"DESRrollo Del MÉdium":
THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A
HEALER IN PUERTO RICAN "ESPIRITISMO"

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief System</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing Dimensions of Puerto Rican Espiritismo</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Between Spiritist Healers and Mental Health Professionals</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Anti-Therapeutic Elements of Spiritist Practices</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit Possession in Puerto Rican Espiritismo</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Process of Becoming a Medium</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Model: Theoretical Orientation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures for Collecting Data</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures for Analyzing the Data</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note About the Translation Problem</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS: THE EXPERIENCE OF A NATIVE RESEARCHER</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical Note</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a Native Researcher</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Participants</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SPIRITIST MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY PUERTO RICO</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Brief History of Espiritismo in Puerto Rico: From its Introduction to 1930</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Practice of Indigenous Espiritismo</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Practice of Kardecian Espiritismo</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trincadistas: A Recent Group of Espiritistas in Puerto Rico</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church Movement within Espiritismo</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Syncretism of Espiritismo and Santería</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. PRESENTATION OF LIFE-STORIES</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doña Gela</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernesto</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doña Generosa</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doña Aurea</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Mayo</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aída</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peruchín</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Félix</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emiliano</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcos</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Doña Luisa .................................................. 248
Doña Juanita .................................................. 259
Miriam ...................................................... 268
Doña Luz ..................................................... 289

VII. MEDIUMS' ORIENTATION TOWARD THE VALUES OF
    INDIGENOUS ESPIRITISMO .................................. 298
    Toward a Classification of Mediums .................. 298
    Moving Away from the Indigenous Spiritist
    Model: The Influence of Social Class,
    Academic Education and Religious Orientation
    on the Medium's Conception of the Desirable .... 328

VIII. BECOMING A MEDIUM IN PUERTO RICO: THE PROCESS
     OF DESARROLLO ............................................. 346
     The First Contact with the Spirit World:
     "The Opening of the Brain" .......................... 346
     Desarrollo de Facultades ............................ 366
     The Education of the Medium and "Education
     as Transformation" ................................... 381

IX. CONCLUSION ................................................. 412

Appendix A: Interview Schedule .......................... 419
Appendix B: Glossary of Spiritist Concepts ............ 430
Appendix C: Summary of Demographic Data .............. 435
References ................................................... 436
Vita .......................................................... 464
ABSTRACT

_Espiritismo_ (Spiritism) is a community healing system that has been considered a very important mental health resource for Puerto Ricans. Research on _Espiritismo_ has centered on explaining and evaluating the success of _Espiritismo_, especially by comparing it with Western psychotherapy. As a result our knowledge of the individuals who are practitioners within this healing system is limited and based on impressions. In order to fill this gap this study examined the process of becoming a spiritist healer (medium) in Puerto Rico using a life-story approach. Becoming a medium was analyzed as an educational process which involves several learning experiences.

Two major methods were used for collecting data about the process of becoming a medium: the qualitative interview and participant observation. Sixteen mediums were interviewed about how they became mediums, evolution of their healing practices and their conception of the ideal medium. In addition, through participant observation in several spiritist centers on the Island, data was gathered on how mediums are educated at the centers.

It was found that the participants of this study
referred to the process of becoming a medium as desarrollodel médium (development of the medium). Desarrollo involves an initial period called the "opening of the brain" (abrir el cerebro) in which the medium begins to communicate with the spirit world. For some mediums this period was distressing to the degree that they experienced an emotional crisis. However for others the "opening of the brain" did not involve any emotional crisis. The data suggests that those participants who have been socialized within Espiritismo since they were children had less propensity to suffer the crisis associated with the "opening of the brain".

The process of desarrollado also involves the development of faculties (facultades), a period in which the medium learns to have control over the mediumistic trance and to identify his/her spirit guides. Both periods, the opening of the brain and the development of facultades, were described in details with examples from the field work and the interviews.

The study also indicates that the medium's social class and academic education may influence his/her healing practices and conception of the ideal medium.

It was found that the education of the spiritist medium has principles which are similar to a model of healer
education developed by Katz (1981) called "education as transformation". Like education as transformation, the education of the spiritist healer emphasizes experiences of transformation, the development of the healer's character, transitioning, the service orientation of the healing work, and the centrality of the spiritual dimension. The implication of these findings were examined in relation to the education of Western mental health professionals.
INTRODUCTION

Every culture develops specific ways for dealing with issues of healing and illness within a socio-cultural context. Western psychotherapy is only one of many different healing systems around the world (Frank, 1961; Kiev, 1964; Torrey, 1986). In the last years increasing number of authors have recognized that psychotherapy may not be the most appropriate and effective method for helping individuals from non-Western cultural backgrounds. There has been an emphasis on the exploration and understanding of indigenous healing systems in order to improve the delivery of mental health services for minority groups such as American Indians (Bergman, 1973), Black Americans (Griffith, 1982) and Hispanics (Harwood, 1977; Sandoval, 1979; Trotter & Chavira, 1981).

Within the Hispanic communities, an indigenous healing system called Espiritismo ("Spiritism") has been extensively studied in an attempt to evaluate and understand its success in helping Hispanics and especially Puerto Ricans (Delgado, 1979a, 1979b, 1979c; Garrison, 1977a; Gaviria & Wintrob, 1979; Harwood, 1977; Koss, 1975; Morales Dorta, 1976; Salgado, 1974). It has been documented that a significant
number of Puerto Ricans are using Espiritismo as an alternative to the professional health system (Garrison, 1977b; Rogler & Hollingshead, 1965). Based in the belief of a spirit world that has the capacity to intervene in human affairs, Espiritismo is practiced by Puerto Ricans living in the Island as well as those living in the United States. In a study done by Wakefield (1957) about the Puerto Ricans in Harlem, New York, one of his informants described the popularity of Espiritismo among Puerto Ricans as follows:

If you ever talk to a Puerto Rican who says he doesn't believe in the spirits, you know what that means? It means you haven't talked to him long enough (p. 59).

Until now, research on Espiritismo has emphasized the description and the explanation of spiritist healing, primarily using the analytic framework of Western psychotherapy. As a result, very little is known about the life and development of the individuals who provide the services within this healing system. We do not know, for example, how spiritist healers develop their abilities, what they experience, or what factors may promote their development. One of the best ways to study any kind of healing system is to examine the development of those who are practitioners within the system (Katz, 1981). This thesis initiates the complex task of examining the development of
spiritist healers using a life-story approach.

Spiritist healers are known as "mediums" within the Puerto Rican community because they consider themselves to be instruments of the spirit world. Most of them are general practitioners who do not specialize in treating specific problems. In contrast to mental health professionals, mediums do not receive any formal schooling in order to develop healing skills.

Studies about the development of spiritist mediums are necessary for several reasons. First, by examining the development of mediums one may be able to achieve a better understanding of Espiritismo as a healing system. Second, the life of mediums may contain important lessons and general principles about healer's development and education which can be useful to Western psychotherapists. Third, research about the development of mediums may contribute profoundly to increasing our understanding of them. When one does not know enough about a group of people the tendency is to base our knowledge of them on stereotypes. Increasing our knowledge about the medium's development may help us to move away from a unidimensional and stereotypical image of the medium.

Fourth, by knowing the medium as a person, one may be able to achieve better ways of collaborating with him/her. Any formal collaboration between mediums and Western
psychotherapists or doctors has to be based on sufficient knowledge of the medium's life-history.

Based on this rationale, the major purpose of this study is to describe the process of becoming a medium using a phenomenological approach. I am interested in examining the kind of knowledge and skills that an individual needs to acquire in order to become a medium. From this perspective, the goal of this study can be seen as describing the process of becoming a medium in order to discover the major dimensions of the spiritist model for educating healers. An analysis of the process of becoming a medium would be incomplete without a discussion of how Espiritismo is practiced in present day Puerto Rico. Thus another goal of this study is to examine the presence of different spiritist movements in Puerto Rico and how they are influencing the development of mediums.

More than 20 years ago Rogler and Hollingshead (1965) conducted an epidemiological study of schizophrenia in Puerto Rico, finding that spiritist healers have a very important function in the prevention and treatment of mental disorders. It appears that the situation has not changed very much since that time. In 1980 the Department of Health of Puerto Rico published a report which suggested that mental health professionals were not the major source of help for a great
number of Puerto Ricans confronting emotional problems. It was estimated that more than 500,000 Puerto Ricans needed mental health services but only 103,555 of them received services from mental health centers. At that time in Puerto Rico there were 210 psychiatrists and 46 psychologists offering services to a population of three and a half million Puerto Ricans. Moreover, most of these mental health professionals were working in the Metropolitan Area (San Juan, Río Piedras, Santurce, Bayamón, Carolina, Guaynabo, Trujillo Alto). In addition, the 12 mental health centers in Puerto Rico do not have enough trained personnel to offer psychotherapy, 95% of the clients receive pharmacotherapy (Rivera, 1984).

These data may help us to appreciate the significant role that Espiritismo, as a healing system, may be playing within the Puerto Rican community. In Puerto Rico, spiritist healers are not usually in competition with mental health professionals; instead they are offering services that the community cannot receive from the professional mental health system.

As a community healing system, Espiritismo in Puerto Rico is practiced by lower class as well as upper class individuals (Saavedra de Roca, 1969). In addition, illiterate people as well as those with college education are
also believers in Espiritismo (Seda Bonilla, 1973). Espiritismo functions as a religion for some Puerto Ricans; as a healing system used in moments of crisis for others; and as a "philosophy" and "science" for academically oriented individuals.

Usually the practice of Espiritismo takes place in spiritist centers (centros espiritistas) where a group of people meet in order to communicate with the spirits of the dead. The purpose of these meetings is to help those people who are suffering due to the negative influence of the spirit world. At the spiritist meeting individuals with problems learn to have control over the spirit world by using the healing resources of good spirits and educating those spirits who are causing harm.

In order to set the background for future discussion, I will present a description of the belief system of Espiritismo.

Belief System

The foundation of the spiritist belief system is the view of a spirit world which is constantly interacting with the "material world" (mundo material). The spirit world is seen to be inhabited by spirits who are classified
according to a hierarchy of moral development (Harwood, 1977). The spirits at the lowest level of this hierarchy are identified as ignorants or "little evolved" because they are too attached to the material world and interested in harming human beings. At the highest level, the evolved spirits or "spirits of light" (espíritus de luz) have achieved a great degree of spiritual perfection, being able to protect people from the negative influence of the ignorant spirits.

Human beings are composed of two major dimensions: a material body and a spirit. When a person dies, his or her spirit leaves the body but continues living on another plane of existence. In this other plane, the spirit maintains its identity as well as its moral and spiritual development. Spirits are considered to be "disincarnated beings" (seres desencarnados) while human beings are "incarnated beings" (seres encarnados); the essential difference between the two is that a human being has a "material body". The essence of the person is his or her spirit; the body is just an instrument.

One's spirit exists before one is born and it will survive after death. Spirits have to reincarnate several times in order to achieve moral perfection. One life is not enough to "purify" (purificar) the spirit of its moral weaknesses. One's present problems and conflicts are deeply
determined by one's actions in past lives. For example, conflictive relationships from past lives may affect one's present relationships. A spirit wife or husband from a past life can cause problems in current intimate relationships with the opposite sex if this spirit is ignorant and does not recognize that we are living another life.

Related to the belief in reincarnation is the concept of pruebas ("trials" or "tests"). According to Espiritistas, pruebas are problems, sufferings or illnesses which have been chosen by a person before birth in order to pay a spiritual debt of a past life. If a person suffers the pruebas with resignation, he or she will purify the spirit of moral imperfections.

Communication between the spirits and human beings is an essential element of Espiritismo. Individuals capable of contacting the spirit world are called mediums: they serve as intermediaries between the spirit world and the material world. Mediums are the instruments that spirits use to manifest themselves and to communicate with the material world. In theory every person is an actual or a potential medium because being a medium is considered to be a natural capacity. Yet, in order to become a medium, an individual has to be involved in a process called desarrollo de facultades (development of faculties). The facultades are
the different capacities that a medium needs to communicate with the spirits to get help from them.

The spiritual development of human beings is intrinsically connected to the spiritual development of spirits. A reciprocal helping process is required for the spiritual evolution of incarnated and disincarnated beings. Good and ignorant spirits need the help of human beings to transcend their limitations. In the same way, human beings cannot progress towards higher levels of spiritual development without the help of spirits.

From birth, every person has a spirit guide who is in charge of protecting him or her from the influence of ignorant spirits. The spirit protector is expected to provide assistance, guidance and spiritual support when the person is in trouble.

Espiritistas believe that ignorant spirits can be the cause of physical as well as mental illness. These spirits can control the thoughts and actions of an individual making him or her experience an obsesióñ. The individual who is suffering an obsesióñ is under the influence of the ignorant spirit, subjected to that spirit's will. The influence of these ignorant spirits can also produce physical disturbances, ranging from headaches to major illnesses.

In the sections of the thesis which follow, I will begin
presenting a review of the literature on Espiritismo. Second, I will describe the methodological issues involved in doing this thesis in chapters three and four. Third, I will discuss five different spiritist movements that are practiced in Puerto Rico today followed by the presentation of the participants' life-stories. Fourth, I will explain the criteria utilized to classify mediums emphasizing how the mediums' values are affecting their healing practices. Five, I will analyze the process of becoming a medium, emphasizing the medium's education. Finally, the implications of this thesis will be discussed followed by suggestions for future research.
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I will present a review of studies about Espiritismo that have been written since the 1960's. I have organized this literature in five research areas: healing dimensions of Espiritismo; collaboration between health professionals and mediums; possible anti-therapeutic elements of spiritist practices; spirit possession; and the process of becoming a medium. Research on Espiritismo has been oriented to the study of the first four areas.

Healing Dimensions of Puerto Rican Espiritismo

Most of the researchers on Espiritismo have concluded that these healers are effective in the treatment of Puerto Rican clients (Comas-Díaz, 1981; Delgado, 1978; Garrison, 1977b; Harwood, 1977; Koss, 1975; Lubchansky et al., 1970; Mercado, 1974; Morales-Dorta, 1976; Ruíz and Langrod, 1976a; Saavedra de Roca, 1969; Salgado, 1974; Seda-Bonilla, 1973). These authors have compared Espiritismo with Western psychotherapeutic approaches in order to explain and understand why spiritist healers successfully heal. First, I will discuss the similarities that have been suggested between Espiritismo and modern therapeutic approaches.

Some authors have described the role of the spiritist healer as a cultural variation of Western mental health professionals (Comas-Díaz, 1981; Seda-Bonilla, 1969; Singer, 1984). Spiritist healers have been compared with social workers (Delgado, 1977), psychologists (Sánchez, 1980), counselors (Salgado, 1974), and psychiatrists (Rogler and Hollingshead,
1961) in terms of how they diagnose, treat and cure several kinds of disorders.

Similarities have also been suggested between spiritist healing and different Western psychotherapies in terms of the techniques employed. It has been argued that the spiritist meeting has therapeutic elements because it functions like a psychodrama (Garrison, 1977a; Morales-Dorta, 1976; Seda-Bonilla, 1969). Seda-Bonilla (1969) argued that "conceived as a psychodramatic performance, the spiritualist session enacts the intrapsychic conflict of the patient in a drama in which the spirit demands reparation for unfulfilled promises" (p. 493). According to Seda-Bonilla the spiritist healer plays the role of the auxiliary ego by enacting clients' unconscious conflicts, helping them to externalize conflicts and to express repressed emotions.

Similarly, others have mentioned that the spiritist meeting functions as a kind of group therapy because clients recognize they share the same kind of problems with other people and receive support from members (Fisch, 1968; Pérez and Mena, 1977; Reeler and Hollings'head, 1961). In addition, it has been suggested that many of the approaches to alcohol treatment utilized in Espiritismo parallel techniques used in family alcoholism therapy (Singer, 1984). For instance, spiritist healers view families as interacting functional units, encouraging each member of the family to be involved in treatment. Treatment is directed at the alcoholic family rather than the individual problem drinker.

The healing process in Espiritismo has also been explained using psychodynamic concepts (Lubchansky, et. al., 1970; Mercado,
1974; Garrison, 1977a). Lubchansky et. al. (1970) described the case of a girl who saw a medium because of problems with her father. He interpreted the girl's meeting with the medium by paralleling the concept of good spirits and evil spirits with the concepts of superego and id respectively:

She was encouraged to encapsulate her ego-alien symptoms by releasing her sexual impulses through trance possession in a controlled setting, the seance. When the medium entered into a trance, he attempted to act as her superego while she played the role of the observing ego. When the medium saw that the technique was failing, he reversed it, representing her id. A reciprocal reversal occurred in the girl who in this latter confrontation was assaulted by superego anxiety (p. 318).

Following Lubchansky's argument, Garrison (1977a) argued that both the spirit guide and the superego have the function of guidance and psychological punishment. She also related the concept of the id with the ignorant spirit because both of them represent unsocialized forces and aggressive impulses. On the other hand, Garrison recognized that the most important difference between these concepts is their physical location. In Espiritismo, ignorant spirits and spirit guides are located outside the individual, while in psychoanalysis the id and the superego are located within the organism of the individual. She also made an excellent point in declaring that neither the psychoanalytic concepts nor the spiritist concepts have a location in exclusively internal or external space, and that the belief in these concepts is a matter of faith in both theoretical systems.

Seda-Bonilla (1969) translated spiritist concepts to psychodynamic ones by explaining that the ignorant spirits
represent the unconscious and repressed feelings of clients and the process of educating ignorant spirits is an attempt to work through the client's "resistance".

Finally, it has been mentioned that spiritist healers use several techniques that are similar to the ones employed by modern psychotherapists. For instance, researchers have noted that spiritist healers utilized these therapeutic techniques: refraining (Garrison, 1982), rehabilitation therapy (Garrison, 1982), abreaction and catharsis (Harwood, 1977; Lubchansky et al., 1970), role playing (Lubchansky et al., 1970), crisis intervention (Harwood, 1977; Garrison, 1982), confession and review of past history (Harwood, 1977), therapeutic paradoxes (Koss, 1975), hypnotic techniques and suggestion (Delgado, 1979-80).

It seems to me that the analysis of similarities between spiritist healing and modern therapeutic approaches is important because this analysis may help us understand the therapeutic implications of Espiritismo. However, this analysis may also prevent us from a full understanding of Espiritismo as an indigenous healing system (Katz and Núñez-Molina, 1986). One may conclude that spiritist healers are effective because they are very similar to modern psychotherapists. But comparing healing systems of different cultures involves the danger of emphasizing similarities at the level of psychological concepts without considering the importance of the differences at the level of the cultural and social dimension. There is a tendency to "psychologize" Espiritismo without considering the unique healing elements of this system.

The other approach that has been utilized to explain the
Effectiveness of Espiritismo is the consideration of major differences between this system and modern psychotherapeutic approaches. Some of the differences that have been identified are:

1. Spiritist healing, unlike Western psychotherapy, is congruent with basic premises of the Puerto Rican culture. Healers take into consideration and utilize cultural concepts that are essential in the Puerto Rican community such as the extended family and the godparents (Ruiz, 1976; Singer and Borrero, 1984). Healers are actively engaged in bringing about therapeutic results, often offering direct advice (Delgado, 1978). In this sense healer and client share similar expectations because it has been found that advice and medication are the principal forms of treatment expected by Puerto Rican patients (Gaviria and Wintrob, 1979). Healers like to prescribe herbs and baths which represent a kind of medication for the clients (Morales-Dorta, 1976). In addition, most lower-social class Puerto Ricans do not believe that they can resolve their problems through psychotherapy. They do not expect to be questioned about or to discuss their psychic conflicts (Gaviria and Wintrob, 1979). Spiritist healing fulfills this expectation by involving the client in different activities, giving little emphasis to talking as a way of achieving insight (De Ins Santos, 1982). Purdy et. al. (1972) described spiritist healing as "exorcism by action as opposed to exorcism by thought and insight" (p. 78).

2. The sociocultural distance between spiritist healers and their
clients is minimal (Singer and Borrero, 1984). Healers share the subculture of their clients (Harwood, 1977; Rogler and Hollingshead, 1965). They live in the same community as their clients, sharing "the day-to-day frustrations of ghetto living: unemployment, lack of adequate sanitation, housing and medical care, and estrangement from the outside world" (Ruiz and Langrod, 1976a, p. 394). All of this provides the spiritist healer with a better understanding of the client's problems.

3. Spiritist healers communicate in a manner that is similar to the communication patterns of their clients (Claudio et al., 1972; Delgado, 1979-80). They use short sentences to describe symptoms, immediately identifying the cause of the problem. Most of the times healers prefer to divine the client's problems by posing several questions which require only a "yes" or "no" response. Consequently, clients do not necessarily need verbal skills in order to get help (Stewart de Socarras, 1982). According to Koss (1982) spiritist healers "utilize symbolic pathways to manipulate emotions in their clients" (1982, p.5).

4. In spiritist healing the client's problem is not a stigmatizing phenomenon (Rogler and Hollingshead, 1961). Usually the client's symptoms are not seen as the manifestation of mental illness but as the signal that the client is developing faculties. The healers interpret the client's symptoms as a gift. This is very important for Puerto Rican clients because they are afraid of being labeled "locos" (mentally ill).

5. Spiritist healers are highly accessible to their clients.
Spiritist centers are located near the community they serve (Koss, 1965; Harwood, 1977). Usually healers provide assistance any time of the day without the need to make appointments. In addition, spiritist healing is characterized by a lack of impersonal or bureaucratic procedures (Rogler and Hollingshead, 1961). The services of healers are very inexpensive and most of the time the payment for services is based on a free-will offering. Furthermore spiritist clients have a knowledge of criteria for evaluating the healer (Harwood, 1977). In the community people know who the good healers are.


In addition to compare Espiritismo with Western psychotherapy, researchers have suggested that Espiritismo has several functions as a community healing resource. First, Espiritismo has been conceived as an institutionalized outlet for the therapeutic discharge of frustration, anxiety and aggression. It has also been seen as a social organization which helps the schizophrenics to cope with their illness (Rogler and Hollingshead, 1965; Saavedra de Roca, 1969). Second, this healing system has been conceived as a mechanism for the attainment of power and control over the environment (Delgado, 1977). Third, Espiritismo functions as a natural support system and a natural network therapy (Delgado, 1982; Garrison, 1978). Fourth, Espiritismo provides a method of adaptation for many Puerto Rican
immigrants, offering them extensive emotional support (Pérez y Mena, 1977; Ruíz, 1979). In the spiritist meetings clients experience a sense of community and belonging (Salgado, 1974). Spiritist centers also function as voluntary organizations providing job referrals, recreational opportunities and social contacts outside the family (Harwood, 1977). Spiritist healers also serve as a link between the population and community resources (Salgado, 1974). Fifth, spiritist meetings offer the opportunity for the expression of creativity (KOSS, 1979).

Collaboration Between Spiritist Healers and Mental Health Professionals

Recognizing the therapeutic value of Espiritismo, researchers have recommended that mental health professionals need to collaborate with spiritist healers in order to provide more effective treatment to their clients (Claudio, Palleja & Vélez, 1972; Comas-Díaz, 1981; Delgado, 1977, 1979-80; Fisch, 1968; Garrison, 1977b, 1978, 1982; Harwood, 1977; Koss, 1980; Lubchansky et al., 1970; Ruíz, 1976; Ruíz and Langrod, 1976a, 1977; Sánchez, 1980). However, very few of these researchers have discussed the problems of collaboration (Delgado, 1979-80; Harwood, 1977). In order to make a liaison with the healers, the following areas should be further explored: What does it mean to "collaborate" with spiritist healers?; What criteria will be used to select the healers?; Where and when should this collaboration take place?; What kind of impact will this collaboration have on the traditional and professional healing system?

A formal collaboration between spiritist healers and mental
health programs may involve the healers in different kinds of tasks: 1) making presentations and doing case consultation to professional groups; 2) receiving and making referrals; and 3) working on a case together with a mental health professional (Delgado, 1979-80). Different projects have been created to implement these three kinds of collaboration with healers. In New Jersey, Garrison (1982) has created the Inner-City Support System Project with the ultimate goal:

.. to develop an optimal relationship between the folk healers and the orthodox care system which will maximize the benefits, minimize the risks, and reduce the conflicts for patients of the coexistence of alternative independent systems of conceptualization and management of the same or similar conditions (p. 59).

Similarly, Koss (1982) developed a project in Puerto Rico called The Therapist-Spiritist Training Project in which spiritist healers and mental health workers met over a 10 month period to exchange ideas, discuss cases and present lectures to one another. As a result of the project, some therapists and spiritist participants began to use each other’s system for dealing with their problems. In addition, some of them began to bring their relatives to practitioners in the other system. They also referred patients to the alternative system. It seems that as a consequence of the project, some participants developed a more open attitude toward using and collaborating with an alternative healing system.

Another example of collaboration between spiritist healers and health professionals was described by Ruíz (1976), a Cuban psychiatrist and director of a mental health program in Bronx, New York. Ruíz and his collaborators hired a number of well-known
mediums to work at the Lincoln Community Mental Health Center as community mental health workers (Ruíz and Langrod, 1976a, 1976b, 1977). A pre-service training program was designed to familiarize the staff with the approaches utilized by spiritist healers. In addition, Ruíz wanted to organize a "formal training program for folk healers which would acquaint them with the medical aspects of mental health and illness, and perhaps lead to their credentialed status as assistant therapists" (1976, p. 275).

Several issues should be considered before any attempt is made to collaborate with spiritist healers. First, trying to integrate spiritist healers into a community health center may be detrimental to the work of spiritist healers (Katz, 1982d). They work within a ritual context that is difficult to create in a mental health center or a psychiatric hospital (Harwood, 1977). Spiritist healers who work in a mental health center may be absorbed by the professional system into a low status position. Both healing systems should learn from each other, but the boundaries between them should be respected (Katz & Núñez-Molina, 1986).

Second, the use of spiritist healers by a mental health center may be resisted by a number of groups: mental health professionals, spiritist healers and community residents. Some mental health professionals and spiritist healers may be opposed to the idea of working together (Delgado, 1979-80; Harwood, 1977). Mental health professionals may feel that spiritist healers are not qualified to help people and they may not agree with the diagnosis and treatment made by spiritist healers. Some spiritist healers may not like to share their "secrets" and healing traditions with professional helpers. Commenting on this
issue in relation to the Navaho healers, Youcha (1981) wrote:

One medicine man was shocked when Navahos at a conference demonstrated sand painting, a sacred technique he felt should be kept a mystery. He also objected when a psychiatrist with whom he had cooperated in the treatment of many patients asked about the ritual he used to prepare himself for treating a sufferer. "You don't have to dance my way", the medicine man said. "You do it your way. It makes sense for you. You have yours" (p. 115).

This story may contain an essential recommendation for the planning of an effective liaison with spiritist healers. Both healing systems can "dance" together, but each should have their own rhythm and style of dancing. The complexity of collaboration can be appreciated when we realize how difficult it is to dance with another person when he or she is dancing to a different rhythm.

Another element that one needs to consider is that some spiritist healers do not wish to work in hospitals or mental health centers because "they view many patients as suffering from harmful spiritual influences of various sorts, and they fear that upon going into trance in such an atmosphere they might be overwhelmed by these malevolent spirits" (Harwood, 1977, p. 206). I think that often the best thing to do is to take the client to the spiritist center or to the place the healer uses to work. The healer's effectiveness will be increased if they can work with clients in their own environment (Harwood, 1977).

In order to implement formal collaboration with spiritist healers one has also to consider that community residents and religious groups may be opposed to the idea of any relationship between a mental health center and spiritist healers (Delgado, 1979-80; Harwood, 1977). One should know that a great number of
Puerto Ricans do not believe in Espiritismo. The Roman Catholic and Pentecostal churches consider mediums as being in league with the Devil. Community residents who are against the practice of Espiritismo may then protest or boycott mental health centers. They may decide not to attend an agency that is supporting the work of spiritist healers. As Harwood (1977) argues: "In light of this opposition, any formal relationship with spiritist healers would seem to be out of the question for any truly community-oriented health program in a Puerto Rican neighborhood" (p. 207).

This kind of resistance was experienced in the projects developed by Koss (1980) and Ruíz (1976). The Catholic Church published articles criticizing the Department of Health for supporting Koss's project in Puerto Rico. In the case of Ruíz, community residents protested that the mental health center use of their money to establish collaboration with spiritist healers.

Third, it is essential to know the spiritist healer very well in order to work in collaboration with him or her. From the literature on Espiritismo one gets the impression that all spiritist healers are equally effective. But this generalization does not take in consideration that the intervention of some spiritist healers may be more harmful than therapeutic to the client's life. Healers should be carefully evaluated in terms of their skills before any working relationship with one of them is established. Mental health professionals who refer some of their clients to the first spiritist healer they know may be doing a disservice to their clients. Garrison (1982) has begun to evaluate the practice of spiritist healers through ethnographic observations, interviews, and clinical skills assessments.
If mental health centers want to develop a formal relationship with spiritist healers they have the responsibility to select them. However, the development of appropriate criteria for screening healers is a very difficult task. Harwood (1977) recommends that instead of developing criteria for selecting healers, "the preferable course of action would seem to be to let patients choose their own therapists" (p. 207).

There are also references in the literature describing individual efforts by mental health professionals to develop a working relationship with spiritist healers (Comas-Díaz, 1981; Mercado, 1974). There is a tendency to present only cases of successful collaboration and leave out cases in which the liaison was not effective. One may learn a lot about collaboration with healers if non-successful cases are described and discussed in order to understand the nature of these "failures".

Possible Anti-Therapeutic Elements of Spiritist Practices

The possible detrimental effects of spiritist practices have been a matter of concern for different authors (De La Cancels and Zavala, 1983; Fisch, 1968; Purdy et al., 1972; Figueroa, 1981; Garrison, 1977b; Harwood, 1977; Koss, 1977c). It has been argued that the spiritist healer can make "antitherapeutic interventions" such as making incorrect assessments, discouraging clients from using medical services, advising clients to stop medication, contradicting the diagnosis of a physician and delaying or not making referrals.

One of the first researchers who suggested that spiritist practices may be more harmful than beneficial was Fisch (1968):
Mediums may not always refer patients to physicians when their problems are "material" in origin, and a serious medical problem may go unattended, perhaps with fatal consequences (p. 381).

Similarly, Purdy et al. (1972) after discussing five cases in which the intervention of spiritist healers was effective, warned us that:

Unfortunately, however, many patients who suffer from mental disorders do not receive adequate, or, in some instances, any psychiatric treatment because of their involvement with spiritism (p. 78).

But neither Fisch (1968) nor Purdy et al. (1972) presented evidence or cases to support their statements that spiritist healers may not refer their clients to a mental health professional or a physician when it is needed.

There are two major studies which provide some understanding about these antitherapeutic elements (Garrison, 1977b; Harwood, 1977). Garrison's long-term study describes the help-seeking behavior of a Puerto Rican neighborhood in New York City (South Bronx). It is based on participant observation made in 14 spiritist centers, interviews with the leaders of these centers, long-term participant observation in one of the spiritist centers, tape recorded transcripts of spiritist meetings, and statistical data on residents, spiritist clients and psychiatrist outpatients. Harwood's (1977) study is based on participant observation in five spiritist centers and open-ended interviews with healers over a period of two and a half years in New York City. The purpose of his research was to "...gather basic data on the etiological and nosological system underlying spiritist therapy, the kinds of problems brought to these
therapists, their treatment procedures, and many other pieces of information necessary to an understanding of their activities in community health" (1977, p. 4).

What did Garrison and Harwood find related to the detrimental effects of spiritist practices? First, Harwood (1977) found the following in relation to the issue of referrals by mediums:

In cases involving somatic problems, our data have shown that mediums do not generally object to their clients' use of physicians and that indeed they may prepare clients for medical treatment by allaying some of their fears (p. 204).

Harwood (1977) also said that "only very rarely in my experience did mediums actively discourage their clients from seeking medical help" (p. 205). He found that in general, spiritist clients do not seek the help of a healer for the treatment of organic disorders but they tend to go first to a physician.

Similarly, Garrison (1977b) studied 24 spiritist clients who reported a diagnosed chronic disease finding evidence that supports Harwood's conclusions:

The majority of those afflicted with chronic diseases continue to seek medical help for their organic disorders and seek the help of spiritists with mood and feeling states associated with the illness or for matters quite distinct from their organic diseases. In some cases the mediums divined these conditions among their symptoms probes, but in no case did they consider them "spiritual" or offer any treatment other than advice about diet, instructions to go to the doctor, reinforcement of the doctor's advice, or the prescription of patent liniments, in the cases of arthritis, or vitamins, in the cases of anemia (pp. 130-131).

However, both Garrison and Harwood commented that there are
some individuals who do not receive needed medical treatment due to their involvement with spiritist practices though this proportion of clients seems to be low. Harwood (1977) mentioned that his data contains only one example in which a medium advised a client not to seek medical help but this client had already been treated by several sources of medical care without any relief. Garrison (1977b) presented two cases which suggest that some spiritist healers may prevent clients from necessary surgical intervention, explaining to them that some spirits "want to cause unnecessary operations".

What about the argument that spiritist healers advise clients to stop their medication for physical conditions? According to Harwood (1977) sometimes healers may discourage clients from taking their medication but this phenomenon is uncommon:

In the most extreme case of this phenomenon uncovered in our research, a medium had convinced a diabetic to discontinue orinase, because he interpreted the client's symptoms as a prueba (p. 203).

However in a footnote Harwood explained that in this case there was not any adverse effect for the client because orinase was found to be ineffective and it was withdrawn from the market several years later.

Up to now, I have discussed the possible detrimental effects of spiritist practices for clients with organic may problems. There is evidence to support the idea that the majority of spiritist client's complaints are related to moderate psychiatric disturbances (Garrison, 1977b). It is this kind of
population that spiritist healers feel themselves competent to treat. Most of them will not consider the idea of referring clients with moderate psychiatric disturbances to a mental health worker. As Garrison (1977b) argued, the competition of spiritist healers is not with physicians but with mental health professionals.

Do spiritist healers advise clients who are suffering from psychiatric disturbances to stop taking psychotropic medication? Here the evidence is contradictory. Harwood (1977) mentioned that this was a very common practice among the spiritist healers he studied. On the other hand, Garrison (1977b) studied 20 spiritist clients who were taking psychotropic medication, reporting that "in none of these cases had the client been advised to stop taking such medication by a spiritist" (p. 129). It is important to say that all of the spiritist clients studied by Garrison were visiting the same spiritist center. One may conclude that some spiritist healers have a negative attitude toward psychotropic drugs while others do not. This is an issue that needs further investigation.

After having discussed in detail the issue of referral from spiritist healers and their intervention in medical treatment, I want to discuss elements of spiritist healing ideology that some have argued may be antitherapeutic for clients. De La Cancela and Zavala (1983) stated that the belief system of Espiritismo and other folk healing systems promote passivity, alienation from the social and political sources of problems and dependency on spiritist healers. They explained that the ideology of Espiritismo helps to maintain the oppressive
social and emotional conditions in the Puerto Rican community:

Folk healing may function to placate the action potential of angry and frustrated individuals by offering mystical and magical explanations and solutions to what are long-standing consequences of structural inequities within our society. Folk practices may displace anger and encourage the acceptance of one's lot in life as a prueba from God. In these ways, therefore, these practices and beliefs function not as healing, but possibly as a "new colonialism" which retards or inhibits an individual's development and acquisition of viable solutions towards self and social empowerment (1983, p. 267).

De La Cancela and Zavala see traditional healing systems as an instrument for resisting social and political change within a community. The weakness of their paper lies in the lack of evidence to support their position. They did not present any case to back up their argument, nor make any mention of having done any formal research on Espiritismo.

Although I agree that the ideology of traditional healing systems like Espiritismo may contain oppressive elements, it is essential to investigate how this ideology actually guides people's actions in their daily life. It is from this kind of data that one may begin to understand the issue in all of its complexity.

To my knowledge the only research on how the ideology of Espiritismo promotes or discourages social change was done by Figueroa (1981). Figueroa's goal was to determine the role that Espiritismo plays in enhancing or diminishing both national self-awareness and working class consciousness. His data come from participant observation in a spiritist group, analysis of case
studies and a description of a collective action by the spiritist group. He found that in spiritist meetings participants have the opportunity to discuss their experiences of discrimination and social injustice:

People can express their discontent and hatred before, during, and after the spiritual séances. Through spiritism, in one way or another, Puerto Rican working class people get to discuss their experiences with welfare, courts, offices, factories, etc. (Figueroa, 1981, p. 152).

Although Figueroa recognized that spiritist participants see their problems as caused by spiritual forces rather than social forces, his analysis of four case studies show spiritist meetings contributing to resistance more than to accommodation. He argued that the spiritist believe in a dialectical relationship between the material world and spiritual world: the spiritual world can affect and shape the material world as much as the material world can affect and shape the supernatural world.

Figueroa described in detail how a group of tenants used Espiritismo in order to act collectively against a landlord who did not want to heat their apartments and maintain the building. During one of their spiritist meetings they organized a rent strike and prepared for a demonstration in front of the landlord's home. Spiritist rituals were also used in order to ask for the help of good spirits. A limpieza (spiritual clean up) was given to the building and a trabajo (spell) was put on the landlord. The tenant's actions pressured the landlord to agree to their demands and the day after the demonstration their apartments were warm.
Figueroa (1981) summarized his argument as follows:

This, of course, does not mean that spiritism serves only as a force for social change. There are opposite tendencies working within the spiritual setting. In some instances spiritism becomes an escapist or an accommodating activity and at others it becomes a creative or progressive force.

These two dimensions of Espiritismo should be a matter of concern for future studies of spiritist centers. Evidence from case studies of Espiritismo needs to be gathered and analyzed in order to achieve a deeper understanding of how this healing system promotes or discourages social change. Without further research, it is impossible to know the real effects of this ideology in the lives of Espiritistas.

Some authors have also argued that spiritist healing may contain elements detrimental to the mental health and personal growth of their clients (Claudio et al., 1972; Garrison, 1977b; Koss, 1977c). Claudio et al., (1972) criticized Espiritismo arguing that as a result of spiritist treatment a client may become more helpless and insecure:

The concept of protecciones (spirit guides), for example, is an interesting case in point... It provides them with a strong, yet unrealistic faith that life will get better or that at least it cannot get worse, simply because their protecciones will not allow it. So the people, in spite of all their sufferings, must "earn" their protecciones as though they are not innately good enough or have not suffered sufficiently to merit them automatically. The espiritistas don't encourage people to strengthen themselves but to give strength to their protecciones by performing certain prescribed rituals. In this sense, espiritismo both feeds on their insecurities and enhances them (p. 6).

The evidence does not support the way in which Claudio et al. (1972) interpreted the function of the protecciones in Puerto
Rican Espiritismo. According to Espiritismo, people are born with some protecciones, so they do not need to "earn" them (Harwood, 1977). However in the process of development as a medium, a person needs to have other protecciones in order to be effective as a healer. A medium will develop other spirit guides depending on his/her moral behavior and commitment to the healing work. Besides, the argument that the Espiritistas do not encourage people to strengthen themselves does not consider the point that in order for a client to fight the influence of ignorant spirits, he or she has to develop spiritual strength and moral character. Mediums with whom I have talked emphasize in their work that clients need to develop strength in order to control the influence of spirits.

Other authors have mentioned that the relationship between the leader of a center and the spiritist clients is characterized by a high degree of dependency (Comas-Díaz, 1981; Delgado, 1977; Koss, 1970). Delgado (1977) for instance, declared that:

Mediums, as a result of their supernaturally ordained powers, are viewed by their followers as omnipotent. Bolstered by these sanctions, the medium takes an authoritarian attitude toward clients by fostering a passive dependency similar to that found in childhood, thus providing a sense of security and protection (p. 457).

Although, these authors understand that this dependency is therapeutic one may argue that in some cases it can be detrimental to the personal growth of clients. De La Cancela and Zavala (1983) warned that "...these aspects of folk healing are certainly not empowering for they may replicate, at best, patronizing transferences, and at worst, foster an oppressive,
colonial or elite hierarchical relationship which in
culturalistic terms amounts to making culture responsible" (p.
265). On the other hand there are studies which do not support
the notion that spiritist healers promote dependency on their
clients (Figueroa, 1981; Garrison, 1982; Salgado, 1974). For
instance, Salgado (1974) described the relationship between a
spiritist healer and her clients as follows:

The process was accomplished by a definite plan of
action that required commitment and effort on the
part of the client with the support and
encouragement of the spiritist. In helping
families she taught them how to work with their
problems rather than working out solutions for
them (p. 203).

Related to the issue of dependency is the argument that
spiritist healers encourage the attitude that clients are not
responsible for their problems because they are caused by
ignorant spirits (Comas-Díaz, 1981; Harwood, 1977). It has been
mentioned that this is therapeutic because it relieves the client from their guilt feelings. On the other hand, this treatment
approach can reinforce the idea that an individual does not have any control over his/her life or the power to change his/her
behavior. Harwood (1977), trying to reconcile this apparent contradiction, distinguished between responsibility for the
problem and responsibility for the cure in the spiritist healing.
He wrote that the spiritist healer denies the client's responsibility for the problem but encourages responsibility for its resolution. Spiritist healers usually make an effort to involve the client in the healing process through activities such as rituals, baths and prayers, transmitting the attitude that the client is responsible for the treatment outcomes (Garrison,
A deeper analysis demonstrates that sometimes clients are also seen as responsible for their problems in Espiritismo. The cause of a problem does not have to be perceived inside oneself for one to be held responsible for it. Sometimes the wish of an ignorant spirit to harm a client is explained as being caused by the client’s bad actions against this spirit in a past life. In this sense the client is responsible for the problem because it was a consequence of his or her actions. As Garrison (1977b) expressed:

... in the spiritist centro identification of these spirits does not generally relieve one of responsibility but rather relieves one of guilt for the past while inculcating responsibility for the future. “Spirit” manifestations, once identified, are “controllable” if not “curable” and future manifestations of the spirit are the responsibility of the sufferer (p. 155).

Data from this thesis suggest that several spiritist mediums emphasize the need for the clients to take responsibility for helping themselves. For example, one of the mediums said: "People cannot become dependent on you because then you are not really helping them." Another spiritist medium declared that the major purpose of Espiritismo is "to teach people how to develop their own spiritual powers in order to become better human beings".

Kass (1977c) examined the long-term effect of spiritist cult social process on those who become healers finding that cult socialization may threaten their adjustment and mental health:

As a spirit worker progresses, the sources of danger to his person multiply. The more good work the medium performs, the more extensive his
contact with evil spirits; nevertheless he must do such work to build his personal spirit repertorie in order to progress to "salvation". He is therefore constantly revealing his identities in the service of petitioners and at the same time expanding his vulnerability. In addition, he must surpass his own performances by attempting more difficult ones... In short, the more powerful he becomes the more self-sufficient he must be in looking after his own needs. Thus viewed, "progress" becomes a matter of renouncing dependency on all but personal spirit guides. Obviously this can be difficult for the committed spiritist adherent. What resource can he find in times of personal crisis? (pp. 465-466).

Koss argued that the vulnerability experienced by the spiritist healers is not helpful because it brings a high degree of stress and anxiety, disturbing the person's psychological balance and causing some of them to withdraw from the spiritual world.

Finally, another element of spiritist healing that may be anti-therapeutic is the prescription of plants that can be harmful to the client's health (De La Cancela and Zavala, 1983). It has been found that some plants can cause delirium, convulsions and death if taken in large doses (Hirschhorn, 1968). This is another area in which research is needed because none of the studies on Espiritismo have described systematically the kinds of plants used by healers in their work.

The most helpful approach for investigating this important area is to try to avoid generalizations. Certainly there are some healers who do not make appropriate interventions with their clients but this does not mean that spiritist practices are detrimental to the health of the Puerto Rican community. One cannot arrive at the conclusion that psychotherapy is detrimental because there are some therapists who have been harmful to their clients. The idea that all spiritist healers treat clients
similarly has to be discarded. They are different in their degree of clinical skills and knowledge. Spiritist healers are also different in their capacity to help people. One may find contradictory results if one compares the effectiveness of different healers. The therapeutic or detrimental effects of Espiritismo depends on the healer who is practicing it.

**Spirit Possession in Puerto Rican Espiritismo**

In this section I will examine the literature about the experience of possession in Puerto Rican Espiritismo using two different frameworks: the psychiatric and the therapeutic. In the literature about spirit possession the framework that has received the most attention is the therapeutic; the primary interpretation offered is that spirit possession is a normal and therapeutic experience which is similar to role playing and/or psychodrama (Garrison, 1977a; Koss, 1975, 1979; Morales-Dorta, 1976; Seda-Bonilla, 1969a, 1969b). This group of researchers has also argued that spirit possession is a "technique" used by the medium during the treatment process. The psychiatric framework has explained possession as a pathological symptom.

**The therapeutic framework**

Koss analyzed ritual possession trance as a "culturally institutionalized precondition for creative thinking within a group setting" (1979, p. 400). She argued that possession trance offers an opportunity for the expression of creativity and artistic productivity because it is an "excellent theatrical
technique" (1979, p. 406). Spirit possession is seen by Koss as a dramatization: performers enact various kinds of scripts in which conflicitive situations are externalized and objectified in other words, Koss is suggesting that spirit possession provides a structural opportunity for the emergence of a psychodrama.

Koss (1975) also analyzed spirit possession as an important element in the development of significant personal relationships in the spiritist meeting using the concept of "paradoxical directives" as developed by M. Erickson. She argued that the spiritist cult leader regularly structures a situation of trance by confronting the medium with a number of "paradoxical directives":

The cult leader first directs the medium to bring his protecting spirits to the table for the purpose of opening the medium's body to receive bad spirits on behalf of clients. The contradictions are apparent: The medium must become possessed to protect himself against subsequent contact, through possession, with dangerous, evil spirits. The medium is directed to protect himself and at the same time to place himself in a dangerous position (1975, p. 167). The medium is blamed yet ultimately not responsible; he must develop control over his behavior and at the same time submit to being controlled by the cult leader; he must be dependent in order to achieve independence (1975, p. 170).

Michtom (1975) emphasizes the use of trance possession to break habitual association patterns. She conceived of possession trance as a:

...ritualized means of defining attainable goals and of rehearsing behavior to achieve them. Individuals learn behavior and acquire attitudes in trance which they later transfer into real life situations (1975, P.319).

Through trance, the medium has the opportunity to practice problem-solving on a symbolic level. In other words, Michtom is
also suggesting that spirit possession is a kind of role playing.

The psychiatric framework appears in the study of Puerto Rican Espiritismo in a subtle form. Some researchers who seem to support the therapeutic framework of possession suggest in their analysis that the possessed individual is experiencing some kind of emotional disturbance. These researchers seem in fact to be moving between the therapeutic and psychiatric frameworks in their interpretation of spirit possession (Garrison, 1977a; Seda-Bonilla, 1969a, 1969b). They have differentiated between "voluntary" and "involuntary" possession states, suggesting that voluntary spirit possession is therapeutic because it is similar to role playing, while involuntary or uncontrolled spirit possession is a sign of psychiatric disturbance.

For example, Seda-Bonilla (1969a, 1969b), using a psychoanalytic perspective, explained involuntary possession as a condition in which the repressed impulses overwhelm the individual's ego. He defined involuntary possession as the "folding of the ego by a return of the repressed" (1969, p. 493). He argued that the individual who is experiencing uncontrolled possession states is losing the capacity to repress and to control the primary process. On the other hand, Seda-Bonilla considers that voluntary possession states of fully-developed mediums are psychodramatic performances which are used for catharsis and abreaction:
The protagonist in a psychodrama presents a problem, which the auxiliary egos help to translate into a drama, relating the symptoms to the conflicting situation experienced by the patient... In the spiritist session role-playing is performed in the name of the spirits that possess the patient and the mediums. These spirits express depressive states of mind, torrents of guilt feelings, symptoms of distrust, and feelings of aggression, fear, and love. Expressions of emotional states and their diagnosis may be represented by the mediums in a way analogous to what has been called "soliloquy-double techniques" in psychodrama (Seda-Bonilla, 1973, pp. 116-117).

Similarly, Garrison (1977a) related uncontrolled spirit possession to the "Puerto Rican Syndrome", a psychiatric term that has been used to describe a condition characterized by seizure, dissociation, aggressivity and partial loss of consciousness that seems to be predominant among Puerto Ricans (Mehlman, 1961; Trautman, 1961). As I understand Garrison's argument, she suggested that the process of mediumship development is therapeutic because the involuntary regression associated with the Puerto Rican Syndrome becomes "regression in the service of the ego" (1977a, p. 440). From Garrison's analysis, one gets the impression that the mediums have not been "cured" of the "Puerto Rican Syndrome" but have instead learned how to control the "symptoms" in a more effective way. The spiritist medium continues to suffer from this psychiatric condition in spite of transforming it as "regression in the service of the ego".

Garrison (1977a) also interpreted spirit possession as role playing, using the following declaration of a medium to support her hypothesis: "Now, very often I do it without any spirit on me". Garrison commented on this statement in the following way:

This is not to say that she is deceitful or charlatan. She knows how these spirits manifest
themselves and can enact them whether or not they actually come. She does not tell this to her clients but in her opinion (and in mine) this is not actually deceit; it is merely a necessity for the treatment situation--it is the professional role (1977a, p. 437).

According to my experience, what Garrison considers the "professional role" is viewed negatively by many Espiritistas. They criticize those mediums who are just role playing spirits, considering this behavior immoral, dishonest, and deceitful. Espiritistas censure the mediums who are not giving "authentic" spirit manifestations.

The above medium's statement can be understood in another way. When she says: "Now very often I do it without any spirit on me'", the medium is not necessarily saying that she is playing the role of spirits. Perhaps she is saying that she often does not need to be possessed by spirits because she can receive their communication from the outside without "passing or taking the spirit" through her body. This latter interpretation is more congruent with the ideal culturally constituted reality of the medium, considering the meaning that healers give to possession.

The only study that directly and explicitly supports the psychiatric framework is that of Espino-Navarrete (1981). This author studied a sample of 60 Hispanic outpatients (95% Puerto Ricans) with the purpose of exploring the characteristics of patients reporting "spiritualistic experiences" and possession states. Using the Rorschach, she found that out of the nine patients reporting possession states, eight showed serious failures in reality testing, confusion, and "bizarre preoccupation with body image distortion" (1981, p. 123). All but one were experiencing possession states outside any ritual
activity. This study suggests that possession states are related to a high degree of psychopathology. Espino-Navarrete recognized that it is impossible to generalize these results to Hispanic patients who are experiencing possession states within spiritist meetings, and most importantly, they cannot be generalized to non-patient Hispanics. This study was also limited by the use of the Rorschach test to determine the mental health of the Hispanic outpatients. The cross cultural validity of this test has not yet been demonstrated and any conclusions derived from the result of it should be taken very cautiously.

The psychiatric and the therapeutic framework: A comparison

In spite of the apparent differences between the psychiatric and the therapeutic framework, there are similarities in the approach that both frameworks employ for the study of spirit possession. First, the researchers who apply the therapeutic and psychiatric frameworks to the experience of possession make the implicit or explicit assumption that spirits do not have objective reality and proceed from there to make their analyses of possession without much consideration of the phenomenological reality of spirit possession for the individual who believes and experiences it. Once they assume that spirits do not have objective reality, the researchers proceed to explain spirit possession using psychological constructs, putting aside the validity of another culture's world-view. Any experience with spirits is explained as being the product of defense mechanisms like projection and displacement (Crapanzano, 1980). For the
psychiatric and the therapeutic framework spirits are metaphors for intrapsychic and/or cultural conditions.

Both frameworks have been interested in the study of spirit possession as a psychological byproduct but not as an experience in itself. The psychiatric framework has explained possession as a psychological disturbance similar to hysteria, neurosis or schizophrenia, while the therapeutic framework has interpreted possession as role playing, psychodrama, regression in the service of the ego and as mechanism for the expression of pathology. Both frameworks emphasize the search for similarities between spirit possession and western psychological constructs, trying to translate the experience of spirit possession to familiar psychological states like role playing, dissociation, regression, etc. Both the therapeutic and the psychiatric models base their analyses in etic categories without sufficient consideration of the emic.

As a result of the orientation of these two frameworks, we know very little about the experience of possession from the perspective of the spiritist medium. I have argued about the need of studying possession using a phenomenological perspective, searching for the meaning that mediums give to this experience (Núñez-Molina, 1985). It is important to study spirit possession as it reveals itself to the medium in all its concreteness and particularity and to describe the essential constituents of the phenomenon without trying to impose our ideas, preconceptions, or prejudices.

The Process of Becoming a Medium
The value of life-stories and the importance of emic viewpoints have been recognized in the last years (Katz, 1981; Langness and Frank, 1981; Runyan, 1984). One of the critical limitations of the literature on Puerto Rican Espiritismo is that spiritist healers have not received sufficient attention as individuals with unique life experiences and world views. To my knowledge only one study (Michtom, 1975) has explored the process of becoming a spiritist healer. Michtom studied this process by using the life histories of six mediums and employing Anthony Wallace's (1956) concept of "mazeway resynthesis" to explain mediumship development. According to Michtom, mazeway resynthesis is "the restructuring of learned cognitions during periods of social stress and intense emotional conflict, often coursing via hallucinatory trance experiences as psychotherapeutic responses" (1975, p. 3).

Michtom (1975) argued that the process of becoming a medium can be divided into three stages: 1) dissonance; 2) training and reinterpretation; and 3) resynthesis. In the first stage, the medium experiences conflict and stress due to "cognitive dissonance". According to Michtom, this cognitive dissonance is caused by one or more of the following areas: similarity between mediumship phenomena and symptoms of mental illness; conflicts between spiritist and Catholic beliefs; and the association of Espiritismo with the "lower class". The second stage, training and reinterpretation, involves learning "a variety of beliefs, rituals, and styles of trance behavior" (Michtom, 1975, p. 246) and the reintegration of dissonant elements. In the last stage, the medium achieves a cognitive transformation, developing a new
personal identity.

Michtom explained the process of becoming a medium as one that involves the resolution of cognitive dissonance through mazeway resynthesis. The limitation of this position is that Michtom is assuming that in the beginning of their development all the mediums experience cognitive dissonance. However, the three sources of cognitive dissonance that she described may not necessarily cause dissonance for all the mediums. For example, those mediums who have been socialized as Espiritistas since they were children will not interpret their first experiences with the spirit world as symptoms of mental illness, therefore not experiencing any cognitive dissonance. In addition, for a great number of spiritist mediums there is no dissonance in being Catholic and Espiritista (Harwood, 1977). The last source of cognitive dissonance mentioned by Michtom, the association of Espiritismo with the "lower class", only applied to middle-class mediums. My study suggests that although some mediums may experience cognitive dissonance, others do not experience dissonance or the intense emotional conflict characteristic of the process of mazeway resynthesis. We will come back to this issue in the analysis chapter.

Another point that has to be considered in evaluating Michtom's findings is that she based her analysis on data from only six healers. Moreover Michtom only presented the life-history of three of them. The reader is unable to evaluate whether the other three mediums experienced cognitive dissonance in their initial development as healers. In addition Michtom focused her study on the role of trance possession, giving little
consideration to other dimensions of the process of becoming a medium such as relation to the community and family, childhood experiences, and the evolution of healing practices, among others. My study has the goal of exploring these areas.
Research Model: Theoretical Orientation

Trow (1957) made a very important point about research when he wrote that "the problem under investigation properly dictates the methods of investigation" (p. 33). The nature of my research questions suggests that a qualitative research methodology is the best alternative for collecting and analyzing the data. Filstead (1970) describes qualitative methodology as:

...those research strategies which allow the researcher to obtain first hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to "get close to the data" thereby developing the analytical, conceptual, and categorical components or explanation from the data itself (p. 16).

Using a qualitative methodology I hope to describe and understand how mediums experience the process of becoming a medium without imposing theoretical frameworks that are not systematically derived from their experiences. My goal is to stay as close as possible to the life-world of these mediums as I analyze and present the data. Thus, in my research approach I have been influenced by a phenomenological
perspective (Giorgi, 1970; Keen, 1975).

In general, the research model that I am following is characterized by the following features: emphasis on description of the process of becoming a medium using emic categories; the search for the meaning of this process in the life of the medium; and a conception of research as a collaborative inquiry. First, it is my position that in order to understand the participants' experiences I have to describe these experiences as accurately and precisely as possible using their own concepts. This emic approach is essential in order "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision or his world (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25). Adequate description based on emic categories is in itself a valuable contribution to a research problem. Considering also the fact that we know very little about the process of becoming a medium, it is essential to concentrate on being descriptive in order to provide a more complete picture of this process as it is experienced by the participants.

Second, influenced by this emic approach, my emphasis is on how the participants make sense of those experiences which characterize the process of their becoming a medium. Instead of projecting meaning into that process, I am interested in discovering "what they are experiencing, and how they
themselves structure the social world in which they live" (Psathas, 1973, p. 10). By making explicit the meaning structures used by the participants to interpret their life-world, one is more capable of understanding their thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

Finally, my research model is characterized by the conception that research is a collaborative inquiry which involves the participants and the researcher contributing to the formulation of research questions, hypotheses and final conclusions, among other dimensions. (Heron, 1981; Torbert, 1981). Research as collaboration also involves the researcher participating fully in the action and experience to be studied, becoming more an "observing participant" than "participant observer" (Jules-Rosette, 1975). From this perspective, the researcher's involvement with participants is not seen any longer as a source of bias but as a resource for the discovery of new insights about the research problem (Dwyer, 1982; Katz & Núñez-Molina, 1986; Reinharz, 1984). In fact, the researcher's own vulnerability in and to the research process opens up new possibilities for such insights (Katz & Núñez-Molina, 1986).
Sample

The sample in this study consists of 16 spiritist mediums who were living in Puerto Rico at the time the field study was done. Of the 16 mediums, there are 10 women and 6 men. The youngest participant is 26 years old, while the oldest is 78 years old. The sample includes participants from different social classes: eight lower-class mediums, four working-class mediums, and four middle-class mediums. Mediums also varied significantly in terms of their academic achievement: 7 of them have completed less than 9 years of school, 5 mediums have completed between 9 and 12 years of school and 4 mediums have a college education.

The mediums also represent different levels of development within spiritist practice. Some of them are beginning to desarrollar facultades while others can be considered to be "fully-developed mediums".

When I became aware, during my field work, that there were different types of mediums, I considered two alternatives: limiting myself to the study of one specific type or including different types of mediums. I chose the second alternative because by including different types of mediums I would have the opportunity to correct what seems to be a unidimensional, stereotypical portrayal of mediums which
is so often found in the research literature. In addition, by following this approach I think that a more precise and accurate picture of how Espiritismo is actually practiced in Puerto Rico can be offered to the reader. The criteria utilized in selecting the mediums was very much influenced by my interest in including mediums with different kinds of orientation and backgrounds.

I used various procedures for making contact with the participants of this study. First, due to my own personal involvement with Espiritismo, I had already established contact with several mediums in Puerto Rico prior to the formal beginning of the field work. I decided to include some of these mediums in the study, considering the advantage of having already established a good relationship with them. I thought that this condition might facilitate the disclosure of life history data.

Second, I have access to an extensive network of Espiritistas who are not mediums. I asked them about mediums who might be interested in participating in this study. Several mediums were contacted through this kind of network referral. Third, other mediums were contacted by visiting the spiritist centers in which they were practicing. Finally, through reading newspaper articles about Espiritismo in Puerto Rico I was able to find mediums who were interested
in being interviewed about their development as healers. Through this procedure I was able to include mediums from different parts of the Island; mediums who live in rural areas as well as mediums who lived in urban areas.

In addition to these sixteen mediums, I benefited very much from a group of Espiritistas who helped me to clarify my thinking in relation to theoretical issues about the spiritist philosophy. Their contribution to this work was also a very important one.

Procedures for Collecting Data

The collection of the data for this study was done in two periods of intensive field work, the first for three months (from February to April 1986), and the second for two months (August and September, 1986). Between the two periods, I was able to reflect on the data collected and do some preliminary analyses. The second period of field work gave me the opportunity to collect missing data and to explore dimensions of the process of becoming a medium which were suggested by data already collected.

I used two major methods of data collection: qualitative interviews and participant observation. The qualitative interview has been defined as a dialogue whose
purpose is "to gather descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1983, p. 174). Lofland (1971), commenting on the value on this method, stated that the interview is "the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being" (p. 2). Therefore, the qualitative interview appears to be the best method for understanding the process of becoming a medium.

In the first period of my field work I frequently used unstructured interviews because I was more interested in knowing the areas that my participants considered to be important. Thus in the first interviews the mediums played a strong role in defining the content and the direction of the conversations. After this initial period, I began to structure the interviews more, using an interview schedule as a guide (See Appendix A). Both open-ended and focused questions were included in this interview schedule.

Although I had developed an interview schedule before the beginning of the field work, I soon realized that several of the questions were not relevant to the mediums. A new interview schedule began to emerge as I started to listen to the mediums. In this sense they helped me to find the questions that I needed to ask them in order to get relevant and meaningful data. Through this process I learned that
"both questions and answers must be discovered from informants" (Spradley, 1979, p. 84). Commenting about this issue, Black and Metzger wrote:

It could be said of ethnography that until you know the question that someone in the culture is responding to, you can't know many things about the responses. Yet the ethnographer is greeted, in the field, with an array of responses. He needs to know what question people are answering in their every act. He needs to know which questions are being taken for granted because they are what "everybody knows" without thinking... Thus the task of the ethnographer is to discover questions that seek the relationship among entities that are conceptually meaningful to the people under investigation (1965, p. 144).

The field work was a process of discovering questions that were meaningful and relevant to the mediums and then learning how and when to ask them.

The interviews were usually held at the participants' home. Most of the time it was possible to conduct the interviews without major interruptions and with a good degree of privacy. This set of conditions made possible the disclosure of intimate experiences on the part of some mediums. I interviewed each participant at least three times; each interview was approximately two and a half hours long. Participants gave me permission to tape the interviews with the exception of one who preferred not to be taped because the tape recorder made her nervous.
The data from the interviews was organized using a life-story approach (Langness & Frank, 1981; Runyan, 1984). This approach is appropriate for the understanding of the mediums' development from their own experiential perspective. Little (1984) proposes that "understanding by comprehension rather than explanation" should be an essential task in a life-story study. The life-story approach is a good way to describe and understand how participants experience their own reality. As Jones (1983) writes about this method:

Of all research methods, it perhaps comes closest to allowing the researcher access to how individuals create and portray the social world surrounding them. The life-history methodology offers an interpretive framework through which the meaning of human experience is revealed in personal accounts, in a way that gives priority to individual explanations of actions rather than to methods that filter and sort responses into predetermined conceptual categories (p. 147).

In addition to qualitative interviews based on a life-story approach, I used participant observation as another method for gathering data. Participant observation has been defined as the method that "involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1984, p. 15).

Through participant observation at spiritist centers I
collected data about the different kinds of spiritist movements in Puerto Rico. It was essential to participate in the activities of spiritist centers because it is in these places that individuals begin to develop their *facultades* in order to become mediums. In addition several of the mediums of this study were regularly attending a spiritist center. By visiting these centers I was able to observe the mediums working with clients, getting a clearer picture of their healing practices and helping style. When mediums were not attending a spiritist center, I observed them helping clients at their homes. I took field notes on the spiritist meetings emphasizing the role played by the participants of this study.

**Procedures for Analyzing the Data**

In this study data analysis was an ongoing process that began on the first day of my fieldwork. Thus the division between data collection and analysis is only a theoretical one, not one based on the reality of my fieldwork experience. Data analysis during the research process gave direction to my data collection, helping me to develop a research focus and to reformulate my questions in light of the new findings. By discovering, during my fieldwork, some of the patterns and
categories that were emerging from the data, I was able to do a more in depth examination of them.

Two major methods were used to analyze the data: the general method of the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) and the specific procedure of qualitative content analysis (Brislin, 1980; Holsti, 1968; Krippendorf, 1980). The grounded theory approach emphasizes that theories, concepts, hypotheses and propositions should be generated directly from data rather than from other research or theoretical frameworks. This kind of orientation has guided my research from the beginning, but my emphasis has been more on understanding the participant's world-view from their own perspective rather than on the generation of theory. In my view, understanding should precede the development of theories and hypotheses. This method requires that a researcher make a comparison of specific social incidents observed and/or comparison of groups in order to "generate categories, their properties and their interrelations" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 55).

Although Glaser and Strauss do not mention it, the constant comparative method involves qualitative content analysis. Content analysis has been defined broadly by Holsti (1968) as "any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified
characteristics of messages" (p. 601). In my data analysis, the combination of content analysis with the constant comparative method facilitated the discovery of core categories and their properties, which is a central dimension of the grounded theory approach.

The following are the general steps that I took to analyze the data from the field notes and the interviews:

1. The taped interviews were transcribed.
2. I read all the participants' protocols and my field notes in order to acquire a holistic grasp of the data.
3. The next step involved the coding of all the data in order to identify emergent themes about the process of becoming a medium. I wrote down words and phrases to represent these themes trying to establish a "data index". I searched for regularities in the data, looking for themes that appeared frequently. The coding was done using emic categories and concepts when it was possible to do so.
4. Comparisons between participants and events in the field were made based on the emergent themes. Through this process of constant comparison, new categories and their properties were discovered.
5. An effort was made to identify "core categories" according to the criteria established by Glaser (1978, p.
95):

a. It must be central, that is related to as many other categories and their properties as possible.
b. It must reoccur frequently in the data.
c. It takes more time to saturate than other categories.
d. It relates meaningfully and easily with other categories.
e. It is completely variable. Its frequent relations to other categories makes it highly dependently variable in degree, dimension and type.

6. A classification system of mediums and different kinds of spiritist movements was designed utilizing the core categories generated from the data. The primary purpose of creating these typologies was to make the process of description easier and to enhance the understanding of becoming a medium in Puerto Rico.

I recognize that data analysis in qualitative research is a creative process that requires making judgements about what is really significant and meaningful in the data (Patton, 1980). Being aware of this dimension, I made an effort to structure the analysis according to what the participants in this study consider meaningful about becoming and being a medium.
A Note About the Translation Problem

Throughout the writing of this work, I confronted the problem of translating concepts and meaning from Spanish to the English language. Transferring material from one language to another is in itself a methodological problem and a great responsibility for the researcher (Katz, 1982).

I was aware that translating several spiritist concepts into English was not adequate because it could produce a misunderstanding of these concepts. In order to avoid these misunderstandings I decided to use several core spiritist concepts in Spanish and to include a glossary of these concepts as an appendix (See Appendix B). My hope is that this procedure would be more effective for conveying the meanings these concepts have for the participants of this study.

Following this approach, I found it inappropriate to use the concept of Spiritism or Spiritualism as a translation of Espiritismo. Although these concepts have been used in the literature, my opinion is that both concepts may lead to a misunderstanding of the practice of Espiritismo in Puerto Rico. Espiritismo is different from the practice of Spiritualism in the United States and England (Macklin, 1974). Although Puerto Rican Espiritismo has its roots in
French Spiritism, it is conceptualized and practiced by Puerto Ricans in a different way. By using the term Espiritismo I am trying to emphasize the unique way in which it is practiced in Puerto Rico.

I also have to clarify that I have not followed English style regarding the use of "it" in referring to a spirit. For most of the Espritistas, spirits have gender and unique personalities. Based on this reasoning, I have decided to use the pronouns "he" or "she" when talking about a spirit in order to reveal his/her "humanity".
Reflections on the Research Process: The Experience of a Native Researcher

Research accounts in the social sciences have emphasized the analysis of results without enough reflexive description of how the researcher's cultural and personal background is influencing the selection of the research topic, the methodological approach, relationship with participants and the research process in general (Lawless, Sullivan and Zamora, 1983; Nash and Wintrob, 1972; Polkinghorne, 1983; Reinharz, 1984). The general orientation among social science researchers is to write about their research as if they were not present or involved in the act of interviewing, observing, participating and interacting with the people studied. Usually research publications are totally dedicated to examining the other ("the participants", "the subjects", "the co-researchers") without including a description of the self (the researcher) and how the interaction of the self and the other affected the research findings (Dwyer, 1982).

Generally, the researcher's personal experiences and reflection on the research process are most likely to be found in peripheral places of a work, such as prefaces, postscripts, footnotes, acknowledgements and appendices.
(Bateson, 1936; Lambek, 1981). In doing this, researchers are disregarding their personal experiences and reflective stance in order to present a "scientific" analysis of their findings. Other researchers have first published their findings and then in a separate book have included their reflections and personal experiences (Maybury-Lewis, 1965; Powdermaker, 1966; Rabinow, 1975, 1977). It appears to me that these researchers are splitting ethnographic studies into a "subjective" dimension (personal account) and a "objective" dimension (presentation of research findings). For example, Maybury-Lewis in his introduction to The Savage and the Innocent wrote that:

This book is an account of our experiences, it is not an essay in anthropology. Indeed I have tried to put down many of those things which never get told in technical anthropological writings — our impression of Central Brazil, our personal reactions to the various situations in which we found ourselves, and above all, our feelings about the day-to-day business which is mysteriously known as "doing fieldwork" (1965, p. 9).

Recently, this situation has begun to change due to what seems to be the development of a new paradigm within the social sciences (Polkinghorne, 1983; Reason and Rowan, 1981). Especially in the field of anthropology and sociology, researchers are publishing accounts that integrate the researcher's personal experiences and self-reflection into
the presentation of findings (Beteille and Madan, 1975; Briggs, 1970; Crapanzano, 1980; Katz, 1982, in press-b; Reinharz, 1984; Ruby, 1982; Turner and Bruner, 1986). The researcher's personal experiences are beginning to be recognized as an important source of new understandings and insights, not as something one needs to hide in order to appear more "objective". The studies suggest the need to consider researchers as "positioned subjects" who have particular lived experiences that both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insights (Rosaldo, 1983).

In this "new paradigm research", the dichotomy between subjective and objective disappears, leading to a new concept of what it means to be scientific. Objectivity is no longer achieved by the elimination of the investigator's personal features but by his/her having a clear understanding of his/her influence on the research (Reinharz, 1984). As Beteille and Madan wrote:

To seek to eliminate the supposedly distorting role of the observer's subjectivity, if at all possible, would destroy the most precious of our tools – the fieldworker himself (1975, p. 6).

From this perspective researchers become more scientific by recognizing their subjectivity, not by repressing or denying it. The researcher is also more honest with the people who will read the research manuscript because he or she is
presenting a more complete and valid description of what happens during the study (Katz, in press-b).

Based on these principles, I will take the risk of telling the reader the "personal story" that evolved in the process of doing this study. This personal story is composed of prejudgetments and assumptions that I brough to the study, moments of vulnerability in which my world-view was challenged, biographical data that influenced the research direction and mistakes that I made during the research process. In this sense I consider this chapter to be a deep confession, a very personal story of the major issues I confronted as a researcher.

When I was considering the idea of writing this chapter, I thought about the reasons a researcher may have for not telling a personal story. Usually the personal story is not considered significant because of the assumption that the researcher's role is to tell the participants' story not his or her own. However I discovered that my personal story influenced the way in which I described and understood the participants' story. How would it be possible to tell the participants' story without making any reference to my own?

In addition, in telling the personal story, researchers take the risk of exposing and disclosing their "subjectivity", making it easier for the scientific community
to point out the weaknesses and limitations of their work.
This dilemma is very well described by Myerhoff and Ruby (1982):

The more the ethnographer attempts to fulfill a scientific obligation to report on methods, the more he or she must acknowledge that his or her own behavior and personality in the field are data. Statements on method then begin to appear to be more personal, subjective, biased, involved, and culture bound; in other words, the more scientific anthropologists try to be by revealing their methods, the less scientific they appear to be (p. 26).

In revealing more about methodological issues I confront the dilemma of being seen by others as less "scientific". In other words, I become more vulnerable to being criticized by others for not being "professional".

Another reason for not telling the personal story is that most of the time researchers are guided in their writings by the model of the "good movie". In the scientific community there is a tendency to describe only "successful" accounts. At the end of the study, researchers seem to have found clear answers to all the questions addressed at the beginning. They do not seem to make any mistakes, nor to be confused during the research process. Similar to movie protagonists, researchers appear to be omnipotent, always having complete control of the research activities. If a researcher is following the model of the "good movie" it is
very unlikely that he or she will decide to tell stories that do not support the image of invulnerability.

My hope is that writing about the research process from a personal perspective will be helpful in illuminating the methodological issues that I confronted during this study. I understand that my research would be incomplete without this presentation. Due to my special relation to Espiritismo, I will begin this presentation with an autobiographical note.

**Autobiographical Note**

...field ethnography (and indeed all social science) as presently practiced, may be a species of autobiography (La Barre, 1967, p. viii).

I need to share with the reader some autobiographical information which has influenced my role as a researcher in this study. I was born in a small rural town in the mountains of Puerto Rico into an extended family and a community of strong spiritist believers. My world-view and concept of reality has been heavily influenced by being a Puerto Rican who was socialized within the subculture of Espiritismo. Having participated in the activities of spiritist centers in my community since I was young, I have had the opportunity to experience Espiritismo from an
insider's perspective.

My interest in the study of the development of spiritist healers can be traced to my first contact with a spiritist healer when I was seven years old. At that time I was suffering from a condition that did not enable me to defecate normally. There were times when I would go for two weeks without defecating. The doctors commented to my parents that there was a physiological basis for my condition and that I should be operated upon as soon as possible.

My parents were desperate and did not know what to do. A friend talked to them about a good spiritist healer who lived near my town. My parents decided to take me to the healer's house. I remember that the healer was a fifty-five year old man named Gumersindo. The first thing he did was to put a cup of water on a table. Then he laid his hands on my head and stomach, giving me some passes(passes). After this, he took the cup of water and said to me: "Drink it, thinking you will be cured." I drank the water as he told me, thinking it was the medicine that I needed to be cured. The last thing that I remember from this experience was when my parents asked Gumersindo, "How much do we owe you?" He responded: "It is free. The healing power has come from God and the good spirits. I am not responsible for it. Your child has been cured." He was right, from this moment my health
problem completely disappeared.

In my adolescence, I started attending different spiritist centers in my community, especially the one led by one of my aunts. It was in this center that I began to practice Espiritismo, participating in different healing rituals. I was also encouraged to read Kardec's books on Espiritismo. I was fascinated by the philosophy of Espiritismo, spending many hours reflecting on several issues such as the communication with the spirits, life after death and reincarnation. Each spiritist meeting was full of excitement and mystery. At that time, the possibility of becoming a medium was very attractive to me. I admired my aunt because she was able to help many persons as a spiritist healer. Sometimes I had the opportunity to collaborate with her in the treatment of clients. I was told by her that I have facultades, and she encouraged me to develop as a medium.

As one can see, the research questions that I explore in this study evolved from my own life experiences. I have not only a scientific interest in these questions but also a very personal one.

My involvement with Espiritismo gave me the opportunity to know several spiritist mediums who were practicing in my community. In talking with them, I began to be interested in
their development as healers. However, at that time I did not have any idea that it was possible to do research on Espiritismo.

I decided to study psychology at the University of Puerto Rico. My decision to study psychology in college was very influenced by my interest in spiritist healing. It was also reinforced by a medium who was a friend of mine. However in my four years of college I did not have the opportunity to do research on Espiritismo, nor to write about it. With one exception, none of my psychology professors mentioned the role of spiritist mediums in the mental health of the community. Very soon I recognized that Espiritismo was considered a taboo topic at the University. In addition, herbal medicine and other folk healing practices were considered to be superstitions. I was afraid of mentioning to any of my professors my interest in doing research on Espiritismo.

Becoming frustrated by all of these obstacles, I decided to do a literature review on Espiritismo for my personal use. In the library I found that most of the articles about Espiritismo were dedicated to criticizing it in terms of religious principles. I could only find one scientific study entitled El Espiritismo Como Una Religión done by a sociologist named Angelina Saavedra de Roca (1969). I
thought that at least there was someone who was interested in studying Espiritismo.

At that time I also heard about a North American anthropologist who was working in Puerto Rico and was involved in developing collaboration between spiritist mediums and mental health professionals. I was very interested in the project but I could attend just one presentation because it was located too far away from my college.

In doing the literature review for this thesis, I found that only two Puerto Rican researchers have been interested in publishing their work on Espiritismo in Puerto Rico (Saavedra de Roca, 1969; Seda-Bonilla, 1973). In addition, after having looked at the abstracts of more than 300 theses done by psychology students at the University of Puerto Rico and the Centro Caribeño de Estudios Postgraduados, I found only two theses on the topic of Espiritismo (De los Santos, 1982; Stewart, 1982). Thus, it seems that the situation has not changed very much since I was a college student.

Becoming a Native Researcher

The specific issue confronted by native researchers and their special contributions to social science have been
examined in several works (Fahim, 1982; Jones, 1970; Khare, 1983; Madan, 1975). Native researchers have been defined as those who conduct research on the ethnic group of which they themselves are members. Consequently, the researcher and the people studied share the same culture. In doing a study on Puerto Rican Espiritismo I became a native researcher not only because I am Puerto Rican but also because I have experienced this healing system from an insider's perspective. To some extent I also share with my participants the subculture of Espiritismo.

Being a native researcher has several advantages. First, I did not have any language problems in communicating with my participants because Spanish is also my first language. I did not have to begin learning a new language nor to use a translator as many foreign researchers have to do in order to communicate with the participants. In addition, I have been using spiritist concepts for many years, which made it easier for me to understand their symbolic and experiential meanings. However, it was in the process of translating my experience and the experiences of my participants to the English language that I confronted difficulties. It was not only a matter of translating words and concepts but also of "translating" worlds of experiences lived by people.
As a native researcher I did not experience any of the usual difficulties related to settling in to the field situation when I went to do the study in Puerto Rico. My parents picked me up at the airport and the next day I was doing a participant observation at one of the spiritist centers in my hometown. Having relatives in different parts of the Island offered me the opportunity to stay at their homes while I was doing the study. To have the support of my family was very important during my field work.

Another advantage that I had in doing this research was that I already had established several contacts with spiritist centers and mediums around the Island. I did not have to spend too much time finding participants.

I also had a deep knowledge of my participants' culture, being able to "think in their symbols". Sharing their culture made it easier for me to think, see and feel like them. It also helped me to understand the symbolic and basic value system of their culture. Being a Puerto Rican myself helped me to understand their stories in a special way.

There are also certain disadvantages in being a native researcher (Fahim and Helmer, 1982; Kelman, 1982; Koentjaraningrat, 1982). It has been mentioned that native researchers may have problems in overcoming cultural bias and "subjectivity" (Koentjaraningrat, 1982). However this is a
problem that foreign researchers also have to overcome. Native researchers may have less freedom to ask naive questions, which may produce significant new information (Kelman, 1982). The informants may presume that one knows the culture. In addition, native researchers may not be able to develop new insights about areas which they regard as self-evident. They may take for granted elements of a culture which may be important to the understanding of a problem.

Recognizing the value of research done by natives, authors have recommended collaboration between foreign researchers and native ones (Levine, 1982; Maruyama, 1981a). According to Maruyama (1981a), "endogenous research", the study of each culture by its insiders, is the first step toward an anthropology that "incorporates different perspectives obtained with the use of different epistemologies" (p. 145). She argued that:

...future anthropology must restructure itself with the recognition that not only the objects of research, but also the researchers themselves, may come from many epistemologies (p. 145).

Maruyama (1981b) has found that native researchers may achieve insights that have been overlooked by outsiders. Native researchers may offer alternatives for studying a problem; collecting, analyzing and understanding data in a
way which is more consonant with the culture they belong to. Their understanding of a research problem may add a new and valuable perspective, enriching and complementing the research done by outsiders.

The study of Espiritismo will benefit very much from the collaboration between indigenous and foreign researchers. This kind of collaboration may open the door for the exploration of new dimensions of Espiritismo. It may also provide the basis for a different kind of research approach to the study of Espiritismo.

It seems to me that the issues confronted by a native researcher get obscured when one looks at them from the insider-outsider dichotomy. To look at native researchers as insiders and at foreign researchers as outsiders is not appropriate for understanding the complexity of the research process. The extraordinary challenge confronted by the native researcher is described by Madan (1975) as follows:

He is placed in a particularly difficult position: he is an insider who takes up the posture of an outsider, by virtue of his training as an anthropologist or as a sociologist, and looks at his own culture, hoping to be surprised. If he is, only then may he achieve new understandings (p. 149).

In agreement with Kelman (1982), I think that "it is much more reasonable to think of the insider-outsider dimension as a continuum with many gradations between the two extremes"
(p. 755). Researchers, "insiders" as well as "outsiders", are always moving between these two extremes in their attempt to find meaning from their data. As a native researcher I experienced myself during the research process moving within this continuum, not only experiencing myself as an insider but also at other times feeling much more like an outsider. I became an outsider by being trained as a researcher, by doing this research and by writing "about" the people I have worked with. All of these conditions increased the distance between the participants of this study and myself.

The degree to which I was an "insider" in this study is not very clear to me. To a great extent, I share the world-view and epistemology of my participants. My conceptualization of the self and the world has been very much influenced by Espiritismo. I understand and respect the realities articulated by the mediums not only due to a scientific attitude but also because sometimes I have been able to participate to a certain degree in these realities. Their experiences of reality are very familiar to me.

To some degree I have also been involved in the process of becoming a medium. Four years ago when I began to visit spiritist centers as a researcher I was not sure if I should continue participating in this way in the meetings. I was afraid that my degree of participation may be seen by other
researchers as a sign of being too personally involved. In other words, I felt that they would disqualify me as a researcher arguing that I did not have enough "objectivity" to study Espiritismo.

After some time of reflection, I realized that my experiential approach to the study of Espiritismo could be one of my unique contributions as an insider. I felt that my personal experiences as a researcher would not necessarily be an obstacle or limitation but rather an asset and a resource for understanding the process of becoming a medium. I discovered that I did not have to conceal this experiential background in order to appear as an "objective" researcher.

The experiential approach is an excellent way of obtaining an emic perspective of religion and healing systems. Over the last decade this approach has been used by those researching healing systems in order to increase their understanding of another culture's world-view (Jules-Rosette, 1975; Katz, 1982; Maquet, 1975; Peters, 1981). In his study of Tamang shamanism, Peters (1981) undertook an apprenticeship with a shaman in an attempt to experience what the participants said they did. Katz (1982) chose to participate in the healing dance of the !Kung, finding that this experience provided him with insights into the nature of healing, and thus motivated healers to share more of their
knowledge with him. Jules-Rosette (1975), in her study of rituals and symbolic meanings in an African church, had a conversion experience that led her to become a member, changing her emphasis from being a participant observer to being an "observing participant". Reinharz (1984), supporting the use of experiential data, writes:

Experiential data can thus generate concepts that are eventually included in a grounded theory. Experiential data and derived concepts can then be complemented by other kinds of data in a study... If the experience of the researcher is omitted, then the discipline is limited to the study of observable behavior and responses to instruments and contrived situations such as questionnaires. Studies built on such a foundation lack both the experience of the researcher and of the subject since the information concerning the subject is not experiential but an artifact of research procedures (p. 337).

The experiential approach can become an essential resource for decreasing the experiential and epistemological gap between the researcher and the people studied (Wexlex, 1985). A female Korean shaman, talking about being a healer and becoming possessed, made the following argument to the researcher trying to describe this gap:

You, though you say you are trying to understand how I became a mudang (shaman) and what it's done to me, you will never understand me... You see, there cannot be any real understanding between the possessed and the non-possessed... The possessed have had experiences that the non-possessed cannot begin to comprehend no matter how they try. At best,
they can only see what your possession is doing to you and to them (her family) socially. They cannot really understand your inner feelings or experiences (Harvey, 1979, p. 199).

The distance between a researcher and his/her participants is increased when the researcher is unable to experience their realities. The degree of researchers' connectedness with and subsequent understanding of a culture may depend to some extent on their accepting their own experiences of "vulnerability" which are inevitably brought about by working in that culture (Katz, in press-b). By accepting one's own vulnerability and thereby giving up the security of one's own world-view, one is open to being transformed by a culture through participating in its world-view.

Katz described how, by questioning his own world-view he was able to achieve a deeper understanding of Fijian healing. He recounts one experience of vulnerability when he was interviewing a Fijian healer possessed by a Vu (Traditional God), describing the confusion which resulted from not knowing how to define the situation. He decided to acknowledge and accept this experience, thereby accepting the loss of his own world-view, including the assumption that spirits have no objective reality. As Katz writes:

It would have been more comfortable and comforting to dismiss the possession as only a
dramatic act, thereby reducing the levels of reality in the conversation. But believing as a Fijian that the Vū was there, while at the moments when my Western mind intruded believing it was not, not only kept me in a state of intense existential transitioning but also kept me open to unexpected learning. This was not a case of acting like I believed in order to get "good data" but of stretching my own beliefs beyond themselves to allow new beliefs to enter on their own terms and in their own reality (in press-b, p. 6).

Generally, researchers who have studied Espiritismo make the implicit or explicit assumption that spirits do not have objective reality and proceed from there to analyze their data. A Haitian proverb says that "when the anthropologist arrives, the gods depart" (Deren, 1953). If spiritist mediums would have the opportunity to read some of the research literature on Espiritismo, they would also adopt this proverb as their own. One of the mediums in this study could not imagine that someone can begin serious research on Espiritismo with the assumption that spirits are products of the medium's mind. He argued that it is impossible to understand the process of becoming a medium if one makes this assumption from the beginning.

Being a native researcher and having a different epistemology from Western researchers, I find it more appropriate to examine the process of becoming a medium from an emic perspective, remaining at the level of the medium's
construction of reality, without trying to make interpretations beyond the data collected. My goal is not to examine the process of becoming a medium by using a framework borrowed from Western psychological theories but to examine this process based on the medium's world-views. Because it is the way in which they experience reality that interests me I do not find it helpful to analyze spirits as creations of their minds, nor to compare spiritist concepts with Western psychological concepts.

For example, to explain the concepts of fluídos (spiritual energy) as representing "libidinal drives" (Seda-Bonilla, 1969) helps very little to understand this experience as it is lived by the medium. Moreover it may obscure the real meaning of fluídos as it is articulated by the medium. It is a fallacy to believe that because one can name something by using familiar concepts, this means that one understand it.

As a native researcher, it is more significant for me to understand fluídos as an "experience-near concept" rather than as an "experience-distant concept" (Geertz, 1979). Geertz made the following distinction between both kinds of concepts:

An experience-near concept is roughly, one which an individual...might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his
fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one which various types of specialists...employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims (1979, pp. 104-105).

As a result of my personal involvement with Espiritismo, I have been able to experience what I think are fluídos. Since the first time that I felt a fluído, it became an experience-near concept for me. By questioning the mediums about their experiences and reflecting on my own experience, my understanding about fluídos was increased. I realized that to feel the fluídos of the spirits was one of the first steps in the process of becoming a medium. Fluídos are conceptualized by the mediums as "spiritual vibrations" or corrientes ("currents"). It is through the perception of fluídos, that a medium can identify a particular spirit. It is also through the concept of fluídos that illness and healing are explained by the mediums. The "bad fluídos" of an ignorant spirit may cause a person to be ill, while "good fluídos" are used by the mediums to heal others.

Although fluídos are "invisible", they are described by the mediums as being "heavy" or "light". Fluídos are also differentiated in terms of being cold or hot and "strong" or "weak". Usually fluídos are felt on parts of the body such as the hands, the stomach and the back part of the neck.
After being touched by a *fluído*, a medium may jump from the chair if he/she is not prepared to receive it.

It is my position that *fluído* can be understood as an experience-near concept without the need to translate it to an experience-distant concept. The task is not an easy one but it is worthwhile because it may prepare the way for a deeper understanding of *Espiritismo* based on a description systematically derived from native categories.

To write about my people is very much a process of self-discovery. The distinction that has been made in anthropology between the self and the other became very blurred (Crapanzano, 1980; Dwyer, 1982). In writing about the other, I am also writing to some extent about myself and vice versa. In trying to understand my participants' stories I am using self-knowledge as a primary resource. I could never imagine how difficult and complex the study of one's own people would be. Referring to this issue, Malinowski wrote:

> If it is true that self-knowledge is the most difficult to gain, then undoubtedly an anthropology of one's people is the most arduous, but also the most valuable achievement of a fieldworker (1939, p. Xiii).
Relationship with Participants

My relationships with participants is another dimension that influenced the kind and the quality of the data collected in this study. Recent ethnographic studies have emphasized the role of the researcher's relationship with participants as a significant variable in the research process (Briggs, 1970; Crapanzano, 1980; Dwyer, 1982). A description of the way in which a researcher and his/her participants interact with each other may help the audience to make a more accurate evaluation of the research findings.

I introduced myself to the participants as a student interested in knowing about the development of spiritist mediums: how they become mediums and what experiences lead them to become mediums. Usually, at the beginning of the study I did not mention to them about my personal experiences with Espiritismo. However as I established a good degree of rapport with them, some of the mediums asked me about my personal position in relation to the spiritist practice. At that time I found it appropriate to talk about my personal experiences within the context of the research. It appears to me that my attitude of self-disclosure stimulated the participants to be more open in the interviews because they understood that I would not reject or judge what they may say
to me. Jourard (1971) commenting on the value of self-disclosure argued that "self-disclosure follows an attitude of love and trust" (p. 5).

The degree of intimacy and closeness that I could develop with some of the participants was facilitated by knowing them before the beginning of the field work. These participants already trusted me and in this sense it was easier to work with them. At the same time to interview them required that I adopt a different kind of role in the relationship. Although I knew these participants before, I had never related to them as a "researcher". I had never directly asked them questions about their development as mediums. Thus, the first interviews with these mediums became an interruption of our styles of relating to each other, and the creation of a different way of interacting with them. In this sense it was more difficult to interview these participants than those who I did not know prior to the study.

Different degrees of rapport were established with each of the participants whom I began to know after the beginning of the field work. It was very easy to establish rapport with some of these participants from the very first meeting, while with other participants it was a more difficult process. Some of them seemed to trust me from our first
contact while others expected me to gain their trust little by little.

Sometimes the participants' dreams and spiritual relations were a good indication of how they felt towards me. For example, a female participant expressed in the first interview that she had a dream in which a man was experimenting with rats. At that time she said that the dream was related to me. I asked her some more information about the dream but the medium said that she was in the process of studying and analyzing it. I thought that she was comparing me with an experimenter who manipulates and controls his/her subjects in order to prove a hypothesis. Maybe through this dream she was expressing her conception of what research and researchers are all about.

I continued working with this medium and in the second period of the field work I asked her again about the dream. The medium now did not associate the content of the dream with me. She said that the dream was connected to a spiritist center that she was attending. It seems to me that the medium changed the interpretation of the dream because she understood that I was not an experimenter interested in manipulating his subjects. As a result of our developing relationship she began to trust me.

The development of rapport with a medium who had
previously participated in a collaborative project between mental health professionals and spiritist mediums was also a great challenge. One may expect that after a medium had participated in this kind of project, it would be much easier to establish rapport with him/her. However one also has to consider that these kind of projects may also increase competition between health professionals and mediums instead of fostering cooperation among them. It appears to me that as a consequence of her involvement in this project, my participant was more defensive and mistrustful of health professionals.

I made several efforts to transmit to her the attitude that I was on her side, that I did not want to prove whether she had real healing power or not. However, she did not want me to be on her side because being a psychology student I was supposed to be on the other side. I felt that I represented a kind of competition for her.

In one of the interviews with this medium I faced a difficult situation because I repeated a question without being aware of it. The medium believed that I was trying to test whether she gives different answers to the same questions. She confronted me very strongly. I tried to explain to her that I did not remember that I had asked this question before. I felt very sad and frustrated about the
whole situation. But it seemed that at the end of our dialogue, she understood that I was being honest with her.

In our last interview, the medium made a statement which revealed that our relationship was moving towards more closeness and friendship. She felt that at the end of the previous interview I wanted to hug her but I was afraid to do that. The medium advised me that I did not have to be afraid to hug her. For me this was a good indication that she wanted me to get closer in the relationship.

I have presented these two examples in order to describe the complexity of my relationships with participants. My attitude was to be honest with them, trying to create an atmosphere characterized by open communication, respect and authenticity, so that the participants would feel free to disclose their personal experiences. In this attempt I was guided by the concept of genuine dialogue as described by Buber:

The chief presupposition for the use of genuine dialogue is that each should regard his partner as the very one he is. I become aware of him, aware that he is different from myself, in the definite, unique way which is peculiar to him (1965, p. 79).

In this sense, genuine dialogue is a two-way intercommunication, a horizontal relationship between persons who are engaged in a joint search (Freire, 1985).
PRESENTATION OF LIFE-STORIES

This section will present a summary of the life-stories of the 16 mediums interviewed in the study. I have chosen the term life-story rather than life-history in order to emphasize that these stories are based on accounts of the mediums' lives as delivered orally by themselves (Bertaux, 1981). In addition, the concept of life-story is one that indicates the collaborative dimension of this process. My goal is not to present a "complete" life-story but to emphasize those aspects which the participant believes are directly related to the process of becoming a medium. Thus, these kind of accounts can be classified as thematic life-stories.

These life-stories are the product of a collaborative act between myself and the participants. My role in the construction of these accounts is reflected in several ways. First, I was involved in the elicitation of these life-stories through asking questions and making comments on the participants' accounts. Second, I translated these accounts from Spanish to English, and in doing this I transformed the original accounts. Third, I organized the life-stories by choosing common themes in order to allow for
comparison between spiritist healers. In spite of these "distortions", I made an effort to write these life-stories from the participants' point of view, without making psychological interpretations. My goal was to respect the healers' accounts of their experiences as they chose to present them.

I did not try to check out the accuracy of these life-stories. I was more interested in the "truth" of autobiography than in the reality of personal history (Crapanzano, 1980). This distinction was made by Jung in the prologue of his autobiography:

I can only make direct statements, only "tell stories". Whether or not the stories are "true" is not the problem. The only question is whether what I tell is my fable, my truth (1965, p. 3).

Bruner (1986) in addressing this issue made the point that in a life history one has to distinguish between life as lived (reality), life as experienced (experience), and life as told (expression). The healers' life-stories are representations of lives, not necessarily lives as actually lived. These life-stories represent ways in which individuals frame and articulate realities and the experience of these realities.

Individuals construct versions of themselves to present to others. Some of the following life-stories may appear to be over-coherent and linear, giving emphasis to the
development of the healing power. In order to understand this issue one has to consider that in the narration of events individuals tend "to make coherent any elements of the narrative that seem discontinuous, supporting the expectation of a single motivated life grounded in a flow of related circumstances..." (Frank, 1979, p. 84).

I have organized these life-stories according to the spiritist movement which the medium seems to follow in her/his practice. Mediums have been classified into three major groups. The first group is composed of those mediums who are followers of Indigenous Espiritismo. The second group is composed of those mediums who are followers of Kardecian Espiritismo. The third group includes mediums who cannot be considered Kardecian or Indigenous in terms of their healing practices. I decided to call this group, the mediums in transition.

The criteria utilized in making this clasification will be discussed in the next chapter. In order to protect the privacy of several participants some names have been changed and the details that may identify them have been modified. However, some participants gave me permission to include their real names in their stories. As a way of appreciating their cooperation I am including their accounts without using pseudonyms.
In the telling of these stories, these mediums are sharing very important and intimate knowledge. The mediums were aware that their stories may be misunderstood but despite of this, they took the risk of sharing their experiences. There is a great need for the reader to read with respect and to honor the medium's honesty without abusing or misusing their willingness to share.

I will begin by presenting the life-stories of the Indigenous mediums: Gela, Ernesto, Diana, Generosa, Aurea, Mayo and Aida.

Doña Gela

Initial contact with the medium

Doña Gela is known in the community as the medium who gives "spiritual injections". People from different towns come to see Doña Gela asking for spiritual injections in order to be cured of their illnesses.

Doña Gela is a fifty three year old married medium who has six daughters and two sons. Her academic education is limited to the fourth grade. Taking into consideration her financial situation and living conditions, Doña Gela seems to belong to the lower class category.
Doña Gela offers consultas (spiritual consultations) every Monday and Thursday. However she sees "emergency" cases any day of the week. It was difficult to make an appointment with Doña Gela due to her busy schedule. We had to cancel some of the interviews because she had to see one of her clients.

Usually Doña Gela works in collaboration with other mediums in the consultas. I participated in several of these consultas which gave me the chance to learn about how Doña Gela works as a medium and how she educates other mediums.

First experiences in her development as a medium

Doña Gela began her story by saying that she has been a medium since she was eight years old. She described that at this age she began to have experiences with the spirits:

At nights I was afraid because I saw different "things". These "things" began to come near me and would suddenly become men and women. These men and women continued getting near me until they were transformed into smoke. This smoke penetrated into me and at this moment I became unconscious. My last words were: "Father, I am dying". When I would wake up, my house would be full of people trying to help me. But I felt fine.

This happened to her several times. When she explained to her father what had happened, he didn't believe her, punishing her for telling lies. Doña Gela's parents were
very Catholic and they did not believe in Espiritismo.

At that time Doña Gela had a vision of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. She also began to develop the power to predict things, especially the death of relatives:

When I was nine years old, I saw a vision in which my two year old sister was in a coffin. I heard a voice that told me she would die at 10:00 P.M. I told this to my mother but she did not believe me. At 10:00 P.M. my sister died in my arms. Six months later I told my mother that my grandmother had died of cancer. My mother told me: "We have a crazy child in this house". She went to look for a belt to hit me. In 15 minutes my aunt came telling her that my grandmother had died.

Becoming a medium

Near Doña Gela's home there was a centro in which reuniones were held. Without the consent of her parents she decided to attend a reunión. There she was told that she had been destined to become a medium since very early in life. At the age of ten Doña Gela began to attend a centro frequently but she told her parents that she was at the Catholic Church:

In this centro I developed my facultades very quickly. I was involved in the spiritual doctrine that was offered in the centro. I passed the spiritual causas that were affecting me. I knew that those things that made me unconscious were spiritual beings who were "passing" through me and I did know how to control them.
At the age of 15, Doña Gela worked as a medium providing *sanación* (healing) and lifting *causas* that were giving people physical illnesses. She continued visiting the *centros* despite the opposition of her father. She remembers that every time that she came back from a *centro*, her father punished her. As an adolescent she had to read the spiritist prayer book *Oremos* secretly, to hide it from her parents.

After being married, Doña Gela did not have to worry about her parents' attitude toward *Espiritismo*. But then she confronted another problem: her husband did not want her to work as a medium. However, Doña Gela would not let anyone limit her development as a medium:

I told my husband that if he prohibited me from attending spiritist *centros* I would divorce him in order to continue practicing as a medium. I also told him that when I fell in love with him I did not ask him if he loved me but if he believed in *Espiritismo*.

Doña Gela's commitment to her work as a medium is very strong. She said that if she had to leave her family in order to continue working as a medium, she would do that. No one would stop her from continuing to help others.

After some time, Doña Gela's husband began to suffer from a stomach condition. He was cured of this condition in a *centro*. After this experience, he began to believe in *Espiritismo* to the point that sometimes he collaborates with
Doña Gela in the consultas. In addition, Doña Gela's daughter and son have developed facultades.

Doña Gela worked in a centro for almost 14 years but she stopped attending it because, according to her, the mediums were doing immoral things. She gave me the example of a medium who, in a reunión, began to kiss and touch another woman while he was passing a spirit. Other mediums liked to swear when they were passing ignorant spirits. Doña Gela was also disappointed because there was too much gossip among the mediums.

She decided that it would be better not to go to any centro. After some time, she had a dream in which the Apostle Saint Pablo appeared telling her that he had the right place for her. One day, Doña Gela was sick and an old man invited her to a centro. Doña Gela felt that she should go to this centro. From the first time that she visited it, she knew that this was the place that Saint Pablo mentioned to her in the dream. The members of this centro called themselves disciples of Saint Pablo. This saint is the most important guide of the centro. Doña Gela became a member of this centro and she has been working as a medium there for more than 10 years.

The centro that Doña Gela is attending has many differences from the Indigenous centro. It belongs to what I
have called in this paper "the spiritist church" movement. These spiritist churches have a structure and organization which is very similar to a traditional church.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

Doña Gela dedicates two days of the week, Saturdays and Sundays, to working at this centro. She spends the rest of the week providing consultas to the people who come to her home. She offers the consultas in a small room located in the basement of her house. In the room there is a bed, a table and two large benches. The walls are covered with pictures of saints. On the table there is a big goblet of water, a bottle of agua de florida, and other kinds of liquid substances used for giving despojos. In the center of the table one can see a great figure of Jesus Christ.

Doña Gela is famous in the community for the spiritual injections that she is capable of introducing on different parts of a client's body. I talked with several of Doña Gela's clients and they felt as if they had been injected with a needle when she had touched a part of their bodies with her finger. I decided to observe Doña Gela very carefully when she was working with clients in order to see if she was carrying something on her hands. She "injected"
several people in front of me and I could not see anything in her hands or fingers.

One day I was doing participant observation in one of Doña Gela's consultas. After having worked with two clients, she looked at me and said: "You are very tired. You are working too much." She asked me to stand up in front of her. Then she began to massage my back and stomach. She was giving me a sobo. Suddenly I felt as if I had been injected in my stomach with a small needle. After a few seconds I felt the same sensation but stronger. Then, Doña Gela took one of my arms and she pressed gently with one of her fingers on the middle of it. At this moment I had to move away a little from Doña Gela because the sensation that I felt was as if I had been injected with a bigger needle. It was kind of painful. I told Doña Gela: "These injections are too strong". Everybody in the room began to laugh and Doña Gela smiled at me, continuing her massage. When she finished giving me the sobo, I looked at my stomach and arm, and I saw three small red points at the places in the body where I was "injected".

Doña Gela's style of working is characterized by strong physical contact between herself and the clients. She established physical contact with all the clients I saw her working with (about twelve). When a person is suffering from
a stomach problem, Doña Gela will give him or her a santíguo. In order to take away the bad fluidos, she uses a despojo. Doña Gela considers that massages are very important; she even had an electric massage machine in the room which she uses on some occasions. It seems that she is open to "modernizing" her practice.

Doña Gela put a strong emphasis on the working of causas in her practice as a medium. Usually her treatment for a person includes the education of an ignorant spirit which is affecting him or her. This spirit "passes through her brain" in order to express his or her feelings to the person.

Doña Gela believes that most of the illnesses are caused by "mental suggestions". She gave me an example to explain what she meant by "mental suggestion":

One day I was in the hospital visiting a friend of mine. A doctor who I have known for several years talked to me about a patient who was not physically sick but he told everybody that he was dying. I told the doctor to inject the patient with water because his illness was mental. The doctor followed my instructions and the patient got well very soon.

According to Doña Gela she sees many clients who are not really sick, they are maniáticos:

They think that there is something wrong with them but it is just their imagination. In their imagination, they believe that they have cancer, a heart problem or that they are mentally ill. I give them advice and sanidad to heal their mental nerves. For example, many of
the men come to me saying that they have cancer of the prostate or that they are impotent. Most of the time I tell them not to worry about it because nothing is wrong with them. Next time they come to see me, they claim to be feeling better.

In our last interview, Doña Gela confessed to me that there are things that she does not like in the centro that she is presently attending. She has had several disagreements with the leader of this centro because he does not think that to work the causas is important in the treatment of a client. The meeting in this centro lasts about six hours but he only gives 15 minutes to the working of causas.

Doña Gela has also challenged the authority of the leader by being able to cure the people he was unable to help. According to Doña Gela the leader does not want other mediums to progress very much, he just wants to keep control of them. She was also critical of the meetings in the centro because they are too similar to a Pentecostal or Evangelist meeting. Doña Gela explained that this happens because the leader was Pentecostal before he began to be involved in Espiritismo. Many members of the centro have told Doña Gela that if she establishes a centro they will follow her.

Doña Gela considers that being a medium has not negatively affected her relationships with the community.
She helps clients who are members of the Pentecostal church, and moreover a Pentecostal minister refers people to her. Her neighbors are also Pentecostal and she has a very good relationship with them.

**Ernesto**

**First contact with the medium**

I met Ernesto when he was a college student at a University in which I was teaching. At that time I was interested in doing a study about the influence of spiritist beliefs on the lives of college students. One day a student of mine told me that he had a friend who is a medium. Through this student I made an appointment with Ernesto at my office.

At this first meeting, Ernesto explained to me that he had worked as a medium at his parent's **centro** for several years. He invited me to attend one of the meetings at the **centro**. However it was not until I began this study that I really had the opportunity to learn about Ernesto's development as a medium and to visit his parent's **centro**.

The story of Ernesto clearly exemplified how different religious orientations and world-views can affect and
influence the development of a medium in Puerto Rico. It also showed that in the process of becoming a medium one may feel conflicting feelings and anxiety when trying to make sense of one's experiences.

Initial experiences in his development as a medium

Ernesto was born in a family in which the father and the mother are mediums. They have a spiritist center which follows the tradition of Indigenous Espiritismo. Ernesto's father works as a medium giving consultas every afternoon. Consequently, for Ernesto Espiritismo has been part of his life since he was born.

Ernesto remembers that as a child he felt lonely because he did not have brothers or sisters. He used to play and talk with the people who went to have consultas with his father. At the age of eight, Ernesto began to work as a medium:

A woman came complaining of several physical pains. I looked directly at her eyes and I told her that she did not have any physical illness. I gave a despajo to the woman with a red handkerchief. I told her to turn over and over three times. Then I gave her a massage with alcohola. The woman told everybody that she was cured. She said that when I rubbed her forehead, she felt that "something" was taken out of herself. Everybody was very surprised about what I had done.
From very early on in his life, Ernesto began to hear the voice of the spirits. He also had dreams in which he received premonitions about the future. However it was not until the age of fourteen that he was able to pasar his spirit guides:

My mother took me to a medium who helped me to pasar all of my spirit guides. She told me that first I had to pasar my principal spirit guide and then the others. What I remember is that I went out of the world for some time. When I woke up, my mother told me that I was able to pasar all my spirit guides. My principal guide established the order in which all my other guides have to pasar when I am ready to work.

Becoming a medium

After this experience, Ernesto began to work causas, to give consultas, to divine what would happen in the client's future and to perform "spiritual surgeries". He worked in collaboration with his parents in the spiritist meetings at their center.

However at the same time Ernesto was being attracted by the rituals and belief system of the Catholic religion. He was attending Mass every week and was also an altar boy. He enjoyed praying the rosary. His parents did not object to Ernesto's interest in the Catholic church primarily because they considered themselves Catholics.
When Ernesto was in high school he developed a loving relationship with a student. However, after some time she told Ernesto that she did not love him. After this experience Ernesto felt that no other woman would love him again. He believed that women would always reject him. Consequently he decided that the best thing to do was to become a Catholic priest because in this way he would not have to confront the issue of not being able to have a love relationship with a woman.

Ernesto's decision caused great problems between him and his parents. His parents knew that if Ernesto became a priest, he would have to abandon the obra (spiritist work). He described the situation at home when this happened as follows:

There was a war between my parents and me. I wanted to leave home. My life became a hell. We were fighting all the time. At that time I began to hate and despise everything related to Espiritismo. This was the major crisis that I have had in my life. It was a very strong spiritual and material confrontation. This decision threatened the good relationship that I had with my parents.

Around the same time, Ernesto's father got very sick because, according to Ernesto, "his protecciones were cut off" by people who disliked him. Ernesto's negative feelings toward Espiritismo increased because he could not understand "how this could happen to my father when he has helped so
many people. He thought that to be involved with Espiritismo was very dangerous.

Ernesto was not sure how to proceed. His parents continued pressuring him to leave the seminary. He had doubts about his decision to become a priest. Ernesto decided to visit a medium in order to get a consulta. According to Ernesto this consulta helped him to understand the nature of his conflicts:

The medium told me that I had a protección who is a priest and he wanted me to also become a priest. She helped me to understand that my decision to become a priest was motivated by the problem that I had with my girlfriend. The medium also said to me that I was looking for an escape from this problem. She finished by saying that I came to serve God not as a priest.

Ernesto then went to talk with a priest about his problem. He spent several days in meditation and reflection, which led him to realize that he should not become a priest. He found himself disappointed with the Catholic Church and Espiritismo. Ernesto did not want to continue working as a medium.

By that time, he had finished high school with very good grades. He made the decision to go to college and study psychology "because it seemed like the most interesting field". While in college, he learned about the Rosacrucés and he began to read everything that was available about this
philosophy. According to Ernesto, reading the books of the Rosacruces helped him to practice Espiritismo again because their system was similar to Espiritismo.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

At present, Ernesto participates in the spiritist meetings that are held at his parents' centro. He also gets involved in the treatment of clients who come for help. In his practice as a medium, he deals with marital problems, physical illnesses, women who have problems getting pregnant and adolescents with sexual identity problems, among others.

There are many factors that make Ernesto's development as a medium a very unique one. First, he came from a very poor family. His father worked as a baker all his life. His parents never went to high school. Their financial situation has always been a very precarious one. Yet, Ernesto has finished college and he is thinking about continuing on to graduate studies. He has overcome financial and social obstacles in order to finish his degree. As I was talking with Ernesto, I began to wonder how his education has influenced his practice as a medium and how his practice has differed from his parents' world-view.

Ernesto expressed to me that through the study of
psychology he has been able to relate spiritist concepts with psychological ones. He considers that a medium uses suggestion and hypnotism in order to perform spiritual surgery. He also told me that he, as a medium, uses the counseling skills he learned in psychology courses.

The practice of Santería has also influenced Ernesto's practice as a medium. At the age of eighteen he received the power from the saints or the aché:

I had to fast and meditate for three days. I could not talk to anybody. After that the santero baptized me using the water of three coconuts. Then I received a despojo with a white pigeon. Following this despojo we went to a river and I was baptized there again. Next I received the necklaces of various santos (saints). In the last part of this ceremony I had to pasar all my protecciones besides the santos who will be in charge of taking care of me. The santos that I received were Saint Francis of Assisi and La Virgen de las Mercedes.

Ernesto was also told in this ceremony that he should wear white clothes when he is involved in spiritual work. After being initiated in Santería, Ernesto read different books about it. He participated in several santero ceremonies in which animals were sacrificed in order to honor the santos. In his work as a medium he gives prescriptions that are based on Santería. For example, he prescribes the number of plants that a person needs to use according to the number of his or her saint. However, he does not use his
*santero* necklaces at the *centro* because "they are too heavy and look as if they were for women". He only uses the necklaces at a Christmas celebration at the *centro* which he described as being a "Santería party". This celebration involves a Mass, a rosary and the singing of *aguinaldos* (native songs) for the spirits. After this, people have the opportunity to dance and to drink alcohol.

When I interviewed Ernesto's father I discovered that he knew little about *Santería*. He told me that *Santería* is very similar to *Espiritismo* but the major difference is that in *Santería* people practice *brujería* (witchcraft). However he said that *Santería* can also be used to do good and that it depends on how the person wants to practice it. Ernesto's father expressed that sometimes he had used *brujería* in order to strike back against an individual who was harming him. He has some *protecciones* who have this power.

Another important element in Ernesto's development as a medium is his strong attraction to Catholicism and especially the priesthood. This influence is manifested in his life and practice as a medium. Ernesto's dream is to have a center which resembles the spiritist churches I described before. He visited one of these spiritist churches and found that this is the kind of model he wants to follow in the practice of *Espiritismo*. 
The influence of Catholicism in Ernesto's life is so profound that he celebrates a Mass by himself every Sunday morning in his room. There he has all the ritual objects that a Catholic priest uses when he is offering a Mass. He showed me the communion cup, the bell and the Bible. Ernesto also has some special clothing which resembles a priest's robe. (Some of Ernesto's protecciones were priests in another life.)

Ernesto disagrees with some of the ways in which Espiritismo is practiced at his parents' centro. He thinks that there are too many pictures and statues of saints. Ernesto likes to preach and to give spiritual instructions while his parents do not consider this an important element of the reunión. His father told me: "There is not much time for spiritual instructions because there are too many causas that have to be lifted." What Ernesto's father considers important is the working of causas.

Ernesto also told me that sometimes "there is too much ignorance about Espiritismo in his parents' centro". However he thinks that there isn't any sense in trying to educate the people who attend the centro because most of them are old people and they don't want to change. They want to keep their old practices. On the other hand he believes that young people are open to learning new practices.
In the interviews with Ernesto's father he emphasized the value of suffering as a way of "purifying" the spirit and getting God's salvation. Contrarily, Ernesto was very clear that he does not believe that one has to suffer in order to be saved by God.

Observing Ernesto in a reunión helped me to understand that although there are differences at the theoretical level between Ernesto and his parents in their view of Espiritismo, these differences are minimized at the practical level. Ernesto's style of practicing Espiritismo is very similar to his parents' style in several dimensions.

For instance, Ernesto, like his parents, considers himself to be an unconscious medium. They all believe that to be unconscious is better because one is not affecting the spirit's communication. Ernesto emphasized to me that he does not remember anything that happens when he gets into a trance. After the reunión his mother tells him about the cases in which he has been involved.

Ernesto's way of helping clients in the reunión is based mostly on the working of causas. In my participant observation at this center, I observed him "passing" very strong espíritus de causa. These spirits came very angrily and aggressively, saying bad words such as carajo and coño. One of these espíritus de causa who were communicating
through Ernesto asked for luz (light) and he was given a lighted candle. Ernesto put it in his mouth until the spirit was lifted.

When I asked Ernesto what the major obstacle in his development as a medium has been, he responded that his mother has overprotected him too much. According to Ernesto, his mother does not want him to have a girlfriend. Also, she does not want him to have any kind of independence. Ernesto said that his mother has always tried to control his social life. He considers that his mother’s overprotection has made it very difficult for him to have an intimate relationship with a woman. He is kind of anxious to have a girlfriend and get married.

On the other hand, Ernesto realized that it will not be easy to find a woman who can share his spiritist ideas. He believes that some women moved away from him when they found out that he was a medium. In addition, Ernesto has discovered that there are some protecciones who do not want him to get married. He has been trying to educate them.

Ernesto also recognized that the stereotypes about Espiritistas have affected his relationships with others:

People think that you are a brujo (sorcerer) and that you do harm to others. They look at me as if I had leprosy and they consider me weird. Espiritismo is considered to be for mediocres and ignorants. Espiritistas are rejected by a
great number of individuals. People told me that I would never go to college because my parents were Espiritistas. They think that you are a primitive man who worships many gods.

Diana

Initial contact with the medium

I met Diana when I was visiting a Kardecian spiritist center. She had attended this center for several years. In this center there was a strong emphasis on the intellectual preparation of the medium. There were classes every week about mediumship development. My impression was that the members of this center were mostly middle class people. The director of this center was a very well educated man who seemed to have deep knowledge about the philosophy of Kardecian Espiritismo, although he was not a medium himself.

When I explained to Diana the purpose of my study, she was interested in being interviewed and she promised to help me in any way she could. She was the first medium I interviewed for this study.

Diana is a fifty-year old woman who lives with her husband in an urban middle class community. Her husband is a retired man who worked as a teacher in the public school and the university. Diana has never worked outside her home.
She finished high school and decided not to continue studying. She has two daughters and one son.

**Early experiences in her development as a medium**

Diana described her childhood as a "normal" one. However, at the age of twelve she began to feel that a "man" was sleeping beside her. In the darkness of the night she perceived several shadows of people (celajes) which made her very nervous. In order to stay calm, she prayed the Lord's Prayer. She believed that all of these experiences were caused by the spirits. Diana added that when she was a child the spirits helped her with her school tests.

Diana's parents were believers in *Espiritismo*. Her grandfather was a medium who specialized in performing cures. Diana's mother helped him when he was working with clients. Diana remembers that the *Espiritistas* from all over the Island met in her mother's house annually. However, Diana considered herself to be a Catholic.

When Diana became an adolescent, she began to attend a spiritist center that was directed by a medium who was the mother of Diana's present husband. This medium helped Diana's father to overcome his alcohol problem and was also an important figure in Diana's development as a healer.
Diana described the spiritist center of her mother-in-law as very different from the center she was attending when I met her. The first center was very much in the tradition of what I have been calling Indigenous Espiritismo. Diana said that in this center people used incense baths, handkerchiefs and candles, among other things. It was in this center that she began to develop her facultades. Diana had an altar at her home in which there were statues of Catholic saints, flowers and water.

As Diana continued attending this Indigenous center, she began to experience having another "mind" or "voice" which told her what would happen in the future, and how to resolve certain problems. She could easily distinguish these particular feelings and thoughts from her own. Although she is not sure about it, she thinks that this "other voice" is her principal spirit guide.

Becoming a medium

After marrying, Diana began to have problems with her husband because he did not believe in Espiritismo. He did not want her to become a medium nor to attend spiritist meetings. Diana reported that each time she went to a spiritist meeting, her husband prevented her from working as
a medium with his negative thoughts. Consequently, Diana described that she had "to develop her facultades secretly".

Several years later, her daughters mentioned that there was a spiritist center directed by a well-prepared person and Diana decided to go to this center. In the meeting she received several videncias (spiritual revelations), being able to tell participants about their past and future. Diana began to participate regularly in the activities of this center, becoming an active member of it.

Very early in the interview I found that there were several disagreements between Diana's perspective on mediumship development and the philosophy of this spiritist center. This theme permeated all the interviews I had with Diana because she was experiencing a great degree of stress produced by what the director was telling her to do, and what she feels was the right way to develop her facultades.

Diana gave me several examples to show how the director prohibited and criticized the way she was practicing Espiritismo and helping some clients. First, she was doing consultas at her home but had to stop because the director told her that the clients would get "dependent" on her. People came to her asking for a consulta but she could not help them because "the director would scold her". Diana believes that she is a medium who needs to give consultas.
According to her, she has lost her confidence as a medium by stopping the consultas. In trying not to create "dependency", she realizes she cannot help a client as she would like.

Diana was also using the cards to work with clients but the director told her that this kind of practice attracts ignorant spirits and not evolved spirits, and that the cards are a crutch that mediums use. The director told Diana that she does not need cards in order to practice as a medium. Nevertheless Diana feels that through using the cards she can contact the spirits easier and faster. She thinks that she is more effective as a medium when she is using the cards.

Diana has also been taught that a good medium should not use candles, handkerchiefs, herbs or other kinds of ritual objects. As Diana told me: "The director has taken everything from me because he says that I don't need them".

The director has made fun of Diana due to her orientation towards indigenous healing practices:

One time the director had a very bad cold. I prepared a medicine from different kinds of herbs for him. Then he made fun of me, telling everybody that I was a curandera. On another occasion he was also feeling sick and I told him to put a cup of water in front of his bed to pick up the bad fluidos (negative energy). Then he told the group that he drank the water every night (One is not supposed to drink this water because one can get sick). This made me feel very badly. I also prescribed some herb
baths for him and he criticized them because they smelled terribly.

Diana commented to me that she thinks the director should not criticize the Catholic Church and Christianity. The director likes to say things such as: "Jesus had several brothers; I am not a Christian; Jesus was a human being like any of us; I do not believe in the Holy Spirit; the mother of Jesus was not a virgin". Diana recognized that she had a strong Catholic background and there are things about Catholicism that one should respect.

Several times I observed Diana's trance states (trance mediúmnico) while I was doing participant observation in the spiritist center. Most of the time her trance states were out of her control. Usually she had to be held by others because if not, she would have fallen off the chair. She "incorporated" the strongest espíritus de causa of the meetings. Usually these spirits were crying, yelling or very aggressive.

Diana describes herself as a totally unconscious medium. She does not remember anything that happened during the trance. The director is continuously teaching that good mediums are those who are in control of the trance state and are conscious of what happens during this process. The director also thinks that although she is an unconscious
medium, Diana can be in control of the trance if she wants to do it because one is never totally unconscious.

One month after the first interviews I went to visit Diana again at her home. This time she was more frustrated than before about her participation in the center. She had not attended the center for weeks. She described an incident which precipitated her decision:

In this meeting we were helping a person who had a causa. I began to feel a desire to fight but I felt that this desire was not mine. The director asked how I was doing. I told him that I was very angry and that I wanted to... I began to feel that I was not myself, but I was a man. The director asked another medium to take my hands. He tried to transfer the vibration of the spirit that I was incorporating to the other medium. However, the other medium took just half of the vibration. I became aware that the spirit still was with me. The meeting finished but the spirit was not "given light". I still had the vibration of the spirit with me. They had to let me incorporate this spirit so that I could get rid of this negative vibration.

When Diana finished telling me this account I thought that at a deeper level she was reacting to the director's decision not to let her work as a medium and his asking another medium to incorporate the spirit. The director uses this technique of transferring the spirit from one medium to another medium when a medium is incorporating his or her own espíritu de causa. He does not think that a medium should work her or his own espíritu de causa.
Diana expressed her dissatisfaction with the way in which mediums are educated at the center and how the spiritist meetings are organized. She argued that the director did not want to learn from the experiences of mediums:

When I disagreed with him, he always said that he would convince me. He teaches us, but he does not want to learn from us. It is true that he has read many books but I have the practice and the spirits who teach me. He is always telling me that the spirits can lie to me and that "the other voice" can be my own voice.

Diana thinks that the education that she has received at this spiritist center has made her doubt her capacities as a medium. She read a book that was in the library of the center noting that according to the book she was not a medium. She said that the result of this education is that she has lost her freedom and spontaneity:

I am very afraid of giving _videncias_ because I am not sure if they come from the spirits or if I am inventing them. Before I did not have any doubts and I worked very well. When I was using the cards, I had a lot of confidence in myself. Now I cannot help anybody. My daughter came from Florida but I could not help her. I have to start again getting confidence in my _facultades_. I do not trust my "other voice" any more and I am doing the opposite of what the voice tells me. I am very confused.

As I was listening to Diana I understood that this was a turning point in her development as a medium. I knew that
she was struggling very hard in order to find the best way to
develop her facultades. It seems to me that she understood
on her own that to follow the director's ideas about
mediumship development was alienating her from her own
perspective of how a medium should be. She was practicing
ideas that were not congruent with her "natural" development
as a medium.

Feeling very discouraged by all of this Diana asked me:
"What is your opinion about all of this? What do you advise
me?" At this moment of the interview I felt vulnerable, not
knowing how to respond her. I felt hesitant to make an
"intervention". I knew that the interview had provided her
with an opportunity to express and explore feelings about her
mediumship development. In this process, both of us were
trying to understand this conflictive issue in her
development. I thought that to leave Diana's question
unanswered was not the right way to proceed at that moment.
I told her that I do not consider mediums who use ritual
objects ignorant, rather that they are developing their
facultades in a different way. I said to her that she should
do whatever she thinks and feels is best for her development.
I encouraged her to follow her own conscience.

Diana asked my opinion about the issue of dependency
between a client and a medium in a consulta. I responded
that this is a very difficult issue because the concept of dependency is very relative and that it is important to consider degrees of dependency between a client and a healer. I also told Diana that I believe that a certain degree of dependency between a client and a healer is therapeutic and necessary. In any relationship it is impossible not to create a certain degree of dependency. I knew that in saying this to Diana, I was not taking a "neutral" position. Moreover, I was in some way in opposition to her director's teachings about the consultas. I felt the need to say something although perhaps I was getting too involved with the whole situation. I began to perceive that while the director was "prohibiting" Diana from giving consultas because they create dependency between medium and client, he was making Diana dependent on him.

It seems to me that my declaration about the potential value of "dependency" encouraged Diana to discuss other doubts and conflicts that she was experiencing. She also knew that I valued and respected her indigenous healing practices.

I am not sure if this was the right way to proceed in my interviews with Diana. However at the particular moment of the interview I felt that I should intervene in this way in order to support Diana.
Diana told me that a person she knows looked for help in the spiritist center. However the director and the mediums could not help him. Then he went to a medium who uses candles, water and camphor. This medium cured him. According to Diana, the Kardecian Espiritismo could not do anything for him but the other medium was very effective:

I understand that there are a group of spirits who need to use these rituals in order to cure people. Maybe in another life I can use just my mind in order to cure others. If in using alcoholado I cure myself and others, I will continue using it. The most important thing is the love that I have when I am helping someone.

On my second trip to Puerto Rico I visited Diana at her home. She was very happy to see me again. Unlike other times, Diana was very relaxed and calm.

The first thing that she mentioned to me was having experienced a personal transformation in which she has found herself. Diana said that she is "learning to be herself as a person as well as a medium". She decided not to continue attending any of the meetings at the spiritist center because they were not helping her. Now Diana is thinking about continuing to help people like she was doing in the past, using ritual objects and offering consultas.
Doña Generosa

Initial contact with the medium

The first time that I saw Generosa was in a reunión at her spiritist center. A cousin of mine mentioned to me that Generosa was the Presidenta of a center and that she may be interested in participating in my study. I arrived at the reunión half an hour late so it was impossible to meet Generosa before hand. I thought that I should not have any problem identifying her because my experiences had been that presidentes have a central role in the development of the reunión. However in this case I struggled through the whole reunión trying to identify Generosa. A male medium was the one who was in charge of the meeting. During the reunión I thought that maybe Generosa was sick and she could not attend the meeting.

At the end of the reunión, I asked one of the participants where Generosa was. He pointed to one of the mediums who did not have any active involvement in the spiritist meeting. I became very interested in knowing why Generosa was not "acting" like a Presidenta of her centro. Soon I discovered that Generosa had lost some of her facultades and she was in the process of recovering them.
Early experiences in her development as a medium

Generosa is a fifty-year old medium who lives with her husband in a rural area. In general she follows and practices the system of Indigenous Espiritismo. In addition she has been influenced by the tradition of spiritist churches. She attended one of these churches for several years.

As I began to interview Generosa, I found that the concept of pruebas was central in the description of her development as a medium. According to Espiritismo, pruebas are problems, sufferings or illnesses which have been chosen by a person before birth in order to pay a spiritual debt of a past life. If a person suffers his or her prueba with resignation, he or she will "purify" the spirit of moral imperfections.

According to Generosa, she has had different kinds of pruebas in her life. At the age of eleven, she had her first prueba:

I got very sick with a very high fever. My parents took me to the hospital and the doctor prescribed some medication. However, I continued having a high fever. My parents decided to take me to a centro in which I was told that I was developing facultades. In addition they told me that I should become a medium. I was cured of my fever in this centro.

Although Generosa's parents were believers in
Espiríntismo, she criticized and made fun of it. She said that she did not have faith in Espiríntismo. Generosa was not interested in becoming a medium.

At the age of eighteen, Generosa experienced a stronger prueba: she "lost her mind" for three years. When I asked what happened when she "lost her mind" she responded that she "cried, yelled and ran away from home". Sometimes she had to be locked up due to her behavior. However, she did not remember this period very well. It was through attending a centro and receiving help from mediums that she overcame this prueba.

After having overcame this prueba, Generosa decided to get married. However, her marriage did not last very long because her husband began to physically abuse her. She was divorced after four months of being married but she was already pregnant. After some years, she married the man who is her present husband. Generosa had only one son, because there were no children from the second marriage.

Becoming a medium

In her story, Generosa emphasized that she visited different centros in the community. Through this process she began to learn how to pasar spirits, to work causas and to
receive *videncias*. She received the help of fully-developed mediums to learn all of these things. According to Generosa, she is unconscious when a spirit is communicating through her:

In the beginning I wanted to be conscious but I was very afraid and I had too many doubts. When I was conscious I believed that what I was saying came from my mind not from the spirit. In order to eliminate these fears and doubts I have to work unconsciously.

When her husband had a heart attack, Generosa could not continue attending *centros* anymore. She began to meet with a small group of *Espiritistas* at her home. Generosa expressed to me that in one of these meetings her husband received a *sanidad* (healing) and because of that the surgery that was scheduled for him was cancelled. As a way of thanking God, he decided to build a *centro* so that others could "also" benefit. At the same time, Generosa was giving *consultas* at her home. She said she was extremely busy seeing people in *consultas* and being in charge of the *centro* three days a week. It appears that she was feeling overwhelmed by her work as a medium.

In 1982 she got very sick and a doctor diagnosed her as having tuberculosis. She came back from the doctor before the end of the *reunión* that was being celebrated at her *centro*. She asked the people who were there to help her
because she was very sick. However she was very surprised by the way people responded to her:

Most of the people left with the exception of two mediums. They excused themselves saying that it was too late. However it was just 3:30 P.M. This hurt me a lot because I had helped so many persons and when I needed help nobody was there to help me. At that moment I decided not to work as a medium anymore. When people came to my home I told them that I was sick or that I was not giving consultas anymore. As a consequence of this behavior I lost several of my facultades such as the ones for working causas and giving evidencias.

At present, Generosa considers that she made a great mistake in not continuing to help people because she "could not blame the whole community for what happened with a small group of persons".

After losing my facultades I learned that I have to be humble because before I was too proud. One has to serve others and it does not matter if they appreciate what you have done for them or not. I understood that I was not serving them, but God. A medium should never turn his or her back on a needed person. One always has to say "I'm here" when a person knocks at your door.

Although Generosa thinks that she can recover her lost facultades, she also understands that the process is a very difficult one. Although she did not lose her principal protección and her cuadro de sanidad (group of spirits who are specialized in healing), it is impossible for her to give consultas because as she said:
I ask and ask and I feel empty. If I do not receive anything from the spirits, I cannot give anything to the person. I cannot invent things. This is something too delicate and I am very honest. If I do not receive any evidencia, I cannot say anything.

Generosa believes that before losing these facultades, she received a lot from the spirit world. She also admitted that her participation in the centro has been affected a great deal by this experience. The fact that Generosa lost some of her facultades was helpful in explaining why she is not assuming the role of a "traditional" presidente.

In my participant observations at Generosa's centro, I noticed that the person who was assuming the role of the presidente was a male medium named Mayo. In my conversations with Generosa I found that there were some conflicts and disagreements between herself and Mayo:

Mayo is always telling people how much he knows. But this is not true because in Espiritismo no one knows anything. Everything is received from God.

Don Mayo also has commented in front of the public that he has more facultades than Generosa. Generosa feels that he has tried to humiliate her in front of the public, but she has remained quiet, not responding to his comments.
Healing approach and evolution of practices

Generosa expressed that what she most likes to do as a medium is to use her don de sanidad (gift of healing). Using this facultad she has been able to cure some of her clients. She likes to sing religious hymns because she receives the healing power from the spirits when she is singing:

I feel that I go out of this world. I feel the vibration in my hands. I get rid of my own self. At that moment I experience being in front of a sea and I am using its water to heal people. I received all of this healing power in my hands and I need to touch a person so that he or she can receive the sanidad. When I am doing this I feel that flames of fire are coming out of my hands.

Generosa believes that water can be spiritually prepared and it can become the medicine that a person needs in order to be cured. The water becomes medicine because the good spirits transmit their "vibrations", "fluídos", or "magnetism" into it. Generosa calls this water "agua fluidizada" (fluidic water). She told me stories of several clients who drank of this water and have been cured of their illnesses. However Generosa believes that if the person does not have faith it is more difficult to cure him or her. To have faith is the first requirement for being healed.

Another procedure that Generosa uses in helping clients is "spiritual injections". After having enough
concentration, she "can inject a client with her finger" in the part of body that is affected.

Generosa's centro is one of the most active in the community where she lives. It is open three days a week. In general, the participants of this centro are poor people. The only individuals who attend the centro regularly are the mediums. There are about seven or eight mediums. The total number of persons in each reunión is about 20 persons.

The central activity of the reunión at Generosa's centro is the working of causas, which occurs after about half an hour of prayers. Several ignorant spirits who are causing harm to clients speak through mediums in each reunión. One day a week there is a period in the reunión for "instructions" but as Generosa said: "Very few people come on this day because they don't like the instructions, what they want is for someone to work their causas." She thinks that people have a great resistance to the study of Espiritismo. She admitted that she does not know very much about the philosophy of Espiritismo because she does not like to read.

As I said in the beginning, Generosa uses the concept of prueba in order to make sense of her development as a medium. According to her, in order for a person to become a good medium, he or she should suffer strong pruebas. But, what is
the purpose of suffering pruebas?

The pruebas help the medium to change his or her character. The suffering that I had when I lost my facultades helped me to become humble. Through having this prueba I began to value the facultades that I had. One has to suffer in order to understand and sympathize with the suffering of others.

Doña Generosa thinks that through these pruebas, God is testing how much faith one has in Him. If a medium passes this prueba successfully, he or she is more prepared to help other people to pass their own prueba. As Generosa said: "If you have not walked barefoot in the rocks, it is impossible for you to know and to understand this experience".

Doña Aurea

First contact with the medium

Of all the mediums who participated in this study, Doña Aurea is the only one who has lived in the United States. I met her in 1983 when she was living in Boston with her family and working in a botánica (herbal shop) giving consultas. At that time I was visiting several botánicas because of my interest in establishing a connection with the spiritist mediums in Boston.
One day I was listening to the radio when I heard the message that a new botánica had opened in Cambridge. On a Tuesday morning, I took the train and went to Central Square looking for the botánica called San Miguel. It was very easy to find it. From the outside I could hear a record of santero songs. I went into the botánica and began to check some of the records that were on sale. Two women were talking to each other, one of them was about thirty years old and the other was in her fifties.

After a few minutes, I introduced myself to the two women. The younger woman was the owner of the botánica, and the other one was Doña Aurea who was working giving consultas at this place. I talked with Aurea about the absence of spiritist centers in Boston. She was very concerned about this situation too, telling me that she would like to go back to Puerto Rico because there she could work in many spiritist centers. After having talked for a while, I told Aurea that I was a student who was interested in writing about the life of spiritist mediums. I asked her if she would be interested in being interviewed about her development as a medium. She did not hesitate for a moment, giving me her address so that I could visit her at home. At the end of the meeting she gave me a crucifix and a small picture of Jesus as a gift.
Since this first meeting, I kept in contact with Aurea, making several visits to her home. From the beginning I felt that she trusted me very much which helped me to develop a good relationship with her. In the middle of 1986, after having lived for five years in Boston, she decided to go back to Puerto Rico, establishing herself in a small town at the center of the Island. During the period that I was doing the field study in Puerto Rico, I visited Doña Aurea two times, which gave me the opportunity to interview her more in depth.

Doña Aurea is fifty-one years old but she recognizes that she looks older than her age because she "has suffered very much". Her education is limited to the fifth grade.

The first interviews with Aurea were done before the official beginning of this study. But my interview approach was consistent with that adopted in the thesis: I let her talk about what she considered important and essential in her life as a medium. I did not want to impose themes which may not be meaningful to her. From these conversations I discovered that her life is full of revelations, visions, meaningful dreams and healing experiences which began to manifest themselves very early in her life.

At times it was difficult for me to distinguish when Doña Aurea was talking about a dream or revelation and when
she was talking about "real" events. I found myself constantly asking her if this was a dream or not. After some time I began to realize that for Aurora some "dreams" were as "real" as our conversations. She was not making a distinction between a "real" event and a revelation because for her the revelations were part of the reality she was experiencing. My need to distinguish between the "real" and the "imaginary" became an obstacle in understanding Aurora's reality.

Early experiences in her development as a medium

Doña Aurora began her story describing an experience she had at age five:

Ever since I was a child I have liked to look at the moon. As a child I spent many hours looking at the moon. One night I was observing the moon through one of the windows of my house. Suddenly I saw a beautiful child in the sky who was coming down in a cloud. He was getting near me and I could see that he had three stars on his face. The child was carrying the world globe in his hands, sitting on a cloud that shined like the sun. The child got down by my window asking me to come with him. He also told me that he was el Niño De Praga (The Prague Child) and to not be afraid of him. I was so astonished that I could not say a word. I called my mother so that she could see the beautiful child. However she did not see him. I explained to my mother what had happened but she did not believe me. After this experience, I went every night to a river that was near my home trying to have another experience with the child.
At the age of seven, Aurea had a vision in which she had a "direct confrontation with the Enemy":

It was very late and I was still at the river. My mother was calling me but I wanted to stay more time looking at the moon. I was not afraid to be alone at the river. On my way back home I had a terrible experience. Between two banana trees there was a very ugly animal. Fire was coming out of its mouth. The animal tried to hold me with its claws. I began to pray "Our Heavenly Father", then I told the animal: "You are not stronger than me". I had the courage to cross in front of it. As I was leaving, I felt an energy that pushed me toward the animal. When I could get home, I began to cry. I described my experience to my mother and she said that the animal was the manifestation of the Devil.

According to Doña Aurea, God wanted to test her spiritual strength, making her have a fight with the Devil.

Doña Aurea's grandmother was a medium. When Aurea was eight years old, her grandmother died. A few days before her death, the grandmother told Aurea that she wanted her to follow the spiritual work, giving Aurea her cuadro espiritual (group of spirits who are assigned to a person from his/her birth). In this process, the grandmother's spirit guides and ignorant spirits became part of Aurea's cuadro espiritual. Besides, her grandmother told Aurea that she would become a medium who would heal many persons. At that time Aurea did not understand the meaning of her grandmother's message very well.
Aurea considered that her mother was an obstacle for her desarrollo de facultades. Her mother was Catholic and did not believe in Espiritismo. Every time Aurea talked to her about an spiritual experience, the mother told her that she was becoming crazy. Aurea was punished several times when she shared the visions with her mother.

Aurea's mother took her to the Catholic Church several times. Doña Aurea remembers that she could not stay at the Church very long because she would begin to laugh without any apparent reason. There were times in which she saw "things" behind the priest.

When Doña Aurea began to see the spirits, she was not aware that they were spirits. The spirits appeared to her as if they were human beings and she would talk with them without knowing that they were spirits. Sometimes she went out to the mountains for several days without telling anyone because she wanted to be alone, in contact with nature. Her first experiences with the spirits were so "real" that one day a spirit hit her face.

**Becoming a medium**

At the age of sixteen, Aurea got married. Her husband did not let her go to the spiritist centers. She read The
Gospels According to Espiritismo without her husband knowing it. After being married for eight years, Doña Aurea got divorced, and had to take care of three children by herself. There were times in which she did not have any food to give to her children. But being alone gave her the opportunity to continue visiting centros.

After a few years, Doña Aurea remarried a divorced man who was a member of the Evangelist Church. He also prohibited Doña Aurea from participating in spiritist meetings. As she expressed: "I had to hide The Gospel According to Espiritismo again". At that time, she became loca (mentally ill), not wanting to eat anything and hearing voices that told her to commit suicide.

Seeing that the doctors could not cure Aurea, her husband decided to take her to a spiritist centro. There, the mediums told him that Doña Aurea was suffering from an obsesión (spiritual illness) because she was not working as a medium. After two or three visits to this centro, Doña Aurea was cured of the obsesión.

After this experience, her husband let her to participate in spiritist meetings. She developed the facultad to cure people using water. She liked to help people beside a river that was near her home because she could use the river's water in the healing ritual. In
addition, Doña Aurea developed the facultad of prescribing herbs to cure physical illnesses. She also learned how to interpret the revelations she was receiving in dreams.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

Although Doña Aurea uses several ritual objects in her work as a medium, she thinks that the function of those objects is to please the spirits or the mediums. According to her the ritual objects are not necessary for healing to occur. However she likes to use a bottle of perfume in a spiritist meeting "for creating a good environment". She learned that the ritual objects are not necessary because there were times in which she was unable to use a ritual object while helping a person and the person was cured.

In her development as a medium, it was important for Doña Aurea to identify the spirits who are part of her cuadro espiritual. First she identified several spirit guides who were helping her. She has a group of spirit guides who are Black Africans and another group who are Mexican Indians. There is also a Queen of Spain in her cuadro espiritual.

According to Aurea, in one's cuadro espiritual there are also ignorant spirits (espiritus de prueba) who need to
be educated. They are trying to make her deviate from the right path. Doña Aurea gave me the example of a female spirit who in another life worked in a bar and she was killed there. This female spirit wanted Aurea to work in a bar and to drink a lot of alcohol. Aurea talked with this spirit several times trying to educate her. After some time this spirit became one of her own spirit guides.

In 1981, Doña Aurea came to Boston with her husband in order to see her newborn grandson. Aurea's oldest son asked her if she could stay for some time and take care of the child. Aurea's daughter and youngest son were also living in Boston. She thought that it would be nice to stay there for a while so that she could be near her daughter and sons.

It was very difficult for Doña Aurea to adapt to the new environment. She complained about the absence of good spiritist centros. Doña Aurea felt that she could not be as effective in Boston as she was in Puerto Rico. She needed the contact with nature and to go to the mountains for a despojo. The water in the rivers and the beaches was so cold that she could not use it in the healing ritual. She also could not go out at nights to look at the moon because she was afraid that someone would attack her. As she expressed to me in one of the interviews held in Boston: "I feel that instead of going forwards I am going backwards in my
development as a medium.

Aurea has an extensive network of friends in Puerto Rico, including a woman who is also a medium. This woman has been very important in Aurea's own development as a medium. When Aurea was feeling down or upset, she called her friend to get advice. And when Aurea had a revelation, she consulted her friend in order to get help in the interpretation of it. This friend was also constantly telling Aurea that Puerto Rico is the place for her to work as a medium.

At the time that I met her, Aurea was dealing with several problems in her family. First, her husband had been an alcoholic for several years and had been unable to keep a job. Second, her two sons were getting divorced at the same time. Her youngest son was also having an alcohol problem and losing his job for the same reason. At the same time, Doña Aurea's daughter had separated from the man she was living with.

Very soon I noticed that Doña Aurea was an "advisor" for all the members of the family. Her sons and daughter consulted her every time they had to make major decisions. Doña Aurea was continually giving them emotional support. She was the one who kept the family together.

At the end of 1984, Doña Aurea made contact with a
group of Espiritistas-Santeros that was holding its meetings every Sunday. The meetings were led by a Cuban man who has been influenced by Santería and Espiritismo in his practice as a medium. I had the opportunity to do an ethnographic study of this group (Núñez-Molina, 1984).

Doña Aurea attended these meetings with her family. At the beginning, Doña Aurea was very excited about the meetings but then she got discouraged because the leader "had a different style of doing the spiritual work". She complained that one time she received a revelation and she asked permission to give it, but the leader told her that she had to wait. Doña Aurea believes that the leader did not want other mediums to give revelations. She also was afraid of working as a medium because she did not know if this would be considered appropriate by the santero leader. I noticed that her participation in these meetings was minimal. Similarly, the participation of other mediums was also very minimal. The leader was in charge of almost everything. Doña Aurea expressed her feelings about the meetings in the following way: "There, what the mediums do is to shake themselves from bad fluídos, so I do the same thing".

In the beginning of 1986, Doña Aurea decided to divorce her husband and to go back to Puerto Rico. She described the reasons for getting divorced as follows:
My husband has been one of my worst enemies within Espiritismo. He has been a big obstacle in my spiritual development. I thought that I could help him to overcome his alcoholism but I have found that I was wasting my time with him. The time that I have left I will dedicate to my spirits.

When I saw Doña Aurea in Puerto Rico, she was feeling very happy. She was helping several persons in collaboration with her friend. Describing her relation with the spirits Doña Aurea said:

I cannot live without the spirits. They are like a family for me. I belong totally to them. They give me a lot of courage. I have a guide who is, for me, like my mother. I always carry her statue everywhere I go.

Don Mayo

Initial contact with the medium

Don Mayo is a fifty-five year old man who has been practicing as a medium for about 30 years. He lives with his wife and mother-in-law. Don Mayo worked as a janitor in different factories but is now receiving a pension due to "mental disability".

I met Don Mayo while I was doing participant observation at an Indigenous centro. He was one of the most active mediums in the meetings, working several causas and giving
many revelations in every meeting. When I visited him at his home I discovered that Don Mayo was involved in giving consultas. He has a small room beside his home designated for this use. Our conversations were held in this room which made it possible to have a more private conversation.

Don Mayo was very cooperative, always trying to respond to my questions with a lot of details and examples. His wife was also very attentive, and invited me for dinner several times.

Don Mayo has a high school diploma. He also has a very good vocabulary for expressing his ideas. His economic condition is very difficult. At one time Mayo told me that he was unable to attend a spiritist meeting because he did not have the money to pay for the transportation.

Early experiences in his development as a medium

Don Mayo's involvement with Espiritismo began when he was in his twenties. Before, he did not believe in Espiritismo, and made fun of the people who practice it. However his wife was suffering from "attacks" and they decided to visit a medium to see if she could do something for her. Besides treating his wife, the medium told Don Mayo some very significant things:
The medium told me that I needed more help than my wife because I was having great pruebas due to my development of facultades. She also said that I liked to drink and to fight with others very much because there was a spirit who wanted me to become a murderer. She ordered me to throw away a knife that I had in my pocket.

Don Mayo recognized that at that time he liked to get involved in fights and was not behaving as he should. After some time, he visited another medium. At this time, Don Mayo received a great comprobación (verification) because the medium told him significant things about his dead mother without knowing her. The spirit of Mayo's mother communicated through the medium saying things to him that proved "that she was really my mother". Don Mayo commented that after this experience he began to have faith in Espiritismo.

Don Mayo emphasized through all of our conversations that he developed facultades because he underwent many strong pruebas. One time he had a medical exam in which it was revealed that he had an ulcer. The doctor told him that he had to be operated on as soon as possible. Don Mayo decided to go to another hospital. There he had another medical exam and this time it did not reveal any evidence of an ulcer. Don Mayo explained this saying that sometimes ignorant spirits can influence the results of a medical exam in order to make one have unnecessary operations.
Mayo's prueba continued and he was unable to work for four years due to an illness. There were times in which there was nothing to eat at his home. He had to send his children to a friend's house so that they could have something to eat. His economic condition was very critical. However he was resigned to it because he knew that God was testing him. As he expressed: "The person who will become a medium is tested in different ways to see how he or she will react to the suffering".

**Becoming a medium**

Don Mayo visited different spiritist centers trying to find the reasons why he was having so many pruebas. In all of them, the mediums told him that he was developing facultades and that he would become a medium. Don Mayo remembers that at the beginning he was experiencing many doubts which were obstacles to his development as a medium. He was afraid of telling people the things that he received from the spirit world because he was not sure if the messages came from the spirits or from himself. Through practice Don Mayo gained confidence in his capacity to heal others working as a medium.

When I asked Don Mayo about his facultades, he responded
that he could do spiritual analysis, give prescriptions, do sanación (spiritual healing), and work causas. He can do all of these things because he has asistencias (spirit guides) who are specialized in these functions.

Don Mayo expressed that his asistencias and God are the ones who are helping people, not him. He does not like people to thank him because he is not responsible if they get healed.

Don Mayo has lost his asistencias three times. He explained that other mediums have been jealous of him and they have tried to take away his asistencias. Don Mayo also recognized that in the past he received revelations about a person's life and he was not sure what could be told and what had to remain a secret. Sometimes he made mistakes telling other mediums and clients something very personal and they reacted very negatively wanting to take away his power. Now Don Mayo is more careful about what things he tells to the people in a spiritist meeting or a consulta.

When I asked him about his asistencias, he responded that a medium should not say the names of his asistencias to other persons. According to Don Mayo if anyone knows the identity of one's asistencias, he may be able to cause harm to them.

In 1965, Don Mayo began "to suffer from the nerves"
(nervios). He was experiencing ataques (attacks) which made him unconscious for a while. At other times, he could not control his emotions becoming aggressive with others. Don Mayo said that he "could not have control over the thoughts that came to his mind which ordered him to do bad things". He had to go to a mental health center in order to be treated for his condition.

At present, Don Mayo is still on medication. According to him, he has not been cured of his nervios (nerves), but now he has more control over the bad thoughts. As he explained:

I have more faith in God. I reject the bad thoughts through praying. I have more control over my behavior. When I have a bad thought, I examine it to see if it is from the spirit world or due to my nervios. When I have problems with my nervios, I ask God to give me control. Through praying, the bad thought goes out of my mind. Being a medium has helped me to confront this problem because my mind is busy with those things.

I was not clear if Don Mayo understands whether his problema de los nervios is caused by spiritual influence or if it is "material". He made it clear to me that his problem is totally "material", there is not any spiritual causa.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

During one of my interviews with Don Mayo, a person visited him asking for help. I realized that this was a good
opportunity to observe Don Mayo working with a client so I asked permission from him and the visitor to stay in the room. Both of them agreed to it.

The consulta lasted for about one hour. The visitor was a fifty-five year old man who was having problems with his legs. Don Mayo began the consulta by offering several prayers. Afterwards he asked the man several questions related to possible symptoms that he was experiencing. Some of the questions that Don Mayo asked were: "Are you having pain in your back? Do you sometimes feel chills and fever? Are you very tired most of the time? Are there nights in which you can't sleep? Do you feel itchy on your head? Do your legs become numb? Do you sometimes get dizzy? All of these questions were responded to positively by the visitor.

Then Don Mayo told the visitor that he saw a spirit who was trying to make him paralytic. This spirit was the one responsible for the leg pains that he was having.

Don Mayo also commented to the visitor that his wife was in need of help. According to Don Mayo the visitor's wife was suffering from headaches because she had a "weak brain". Don Mayo also pointed out that one of the visitor's daughters was causing problems at home.

After all of these comments, Don Mayo informed the visitor about the manifestations of ignorant spirits. He
told the visitor what he should say to an ignorant spirit in order to "give light" to it. Then Don Mayo closed his eyes, and began to move his hands around his head, showing that he was getting "possessed" by a spirit. Two ignorant spirits gave a manifestation expressing their desires to harm the visitor by making him paralytic. Both of the spirits were taken by Don Mayo's guide to a spiritual school where they would "get light".

Then, Don Mayo made several recommendations to the visitor. First, he prepared water and gave it to the visitor, telling him that it would cure him of the itch he was having on the head. Second, he told the visitor to put a hot towel on his waist everyday. Third, Don Mayo prescribed that the visitor take three herbal baths with different kinds of plants such as *altamisa*, *berbena* and *santamaría*.

Before leaving, the visitor asked Don Mayo if he had to pay him something. Don Mayo answered that he does not charge for his services.

I asked Don Mayo if there wasn't any material cause in the visitor's problem. He responded to me that there possibly was a material cause but he does not give importance to a material cause when it is not dangerous to a person's health.

Don Mayo's wife is a medium in development. She knows
how to pasar her asistencias. Sometimes they work cases together. However, Don Mayo's daughter is a Jehova's Witness and she has been trying to convince Don Mayo that he is doing something wrong. As Don Mayo expressed: "My daughter has given me many headaches". Their relationship has been affected negatively because the daughter is continually criticizing Espiritismo.

In our last interview Don Mayo expressed the following: "Maybe the people who read my story will laugh at it, but this is my story and it is my truth. So I do not mind if they make fun of it".

Aida

Initial contact with the medium

The story of Aida is one that touches me in a special and profound way. I have known her for many years. I observed her many times helping clients at her centro. I always admired her spiritual strength. She was always eager to help others.

Aida was the Presidenta of a centro which has been located behind her house for more than 20 years. Due to several health problems she is now unable to practice as a
medium. She has chronic diabetes condition. Three years ago one of her legs had to be cut off in order to protect the rest of the body from being infected. In addition she has lost her vision due to glaucoma. But the most painful event of her life was the loss of her twenty-two year old daughter who died in a car accident about six years ago. Aida is continually trying to make sense of all of these pruebas but sometimes she cannot understand why she has to suffer so much when what she has done in this life is to help others. The question of the meaning of suffering remains an unsolved puzzle for her.

Aida is now fifty three years old, but she looks much older. Much of the time she has to lie in bed. As she was telling her story to me, there were moments in which she cried, feeling very sad and hopeless. At other times there were moments of joy and happiness as she remembered special events of her past.

Early experiences in her development as a medium

Aida's pruebas began very early in her life. At the age of twelve she began to hear voices that commanded her to hurt herself. She ran away from her home several times. She cried and yelled without any reason. Aida's mother believed
in Espiritismo and took her to different spiritist centers. At these centers, mediums told Aida that she was suffering from spiritual causas and pruebas of past lives.

Aida's problems continued after she got married at the age of twenty. One day she tried to jump through a window from the sixth floor of an apartment building because the spirits told her that she was a bird. Another time she got poisoned with Clorox. When she had these crises, she was very aggressive with her husband and other people.

Aida had 10 natural abortions before having her first child. She believed that ignorant spirits wanted her not to have any children. Her husband said that Aida told him the day that she would get pregnant and the day that she would abort. Aida further explained:

A spirit told me all of these things. He also told me that I got pregnant by him. The spirit also tried to kiss me. I told him that I was a married woman and he should not kiss me. I saw this spirit as if he were alive. I ran away from him around the house. After some time of running after me the spirit left me, saying that he was happy because I would lose my child. This was a nightmare.

**Becoming a medium**

At that time one of Aida's aunts invited her to a spiritist center. There Aida began to have more control over
the voices that were troubling her. Several of the *espíritus de causa* that were affecting her were "lifted up". Aida was also told that she should become a medium so that she would not get ill again.

Aida began to have dreams about future events that would happen. At the spiritist meetings she learned how to *pasar* the spirits. One night, a spirit gave a message through a medium, telling Aida that he was her spirit guide. The spirit also said that she would find his bust in a shop. A few days later, Aida was in a *botánica* and she saw the bust of a black man. She suddenly understood that this was the bust that the spirit guide was talking about. She bought it for two dollars and ninety five cents and she still preserves it. However she made it clear to me that this bust is just a representation and a symbol of her spirit guide.

In later communications, the spirit guide revealed more about his identity. He told Aida that his name was Carabalu. He lived in India as a Black slave all his life. He was a very strong man who was obligated to have sex with other slave women in order to make healthy children.

Aida developed different kinds of *facultades*. She could *pasar* ignorant and good spirits unconsciously. Aida could also receive revelations from the spirit world. She also "magnetized" water so that it could become medicine for sick people.
Healing approach and evolution of practices

After living for some years in New York, Aida and her husband decided to go back to Puerto Rico. She got pregnant and had her first child. Aida described this experience as the most significant one in her life. At that time she decided to build a centro behind her house as a way of giving thanks to God for all the help she had received. She also began to see people at her home in order to help them with their problems.

Aida's centro can be classified as an indigenous one. There is a large table covered with a white cloth. On the table there are objects characteristic of indigenous centros: agua de florida, candles, a goblet of water and other things. The walls are covered with figures of saints.

The centro became a place in which Aida's family and other members of the community met together in order to get help from the spirit world. There were times in which Aida felt overwhelmed by the people who were constantly looking for her in order to get help. Sometimes it was hard to find free time for herself and the family. Aida complained that people from the community came to her when they were robbed or when they had lost objects as if she had the capacity to "view" where they could find their belongings. These
unannounced visits and requests also took much of the time she could have otherwise dedicated to her family.

When I asked her about the function of ritual objects in spiritist healing, Aida responded that although she used the ritual objects, none of them are necessary for healing to occur. What she considers important is the fluído de sanación (healing energy) of a good spirit. When this fluído is deposited in water, then a sick person who drinks from this water can be cured.

Aida's husband, Ramón, has worked as a carpenter all his life. He has also been a medium since he was very young. Ramón believes that if he had not been an Espiritista, it would be impossible for him to be with Aida and to have a stable marriage. They worked together as mediums in the spiritist meetings that were held at their centro.

At the present, very few individuals are attending Aida's centro. A small group of people meet at the centro to pray. There is no working of causas or spirit manifestations. However, Aida expressed that the centro should not be closed because she has a commitment with God to keep it open.

Aida mentioned that most of the people who attended the centro in the past had faith in her but not in God. She believes that they left when she got sick and could not work
as a medium at the centro. She considers this a problem because "people have to understand that everything that a medium receives is from God, so one does not know anything".

The death of Aída's daughter was an incident that affected her very deeply. This daughter was the one who was supposed to be her successor at the centro. Of her three daughters, this one was the only one who was a believer in Espiritismo. She was also her preferred daughter. As she expressed to me: "Since the death of my daughter, there has not been any day in which I have not cried. Sometimes I hear her laughing. When I eat something that she liked, I remember her and I cry. I cannot understand why they took her away. I hope that all of this will help me to purify my soul." There were moments that she asked God: "Where were you when this happened to my daughter?" The only answer that she received was that this accident had to happen as a prueba for her and not as a punishment for her daughter. She thinks that maybe in another life she was not a good mother and now she is paying for her mistakes. As she expressed: "I ask God for all of these pruebas to have the purpose of liberating my spirit. I ask God that I can say one day: I am happy, I do not suffer anymore. It is with this hope that I continue living."
The second group of mediums represent the practice of Kardecian Espiritismo: Peruchín, Félix, Emiliano, Marcos and Rosa. What follows is a summary of their life-stories.

Peruchín

Initial contact with the medium

Peruchín was referred to me by an informant of mine who is a leader of Kardecian Espiritismo in Puerto Rico. He has known Peruchín for several years. On a Sunday morning, we visited Peruchín at his home located in a community of limited economic resources. After having introduced me to Peruchín, my informant left the house explaining that he had to work on his car and would come back in two hours.

Peruchín is a sixty-nine year old medium who looks much younger. He is tall and thin, with dark skin that makes him look like a mulato. Peruchín lives with his wife in a small wooden house. They do not have any children. He has worked as a janitor in a public school for many years.

Peruchín never finished the first grade. He hated school and never learned to read and write. Despite these limitations Peruchín expresses his ideas very well. I was impressed by how much he used metaphors and other figures of
speech in our conversations. He explained to me that he is able to talk in this way because he has the *facultad* of inspiration. The spirits inspire him to talk using poetic language. According to Peruchín, he was being helped by the spirits as he was answering my questions. He did not need to experience a deep trance in order to communicate with the spirits.

**Early experiences in his development as a medium**

Peruchín began his story by telling me that when his mother was pregnant with him she was told that the child she would have would become a medium. His mother was black and was never accepted by his father's family. They were constantly telling Peruchín that he was not his father's son.

As a child, one of Peruchín's dreams was to become the best professional baseball player in Puerto Rico. At the age of nineteen, he began to play professional baseball for the team of Ponce. At that time he had experiences which led him to stop playing baseball.

At nights I began to see "things". I felt that someone was holding my hands. Then I felt that my spirit was getting out of my body. Instead of dreaming about baseball, I dreamed that I was giving a spiritual message to a big crowd of people. When I was batting in a game, I saw the figure of a woman and this made me strike out.
Peruchín understands that this was the beginning of a "conscious obsesión". This process made him wander in different towns, sleeping on benches without any money. For a period of six months, he lost his appetite, feeling nauseous in the presence of food. Also his sexual appetite increased, and he felt a tremendous need to have sex with other women. He made it clear that the obsesión was conscious because he felt the need to run, to throw things at people and to fight with them but he was able to control these impulses.

**Becoming a medium**

At that time an old woman invited him to a spiritist center. There his obsesión was cured by helping the ignorant spirits who were troubling him. He was told that he came to this world to develop facultades. Peruchín felt a great love for the spiritual work, and decided to prepare himself as a medium.

Very soon he developed the facultades of inspiration, was able to give videncias and pasar spirits. He began to see spirits who told him: "I want to be your friend". He established a small center in which he saw people in need of help.
By the age of twenty-eight Peruchín had been divorced two times. A spirit told him that he would find the right woman very soon. That night, in a dream, he saw a young woman who was sitting under a tree.

That week a woman came to his center asking for help. Peruchín was very surprised to see her because the woman was very similar to the one in the dream. The woman was experiencing an obsesión because she was developing facultades. Peruchín helped her to overcome the obsesión and in the process they also fell in love. They have been married for more than thirty years.

I noticed very soon that the relationship of Peruchín with his wife is a very special one. As Peruchín told me: "When I married her, my life changed completely". He relates to his wife as if they were newly-weds. Peruchín is constantly praising her for how good a wife she is. He expressed that his wife is always concerned about how well he is dressed and how much he has eaten. A spirit told him that his wife was his mother in another life.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

Peruchín follows the movement of Kardecian Espiritismo in his practice as a medium. He is a friend of several
leaders of this movement. In many ways he is different from an Indigenous medium. Peruchín has a spiritist center beside his house but he calls this place a spiritist school, not a centro or a "temple". The name of his spiritist school is La Voz de la Vida (The Voice of Life). Meetings are held in his school every Monday night. An average of 15 to 20 persons attend these meetings.

Although Peruchín recognized that he used prayers in the past, now he thinks that they are not necessary. In the meetings he gives talks about topics inspired by the spirits. He considers that what is important is to prepare a good environment so that good spirits will be attracted. To support his point Peruchín told that "a baker does not have to call people because they will come attracted by the good smell of the bread. The spirits do not have to be called if there is a sense of harmony in the meeting". Besides, Peruchín does not believe that ignorant spirits can be educated through prayers. When I asked him what the reaction of people was when he stopped doing the prayers, Peruchín responded that some of them left the school.

Peruchín also has a different conception about the working of causas:

The concept of causas is what has been an obstacle in the progress of Espiritismo. No one can take away the causa from another person. I
am the only one who can lift my causas. The important thing is to orient and to educate the individual. What would life be then, if someone has the power to lift our own causas?

Moreover, Peruchín does not think that a medium should tell a person that there is an ignorant spirit who is trying to harm him or her. As he explained:

To say this to people is like giving them a poison. It may become a negative suggestion which may cause more harm than good. For example, to say to an individual that an ignorant spirit wants him to have a car accident may affect the individual negatively because now he is very afraid of driving. What a medium should do is to support the individual, motivating him to study and to become a better person.

"How then the ignorant spirits will be educated?", I asked Peruchín. Peruchín answered me that in the process of giving advice to the individual, these spirits will also be listening and benefiting from these conversations. According to Peruchín it is not necessary to talk directly with the spirits to help them. If the person is being helped, the spirits who are troubling him or her are also being helped.

In relation to the use of ritual objects in the medium's practice, Peruchín declared that "the cigar does not think, the candle does not think, the agua de florida does not think..." He made it clear that he does not use any of these things in his practice because they are not necessary
in helping a person. However, he recognized that these ritual objects may help mediums to do their work with more confidence. Peruchín added that sometimes the spirits suggest that a medium use a ritual object but the medium should not follow their suggestion, just educate them.

In one of my interviews with Peruchín, a friend came to see him because she was not feeling well. The friend was a woman of about thirty-five years of age. Peruchín asked his wife for the book *The Gospel According to Espiritismo*. Then Peruchín asked the woman to sit down in a chair that he brought from the dining room. Afterwards, he told the woman to close her eyes and to breathe very deeply five times thinking that she is alright. Following this, Peruchín asked her to think about a place she would like to be.

He began to touch her forehead with his fingers, using gentle pressure. Then he repeated the same procedure in different parts of her back. He gave these massages for about 15 to 20 minutes. When he finished, his friend said: "You have taken about 50 pounds from me. I feel much better".

I was surprised to see that Peruchín was using techniques of relaxation and visualization in order to help this person. Besides, instead of giving a despajo, he gave a "massage" to her.
At the spiritist school Peruchín also uses classical music as a way of creating a "more spiritualized environment". When I asked him where he learned these techniques, Peruchín responded that it was in the "school of life".

Throughout all the interviews Peruchín emphasized that a medium should "study" in order to develop his or her facultades. What he means by study is that one has to "listen and observe the events of life very carefully". Peruchín pointed out that we have confused the words "study" with "reading and writing" but they are not the same.

As I was about to leave Peruchín's house, I asked him if he considered himself a fully-developed medium. Peruchín answered as follows:

A medium never finishes developing the facultades. A medium is always in the task of learning and developing. The medium never becomes a fully-developed medium. I am always learning new things.
Don Félix

Initial contact with the medium

Don Félix is a seventy-eight year old medium who is well known throughout the whole Island due to his healing skills. People from different towns come to see him for a consulta, sometimes traveling two or three hours. He is considered to be one of the most powerful spiritist healers of Puerto Rico. Newspapers have written articles about him and the cures he has performed. Famous artists, politicians and public figures have visited Don Félix asking for his help.

I was very curious and interested in meeting him. I went to see him on Saturday morning in which he was giving consultas at his centro. Don Félix's centro is located in the heart of a poor community at the metropolitan area. The centro is a cement structure painted white and blue. It has a separate small room which is used by Don Félix for giving consultas. The centro also has a small cafeteria in which visitors can buy different kinds of native foods. The main room of the centro, in which spiritist meetings are held, has the capacity to accommodate more than 150 persons. In the front of this room there are four rectangular tables in which
the centro's mediums are accommodated.

From the moment I asked Don Félix to participate in my study he was very interested in helping me. He told me that he did not have time for an interview on Saturday or Sunday because he was working at the centro those two days. However he invited me to a country house he has in the mountains where we could talk about whatever I wanted. I discovered that Don Félix's country house was located in my hometown where I was staying while I was doing this field study.

Through the interviews and participant observation at his centro, I began to know about the mediumship development of Don Félix and his unique style of helping others. Although Don Félix is the oldest medium among those I interviewed, he is one of the most active. On Saturdays, he gives consultas to about 30 individuals. On Sundays, he is in charge of a group of more than 100 persons. In addition, on the weekdays he visits those clients who cannot go to his center due to different problems. I was very impressed with his physical strength. On Saturdays and Sundays he does not seem to get any rest from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., seeing several clients, and taking charge of the meetings' development. He seems to renew himself in the reunión and the consultas, always being ready to meet the different needs of the people.
I made an appointment with Don Félix for an interview in his country house. On a Tuesday morning I went to see him. I met Don Félix's wife who is also a medium. She told me that Don Félix was working on the farm, planting some orange trees. She told me that they like the house a lot because it is a spiritual retreat for them. They can also have some privacy because in their home in San Juan many people visit them asking for help. After a few minutes Don Félix came, looking very sweaty. He said that he had been working on the farm since very early in the morning. Working on the farm is a hobby which he enjoys very much.

Don Félix showed me his house and afterwards we went to the basement because he said that there we could talk without interruptions. There he began to tell me about his life.

Early experiences in his development as a medium

Don Félix described his family of origin as one of the richest in his hometown. At the age of ten, due to several problems with his family, he left them and went to San Juan. He began to live by himself, shining shoes and working in agriculture for the rich people of San Juan. Consequently he never had the opportunity to go to school.

At the age of eighteen, Don Félix had his first direct
contact with the spirit world. He was awake on his bed at one in the morning when two men and a woman suddenly appeared before him. At that time he did not recognize that they were spirits. He thought they were burglars:

These people told me that they will educate me about everything. They also said that they would dictate a book to me. I asked them how I could write a book if I do not know how to write or read. They responded that I do not have to worry about it because they will teach me.

After this experience, Don Félix often began to feel the need to travel to many remote places in the Island, compelled by the spirit forces. In these different places he went into trance and he received messages from espíritus de luz (spirits of light) which he wrote in whatever he found that can be used to write. He wrote these messages on plantain leaves, wrapping paper, fabrics, cardboards, among others. After his trance experience, Don Félix did not know what had happened nor did he know how to read the spiritual messages because he was illiterate. The only thing he knew was that he had to preserve these different messages.

Several years passed until some friends of Don Félix became interested in the messages that he had received from the spirits. According to Don Félix, they had a hard time trying to figure out what was written on the different kinds of materials he used. His friends told him that the messages
should be printed in a book in order for other people to benefit from these teachings. After overcoming several obstacles, the book was published in 1974 by Kier, a famous publishing house in Argentina specialized in spiritualistic books (Rodríguez, 1973).

In the first interview Don Félix gave me a copy of his book, *Luz de la Verdad Espiritual* (Light of the Spiritual Truth) which I had the opportunity to read; it was very well written. This book is, according to Don Félix, a mediumistic work, which means that he wrote it by automatic writing. In this sense Don Félix does not consider himself to be the author of the book because he was only a "channel" that different spirits used to dictate their messages. The book is a collection of 13 short essays dictated by different "spirits of light" such as Amalia Domingo Soler (a famous spiritist woman from Spain), León Denis (an European spiritist philosopher), Agüeybaná (a well known Puerto Rican Indian) and the Apostle John.

At the age of twenty-three Don Félix got married to a woman who was also a believer in Espiritismo. A few years later he began to suffer from an obsesión which lasted about three months. Don Félix had to be hospitalized in a psychiatric facility. His wife decided to take him to a spiritist centro. After visiting this centro for a month,
Don Félix was able to recover his mental health. The diagnosis that was given to him at the centro was that he was developing facultades.

**Becoming a medium**

After this experience, Don Félix visited different centros until he got prepared to offer consultas at his home. (I could not get more information about this period because he had difficulties trying to remember what happened to him). In a few years, Don Félix became a very well known medium in the community, having developed several facultades.

When I asked about his facultades he mentioned several including clairvoyance, telepathy, hypnotism, magnetism, automatic writing, visual and auditive mediumship (capacity to see and hear the spirits). Listening to all of these concepts, I recognized that Don Félix's vocabulary for describing his facultades was very different from the vocabulary used by indigenous spiritist mediums. Where did he learn all of these concepts? Although he seems to be an intelligent person, Don Félix's everyday language shows that, if he had some academic education, it was very little. According to Don Félix, the spirits have taught him how to read and write because he has never been in the school.
Don Félix's principal guide is called Agüeybaná. Agüeybaná was a famous Taino Indian who at the time of the Spanish colonization decided to fight against the oppressive Spanish regime. The first contact that Don Félix made with Agüeybaná was after having been meditating in a mountain for three days. There, Agüeybaná told Don Félix everything about the history of the Puerto Rican Indians.

Don Félix is a conscious medium but there are times in which he works unconsciously. He considered that conscious mediums are the best ones because they can help people without them being aware that there is a spirit helping the medium. Another advantage is that conscious mediums can work with their eyes open.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

In 1953, Don Félix established a centro on the first floor of his home. He has been offering services to the public since then. To see Don Félix "in action" at his centro is a unique experience because the reunión in this centro is not a ritual separated from everyday life. Don Félix likes to make jokes in the reunión trying to release the tension of the group. He told me that when he makes a joke and the audience laughs they are not thinking about
their problems anymore. They feel more relaxed and consequently it is easier to help them. However this is not a "technique" that Don Félix uses, it is an intrinsic part of his personality. He made me laugh several times during the interviews suggesting that I not take this research too seriously. I really enjoyed being with him. He was always emphasizing the funny elements of life.

At the reunión, Don Félix is a very spontaneous person. In the middle of a very serious conversation, he may swear a carajo or a coño in order to emphasize a point. He may compliment a young woman saying to her: "Do you want to be my girl friend?" He may scold a client or a medium very seriously and then he may start laughing. Sometimes he calls people by nicknames based on their physical characteristics such as flaco (the skinny one), gordo (the fat one) or cabezón (the big-headed). However Don Félix told me that the spirits tell him when he can tease a client and when it is not appropriate to do so.

Don Félix has great confidence in his abilities, demonstrating no doubts about the way he wants to proceed in the treatment of a client. He walks slowly with a sense of pride and respect. The mediums and the clients seem to admire him a great deal. I noticed that I admired his capacity for relating to people, for interacting with them in
an intimate but not intrusive way. He seems to be in control of the reunión at all times.

The reunión at Don Félix's centro is divided into four major sections: the conference, the prayers, the healing session, and the working of causas. The reunión begins with a conference by Don Félix from 8:00 to 9:00 A.M. In this conference he presents different topics such as his personal experiences as a medium, description of cases in which he was successful, how a person should be according to Espiritismo, and a talk about reincarnation. Sometimes he tells people to ask questions related to the conference. At other times he will ask questions to the public. He may also read a passage from a book about Espiritismo and then explain it.

After the conference, the participants listen to a record of prayers for about half an hour. Then, there is a healing session in which each participant comes to the front and receives pases from Don Félix and other mediums.

At about 12:30 P.M. there is a one hour lunch recess. The final period is the "working of causas". The "working of causas" is primarily for clients who have been to a consulta before. Each client is assigned to a medium who is supposed to help him or her. In this process a medium may find an ignorant spirit that is affecting the client and this spirit may speak through the medium. Don Félix does not work with
any specific person so that he can be ready to assist a medium who needs his help in order to work a causa. He moves around the other mediums, checking how they are helping clients. Mediums tend to give advice about how a client should behave in order to resolve a problem. It seems that Don Félix is "supervising" their work.

In the reunión, it is very difficult to recognize when Don Félix is under the influence of a spirit and when he is not. He does not believe that a spirit goes through the "brain" of a medium in order to make a manifestation. In other words, he does not believe that the spirit "possesses" a medium. According to Don Félix, when a spirit wants to say something to him, it comes near him and stays at some distance. Then the spirit "projects" ideas and feelings to his subconscious mind or submente. From the submente these ideas and feelings cross to his conscious mind. At that moment he feels an irresistible impulse to talk to the client. According to Don Félix the submente is the part of the human mind which is more influenced by the spirits because it is free of prejudices and negative ideas.

Don Félix has developed a vocabulary which seems to be particular to his own development as a medium. In one of the interviews he mentioned to me the concept of espíritus anoides for describing ignorant or bad spirits. Don Félix
told me that he likes to read books about Espiritismo, parapsychology, hypnotism, magnetism and occult sciences. I saw a good book collection on these areas at Don Félix's centro. It seems that he has been influenced in his practice as a medium by the reading of these books.

Don Félix works primarily with a population characterized by poverty and low academic achievement. In this sense he is a medium who serves the poor. On the other hand he uses a vocabulary and understands the healing process in a way that is very much different from indigenous spiritist healers. For example in his centro there are no candles, goblets of water, incense, nor statues or figures of saints. Moreover he does not believe that using these ritual objects may be helpful in the healing process. I observed that in his center there are pictures of Jesus Christ, John F. Kennedy, Juan Ponce de León (Spanish colonizer of Puerto Rico), Amalia Domingo Soler (a famous Spanish spiritist woman), Luis Muñoz Marín (a past governor of Puerto Rico), and a picture of Don Félix when he was young. According to Don Félix he has these pictures in the center because these persons are examples of how a human being should be and behave. Don Félix also has the statue of an Indian which represents his principal guide, Agüeybaná.

The only ritual object used by Don Félix in his centro
is a wooden knife. With this wooden knife, Don Félix finds the areas of the client's body which are affected by an illness. However, according to him, the knife is just a symbol and does not participate directly in the healing process. Don Félix uses a knife because it "increases the suggestibility and the faith of the client", and therefore it is easier to help a person. According to Don Félix, in the healing process, his spirit guide uses his "physical magnetism" in order to cure the client of his/her affliction. The client's faith is important because it opens him or her to this magnetism or energy.

Don Félix admitted that in the beginning of his development he used ritual objects because he "had weak facultades". When he made contact with more powerful forces, the ritual objects were not necessary anymore. It was after suffering a thrombosis that Don Félix developed the "forces of magnetism and hypnotism".

Don Félix's understanding of the causes of illness is described in this way by him:

Illness is a psychic microbe. Illness resides in the "subconscious mind" and because of that the "physical mind" is disturbed and gets sick. What I do is to cure the subconscious mind and therefore the physical mind is also cured. In this sense I am a natural psychologist.

Don Félix did not emphasize the education of ignorant
spirits as a major goal in his treatment. He uses techniques that are based on a psychological explanation of illness. For example, he employs techniques of suggestion and hypnosis in his work with clients. He told me that a medium should know how to use suggestion with their clients because most of the problems can be resolved using this technique. He gave me an example of how to use suggestion with a client:

"Let's suppose that you are mentally sick. I would tell you: "I can cure you. They are treating you for being crazy but you are not crazy". (Although you can be really crazy). "What happens is that you are suffering very much. I will put my hands on your forehead and when I ask you to yell, you will do it. After that you will be cured".

Don Félix mentioned that sometimes it is not necessary to tell people that there is an espíritu de causa that is troubling them. Through the process of hypnotism and suggestion the spirit may get help without the need to make people afraid of it.

In addition Don Félix uses hypnosis with clients when they are prejudiced against Espiritismo. Such clients do not want to cooperate in the treatment or they are very afraid. In order to "hypnotize" a client Don Félix puts his hands on the client's forehead, putting pressure on his or her eyebrows. Afterwards, he tells the client to count from one to 100. Through this process the client gets into a trance.
and Don Félix gives him or her a verbal suggestion to "condition" his or her mind. Don Félix believes that the major goal in using these techniques is to make the client more open to the influence of the spirit guides. He expressed that he is not the one who gives the suggestion but his spirit guides through him.

Another procedure that Don Félix uses to help clients is to give *pases*. What he does when he is giving *pases* is to put his hand on the part of the body which is affected without moving it. Don Félix does not think that one has to move the hands while giving *pases* or *despojos*. However he considers that for some people to move their hands rapidly is helpful because it increases their faith in the healing process. Don Félix understands that to give *pases* is effective because the medium is giving of his own "physical magnetism" with the help of his or her spirit guide.

**Presentation of a case worked by the medium**

Don Félix described a case to me in which he was able to cure a client who could not speak due to some damage in his vocal cords. The physicians had told the client that only with a very delicate operation would he have some possibility of recovering his voice. In order to be operated
on, the client had to be anesthetized but it was dangerous to do that because he was suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure.

The client decided to attend Don Félix's centro on Sunday morning. Without the client describing his problem, Don Félix told him that he had to be operated on immediately by him if he wanted to recover his voice. Then, Don Félix said to the client that first he had to be "anesthetized". Hearing Don Félix's statement, the client became very afraid because he did not want to be "anesthetized". However Don Félix explained to him that this anesthesia was produced by hypnosis and it would not be dangerous to his health. Seeing that the client understood the procedure, Don Félix proceeded to hypnotize him. In a state of trance, the client was "operated on" by Don Félix using his wooden knife.

When the client was getting out of trance, Don Félix heard a voice ordering him to slap the client's face. After being slapped by Don Félix, the client became furious about the lack of respect but at this moment a word came out of his mouth. Everybody in the centro heard the client swearing a carajo, a word which is used when one is angry. But the client was aware that in order to say this word he had to be able to speak. He began to cry, giving thanks to Don Félix for helping him recover his voice.
I interviewed other members of the centro who were there when Don Félix cured this person. All of them confirmed Don Félix's story.

Emiliano

Emiliano has been the director of a spiritist society that belongs to the movement of Kardecian Espiritismo for about 25 years. No one can believe that he is already seventy-three years old because his physical condition is very good. Emiliano is a very active man who works on his farm very hard, teaches gymnastic classes and enjoys reading very much. Although Emiliano went to school until eighth grade, he is a self-educated person. He is knowledgeable about psychology, philosophy, medicine, health foods and other areas. He worked all his life as a tailor but now he is retired and living with his wife who is also a medium.

Emiliano's development as a medium varies significantly from the other stories that I have presented. Emiliano's development is not characterized by pruebas, obsesión or spiritual experiences in childhood. Besides, Emiliano does not have the facultad of "incorporating" or pasar spirits. He does not see or hear the spirits, nor does he have visions or revelations. Emiliano is a medium of magnetic pases,
meaning that he has the capacity to give "magnetism" to a sick person in order to cure him or her.

Early experiences in his development as a medium

Emiliano began his involvement with Espiritismo in his twenties. His parents were Catholic but he did not like any kind of religion. He considered himself an "agnostic". At that time he was in love with the woman who is now his wife. She was a very active Espiritista. Emiliano became interested in Espiritismo through her because she lent him several books on this matter. They also had numerous conversations about Espiritismo. Emiliano found that the spiritist philosophy was congruent with his ideas about life.

One day a friend invited him to a spiritist meeting. There Emiliano received a message: "Work hard and you will succeed".

Emiliano began to work as a tailor in the Metropolitan Area, having to be away from his girlfriend. One day he was sick with a stomach condition. The next day Emiliano received a letter from his girlfriend telling him that she had gone to a medium. The medium told her that Emiliano was sick with a stomach condition and prescribed several things for him. Emiliano was very surprised that this medium could
know about his illness if he had not said anything to his girlfriend.

Becoming a medium

The next time he went back home he decided to see the medium with his girlfriend. This time the medium told him something that he considered absurd: "You have to prepare yourself because you will become the presidente of the spiritist society that your girlfriend is attending". Emiliano responded to the medium that he was not very interested in those things and that he was just a beginner. The medium repeated to him: "You have to prepare yourself".

Emiliano followed the medium's advice by continuing reading different spiritist authors. After being married, he continued attending the spiritist society with his wife. Very soon he was part of the society's directive. In addition he received lessons from a spirit through a medium about how to magnetize. This spirit is a Hindu who helped Emiliano when he was giving magnetism to a person.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

At present Emiliano does not work as a medium of magnetic pases. According to him, being seventy years old,
he does not have enough magnetism to share with others. It can be dangerous to his health to do that at his age. Emiliano considers that, in this process, besides being an instrument of the magnetism of the spirit world, one is giving magnetism from one's own body.

Emiliano explained that one gets sick due to a magnetic disequilibrium. The role of the mediums is to restore the magnetic equilibrium by providing the person with a quantity of magnetic energy. When a person is healthy he or she does not need magnetism. However if the sick person does not have faith, Emiliano thinks that it is a waste of time to magnetize because he or she will not be open to receiving it.

The spiritist meetings in Emiliano's center are held Mondays and Fridays. I made three visits to the center and there were about 10 to 12 people at each meeting. The structure and organization of the center is characteristic of the centers that practice Kardecian Espiritismo. There is a total absence of ritual objects. In Emiliano's center the traditional "white table" has been replaced by a desk which is used by him. At one side of the center there is a bookshelf which contains several books on Espiritismo.

The spiritist meeting lasts about two hours. Almost one hour of it is dedicated to the reading and discussion of a book on Espiritismo. This discussion is led by Emiliano. He
asks questions about the reading trying to motivate people to participate and to contribute with their ideas. In the meetings that I participated in, people had the opportunity to criticize the health services that they are getting. Emiliano supported the discussion of social issues. In one of the meetings he said: "We are governed by mediocrities".

After the discussion, the lights are turned off. Emiliano announces that it is time for the meditation. Then the people begin to listen to a tape of classical music. Emiliano asks them to relax and to breathe very deeply several times. Then Emiliano helps people to concentrate with a kind of guided meditation using phrases such as: "God is within me, as I am within Him".

This period lasts about 20 to 25 minutes. When the meditation ends, Emiliano asks the mediums to pass their guides. After each medium has done this (there are about three to four mediums), Emiliano asks the group if anyone has had an experience in the meditation that needs to be shared. This is the opportunity for the mediums to talk about any revelation or vision they have received about a person. For example in one of the meetings I was told that a spirit who came with me did not like to listen to the word "strength" when Emiliano was saying it. Another medium expressed that she saw a female spirit with me but she was one with good
intentions. In addition, a woman was given magnetic *pases* because she said she was feeling depressed and nervous. In none of the three meetings did I observe the manifestation of an ignorant spirit.

When Emiliano began to preside over the center, he used to offer prayers and to have a goblet of water in the meetings. He ceased praying because he "was cooperating with the religions" and not practicing *Espiritismo*. For this reason, he also prohibited mediums from "wetting people with water". There were people who stopped coming to the center but he didn't mind because "those were the religious ones". Emiliano made clear that he did not consider himself a Christian. For him, *Espiritismo* should never be mixed with religion. Spiritist centers are not churches but "schools for moral and intellectual development", he said.

Through all of our conversations, Emiliano emphasized how important it is for a medium to have a balanced diet and to do physical exercise. He became a vegetarian several years ago when he began to read literature about natural foods. He has found that this kind of diet helps him feel better and have more energy than before. In addition he keeps himself in physical shape by teaching calisthenics to a group of children in a gymnasium. This has also provided him the opportunity to know other people who visit the gym.
Emiliano showed me the importance of reading literature from different sources by describing an experience he had with a minister who was visiting the gym. He was suffering from intestinal polyps. Emiliano had read in books of Yoga how to cure intestinal polyps. He told the minister to change his diet and to stop eating meats. Emiliano recommended that he do certain exercises. After a short time, a medical exam revealed that the minister did not have polyps. Emiliano made it clear to me that the most important thing was not just the elimination of the polyps but that the minister is now living a healthier life.

Elaborating on this idea, Emiliano explained to me that the major purpose of Espiritismo is not to cure people or to communicate with the spirits but to teach people how to develop their own spiritual powers in order to become better human beings. This is the goal that he is trying to achieve every Monday and Friday at his centro.

Marcos

Initial contact with the medium

I met Marcos five years ago when I attended a spiritist meeting at his home. Since then we have had several
conversations about his practice and development as a medium. Consequently the interviews for this thesis were seen by him as a continuation of our conversations but with the difference that at this time they were being recorded.

Early experiences in his development as a medium

The mediumship development of Marcos highlights how a medium who was educated within the tradition of Indigenous Espiritismo has moved to practice Kardecian Espiritismo, while still appreciating and respecting the indigenous tradition. He believes that "scientific" Espiritismo does not satisfy the needs of the poor, religious and non-educated Puerto Rican.

Although Marcos has a college education and he is living up to the standards of the Puerto Rican middle class, his family of origin was poor and had very little academic education. He never knew who his father was, so he considered himself a hijo natural (natural child). His grandmother took care of him until he was five years old. Then his mother married a cousin and Marcos began to live with them.

Marcos remembers that as a child he woke up at night and began to walk around the house. His mother told him that he
seemed to be talking with others while he was in this kind of sonambulistic state. His stepfather did not like this behavior and punished Marcos several times. From what Marcos described, it seems that his stepfather was physically abusive towards him and his mother.

Marcos had a religious inclination since he was a very young child. He liked to go to the Catholic Church and to read the Cathecism. He did not miss any of the rosaries given at the Church. Sometimes when the priest was holding Mass, Marcos got the impression that it was he who was giving it. When somebody asked him what he wanted to be as an adult, he responded that he wanted to be a priest. His stepfather made fun of him, telling Marcos that men who become priests are homosexuals.

**Becoming a medium**

When Marcos was in fourth grade, his stepfather began to suffer from "attacks" but the doctors could not find anything wrong with him. A medium told the stepfather that his problem was not "material" but spiritual. The medium also told the stepfather that he had to bring Marcos to spiritist meetings because he was developing facultades. The stepfather decided to follow the medium's advice and began to
attend a center with Marcos regularly.

However, the stepfather continued abusing Marcos and his mother to a point where Marcos asked his mother to divorce her husband. Marcos was feeling great resentment towards his stepfather. He started to carry a knife in order to defend himself and his mother from the stepfather. In addition, Marcos began to feel the presence of a spirit that wanted him to kill his stepfather.

Marcos's mother recognized that she could not continue accepting this situation for much longer. After an incident in which her husband beat her up very badly, she became determined to get divorced from him.

Marcos was then fifteen years old. He was attending a centro with his grandmother but at the same time he was a member of the Presbyterian Church. At the centro, he was the center of attraction because many people came to see the "boy who was able to pasar spirits".

The Presidenta of this centro, named Pura, became a very important role model for Marcos. This woman did not have any academic education but according to Marcos she was one of the best mediums he has known. She emphasized that in order to be a good medium one has to be humble. When clients did not have money to buy something that she had prescribed, Pura did not hesitate to buy it for them.
In this centro there was also a medium named Ramón, who was in charge of giving spiritual instruction. It was he who introduced Marcos to the works of Allan Kardec, teaching him the importance of studying the philosophy of Espiritismo.

After finishing high school, Marcos wanted to go to college but he had not taken the required entrance tests. With the help of his school counselor, he was admitted to a private college after having passed a very difficult test. Marcos believes that he received help from the spirit world to pass this test. In addition, he obtained a fellowship and work-study scholarship which enabled him to pay the tuition and board.

By that time Marcos had the experience of meeting his spirit guide for the first time:

That night I had a dream in which I talked with my spirit guide. She was a girl of about seventeen years of age, thin with long hair. She told me that she was my sister in another life. She also said that she was in charge of taking care of me.

In addition he had his first experience in trying to educate an ignorant spirit:

This spirit wanted to help me but she was not very evolved. She wanted me to smoke cigars when I was working as a medium. In the centros I was feeling a strong desire to smoke. I told the spirit that if she wanted to help me she would have to change her style or I would not accept her. After some time, the spirit said to me that she would adapt to my style of helping.
In addition I discovered that she was my mother in a past life.

Healing approach and evolution of practice

After completing college, Marcos got married. He continued attending centros regularly. After some time he also decided to hold reuniones at his home. At present, these meetings are being held every week in a section of his garage specially prepared for this purpose. Marcos's centro does not follow the model of Indigenous Espiritismo in its physical organization. The incense, the agua de florida, the "white table", the candles or other objects characteristic of indigenous centros are absent in Marcos's centro. However, there is a goblet of water which indicates Marcos's roots of indigenous practices.

Through interviewing Marcos and doing participant observation at his centro, I was able to see how Marcos's practice and world-view as a medium has changed as he got exposed to Kardelian Espiritismo. These changes in his philosophy and mediumistic practice are revealed in different ways. First, Marcos is opposed to the belief that one can be an Espiritista and Catholic at the same time. In his reuniones he asks people to decide between the practice of Espiritismo and Catholicism. But he recognized that this is
one of the reasons that people stopped attending his centro. Marcos also realized that it was not easy for him to begin practicing a more rational and secular Espiritismo because his background was very Christian and especially Catholic.

According to Marcos there are a number of beliefs within Espiritismo which are opposed to the teachings of the Catholic Church. One is that Espiritistas believe in reincarnation while Catholics believe in resurrection. Another difference is that Espiritistas do not believe that Jesus was God incarnated nor that Mary was a virgin. Marcos believes that these ideas may seem as too radical for an Espiritista who still attends the Catholic Church.

Marcos said that he "does not want his centro to become another church because that is opposed to his principles". He criticized those centros that use the Bible as their primary reference, celebrate baptisms and the Catholic communion.

Although Marcos began using ritual objects in his practice as a medium, he thinks now that "the only thing that one needs to contact the spirit world is a good thought". He indicated that as he was educating himself, it was necessary to discard some "superstitions" he had about Espiritismo. Marcos thinks that some mediums need to use ritual objects in order to concentrate.
Another dimension in which Marcos has experienced changes is in how to educate an ignorant spirit. In the beginning he thought that the most important thing to do to educate the spirits was to offer prayers to them. Now he teaches people that one cannot educate spirits through prayers but one has to give "counseling" to the spirit. According to Marcos one has to "dialogue" with the ignorant spirits if one wants to help them.

On the other hand, Marcos's practice as a medium suggests the presence of indigenous spiritist elements. For instance, each meeting at Marcos's center begins with several prayers from the Colección de Oraciones Escogidas of Allan Kardec. He believes that prayers are very important and essential in the meeting because they help people to concentrate. Prayers are also necessary for the development of a positive environment. Moreover, Marcos considers that the "magnetized water" can be helpful in the treatment of the client's condition. He has a goblet of water in his centro prepared with healing plants.

Marcos criticized the Kardecian Espiritistas for trying to eliminate the religious dimension of Espiritismo. He thinks that Espiritismo cannot be totally "scientific" because it will mean the practice of "materialistic Espiritismo". According to Marcos the practice of a "pure
scientific Espiritismo" leaves him totally empty because it only emphasizes the intellectual dimension.

He also criticized Kardecian Espiritistas for using a very sophisticated and high-sounding vocabulary in their meetings because it discourages people who don't have a good education. Marcos argues that as a leader of a spiritist group he also has to provide for the people who are not very educated. It is important for him to offer instructions using a very simple vocabulary since there are individuals in his centro who have not gone to school.

Marcos described several dissatisfactions and frustrations with his role as a leader of a spiritist group. The number of individuals who attend Marcos's centro varies from 15 to 20. He complained that he only has two good mediums in his centro. Marcos argued that most of the time individuals who can become mediums do not have enough faith and perseverance, and consequently it is very difficult to develop a group of good mediums. Sometimes he feels that he is working alone in the reunión without receiving help from anybody.

Another of Marcos's dissatisfactions is that according to him, some mediums produce "animistic manifestations". (Animistic manifestations are those possession experiences which are totally produced by the mind of the medium without
the intervention of a spirit). He described one of the developing mediums who attends his centro as having a "sick ego" which leads her to generate a trance manifestation which is purely psychological in its nature.

Although Marcos has been working as a medium since he was very young, he confessed to me that doubts about the reality of the spirit world have never left him. He has had several moments of crisis in which he has lost his faith but he always finds "someone" who answers his questions. There have been times when he would like to see the materialization of a spirit in order to be sure of the reality of the spirit world. In addition, due to the fact that he is a conscious medium, Marcos is constantly examining and questioning the nature of his trance manifestations. Consequently, the issue of who is the one talking through him when he is in trance is always present in his mind.

Because he is a spiritist medium, Marcos has felt some rejection from co-workers and community members. Some people move away from him when they find out that he is an Espiritista. Some of them think that he has a liaison with the Devil. At the school where he works, his co-workers know that he is a medium. One time they were talking about Espiritismo, and realizing that Marcos was an Espiritista, they said: "Lets not talk about this anymore because with
Marcos we have to be careful." On some occasions community members were surprised to find that Marcos was a medium because they could not imagine how a good and educated person as he could be involved in Espiritismo.

Rosa

Rosa is a medium who attends a spiritist center that belongs to the Confederación de Espiritistas de Puerto Rico (Spiritist Confederation of Puerto Rico). The center's philosophy is based on the practice of Kardecian Espiritismo without using any kind of religious rituals. The people who attend this center are primarily middle class.

Rosa is a forty-two year old black woman who divorced several years ago. She lives with her two adolescent daughters. Rosa works for the Department of Public Instruction as a teacher in an elementary school.

Early experiences in her development as a medium

Although Rosa has attended spiritist centers since she was a child, she considers herself to be a "medium in development". When she was a little girl, her father took her to a spiritist center several times. Rosa very much
enjoyed being at these meetings, considering them a "marvelous spectacle".

Rosa's mother did not believe in Espiritismo. She was constantly arguing with Rosa's father about taking Rosa to the spiritist center. Rosa's mother also considered that she was too young to attend spiritist centers.

Rosa's father died when she was seven years old. However Rosa continued visiting a spiritist center located near her home. She described her visits to the spiritist center as being the most important recreation in her childhood. Rosa remembered that she got punished by her mother due to these visits.

She explained to me that as a child she had "visions" of beautiful places. Now Rosa understands that these visions were part of her development as a medium. In addition, any time she was feeling sick, Rosa dreamed that she went to a place on a white horse. After she woke up from the dream Rosa felt that the illness had disappeared.

As Rosa grew up, "strange things" started to happen in her life. One time she was walking on a road well-known to her and suddenly she had the feeling that she had never been there before. Rosa also began to see shadows near people and to "see things that were not there". She was worried and decided to consult with a neighbor who was a medium. This
medium told her that she was having these experiences because she would become a medium.

**Becoming a medium**

A few years later, Rosa began to feel a great pain in her eyes. After some minutes, she could not see anything. Rosa decided to visit the medium she had seen before. The medium took a glass of water and put a white flower in it. Then she rubbed Rosa's eyes with the water. At that moment Rosa got her vision back.

Another unusual experience happened to Rosa one day when she came back from work:

I could not talk. I felt that my tongue had been stabbed with a paper clip. I went to see the medium. She "prepared" some water and gave it to me to drink. A few minutes later I began to talk without any problem. The medium told me that I was developing **facultades** and that I should be careful about the kind of spiritist centers that I attend.

Rosa continued attending spiritist centers of the kind that I have described as indigenous until five years ago when she learned about a center that was led by a university professor. Since that time she has been attending this center two or three times a week. At the center she takes classes on mediumship development. Rosa is one of the most active mediums at the center.
At the beginning she had revelations about people but she was afraid of talking about them. However one night the director was giving pases to her. At that moment, she got in a trance and one of her spirit guides communicated through her. After this experience, Rosa gained more confidence to participate in the meeting as a medium.

When I asked her about the facultades that she has developed Rosa responded that she is a medium who receives the spirit communications mentally or intuitively. She expressed that "the spirits do not talk directly to me but it is like I am imagining it". She does not see the spirits with "the material eyes" but with the mind. Besides, Rosa has the facultad of incorporación, meaning that the spirits can manifest through her, using her senses. She also can feel the illnesses of other people in her body in order to identify the problem. Rosa commented that to feel the symptoms of other people's illnesses may be dangerous if you don't know how to get rid of them before the meeting ends. It is also very painful because one becomes the receptor of the negative vibrations that are affecting the person.

I observed Rosa at the spiritist meetings several times. Ignorant spirits who were affecting visitors communicated through her in order to be educated not to do harm. She described what she feels at the moment of incorporación as
follows:

Each time one feels different things. I may feel tremors, pain in my body and strong heart palpitations. At other times I feel very hot or cold. Sometimes when I am working a causa I feel like I'm dead because I do not feel that I am breathing. I don't feel my body. Many times I have felt the need to laugh.

Rosa described herself as a semi-unconscious medium because when she is in trance she can remember certain things but not others. Sometimes people express their gratitude to her at the meeting but she does not remember what she has done to help them.

Rosa expressed that most of her spirit guides do not have academic preparation or knowledge about Espiritismo. Consequently she began to work as a medium using candles, agua de florida, incense, handkerchiefs, cigars and other things. From the classes at the center, she has learned that one does not need to use this paraphernalia in order to help others. She is educating her spirit protectors in this matter so that they can learn to work without using these objects.

The director of the center is continuously attacking the mediums who use ritual objects in their practice. However Rosa believes that if a medium needs to use these ritual objects, she does not see anything wrong in doing it. As she explained:
I do not use these things at the center because I have not needed it due to the kind of people who attend the center and the kind of spirits who give manifestations there. I believe that these kind of practices are useful. If you are a carpenter, you need a hammer to work with. If you are an engineer you use more sophisticated tools. The same happens in the spirit world. The spirits have different kinds of preparations, some of them are more evolved than others. If a spirit needs to use something "material" to help a person it is acceptable to use it. I do not mind what the director thinks about it. In my experience I feel that I am more effective doing a despoko when I am using my handkerchief than when I am not using it. I feel that the magnetic force is bigger when I am using my handkerchief. When I visit other center, I use my handkerchief.

Rosa thinks that the director of the center is too rigid and strict about the development of mediums. He doesn't want the mediums to move their hands and bodies when they are "incorporating" a spirit. Some mediums have left the center because the director has criticized their performance. She remembers that one night her spirit guide, a Black African, gave a communication in which she sang a song. A few weeks later the director criticized those mediums who have guides that sing and dance.

Rosa emphasized that working as a medium may be dangerous because the medium is confronting negative forces while trying to help a person. She believes that there are causas that are too strong, that can disturb the mental equilibrium of the medium. Three years ago she had an
experience in which she "lost her mind" for three days:

A person asked me to meditate with her at twelve midnight in order to help a friend who was having a lot of problems. One night I was meditating about the problem of her friend and I lost my mind. I began to talk incoherently, without wanting to eat or sleep. I was out of my mind for three days. I was very aggressive against others. I had a "machete" on my bed. I was conscious of what I was doing but I did not have any control over it. It was the most terrible experience that I have had.

Rosa was cured after a spiritist meeting was held in order to educate the spirit who was bothering her. She believes that the spirit who was affecting the person she was trying to help, tried to make her crazy. In other words, she lost her mind due to an obsesión by an ignorant spirit. One of Rosa's concerns about her practice as a medium is the possibility that the work with ignorant spirits may be detrimental to her mental health.

Rosa is taking meditation classes and reading books about it. She is interested in learning to meditate because this will improve her contact with the spirit world. According to her, through meditation she can become a better receptor of the spirits.

In the beginning Rosa had problems with her daughters because they did not accept her work as a medium. However in the last years their attitude has changed significantly and now they are more open to these ideas.
Rosa expressed to me that the classes she is taking at the center have helped her to be a better mother. She was having problems with one of her daughters:

I treated my daughter very badly, punishing her very often. At the center I learned that if I want to change the world, I have to begin changing myself. I have developed more patience and tolerance in the relationship with my daughter. Before, I usually exploded very easily when she contradicted me.

Rosa finished our conversations by saying that although she feels that attending spiritist meetings is important, she would not miss a dance or a party for a meeting. As she said: "One cannot spend all one's time in communication with the spirits; it is also important to enjoy life".

The last group of mediums represents the category of mediums in transition: Luisa, Juanita, Miriam and Luz. These mediums cannot be classified within any specific spiritist movement. Although they have moved away from Indigenous Espiritismo, they still are influenced very much by this movement in their practices.
Doña Luisa

Initial contact with the medium

Doña Luisa is a sixty year old black woman who appears to be much younger than her age. A friend of mine, who knew her, talked to me about the "great facultades" of Doña Luisa. My friend was very impressed with Doña Luisa's capacity for "reading the mind" and knowing the past of a client. I decided to call and ask her if she would be interested in participating in my study. She agreed to do so and we made an appointment for a weekday because she dedicates the weekend to her husband.

After a long trip of about two and a half hours, I finally arrived in the town where Doña Luisa lives. As I was trying to find her house, a black woman in her car stopped and said to me: Are you the one who is looking for me? She was Doña Luisa. Doña Luisa told me to wait in her house which was located at the end of the street because she had to take her husband to his job.

I waited for her about 10 minutes. She came driving an old car. I was very impressed by how tall she was. We sat in two rocking chairs on her porch and began to talk about my study.
At first Doña Luisa did not let me tape the conversation. She told me that she wanted to know more about my interests in doing this study. I understood that I was too anxious to tape everything. I told Doña Luisa that I was not interested in proving anything about mediumship development. My main interest was to describe the development of spiritist mediums. In addition I told her that some members of my family were mediums and this was one of the reasons which led me to choose this topic of investigation. I felt that Doña Luisa was much more apprehensive about being interviewed than the other healers I had interviewed.

One of the reasons that led me to interview Doña Luisa was that she had participated in a project in which mediums and mental health professionals met together to exchange lectures and to discuss cases each had treated. I was interested in knowing how this project had influenced Doña Luisa's development as a medium.

Doña Luisa confessed to me that after being involved in this project she had decided not to participate in these "kind of things". She agreed to be interviewed by me because she wanted to help others. She felt that in the prior project, mental health professionals attacked her and wanted to compete with her. According to her, mediums were
considered ignorant by many mental health professionals. At other times, mental health professionals did not take into account the educational background of the people they were dealing with. Doña Luisa said that sometimes these professionals presented material using a very sophisticated vocabulary. She also felt that they were continuously trying to test her facultades in order to prove whether she was a good medium. It seemed that she was also in competition with the mental health professionals rather than in collaboration with them in this project.

I felt that this prior experience influenced the degree of trust that Doña Luisa had toward me. I think she perceived me as yet another mental health professional who wanted to test her facultades as a medium. Several times she responded to my questions in a "defensive" way. However, I am not sure if this was also produced by the nature of my questions.

Early experiences in her development as a medium

Doña Luisa described her first spiritual experiences as very sad. Her family was very Catholic and they were opposed to Espiritismo. Luisa's parents died when she was a child and she was reared by family members. At the age of twelve,
she woke up one morning with several scratches on her body. However these scratches disappeared very soon. Each morning she began to wake up with these scratches in her body. According to Doña Luisa these scratches were caused by spirits who wanted to harm her. She began to attend spiritist centers with her sister and after a short period of time her problem disappeared.

In her adolescence, she had visions of the Virgin Mary. She also heard voices which addressed her. On several occasions she saw flowers falling from the sky but when she tried to pick them up, they disappeared. In addition, Doña Luisa had premonitions that terrible things would happen in the future such as wars and deaths of family members. Her family members thought that she would become "crazy". Her concern about these experiences made her consult a Catholic priest. The priest told Doña Luisa not to tell anybody about her experiences and not to worry about experiencing all of these things.

One day, when Doña Luisa was fourteen, she was in the yard when suddenly she saw a human head on a piece of zinc. She was very afraid and remembered this experience for a long time. At that time she had thoughts of wanting to run away but she had control over them.

After some time of attending different centros, Doña
Luisa, with the help of another medium, was able to see spirits who were "materialized" in front of her. This medium also gave her advice about the importance of morality in the development of facultades. She decided not to attend any more centros and to continue developing her facultades by herself.

**Becoming a medium**

When I asked Doña Luisa about her facultades she responded that she has the capacity to see and hear the spirits, to read people's thoughts, to pasar spirits, to receive the messages of spirits through the mind and to predict future events. However, she considers that sometimes having these facultades is disturbing and anxiety-provoking. She explained to me that days before the disaster in Mexico in 1985, she received a revelation that it would happen. She also thinks that having the capacity to read people's minds is terrible because in a way it is a kind of manipulation and control over others. For example, sometimes she is capable of knowing what her husband is thinking about her which makes her more vulnerable to being hurt.

Doña Luisa stressed that in the process of developing her facultades it has been very important to educate her
protecciones:

In the beginning I had a protección who liked to smoke. He wanted me to do the same thing to the point that I started to look for tobacco in order to smoke. However I understood that I should not do this because I was giving a hope of life to this spirit when he was already dead. My protección did not need to smoke because he is a spirit. What I did was to help him understand that spirits do not need to smoke.

On another occasion, Doña Luisa's protecciones wanted her to charge for her services as a medium. It was a great conflict for her because to charge for services was against her values and principles. However she thought that maybe she could use the money to do charity work. For a week she charged for her services to clients but afterwards Doña Luisa reconsidered her decision:

How can it be possible to charge for my service when I don't pay anything to the spirits for helping me? I should not let the spirits convince me that I have to charge for my services. I didn't pay for receiving my facultades so I should not charge for helping people.

After this experience, Doña Luisa continued helping people for free. However she does not criticize those mediums who charge because sometimes they do not have any other source of income. She believes that in general the mediums who charge are the ones who are very poor.

Although Doña Luisa seems to have extensive academic
instruction, she only has a high school diploma. As a child
she left school in the fifth grade due to an illness.
However, when she was an adult, Doña Luisa continued her
studies at night until she got her high school diploma.

Doña Luisa does not like to read very much about
Espiritismo because she prefers "to learn from personal
experiences":

I believe that Kardec's books were about his
own experiences. I love and trust my own
experiences. In order to defend myself, I have
to talk about my own experiences. Not to say in
these books I read this but to consider what I
have experienced through all of these years
practicing as a medium.

Some of the books that Doña Luisa has read are the ones
written by Amalia Domingo Soler, a famous spiritist woman
from Spain who is very well known in Puerto Rico. According
to Doña Luisa, the spirit of Domingo Soler has helped her a
great deal. This spirit has dictated messages and poems to
her. She asked Doña Luisa to write a book of poems dictated
by her. Doña Luisa did not agree to write the book because
she "did not deserve to receive this honor". She feels that
she does not have enough preparation to write this book.

One of the poems dictated by the spirit of Domingo Soler
to Luisa reads as follows:

Vente conmigo amigo mío,
vanos al campo y tú verás,
verás lo que en tu tierra pasará.
¿Dónde está el coquí?,
dónde está si ya no existe,
ya no da el mismo ritmo de canción.
Corre, coge por este atajo,
mira a ver si alcanzas
a ver un cucubano.

At present, Doña Luisa is living with her husband. They have one son who is thirty years old. She told me that in the beginning her husband did not believe in Espiritismo but little by little the spirits gave him evidence of their existence. Consequently her husband "was convinced that the spirits have a great influence over our lifes". She gave me the following example:

My husband likes to play baseball. One day I told him not to go to a baseball game because something very bad would happen to him. However he did not listen to me and went to play baseball. In this game he was hit by a ball, having to be hospitalized for three months. All of these things gave him faith in Espiritismo and therefore he began to respect it.

Doña Luisa had to visit a psychologist because she wanted to receive help with a family problem she was confronting. After having told the psychologist about her problem, he responded in the following way: "You know, Luisa, you have an incurable disease. This disease is called Juan Pérez" (this is the name of Luisa's husband). According to Doña Luisa, after hearing this she understood that she had to deal with her husband in a different way. The relationship
with her husband improved a great deal.

Healing approach and the evolution of practices

Luisa is not attending any centro regularly. In addition, she does not offer consultas, in the sense of having a specific day in which she helps people. She thinks that a medium always has to depend on the spirits in order to help others. They are the ones who decide when a client can be helped. Consequently, according to Doña Luisa, a medium who gives consultas on specific days takes the risk of trying to help a client without the help of the spirits because they cannot be with the medium all the time.

Although Doña Luisa does not give consultas, when people in the community need her, she is ready to help them. However she told me that when she discovers that a client's problem is psychological, she will refer him or her to a mental health professional. She emphasized to me that she does not want to take a psychologist's job. Doña Luisa feels that she is only capable of treating spiritual problems, not psychological ones.

She was very concerned about those mediums who do not refer clients to a physician when they should. She said that she knew three clients who died because they were not
referred to a physician by the medium when they were asking for help. Doña Luisa said that a medium should be prepared to distinguish between physical, psychological and spiritual problems in order to be an effective helper.

Although Doña Luisa has the ability to pasar the spirits, she prefers to receive their communication through her mind. She does not like to be "taken" (tomada) by the spirits because she wants "to be conscious of what I am saying". Doña Luisa also likes to be conscious when she is helping a client because in this way she is totally responsible for what may happen.

If I say something wrong the client may say this is not true. The client is telling me that this is not true. It is not the spirit who made a mistake but myself.

Doña Luisa said that she does not need any kind of ritual objects in order to help a client. She thinks that all of these paraphernalia "are just a placebo" because the ritual objects do not have any function for attracting the flúidos of spirits.

A spirit never has told me to light a candle for him or her. In addition the money that is used to buy all of these things can be used to buy food for the people who are dying of hunger. The only thing that I need to attract good spirits is to be at peace with myself.
Presentation of a case worked by the medium

I had the opportunity to see Doña Luisa working on two cases. One of them will be described when I present the case of Miriam (See pp. 281-283). The other one was when, in the middle of one of the interviews, she decided to offer me some advice. Personally, I was very impressed with Doña Luisa's ability to "discover" significant things about my life. One piece of advice that she gave me was the following:

You had an illness in your childhood that isolated you from people. This illness made you lose a very important part of your personality. It was like someone stealing a candy from a child. But you can recover from it. This illness was a prueba that you got through your family. You began to pay your "karma" too soon.

I understood that Doña Luisa was talking about the illness that I had which was cured by a medium. For me it was very helpful to hear this because it was something to which I could relate very well. I have been working, trying to overcome the effects of this physical illness for many years. Through all of these years I have felt the great need to reconnect with these painful childhood experiences and to heal my inner child.
Doña Juanita

Initial contact with the medium

Doña Juanita is a sixty-seven year old medium who lives with her husband in a rural community on the mountains of Puerto Rico. I met her when I was an adolescent because I used to visit her centro that is located near my hometown. She is the Presidenta of a well organized centro which has a Board of Directors and several committees with different responsibilities. Her centro is called a society (sociedad) and it was associated with the Federación de Espiritistas de Puerto Rico for many years.

Doña Juanita let me tape the first interview. However, she was very conscious of the tape recorder and very concerned about how clearly she was expressing her ideas. Doña Juanita expressed that she has arteriosclerosis and that sometimes she may not talk very coherently. However, I did not have any problems following her lines of thought. Her conversations were very clear, precise, organized and articulated. I made an effort to communicate this observation to her.

At the second and following interviews, Doña Juanita
asked me not to tape the interviews because it was kind of difficult for her to organize her thoughts knowing that the tape recorder was on. Besides, she told me that her spirit guide does not like to be taped when he is giving a message. I decided that the best thing to do was to take notes.

Early experiences in her development as a medium

Doña Juanita's experiences with the spirit world began very early in her life. At the age of six she liked to recite very loudly in front of a tree. At that moment she was talking with her "invisible family". This "invisible family" had to listen to her and follow her advice. As a child she believed that she was responsible for educating this family. When her father heard her conversations with the invisible friends he told everybody: "Listen to my daughter, she is very crazy today". She was known in the community as "the crazy girl".

Juanita's family was very Catholic. She grew up visiting the Catholic Church every Sunday. One day at the age of eight she read something in a Catholic book that caught her attention: A woman who had died was talking to another one. She asked herself: How is it possible that a person who has died can talk to us? She could not talk about
these things at her home and she decided to ask a Catholic priest. The priest told her that "it is true that the dead can communicate with the living but you should not talk to anybody about it. You are too young to ask these questions".

However, Juanita's curiosity and interest in the spirit world continued despite the opposition of her parents. One of her neighbors had a daughter who was suffering from an obsesión; she was constantly yelling. Her parents brought a medium who treated the girl at the house many times. Juanita liked to observed how the medium helped the girl with her problems. When she explained to her mother what was happening with the girl, the mother prohibited her to visit that house again. But whenever she had an opportunity, Juanita went to see the medium working with the girl.

At a very young age, Juanita began to predict future events. She predicted the death of her grandmother and other family members. Juanita would also tell her parents when they would receive an unexpected visit from someone. Her parents began to take her predictions very seriously.

Juanita remembered that as a child she liked to do charity with people. Her father had a shop and she used to steal things from it in order to give it to poor people. One day her mother prepared a great piece of meat and Juanita decided that she would like to share it with a poor family.
She cut a piece of the meat and gave it to them. When the mother asked what happened with the rest of the meat, Juanita responded that a cat had taken it.

Becoming a medium

At the age of fourteen, Juanita had her first obsesión. She described that after having cooked, she felt very angry. At that moment, she went to the altar of saints that her father had, and destroyed all of it.

When she was sixteen years old, she got married. After two months of marriage, she had lost more than 50 pounds. The doctors certified that she had tuberculosis. Juanita decided to visit a medium. After being treated by the medium, Juanita was cured of the disease.

Three years later Juanita suffered her second obsesión. She understood that the cause for the obsesión was that she had not accepted her role as a medium and the spiritual experiences she had been having. She did not want other people to know that she was capable of communicating with the spirits, mostly because of her Catholic background. Besides, she was very afraid of the spirit world.

Despite this conflict, Juanita felt a strong inclination to visit the sick people of the community and heal them.
Very soon she became the "physician" of the community:

When I visited someone who was sick, I heard voices that told me how the person could be cured. I touched the person with my hands and he or she got cured. At other times I prepared a tea from plants and I gave it to the sick. I also learned to give injections and many people came to my house in order to be injected with penicillin. Some women visited me when they had tumors on their sexual organs because they did not want to be seen by male doctors. My home became like a hospital for the community.

Once one of Juanita's sons became very sick. He lost his vision and could not walk for six months. According to Juanita, the child had pernicious anemia. One day she heard a voice that gave her the names of the medications that her son needed in order to be cured. At this time they were in a precarious economic condition and her husband had to borrow five dollars to buy the medication. In a few days, her son was cured. When people asked her how the child was cured, she told them that a woman from another town cured him. She did not want others to know that she could talk with the spirits.

After some years Juanita understood that she should not continue denying her experiences with spirits. She felt a special attraction to help people who were mentally ill. Juanita found that sometimes mental illness is produced by ignorant spirits. The person can be cured if these spirits are lifted up (levantados). She worked with several of these
cases and according to her she had a great degree of success.

At the age of 28, Juanita received the order from the spirit world to open a spiritist centro. On a Palm Sunday the centro was inaugurated. The meetings were divided into two major sections: the morning was dedicated to the teaching of the spiritist doctrine to children and in the afternoon the working of causas was held. A great number of children attended the centro. Juanita, along with other members of the centro dedicated part of their time to visit different prisons in Puerto Rico. They had conversations with the prisoners. They also presented entertainment activities such as dramas, songs and movies.

Years later Juanita's centro became affiliated with the Spiritist Federation. For several years the centro had a representation at the annual conference of the Federation. Juanita was a very active member of this organization. On many occasions she was in charge of presenting a drama, writing a paper and/or organizing a musical presentation. A few years ago Juanita decided not to continue her participation in this organization due to health problems and some disagreements with its Board of Directors.

Doña Juanita has confronted the possibility of her death many times. She has been operated on 14 times. She has had several heart attacks. In addition she was in a coma for 60
days; and had to be in a wheel chair for one year. In 1962 she had to go to New York in order to be treated for strong headaches that were producing hemorrhages. The doctor told her that she had a tumor on her brain that required surgery. However Juanita heard a voice telling her to go back to Puerto Rico and not let the doctor operate on her. She followed this advice.

Six months ago Juanita was unable to sleep for three months due to a brain dysfunction. She had to be treated in Chicago. Again she was in a very delicate condition but she was able to come out of it successfully.

When one sees Doña Juanita it is difficult to imagine that she has gone through all of this. Every time I went to visit her, she was involved in some kind of activity: cooking, washing the dishes, cleaning the house or working in the yard. I was impressed with what a strong woman she is. As she expressed to me:

I am aware that my illness is incurable. The physical pain in my body is continuous but I have learned to take it as something normal in my life. I am resigned to suffering because we come to this life to "polish" our spirit. Through suffering I am purifying my spirit. I am a friend of suffering.

For Doña Juanita, the spirits have been a source of creative inspiration through all her life. At times in which she has been in bed due to illness, the spirits have came to
dictate poems, songs and spiritual messages to her. She has
preserved all of these messages. Sometimes, while she is
sleeping, she has to wake up in order to write a poem or a
message that the spirits are communicating to her. At other
times she may receive a communication that may be important
for the treatment of one of her clients.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

Despite her illness, Doña Juanita has continued her
function as Presidenta of the centro. The centro is a cement
structure which can accommodate up to 80 persons. It also has
a small room which is designated for healing. There are also
kitchen facilities. In front of the meeting room there is a
large table which can accommodate about 30 mediums. On the
center of the table there is a big goblet of water. On the
front wall there are pictures of Doña Juanita when she was
younger, Joan of Arc and Allan Kardec. There are no signs of
agua de florida, candles, incense, or pictures of Catholic
saints.

The meeting begins with the reading of prayers from the
Colección de Oraciones Escogidas (Collection of Selected
Prayers). After the prayers, mediums who are sitting on the
table pass their guides in order to prepare themselves for
the working of causas. When a medium has problems passing
the guides, Doña Juanita rings a bell to hurry the medium up.

After all the mediums have passed their guides, usually
Doña Juanita's guide gives the members a message about moral
behavior and Espiritismo. Next, the mediums get prepared for
the working of causas. The last period is the healing
session in which each person goes to a small room to receive
a despojo. At the end Doña Juanita "magnetizes" water and
each person can have a cup of water. The meeting is closed
with a religious hymn.

Doña Juanita told me that now she is giving less
emphasis to the working of causas. According to her, many
persons attend her centro with the goal that a medium will
take away all the causas that they have, but they are not
interested in improving themselves. There are Sundays in
which she decides not to have any working of causas and
dedicates the time to "meditation, spiritual reflection and
dialogue".

Doña Juanita is also opposed to the use of ritual
objects like agua de florida, candles and incense in the
practice of Espiritismo. She thinks that some mediums use
these things out of ignorance because they are not necessary
for helping a person. However she likes to magnetize water
because in the water a medium can deposit healing substances.
Presentation of a case worked by the medium

Doña Juanita told me about the case of a person who came asking for help because he had an obstruction in the kidneys and would be operated on in a few days. She described her treatment of this person as follows:

I told him to lie down on a bench. I made a meditation asking for the help of the spirit guide who is specialized in doing spiritual operations. I began to massage with my hands the area of the body in which the kidneys are located trying to take out the bad fluidos. Then I prepared a tea made of different plants and asked the person to drink it. The next day the person came to my house saying that he had thrown out the kidney obstruction while urinating.

Doña Juanita finished our conversation explaining how Espiritismo has influenced her life:

Through Espiritismo I have learned to love life, to be a good daughter, wife, mother and citizen. It has helped me to gain more confidence in myself. It has been a great support for me. Through Espiritismo I have been able to keep myself on the right path.

Miriam

Miriam is a thirty year old married woman who is the mother of three children. Miriam completed a bachelor's degree in science and she is working as a science teacher in a private school. Her husband also has a good job, after
having graduated from college. They seem to live by the standards of a middle-class family.

**Early experiences in her development as a medium**

Miriam grew up in a rural community in the south coast of Puerto Rico. She came from a family with few financial resources and a limited education. Her mother has never worked outside the home, and her father has been working in a factory all his life.

Miriam described her childhood as a difficult one. She felt very sad and lonely. Her father was an alcoholic who usually came home from work feeling very angry and aggressive. Her mother was a very passive and weak woman who suffered silently and with resignation. Miriam remembers listening to her crying at nights due to the problems with Miriam's father.

Miriam's childhood was influenced significantly by Espiritismo. Her uncle was the Presidente of a spiritist center and her grandmother was also a medium. Since she was a young child, her parents took her to spiritist centers in the community.

She also had strong religious tendencies as a child. She remembers wanting to be a nun but recognized that she was
not Catholic and that she wanted to have children. Miriam "fantasized" that she was a religious leader who gave spiritual messages about Jesus to a big parish.

There were two important family figures who influenced her development as a medium: her uncle and her grandmother. She described the relationship with her grandmother as follows:

My grandmother was a significant person in my childhood. She became for me like a sister and a confidant. She gave me the spiritist vein. She enjoyed talking to me about Espiritismo, motivating me to read Kardec's books. She was a medium who took her role in spiritist meetings very seriously. I admired her a lot.

Miriam also had an uncle who had a spiritist center. It was in this center that she began to develop as a medium. (This center followed the Indigenous Espiritismo). Miriam's uncle became a role model for her. She said that there were times in which her uncle was obsessed (obsesado) by ignorant spirits, leading her to believe at the age of ten that to become a medium she would also have to have this experience. By that time she thought that "if I had to go crazy in order to help others I would do it". Mediumship was very attractive to her because she wanted to help others.

She attended her uncle's center regularly. At the age of eleven, her uncle told her that in the centro she would have the opportunity to read the prayers. This represented a
great achievement for her, and she felt very proud and happy. Other mediums in the center were continuously telling her that she would become a great medium.

At age fourteen Miriam had a dream in which she made her first contact with a spirit. She described this dream as follows:

I was walking on the street when suddenly I saw a small Black woman with a beautiful necklace. As I got distracted by her necklace, she was getting nearer to me little by little. She spoke to me without moving her lips: "You met me in another life. I am your spirit guide". I woke up very moved and I could not sleep any more that night. I had to call my mother. This dream was very real for me.

The next day Miriam attended her uncle's center. In this meeting, a spirit communicated through the uncle saying:

Last night I told somebody that we have met in another life and she got scared. She does not need to be afraid. My name is Ana. Call me when you are in trouble.

Miriam understood that Ana was her spirit guide. Some days later, Ana gave her another message through her uncle: "I was your nana (a child caretaker) in another life. I love you very much and I will always be with you".

In her adolescence, Miriam continued her participation in the spiritist center but the spirits did not communicate through her nor did she have the capacity to see them. As she explained: "I just helped the group with my prayers and
good thoughts. I did not have enough confidence to communicate with the spirits." She also had dreams in which she traveled to other countries. She felt as if she was really in these countries, waking up tired from these "imaginary" trips.

By that time, her grandmother died. It was very difficult for Miriam to accept her death. She used to receive a lot of emotional support from her grandmother. However Miriam recognized that her grandmother, as a spirit, continues influencing her life:

I have been able to communicate with her. She has became part of me. When I am confronting a difficult situation, the person that I call for help is my grandmother. But also she has scolded me when I have not dealt with issues in the right way.

Becoming a medium

In college, Miriam continued her involvement in Espiritismo, visiting different centers. However it was not until she graduated from college and got married that she began "to work" as a medium. She attended a spiritist center where she took classes to know her spirit guides. These classes were based mostly on meditation exercises. It seems that this center was more oriented towards the tradition of Kardecian Espiritismo. Miriam described how in one of these
meditations she could verify that her spirit guide is Ana:

I did not want to force her figure or anything else. Simply, I followed the direction of the group leader. I made an effort to relax and to be calm. I asked for my spirit guide and Ana was the one who came. She smiled at me, corroborating that she was my guide.

After this experience, Miriam met an experienced medium who helped her to pasar los espíritus. Through this medium she got confidence in her mediumistic capacities. She remembers that this medium told her the following:

If one wants to learn how to swim, one has to throw oneself into the water. A similar thing happens when one wants to learn how to pasar the spirits. You call your guide and she will not let anything bad happen to you.

Miriam and this person started to work in collaboration treating different cases. Through this process, Miriam learned to pasar good and bad spirits and to identify their nature. Miriam also developed the capacity to see and hear the spirits. At the beginning she had doubts whether it was really a spirit who was communicating through her. According to Miriam this happened because she is a conscious medium. She is able to remember almost completely the message that a spirit can give through her. Miriam likes to be conscious because in this way she is able to control and modify the verbal manifestations of spirits when their language is inappropriate.
In the process of developing faculties, Miriam learned how to differentiate between good spirits and bad ones. She said that one can do this by identifying and feeling the kind of fluído the spirit has. She confessed to me that she does not like to pasar ignorant spirits because they leave her with the bad flúidos. But when it is necessary to work a causa she will do it. She thinks that sometimes a spirit does not need to pasar through a medium in order to be educated.

Miriam also has a very good knowledge of her different spirit guides. She has three major guides: Ana, a European physician, and Saint Francis of Assisi. As I described before, Ana is a Black woman who in another life took care of Miriam when her mother died. She is Miriam's principal spirit guide. In addition Miriam has identified Saint Francis as another of his guides. Several times he has spoken through her. Miriam has different books about this saint. The last guide that she has identified is an European physician who she met in another life. Miriam said that she needed this guide in order to be involved in spiritual surgeries. At first she did not trust this spirit but then she understood that it was a good spirit.

In the beginning Miriam thought that in order to help others she has to be a fully-developed medium. However, she
then understood that the only way to become a fully-developed medium was to start helping others: "It is through practice that one can become an effective medium".

Miriam began to work alone as a medium with cases referred to her by friends. She could tell people about their problems without them giving any kind of information. Miriam also continued attending her uncle's spiritist center when she visited her parents. There were times in which she was in charge of the meetings because her uncle was having several health problems. According to Miriam, it was expected that she would become the Presidente of the center because it was seen by the family as her spiritual responsibility. However by that time she began to recognize that her uncle was not behaving as a spiritually evolved medium. According to Miriam, "her uncle was not dealing correctly with several problems in his life". Although "he was helping many people, he could not help himself". Miriam began to have several doubts about her involvement with Espiritismo:

I was confused. I asked myself why my uncle who had so many spirit guides, was not happy with his life and why he was having so many problems. I had to work alone in the spiritist center helping so many people. I did not know if my uncle would come back to work at the center. I wonder what would happen if the center had to be closed.
Miriam decided not to continue working at her uncle's center. This was a time for her to re-think her role as a medium and her involvement with Espiritismo: "I remained latent and receptive, like a hermit in my own soul." This was a period for reevaluating her involvement with Espiritismo because her uncle who was a "master" for her was not dealing effectively with his own life. She began to question the potential dangers of becoming a medium. She understood that in order to become an effective medium she should not make the same "mistakes" that her uncle made:

My uncle made people too dependent on him. He helped people without teaching them how to help themselves. People cannot become dependent on you because then you are not really helping them.

This issue became critical in her practice as a medium.

As the number of people who came to her asking for help increased, Miriam began to feel overwhelmed by her responsibilities as a wife, a mother of three children, a worker, and a spiritist medium. People called her at any time of the day asking for a consulta. As she described:

Sometimes it was difficult for me to have a free time in the day in order to see a client. Some of them were not aware that I also had other responsibilities, criticizing me for not having the time to see them. I needed to set some boundaries in order to have some time for my family and myself.

As opposed to other mediums, Miriam does not have
specific days or hours in the week to see clients. Clients come to her referred mostly by friends who know she is a medium. Miriam has a small room in the house where she sees the people who come asking for help. She made it clear to me that she is not a medium of consultas referring to those mediums who see 20 or 30 clients in one day. She has doubts about their effectiveness. According to her it is impossible to really help so many persons in just one day.

The intervention of a psychiatrist and a medium in the life of Miriam

In her account, Miriam emphasized how her husband has been an obstacle for her development as a medium. As she explained to me:

Usually my husband reproaches me for the time that I spend helping other people. Most of the times I have to see clients when my husband is not at home. He does not cooperate with me so that I can visit someone who needs help. Instead of being a facilitating agent, he has been a limiting agent. Because of that, I have felt a lot of resentment towards him. My husband also asks me why I continue seeing people if they do not improve. Sometimes he has confused me a lot. I am frustrated because he has not let me do what I want to do as a medium. Usually I have to overcome several obstacles in order to help someone.

Miriam's relationship with her husband was causing her a significant amount of stress and anxiety to the point that
she has thought about the possibility of getting a divorce. She was not happy in her marriage. To deal with this problem, she decided to go to a professional therapist (a psychiatrist). She wanted "to learn how to deal more effectively in the relationship with her husband" because she was getting "depressed" and was losing her appetite.

In the beginning, Miriam was taking medication prescribed by the psychiatrist, but the medication made her sleepy and she stopped taking it. Yet, she is ambiguous about how much this psychiatrist has helped her. The psychiatrist has identified the problem being that Miriam is repressing her anger and aggressive feelings towards her husband. He argues that in order to resolve this problem she has to get in contact with these feelings and express them. The psychiatrist recommended Miriam think more about herself and consider divorce as an alternative. Miriam described the last session with the psychiatrist as follows:

I feel very confused because the psychiatrist told me that I want to help others in order to be recognized and to overcome my loneliness. This really disturbed me because I want to help others without any kind of selfish interest. He also told me that I don't have enough knowledge about personality and behavior to help others. Besides he expressed that I get too involved with the people I try to help and that it was affecting me emotionally.

As Miriam was talking, I was feeling angry at the
psychiatrist. I thought that he was very insensitive and inconsiderate toward her. I said: "Well, maybe one does not need to know about theories of personality in order to help others. I know some cases in which psychiatrists have not been able to help but a spiritist medium has been successful."

My comment led to a discussion about the nature of helping. Miriam had the opportunity to talk about some of her frustrations in trying to "help" others. She brought the case of her uncle who has "helped many people but has been unable to help himself". Miriam told me that she has made several "mistakes" trying to help others because of lack of knowledge and experience.

Afterwards, Miriam continued talking about her experiences with the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist recommended that in order to express this "anger" toward her husband she could do an exercise: When she is ironing clothes, Miriam should think that she is ironing her husband's face! Miriam found it impossible to do this exercise because "just to think that I am ironing his face makes me uncomfortable. I care too much about him".

In another session, Miriam expressed to the psychiatrist that she wants to be a peaceful person like Saint Francis. "The psychiatrist responded ironically: How did you know that
he was a peaceful person? Did you meet him?” Miriam felt offended by this comment. As I wrote before, Saint Francis is one of Miriam's spirit guides.

Miriam disagrees with the psychiatrist's emphasis on "the search for one's happiness and pleasure as a priority in life". For Miriam the happiness and well-being of her children is the most important thing, it is more important than her own happiness. She considers that her husband is a good father and in this sense a divorce will affect her children negatively. She will stay married in order for her children to have a good father.

At the time of these interviews Miriam was also struggling with an issue related to her own development as a medium. She was told by the spirit world that she would have a very important mission in her life: to give birth to a very spiritually advanced child. However, at that time she and her husband were considering not having another child due to the financial situation and because Miriam was very busy with her three children. She talked to her husband about what the spirits told her to do. Her husband responded that maybe everything was in her mind and that they should not have another child. Miriam did not know what to do. She wanted to obey the spirit world but on the other hand she wanted to be faithful to her husband. She could not be pregnant
without his consent. The spirits continued telling her that she should have another child. She began to doubt the authenticity of these spiritual messages: "Is this just produced by my personal wish to have another child? Is this truly a real communication from the spirits or am I inventing it in order to have another child?"

While she was dealing with this conflict, her husband continued pressuring her to make a decision. After a great deal of discussion they decided that he should have a vasectomy.

Miriam was crying while describing this experience. She felt frustrated and guilty because she could not carry out or fulfill the mission that was given to her from the spirit world. She understood that this spiritual revelation was not caused by her mind. After her husband's vasectomy, she had experiences with the spirit who is the one that she was supposed to give birth to. According to her, this spirit was very anxious to be born or "incarnated" in this world. Miriam suffered very much because she was not sure if she made the right decision.

At this time I decided to make an "intervention" in order to help Miriam with this problem. I knew a medium who lived near Miriam. I thought that this medium named Luisa may be helpful in dealing with Miriam's problem. I asked
Miriam if she would like to visit this medium with me. She was very eager to do that. I called Luisa telling her that there is a person who needs some help and if she would be able to see her. This was the only information I gave her.

One afternoon, Miriam and I went to see Luisa at her home. After we got acquainted, Luisa told Miriam that she saw the spirit of a baby child in her lap. After hearing this Miriam started to cry while she explained her problem to Luisa. Luisa seemed to know what was happening with Miriam before she talked about it. After hearing Miriam, Luisa offered her several pieces of advice. First, she told Miriam that she did not need to feel guilty about not fulfilling her mission because it was out of her control. It was something that required her husband’s cooperation. Second, Luisa said to Miriam that God will never ask us to do something which may be impossible to carry out due to material circumstances. God understands why she could not fulfill this mission. Third, Luisa expressed to Miriam that there is the possibility that this spirit will come through another family member. Miriam had also received this message from the spirit world. For Miriam this was a very important confirmation or comprobación because at least she can be near this spirit when he or she is born.

Luisa also gave feedback to Miriam about her marital
problems. She told Miriam that she has to consider two questions: How much love does she have for her husband in order to stay in this marriage? and How important is it for her that her children have a good father? Miriam expressed to Luisa that she does not want to get divorced because her husband is a good father and that she loves him very much. Miriam was interested in giving a second chance to her marriage. Luisa recommended that she sit down in front of their bed when her husband is sleeping and talk to his spirit because in this state he is more receptive to change. Through the whole meeting, Doña Luisa did not appear to go into any trance state, not showing any sign of being possessed by a spirit. She worked with Miriam without getting into any apparent altered state of consciousness.

The meeting seemed to be helpful for Miriam. She expressed to me that Luisa helped her to achieve a deeper understanding of her problems and not to feel guilty for not fulfilling her special mission. I noticed that she was happier and more optimistic than in the other interviews.

Healing approach and evolution of practices

Although Miriam is a medium who developed her facultades within the tradition of Indigenous Espiritismo, she
recognized that her practices as a medium have changed significantly:

I learned that I do not need to sit in front of a mesa blanca (white table) or to use different kinds of rituals in order to help others. For example, in the past I used candles because they made me feel solemn. Now they don't have any meaning for me. But there is something that I always need in my work as a medium: it is pure water. The water makes me feel more faith. Also one can prepare water and it can become a medicine for a client. However sometimes I work without water. Little by little I have been leaving this baggage (referring to the ritual objects). I had to get rid of these things. I need the emotional independence from all of these things.

Miriam believes that the table in a centro creates distance between the public and the medium because it establishes a kind of hierarchy. She learned that she could work without a table and still be an effective medium. According to Miriam the function of the other ritual objects is to create a good environment to work as a medium. But she can contact the good spirits without using these objects. In addition Miriam sees that there is an advantage in working without using ritual objects: she can help people without being identified as a medium. In this sense she can reach people who are not Espiritistas.

Despite this difference with Indigenous mediums, Miriam's healing approach is based on prayers, despajos and pases, the preparation of "magnetized water" and the working
of causas. Therefore she is still very much influenced by the practice of Indigenous Espiritismo as it is seen in the presentation of the following cases.

Presentation of a case worked by the medium

In order to describe her approach in dealing with cases, Miriam presented several cases to me in which she has been involved. She described one of these cases as follows:

A very nervous woman came to me asking for help. She had gone to a professional helper before. A naturalist had told her that she had cancer. She was eating very little. I told her that she did not have any cancer. I gave her some hot coffee and cookies. After that, we went to my room to pray. I understood that her problem was that she did not know how to pasar her spirit guides. She had spirit guides who wanted to communicate through her. This sensation made her become anxious and nervous. She needed to learn how to meditate and how to pasar her guides. I explained to her how to pasar her guides and that she should not get nervous. I also told her that she did not have any kind of physical condition. I gave her a small pigeon statue. She prepared a room in her house in which she could meditate. In this room she had a goblet of water, the pigeon that I gave her and flowers. After she began to pasar her guides, her nervousness disappeared. She did not continue taking her medication.

However Miriam made the point that a dependency was created between herself and the client. In Miriam's view, the client used her as a substitute for the medication. The
client did not want to confront her "material" problems. Miriam decided to refer her to a professional helper because the client was getting too dependent on her. According to Miriam, the client did not want to take responsibility for the "material" problems that she had.

I also had the opportunity to observe her working with a case at her home. This client was a woman who was experiencing a lot of stress due to family problems. Miriam had worked with this case before. We met in the room which Miriam has prepared for seeing her clients. In this room there are several books on Espiritismo and personal growth.

Miriam began the meeting with a prayer asking for the help of God, Jesus and the good spirits. She made a petition for the meeting to be a productive one. After it, she gave me a book of spiritist prayers, asking me to open it and at random to read a prayer. I opened the book and read a prayer for the people who had died recently. Miriam commented to the client that this prayer was for her grandfather's spirit because he is still confused about his condition. According to Miriam the grandfather is intervening in the family's affairs as if he were still alive. He has not recognized that he is a spirit.

Then, Miriam asked the client to read at random a passage from another book. When the client was reading it,
Miriam interrupted her in order to say that she received an evidencia (spiritual revelation) in which she saw many dogs fighting. She said that this may be a symbol for discord and conflict. The client began to talk about her family's conflicts due to financial interests. Family members were getting out of control without any reason. While the client was talking about these issues Miriam moved her hands rapidly back and forth around the client's head as if she was trying to put something inside it. Miriam began to talk in a different tone of voice with her eyes closed. I noticed that her principal guide, Ana, was communicating through Miriam.

Ana said that she will use her "magic broom" to "clean" the client's home of all the bad fluídos. She also gave support to the client, indicating that she stay calm and peaceful. Ana also acknowledged the client's spiritual strength in dealing with the problem. She advised the client not to take other people's responsibilities.

After Ana's communication, another spirit came to talk through Miriam. This spirit was the client's mother-in-law. The client had a conflictive relationship with her mother-in-law when she was alive. The mother-in-law was very authoritative and demanding. In her communication through Miriam, the mother-in-law indicated that she wants to control the family members and to influence their decisions. The
client and myself made an effort to convince the spirit to desist in trying to continue influencing the family members. However she was very resistant to changing her behavior.

Miriam told us that the mother-in-law had been lifted up (levantada) by a group of espíritus de luz in order to educate her spirit. Then Miriam closed the meeting with a prayer, giving thanks to God and the good spirits for what had been achieved in the meeting.

Through all the interviews, Miriam strongly emphasized that being a good medium is to be an instrument of peace and love. She asks herself every moment how she can contribute to the peace of other persons. According to Miriam, mediums do not have special powers, they are instruments of the power of God. Miriam wants to become a "functional medium", one who is prepared at any time to help others. She stressed that in order to help others, one has to grow as a human being. In order to become a good medium one has to constantly evaluate one's heart and soul:

A good medium should be very aware of the needs of others. There is always a sad person, a lonely person, an unloved person who needs our support. My happiness and satisfaction is to give from myself without any interest, just for the pleasure of giving.
Doña Luz

First contact with the medium

Doña Luz was referred to me by a friend of mine who had been helped by her. On my first visit to Doña Luz's house I found her sitting on the balcony. I introduced myself as a student who was doing a study on the development of mediums. Her initial reaction was to recommend several books on Espiritismo to me. I explained to her that I was more interested in her own experiences as a medium.

I discovered that Doña Luz was attending a center based on Trincado's philosophy. I had met the director of this center before. When I mentioned this to Luz she was more positive about being interviewed. We agreed to meet at her home the next day.

Early experiences in her development as a medium

Doña Luz is a fifty-nine year old woman who lives with her husband and younger son. Her academic education is very limited. After passing the first grade, her father told her that she could stay at home because she did not need any more education. She does not know how to read or write very well. Her husband has worked as a barber all of his life.
Luz described her family of origin as "very poor and moral". Her grandmother was a medium who "cured people with leprosy using plants". Luz was reared by an aunt because her mother was killed in a car accident.

At the age of seventeen, Luz had the painful experience of seeing her sister commit suicide. This experience was very devastating for her. After her sister's death, Luz began to have "mental problems":

I began to hear voices that told me to commit suicide. I used to leave home and to yell in the streets without any reason. I could not control myself. My family took me to a doctor, and he said that I had something wrong with my nerves (enferma de los nervios). The doctor prescribed several drugs for me.

However, Luz continued hearing the voices that were telling her to commit suicide. Her grandfather decided to take her to a famous centro in the community presided over by a medium called Juan. According to Luz, through attending this centro and following the teachings of this medium she got completely cured:

This was my medicine. Don Juan taught me how to control my thoughts and the voices that I was hearing. He also told me that I was passing a prueba in order to develop facultades. In addition Don Juan said to me that I have to learn how to use my thoughts to reject the spirits that were troubling me.
Becoming a medium

After being cured in this centro Doña Luz described her life as a "normal" one. She understood that her mental problems were caused by an obsesión ("spirit obsession"). She also believes that her mental problems were a prueba that she had to pass in order to become a medium.

To develop great and good facultades one has to go through very hard pruebas. Pruebas also increase your faith in the spirit world. Although there are persons who develop their facultades without having an obsesión, people say that the medium who has gone through an obsesión develops greater facultades than a medium who has not had this experience.

Luz continued attending Juan's centro and with the help of Juan, she became one of the most active mediums at the centro. Luz is very grateful to Juan for both his help and for showing her what a medium should be.

One day Juan was sick and he asked Luz to be in charge of the reunión until he got well. Luz remembers that her legs began to tremble when she initiated the reunión that day. She knew that it was a great responsibility to be the leader of a spiritist meeting.

After a short period of time, Juan died and Luz was designated to permanently occupy Juan's position as a Presidenta. At first Luz felt very insecure because of her very limited academic education.
I found myself like a "cockroach in a dance of hens". I could not talk about scientific Espiritismo or very profound things. But without knowing how, I began to receive very important lessons from the spirit world. In the reunión, I emphasized that mediums have to be responsible and moral and by no means can they charge for their services.

Luz is a conscious medium. She prefers to work in this way because she wants to have control of the spirit's communication. Luz argued that unconscious mediums let the spirits say bad words. As opposed to other mediums, Luz has not identified her guides by names or physical appearance. She expressed that the spirits have never given her their names. Luz does not consider it important to identify our guides by names because in the spirit world the spirits do not have names.

Although Luz told me that in general her relationship with the community is a good one, she said that some people have called her a witch. Others have commented that she is a good woman but an Espiritista. She told me the story of a Pentecostal group that asked her if they could install their electrical amplifying equipment in her home because they wanted to offer an outdoor public service in the neighborhood. Luz gave them permission. She remembers that in that service they attacked and criticized the Espiritistas, telling the public that the mediums are
inspired by the Devil.

**Healing approach and evolution of practices**

Luz presided over this *centro* for eight years. Due to some disagreements with the people who owned the *centro*, she decided to stop attending it. According to Luz, she suggested changing some of the traditional practices and proposed new ones. For example, in the *centro* the only book read was *The Gospel According to Espiritismo*. She suggested reading other books by Kardec and discussing them. However, this was not well received by other members "who did not want to get any kind of instruction".

Another point of disagreement between Doña Luz and the members was in the area of religion. Doña Luz did not want other mediums to go to the Catholic Church. She disagreed with these mediums when they said that all the religions were good. According to Luz, in *Espiritismo* one can find everything and there is no need to go to any church "to hear that *Espiritismo* is something from the Devil".

Doña Luz's opinion about religion is a negative one. She thinks that religion enslaves people because one has to believe in the leader's argument without having the opportunity to question it. For her, *Espiritismo* is not a
religion because it has no dogmatic truths. It is a science because it encourages people to reason and reflect on the nature of life. It is in this context that Doña Luz argues that our faith has to be "rational".

After being the Presidenta of this centro for eight years, Luz became aware that she "could not continue supporting any religion" and that one "cannot believe in altars and rosaries". She also began to doubt the divinity of Jesus Christ. It seems that the members of the centro were not ready to accept this radical departure from the Catholic religion. Luz thought that the best thing to do was to leave the centro and to look for another place where her ideas could be accepted.

A group of college students that was attending the centro asked her to meet with them in order to study Espiritismo. Luz liked this idea very much and they met for about two years at her home. Besides discussing Kardec's books, they also had some time to work causas. The group also published a magazine about Espiritismo. According to Luz the group was dissolved when most of the students graduated from college and moved to different towns.

For some time, Luz did not go to any centro because none of them satisfied her. About seven months prior to my initial interview Doña Luz was invited to a spiritist center
based on Trincado's philosophy. She liked the place and has been attending it every week.

The meetings at this cátedra (the name that Trincadistas give to this center) follow the model of Kardecian Espiritismo. There is a complete absence of ritual objects, prayers and religious pictures. The emphasis of the meetings is on the study of Espiritismo and the works of Trincado, although from time to time there can be a manifestation of an evolved spirit or an ignorant one. The leader of the group said that they do not invoke the spirits but if they want to manifest through a medium it is acceptable. I noticed that the leader is not a medium but he has a vast knowledge about Espiritismo.

This cátedra is located in a rural area. The public who participate in these meetings comes from middle and lower social classes.

Luz pointed out that her participation in the cátedra has been limited to "observation" because she has not read the works of Trincado. But she has been concentrating very much on the discussions, trying to learn the most important facts of Trincado's philosophy. From time to time she gives a "revelation" related to one of the participants.

The two major ways which Luz uses to help people is to give them "magnetized water" and sobos (massages) in the area
affected by the spirit. For example, she described that one of her clients had a causa in the stomach and Luz felt the client's causa in her own stomach. Then she asked if he was experiencing stomach problems and the client responded positively. Luz massaged his stomach in order to take out the bad fluidos. After it, she prepared "magnetized water" and gave it to the client.

Luz recognizes that in the process of working a causa, she does not like to pasar a spirit and "start to cry and yell due to the spirit's aberrations". She prefers to work a causa by listening to the spirit and receiving his or her vibrations. She also thinks that this is the best approach because some clients become very afraid when they hear the evil intentions of an ignorant spirit. Using this way, she can choose what is appropriate to tell a person about the intentions of an ignorant spirit. However Luz admitted that sometimes there is no other alternative than to pasar the ignorant spirit because he or she is too strong.

Luz criticized those mediums who develop their facultades only by the study of books. She made it clear that she is not a "medium of books but of experiences". As she expressed: "It does not matter how many books one has read, but what is important is to have the special power to help others". Luz commented that she has been in spiritist
groups of professional people who like to talk about physics, chemistry, biology and other difficult areas:

I have felt very uncomfortable there because I do not have the capacity to understand all of those things. However when these groups need someone to work a causa, they look for me because none of them is able to do that. They are great intellectuals but not mediums.

In our last interview Luz expressed her dissatisfaction with the meetings at the Trincado's center. According to her, there is a medium in the center who is not giving authentic spirit communications. There is no spirit talking through him when he is giving the messages, she stated. Luz complained that "the director has to call his attention to this because one cannot let this happen in a center". In addition two mediums who have college education claim that spirits of famous personalities such as José Martí, Simón Bolívar and William Shakespeare have communicated through them. Luz has doubts about the reality of these communications. She believes that "there are mediums in the center who are too arrogant".
MEDIUMS' ORIENTATION TOWARD THE VALUES OF INDIGENOUS ESPIRITISMO

For the presentation of the mediums' life-stories I have classified them into three groups: Indigenous mediums, Kardecian mediums and mediums-in-transition. In this section I will describe the criteria on which this classification is based. Afterwards I will examine the position of the 16 mediums in relation to the values espoused by Indigenous Espiritismo.

Towards a Classification of Mediums

Through my participant observation at spiritist centers and interviews with mediums I began to develop a criteria for identifying the kinds of mediums I had met. Mediums tend to differ in terms of their practice of Espiritismo and their conception of the ideal medium. The medium's healing style and values about the ideal medium are heavily influenced by the spiritist movement in which the medium has been socialized and educated. In order to understand this point it is necessary to examine the five spiritist movements as a group of subcultures sharing a basic belief system but with
differences in their conception of the ideal medium. Each spiritist subculture or movement holds specific values about the education and development of good mediums. Thus, the affiliation of mediums with one of these spiritist movements has strong influence on their mediumship development. Through a process of socialization within a spiritist movement, mediums acquire a set of standards which define the characteristics of the "ideal medium".

In this work, I am using the concepts of values and value system based on the definitions provided by Rokeach (1973):

A **value** is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. A **value system** is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance. (p. 5)

Rokeach emphasized that a value is a **preference**, as well as a conception of the desirable. Defined as beliefs, values contain cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. As Feather (1975) explained:

A value... involves some knowledge about the means or ends considered to be desirable; it involves some degree of affect or feeling, because values are not neutral but are held with personal feeling and generate affect when challenged; and it involves a behavioral component because a value that is activated may
lead to action (p.5).

The major function of values is to provide standards that guide behavior in various ways. Values also function as general plans that can be used to resolve conflicts and as a basis for decision-making. In addition, values maintain and enhance self-esteem "by helping a person adjust to his society, defend his ego against threat, and test reality" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 15).

An examination of value systems held by the spiritist movements seems to be an appropriate way to understand the differences in the healing approaches found among mediums and to develop a medium classification. This discussion will be limited to Indigenous and Kardecian Espiritismo because I did not interview mediums who can be considered ideal representatives of the other spiritist movements. Although Gela attends a spiritist church and Ernesto has integrated Santería practices in his work as a medium, both are essentially following Indigenous Espiritismo as a model of spiritist practice. In my experience, Indigenous and Kardecian Espiritismo are the most popular in Puerto Rico.

Through my participant observation at Indigenous centers I found that in general the Indigenous conception of the ideal medium is based on the following values:

A. Use of ritual objects such as candles, cigars, agua de
florida, incense and other kinds of paraphernalia as part of the healing ritual.

B. Preference for the unconscious trance.

C. Emphasis on the procedure of pasar the spirits in order to give light to them. Healing approach emphasizes the working of causas.

D. Use of a "folkloric" spiritist vocabulary in order to express their ideas about healing and illness (causa, cuadro espiritual, auxilios, and so on).

E. Positive attitude towards the role of religion, especially Catholicism. Use of prayers and religious hymns in the spiritist meetings.

F. Emphasis on the experiential dimension of mediumship development rather than its academic or intellectual side.

G. Use of healing techniques such a santiguos, herbal medicine, despojo, spiritual injection and other traditional healing practices.

H. Pruebas are considered to be a central element in the process of becoming a medium.

The adoption of values opposed to those described above may indicate that a medium is moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo and moving toward adopting the values espoused by Kardecian Espiritismo. As a criterion for classifying
mediums in this study I established that a medium is an Indigenous one if six or more of the Indigenous model's values are held by him or her at the time the study was done. Contrarily, if a medium's development is characterized by less than six of these values, it would be interpreted as a sign that he or she is moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo and adopting a new set of values about mediumship development.

From an examination of the values of the 16 mediums I obtained the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the medium</th>
<th>Letter of the value held by the medium</th>
<th>Total of values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aida</td>
<td>A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aúrea</td>
<td>A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generosa</td>
<td>B-C-D-E-F-G-H</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gela</td>
<td>A-B-C-D-E-F-G</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>A C-D-E-F-G-H</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernesto</td>
<td>A-B-C-D-E-F-G</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>A-B-C E-F-G</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>C-D-E-F-G</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juanita</td>
<td>D-E-F-G-H</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luisa</td>
<td>D-E-F-G</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>D G-H</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on these results, the mediums can be classified into three groups. First, there are seven mediums who may be considered as strongly Indigenous because more than six values characteristics of Indigenous Espiritismo can be attributed to them (Generosa, Mayo, Aida, Diana, Ernesto, Aurea, Gela). There are five mediums who seem to have gone far away from Indigenous Espiritismo (Rosa, Félix, Peruchín, Marcos, Emiliano). All of them have been influenced very much by the model of Kardecian Espiritismo. I am calling this group of mediums the Kardecian mediums. There is still another group of mediums who cannot be classified as Indigenous or as Kardecian mediums (Miriam, Luz, Juanita and Luisa). These mediums seem to be moving in two directions: moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo but also moving towards it. They hold several values attributed to Indigenous Espiritismo but they have developed values which are not congruent with it. I am calling this group the "mediums in transition". These mediums have made several innovations to the indigenous spiritist model but their
practices are still very much characterized by indigenous elements.

I recognize that this kind of medium classification has many limitations. My purpose is not to encapsulate mediums within these three categories. The boundaries between these categories are flexible and open, not fixed or rigid. The medium’s development is best described as a process which is a unique experience for each medium. However these categories are important because they provide a framework which can help us to analyze the influence of value systems on the medium’s development.

A. Use of ritual objects

1. Indigenous mediums:

   With the exception of Generosa, all the other Indigenous mediums use ritual objects in their practices. Generosa said that she does not use any ritual objects because she does not "have faith in them". It is important to point out that Generosa developed her facultades in the spiritist center led by Juanita, a medium who does not believe in the use of ritual objects. The only thing that she likes to use in her practice is water. However, Generosa is not opposed to the use of ritual objects by other
mediums if "they use them with faith".

For Mayo, Ernesto, and Diana the ritual objects have a very important function in the healing process and the working of causas. As Ernesto expressed: "Many people think that to use these things is superstitious but I have found that these practices are very effective". Most of the time these mediums use the ritual objects to give despojos. They believe that candles can be used to give light to ignorant spirits. According to Mayo, the candle is a material light that the spirits need in order to progress.

Diana is a special medium in this group because she was attending a spiritist center based on the teachings of Kardecian Espiritismo. As I described in her life-story she was asked by the leader to discard all the practices based on ritual objects. At first Diana decided to do that but she felt that her effectiveness as a medium had diminished, finding that it was very difficult to contact her guides without the use of ritual objects such as cards, alcoholado, and handkerchiefs. According to her, she has to use these ritual objects because her guides like to work with them. When she stopped using them,
it was difficult for her to feel the guides' vibration or fluído. The ritual objects help her to make contact with the guides.

There is another group of Indigenous mediums who use ritual objects but they do not consider their use necessary or essential in the healing process (Aída, Aurea, Gela). These mediums believe they can cure a person without the use of any ritual object. For example, Aurea states that she uses ritual objects in order to please the spirits and herself, but she does not need any ritual object in order to help people. She learned this because there have been times in which she has been able to help people without the use of ritual objects. Aurea believes that the use of ritual objects is a "habit" that she has developed through working as a medium. Moreover she maintained that this practice can spoil the spirits because they will not come if a medium does not use ritual objects.

2. Kardecian mediums:

None of the Kardecian mediums are using ritual objects in their healing practices. Peruchín and Emiliano remarked that they have never used ritual objects, considering the mediums who use them as
ignorant. However Peruchín said that the use of ritual objects may have the function of increasing the medium's self-confidence in his or her healing power.

Félix, Marcos and Rosa began to develop facultades using ritual objects. They gave several reasons for not continuing to use them. Marcos explained that he became aware that this practice was based on "superstitions" and all that is needed to contact the spirit are his thoughts. Nevertheless Marcos is not against this practice because "it may help other mediums to concentrate". Félix declared that the use of ritual objects is necessary in the first stages of mediumship development. He explained that in the beginning he had to use ritual objects because his healing power was not very strong and also he needed to gain people's confidence. Even though Don Félix uses a wooden knife in the healing process, he made it clear that the knife is just a symbol to increase people's suggestibility.

Rosa's decision to stop using ritual objects in her practice as a medium was very much influenced by the philosophy of the spiritist center she is attending which is based on Kardecian Espiritismo.
However she still considers that using some of these objects increases the medium's power to heal others. She believes it is more effective to use a handkerchief when giving a despojo than not to use one.

3. Mediums in transition:

None of the mediums in transition are using ritual objects in their healing practices. Luz and Luisa pointed out that they have never used ritual objects in the healing process. Luz is opposed to the use of ritual objects because, according to her, this is not a spiritist practice but one that comes from the Catholic Church. Luisa has a more positive attitude about the ritual objects although she does not use them. According to her, ritual objects may function as a placebo for the sick person and as a way of "preparing" a good environment for healing to occur. However she believes that the money that is spent buying these ritual objects can be used to buy food for those who do not have anything to eat. Consequently she does not like "to depend on these objects in order to help others".

Miriam and Juanita used ritual objects in the beginning but at some point in their development
decided that it was not appropriate to continue doing so. It seems that Juanita's change regarding ritual objects was influenced by her involvement with the Spiritist Federation. Her opposition to the use of ritual objects is based on the assumption that this is a practice based on ignorance. However, Juanita "confessed" that she "has been unable to get rid of the goblet of water" because she likes the use of water in healing very much.

Miriam stopped using ritual objects because it is important for her not to depend on anything in order to help others. In addition she believes that the use of ritual objects may create defenses in the person a medium is trying to help if he or she is not an Espiritista. However, Miriam, like Juanita, has kept the traditional goblet of water in her work as a medium.

B. Unconscious mediumistic trance

1. Indigenous mediums:

With the exception of Mayo, all the other Indigenous mediums usually go into an unconscious trance for any kind of spirit manifestation. It appears that they prefer this kind of trance state in
order to \textit{pasar} the spirits. This preference may be influenced by a popular belief within Indigenous \textit{Espiritismo} which considers unconscious mediums better than conscious ones. The unconscious mediums are seen as the ideal mediums because they do not "contaminate" the communication from the spirits.

2. Kardecian mediums:

This group of mediums usually prefers to have a conscious trance state when they are in communication with the spirit world. Although Rosa considers herself to be a semiconscious medium, she is working towards becoming more conscious. Félix and Peruchín indicated that they could enter both kinds of trance, but they prefer to be conscious. According to Félix, the conscious mediums are the best ones because they can work with their eyes open, without letting anybody know that there is a spirit communicating through them.

3. Mediums in transition:

Similar to the Kardecian mediums, this group also prefers to go into a conscious trance state in order to contact the spirit world. They said that to be conscious helps them to have more control over the spirit manifestations. These mediums believe that
the unconscious mediums have less control over the spirit communication, which makes them unable to control the inappropriate language of the ignorant spirits.

C. **Emphasis on **pasar** the ignorant spirits in order to give light to them**

1. Indigenous mediums:

   All the Indigenous mediums emphasize that an ignorant spirit has to **pasar** through a medium in order to be lifted up or educated. Their healing practices are strongly based on this procedure for working the client's **causa**. Though it is true that some of them such as Gela and Aida recognize that it is not necessary to **pasar** the ignorant spirit, they believe that the spirit manifestation is the most effective and reliable procedure for working the **causa**. Ernesto expressed this attitude in the following way: "I can lift up spirits without passing them through my body but I do not guarantee that they will not come back to trouble the person".

2. Kardecian mediums:

   Two mediums in this group are opposed to the working of **causas** as it is usually done in indigenous
centers (Emiliano and Peruchín). Both of them are strong followers of Kardecian Espiritismo. Their healing approach is based on educating the individual, not the ignorant spirit. Peruchín does not consider helpful to tell an individual that an ignorant spirit is trying to harm him or her. Peruchín believes that while the person is educated, the spirit will also be educated. As he expressed it: "No one can lift up the causas of others". Similarly Emiliano declared: "When a medium does not work on the soul and consciousness of an individual, the working of causas is a waste of time".

Félix and Marcos have a more positive attitude about the working of causas. Both of them use this procedure at their centers. But their own healing style is not characterized by pasar the spirits despite the fact that both of them have this facultad. Félix's healing approach is based on the assumptions that "the human mind generates all the problems" and the best methods for healing the mind are hypnotism and suggestion.

Rosa is the only medium from this group who is dedicated to pasar ignorant spirits in her healing work. She is also the only medium-in-development of
this group.

3. Mediums in transition:

These four mediums agree that it is possible to educate a spirit without the manifestation through a medium. All of them prefer this approach but they recognize that there are times in which it is necessary to _pasar_ the spirit because the _causa_ is too strong. At her spiritist center Juanita is reducing the time for the manifestation of ignorant spirits. Moreover there are days in which she has decided that there will not be any manifestation of ignorant spirits. As she described to me:

Now I am not very interested in the working of _causas_. Most of the people come to my center to find a medium who can work their _causas_. However it is impossible for a medium to take away their _causas_ if they are not interested in developing their own powers. A medium can work an ignorant spirit who is troubling an individual but another one will come very fast if he is not interested in changing his life.

Luz and Luisa's approach to educating the spirits is not to _pasar_ the spirits but to talk "mentally" with them. They will agree to be taken by the spirits when there is no other alternative. For Miriam, _pasar_ the ignorant spirit is an important dimension of the healing work but she also prefers to
help a person without having to do that.

D. **Use of a folkloric spiritist vocabulary**

1. Indigenous mediums:

   This group of mediums describes their healing practices by using what I call a folkloric spiritist vocabulary (See Appendix B). As I was performing this study I became aware of the richness and complexity of this vocabulary. It contains many words which seem to be authochtonous to the Puerto Rican culture in general and of the folk healing systems in particular. My impression is that Indigenous mediums and **Espiritistas**, in an attempt to communicate their practices and experiences to the community, have developed a set of concepts to complement the vocabulary offered by Kardecian **Espiritismo**. The community in general can identify more easily with these kinds of concepts because they are "experience-near concepts" rather than "experience-distant concepts" (Geertz, 1979).

   I consider the folkloric spiritist vocabulary a great contribution because it helps the community to articulate issues of healing and illness by using its own concepts. Experiences of healing and illness
acquire new and profound meanings when they are communicated through constructs which are connected to the heart of people rather than to their intellect. For example, it makes a great difference to explain a person's problem as a *causa* rather than as a "mental illness" or an emotional "disturbance". The concept of "causa" is meaningful and sensitive to the community's world-view. Besides it does not have any pathological connotation. To have a *causa* does not mean that one is "sick" but that one's balance with the self, the community and/or the spirit world has been lost and is in need of being restored.

2. Kardecian mediums:

The Kardecian mediums articulated their experiences using a vocabulary which is mostly taken from psychology, metaphysics, parapsychology and Kardecian *Espiritismo*. As these mediums moved away from Indigenous *Espiritismo*, they began to develop a new set of concepts to describe their practices and experiences.

As I described before, Félix uses concepts from the field of parapsychology such as "telepathy", "aura", "telekinesis", and "extrasensory faculties" among others. He also uses concepts from psychology
such as "the unconscious", "hypnotism" and "suggestion". However Félix still uses several concepts from the folkloric spiritist vocabulary (causa, despojo, consulta, templo).

The other four mediums of this group use a spiritist vocabulary based on Kardecian Espiritismo. Instead of using the concept of pasar the spirits, they talk about incorporar the spirit. The "working of causas" has been substituted by the concept of the "mediumistic work". In addition, the spiritist center is not called a temple or a center but a "school", a "society" or an "institute". Emiliano and Peruchín argued that a medium does not have guides or protectors but "invisible friends".

It seems that in an attempt to differentiate their practices from Indigenous mediums, the Kardecian mediums are using what they consider a more "scientific" vocabulary.

3. Mediums in Transition:

With very few exceptions, this group of mediums described their experiences using a vocabulary based on Indigenous Espiritismo. These four mediums talk about their development employing concepts such as despojo, causa, pasar the spirits, and protecciones.
They have not adopted concepts from parapsychology, psychology, or metaphysics in order to conceptualize their practices.

E. Attitude toward religious practices: Use of prayers and religious hymns

1. Indigenous mediums:

Indigenous mediums have a positive attitude toward Christian religions, especially Catholicism. Their attitude is that "religions are good because all of them lead us to God". Generally Indigenous mediums do not make comments against religions, which makes it possible for them to have clients from different religions. They do not hesitate to integrate religious rituals in the practice of Espiritismo. Catholic prayers and Pentecostal religious hymns are usually part of indigenous meetings. For all of them the spiritist meeting is essentially a religious activity.

For the Indigenous mediums there is no conflict between being Catholic and Espiritista at the same time. Most of them consider Catholicism to be a complement of Espiritismo. At a theoretical level they define Espiritismo as a "science" which give
them the opportunity to be Catholic without experiencing any kind of "dissonance". Gela was the only Indigenous medium who stated that her religion was Espiritismo, making clear that she meant "Christian Espiritismo". The rest of them declared that they were Christian or Catholic.

Although Espiritismo is recognized as a "science" by Indigenous mediums, it is very often practiced as a religion. As one of the mediums expressed: "Espiritismo is a science but I am practicing it as a religion".

2. Kardecian mediums:

This group of mediums has different attitudes about the role of religion in the practice of Espiritismo. Félix defines Espiritismo as a science, considering himself to be Catholic. Prayers are a very important ritual at his centers. Peruchín is against the mix of Espiritismo and religion because "one cannot mix oil and vinegar". However when I asked him about his religion, he answered Espiritismo. Marcos sees Espiritismo as a science that has religious elements. He believes that to practice Espiritismo only as a science will lead to "a materialistic Espiritismo". Nevertheless
he is opposed to the idea of transforming the spiritist centers into temples or churches.

Rosa is developing facultades at a center in which she is learning that Espiritismo cannot be mixed with religion and that it has to be practiced as a science. The leader of this centro emphasizes that it is not possible to be Catholic as well as Espiritista. Rosa is in agreement with this approach.

Finally Emiliano is also opposed to the practice of Espiritismo as a religion. His position is that any religion is dogmatic and this is against the true nature of the spiritist philosophy. Emiliano does not consider himself to be a follower of Christianity.

3. Mediums in Transition:

Luz and Juanita sustain the idea that Espiritismo is a science, not a religion. They are also against the mix of Espiritismo with other religions. Luz believes that religions enslave human beings because one has to believe with blind faith. In the practice of Espiritismo, Juanita is more open to the integration of religious elements. She
celebrates most of the important religious holidays at her center. Also she believes that prayers and religious hymns have a positive function in the practice of Espiritismo.

The other two mediums, Miriam and Luisa, are not very concerned about the conception of Espiritismo as a science. When I asked Luisa her opinion about Scientific Espiritismo, she responded that "scientific" was the word that middle-class Espiritistas use to distinguish themselves from lower class Espiritistas. Luisa does not understand how Espiritismo can be considered "scientific". However she does not believe that Espiritismo is a religion, considering herself to be Catholic. For Miriam, Espiritismo is more a philosophy of life, which is an extension of Christian philosophy.

F. Emphasis on the intellectual or academic dimension of mediumship development

1. Indigenous mediums:

Most of the Indigenous mediums believe that the intellectual dimension is not essential in the development of a medium. To acquire knowledge about Espiritismo by reading books is not emphasized. This
kind of knowledge is not considered very valuable because it is obtained by "material means". According to them, a good medium should base his or her spiritist practice on knowledge obtained from the spirit world.

This attitude was expressed in several ways. For example, Aida said that one can rely more on the instruction of a spirit guide than in the reading of a book. Other Indigenous mediums criticized those mediums who develop their facultades through the reading of books and "material studies". They argued that the healing power of those mediums does not come from God but from "material knowledge". They referred to those mediums as "mediums of readings and books". Diana emphasized that the education of mediums cannot rely on books about mediumship development but on the unique experiences of each medium.

It seems to me that most Indigenous mediums are not criticizing intellectual knowledge per se but the excessive reliance on this kind of knowledge at the expense of the mediums's personal experience and knowledge obtained from the spirits. Only Gela remarked that she has not read any book on
Espiritismo. The other mediums maintained that the reading of Kardec's books was helpful in their development as mediums. As Aurea expressed:

I educated myself by reading Kardec's books. These books are very important. I always find in these books something that I can apply to my life.

2. Kardecian mediums:

All the mediums in this group very strongly stress the need to read spiritist books. For them the intellectual preparation of the medium is an essential component of mediumship development. Félix, Marcos and Emiliano have specific periods in their meetings which are dedicated to this goal. These periods are used to discuss issues such as what a medium is, the theory of reincarnation, and the different kinds of facultades. Rosa is attending a spiritist center which has a strong emphasis on the intellectual preparation of the medium.

Although Peruchín is following the model of Kardecian Espiritismo in his practice as a medium, he has some reservations about the emphasis that some mediums give to the reading of books. He made the following remark:

Most of the scientific Espiritistas believe that wisdom is found in books.
I did not become a medium through the reading of books but through my experiences with the spirit world. It is good to read books but mediums have to produce their own ideas, not only to repeat what Kardec or other spiritist thinkers have said.

3. Mediums in Transition:

Similar to the Indigenous mediums, this group of mediums is not very interested in the study of Espiritismo as a "science" and "philosophy". For example, Luisa expressed that she has begun to read the Book of the Mediums several times without being able to finish it. She does not like to read spiritist books because she is afraid of getting confused when her personal experiences and the contents of a book are in disagreement. Another medium in this group, Juanita, declared that she does not need to read books because the spirits teach her.

Luz is the one who seems to attach more value to the readings of spiritist books and the intellectual study of Espiritismo. However she also criticized "those mediums who have read many books but do not know how to help a person."
G. Healing techniques

1. Indigenous mediums:

   This group of mediums uses "techniques" which are based on traditional healing practices. They employ procedures such as *santiguos*, *sobos*, spiritual injections, herbal medicine, baths, magnetized water, *despojos*, and reading cards.

2. Kardecian mediums:

   Of the five mediums in this group, four have replaced traditional healing techniques with "modern" psychological techniques. Félix's healing approach is based on hypnotism, magnetism and suggestion. He very rarely uses traditional healing techniques. Peruchín, Emiliano and Marcos use relaxation techniques, guided imagery, music therapy, massage, and meditation. Marcos referred to the working of *causas* as a counseling process in which a medium has to use therapeutic techniques in order to help the ignorant spirits.

   Rosa is attending a center which is against the use of traditional healing techniques. She has begun to substitute most of the traditional techniques, although she still relies on some of them when she is
working as a medium out of the center. Rosa's position is that when her guides get enough education, she will not have to use traditional techniques anymore.

3. Mediums in Transition:

These mediums have continued using healing techniques which are based on Indigenous Espiritismo. Although they have abandoned the use of ritual objects, their practices are still based on the prescription of herbs, the giving of despojos, the use of magnetized water and prayers.

H. Pruebas

1. Indigenous mediums:

Four mediums in this group consider themselves to be "mediums of pruebas" (Generosa, Aida, Aurea, Mayo). Mediums of pruebas is an emic category which refers to those mediums who in their development have undergone a great deal of suffering, illness and/or problems of any nature. The purpose of the prueba is to purify the medium's own spirit and body from imperfections and defects. These four mediums believe that the attitude toward the prueba should be one of acceptance and resignation. In their stories,
they greatly emphasized the essential role that pruebas have in mediumship development. As Aurea declared: "I do not want anybody to take away my pruebas".

Gela and Diana said that they have not experienced pruebas. Ernesto declared that although he has undergone several pruebas, he does not think that one has to suffer in order to become a good medium. In contrast to other Indigenous mediums Ernesto believes that resignation is not the best attitude toward the prueba but "one has to confront the prueba and make an effort to change the circumstances which cause it".

2. Kardecian mediums:

None of these mediums consider themselves to be "mediums of pruebas". Moreover some of them (Emiliano, Rosa and Félix) criticized the validity of the concept of prueba. For Emiliano it is senseless to believe that God is testing people by making them suffer several trials. In addition, he criticized those mediums who believe that one develops facultades through the suffering of pruebas. He argued that suffering in itself does not make a medium better - he or she has to learn from and be
Marcos and Peruchín believe in the concept of pruebas, considering that some mediums have to suffer pruebas in order to accept that they must develop facultades. Peruchín made the point that pruebas help a medium be more sensitive to the spirit world.

3. Mediums in Transition:

Two mediums in this group, Juanita and Luz, described themselves as "mediums of pruebas". They recognized that their decision to become mediums was strongly influenced by the pruebas they were suffering. Juanita and Luz saw the pruebas as an instrument of their education as mediums.

Miriam and Luisa told their stories making very little reference to pruebas. However both of them agreed that through pruebas individuals can purify their spirits. Miriam compared the prueba to a test that one has to pass in order to fulfill the standards of a course.
Based on the evidence that all the mediums in this study, with the possible exception of Emiliano, began to practice Espiritismo following Indigenous Espiritismo, one can ask the following question: What are the factors that motivate several mediums in this study to move away from the indigenous conception of the ideal medium? One approach that can be utilized to examine this question is to look at the process of moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo as one which implies the development of new values in relation to the conception of the ideal medium. The concept of value is helpful in understanding why several of these mediums have modified, innovated and/or transformed their practices and philosophy about Espiritismo. The conditions that determine the development of different values in relation to mediumship development is the central issue that I want to examine in this section.

The values inherent in the conception of the ideal medium are the products of cultural, institutional, and personal forces acting upon the individual (Rokeach, 1973). Besides the affiliation to a spiritist movement, which I have already described, this conception seems to be affected by
factors such as social class, academic education and religious orientation. However, the specific ways in which these dimensions will affect the mediums' value system will depend very heavily on their unique life experiences and personalities.

First, social class may be a factor which influences the medium's conception of what characteristics are desirable to have as a medium. Social classes can be defined as aggregates of individuals who occupy broadly similar positions on the ladders of power, prestige and property (Tumin and Feldman, 1971). Researchers have found that an individual's social class determines to some extent his/her values about parenting, problem solving, control of emotions, time orientation, religious behavior and mental health (Riesman, Cohen and Pearl, 1964). As Kohn (1964) puts it:

Members of different social classes, by virtue of enjoying (or suffering) different conditions of life, come to see the world differently - to develop different conceptions of social reality, different aspirations and hopes and fears, different conceptions of the desirable (pp. 159-160).

Second, the medium's academic education (formal schooling) can influence the development of values in relation to his/her conception of the ideal medium. School has always been one of the means by which cultural values are transmitted to the members of a culture. It is expected that
academic education with its strong emphasis on abstract and intellectual knowledge would influence the medium's value orientation. Third, the medium's religious orientation and background may play a significant role in his/her decision to move away from Indigenous Espiritismo. A medium's attitude toward religion very strongly shapes his/her healing practices and conception of the ideal medium. To be or not to be religious becomes a major issue for some mediums.

In looking at the role of social class and academic education, one may expect to find that the more middle-class and academically educated mediums are moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo. Similarly one may expect to find that lower class mediums and those with little formal or academic schooling are the ones who are moving toward Indigenous Espiritismo. In order to examine this relationship, I have classified the mediums of this study into three major social classes following Kohn's (1964) approach:

1. a "lower class" of unskilled manual workers
2. a "working class" of manual workers in semiskilled and skilled occupations
3. a "middle class" of white-collar workers and professionals

When the medium was not working, I took into
consideration his/her spouse's occupation. If the medium was retired, I based the classification on her/his past occupation. I considered the parents' occupation when the medium was still living with his/her parents. Combining the social class of the mediums with the three mediumship categories produced the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Class</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Kardeclan</th>
<th>Mediums in Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aurea, Mayo Ernesto, Gela Generosa</td>
<td>Peruchín</td>
<td>Luz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Aida</td>
<td>Félix Emiliano</td>
<td>Luisa Juanita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Marcos Rosa</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I recognize that using occupation as a criteria for social stratification is too simple, however, Tumin and Feldman (1971) found in their classic study of social class and social change in Puerto Rico that the individuals' occupation correlates very highly with the income they are receiving. The higher the occupation on a scale of prestige, the higher the annual income.

Tumin and Feldman (1971) also used educational level as an indicator of the individual's social class, arguing that:

First as education is the primary avenue of
mobility in the new system of values and opportunity in Puerto Rico, commitment to the values of education is probably an indication of commitment to the goals whose achievement education makes possible. Second, education correlates very highly with income and occupation (p. 44).

Following Tulmin and Feldman I will also take into consideration the medium's educational level in order to examine the influence of social class on the medium's conception of the ideal medium. The following table summarizes the relation between educational level and categories of mediums:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of School Completed</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Kardecian</th>
<th>Mediums in Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-8</td>
<td>Aurea Gela</td>
<td>Peruchín, Félix Emiliano</td>
<td>Luz Juanita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diana, Aida Mayo, Generosa</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Luisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 12</td>
<td>Ernesto</td>
<td>Marcos Rosa</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are now prepared to examine the hypothesis that lower class mediums and those mediums with few years of school completed are the ones who I have classified in this study as Indigenous. Of seven Indigenous mediums there are five of
them who are lower class mediums. A high percent of Indigenous mediums (4/7) have completed between nine and 12 years of school. Consequently not all the Indigenous mediums are lower class mediums and a good percent of them have completed several years of schooling.

One may also expect that the middle-class mediums and those mediums who are college-educated will be more likely to be Kardecian or mediums in transition. Of five Kardecian mediums, two of them are middle class, two of them are working class and one is lower class. Three of the Kardecian mediums have completed less than nine years of school. Of four mediums in transition, one is lower class, two are working class, and one is middle class. Two of the mediums in transition completed less than eight years of school. Thus, one cannot say that all the Kardecian mediums and the mediums in transition are middle class and college-educated individuals.

However there are trends in the data suggesting that for some mediums, moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo may be related to educational achievement and/or social class mobility. These two variables have strong influence in the development of values which are not congruent with Indigenous Espiritismo. As Kohn (1964) pointed out, members of different social classes have different conceptions of the
desirable. Kardecian mediums and mediums-in-transition seem to be moving towards a "middle-class" conception of the ideal medium. This middle-class conception of the ideal medium puts strong emphasis on values such as self-determination, independence, self-control, academic and scientific orientation. The adoption of this middle-class ideology may motivate the mediums to move away from Indigenous Espiritismo.

The medium that emerges from this middle-class ideology is a conscious one with complete control of the mediumistic trance. In addition, the medium does not depend on any ritual object in order to help others. The use of ritual objects is seen as the product of ignorance or superstition. The preference is not to pasar the spirit because in doing this there is a chance that one may lose control. The middle class conception of the ideal medium also emphasizes the use of "scientific" concepts rather than folkloric spiritist concepts. The medium is very concerned about being "scientific" and "rational" in his/her healing approach. Consequently, he or she considers that religion and Espiritismo cannot be mixed because Espiritismo is a "science". The medium also adopts healing practices and techniques which are seen as being more "scientific" or "modern". Finally the traditional concept of prueba is no
longer seen as a meaningful one by this medium because according to him/her it implies a lack of freedom and self-determination.

The healing practice of Kardecian mediums is specifically characterized by this middle-class conception of the ideal medium, while mediums-in-transition seem to have adopted some of these values but not others. Consequently, in this study there are nine mediums who can be seen as moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo (five Kardecian and four in transition). One would not expect five of these mediums to be moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo because they are lower class mediums and/or they have very few years of school completed (Félix, Peruchín, Luz, Juanita, Emiliano). How can we explain their adoption of values espoused by the middle-class conception of the ideal medium?

One possible explanation that can be given is that these mediums are moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo in order to be accepted by middle-class and more educated groups. As their spiritist practices fulfill the expectations of educated and middle-class groups, the mediums' social status is increased. In addition, middle-class individuals will be more attracted to their services because these mediums are working within a middle-class world view. Moving away from Indigenous
Espiritismo may be seen as a way of increasing the medium's prestige and social recognition within middle-class groups. This process can be understood as one that involves social mobility for the medium.

One may argue that the process of moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo may affect the medium's relationship with lower-class and non-educated groups. There is also the possibility that his/her effectiveness with poor people can be diminished because the medium may not be satisfying their expectations about the healing process. As the medium moves away from Indigenous Espiritismo, there is also the possibility that a distance will be created between himself and lower-class groups. The medium may become more a "psychologist" for the middle-class and less a medium for the poor. Will lower-class people lose faith in those mediums because they are not "good" mediums according to their standards? What are the consequences of not working the causa using the style of Indigenous Espiritismo? How is the healing practice of the medium affected when she or he is not using ritual objects and folk healing techniques? Peruchín and Emiliano reported that when they decided not to use prayers anymore at their centers, a good number of people did not come to the meetings anymore. Very few individuals were attending the spiritist meetings leaded by Peruchín and
Emiliano. Other mediums declared that when they adopted the position that one cannot be Catholic and Espiritista, several individuals were upset to the point that they decided to leave the center.

It seems to me that Don Félix is aware of these issues when he says that he uses the knife in order to please people not because he believes that a knife is necessary for healing to happen. He considers the knife to be necessary for increasing the client's faith in him. The knife seems to represent the bridge that Don Félix uses to connect traditional conceptions of healing with Western ones. Although Félix's clients are predominantly lower-class, he also sees a good number of middle-class clients. It seems that Don Félix has been able to innovate his healing practices while conserving some basic principles of the indigenous model. Although he considers himself to be a follower of Kardecian Espiritismo, he is not affiliated with the Spiritist Federation or the Spiritist Confederation. In addition, he does not have any contact with the leaders of Kardecian Espiritismo.

In contrast, Peruchín has communication with several leaders of Kardecian Espiritismo. One of these leaders is a very good friend of his. It is very probable that Peruchín's contact with followers of Kardecian Espiritismo
has very much influenced his development as a medium. He has moved far away from Indigenous Espiritismo, innovating his healing practices by using massages, relaxation techniques and music. It is also impressive that Peruchín's spiritist "school" is located in the center of a very poor community. He admitted that several members of his center stopped attending it when he began to move away from Indigenous Espiritismo.

In the case of Luz it seems that a change in her religious orientation influenced her moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo. Although she was the Presidenta of an indigenous center for eight years, at some time she could not accept that some members of the center also attended the Catholic Church, and she began to talk against the Church. Luz also began to give more emphasis to the reading and discussion of spiritist books. Members reacted very negatively to these innovations which led Luz to stop attending this center. She is now attending a Trincado's center, which emphasizes the discussion and reading of spiritist books and is against the mix of Espiritismo with religion. The members of this center are primarily from the working and middle class.

Emiliano is a working class medium who has been influenced by the Kardecian spiritist movement more than any
other medium in this study. It seems that he had never been very interested in the practice of Indigenous Espiritismo. Since the beginning of his development as a medium, Emiliano has been trying to move away from Indigenous Espiritismo.

Emiliano's values about his conception of the ideal medium are strongly shaped by his academic non-religious orientation. Unlike most of the other mediums, he does not consider himself to be Christian. He is strongly opposed to the practice of Espiritismo as a religion. Although he only completed eight years of school, Emiliano is a self-educated person who deeply values intellectual knowledge. For several years he wrote articles for the journal of the Spiritist Federation. He also made several contacts with spiritist intellectuals of South America. For him Espiritismo is, more than anything else, a philosophy of life which should be studied as a way of improving the self.

Juanita is another medium who provides evidence against the position that only the mediums who are middle-class and have strong academic education are the ones who are moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo. She is a working class medium who has completed only eight years of school. It seems that Juanita's conception of the ideal medium has been influenced very strongly by the Spiritist Federation because she was an active member of this organization for several
years. Through her involvement with the Federation, she had the opportunity to meet several leaders of Kardecian Espiritismo.

Of the other four mediums who are moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo, three of them are middle-class and college educated mediums (Miriam, Marcos and Rosa) and the other is a working class medium with high school education (Luisa). Marcos began to desarrollar facultades at an indigenous center when he was an adolescent. Later in his development, he had contact with leaders of the Kardecian spiritist movement. Influenced by this contact and the reading of spiritist literature, Marcos has moved away from the indigenous model while still preserving some of its elements. He thinks that the religious dimension has to be integrated in the spiritist practice. Thus, instead of eliminating the prayers at the spiritist meeting, he has reduced the number of prayers that are read in his center.

Marcos is also aware that if he wants to reach the poor and non-educated, it is necessary to be flexible in his practice of Kardecian Espiritismo. As a leader of a spiritist group Marcos believes that he has to also provide for those who are poor and are not familiar with the Kardecian movement.

Rosa has been attending a Kardecian center for more than
five years. Prior to this, she was practicing Espiritismo in several indigenous centers. At the Kardecian center, she was required to change her indigenous healing practices "in order to become a better medium". Rosa was told that she has to educate her guides so that they can help her without using ritual objects.

Rosa's attitude towards this situation has been one of adaptation to her new role but she has not been convinced that ritual objects are not effective. However, Rosa has begun to see ritual objects as something that she can get rid of when her guides obtain the necessary preparation and education.

The other two mediums who are moving away from the indigenous model, Luisa and Miriam, do not seem to be very much influenced by the Kardecian movement. None of them have been affiliated to a Kardecian center. They are not concerned about the status of Espiritismo as a "science". However Luisa and Miriam do not use ritual objects, nor do they like to pasar the spirits. Both of them prefer to have a conscious trance when they are working as a medium. Nevertheless, unlike most Kardecian mediums, Miriam and Luisa do not criticize Indigenous mediums. Their attitude is not that Indigenous Espiritismo is wrong but that they have developed a different way of working as a medium. Their
conception of the ideal medium is still very much influenced by Indigenous Espiritismo.

Luisa, as well as Miriam, place a strong emphasis on the values of self-control and independence. Moving away from Indigenous Espiritismo may be influenced by the importance these values have for them. One can argue that if a medium is concerned about these values, there is a strong probability that he or she would prefer not to be unconscious, not to use ritual objects and not to pasar the spirits. These three dimensions are related to issues of control and independence.

As there are lower-class mediums who are moving away from the indigenous model, Diana is a middle-class medium who is moving towards the indigenous model again after making an effort to become a Kardecian medium. It seems that Diana was adopting Kardecian practices in order to satisfy the expectations of the director. As she became aware of this situation, Diana decided to stop attending the Kardecian center and to continue working as an Indigenous medium.

Another interesting relationship between social class, spiritist movement and educational achievement is found in Ernesto's development as a medium. Of the four college-educated mediums, he is the only one who can be described as an Indigenous medium. Ever since he was a
child, Ernesto has received very strong socialization within the indigenous spiritist movement. His conception of the ideal medium has been shaped by this socialization. In addition to this socialization, Ernesto is a strong Catholic believer who holds his own Mass every Sunday. Catholic religious values are a very important influence in his conception of the ideal medium. Moreover, Ernesto has adopted *Santería* as an important practice in his mediumship development. For Ernesto there is no incongruence in adopting what seems to be opposing belief systems for an outsider. Ernesto's academic education has not disconnected him from Indigenous *Espiritismo*.

As I have shown, the influence of social class, educational achievement, religious orientation and spiritist movement on the medium's conception of the ideal medium is a very complex one. It is impossible to make generalizations about the effect that any single variable may have on the development of mediums. One has also to consider that this influence is reciprocal. Ideology influences the mediums' movement and as they move away from Indigenous *Espiritismo*, they change their ideology.

Finally I must point out that in order to understand the medium's moving away from Indigenous *Espiritismo*, one also has to consider the impressive socio-cultural and economic
changes that Puerto Rican society has experienced since 1940 due to a development program known as "Operation Bootstrap" (Safa, 1974; Steward, 1956). This program was designed "to improve the standard of living of the Puerto Rican people through government-sponsored industrialization, land reform, and vast increases in government expenditures for education, public health, housing, and other social welfare programs" (Safa, 1974, p.1). As a result of "Operation Bootstrap", Puerto Rico was transformed from an agrarian and rural society to an industrial and urban one. Annual income per family increased from $1,103 in 1940 to $3,979 in 1970 (Safa, 1974). Illiteracy dropped from 32 percent in 1940 to 11 percent in 1970. Life expectancy increased from 46 years in 1940 to 72 years in 1970 (Michtom, 1975).

The impact of this process of "modernization" on the role of traditional healers has been examined by several authors (Gould, 1965; Landy, 1977; Press, 1971). Landy (1977) argued that the healer's role may be "one of the more sensitive roles to the pressures for change in any social system... and what happens to the curer may be an important barometer of what is going on in the total process of sociocultural change" (p. 468). It appears that some mediums in this study are responding to these large socio-cultural changes by changing traditional practices and adopting
elements of Western Psychology. For example, Don Félix's healing approach is mostly based on psychological techniques. Moreover he considered himself to be a "natural psychologist". Gela, a very traditional medium, pointed out that a great percentage of her client's problems are caused by "mental suggestion". Sometimes she uses an electric machine to give massages to her clients.

Can the indigenous practice of Espiritismo survive on the Island despite the so-called "modernization which pervades the Island"? Will Indigenous Espiritismo disappear as a consequence of being considered a "superstition" by the new generations? If this happens in the future we may have another example of the destructive and negative consequences of socio-economic "progress" and the so-called process of "Americanization" of the Puerto Rican society.
In this chapter I will examine the process of becoming a medium, beginning with an analysis of the "opening of the brain", the first stage in the development of a medium. Then I will discuss the process of desarrollo de facultades (development of faculties) which involves the control and regulation of the trance state. In the last section of this chapter I will compare the education of the spiritist medium with a model of healer's education developed by Katz (1981, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1982d, 1983, in press-a) called "education as transformation".

The First Contact With the Spirit World:
"The Opening of the Brain"

Indigenous mediums refer to the first stage of the desarrollo de facultades as the "opening of the brain" (abrir el cerebro). Some Kardecian mediums and mediums in transition also use this concept in the interviews. Through this process the medium is opening his or her brain in order to experience the reality of the spirit world. Through the opening of the brain the medium is preparing the spiritual
channels for the communication with the spirits. Most of the Indigenous mediums believe that the spirits "pass through their brains" (pasar por el cerebro) in order to communicate. When they do not want to communicate with the spirits, the mediums have to "close their brains".

The phrase "opening the brain" may give some indication of how dangerous, vulnerable and delicate this initial period may be for the mediums. One of the mediums, Doña Luisa, compared the opening of the brain with the unfolding of a rose, trying to explain the wonderful but delicate nature of this period. She also compared this process with the defloration of a woman.

The initial experiences which characterize the opening of the brain can be classified in several categories such as:

- hearing voices
- having premonitions about the death of family members
- dreams in which the spirit guide is met
- visions
- conversations with spirits
- feeling the "presence" of someone who is neither seen, heard nor touched
- out of body experiences
- prediction of future events
- sensation of being touched by someone
- pasar spirits without being conscious of it
- automatic writing
- obsesión

For example, Miriam had her first experience with the spirit world through a dream in which she met her guide. Juanita began to have conversations with invisible friends when she was a child. At the age of five, Aurea had a vision of the Child of Prague. Others such as Luisa and Gela had premonitions about the deaths of family members. Aída and Luz heard voices telling them to hurt themselves, experiencing an obsesión.

An examination of the medium's life-stories reveals that 60% of them had their initial experiences with the spirit world in the adolescent years; 25% of them in their middle childhood and 12% of them in their young adulthood. Thus, for most of the mediums in this sample, adolescence was the period in which they began to have contact with the spirits.

Being an adolescent is in itself a very difficult developmental stage. One can imagine how difficult it was for most of these mediums to understand their experiences. Most of them seemed to experience a certain degree of distress in this first period. In a society in which the boundaries of reality are so well defined, it is "normal" to be distressed after having gone beyond these boundaries. It
is not easy for any one to begin experiencing things that society has labelled as abnormal.

The mediums' reactions to these first experiences may depend upon several factors. One needs to consider the degree of congruence or dissonance experienced by the mediums when they began to open their brains and their family's attitude toward the communication with spirits and Espiritismo. For example, some mediums indicated that when they were having these spiritual experiences, their parents and other family members considered them to be in the process of becoming mentally ill (Luisa, Félix, Aurea, Juanita, Gela). Some of the parents were opposed to the idea of letting their children attend a spiritist centro because they were Catholic. Eleven mediums came from families who were primarily Catholic, not Espiritistas. Consequently, these first experiences were not only distressing to the mediums but also to the entire family.

The degree of distress experienced by the medium in the initial stages may depend on how well they can integrate these initial experiences within themselves. According to Rogers (1980) those experiences which are incongruent with the self serve as a source of threat and usually are experienced as a form of anxiety. Consequently, all maladjustments come about through denial of experiences
discrepant with the self-concept. Similarly, Sullivan (1948) developed the concept of the "uncanny" to describe a set of relations which does not form part of the self-system of the person and, being outside of the person's usual cognitive processes, cannot be integrated into everyday life.

Some of the participants in this study described how in the beginning they struggled very hard not to become a medium (Juanita, Félix, Generosa, Aida). They did not want to open their brains. For instance, Juanita expressed that in the initial stage she did not accept her experiences with the spirit world, denying to herself and to others that she was becoming a medium because she was Catholic. Generosa said that she did not believe in Espiritismo and was constantly making fun of the mediums. She did not want to attend spiritist centers but her parents forced her to do so. For these mediums the first stage in their mediumship development involved the integration of the experiences with spirits into the structure of their lives so that they could achieve a degree of "congruency". Using Sullivan's concept, one may say that the mediums were able to expand their self-systems in order to accommodate a different conceptualization of the self and the world.
The obsesión

Seven of the 16 mediums talked about suffering an obsesión when they began to communicate with the spirit world (Félix, Juanita, Luz, Aurea, Aida, Generosa, and Peruchín). The obsesión is a state of mental disequilibrium or maladjustment in which the medium does not have control over his or her actions because of spiritual influence. The obsesión is produced when an ignorant spirit is dominating the medium's will in such a way that it is difficult for him or her not to follow the spirit's suggestions. The principal symptom of an obsesión is actual or feared loss of impulse control.

Mediums classify the obsesión into two major types: the conscious and the unconscious. The mediums who are suffering a conscious obsesión have a relative control over their actions but not over their thoughts and feelings. The mediums who are experiencing an unconscious obsesión are not able to control their feelings and thoughts or their behavior.

Five of the mediums experienced the obsesión in their adolescence (Peruchín, Generosa, Aida, Luz and Juanita) while the other two had it in their young adulthood (Félix, Aurea). Most of the time the mediums declared that they did
not remember this period very well, so it was difficult to get a clear picture of the symptomatology of obsesión. Obsesión seems to be a very broad concept which is used by the mediums to describe a condition characterized by one or more of these signs: running away from home, yelling and crying without any reason, loss of appetite, hearing voices of a suicidal nature and being aggressive towards others. One may speculate that depression is also a symptom of this syndrome.

The duration of these obsesiones range from a three month period (Félix) to a three year period (Generosa). Also for some of these mediums, the obsesión is a recurrent condition. Aida began to have her obsesión at the age of twelve and it was in her late twenties that she was cured, suffering various episodes of this condition during this period. Aurea experienced three obsesiones when she was a young adult and her last one was at the age of thirty-two.

The mediums used words such as locura (madness) and problema de los nervios (problem of the nerves) to describe the experience of obsesión. One of them, Luz, expressed that she was "hysterical". It seems that all of them recognized that they had a "mental disequilibrium" but they explained it as being caused by spiritual influence not by psychological factors.
Why did these mediums suffer an obsesión? All of them believe that the obsesión was a prueba they had to undergo in order to believe in Espiritismo because they were resistant to accepting their facultades. The obsesión is thought to be produced by the refusal to accept one's mediumistic experiences. In addition, Generosa suspected that maybe there were spirits in her cuadro espiritual who were suffering an obsesión. She and Luz also declared that having suffered an obsesión helped them to develop strong facultades. Generosa made the point that when a medium has experienced an obsesión, he or she is able to work more effectively with people who are mentally ill. All of the mediums see the obsesión as a learning experience which helps them to desarrollar facultades. The obsesión was also the experience that motivated them to attend spiritist meetings in order to look for help.

None of the 16 mediums interviewed in this study believe that suffering an obsesión is a requirement for becoming a medium. They consider that a person can desarrollar facultades without experiencing an emotional crisis. However, some of them believe that a medium who has suffered an obsesión is better prepared than the one who has not suffered one.

The mediums who did not experience an obsesión when
they were in the process of opening their brains gave me other explanations for the incidence of the obsesión in this initial stage. Luisa believes that there are people "who are born with a "weak nervous system" and they are not prepared to confront this kind of experiences. They cannot understand why they are having these experiences, becoming very confused. As Miriam explains: "When the medium's brain opens to the spirit world, the medium experiences a lot of pain because there are many things that she or he does not know". Other mediums explained that some mediums experienced this initial crisis because there is no one who can support and advise them (Miriam, Luisa, Ernesto, Marcos, and Emiliano). Marcos argued that there are some "psychic systems that are more vulnerable than others" and that the social milieu in which the medium grew up may have a role in the development of the obsesión. In general the mediums believed that prior contact with the practice of Espiritismo may prevent a person from suffering an obsesión because he or she will understand what is happening in his or her life, getting support from experienced mediums.

This last statement has some support from the life-stories of the mediums who suffered an obsesión in the beginning of their development. With the exception of Aurea, none of them were involved in the practice of
Espiritismo or had visited spiritist centers prior to the obsesión. They were not able to use the resources of the spiritist meetings before experiencing the obsesión. In some of the cases, the medium's family was against the practice of Espiritismo (Aurea, Juanita, Félix) and they did not want their children to visit spiritist centers.

The analysis of the mediums who did not have an obsesión reveals a different pattern. Most of them began to visit spiritist centers when they were children (Ernesto, Gela, Miriam, Marcos, Luisa, Diana, Rosa). (The other two mediums were young adults when they began to have contact with the spirit world). From these data one may ask the following questions: Does this initial socialization within spiritist practice help prevent the obsesión? Is this socialization helping the mediums to open their brains without experiencing a high degree of anxiety?

Ernesto's story is particularly significant in examining these questions. His parents are mediums who have a spiritist center. He grew up feeling that the experiences with spirits were completely normal. Moreover he was reinforced in having communication with the spirit world as part of his life. Becoming a medium was a natural pathway for expressing himself. Ernesto considered that developing facultades had been his "daily bread" since the time he was
born. His socialization as a medium started the day he was born.

Similarly, but to a lesser degree, Miriam's *desarrollo* as a medium was characterized by a strong involvement with *Espiritismo* from the time she was a little girl. She visited her uncle's center regularly. Her parents and grandmother were *Espiritistas*. As a product of this socialization, she wanted to become a medium. At the age of ten, Miriam thought that she would not mind suffering an *obsesión* if this was a requisite for becoming a medium. She was very attracted to the medium's role.

It seems to me that the degree of anxiety that a medium may experience in the initial stage of his or her development will depend on his or her capacity to make sense of this process. Prior socialization as an *Espiritista* helps the mediums to articulate and structure these "uncanny experiences", integrating them as part of their reality.

Based on the medium's conception of the opening of the brain, one may infer that this process is experienced relatively as "ego-dystonic" or relatively "ego-syntonic". When the opening of the brain is ego-dystonic, it is unwanted and a persistent source of distress for the person. He or she has strong negative feelings towards becoming a medium, perceiving the medium's role as undesirable and unacceptable.
From the medium's perspective, one can argue that the obsesión is a consequence of an opening of the brain experienced as ego-dystonic.

When a person wants to become a medium and is prepared to desarrollar facultades, he or she experiences the opening of the brain as ego-syntonic. The process is not experienced as alien to his/her conception of the self, but as compatible and consistent with it. Mediums will argue that when the opening of the brain is ego-syntonic, an obsesión will not occur.

Healing of the obsesión

The seven mediums who experienced an obsesión in the beginning of their desarrollo went to a spiritist center in order to be cured. It was in the spiritist center that they learned how to deal effectively with the obsesión. All of the mediums were told that they were in desarrollo de facultades and the obsesión was a sign of it. The obsesión was seen as an indication of their ability to communicate with the spirit world, not as a pathological or abnormal symptom that needed to be removed. It was explained that they were undergoing an obsesión because they did not have control over the spiritual forces that were trying to
manifest through them. Thus, the healing approach was oriented to teaching them how to have more control over the spirit world.

It was also explained to the mediums that there were ignorant spirits taking advantage of the situation, trying to harm them. Through the process of working the causa, these ignorant spirits were given light. Several of the mediums were told at the spiritist center that if they did not make an effort to desarrollar facultades, they would inevitably become ill again.

After having worked these causas, the mediums were ready to continue opening their brains to the world of the spirits but now with the support of experienced mediums. The scenario was prepared for the desarrollo de facultades.

A comment about the "normality" of the process of becoming a medium

It seems to be appropriate now to comment on the "normality" of the process of becoming a medium.

The experiences which characterized the process of becoming a medium such as hearing voices, spirit possession and visions have been traditionally explained as psychiatric symptoms. Consequently, shamans and other types of traditional healers who experience these states have been
considered by several authors to be mentally disturbed (Devereux, 1980; Linton, 1956; Spiro, 1967; Wallace, 1966). As Devereux emphasized:

...there is no reason and no excuse for not considering the shaman to be a severe neurotic or even a psychotic in a state of temporary remission (1980, pp. 14-15).

In agreement with Devereux, Spiro (1967) based on a sample of only nine Burmese shamans, argued that they are drawn to their roles by a number of unresolved conflicts and painful frustrations. According to him, shamanistic possession is utilized to satisfy frustrated sexual, dependency and prestige needs. He concluded that the shamanistic recruit suffers from a neurotic conflict and that shamanism "serves to avert the outbreak of psychopathology" (1967, p. 229). In discussing the experiences of a Burmese villager, Spiro commented:

Although Mr. G's belief that he was possessed by a witch is entirely consistent with the cultural frame of Burmese witchcraft, and although his fellow villagers, therefore, fully share his belief that he was possessed, in my view his belief was no less irrational than if it had been inconsistent with it. For in both cases such a belief is based on an hallucination - on a confusion of fantasy with reality... (1984, p. 342).

Similarly Wallace (1966) considered that the shaman is a mentally disturbed individual with major identity problems. He described the last stage in the process of becoming a
shaman as a "controlled hysterical dissociability during which the shaman is able to visit, speak to, see, or be entered by his supernatural alter ego" (1966, p. 150). Silverman (1967) argued that there are significant similarities between acute schizophrenics and shamans and that the major difference between them is the degree of cultural acceptance.

Although this pathologizing approach is more characteristic of the 1950's and 60's, the bias persists now in a more subtle form. In the literature review on Espiritismo I have already discussed the presence of the psychiatric framework in the explanation of the experience of pasar the spirits or "spirit possession". Spirit possession has been explained as "the flooding of the ego by a return of the repressed" (Seda-Bonilla, 1969, p. 493) and it also has been related to the "Puerto Rican Syndrome" (Garrison, 1977a).

Usually psychiatric concepts such as "hallucination" and "dissociation" have been used to describe the process of becoming a medium. For example, Lubchansky et al. (1970) described an evidencia as a visual hallucinatory phenomenon. He wrote that hallucinating is regularly encouraged at the spiritist meeting, referring to the experience of seeing and hearing the spirits. Rogler and Hollingshead (1965)
presented the contrast between the pathological model and the emic perspective of the *Espiritista* in the following way:

If an individual reports hallucinations, it clearly indicates to the believer in spiritualism that he is being visited by spirits who manifest themselves visually and audibly. If he has delusions he is told that evil spirits are deceiving him about himself as well as about others; his thoughts are being distorted by interfering bad spirits, or through the development of his psychic faculties spirits have informed him of the true enemies in his environment (1965, p. 254).

Some researchers while admitting the limitations of the psychiatric model, continue using psychiatric terminology to describe the medium's experiences. For instance, Michtom (1975) emphasized that she wanted to avoid the pathological model in her study of *Espiritismo*, but she constantly used the concept of hallucination to describe the process of becoming a medium.

The research literature on *Espiritismo* suggests that the role of a medium is achieved through the successful resolution of a life crisis (Garrison, 1972; Koss, 1965; Lubchansky et al., 1970; Michtom, 1975). Lubchansky et al. (1970) interviewed 20 mediums and found that all of them described having experienced "episodes of severe mental distress". *Desarrollo de facultades* is seen as a cultural mechanism for the expression and resolution of pathological symptoms. These researchers argue that the medium's
desarrollo is not an illness but a process of being healed from an illness.

In my view, the major limitations of the psychiatric model for explaining the process of becoming a medium is its generalization from a small sample of mediums to all of them and its lack of recognition of the values of cultural relativity and diversity. First, I do not think that it is appropriate to make generalizations about the process of becoming a medium when this dimension is not yet well understood. Any conclusion about the normality of this process has to be limited to the specific sample studied. The reality is that there is not enough information yet to make clinical judgements about the medium's desarrollo. There has not been any empirical research designed to test the mental health of spiritist mediums. The administration of psychological tests to mediums in a culturally-sensitive way may shed some light on this important issue.

My clinical impression about the participants of this study is that most of them seem to be emotionally stable persons. I did not find evidence of mental disturbance in any of them with the exception of Mayo who confessed to me that he was in psychiatric treatment due to a problema de nervios. Although Miriam was seeing a psychiatrist in order to deal with her marriage problem, in my view she was
functioning as a healthy human being. However, I did not administer any test to the mediums to determine the presence of mental disturbance and therefore my observations are not based on empirical data.

Opposed to what Lubchansky et al. (1970) found in his study, only seven of 16 mediums in my sample described having experienced any severe emotional distress while they were in desarrollo de facultades. In light of this finding, the argument that desarrollo de facultades is a mechanism for the resolution of an emotional crisis may have to be reevaluated. Although this may be the case for some mediums, it seems that a good number of them do not experience these crises. A future study should investigate whether there are any significant differences between these two kinds of mediums. Instead of examining the process of becoming a medium as if it were the same for all the mediums, it is important to recognize that the mediums have different life experiences which affect their mental health in different ways.

The other major limitation of the psychiatric model is its reliance on a Western conception of mental health and reality, without enough recognition for cultural relativity and diversity. By not recognizing the right of individuals and groups from other cultures to experience reality in a different way, the psychiatric model is enforcing a criterion
of normality that is not suitable for understanding the medium's experiences. As a model that is not culturally-sensitive, it tends to describe other ways of constructing reality as "abnormal", "irrational", "magical", "primitive" and "pre-scientific". By explaining the medium's experience with spirits as being a hallucination, the psychiatric model is defining it as pathological and as such invalidating the experience. Ackerknecht (19**) in criticizing this model expressed:

Psychopathological labeling seems to be foremost an expression for helplessness, a specific attitude of our culture toward the unknown... the psychopathological "diagnosis" gives, perhaps, emotional relief, but not a scientific solution of the incomprehensible (p. 33).

The process of becoming a medium is based on the paradigm of multiple or alternative realities (Bentov, 1977; Berger, 1977; Rogers, 1980). This paradigm emphasizes that ordinary reality is one of a number of realities and states of consciousness, as opposed to the conception that there is one reality with which everyone should be in contact in order to be considered "normal" and "mentally healthy". Mental health for the spiritist medium is the capacity to live in a world of alternate realities controlling the possibility of connecting with each of them at will. Relevant to this discussion is an argument made by Rogers:
It appears to me that the way of the future must be to base our lives and our education on the assumption that there are as many realities as there are persons, and that our highest priority is to accept that hypothesis and proceed from there. Proceed where? Proceed each of us, to explore open mindedly the many, many perceptions of reality that exist. We would also become more able to cope with the reality in which each one of us exists, because we would be aware of many more options (1980, pp. 104-105).

To follow this recommendation may lead to a new understanding of the process of becoming a medium. This kind of understanding will require a change of orientation toward reality or at least in respecting the different orientations that other individuals have. This attitude will make the difference between ethnocentric explanations of the medium's desarrollo and explanations which are more congruent with the culturally constituted reality of the medium.

Through the understanding of the medium's experiences of reality, I will continue examining the process of becoming a medium. In the next section, I will explore the dimensions of the desarrollo de facultades.
Desarrollo de Facultades

The concept of facultad

The desarrollo de facultades is an essential aspect of the process of becoming a medium. In this section I will discuss what desarrollo de facultades is according to the participants of this study. First, I will consider the concept of facultad as it is used in Espiritismo. According to the mediums, the facultad is the capacity to be an instrument or intermediary of the spirit world. In this sense it is impossible to be a medium without having facultades. Any power that a medium has is based on his or her relationship with the spirits. Peruchín, in trying to explain to me the nature of the facultad, compared the medium to a musical instrument, a radar and a microphone. Aida making a similar point said: "The facultad belongs to the spirits because the medium does not have any power".

There are different kinds of facultades. Usually mediums are classified according to the kind of facultad they have. For example, those who can see the spirits are called mediums videntes (seers). The mediums who can hear the spirits are called auditivos (auditives). There are others who have the facultad of feeling the presence of spirits and
they are called sensitivos (sensitives). The mediums who have the facultad of curing physical illnesses are called sanadores (healers). Usually mediums develop more than one facultad as they become more experienced.

Is the facultad an inborn capacity? With the exception of Miriam and Marcos all the mediums seemed to agree that the facultad is an inborn capacity. Luisa made the point that mediums are born "with something different in the brain". A popular expression among mediums suggests that one brings facultades to this world. Gela and Ernesto expressed that the facultades "are latent from the time one is born". Marcos and Miriam believed that what is inborn is not the facultad but the "predisposition or the potential to develop it".

The notion of inborn facultades acquires a new meaning when one considers the concept of reincarnation and past lives. The mediums believe that the facultades have not been given to them for free, but are the product of past life achievements and spiritual development. Although several mediums consider the facultad as a gift (don) from God, they made it clear that they have worked very hard in order to get it (Luisa, Félix, Aida, Generosa, Mayo, Luz, Juanita, Aurea, and others).

Why do some people develop their facultades while others
do not? The mediums responded by saying that it may depend on God's will, the kind of family and social environment the person is born in and the motivation of the person to develop facultades. Others felt that this was a great mystery. Emiliano compared the facultad to a person's intelligence because both of them have to be nurtured by environmental factors in order to develop and grow.

If a medium is in desarrollo de facultades this means that he or she already has them. Consequently the process of becoming a medium is not based on learning how to have or acquire facultades because they are already within the medium. The facultad is a capacity that no one can teach to others. Luz expressed it very well: "I cannot teach other persons to have revelations or to hear and see the spirits. No one can make you a medium". When a medium such as Juanita says that "a medium is born, not made", she is not telling us that learning is insignificant in the process of becoming a medium, but rather that the facultades cannot be learned the same way one learns for example, to type or to dance. She is not diminishing the role of learning in the desarrollo de facultades but emphasizing that the facultades are not acquired through any kind of training or education. Similarly, Peruchín declared that "the facultades are inborn but the medium needs knowledge and education in order to
expand them". And Diana compared the facultad with a "diamond that needs to be polished with knowledge and morals".

The desarrollo de facultades is an unfolding process in which the medium's facultades have the opportunity to emerge and expand. As their facultades are emerging, the mediums-in-development are involved in a learning process which usually takes place at a spiritist center. Desarrollo de facultades is a process based on learning how to control and regulate the facultad or power so that it can be used to help others.

**Education in the spiritist center**

The spiritist meeting is an event which involves three major processes that are interdependent: 1) participants are assisted with their particular problems and advised on how to transform their behavior; 2) ignorant spirits are given light or educated; 3) and prospective mediums have the opportunity to develop their capacities. These three components have to be seen as a whole in order to understand the meaning and structure of the spiritist meeting. One may examine the spiritist meeting as an educational experience which involves the interaction of mediums, participants and spirits.
All 16 mediums in this study began to desarrollar facultades within the context of a spiritist center. They were considered to be mediums-in-development (médiums en desarrollo), being assisted by other, more experienced mediums. The spiritist meeting provided a safe place in which to continue the exploration of the spirit world under the guidance of people who know this world. It is at the spiritist meeting that the blossoming of their facultades was facilitated.

Mediums refer to the desarrollo de facultades as a process of education for the medium. For example, Mayo noted that a person who will become a medium goes through a process similar to the child who attends school. Through my participant observation and interviews with mediums, I found that it is very relevant to look at the desarrollo de facultades as an educational process which involves several dimensions. In this section I will examine these dimensions.

The first point is that desarrollo de facultades is a process that varies from medium to medium. One of the reasons for this is that mediums develop different kinds of facultades. In addition, spiritist centers do not follow a strict formula for helping mediums to desarrollar facultades. Each spiritist leader has a unique way of educating the mediums-in-development. If one considers the different
spiritist practices, one will find that each of them has a particular model for the education of the medium. However, there seems to be a general framework which may apply to the different ways to desarrollar facultades.

All of the mediums in this study, with the exception of Emiliano, began to desarrollar facultades in indigenous centers. Some of them have moved away from indigenous practices but the first education they received was based on Indigenous Espiritismo. Therefore, in this discussion I will emphasize how a medium begins to develop facultades within Indigenous and Kardecian Espiritismo.

In the beginning, mediums-in-development experience doubts about the reality of their communication with the spirits. They are not sure if the information received by them at the spiritist meeting comes from the spirits or if it is a creation of their minds. Consequently they are afraid to give evidencias and to participate in the meetings. The spiritist leaders are aware of this problem and most of the time they ask the mediums-in-development not to restrain themselves from saying something that has been given to them. This period seems to be one in which the mediums develop self-confidence in their capacities. As they get positive feedback about their participation in the meetings, the mediums-in-development begin to have faith in their
facultades.

The education of mediums-in-development emphasize that it is through practice and observation that one can acquire the necessary "skills" to become an effective medium. There is a strong experiential component in the medium's education. As one of my informants expressed: "It is through practice and experience that one can become a good medium".

Desarrollo de facultades consists of several skills. First the mediums have to learn how to identify the good and ignorant spirits by the kind of fluído or vibration they are perceiving. As Mayo puts it: "One has to recognize what is in our brain". This is essential in the practice of mediumship because not knowing how to discriminate between good and ignorant spirits may lead the medium to follow the recommendation of the ignorant ones.

Most of the mediums described the fluídos of ignorant spirits as being hot, uncomfortable, unpleasant, heavy, and anxiety-provoking. Generally, the fluído of an ignorant spirit produces physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches and back pains. If the spirit died from a physical illness, the medium may feel the symptoms of the illness. In contrast, the fluídos of good spirits are described as being cool, pleasant, refreshing, cheerful, soft and peaceful.
Perceiving a **fluído** helps the medium to identify the kind of spirit that is trying to **pasar** through her or his brain. The medium has the opportunity to be prepared and to decide if he or she will open the brain to the influence of the spirit.

Another important step in the **desarrollo de facultades** is learning how to concentrate. Indigenous mediums described this important skill as being able to forget the material things and to concentrate absolutely on the meeting. Mediums in the Kardecian movement talked about learning to meditate as an essential step toward becoming a medium. Several times in an indigenous meeting, mediums-in-development were asked to "lift their thoughts" or to "unite their thoughts" in order to communicate with the spirit world. Most of the times prayers were used to facilitate this "unity of thoughts". Kardecian centers used music as a facilitator of the meditation.

Whether it is a meditation or a unity of thoughts, the fact is that it is essential that a medium achieves a particular mental and emotional state in order to communicate with the spirit world. It seems that in both traditions it is recognized that the mediums' reception of the spirit world will be improved if they know how to concentrate or meditate. If the reception is better, there will be less interference
from the medium's mind.

After being able to have good concentration and to perceive the fluídos, the medium is prepared to pasar or incorporar the spirits. With the exception of Emiliano, all the mediums in this study developed this facultad. To develop this facultad means that one is capable of pasar good as well as ignorant spirits. None of the mediums in this study used the word "possession" to describe this experience. The concept of possession has a negative connotation for them because of its relation to the concept of the Devil and demonic possession. For the mediums it is not really "possession" that is taking place when they go into trance because for them, this concept implies a lack of control over the spirit manifestation.

Indigenous mediums use the concept of pasar or tomar the spirit to describe the experience of "trance possession". They believe that the spirit goes into their brains in order to communicate through them. Some of them explain that their own spirit leaves the body when they go into trance. On the contrary, Kardecian mediums argue that it is impossible that a spirit can enter into the medium's brain. What happens when a medium is incorporating a spirit is that he/she establishes a connection with the fluído of the spirit.

Pasar the spirits involves trance behavior which
from medium to medium in terms of degree of consciousness experienced when entering the trance. (Instead of using the concept of possession trance, I will refer to this experience as the "mediumistic trance"). Based on the mediumistic trance, mediums are classified into three types: "conscious", "semi-conscious" and "unconscious". The conscious mediums are the ones who remember almost everything the spirit has communicated when they are in trance. The semi-conscious mediums are those who remember part of the spirit communication. The unconscious mediums do not remember anything or very little of the communication given by the spirits through them.

For the mediums, the kind of mediumistic trance is an indication of the degree of control they have over the trance state and the degree of their personal intervention. Of the 16 mediums in this study, seven of them are conscious mediums (Emiliano, Luisa, Juanita, Mayo, Miriam, Luz, Marcos) and four of them are unconscious (Generosa, Aida, Dinora, Gela). Four mediums said that they are conscious in some trance states but unconscious in others depending on the situation (Félix, Aurea, Peruchín, Ernesto). One medium, Rosa, is semi-conscious while experiencing the mediumistic trance.

According to the mediums, the two major kinds of mediumistic trances, unconscious and conscious, have
advantages as well as disadvantages. Mediums consider that the advantage of being unconscious is that there is little or no participation by the mediums in the spirit communication. In other words, the spirit communication is considered more authentic and reliable. In the unconscious trance, there is little interference by the medium in the communication. On the other hand, the major disadvantage of the unconscious trance is that the medium has less control over the trance behavior. Consequently the medium may not be able to control the inappropriate vocabulary and behavior of an ignorant spirit. If the unconscious mediums do not have enough "preparation", they run the risk of being manipulated by the ignorant spirits.

Conscious mediums have more control over the vocabulary and behavior of the spirits, but at the same time they are in danger of contaminating the spirit communication with their personal desires and feelings. In the beginning they also may be afraid of working as a medium because they are not in a deep trance. This is demonstrated in the development of Generosa who at the beginning wanted to be conscious in the trance but felt too many doubts and fears. She had to become an unconscious medium in order to work as a medium.

Whether experiencing a conscious or unconscious trance, the mediums-in-development must learn how to have some
relative control over this trance state. Control of the mediumistic trance means that the mediums are capable of regulating their physical movements, the vocabulary of the spirit and the trance behavior as a whole. For example, a medium has to learn not to fall down and roll on the floor when he or she is in trance. In addition, the medium who goes into trance should be able to have control over the aggressive impulses of ignorant spirits. Mayo told me the story of a medium who in a meeting went into an unconscious trance and was impulsed by an ignorant spirit to go out of the center and to look for a knife in order to kill himself. Mayo had to follow the medium in order to take the knife away before he killed himself. Diana, who is a medium-in-development, had to be held by other mediums when she went into trance because she could have hurt herself or others.

Although Gela is an unconscious medium, she declared that "it is easier to educate conscious mediums" because they are able to control the spirit's language. According to her, unconscious mediums have to work very hard in order to control the trance state. Unconscious mediums believe that they have control over the mediumistic trance because they have educated themselves and they receive help from their spirit guides. The spirit guides are responsible for
controlling the actions of the ignorant spirits so that they will not cause harm while making a manifestation. Most of the time, ignorant spirits complain of being chained or not being able to move while they are talking through the medium.

Other mediums declared that the types of trance they experience depends on what kind of work has to be done. For example, Ernesto is unconscious when he goes into a trance state with ignorant spirits but he remains conscious while passing a spirit guide. Ernesto thinks that if a medium does not work a causa unconsciously, people do not believe in him or her.

In addition to learning to control what happens in the trance state, the mediums-in-development must learn to experience it voluntarily. They have to learn to go into trance when it is required and necessary to do so. The trance state by ignorant and good spirit guides has to be produced at will.

Another important aspect of the education of mediums is the identification and familiarity with spirit guides. As Juanita expressed: "The mediums have to recognize their guides as a mother recognizes her children". There are at least three major ways in which a medium-in-development can discover who his/her spirit guides are. First, a spirit guide may appear to the medium in a dream. This happened in
the case of Marcos and Miriam. Second, a medium can discover the identity of the spirit guide through a vision. Félix spent three days meditating on a mountain when he met his principal guide Agüeybaná. Third, other experienced mediums can help the mediums-in-development to identify their guides. They may say the name, physical appearance and character of the spirit guide to the medium-in-development. For instance, in a spiritist meeting Aida received a message from a medium in which she was told the name and physical characteristics of her spirit guide.

In addition to a principal spirit guide, mediums may identify other kinds of guides who are interested in working with them. As mediums develop facultades, they may need to be assisted by other guides who have certain kinds of specializations. For example, Miriam received a new guide who was a physician in order to help her in doing spiritual surgery.

The working of causas or the education of ignorant spirits is another skill that has to be learned by mediums-in-development. First, mediums have to learn to interrogate an ignorant spirit who is communicating through another medium. They also need to know how "to give light" to the ignorant spirits by convincing them that it is not right to harm people. Second, after the manifestation of an
ignorant spirit, a medium has to be able to remove the negative *fluídos* from his or her body. In dealing with the *causas* of other people, a medium has to be careful because he or she may be affected by them.

Another important skill a medium-in-development should learn is to interpret the *evidencias* (revelations or visions) they receive from the spirit world. Mediums in this study argued that one does not learn to receive an *evidencia*, what one learns is to understand and interpret it effectively. At the spiritist meeting mediums-in-development learn how to find meaning for the *evidencias* received and how to communicate this meaning in a sensitive way. Mediums expressed that one has to distinguish between an *evidencia* that can be shared with others and one that should remain a secret. Through *evidencias*, a medium may know things about a client which are very private and that should not be revealed in public. Confidentiality becomes a very important element in the work of a medium.

*Evidencias* are especially helpful in finding the source of a client's problems. An example from my field notes illustrates how, through an *evidencia*, a medium was able to discover a conflictive issue in the life of a woman:

A medium told a woman that her mother died from a heart attack and that she was feeling guilty because nobody was with the mother at the time
of her death. The woman responded affirmatively to the medium's remarks. She declared that she felt responsible for her mother's death. The medium supported the woman by saying that her mother's death could not be avoided by anybody. The mother was supposed to die at that time. The woman seemed to feel better after hearing the healer's explanation.

In general, the *desarrollo de facultades* is a process in which the mediums learn how to have control over the mediumistic trance, being able to communicate at will with good as well as ignorant spirits. The mediums-in-development learn to be more receptive to the spirit world and at the same time are able to effectively interpret the *evidencias* received from the spirits.

The Education of the Medium and "Education as Transformation"

The education of the medium is not limited to the *desarrollo de facultades*. The unfolding of the *facultades* is only a dimension of a more global process known as the medium's *desarrollo*. While the *desarrollo de facultades* is a concept used for describing the process of becoming a medium, the concept of the medium's *desarrollo* is used in referring to the process of becoming and being a medium. After the unfolding of the *facultades*, the medium's education is oriented to the goal of the medium's *desarrollo*. The concept
of *desarrollo*, as it is used by the medium, refers to a process of continuous transformation experienced by the mediums as part of their healing work.

Although mediums have different conceptions of how *Espiritismo* should be practiced, the medium's *desarrollo* is guided by a set of principles and standards which are shared by most of them. It is the concept of *desarrollo* that give some unity to the mediums' life stories. The process of *desarrollo* is based on a model of healer education which I will call "education as *desarrollo". Most of the mediums in this study tend to use the concepts of *desarrollo* and education as if they were synonymous. They believe that the medium's *desarrollo* is the medium's education. Based on this evidence it makes sense to examine *desarrollo* from an educational perspective.

In this section I will describe the major principles of education as *desarrollo* comparing it with the transformational framework, as presented in the model of "education as transformation" developed by Katz (1981, 1982a, 1982b, in press-a). I think that it is appropriate to do such a comparison for two major reasons. First, the model of education as transformation is deduced from data on traditional community healers. Thus the categories of this model may also be relevant to the education of spiritist
mediums. Second, if education as desarrolllo supports the model of education as transformation, or is another example of that model, it would add further evidence for the validity of education as transformation as a model which could describe the education of traditional healers, and possibly guide the training of contemporary healers in a more culturally sensitive manner.

My qualifying paper suggested the value of this comparison (Núñez, 1986); in my thesis, I now have the opportunity to explore this comparison and its implications more in depth, and with access to more extensive data.

Principles of "education as transformation"

In his ethnographic research with the !Kung and the Fijians, Katz (1981) found that in these two diverse communities the education of healers is based on similar principles. First the education of healers in these communities is characterized by "a transformation of consciousness, a new experience of reality in which the boundaries of the self become more permeable to an intensified contact with a transpersonal or spiritual realm" (Katz, 1981, p. 71). This transformation implies an experience of transcendence which does not separate the
healer from the community but connects him/her with it and a transpersonal dimension. Education as transformation is oriented toward describing and understanding the interconnections between the healers, the community and the spiritual dimension. While the literature in the West has emphasized the study of altered states of consciousness separated from the community and a spiritual context, the model of education as transformation stresses the essential role of these experiences in community healing and the healer's education.

A very important element of this transformation of consciousness is the process which Katz (1981) calls "envisioning":

Envisioning is more than carrying out the intent of the first healing vision. It involves advice and instruction from a teacher, if there is one; subsequent visions; lessons learned from one's patients; and most of all the actual practice of healing and learning to live with that practice in one's community (p. 69).

Katz found that a Fijian healer begins his or her career by having a vision in which he or she is called by an ancestor to become a healer. In the first vision the healer makes the commitment to use his/her healing power for the benefit of the community, not for his/her own interest. These spiritual experiences connect the healer with "healing resources beyond the self" through a transformation of
consciousness. As Katz commented:

The first vision presents to the healer a new way of being and behaving, a new way of viewing him or herself as one now capable of directing mana toward healing (1981, p. 69).

The healer's transformations are characterized by a process of transitioning, "the moving into and out of states of consciousness rather than achieving a stage, regulating healing power rather than possessing a certain degree of power" (Katz and Kilner, in press, p. 41). Transitioning is distinguished by a profound sense of vulnerability because the healer's increasing power also implies the danger of misusing and losing it.

As one can see, the model of education as transformation recognizes the central role of the spiritual dimension in the life of the healer (Katz & Kilner, in press). From his ethnographic research, Katz found that neither !Kung nor Fijian healers make distinctions between the spiritual and secular elements of life. They seem to integrate the sacred aspects of their careers into their daily lives. Education as transformation does not reduce the spiritual dimension to a psychological manifestation but tries instead to understand this dimension in the life of the healer from his/her point of view. In this model the spiritual dimension is understood as a meaningful reality for the healer and essential to a
better understanding of the healing process.

A second principle of the model is that the healers are not removed from the context of daily living, remaining "ordinary members of the community" (Katz, 1981). A third principle emphasizes the service orientation of the healing work, the healer's commitment to share the healing power with the community. The essential goal in becoming a healer is to "serve as vehicles that channel healing to the community rather than to accumulate power for personal use" (Katz, 1981, p. 72). This principle stresses the healer's commitment to love everybody and to help those who come asking for help. A fourth principle stresses that healers experience an "inner development" which is not manifested or "rewarded by changes in external status" (Katz, 1981, p. 72).

The emphasis on the development of character rather than healing technology is a fifth principle. The learning of healing techniques must occur within the essential context of the healer's character and development. As Katz (1981) wrote: "It is qualities of heart - courage, commitment, belief, and intuitive understanding - that open the healers to healing potential and keep them in the healing work" (p. 72).

Finally, from the perspective of education as transformation the healer is understood as a "moral explorer
and a tester and definer of reality" for his/her community (Hahn and Katz, 1982). The healer is considered to be an ideal for the community - one who struggles most intensely to be what the community wishes for itself to be. As Katz writes:

Healers are faced with the task of defining reality in their interaction with cultural mysteries. Defining reality, they impart meaning. Imparting meaning, they make judgments about morality...The community sends healers on a journey to new territories of experience, to formulate new questions of reality, meaning, and morality, and then it looks to them for guidance in these areas (in press-a, p. 16).

Several studies have been made to establish the relevance of education as transformation to settings beyond the original field sites. Education as transformation has been shown to be an appropriate description of healer education generally among hunter-gathers (Hahn and Katz, 1985); the training of counselors at a private university (Simonis, 1985); the training of Native American healers (Hampton, 1985); and the education of community psychiatrists (Cheever, 1984). This thesis attempts to generate further data that can be used to test the validity of education as transformation as a paradigm for healer's development and education.
"Education as transformation" and education as desarrollo: A comparison of two models for educating healers

Experiences of transformation:

Beginning with the initial "opening of the brain", transformations of consciousness are a central dimension of the medium's desarrollo. Through the "opening of the brain" the mediums begin to experience a different kind of reality which involves the existence of a spirit world. They have to transcend feelings of fear, anxiety and confusion in order to be able to use the healing resources of the spirit world not only for their own benefit but for the well-being of the community. Similar to !Kung and Fijian healers, the spiritist medium connects with the spirit world for the purpose of "transcending the self to channel transpersonal resources to the community" (Katz, in press-a, p. 15).

Transformations of consciousness are involved in every experience of pasar a spirit or in any kind of contact with the spirit world. As the mediums begin to have control of the mediumistic trance, the experiences with the spirit can no longer be considered "altered states of consciousness" but "alternate states of consciousness" (Zinberg, 1977). The trance state is not experienced by the mediums as a deviation from the way consciousness should be, it is seen as a
different state of consciousness. Through the trance state, they experience themselves as existing beyond their ordinary level of existence.

Education as transformation, like education as desarrollo, emphasizes the role of transcendence in the development of healers. Transcendence has been considered by several authors as a fundamental need in the process of human development (Katz, 1970; Maslow, 1971; Menary, 1982; Murphy, 1975). Transcendence has been defined by Menary as

...the experience of moving beyond one's ordinary state of mind, beyond the ordinary structures of self and of reality... In the process of transcendence one's whole being is affected--one's perception, sensations, thinking, and emotions. The everyday experience of reality--the boundaries of the self and others--dissolve or are shattered and in this dissolution a new experience of reality emerges (1982, p. 5).

This definition of transcendence applies very well to the mediumistic trance state specifically and to the process of becoming a medium in general. At the spiritist meeting, mediums experience change in sensing, perceiving, thinking and feeling. Their sense of identity is altered as they come in contact with the spirit world, manifesting the identity of the spirits. Mediums reported that in the spiritist meeting they stop thinking about their "material" problems, concentrating just on the spiritual work. Others said that
they have been able to work as mediums even when they were feeling very sick because all the symptoms disappeared as they made contact with the spirit world. At the spiritist meeting mediums have to transcend themselves in order to find healing resources for the community.

The connectedness experienced by the healers with the spirit world and the community as described in education as transformation is also present in education as desarrollo. The spiritist mediums are in essence intermediaries between the spirit world and the community. Their most important role is to serve as bridges to the spirit world, so that community members can have the opportunity to experience this dimension. The spiritist healers call themselves "mediums" because they are channels of a healing power which does not reside in themselves. The spiritist meeting is the best example of the connectedness between mediums, the spirit world and community members.

Although a process of envisioning characterizes the education of spiritist mediums as well as education as transformation, there are differences in terms of how envisioning is manifested in the life of the spiritist medium. Most of the time the visions a medium may have at the beginning of his/her career do not involve a calling from the spirits. Usually the calling to become a medium is not a
direct and explicit one. It seems that by having several experiences with the spirit world, the mediums understand and feel that they have to become a medium. For several mediums in this study, becoming a healer was a decision they had to make in order to overcome an initial emotional crisis. They realized that if they did not make an effort to become mediums, they would continue suffering from the emotional crisis. They had to make a commitment with the spirit world to dedicate their lives to helping others. For another group of mediums the commitment has grown out from their own desire to adopt the healer's role and the need to use what has been given to them to help others.

Transitioning seems to be an element which characterized both kinds of healer's education. Education as *desarrollo* emphasizes transitioning rather than stages achieved. Most of the mediums do not conceive of *desarrollo* as a "progression through invariant ordered sequential stages" (Kohlberg and Mayer, 1978, p. 128). The concept of "development" as elaborated by cognitive-development theory does not seem to be the goal of "education as *desarrollo*. The changes produced by the process of *desarrollo* are not irreversible, sequential, hierarchical or unidirectional. Although mediums are classified into three major categories (in-development, partially-developed and fully-developed),
this classification is mostly applied to the development of facultades, not to the medium's desarrollo as a whole process. The majority of the mediums expressed the idea that one never becomes a fully-developed medium because one is always in desarrollo. Similar to education as transformation, desarrollo emphasizes process and experience rather than structures (Katz, in press-a). What is essential is not becoming a fully-developed medium, but to use this process for community healing.

Transitioning is also intrinsic to the medium's relationship with power. The facultad is neutral, it can be used to help as well as harm. At the beginning mediums make the commitment to use their power for doing good, but this commitment is tested throughout their entire careers. Several mediums mentioned that they have been asked by clients to perform witchcraft against others. They have been offered money in order to do harm to other people. Mediums have to confront these challenges and reevaluate their commitment to using the facultad only for healing.

One of the mediums in this study said that she was involved in the practice of witchcraft several years ago. However she understood that in doing this, she was surrounding herself with a group of ignorant spirits who were also affecting her. The medium realized that to be involved
in witchcraft is a very dangerous practice and stopped using it. Another medium told the story of a man who offered her a lot of money if she would destroy a marriage. At that time the medium was confronting severe economic problems and this petition was a great temptation. However she was able to resist the offer, telling the man to leave her house.

As the power of the medium increases, he or she is more vulnerable to using it for purposes other than healing. Commenting on this issue within the context of education as transformation Katz and Kilner (in press) wrote: "The most powerful Fijian healers are the most vulnerable to abusing that power - and thus losing the power and the straight path totally" (p. 42). Education as desarrollo emphasizes that the mediums have to use the facultad only for healing because if not, the mediums may lose it. To lose the facultad means that the spirit guides abandon the medium because they are dissatisfied with the way the medium is using his/her power. Without the protection of their spirit guides, mediums are under the influence of ignorant spirits which make them susceptible to suffering an obsesión.

Mediums may also lose their facultades if they refuse to help those who are in trouble. Education as desarrollo stresses that the purpose of having facultades is to serve others, not to accumulate power. Spirit guides will abandon
a medium if he/she is not using the **facultad** to help others. An example of this was presented in the life story of Generosa. She lost some of her **facultades** because she refused to work as a medium for several months. Mediums also indicated that one may lose the **facultades** if one's behavior is not morally appropriate. Education as **desarrollo** establishes a set of moral standards that a medium has to follow in order to increase his/her power.

The medium's relationship to power is a dynamic one because they do not see themselves as possessing the power but being channels of it. Similar to education as transformation, education as **desarrollo** is oriented toward the regulation, not the possession of the power (Katz and Kilner, in press). Mediums depend on the spirits in order to heal someone but at the same time the spirits depend on the medium to manifest their power. The healing power comes out of this reciprocal relationship between spirits and mediums. They need each other in order to accomplish the goal of healing. In the spiritist meeting, the healing power is generated by the effort of the spirit world, the mediums and the community.

Transitioning as a process permeates the medium's **desarrollo**. The medium's **cuadro espiritual** is in continuous change, some spirit guides leave the mediums while new ones
come to substitute them. In addition, mediums pointed out that sometimes the spirit guides do not come when they wish them to because the guides are busy doing other things. The control that a medium has over the spirit world is a very relative one. As one experienced medium declared: "Sometimes my guides make a fool of me because they do not come when I ask for their help". Another medium remarked: "There are times in which it is difficult for me to contact the spirit world".

Centrality of the spiritual dimension:

Be it in symbol, in mind, in memory, or in felt presence, we, the living, stay connected to them, the dead, and sound our connectedness in language and in heart. The dead do not leave us, they are too powerful, too influential, too meaningful to depart. They give us direction by institutionalizing our history and culture; they clarify our relationship to country and cause. They immortalize our sentiment and visions in poetry, music, and art. The dead come to inform us of tasks yet to be completed, or struggles to be continued, of purposes to be enjoined, of lessons they have learned. We need the dead to release us from obligations, to open new potential, to give us belongingness and strength to continue with our lives (Bertman, 1979, p. 151).

The spiritual dimension is also a major focus of education as desarrollo. For the mediums, the reality of a transpersonal or spiritual realm is based on lived experiences, not just on beliefs based upon faith. For them,
spirits are not abstract concepts or symbols for explaining reality. They can see the spirits, hear their voices and experience their reality in the mediumistic trance. mediums are in constant interaction with the spiritual dimension, which leads them to integrate this dimension into their ordinary lives. The spiritual dimension is not only relevant at the spiritist meeting or the consulta, it penetrates the medium's being-in-the-world. What Katz and Kilner (in press) wrote about the relationship of the Fijian healer with the spiritual dimension is also relevant for the spiritist medium:

The closeness of the spiritual dimension does not lead to a disrespect or diminution of its power. Instead, the closeness generates a familiarity, even an intimacy with that dimension, thus preventing it from being considered as separate from ordinary life (p. 38).

The familiarity and intimacy with the spirit world is manifested in the mediums' life-stories in many ways. Several mediums referred to their spirit guides as being "friends". Others thought that spirit guides were their relatives in past lives. Two mediums declared that the guides were an invisible family for them. Aurea described how when one of the spirits from her cuadro espiritual leaves her, she feels like part of her heart is missing.

Spirit guides and other kinds of spirits are not seen as
perfect beings, but as possessing human attributes. Thus, spirits have human emotions, feelings, and physical characteristics. Although at a theoretical level spirits are not considered to be male or female, at the practical level spirits are assigned a specific gender. Spirits are not conceived of by the mediums as "supernatural" or "superhuman" beings. Within the context of education as desarrollo, the concept of "human spirits" (Lambek, 1981) is more relevant to understanding the nature of the spiritual dimension. It is the human nature of the spirits that provides the basis for the medium's familiarity and closeness with the spiritual dimension.

The spirit world is constantly intervening in the medium's life. Sometimes these interventions may cause a degree of disequilibrium in their lives. For instance, Miriam was asked by the spirit world to have another child at a time when she and her husband were planning not to have more children. She experienced distress because first she was unsure about the authenticity of the communication and second, her husband did not want to have another child.

At other times the intervention of the spirits is a positive one. Mediums described how spirit guides help them by offering advice and support when they are confronting a difficult decision. Mediums feel empowered by the presence
of spirit guides. Most of the mediums refer to spirit guides as spiritual teachers who are inspiring and motivating them to develop their potential. Spirit guides are also considered to be a source of creative inspiration. Some mediums reported that the guides "transmit" poems, songs and messages to them (Juanita, Miriam, Luisa, Peruchín). Don Félix wrote a book which was dictated to him by a group of spirits. Diana, Luisa and Marcos also felt that they were helped by the spirits when they were taking school examinations.

However, not all the spirit guides are prepared to be of assistance to the mediums and some of them have to be educated by the mediums. These guides are usually testing the mediums' character by suggesting that they do things which are against their moral values. For instance, Luisa was asked by some of her guides to charge money for her services. She followed this recommendation for a week but then realized that to charge money for the healing work was not morally appropriate. Luisa decided to teach her guides that it is not right to charge money to people. Similarly Ernesto had to confront one of his guides who is a Catholic priest because the guide was constantly trying to convince him to become a priest. Mediums do not seem to follow the recommendations of spirit guides without evaluating their
consequences.

Mediums are also responsible for the education of other spirits who belong to their cuadro espiritual. After being helped by the mediums, these spirits may become guides for them. For instance, in Aurea's cuadro espiritual there was a spirit who at first wanted her to drink alcohol. However, Aurea began to talk with the spirit, convincing her (the spirit) that to drink alcohol was dangerous to her health. Through a long process of education, the spirit became a guide for Aurea. It is interesting to point out that Carl Jung addressed the issue of the education of "spirits" in his book Memories, Dreams and Reflections:

...the souls of the dead know only what they knew at the moment of death, and nothing beyond that. Hence their endeavor to penetrate into life in order to share in the knowledge of men. I frequently have a feeling that they are standing directly behind us, waiting to hear what answer we will give to them, and what answer to destiny. It seems to me as if they were dependent on the living for receiving answers to their questions, that is, on those who have survived them and exist in a world of change...(1961, p. 308).

The relationship of the mediums with the spirits is based on reciprocity and interdependency. The model of education as desarrollo emphasizes not only the desarrollo of the mediums, but also the desarrollo of the spirits. And the mediums' and spirits' desarrollo depends very heavily on the
desarrollo of the community in general. From the perspective of education as desarrollo, these three dimensions (community, spirits and mediums) have to be considered as a whole in order to understand the process of desarrollo and its implications for education.

The healer is not removed from the context of daily living:

The process of desarrollo does not remove the medium from the community's social life. However, becoming a medium may bring tensions with other family and community members who are opposed to the practice of Espiritismo. Six mediums (Miriam, Generosa, Diana, Aurea, Gela and Marcos) indicated that their spouses did not want them to become mediums. These mediums considered their spouses an obstacle to their desarrollo. Several others confronted problems with their parents when they were developing facultades. The medium's relationship with his/her daughters or sons may also be affected as a result of their involvement with Espiritismo. For instance, Mayo's daughter who is a Jehovah's Witness does not want him to work as a medium because according to her Espiritismo is the Devil's work.

The mediums' relationship with the non-spiritist community may also become a conflictive one. Some mediums complained of being considered "witches" by other community
members (Áurea, Félix, Luz, Aida, Ernesto, Mayo and Generosa). Marcos has perceived a degree of rejection from some co-workers when they were told he was a medium.

Propaganda against the work of mediums is done by leaders of the major established religions in Puerto Rico. The official newspaper of the Catholic Church, El Visitante, is constantly publishing articles which criticize and condemn the practice of Espiritismo. The Catholic Church gives "workshops" throughout the Island to "expose the fraudulence of Espiritismo and to educate people about the right doctrine of the Church" (Colón, 1982).

 mediums in contemporary Puerto Rico have to overcome all of these obstacles in order to continue offering their services to those community members who believe in their healing power. Similar to Fijian healers, mediums are struggling against the attempt of the Christian religions to eradicate their healing practices.

As mediums gain popularity within the community, they may confront the problem of having to spend a considerable amount of time seeing clients. Several mediums in this study felt the need of creating some boundaries in order to have time for themselves and their family. Mediums have to learn to harmonize their work as healers with other responsibilities.
Service orientation of the healing work:

Similar to education as transformation, education as desarrollo stresses the healer's commitment to sharing the healing power with the community. The medium's desarrollo is a community-oriented process. The education of the medium rather than emphasizing "ego-development" is oriented toward the community's desarrollo. Service to others is what gives meaning to the mediums' desarrollo.

Mediums expressed their service orientation in several ways. Miriam emphasized that she wants to be a "twenty-four hour medium". She said that she goes to sleep in peace when she has been able to help someone to be happy. For her, as well as other mediums, to be a medium is a style of life dedicated to helping the community. As another medium expressed:

I need the satisfaction of helping others. This is what makes me happy. There is not a thing that makes me suffer more that not being able to serve others.

An old medium, Don Félix, declared that he would continue helping people until the moment of his death and also after it. He made the following point: "I do not need my eyes, ears or my hands to work as a medium. What I need is my will and my desire to heal people".
Inner development not manifested by changes in external status:

The criteria developed by Hahn and Katz (1985) to evaluate the presence or absence of this principle include two areas: material rewards and prestige. First, in relation to material rewards, education as transformation emphasizes that: "Income received by the healer for his/her work, if any, is only supplementary: it does not make the healer more wealthy than other members of the community" (Hahn and Katz, 1985, p. 5). Second, in relation to the issue of the healer's prestige, education as transformation considers that: "Public recognition and prestige may accompany the healing but not result in status change" (Hahn and Katz, 1985, p. 5).

Before exploring these issues with the mediums who participated in this study, it is necessary to explore what has been found by other researchers. After studying spiritist centers in New York for several years, Garrison (1977b) concluded that "most spiritist mediums gain little financially from their practice and often have to support the rent of the storefront themselves" (pp. 96-97). Similarly, in his study of Espiritismo, Harwood (1977) wrote:

Although I do not have figures from mediums on their incomes from spiritist activities, my impression is that their gains are not
sufficient to live on, since the six head mediums of centros whom I knew well all either held a regular job or had some other source of income (a working spouse or Welfare) (pp. 71-72).

Generally, Espiritistas in Puerto Rico are suspicious of those mediums who charge for their services. The attitude held by many Espiritistas is that good mediums should not get remuneration from the spiritual work because the healing power is a gift which has to be shared freely with people.

In order to understand the issue of material rewards, we need to see it as a continuum where on one extreme there are the mediums who charge a fixed amount of money for their services and on the other extreme there are the mediums who believe that they should not accept any kind of material rewards, not even thanks from their clients. None of the participants in this study charge a fixed amount of money for their services but several of them accept donations from their clients. All of them gave a similar explanation for not wanting to receive any payment for the healing work: "What one receives as a gift has to be given as a gift". Mediums also noted that to accept any kind of payment may upset their spirit guides. The guides may decide to abandon the mediums, leaving them very vulnerable to the influence of ignorant spirits.

It has been my experience in Puerto Rico that mediums
who charge for their services are a minority in comparison to the ones who do not accept any payment. Those who decide to charge need to get permission from their guides before doing so. Just the idea that the guides have to approve the medium's request functions as a mechanism against the practice of charging money for the healing work.

Some mediums in this study were open to receiving donations for their healing work at consultas (Ernesto, Félix, Gela). Others who were involved in giving consultas said that they did not accept any kind of donations (Aida, Luz, Aida, Diana, Generosa, Luisa, Gela, Mayo). Mayo and Generosa told me that their guides have prohibited them from receiving even thanks from clients.

Education as desarrollo maintains that mediums should not enrich themselves from their healing work. To benefit from the healing work by becoming more wealthy than other members of the community is seen by most of the mediums as exploiting and taking advantage of the community.

Character more important than technology:

The model of education as transformation, as well as the education of the spiritist medium, emphasizes the development of the healer's character as a central aspect of the healing process. According to both models, the learning of healing
techniques must occur within the most important context of character development. Effective healers are not only those who learn techniques but are those who transform their character in the process of becoming healers. As one of the mediums declared: "Honesty is the only technique that I use in my work".

Good mediums represent models of ideal personal development for the community. As is true of Fijian healers (Katz, 1981), becoming a spiritist healer means developing characteristics such as respect, love, compassion, honesty and commitment to the healing work. The spiritist healer believes that the best way to transcend the influence of ignorant spirits is to strengthen the character and behave in a moral way. Ignorant spirits like to be with those who are morally weak or those who do not have enough spiritual strength.

Mediums emphasized that in order to work as a medium one has to "prepare" (preparar) one's spirit. The concept of "preparation" involves a process of developing moral qualities and self-awareness about weaknesses and defects. The major principle of the medium's preparation is that "one cannot give what one does not have". As one medium pointed out: "If you are not prepared you cannot be helpful to anyone". The mediums have to cultivate their character as a
way of increasing their healing power and effectiveness.

When I asked mediums about the most important elements of their education, most of them emphasized desarrolllo of their character, rather than desarrolllo de facultades. Desarrollo de facultades is the technological dimension of spiritist healing. It means to learn how to control the trance state, how to interrogate the spirits, and how to give despoyos, among other things. Although these elements are considered part of the medium's desarrolllo, mediums did not seem to be very concerned about them. At the initial stage of the study, I found myself stressing healing technology while the mediums were interested in discussing the importance of the "qualities of the heart". After doing several interviews I understood that the mediums were trying to make me aware that for them "character precedes and provides the context for healing technology" (Katz, in press, p. 12). Education as desarrolllo is oriented towards the desarrolllo of the mediums' character rather than towards the learning of healing techniques.

A good and effective medium is mostly defined by the presence of moral qualities and virtues. Increasing healing power or facultades is seen as the result of the medium's desarrolllo of character. Mediums believe that the good medium should cultivate the following qualities:
**humildad** (humbleness):
Not to believe that the healing power belongs to the medium. "One has to help others without trying to call attention to oneself." "A medium cannot believe that he is all knowledgeable."

**honestidad** (honesty):
"A medium should recognize that sometimes it is impossible to help someone." "If one does not see anything (an evidencia), one should not say anything."

**amor** (love):
"A person who is full of love is desarrollada (developed)." "Love for humanity is the basis of the medium's desarrollo."

**perdón** (forgiveness):
"One has to forgive those persons and spirits who have tried to cause harm to oneself."

**respeto** (respect) y **dignidad** (dignity):
"The respect toward others is not based on what they have but on what they are".

**tolerancia** (tolerance):
"One has to learn not to judge or criticize others."

These attributes are not only used to describe the good mediums, they also refer to characteristics that represent important values in the Puerto Rican culture (Saavedra de
Roca, 1963). Thus, education as desarrollo not only speaks about the ideal desarrollo of the Puerto Rican medium, it also considers the desarrollo of the Puerto Rican people in general.

The healer as a moral explorer:

The concept of the healer as a moral explorer also applies very well to the spiritist medium. One medium used the proverb "You can't preach about morals in your underwear" (No puedes predicar la moral en calzoncillo), referring to the idea that mediums should practice in their lives the moral values they are teaching to the community. The mediums recognize that they represent models of ideal behavior for the community.

The role of the mediums as "tester and definer of reality" for the community is a central one in education as desarrollo. It is in the process of helping community members to find meaning that the medium establishes the boundaries for the different experiences of reality (Hahn and Katz, 1985). In doing this, the medium becomes a "moral explorer" for the community.

Usually mediums see individual's problems as resulting from moral deviations. The emphasis is on helping the individual to behave in ways that do not attract ignorant
spirits. The belief is that ignorant spirits like to be with those who are not guided by moral principles. The encausado (client with a causa) has to become a moral example for the ignorant spirits who are harming him or her.

Mediums also have to become moral explorers not only for the community but also for themselves. As an Indigenous medium expressed: "Mediums have first to find themselves and then they may be able to find others." Mediums are continuously examining their lives, reflecting on the moral implications of their actions. One of them declared: "The biggest struggle is with myself, by working on my self I can be helpful to others."

In general this comparison between education as desarrollo and education as transformation reveals that these two models of healer's education share several important principles. Despite major socio-cultural differences between the Fijians, the !Kung and the Puerto Rican Espiritistas, all of them seem to educate their healers based on similar principles about the concept of healing and development. In the case of Puerto Rican Espiritismo, the data suggests that the model of education as transformation has cross-cultural validity. This thesis confirms other studies which have shown that "education as transformation" is a model with cross-cultural validity. Also, this thesis has helped to
put "flesh" on the model of education as transformation, bringing a rich data set to bear on the model. The details and dynamics of this model of healer education are made clearer by this thesis.
CONCLUSION

This study has explored several dimensions of the process of becoming a medium in Puerto Rico based on the life-stories of 16 mediums. In an attempt to provide a more complete picture of this process, I have chosen a global orientation rather than emphasizing any one specific dimension. A limitation of this approach is that one does not have the opportunity to discuss each dimension in detail. However due to our limited knowledge about the development of spiritist mediums, it was necessary to offer a global picture in order to concentrate on specific dimensions in future research.

In my view this research has contributed to the study of Espiritismo in several ways. By examining the education of mediums, this study has increased our understanding of a traditional model of healer education. The education of mediums is guided by the principle of desarrollo, a process of transformation which involves the medium in constant examination of his/her practice and life. When some of the mediums said they are always in desarrollo, they were referring to the idea that transformation was a continuous developmental challenge in their careers.

Education as desarrollo involves an initial period
called the "opening of the brain" in which the medium begins
to have contact with the spirit world. For some mediums the
opening of the brain was a distressful experience to the
point that they experienced an emotional crisis called an
obsesió n. Other mediums were able to overcome the initial
period without suffering any obsesió n. The opening of the
brain represents an experience of transformation which
prepares the mediums for the desarrollo de facultades. The
focus of desarrollo de facultades is on expanding the
healer's ordinary consciousness so that he/she can develop
abilities that reside in other states of consciousness. By
learning to control and regulate different states of
consciousness, a medium is able to develop the capacity to
communicate with a spiritual dimension in order to help the
community.

Through a comparison with the model of education as
transformation, I described the major principles that
characterize education as desarrollo. Education as
transformation and education as desarrollo emphasize
experiences of transformation, the role of the spiritual
dimension in the life of the healer, service orientation of
the healing work, inner development not manifested by changes
in external status, development of the healer's character,
and the role of the healer as a moral explorer.
Another contribution of this thesis is that it offers evidence for the validity of the model of "education as transformation" as a generic traditional model of education. Katz's model contains principles that are relevant to the education and development of spiritist mediums. The relevance of education as transformation for the training of professional helpers has been examined by Katz (1981, 1982b, in press-a), Simonis (1985) and Cheever (1984). They have argued that education as transformation may contribute to the improvement of the training and education of Western mental health professionals. Any kind of model of healer education needs to stress principles such as service orientation, development of character and experiences of transformation.

The education of Puerto Rican helpers has been criticized because it does not take in consideration the cultural reality of the Puerto Rican society (Rivera, 1984). The education of professional helpers in Puerto Rico is guided by Anglo educational models that do not respond to the specific needs of the Puerto Ricans (Albizu-Miranda, 1966). By being an example of education as transformation, the education of the spiritist medium may have implications for the education of professional helpers from Puerto Rico. If the model by which mediums are educated is responsible for their effectiveness, then the training of Puerto Rican
helpers will be improved by adopting principles of education as **desarrollo**.

An important lesson from this study is that in order to do research on Espiritismo in Puerto Rico, one has to specify the type of spiritist movement that one has investigated and the type of medium who has participated in the study. This kind of data is essential for evaluating the results of a study.

Although the presence of different spiritist movements has been recognized in the literature, it was never the focus of any study (Koss, 1977a; Seda-Bonilla, 1969b; Steward et al., 1956). My data suggests that instead of studying Puerto Rican Espiritismo as if it were a homogenous and uniform healing system, researchers have to focus on the varieties of spiritist movements and spiritist mediums.

Another contribution of this research is that its findings indicate the need to reconsider the idea that all or the majority of spiritist mediums experience an emotional crisis when they are in **desarrollo de facultades**. Several mediums in this study did not report having suffered any severe crisis while becoming a medium. For these participants becoming a medium seems to have been a natural process which was not undertaken because of a need to resolve an emotional problem. To say that "spirit mediumship
development is a process in which the ataque (the Puerto Rican Syndrome), as an involuntary regression...becomes restrained to serve as regression in the service of the ego" (Garrison, 1977a, p. 440) may apply to some mediums but not to a good number of them according to the findings of this study.

This study also suggests that the development of spiritist mediums cannot be separated from the socioeconomic context in which the mediums are moving. It was explained that socioeconomic changes may be affecting the development of new values and ideologies about the spiritist practice. The practice of Indigenous Espiritismo and Kardecian Espiritismo may be understood as promoting values linked to different social classes. While Indigenous Espiritismo is consonant with the values of the lower-class Puerto Rican, Kardecian Espiritismo has a middle-class ideology. The relationship between the spiritist movement and social class seems to be a dynamic one; both influencing and modifying each other. Commenting on the relation between healing systems and social class, Mullings (1984) wrote:

...Therapies are aligned to specific class interests and ideologies. This is not to say that therapies are limited to this or that class or stratum but that they express and perpetuate the interests of a given class or group. In fact, it is the extension of ideologies to people beyond the class whose
interests they express that may allow for control and manipulation of the social order. By mediating ideology – promoting certain elements and de-emphasizing others – therapies and therapists reinforce a given social order (p. 198).

Suggestions for Future Research

Several research questions have emerged from the data in this study. First, future research on spiritist mediums should focus on the experience of obsesión in order to achieve a deeper understanding of this emic category. Mediums who have suffered an obsesión can be compared to those who have not suffered one in order to identify possible differences in personality and degree of adjustment. Second, the administration of personality tests such as the Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test to the mediums may reveal important dimensions of their psychological dynamic. Data from these tests should be interpreted in a culturally sensitive way.

Third, the relation between creativity and mediumship development needs to be explored in a systematic way. This study suggests that in several cases the process of becoming a medium fosters the development of creativity. A careful examination of this theme may help us to increase our
understanding of the factors that stimulate creativity.

Fourth, several of the participants in this study began their development as mediums when they were children. A future study should examine the influence of spiritist beliefs on children's cognitive and emotional development. A longitudinal study with a sample of children who have been socialized as Espiritistas will have deep implications for the disciplines of psychology and education.

Fifth, the life of those mental health professionals who are also spiritist mediums is another possible area for future research. By studying these kinds of healers we may be able to understand the issues confronted by healers who are moving between two different healing systems. It will be important to know if they integrate both healing systems in their practices or keep them separated.

Finally, considering that this is only a first step in the understanding of the medium's life, it is essential to do more research in this area using a life-history approach. From this kind of research, more may be learned about the nature of healing and the influence of cultural elements in this process. By giving mediums the opportunity to speak for and about themselves, one may also be contributing to their empowerment.
Appendix A

Interview Schedule
(English Version)

1. Can you tell me the story of how you became a medium?
   a. When did you begin to have communication with the spirit world? What was your reaction to these first experiences? What was the reaction of your family?
   b. Describe the first experiences in your development as a medium.
   c. Describe your childhood and adolescence in relation to your involvement with Espiritismo. What were the most significant experiences in these two periods?

2. How did you develop facultades?
   a. What were the things that you had to learn in order to become a medium?
   b. What kind of facultades did you develop? What does it mean to develop facultades?
   c. Did you have any kind of problems while you were developing facultades? Did you experience an obsesión? How were you able to overcome these problems?
d. Did you go to a spiritist center to develop your facultades? Were there significant persons who helped you in this process? How did they help you?

3. Have you confronted any obstacle or limitation in your development as a medium? Have you had doubts about becoming a medium?

4. Describe some of the most significant moments in your development as a medium.

5. Have you ever needed the help of other mediums? Describe these experiences.

6. Have you identified your spirit guides? How did you know who your guides were? What kind of relationship do you have with your guides? Could you describe them to me?

7. Are you a conscious or unconscious medium? What do you consider the best way to work with the spirits? Why?

8. What kind of medium are you: a medium-in-development, a partially-developed medium or a fully-developed medium?

9. Describe if there have been any significant changes in your practice as a medium. Have you made changes in the way in which you help others?

10. What is the role of pasar the spirits in the process of developing facultades? Have you ever been able to pasar a spirit? Could you describe the first time? A recent time?
11. Describe your relationship to the community. How do people react when they discover that you are a medium? What do you think should be the role of the spiritist medium in the Puerto Rican community? Was your contact with the community affected after you became a healer? If yes, how was it affected?

12. Has your relationship with your family been affected by your development as a medium? How does your spouse see your work as a medium? How do your children see your work as a medium?

13. How has your marriage been influenced by your work as a medium?

14. What have been the major satisfactions and dissatisfactions with your work as a medium?

15. Can you describe an example of a successful case in which you were the main helper? Can you describe an example of a case in which you were not successful? Why were you not able to help the person? What do you do when you recognize that it is not possible to help a client?

16. Could you describe your participation in a typical spiritist meeting? Could you describe your participation in a recent spiritist meeting?

17. Describe the things that you usually do in a normal day.
18. If you have the opportunity to write a book about your life as a medium, what are the things that you will give more emphasis to?

19. How has the process of becoming a medium influenced your way of being?


21. Do you charge for your services as a medium? Do you accept donations from your clients? Why?

22. What are pruebas? What is the role of pruebas in your development as a medium? Can one become a medium without having pruebas? Do you consider yourself a medium of pruebas?

23. What are the causes of people's problems? How do you determine the kind of problem that is affecting a person? Do you use any special way or method in order to help others?

24. Do you use ritual objects such as agua de florida, candles and incense in your work as a medium? What are the functions of these ritual objects in the healing process? Could you help a person without using ritual objects?

25. How do you work a causa? Could a medium work his/her own causa? Could an ignorant spirit be educated without giving a manifestation through a medium? Is a client
26. What are the characteristics a good and effective medium should have?

27. What are the most important elements in your education as a medium? What do you consider the least important elements?

28. If I want to become a medium, what should I do?

29. Are you in charge of the education of other mediums? How do you educate them?

30. What are the characteristics the Presidente of a center should have?

31. What are the elements that should be emphasized in the education of the medium?

32. What is the role that the reading of spiritist books has in the education of the medium?

33. What do you think are the most important conditions for healing to occur?

34. Is everybody born with facultades? Why? Could the facultad be used to harm others? Is a medium born or made?

35. Why do some mediums suffer an obsesión when they are developing facultades? Does a medium have to suffer an obsesión in order to develop facultades?

36. Is Espiritismo a religion or a science? What is your
attitude toward other religions? What is your religion?

37. What are the areas of the development of mediums that you think should be explored by me?

38. How did you feel during the interview? What are the questions that were not clear to you? Did any of these questions make you feel uncomfortable?

Appendix A

Interview Schedule
(Spanish Version)

1. ¿Podría decirme la historia de cómo usted se convirtió en médium?
   a. ¿Cuándo comenzó usted a tener comunicación con el mundo espiritual?
   b. Describa sus primeras experiencias en su desarrollo como médium.
   c. Describa su niñez y adolescencia en relación a su envolvimiento con el Espiritismo.

2. ¿Cómo usted desarrolló facultades?
   a. ¿Qué cosas tuvo que aprender para llegar a ser un médium?
b. ¿Qué clases de facultades desarrolló? ¿Qué significa desarrollar facultades?

c. ¿Tuvo usted alguna clase de problemas mientras desarrollaba facultades? ¿Sufrió usted una obsesión? ¿Cómo usted sobrepasó esos problemas?

d. ¿Asistió usted a un centro espiritista para desarrollar sus facultades? ¿Habían allí personas significativas quienes le ayudaron en ese proceso? ¿Cómo le ayudaron?

3. ¿Ha confrontado algún obstáculo o limitación en su desarrollo como médium? ¿Ha tenido alguna duda acerca de su trabajo como médium?

4. Describa algunos de los momentos más significativos en su desarrollo como médium.

5. ¿Ha necesitado en algún momento la ayuda de otros médiums? Describa esas experiencias.

6. ¿Ha identificado sus guías espirituales? ¿Cómo supo usted quiénes eran sus guías? ¿Qué clase de relación usted tiene con sus guías?

7. ¿Es usted un médium consciente o inconsciente? ¿Cuál usted considera es la mejor manera de trabajar con los espíritus? ¿Por qué?

8. ¿Qué clase de médium es usted: un médium en desarrollo, un médium parcialmente desarrollado, o un
média completamente desarrollado?

9. Describa si han habido cambios significativos en su práctica como médium. ¿A hecho usted cambios en la manera en que ayuda a otros?

10. ¿Cuál es el rol de pasar los espíritus en el proceso de desarrollar facultades? ¿Ha podido usted alguna vez pasar un espíritu? ¿Puede describir la primera vez? ¿Una ocasión reciente?

11. Describa su relación con la comunidad. ¿Cómo la gente reacciona cuando descubre que usted es un(a) médium? ¿Cuál usted cree debe ser el rol del médium en la comunidad puertorriqueña? ¿Fue su contacto con la comunidad afectado luego de convertirse en médium? Si la respuesta es sí, ¿cómo fue afectado?

12. ¿Ha sido afectada la relación con su familia a causa de sus desarrollo como médium? ¿Cómo su esposo(a) ve su trabajo como médium? ¿Cómo sus niños ven su trabajo como médium?

13. ¿Cómo su matrimonio ha sido influenciado por su trabajo como médium?

14. ¿Cuáles has sido sus mayores satisfacciones e insatisfacciones con su trabajo como médium?

15. ¿Puede describir un caso exitoso en el cual usted fue el principal agente de ayuda? ¿Puede describir un caso en
el cual usted no tuvo éxito? ¿Por qué usted no pudo ayudar a la persona? ¿Qué usted hace cuando reconoce que no es posible ayudar al cliente?

16. ¿Puede describir su participación en una reunión espiritista típica? ¿Puede describir su participación en una reunión espiritista reciente?

17. Describa las cosas que usted usualmente hace en un día normal.

18. Si usted tuviese la oportunidad de escribir un libro acerca de su vida como médium, a qué cosas le darí más énfasis?

19. ¿Cómo el proceso de convertirse en médium ha influenciado su forma de ser?


21. ¿Cobra usted por sus servicios como médium? ¿Acepta usted donaciones de sus clientes? ¿Por qué?

22. ¿Qué son pruebas? ¿Cuál es el rol de las pruebas en su desarrollo como médium? ¿Puede uno llegar a ser médium sin tener pruebas? ¿Se considera a sí mismo(a) un(a) médium de pruebas?

23. ¿Cuáles son las causas de los problemas de las personas? ¿Cómo usted determina la clase de problema que está afectando a una persona? ¿Utiliza usted algún método o forma especial para ayudar a otros?
24. ¿Usa usted objetos de ritual tales como agua de florida, velas e incienso en su trabajo como médium? ¿Cuáles son las funciones de estos objetos de ritual en el proceso de sanación? ¿Podría usted ayudar a una persona sin usar objetos de ritual?

25. ¿Cómo usted trabaja una causa? ¿Podría un médium trabajar su propia causa? ¿Podría un espíritu ignorante ser educado sin dar una manifestación a través del médium? ¿Es el cliente responsable por lo que le está pasando a él o ella?

26. ¿Cuáles son las características que un médium bueno y efectivo debe tener?

27. ¿Cuáles son los elementos más importantes en su educación como médium? ¿Cuáles considera usted son los elementos menos importantes?

28. Si yo quisiera convertirme en médium, ¿qué debería hacer?

29. ¿Está usted a cargo de la educación de otros médiums? ¿Cómo usted los educa?

30. ¿Cuáles son las características que el Presidente(a) de un centro debe tener?

31. ¿Cuáles son los elementos que deben ser enfatizados en la educación del médium?

32. ¿Cuál es el rol que la lectura de libros espiritistas...
tiene en la educación del médium?

33. ¿Cuáles usted cree son las condiciones más importantes para que ocurra la sanación?

34. ¿Nace todo el mundo con facultades? ¿Por qué? ¿Puede la facultad ser usada para hacerle daño a otros? ¿Nace el médium, o se hace?

35. ¿Por qué algunos médiums sufren una obsesión cuando están desarrollando facultades? ¿Tiene un médium que sufrir una obsesión para desarrollar facultades?

36. ¿Es el Espiritismo una religión o una ciencia? ¿Cuál es su actitud hacia otras religiones? ¿Cuál es su religión?

37. ¿Cuáles son las áreas del desarrollo del médium que usted cree deben ser exploradas por mí?

38. ¿Cómo se sintió usted durante la entrevista? ¿Cuáles son las preguntas que no estuvieron claras para usted? ¿Alguna de estas preguntas le hicieron sentir incómodo(a)?
Appendix B

Glossary of spiritist concepts

agua de florida ("florida water"): an aromatic fragrance that is used in the giving of despojos.

agua magnetizada (magnetized water): water that is prepared by a medium to function as a medicine.

asistencias: good spirits

botánica: religious goods and herbs store specialized in selling paraphernalia for the practice of Espiritismo.

brujo (sorcerer): medium who practices black magic.

causa espiritual ("spiritual cause"): the negative influence of an ignorant spirit on the person's life which can produce a physical, psychological and/or spiritual problem. Condition that is caused by a spirit.

causa material (material cause): A physical condition requiring medical care.

centro (center): place where a spiritist meeting takes place.

comprobación (proof or verification): when the same spiritual message is received independently by two mediums, one verifies the other.
consulta ("consultation"): private meeting between a spiritist healer and his or her client in order to determine the source of the problem and the adequate treatment.

cuadro espiritual ("spiritual picture"): groups of spirits who are assigned to a person from his/her birth.

dar los auxilios: to give despojos to someone.

dar luz al espíritu (give light to the spirit): to educate an ignorant spirit.

desarrollar facultades (develop faculties): to develop the necessary abilities for becoming a medium.

despojo ("spiritual cleansing"): healing ritual in which a person moves his or her hands rapidly and strongly around the head. Its purpose is to eliminate the negative influence of a spirit.

encausado: refers to the person who has a causa.

espiritero: a medium who uses the healing power as a business to exploit people; one who is not an authentic Espiritista.

Espiritista (spiritist): follower of Espiritismo including mediums, spiritist clients and believers.

espíritu de causa ("spirit of cause"): the spirit that is responsible for the person's problem.

espíritu de luz (spirit of light): a spirit who has
achieved spiritual wisdom and is dedicated to helping the living.

espiritu desencarnado (disincarnated spirit): refers to the spirits of the dead.

espiritu encarnado (incarnated spirit): refers to the living.

evidencia: message received from the spirits.

facultad (faculty): the different kinds of capacities that a medium develops in order to communicate with the spirit world.

fluídos (fluids): spiritual energy involved in the causes of healing and illness.

guía (guide): spirit who protects a person.

La Colección: a book of spiritist prayers attributed to Kardec.

levantar la causa ("lift up the cause"): the activity of eliminating the negative influence of a spirit through a dialogue in which he/she is convinced not to continue doing harm.

limpieza espiritual (spiritual cleansing): ritual cleaning of the home.

Madama: black woman from the Caribbean area.

médium: person who has the capacity to communicate with spirits in several ways in order to help others.
médium en desarrollo (medium in development): medium who is beginning to develop faculties.

mediumnidad (mediumship): capacity for communicating with spirits.

mesa blanca (white table): it is the name that has been used to identify Indigenous Espiritismo.

mistificación (mystification): when a medium is using deception in his/her practice.

obsesión (obsession): spiritual illness produced when an ignorant spirit is taking control of the person's actions and thoughts.

pasar espíritus (to pass a spirit): the capacity to be "possessed" by a spirit.

pases ("passes"): healing ritual similar to a despojo but with the difference that pases are used to transmit good vibrations or influences to the client.

Presidente (President): the head medium of a spiritist center.

protecciones (protectors): synonym of spirit guides. Spirits who are in charge of helping a person.

prueba (test): series of experiences, trials or tribulations conducive to the development of maturity, affinity and harmony with the spirit world. A problem which has been chosen by a person before birth in order to pay a
spiritual debt of a past life.

resguardo: object that is used for protection against the influence of ignorant spirits.

reunión (meeting): spiritist meeting.

sesión (session): same as spiritist meeting.

sobo: hand massages around the stomach.

trabajar la causa (working the cause): the necessary steps for convincing an ignorant spirit not to cause more harm to a person.

trabajo (witchcraft): the belief that a person can manipulate an ignorant spirit and seduce it to do harm unto others.

videncia (vision): spiritual revelation.
## Appendix C

### Summary of Demographic Data

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Education</th>
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