already legitimate occupations, they have already achieved professional status. Therefore, their main concern is the effective and efficient treatment of their patients while *maintaining* their professional status.

This is not such a strange thing when one considers that some of the world's greatest scientists held some very irrational beliefs and made some fantastic discoveries in pursuit of those beliefs. Think about Sir Isaac Newton, who was both an alchemist and a scientist (Weeks & James 1996). Dr. Edith Fiore (1993) is a good example of a cross-organizational psychic. Fiore, a psychologist whose literary works on spirit possession are classics in the field, uses hypnosis as a technique and does past life regressions as well as works with those that believe they are possessed. After all the work she has done in this area, she still does not know if possession is a fantasy or not. Fiore is not convinced that possessions are figments of the imagination either. Another person highly regarded in this area, Raymond Moody (1993), echoes Fiore's thoughts:

Frankly, I have no idea whether "possession" is ultimately "real" or not, but I do know two things. First, I like many other psychiatrists, have encountered in my practice a small number of very troubling cases in which the person involved seemed to be suffering from some peculiar alteration in consciousness which did not seem to fit in any category of mental illness known to me. And yet which resembled the description of "possession" found in medieval litera-

ture. Secondly, it is fairly clear that persons who are treated as though they were suffering from a "possessing entity" sometimes report dramatic resolution of their symptoms after these procedures. Obviously, neither of these facts necessarily implies that possession is "real" in a factual sense. But together they do suggest that we may be dealing with an unusual variety of human consciousness which is distinct from mental illness and which is worth investigating in its own right.

Regardless of the possession or fantasy debate, organizations such as the Transpersonal Psychology Association have developed to support others using techniques similar to Fiore's. Its members are mindful that psychological issues concerning the paranormal experience aren't ontological, but are clinical and phenomenological. By connecting themselves to the field of psychology, they justify "the study and use" of paranormal techniques. In other words they are normalizing these techniques, beliefs, and behaviors for their own practical purposes regardless of ontological realities (Moody 1999).

Educational Tactics. Fiore (1993) sees dispossession as a growing therapeutic tool, largely because it is extremely effective and efficient in the treatment of her patients. Because of that fact alone, she has taught hundreds of other therapists in the United States and at least sixty persons in Brazil. Our data indicate many other individuals in the cross-occupational category are holding seminars and workshops to teach people interested in using these treatment techniques.

These professionals have not been censored by their respective professions because what they are doing can be argued to be no different than the placebo effect. It has been known among practitioners of medicine for a long time that placebos work. Though how they work is still unexplained (Talbot 1992; Goode 2000). The new concept applies to medical doctors as well. Brody (2000 142-143) explains:

Why does conventional medicine seem to be taking a more sympathetic view of alternative medicine? For one thing, American physicians are members of American society. If society as a whole finds alternative medicine as fascinating and attractive as it

appears to, eventually physicians cannot help being influenced as well. It's no longer unusual to find conventional M.D.s who have studied one or more alternative styles of healing, even incorporating them into their practices for selected patients... Finally, conventional physicians have always prided themselves on their scientific achievements, curiosity, skills, and research. It had to dawn on them eventually that ignoring alternative medicine—and refusing even to consider researching its methods and results—was simply unscientific... Due to the cross-fertilization between conventional and alternative medicine, the placebo response can at last assume its rightful place at the interface.

Other professionals that are looking into similarly psychic types of research and treatments are psychiatrists Dr. Brian Weiss, Dr. William Roll, Ken Ring, Dr. Bruce Greyson, Dr. Melvin Morse, Michael Newton, and a host of other hypnotherapists, physicians, and psychologists in the United States. This trend is occurring in Europe and other areas around the world as well. It is believed that this research will lead to the point where intense psychic experiences can be facilitated in psychologically normal individuals (Moody 1999; Weiss 1988, 1993, 1996). One advocate of this perspective is Jeffery Mishlove.

Mishlove is the president of the Intuition Network. He has a doctoral degree in "parapsychology" from the University of California at Berkeley (Intuition Network 2000). He and his organization, with the help of educational promotion through various media sources, are promoting a social movement for the liberation of human psychic potential from the grasp of what they claim is naiveté and fear. Their recently released "Psychic Liberation Manifesto" states:

In particular, it is important to infuse the field of psychology with an understanding of psychic ability. The very name "psychology," implies a discipline of knowledge dedicated to studying the psyche or soul. However, for nearly a century since the death of William James, America's first and greatest psychologist, the field has been dominated by behaviorist and positivist schools of thought that - in an effort to achieve scientific credibility - studiously avoided questions regarding the existence and nature of

the psyche... The abilities of the human psyche are natural - even though they may be labeled "supernatural" or "paranormal". (Mishlove 2003)

Regardless of this movement, some psychics and mediums do not push for the legitimacy of their occupation in such a direct way. Not always seeking self-promotion or glorification, our data indicate some altruistically use their abilities to help people belonging to other organizational professions.

Interorganizational Psychics and Mediums

Interorganizational psychics are those involved with other occupations in order to achieve a shared goal. This happens because of some altruistic desire to help others. An example involves psychics and mediums, free of charge, working with law enforcement to help solve crimes. For example, Allison DuBois, who has a new hit television show based on her life, says her visions help police get to the bottom of law-breaking activities. She often does not charge in cases where flashes of evidentiary information fill her mind. However, she does charge a fee for her services as a psychic jury consultant (Tresnlowski, Stoyhoff, & Paley 2005).

Criminal justice journals claim that the use of psychics and mediums in police investigations is a waste of time (see for example Reiser 1982; Lucas 1985). However, one study indicates that 35 percent of America's largest police departments report using psychics in investigations at some point (Sweat & Durm 1993). Clearly, a tradition of psychics working in conjunction with law enforcement exists. Examples include prophets exposing criminals through visions in biblical times, Robert Lee's providing information to London police in the Jack the Ripper case, and multiple cases in modern times when police called psychics in to look for missing persons. Police in Oslo, Norway even contemplated bringing in psychics to help them find Munch's "The Scream" when it was stolen in the early 1990s (Lyons & Truzzi 1991; Valente 1994; Moran 1999). The trend is that when law enforcement has exhausted all options in dead end cases, psychics are legitimate to use as a last resort. For example, consider Bill Ward of Lockport, Illinois.

From 1971 to 1986, police used Bill Ward in over 250 major cases. Police asked him

for help at various stages of case development. Often their use of him would depend on the specific needs of investigators. Lieutenant Andrew Barto of the Romeoville, Illinois police department states in one source that he usually calls Ward in for "something big" such as:

If I have a class X murder, rape or armed robbery; something where someone is seriously injured, I would call Bill... (In relation to a homicide investigation) I wanted reassurance I was in the right direction with my investigation – that these were the people I was actually looking for... When he first saw the car, you could see he got feelings right away. Once he starts talking, he's just like a machine going on... How really right he was. That was our biggest case with Bill. One case doesn't make him a genius, but on this one he was right on the money. (Crmkovic 1986 44)

Unfortunately for psychics, a majority of sources indicated such target accuracy in police cases involving psychics is rare. As one skeptic argues:

Psychic ability is a tremendous waste of tax money when used for "police purposes." Any homicide investigator who's ever gotten a spate of publicity has been contacted by a member of the "psychic community" who claims to have information that might help solve the case. Hundreds, yes thousands of police detectives have spent hundreds of thousands of hours examining psychically obtained evidence for clues to the solution of criminal cases. Yet, to this day there is not a shred of scientific proof of the validity of such information. (Lucas 1985 16)

Often police officers agree. In one source, an officer from Austin, Texas states:

I have yet to see any information received from psychics of any value, based on 20 years of experience. The information is usually distorted, of no investigative value, and inaccurate. They hamper an investigation and often cause distractions from the main investigation. (Sweat & Durm 1993 156)

A Fort Worth, Texas officer has similar feel-

ings indicating:

They surface on sensational cases only. Most fit a mold. They tell you they are 85 percent accurate and are very defensive when you ask them for specifics. It doesn't take long for them to reach the victims' relative and generate false hope. I would never, no matter what the cost, rely upon a psychic other than to process info the same as we do for everyone else. (Sweat & Durm 1993 157)

This passage implies that psychics only get involved with high profile criminal cases so they can promote themselves or the legitimacy of what they do. However, many criminal justice cases involving psychics concern anonymous information (Daniels & Horan 1987). It is possible police often deny the use of psychic information due to legitimacy issues in their own profession. Police appear to be in their own struggle for legitimacy and professionalization with, for example, the use of educational credentials. Moreover, they are in a continuous struggle to fight off deviant stereotypes involving brutality and corruption (see Bittner 1975; Goldstein 1983; Sheley 2000). The use of a psychic or medium can jeopardize the validity of the investigation. As in the case of Allison DuBois, police that work with her will not share details of cases because they fear defense attorneys will discredit it and seek an appeal if they catch on that any "evidence" was provided by a psychic (Tresnlowski, Stoyloff, & Paley 2005).

Comparison to the Medical Profession.

Our data indicate that cross-organizational psychics and mediums are much like the traditional physicians that subsumed osteopathy into a medical specialty for traditional medicine. The difference between the intra-organizational, hierarchical category and the cross-organizational is that the former believe in psychic ways of knowing and subsume medical professional appearances. On the other hand, cross-organizational psychics and mediums are professionals based in scientific principles subsuming psychic ways of knowing with various levels of belief in those ways of knowing. If these groups are successful, they may be the first to be considered professional according to Freidson's (1984) model. With cross-organizational psychics and mediums, it may take an-

other fifty years for this to happen. As Wolinsky (1980) points out, it took fifty years for the osteopaths to be subsumed into traditional medicine.

Charlatans

Charlatans are at the heart of the legitimacy problem for psychics and mediums. Again, charlatans are people claiming to be psychics or spirit mediums only for entertainment and profit purposes. In relation to Freidson's (1984) theory, they directly work against professionalization because they discredit all of the elements of expertise, accreditation, and autonomy. They are particularly problematic since the understanding of paranormal work does not fit into the rational, logical means accepted in the widespread culture and scientific community. So when people believe some psychics and mediums are out to "con" them, they believe they all are. We call this the "charlatan error." Many skeptics use it. The charlatan error is the reason that the process of deviance neutralization has to be incorporated along with the process of professionalization for psychic and mediums.

Proskauer (1946) pushed forth the charlatan error concept when looking at the paranormal work of Dr. Emerson Gilbert. Proskauer acknowledged

respect for scientific research into psychic phenomena, which was motivated by a genuine and disinterested desire to add to man's knowledge of himself and his destiny.

Yet, he held contempt for those charlatans like Dr. Emerson that were found to be totally fraudulent. Proskauer's (1946 2) work describes Gilbert's psychology and establishment in the following terms:

It was a bizarre setting, a doctor's office transformed into a séance room. A neat psychological twist concocted by the subtle mind of a man who was to mark himself a clever schemer, craftily seeking every twist and turn. Having gained his client's confidence by disguising his claptrap under a medical mask, Gilbert continued with the process of warped logic, presented in convincing style..... What marked Dr. Gilbert as unique was the fact that he was not limited to the choice of contemporary specialists. Having contact with the spirit world, Gilbert

could summon his consultants from there, giving his patients the advantage that no other physician could offer.

Though Gilbert was later proven to be neither a doctor nor a psychic, his case is interesting because though he was proven not to be a doctor, other doctors were not called into question as professionals, yet other psychics are found suspect when such cases occur. This is perhaps because the medical field has assured itself a high level of legitimacy, so it is not questioned as often. This dodging of the "charlatan error" allows illegitimate doctors to carry off fraudulent schemes against clients. With their profession's high level of *perceived* authenticity, people rarely question them or their actions.

In terms of psychics and mediums, Ford and Harmon Bro (1958) suggest that the words and actions of one man in the 1920s, Harry Houdini, largely molded our current cultural impressions. They describe the polarization of the general public as follows:

One of the most passionate expositors of mediums was Houdini, the magician. In the early twenties he threw the entire weight of his reputation as a magician behind his declaration that all mediums were fakes, and that he could duplicate any trick a medium could do... It is difficult to recover the violent reaction of the orthodox against Spiritualism in Houdini's day. In the orthodox mind all Spiritualists were equated with the lunatic fringe and all mediums were tools of the devil, even if there were no devil. Here Houdini took his stand and lined up his targets... As the self-appointed expositor of fraudulent mediumship and ridiculer of Spiritualists, he built himself the biggest reputation in America, and probably in the world. (Ford & Harmon Bro 1958 60-61)

This polarization in the general public continued with the expansion of science and rationality. It was primarily unabated until the 1970s. The resurgence of psychics and mediums in the postmodern era happened as science began to reveal that everything is relative (and thereby possible but not definite or permanent). People once again turned to explore realms that transcend a merely physical plane (Davies 1999). Others would say this renewal in occult interest was the

result of disenchantment with modernity (Hodges 2002). Whatever the case, there was a renewal in the number of charlatans as well. The scientific community was quick to point this out. Carl Sagan, a noted astronomer, made himself a widely known opponent of paranormal work, which he discussed as "pseudoscience." In his writings he states:

More than a third of American adults believe that on some level they've made contact with the dead. The number seems to have jumped by 15 percent between 1977 and 1988. A quarter of Americans believe in reincarnation. But that doesn't mean I'd be willing to accept the pretensions of a "medium," who claims to channel the spirits of the dear departed, when I'm aware the practice is rife with fraud. I know how much I want to believe that my parents have just abandoned the husks of their bodies, like insects or snakes molting, and gone somewhere else. I understand those feelings might make me easy prey even for an un-clever con, or for normal people unfamiliar with their unconscious minds, or for those suffering from a dissociative psychiatric disorder. Reluctantly, I rouse some reserves of skepticism. (Sagan 1996 203-204)

In terms of psychics and mediums, Sagan's work also points out:

Many are conscious charlatans—using Christian evangelical or New Age language and symbols to prey on human frailty. Perhaps there are some with motives that are not venal. Or am I being too harsh? How is the occasional charlatan in faith healing different from the occasional fraud in science? Is it fair to be suspicious of an entire profession because of a few bad apples? There are at least two important differences, it seems to me. First, no one doubts science actually works, whatever mistaken and fraudulent claim may from time to time be offered. But whether there are any "miraculous" cures from faith healing beyond the bodies own ability to cure itself, is very much at issue. Secondly, the expose of fraud and error in science is made almost exclusively by science. The discipline polices itself - meaning that scientists are aware of the potential for charlatany and mistakes. But the exposure of fraud and error in faith healing is almost never done by other faith

healers... A placebo works only if the patient believes it's an effective medicine. Within strict limits, hope, it seems, can be transformed into biochemistry. (Sagan 1996 229-230)

Sociologists have also looked at psychics and spirit mediums from the lens of the ontological falsity of their claims. Boles, Davis, and Tatro (1990) researched the false pretense and exploitation in fortunetelling. They carried out valid study portraying and exposing fraudulent acts. Yet as noted by Goode (2000) and Hodges (2002), this is only one side of the coin. Science is bounded and limited. Belief in science can be overextended beyond its discoveries. From a sociological point of view, faith in science is in reality no different than faith in anything else. Charlatans exist as one possibility; genuine psychics are another.

CONCLUSIONS

Using Freidson's (1984) theory of professionalization as a backdrop, it becomes apparent that various groups of psychics are involved in deviance neutralization and professionalization. The establishment of expertise, the use of education as a credential, and ties to a legitimate profession were especially salient in our study. Importantly, the findings indicate that professionalization in and of itself may be an impression management tactic. As discussed in the early pages of this work, these neutralization techniques may appear to be working, but psychic occupations have a long way to go to reach an adequate state of legitimacy. With charlatans, some of whom are facing criminal charges, tainting the image of psychics, the future of professionalization seems bleak. This not withstanding a dominant cultural ideology focused on a paradigm of scientific validity.

Regardless, this work remains important for several reasons. First, it fills a gap in existing literature. It stands as one of the only sociological pieces of research examining psychics and their attempts to neutralize a deviant image. Second, it provides a typology for examining paranormal occupations. A breakdown of different types of psychics and mediums not only allowed the current researchers a better understanding of literature pertaining to psychics, but also opens the door for future research looking at issues such as psychics, mediums, and their rela-

tionships with other occupations. Finally, it indicates that a psychic liberation movement is forming. It would be beneficial for future research to explore the link between that movement with existing social movements literature. As the findings in this work imply, a frame analysis (see Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford 1986) might provide insight into the alignment of psychic cognitive frameworks to those of the general population.

ENDNOTES

1. A detailed history of psychics and spirit mediums is beyond the scope of this study. Other works on the historical context this research concerns exist. For an exhaustive discussion see Bruce (1996), Steward (1999), Davies (1999), Emmons (2001) and Hodges (2002). Their research indicates that in the modern era, professional psychics and spirit mediums started to gain favor during the spiritualist movement of the mid-nineteenth century. It was a reaction to the dehumanization of the industrial revolution and the skepticism of scientific progress. Beginning in the 1950s, the scientific community started taking a hard look at evidence of psychic phenomena. Soon afterward, people identifying themselves as psychics and spirit mediums associated themselves with respected professions at a higher rate. In the 1970s, psychic phenomena came into the sphere of mainstream science with the published works of medical doctors, psychologists, and psychiatrists concerning near death experiences, past life regressions, and spirit possessions. With this aspect of legitimacy given to psychics and spirit mediums, coupled with positive media depictions, their popularity and legitimacy increased to its current state.
2. The literary ethnography is similar to what some refer to as "analytic induction." Analytic induction involves scanning data for categories of phenomena and relationships between categories. A hypothesis emerges from the examination of initial cases and is refined with the examination of subsequent cases. For some, this process involves a constant comparison of data to discover relationships (see Goetz & LeCompte 1981; Lincoln & Guba 1985). The main difference with the literary ethnography concerns its precise methodological steps and focus on literary information.
3. More current texts were selected as a result of reading the work of John Edward (1999, 2002) along with George Anderson and Andrew Barone (1999). Texts were also considered that had been used as references by other notable researchers in this area, such as Goode (2000), Truzzi (1972, 1974, 1999) and Markovsky and Thye (2001).

4. These categories are not mutually exclusive. A passage referencing a charismatic psychic might also apply to an interorganizational type. Moreover, some points that involve the charismatic classification are present in other classifications, as is the case with charismatic and cross-occupational psychics. We should also point out that we defined specific categories at this stage of the research, but did remain open to emerging topics as we continued to deal with the documents.

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