This article considers the implications of the definitions and typologies of trance and shamanism for the development and testing of cross-cultural hypothesis through a review of definitions typologies, and the use of key terms and related concepts in anthropology. Authors vary widely in their definitions and applications of terms: some uses are based on reasoned criteria, others on traditional practice; some establish typologies, others prefer continua. Classifications range from narrow and highly specific to broad and inclusive coverage. Some restrict the usage to traditional societies, while others seek applications to Western phenomena, whether faith healers and mediums, or poets, such Walt Whitman. The concept of control, with a variety of meanings assigned to it, emerges as a significant variable in the comparative study of “trance” and “shamanism” as these terms are used by different authors in widely different manners.

Anthropology has long been plagued by semantic questions. Does it matter what a given phenomenon is called? What difference does it make whether or not the terms “trance” and “shamanism” are used in a broad sense or a narrow one? What is the effect of these terminological decision on research and findings on the one hand, and on the literature on the other? These particular terms have caused a good deal of ink to be spilled, without a resolution in sight as yet. I here argue that it does matter. These definitions and their usage are heuristic and have implications for the collection and classification of ethnographic data, for the formulation and testing of hypothesis, and ultimately for the development of models and theories. There are also implications for communication with readers, be they cultural insiders or outsiders.1

Anthropological terminology is influenced by the history of the discipline and by local traditions among researchers, both by schools of anthropology and by field sites. Current interests
in the discipline, even vogues or fads, also have their impact. Perhaps more importantly, there is the much-discussed distinction between an etic, supracultural vocabulary and an emic, cultural-specific one. And then there is what might be called the politics of terminology. Some words that were once used freely by anthropologists (and others) have been banned from the lexicon, such as idol and fetish in religion, or primitives and race in other contexts. The evolution of the language of anthropology, as part of the transformation of the world in the past 40 years, is itself a worthy object of study in this age of discourse analysis and semiology.

When some of the terminology of the comparative study of religion is also a part of the Western heritage, part of the history of European and American practices and beliefs—as is the case with such terms as “possession” and “witchcraft”—the complexities are compounded (Hallen & Sodipo 1986; Bourguignon & Pettay 1965). The same is true when terminology (i.e., “trance” and “dissociation”) is taken from other contexts, such as the psychiatric. Also, it matters whether one speaks of “visions” or “hallucinations”; that is, whether one uses what appears to be the language of the believer or that of the psychiatrist. Under these circumstances, what one wishes to be perceived as etic and descriptive, turns out to be (or to be read as) emic and interpretive, projecting onto the descriptions of behavior and the accounts of beliefs of others a load of implications and connotations derived from the scholar’s and the reader’s common history; connotations and implications that are all the more treacherous and slippery because they are not fully articulated or made explicit.

In such cases, there exists a flow of emic meanings that risks overtaking descriptions and analyses of other cultures. There is, however, also a backflow. It may be true that anthropologists have generally become more circumspect in their use of the terminology employed in their reports of other cultures. At the same time, scholars in other disciplines have been struck by ethnographic
descriptions to the extent of seeing shamanism and some of its prominent features in Western contexts. For example, in her analysis of the case of a seventeenth century Italian lesbian nun, the historian Judith Brown (1986) finds reason to compare the subject of her study with shamans, as described by Lewis (1971). G. B. Hutchinson (1985), on the other hand, writes of Walt Whitman's "literary shamanism," and draws on an extensive anthropological literature as well as Whitman's own interest in comparative religion. In each of these cases the central figure is characterized, in some respects, as a shaman. Yet, there is no concern for the larger social and cultural context, including beliefs and behavior of the audience for whom the shaman performs.

Horwatt (1988) speaks about the "shamanistic complex in the [contemporary] Pentecostal Church" in the United States. While aware of the differences between Pentecostal preachers and Siberian shamans, she judges these to be negligible.

In practical terms, the question for the anthropologist is this: Is there a satisfactory set of etic terms available for comparative research? It is all very well to use native concepts and terminology for ethnographic description and analysis; given the uniqueness of each culture, it is not surprising to find a lack of standardization in reporting. Nevertheless, comparative studies must somehow manage to deal with the issue of comparability, seeking to discover the constant and attempting to find some order among the mass of unique cases. If there are no appropriate etic terms, whose emic terms are to be used? Choosing them, we turn them, by slight of hand, into a set of supracultural categories. The problems is intensified when dealing with cultural contexts where multiple historical layers are in evidence, with various types of syncretism at work. Therefore, of particular importance for comparative research is the detailed ethnographic description of the phenomenon under scrutiny, not the label affixed to it by ethnographers whose texts furnish the materials for comparative research. Thus, when one reads of shamanism among the Tungus
(Shirokogoroff 1935), the Temang (Peters 1981), the Burmese (Spiro 1978), or the Koreans (Kendall 1985), one should not automatically assume the identity of the phenomena that are being explored. A consideration of some specific comparative studies and their usages will illustrate the complexities of the issues and the implications of the choices made.

Dissatisfied with terminological disputes, and initially staunchly etic in their approach, Peters and Price-Williams (1980) focus on the experiential dimension of shamanism, seeking to delineate the shaman's characteristic states from the perspective of cross-cultural psychiatry. To do so, they deal with altered states of consciousness (ASC)--which they refer to as "ecstasy" or "ecstatic states"--that are experienced during the "ceremonial performances." However, the principle defining element of shamanism is not trance, according to these authors, but the shaman's control of ecstasy. Control, or mastery, is inferred from such terms as "voluntary," "artificial," and "desired," which appear in the ethnographic and comparative literature. Control refers both to entry into ASC and its duration. In a note, Peters and Price-Williams add an important modifier: the "only defining attribute [of shamanistic ASC is] that the [ritual] specialist enter into a controlled ASC on behalf of his community" [emphasis added]. On the basis of the controlled-trance criterion distinctions made by other writers between shamans, spirit mediums, and other trance-ritual specialists are rejected as irrelevant, as are contrasts between explanations of trance involving magic flight, spirit possession or other emic conceptions, or between various methods of trance induction--whether or not, for example, drumming or drugs are utilized.

Peters and Price-Williams (1980: 399) write that "the common element is that the shaman, no matter how the trance is interpreted... or how produced... remains in control of his ecstasy." They go on to say that "what is important for a psychological and experiential analysis of ecstatic states is not the belief in spirit mastery, but mastery of the trance." It is not clear, nor is it
discussed, how persons under the influence of drugs can and do control the duration of their trance, although of course the induction of the trance is voluntary. Controlled trance is likened to a (Western) therapeutic technique termed “waking dream” that is induced hypnotically. Whether or not hypnosis may be said to be involved in ritual trance, however, is at least an open question (Price 1982).

Peters and Price-Williams present data on the experiential dimension of what is termed “shamanistic trance” for forty-two societies grouped into four major world areas. Because only controlled trance (as defined) is considered, trance or ecstatic states described as spontaneous, negative or unsolicited are excluded from the sample. Presumably, the criterion of trance “on behalf of his community” explains the exclusion of solicited (though perhaps not controlled) trances experienced in the North American vision quest.

As a result of these definitional elements, the study includes not only the classic shamanism of Yakuts, Tungus, and Eskimos, but also trance specialists found in the Himalayas, New Guinea, sub-Saharan Africa, and Haiti. In their conclusion, Peters and Price-Williams (1980: 407) state that of the “facets of possession trance” they examined, “the most universal” was control. However, having distinguished shamanistic trance from other types by the criterion of control, the universality of the control appears not to be a genuine research finding but a result of the initial selection process. The use of the term “possession trance” in this concluding statement is also puzzling, since belief has been eliminated as an element in the definition of the phenomenon. In other parts of the study, however, the authors do in fact look at the interpretation or belief associated with the trance state. Here they distinguish between three categories and their combinations: magic flight, spirit possession, and trance (without either of these explanations).

In the cases that they selected, the authors find control regardless of the type of explanation.
They also look for the presence or absence of memory, and for what they term “transic communication interplay.” Their concern with memory is related to the question of the pathology of the shaman, a topic that is much debated in the literature. The argument goes that if trance is dissociation, then dissociation is pathological where it is linked to amnesia. They find amnesia to be rare in their sample and hence imply they are not generally dealing with pathological dissociation in the case of shamanistic trance. As Winkleman notes (1986), the data they present (but do not analyze) show a strong association between the interpretation of trance as possession and the presence of amnesia. Transic communication interplay also occurs primarily with possession trance, according to the Peters and Price-Williams data: In 93 percent of the cases where there is either possession trance only or both possession trance and magic flight. On the other hand, it occurs in only 34 percent of the cases of magic flight. These statistics are not surprising when one considers the uses of the various trance types and the social and religious context in which they occur. Where there is amnesia, in particular, it is important for the spirit to communicate with others present, because by definition, the trancer’s own personality is in abeyance (Bourguignon 1974).

At this point a problem has arisen: The definition of shaman as ritual trance specialist in control of his/her trance is insufficient. First, there is the belief system that structures the trance—the behavior engaged in and the meanings assigned to it. Second, there is the immediate social, interactional context in which the trance performance occurs. For example, are there individual clients and an audience, or is there a religious community, a group of initiates at various levels whose participation in the ritual is necessary for the performance of the principal officiant? And necessarily, it follows that one must ask, What is the larger society in which such ritual activities are carried on?
Using their etic definition of shamanism as controlled trance (for public welfare), Peters and Price-Williams (1980) are able to show that such trance experiences exist regardless of the cultural explanations of the ASC. But once they turn to the matter of memory (or amnesia) regarding the trance experience, their data show that the emic definition of trance (i.e., the cognitive dimension of the experience) becomes a significant variable affecting the presence or absence of memory.

Similarly, transic communication interplay is related to emic definitions; that is, it is the consequence (in the context of the interpersonal behavior) of the cognitive dimension. If the trancer's personality is replaced by that of spirit entities in possession trance, and these entities do not communicate with the trancer (who has no memory of the event), their presence is made evident to witnesses at this visitation, and hence the transic communication interplay. In Haiti, for example, the visiting spirits present in the body of the trancer leave messages for him/her, in the phrase “tell my horse...” Peters and Price-Williams (1980: 407) have a different interpretation, and write that “the theatrical quality [of the communicative interplay between the trancer and audience] keeps the ecstasy, which by itself could lead to uncontrolled frenzy, within the cultural limits.” This suggests a direct contradiction to the argument that the distinguishing features of the shaman's trance is his/her control over the trance, because here the audience is said to exert control.

The implication of this study by Peters and Price-Williams is that the etic approaches can deal with problems formulated in etic terms; here answering the question, Is it true that trance specialists have a common experience of ASC, regardless of cultural features? They suggest that this common experience lies in the matter of control, and they find it in all of their cases. On the other hand, once one turns from what can be seen (i.e., the presence of ASC) to what one asks
people about (i.e., what is the local explanation for the ASC phenomenon), then one is dealing with emic features and these too have their consequences in the experiential as well as the cognitive realm.

Quite a different approach to trance and shamanism is utilized by Gilbert Rouget (1985) in his book *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*. Before addressing the central issue of his book, however, Rouget's attempts to clear up what he considers to be a massive terminological confusion surrounding such terms as "trance," "ecstasy," "possession," and "shamanism." To begin with, Rouget distinguishes trance from ecstasy, rejecting ASC altogether as too vague and all-encompassing a term. He considers ecstasy and trance to be polar opposites with regard to a whole series of attributes. For Rouget, ecstasy is characterized by immobility, silence, and solitude. It does not have a violent or sudden onset. It is induced by sensory deprivation and involves hallucinations (or visions) that are remembered after the event. There is no place for music in all of this. The North American vision quest is a good example of what Rouget would call ecstasy, as are the visions of the Christian mystics. For Rouget, trance is the very opposite: It is associated with movement, noise, and crowds; it has a violent onset (a "fit" or "crisis" in the traditional French terminology); it is induced by sensory overstimulation; it is not characterized by hallucinations; and it is followed by amnesia. In Rouget's (1985: 3) words: "Axiomatically, trance will be considered ... as a state of consciousness composed of two components, one psychophysiological, the other cultural. The universality of trance indicates that it corresponds to a psychophysiological disposition in human nature ... . The variability of its manifestations is the result of the variety of cultures by which it is conditioned."

In contrast to Peters and Price-Williams (1980), Rouget explicitly rejects an experiential
analysis. He states (1985: 3) that "[a] state of consciousness, trance consists, for the subject, in a particular experience of a series of events, that can only be described by those who have lived through them . . . . I shall not make use of such subjective experience in order to delimit the concept of trance. Instead, I shall define it by its external manifestations, the context in which they can be observed, and the representations of which they are the object." Clearly, the approaches and the aims of the two studies are in sharp contrast to each other.

Having distinguished between ecstasy and trance, Rouget goes on to differentiate between two forms of trance, which he term "shamanism" and "possession." For Rouget, it is of particular importance that they differ not only in their belief systems, but also in their relation to music. Shamanism is defined primarily in the terms presented by Eliade (1964), with stress on magic flight, a concept also used by Peters and Price-Williams (1980), as mentioned earlier. While the shaman engages in a spirit journey to the world of the spirits, in possession it is the spirits who visit the world of humans. However, Rouget appears to be inconsistent here because he has defined trance—in contrast to ecstasy—as characterized by amnesia and the absence of hallucinations. However, in a magic flight, hallucination (or visions) are the typical or normative experience of the shaman, whereas amnesia is linked to spirit possession. With regards to hallucinations and memory, the shaman resembles the ecstatic more than the possession trancer.

As far as music is concerned, Rouget finds a clear difference between his two types of trance: the shaman makes and controls his/her music, whereas the possession trancer is controlled by others by means of music. In shamanism, music is said to be a technique of the body. This is also true of another form of trance that is positioned somewhere between shamanism and possession trance, and referred to as "communal" or "conducted" trance, as it appears in some enthusiastic Christian churches and in the Islamic practice of dhikr. In possession, on the other
hand, the group “provides the entranced person with a mirror in which he can read the image of his borrowed identity” through music. And again more emphatically, according to Rouget (1985: 325), “possession cannot function without being theater.” This statement may be seen as consistent with the claim by Peters and Price-Williams (1980) that communicative interplay between trancer and audience keeps the trance “within cultural limits.” However, for Rouget, group control is exercised on the possession trancer by means of the music; for Peters and Price-Williams it is the shaman that is in the majority of the cases in their sample the magic flight trancer—who is controlled by the audience by means of this interplay. For Rouget, in possession cults, trance has both an individual (psychophysiological) dimension and a collective one (i.e., cultural dimensions, which includes the concept of trance itself). In possesson, music is a form of communication, in contrast to the “corporeal techniques” that is in shamanistic and communal trance (i.e., a form of self-manipulation).

Rouget treated the !Kung Bushman, as described by Lee (1968) and Marshall (1969), as a test case. Following Marshall, Rouget finds that the men sing before going into trance and that although singing and handclapping during the trance is provided by the women, who do not trance, the men’s footstomping and the tinkling of jangles on their legs shows that the men provide much of their own trance music. In this regard, the !Kung are intermediate between Siberian shamans who perform their own music, and the possession trancers who rely on musicians. Thus, although Rouget establishes a typology, in which the role of music is the key element, he recognizes intermediary types. Also, his interest is not limited to the performance of the ritual specialist. He deals with group activities in possession cults and communal trance, and with negative possession trance in the context of exorcism.

As previously mentioned, Peters and Price-Williams (1980) focus on the experiential
aspect of trance, and since they find control to be everpresent among trance specialists, they choose to label all such specialists "shamans." Rouget (1985), on the other hand, establishes a typology based largely on the relation between music and trance. On the basis of this relationship, he starts by eliminating "silent" trance (ecstasy) from consideration, and sees shamanism and possession as polar opposites.

In spite of the radical differences in their approaches, control is ultimately a central issue in trance and its various forms for Rouget as well as for Peters and Price-Williams. The latter stresses the control of trance by the trance specialist, implicitly contrasting this with the lack of control of those who experience negative or spontaneous trance, a type which is excluded from consideration in their study. Rouget, who views the shaman as manipulating him/herself by means of music that s/he performs, also sees the shaman as being in control of the trance: inducing trance, engaging in magic flight, and telling the audience about it. The situation is quite different for the possession trancer. Here Rouget does not distinguish, as Peters and Price-Williams do, between the specialist (cult leader, priest, or priestess) and other possession trancers participating in the ritual, no matter what their role, whether as initiates or as novices or patients, who are sometimes one and the same. Control of the possession trance, for Rouget, is the work of the musicians. Specific musical techniques are discussed by Rouget, as well as in other studies involving music and dance (e.g., DeMartino 1966 for tarantism). Moreover, Rouget does not select only one stage in the development of the trance specialist for his analysis. The issue of control or mastery of the trance is seen most clearly in the fully developed shaman, as in Peter's Tamang case (1981). Only at the final stage of the shaman's spiritual growth are the spirits controlled: prior to this it is the spirits who are in control. In Afro-American possession trance religions, as in Haitian vodou, initiates also go through several stages or rites of passage, and in the course of their relation with
their spirits they grow in esoteric knowledge. They may gain so much control over their spirits that, in fact, they rarely become possessed. This may be explained, as above, in strictly emic terms. On the other hand, it may also be seen in etic terms, as involving the development of psychological resistance to the compelling cues of the ritual process, in dance and music as well as in other of its aspects. It may also involve the practical need to remain in charge of the goings-on, keeping control of the situation and its participants. It is such persons who are most often suspected by outsiders of engaging in fakery or imitations of trance.

The issue of control involves a larger field: Does the trancer control his/her own psychological state—whether all or some of it? If not, who controls it? If control is in someone else’s hands, how and to what extent is it exercised? How is trust established between the trancer and those exercising control, be it the spirits (in emic terms) or human agents (in etic terms)? The significance of trust is nicely illustrated in certain photographs where one sees people falling in response to drums and other cues into the supporting arms of persons standing behind them—whether in Haitian vodou, in Brazilian Umbanda, or in an Ohio Pentecostal church. On the other hand, where exorcism is involved, in negative trance and negative possession, the mastery of the exorcist over the patient and the possessing spirit must be established, as the mastery of the spirit over the patient has, emically, been established earlier.

The subject of control, then, is one of considerable importance in relation to ASC and the religious institutions utilizing such states. However, the concept means different things to different people. As previously mentioned, for Peters and Price-Williams (1980) the question is who controls the trance. For Rouget (1985) the question is who controls the trancer. A third approach to shamanism and the issue of control is found in the work of I.M. Lewis (1981, 1971). Lewis sees the religious phenomena involved as fluid, and opposes any classification that would distinguish
between a shaman and a spirit medium (1981: 32): “A shaman is an inspired prophet and healer, a charismatic religious figure, with power to control the spirits, usually incarnating them. If the spirit speaks through him, he is also likely to have the capacity to engage in mystical flight and other ‘out of body’ experiences.” Given this definition, Lewis considers Western mediums to be shamans (1981: 33): “... they have spirit familiars at their command. It is with the aid of these ‘spirit guides’ that in seance contexts they diagnose and resolve problems of their clients. They are thus ‘masters of spirits’ and so shamans.”

Lewis fears excessive terminological rigidity (1981: 33) and the “confusion and distortion which exhaustive reification promotes.” He sees interest (by British anthropologists) in correct labels and in classification as due to the emphasis on comparative analysis, a concern with society rather than culture, and the use of etic categories. He is, in fact, quite scornful of systematic comparative studies, which leads him to a rejection of all approaches that allow for a formal testing of hypotheses.

Classification of phenomena is, of course, a necessary first step for any scientific enterprise, if one wishes to move beyond the description of individual cases. Yet the establishment of categories and the development of a consensus is notoriously difficult, as the review of terminology undertaken here demonstrates.

Lewis does, in fact, set up a classification. However, his principal interest is not in trance but in possession, which he writes (1971: 204) “is essentially a philosophy of power.” His classification is one of religions: “main morality possession religions’ and “amoral peripheral possession cults.” In the latter case, downtrodden people (particularly women) seek to exercise some control over those who oppress them by means of their spirits, either actual or feigned. In the former, the holders of power who dominate the religious institutions are men. At times,
mastery by means of spirits is exercised over nature in an attempt to supplement inadequate technological means. Power of individuals or groups may be marginally enlarged with the aid of spirit possession, or the empowerment may be a fantasy of mastery, providing moral support, which may be psychologically significant. Lewis’ categorization of the two types of possession religions has been challenged on ethnographic grounds by a number of scholars. Kendall (1985), for example, argues that in Korea, women’s shamanism is not peripheral but rather a necessary complement to men’s ritual tasks.

The psychological dimensions of trance and variations in trance experience and performance are, at best, of secondary importance to Lewis (1971: 32) who considered it necessary to note that women are not the only ones to become possessed in rigid, stratified society, “so that it [possession] cannot thus be explained plausibly in terms of any innate tendency to hysteria on the part of women.”

It should be noted that the Lewis does not engage in a formal typology of societies. Yet, as described, the two kinds of religions correspond to two different types of power structures and different levels of technological complexity.

If one looks not to comparative research of the type reviewed here but to individual field studies by anthropologists, it is clear that however different the approaches, when anthropologists are interested in ASC they study the occurrence and nature of these states in particular cultural contexts, considering ASC in ritual behavior and religious belief. Starting from that perspective, we reviewed the literature on 448 societies in all parts of the world (Bourguignon & Evascu 1977; Bourguignon 1974, 1968). A complex typology was developed, but only its basic elements were utilized for statistical analysis. Essentially, the term “trance” was used to refer to ASC at the most general level, and then asked whether or not in a given society such alterations of
consciousness and awareness were explained as being due to possession by spirits, and whether or not the behavior was structured by such a belief. If so, we referred to this as "possession trance" (PT). If not, "trance" (T) was used as a residual category. This covers what Rouget (1985) calls ecstasy as well as shamanistic trance. We have also referred to it as visionary trance. It is far more likely to be induced by sensory deprivation or drugs than is PT, and tends to be a male activity, while PT is more likely to be induced in a context of music, dance, and group activity, as well as to be primarily an activity of women.

In some societies both exist, and these we labeled T/TP societies. Among the Temang studied by Peters (1981) or Shirokogoroff's (1935) famous Tungus, both activities are engaged in by a single ritual specialist. These, too, are T/TP societies. It should be noted that we categorized societies, and referred to groupings as "trance types." With some slight variations, these are in fact utilized by both Peters and Price-Williams (1980) and Winkleman (1986), who replicated part of our research.

Having put some order into our data, an understanding of the observed variations was sought in the characteristics of the societies under study. One clear result, confirmed by Winkleman, was that these are societies at different levels of complexity: PT societies being more complex than T societies. The institutionalization of ASC in a religious context is virtually universal: We found it in 90 percent of our sample societies. For the rest, we were left to wonder whether or not additional reports would have reduced the number of cases for which there was a lack of evidence of ASC.

By contrast, the relation to spirits--particularly as expressed in trance behavior--is highly variable and cannot be ascribed to any universal of human nature. Dealings with spirits are a form of interpersonal relations, patterned we must assume on some type of human interactions. In
possession trance, the ideology is one of submission to the spirits and the possession trancer is said to be "mounted" or "ridden by the spirits": The individual's personality is in abeyance, replaced by that of the spirit. In the case of trance, the trancer undertakes a voyage, engages in struggle with the spirits, and often forces them to relinquish whatever it is the trancer wants. The dominant mode is one of assertion, I (Bourguignon 1974: 21) have suggested, "the behavior and ideology must be compatible not only with the social structure... and [their] social functions... but also with the personalities and the values of the actors... [H]allucination trance through the relationship with spirits... satisfies dependency needs that cannot be satisfied... in human interactions... [T]he compliant and dependent person who seeks or experiences possession trance, through the pretense of acting as a passive vehicle for powerful spirits is able to satisfy power strivings."

The visionary trancer, as Peters and Price-Williams (1980) claim, is in control both of the trance (or some of it) and also in control of the spirits, as the literature on shamanism shows (e.g., Eliade 1964; Shirokogoroff 1935). The possession trancer gains control and some power through the strategy of passivity and submission.

Winkleman (1986: 198) finds evidence for a psychophysiological basis for possession trance in temporal lobe disinhibition. He concludes that both the psychological variables and "social variables relating to political integration have a strong predictive value explaining the incidence of possession trance states," and argues that "psychophysiological factors are central to the basis that motivates the development of the belief in possession." Certain types of societies then favor the development of such an epileptoic symptomatology; or more precisely, they cultivate it for the social and political functions they are able to fulfill.
Conclusion

Given our reading of these studies, I suggest it is misleading to apply the term “shamanism” either to all ritual trance specialists or to use the trance criteria exclusively to characterize a shaman. The social and cultural context of the trance, the social and cultural role of the trancer, and importantly, the societal context in which s/he operates needs to be considered for a full discussion of shamanism. Control and power are important features in this context.

What have we discovered by means of this brief survey? First, and most obviously, the answers we find depend to a large extent on the questions we ask, and on the way in which we ask them. The labeling and classification of the raw data is a significant step in this process. We may foreclose research options by the very manner in which we initiate the process. For the field anthropologist, turning to comparative research in this manner is very likely not only due to academic training, but largely to experience in the field. It is not without relevance it seems to me that Lewis (1969) worked among the Somali where he found an open sex war, that Peters (1981) became an apprentice shaman among the Tamang, and that my field research took place in the context of Haitian vodou.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of word usage in another context, namely that of Margaret Mead in Samoa, see Leacock (1988).

2. The criticism heaped on Ruth Benedict (1934) for her use of psychiatric terminology in Patterns of Culture is a case in point.

3. See, for example, the exchange between R.K. Dentan and his critics on the “bloodthirsty”
Semai, where much of the argument appears to hinge on word choice in translation (Brown 1988; Dentan 1988a, b, c; Nanda 1988; Paul 1988; Roberchek & Dentan 1987).

4. This is in contrast to the influential classification of ASC by Ludwig (1968), which was based on the induction of the states.

5. The term “altered states of consciousness” came into general use only in the mid-1960's, by which time our initial terminology had been established.

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