WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE: FANTASY AND CULTURE CHANGE

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Introduction*

George and Louise Spindler have been studying the differences between men and women for over forty years. They were pioneers in research on "gender" long before that term moved from grammar to the social sciences. Clearly, such studies did not begin in the 1970s with the modern version of the women's movement in the United States. It has a long and respectable ancestry, in which the Spindlers hold some priorities. Their important paper "Male and Female Adaptations to Culture Change: Menomini" (L. & G. Spindler, 1958) was the first publication extensively demonstrating sex differences in response to modernization on the basis of quantitative data. It was also the first anthropological study to present and discuss gender differences in the Rorschach in some detail. Their sample was large enough and sufficiently balanced to permit analysis of the data by sex as well as by other criteria. Their field observations had led them to formulate hypotheses concerning the relationship between sex and acculturation, observations that were undoubtedly facilitated by their own division of labor in the field, as well as by the earlier findings of other investigators.

The Spindlers (1990, 188) note ruefully that "despite the early appearance of this analysis it had relatively little influence on the development of anthropological thinking about sex differences, probably because it used Rorschach data." But they also comment on how much investigators’ language has changed between the 1950s and the present, so much that, both for their own work and that of such predecessors in American Indian studies as Mead (1932) and Hallowell (1942) "translations are required" (S.

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and L. Spindler 1990, 188). Indeed, this is only one dramatic example of a broader problem, so that we may ask: do the changes in the rhetoric of the social sciences, and of anthropology in particular, make the findings of earlier workers unintelligible and inaccessible to current generations of students, so that much of the same ground has to be gone over and over again, albeit with different terminologies, emphases and styles of address? Related to this problem, as George Spindler has pointed out (1978, 119) is that of changes in the interpretations of the data themselves, as part of the "tenor of the times." This includes changes in the context of the lives of the people studied, the "real" world in which they, and we, live.

With regard to these transformations between 1958 and the present there is also another matter to be taken into account in understanding why the Spindlers' important paper was less influential than it should have been: the very fact of reliance on quantitative data (not merely the use of the Rorschach test) perhaps inhibited its acceptance in a discipline which was heavily dominated by qualitative and holistic studies. A glance at the volume edited by R. Hunt (1967) in which the paper was reprinted, shows it to be the only one of the eighteen items included to contain statistical tables and graphs. Statistics were something sociologists and psychologists did. And then, too, perhaps the findings, as well as the methods, did not quite fit the "tenor of the times"!

A historic review of the Spindlers' work, separate and joint, shows how they have built on each other's as well as their common efforts in their continuing methodological innovations and their findings. George (1955) focussed on the adaptation of men in his first study of the Menomini, while Louise (1956, 1962) addressed the situation of women. In her analysis she
made use of concepts developed by Parsons and Bales (1955) distinguishing between "instrumental" and "expressive" roles. Concluding an early study with a question on which their recent joint work sheds significant light, she asked: "Are the manipulatory 'instrumental' roles taken by males in most cultures and the almost universal 'expressive' roles taken by females ... important variables in female conservatism?" (L. Spindler 1962, 99). This relationship between early questions, recent data and at least partial answers points to an impressive continuity in the work of these pioneers, despite changes in language, rhetoric, interpretations, and the "tenor of the times."

The instrumental versus expressive distinction is, in some respects, a conceptual and terminological forerunner of the "public" versus "domestic" (or "private") distinction that played such an important role in the 1970s in the anthropology of women, as well as more generally, in women's studies. This distinction has been one of the foundations for claims for a "universal male dominance" and a universal "sexual asymmetry," since, it was argued, the domestic/private domain was that of women while the public domain was that of men. And it was in the public arena, men's field of action, where the important decisions were made (Rosaldo 1974, 1980, Quinn 1977, Bourguignon 1980). Many of the studies of the period put forward the concept of a unitary women's "status" and looked for it, or its absence, in the public domain. It was the pioneering cross-cultural study of Whyte (1978) that demonstrated the importance of distinguishing among a series of variables that make up the status of women, variables that are often independent of each other. In so doing it effectively destroyed ("deconstructed"?) the concept of a unitary women's status. The public versus domestic/private has largely disappeared as a theme of discussion in the anthropology of women as well as in women's
studies. Anthropologists seem to have realized that, as with other global concepts, such as "national character" or "modal personality", such claims were simplistic and over-generalized. Or perhaps it is that the "tenor of the times" has changed. It may also well be that the binary distinctions of domains was largely based on projections of a Western, particularly a Mediterranean, model on the rest of humanity. And this without serious research seeking to discover just what model of the "public" and the "domestic" (or "private") contemporary Westerners, and specifically Americans, actually hold.²

The diversity of the cultures the Spindlers have studied, several over lengthy periods of time, has allowed for significant comparisons in the manner of the method of controlled comparison advocated by F. Eggen (1954, L. Spindler 1978). Their data allow for cross-temporal as well as cross-cultural comparisons, showing clearly how attitudes and preferences are functions of situations as well as personality dimensions.

One of their most striking findings, appearing in one form or another over and over again, has been the consistent, statistically significant difference between men and women with regard to culture change, a finding that is based on several different quantitative techniques and instruments. In 1962 Louise could write of Menomini women that "at all acculturative levels [they] retain more values and beliefs of Menomini culture than do the males" (1962, 98). That is, the women were found to be more conservative. But they were also having an easier time of it than the men, for she speaks of their "lack of anxiety, flexibility and acculturative continuity." This relative lack of stress as well as the greater conservatism of women appeared to be due to certain features of the traditional culture and also to certain
characteristics of the impinging American culture, for we read that "Menomini women have ... played spectator roles in the male-oriented Menomini society ... there were no cultural emphases on prescriptions for female role-taking behaviors." This was in contrast to the highly rigid prescriptions for both religious and economic roles for men. On the other hand, as a wife and mother in Western-oriented society, the Menomini woman also played a "spectator role" without pressing demands for change on her. The men, on the other hand, "must conform and please [white] superiors in order to support their families."

Louise also notes that, "whereas the women may be the first to lose their group identity with the native-oriented Menomini social group, they are the last to give up basic, covert, Menomini values" (L. Spindler 1962, 99).

Women, then, are permitted to remain more traditional because they are more isolated from the Western world than men, who have more intensive economic interactions with it and dependency on it. It is this which brings us to the question of women's "expressive" roles in contrast to men's "instrumental" roles, mentioned above.

The findings of gender differences in response to acculturation (a word that seems to have largely dropped out of the anthropological vocabulary) and culture change has held through all phases of the Spindlers' work with the Menomini, and also their studies of the Cree of Quebec, the Bloods of Alberta, and the Germans of the Remstal. The findings of greater conservatism and less stress among women fitted in well with a number of early studies, which they themselves cite: "Others working with American Indians" they write (G. & L. Spindler 1990, 187), "had noted that females tended to be both more conservative [exhibiting more cultural continuity] and ... made better adjustments to white cultural expectations."³
While the Menomini women were more conservative than the men they were also more flexible, less anxious and more open to change. The distinction here is between a situation in the present (the maintenance of traditional values and practices) and a potential for the future (openness to change, lack of anxiety, flexibility).

In the 1960s the Spindlers developed a new technique, the Instrumental Activities Inventory (IAI), a picture test which allows respondents to choose activities they would prefer to engage in, to establish contrasts between what is preferred and what rejected. In their own words, "the IAI model makes possible some consistent attention to children's perceptions of the world into which they are enculturating, the culture they are acquiring, and the concepts held by their teachers and parents of these same relationships" (G. Spindler and L. Spindler 1982, 114). The IAI was used in three groups, the Blood of Alberta, the Cree of Quebec and the Germans of the Remstal. In all three groups, including the Germans in 1968, women and girls consistently chose activities external to their communities: more urban, more modern than their present situation. In the case of the Germans, the Spindlers distinguish between a "pragmatic cluster" of choices (modern, urbanized) and an "ideal-romantic cluster," representing the traditional way of life of the wine-growing villages in the Remstal. When they conducted their restudy in 1977, after a substantial political and economic reorganization and with it, appropriate school reform, they and the local authorities had their great surprise. Now that the village life was largely a thing of the past, the school girls and the women tested swung in the opposite direction, preferring the ideal-romantic cluster by a substantial majority, in contrast to the males.
For the 1977 girls, they write, "the traditional instrumentalities, particularly as they relate to domesticity and village level life styles, are more desirable than modern instrumentalities" (G. & L. Spindler 1990, 194). Consistent with the literature, they note that modernization and development have often been detrimental to women, a finding quite in contrast to earlier studies of acculturation that showed, as mentioned above, change to have been less difficult and threatening to women than to men. (There is evidence to suggest that "development" is different from "acculturation" in many respects and has different consequences for individuals.) Following their informants, the Spindlers see in the reversal of the girls (and women's) choices in 1977 a fear of isolation which is a "correct perception of social and economic change, a loss of status, influence, personal security and complementary sex roles" (G. & L. Spindler 1990, 112). These, then, are changes in which women had a great deal more to lose than men. In other words, as long as an imaginary modern life could be contrasted with the reality of village life domestic drudgery, it was attractive. When reality struck, the losses could be evaluated realistically, modern life was found wanting and then the old way of life took on a brighter coloration. Reevaluation, memory and nostalgia came into play. The Spindlers (1989, 133) "hypothesize that the ideal-romantic cluster, the image of the traditional wine-growing village is deep in [their] fantasy life ... and that it constitutes an enduring aspect of the collective self of the people ..." In 1968, much of what that ideal-romantic cluster embodies was still a functioning reality; it was also a world of hard work for the women who envisaged (fantasied) an easier life in a modern setting. The women among the Blood and the Cree similarly preferred the urbanized pragmatic choices. They, too, fantasied life away from the daily
reality of hard work. That is, while the ideal-romantic cluster, the image of traditional village life, is a significant fantasy for urban people, a fantasy of an idealized past, the image of urban life can act as a fantasy of an ideal future for those who are not, or only marginally involved in it.

Experience, Fantasy and Action

The Spindlers seek explanations for what at first seemed paradoxical findings: In 1968 the Remstal girls and women chose the pragmatic mode, showing a preference for urbanization; in 1977, they preferred the "traditional instrumentalities" (G. & L. Spindler 1990, 194), and they did so to a much greater extent than the boys and adult men. There is still a difference between males and females, but for the females this represents a real reversal of direction. The Spindlers, in attempting to understand their findings, speak of "cultural translations of biological differences" but offer only tentative interpretations, ending with questions: they note the consistent fear of isolation among women, and "the consistent tendency of females to want something different from what they have" (G. & L. Spindler 1990, 198). They also note a "swing back" when change has "gone far enough" and has continued "long enough." But what is to be understood by "far enough" and "long enough" remain questions for research. If it is true that women universally fulfill expressive caretaker roles, are these roles inherently satisfying, and is their loss, partial or complete, frustrating and anxiety producing? Is it that women always want something different because in all social systems women have lower prestige than men? Or does that refer primarily to the "public domain" or some parts of it?
The IAI allows people to make choices, present preferences. Note that preferences for activities with which they have little realistic experience are, essentially, fantasies, though not elaborated in the context of the administration of the instrument. The sources of the fantasies may be entirely personal, but more likely they derive from readily available bodies of information, which may range from traditional folklore to contemporary mass media. In her 1953-54 study of change among Africans in the Copper Belt (then Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia), Hortense Powdermaker used an essay-writing technique among school-attending teenagers, seeking to identify, among other things, their "specific ambitions and their fantasies of what they would like to be" (Powdermaker 1966, 267). She found that "the girls were more tradition oriented than the boys and were more hostile to Europeans, and a considerable number of girls wanted to be men in order to enjoy the greater privileges of the latter. Their concrete [occupational] ambitions were realistic ... their fantasies were in vivid contrast: two thirds of the boys and more than half of the girls wanted to be non-humans" (Powdermaker 1966, 257). Women, in this study, generally preferred town life, but were not secure in it. There was less work than in the village, more money, more clothes and food, but in contrast to the village, town women were totally economically dependent on their husbands, a situation which was quite unfamiliar to them. In town, few women had jobs, whereas in the village, they were largely independent economically (Powdermaker 1965, 188).

Town women were also more isolated and less familiar with whites and the urban work situation than were the men. Thus, women could be said to be more conservative, more tradition oriented, fearful of some aspects of modernization, yet not willing to return to village life. Girls, believing
that men had more prestige, fantasied being men, while boys, perhaps more realistic about men's status, fantasied in larger numbers about being non-humans.

In speaking of media as a source or expression of fantasy, a case in point are women's romance novels. These have widespread appeal in societies as different as the United States and Japan. Mulhern (1989) discusses Japanese romance fiction written by Japanese women writers for a mass market. She notes that both in the U.S. and in Japan "modern mass romances are nothing if not fantasies of contemporary middle class women." In both countries, "the heroine's autonomy, competence, and career options are taken for granted, [even though] an acknowledged union of male and female" is still presented as the root of happiness. "Romance fiction describes a woman's odyssey and crusade, the object of which is to lead a man, and society, to acknowledge and honor her true identity and her place in the world" (Mulhern 1989, 67). It is a fantasy that does not subvert existing values, she argues, but rather, insofar as it supports marriage and monogamy, supports them.

In what follows I wish to consider the relationship between fantasy and instrumental activities, and to do so specifically with reference to women and social change. My examples come from two radically different types of research: the first concerns women graduate students and their career choices, the second deals with women's possession trance religions. Data for the former come from interviews we have conducted with U.S. and foreign ("international") graduate students (Cf. Bellisari, 1991). The second example draws on previously published materials (Bourguignon 1965, 1973) and the work of others.

Fenichel (1945, 50) calls fantasy "thought not followed by action," and distinguishes two types: "creative fantasy which prepares some later action,
and daydreaming, the refuge of wishes that cannot be fulfilled." Spiro (1987[1982], 70) distinguishes between the private fantasy of the dream and the cultural, shared fantasy of religion, the mythic-religious world. When dreams are told or enacted these two realms, however, may join. A fascinating example of this is presented by Homiak (1987), showing how dreams and visions among the Jamaican Rastafarians are elaborated into complex ideological statements which in turn have significant implications for behavior. In the examples I propose to discuss, possession trance religions that interest me combine elements of individual, personal fantasy with shared elements of a culturally constituted reality, which we, as outsiders, may view as fantasy. In the case of the women students, behavior directed toward apparently rationally selected practical goals also exhibit evidence of personal and social -- often familial -- fantasy.

It might be best to consider fantasy and instrumental activities not as polar opposites but rather as ends of a continuum. Consider the fantasy of the dream, on the one extreme, as complete in itself: the dream is dreamt and forgotten, or, if remembered, only brief attention is given to it. On the other hand it may become part of an action sequence and an incentive for further action. Here traditional forms of dream interpretation and dream communication play an important role (Hallowell 1966, Tedlock 1987). The same is true for daydreams, waking fantasies: a child’s fantasy of herself as a concert pianist may be just that, or it may be the starting point of hard, goal-directed work, eventuating in a substantial career. On the other hand, the fantasy may not be that of the child but that of her mother.

In the present discussion we shall be concerned on the one hand with fantasy sources and fantasy aspects of action directed to the "real" world,
where reality testing and the consequences of the reality principle come into play, and on the other, with the sources and implications of beliefs and behavior in the (at least partially shared) world of religion.

We must distinguish, then, fantasy as creative imagination and impetus to action, by self and/or others from the passive fantasy of daydreams which leads to no visible action. However, though daydreams and nostalgia may not lead to visible actions they may yet have profound consequences for the self. When the Spindlers (1989) mention the ideal-romantic cluster and note that it is deep in the fantasy life of the people they do not elaborate on this observation. One is reminded, however, that this fantasy image has been utilized by conservative and right-wing movements in German history to mobilize energies for political ends. When fantasy is so mobilized it becomes a significant element in ideology, in social action and ultimately in history. Fantasy -- images or image sequences, deviating in some significant fashion from pragmatic reality and invested with affect -- whether individual or shared, is related to dissatisfaction with experienced reality and to a search, however unawares and unsystematic, for alternate modes of being. The degree of conscious control and affective charge will vary, of course, widely as -- to suggest some extremes -- between individual dreams and hallucinations, on the one hand, and the utopian visions of social reformers and city planners (e.g., Doxiadis 1975, Holston 1989, Spauiding n.d.). In the story of Handsome Lake, Wallace (1966) has shown us how a personal private vision could and did lead to a shared utopian vision and to actions to transform a society.

Women's career choices

"TURN YOUR DREAM INTO A CAREER" (Advertisement, New York Times Magazine).
College and graduate school provide students, at least in theory, with a virtually unlimited field of choices, and hence an opening for the play of fantasy. The first example comes from an interview with a 37 year old Euroamerican woman working toward a Ph.D. in history. She is strongly involved in women's and left-wing causes and focusses on women's history.

I want to continue as a professor of history in a university like this one, a big university with a lot of activity.... My first goal was always to be a teacher. I want to deal with being intellectually oriented, being interested in the life of the mind ... the history of ideas, ideas with the human element plugged in. And it has much more explanatory value in terms of what the world really is today, my position in it. Women have a past which has made them the way they are. It's a complicated field, and not just descriptive, trivial things. So basically, I wanted the work I do to live on, to be something in academia.

I think I have reason to be confident, but it has to be a realistic confidence. You just have to keep pushing, waiting for something to open. I have to keep on scoring major successes. I'm always working on my next award, my next thing that I'm going to get that will help me build my credentials. It usually works if you plan your way toward something. But I feel I have to do that. You have to keep on proving, over and over again, that you're good at it. There are no laurels to rest on. That's garbage.

Her first sentence clearly states her goal. How realistic this goal is we cannot know. This will depend on market conditions, that is, on appropriate openings when she is ready to search for a job and the number of
qualified applicants for them, as well as her own placement within the market (the subject of her dissertation, the reputation of her adviser, perhaps her age). Only retrospectively would it be possible to evaluate this statement as either a realistic goal or a daydream, a fantasy. When she goes on to say, later in this lengthy interview, "my first goal was always to be a teacher," what are we to make of that? It suggests a long-term aspiration, perhaps even one going back to childhood, when the more specific and complex ideas of just what kind of a teacher she would be could not yet be formulated. Such rootedness argues for a strong motivation and affective grounding of her ambition. Given her age, however, we know that her studies have been discontinuous, and that she has not held her vision steadily. Beyond being a teacher -- and she does not speak of teaching, of transmitting anything to others -- "being intellectually oriented" matters to her. She has an MA in philosophy and wrote a thesis on Nietzsche. Ultimately, her quest for an understanding of "what the world really is today, my position in it" is phrased in very personal terms, concerning her perceived identity as a woman. This, then, leads to her concern with women's history, in the context of politics. However, the quest for an understanding of her own position is only the beginning, for there is another ambition: "I wanted the work I do to live on, to be something in academia." Surely, here we see fantasy at work, though the next sentence tells us that she has had some doubts. She evaluated herself and has convinced herself that her confidence is not based on fantasy, but is realistic, that she works hard and has her eye on the goal. But, in fact, there is more than one goal: to understand the world and her position, as a woman, in it; to be a professor of history in a large university; to do
lasting work; to "keep scoring major successes." This last may be seen as an end in itself, or as a means to other ends.

Overall, the focus is very largely on the self: "my" position, "my" work, "my" major successes. She does not say that she wishes to teach to transmit knowledge, to help others to develop intellectually or politically, to study history to "explain" but, rather, in more personal terms, to understand. Her concern for women's history is not to improve the lot of women, but to "understand my own position [in the world]." She comes across as serious and hardworking, determined and committed to her goals, but the goals are primarily personal ones.

Here is another example:

Q: Why did you choose a science major?
A: It's very simple. My advisors and teachers in high school, particularly the math and science, said, "Go into engineering and make money." And at that time, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do....

I think that if we [blacks] don't keep going into these fields that it's never going to change and that there's no reason why we shouldn't be in these fields because we can do it! And that's one of the reasons why I do hope to eventually get my Ph.D. so that I can be there and I can be a role model for others. I'm sorry but I don't really care about white women. But ... blacks that come into engineering, and we just have to increase our numbers if our people are going to survive.... Engineering isn't a great interest of mine -- it's just a career decision.
The interviewee is a 26 year old African-American woman working toward a Master's degree in an engineering field. As a high school student, she was not sure of what she wanted to do, it might have been English or psychology, and "engineering" she tells us, still "isn't a great interest of mine." The push for economic mobility, encouraged by (black?) teachers and advisors, and her own ability to do well in science subjects -- a necessary condition for this career path -- got her started. It is now backed up by a strong desire to "be a role model for others." "Others" are blacks, not women. "I don't care about white women," said to the black interviewer, refers to the announced focus of the study: women's career decisions. Is the desire to be a pioneer, "a role model" so that the situations of Blacks in this country will change, is that a realistic goal? A fantasy? As stated in this interview, presenting herself to this interviewer, there is no strong commitment to engineering for this young woman. The goals are external to the field: making money, being a role model, rather than perhaps making a major contribution to an area of applied science.

Our third example is a 28 year old Asian-American woman, working for a Master's degree in music. She is married and has one child.

I want to become a concert pianist. I tried the science parts, since I had been in medicine. And I just felt that it ... I really missed music. It started when I was very young, five or six, when I started playing piano. And it was really just second nature to me, and when I spent time in medicine, I just felt that my creative juices had dried up. And there was definitely a part of me missing. So I had to get back to it ... It's really simply love of the music, and I love to
perform. So, that's just something that I thrive on.... I got a very excellent teacher at the age of nine, who was a concert pianist. She gave me excellent training so that I was winning competitions when I was very young. It was just something that I had a lot of success at, and I loved.... My father, when I was in first or second grade, he would come home from work and he'd always sit down with me when I practiced to hear how I was doing....

...[W]hen I was in medical school I continued studying. I had a very interesting Chinese teacher.... She told me you can only do music or try to go for it when you're fairly young. But in medicine, you can go back to it.... I'm confident in my own ability, but I'm also worried about the number of opportunities I will have. I know that it's a long road. And that, I'm confident that eventually I'll make a name for myself. It's gonna take a while.... My relatives are not approving at all. They think I should have stayed in medicine. Especially my parents....

What makes this account particularly interesting are the conflicting goals it reveals. She started studying the piano as a small child and was strongly encouraged by her parents, particularly her father. But the career her parents intended for her was not that of concert pianist but of physician. Her father, her two brothers, and her husband are physicians. She went to medical school and completed her internship before her love of music and of a career as a concert pianist with the support of her teacher, gained the upper hand. Consequently, she has been a disappointment to her parents and other members of her family. She was expected to live up to family expectations and
attempted to do so. By seeking to follow her own desires she has rebelled against the demands placed on her. Personal goals and dreams have so far won over family expectations. What will the future bring? Will she be able to fulfill her dream, seeing herself as a successful concert pianist? Or will she fail at this, give up the dream and attempt to return to medicine? Or, perhaps, will neither plan work out? Although women engage in careers in the industrial countries of Asia, is her willingness to go against her family's wishes more readily acceptable to her in the American setting? In other words, has culture change away from the home country traditions made it easier for this woman to make an independent choice? Note however that the teacher who encouraged her is Chinese, rather than Western.

Here it might be appropriate to note that of our three U.S. groups of women graduate students (African-American, Asian-American and EuroAmerican) the Asian-Americans are closest to their immigrant backgrounds, that is, they are children of immigrants, whose families have close ties to their home communities and who make strong demands on them for hard work and high performance. Young women as well as young men are expected to work hard for high professional status, with money earning capacity a clear criterion. To say, as this woman does, that without music "my creative juices had dried up. And there was definitely a part of me missing," is to say that something other than professional success and money making was at stake for her.

As we look at these three examples, it becomes clear that fantasy and reality-directed behavior interact in a variety of different ways. They arise from different psychological and social sources and shape each other in characteristic individual and cultural fashions. When we consider the sample from which these cases are drawn as a whole, we can recognize and distinguish
some major cultural themes and differences between them. The Euroamerican, and to some extent the European, women talk about "enjoying" a field of study, of seeking personal, psychological or aesthetic satisfaction in their work. The others, particularly the Asian and Asian-American women, face the demands of their parents, who push them toward high status, high earning careers. The Africans tend to speak of the needs of their countries, and the African-Americans of those of their group. A male social work graduate student, who reviewed the interviews, helping us to code data, was prompted to pity these women who lack "our freedom" to "be themselves," to "make their own choices." However ethnocentric his perspective, it supported our observation of the striking differences in motivations that are shown in these interviews. The Asian-American physician/concert pianist clearly illustrates the conflict between personal desires and family goals. Another Asian-American woman resolved her conflict in a different manner. Discouraged by her father from majoring in anthropology ("no jobs, no money") and reluctant to go into mathematics, a field without "human contact," she opted for statistics.

Fantasy and reality are clearly seen in interaction in these accounts of career choices by women graduate students. The desire to please oneself, to satisfy creative and narcissistic longings, to please parents or other persons of significance, to do something lasting (for one's self, one's family, on's group, one's country) provide motivation for a course of practical action, including the choice of a field of study. Sometimes the fantasies are those of the parents: the African father, in one of our cases, who wanted to be a physician but could not stomach the sight of blood, wants his daughter to be a physician in his stead; the Asian mother, in another case, whose studies were
arrested by marriage and childbirth, wishes her daughter to accomplish what she had been unable to do.

The fantasy/reality interaction sequence in the case of women's career choices might be visualized in the following chain: A wish (grounded in some aspect of personal, familial or social life) is elaborated to a fantasy. When this is reformulated as a goal, a plan of action in the practical world is organized. The wish/fantasy serves as a motive for the action sequence and fuels it. Experience may modify the plan of action: perhaps the resolve is weakened, compromises between the initial fantasy and a realistic assessment of the situation are accepted. Because of school requirements a girl who thinks she is headed to medicine as a teenager turns to zoology in graduate school. Because of economic pressures resulting from divorce and single parenthood, a would-be artist opts for art education; the woman who as a child dreamt of being a ballerina turns to the teaching of the history of dance. Ultimately, when careers are established, the deviation from the original wish/fantasy, if it is not heavily distorted in the remembering and the telling, may be identified, and the factors responsible for the deviation assessed. In our study, we find women at various stages of preparation for their careers, and the ultimate outcomes are not yet at hand.

Fantasy and Reality in Possession Trance

We now turn to the subject of women and social change in the context of possession trance religions, where fantasy and reality form an especially interesting partnership. The fantasy of religion, being shared, is perceived by participants as an aspect of their reality. We distinguished earlier between fantasy as creative imagination and impetus to action and the passive
fantasy of the dream and the daydream. The fantasy of religious belief and its expression in behavior spills out of the bounds of ritual time and space into the everyday world of family life and work, and is, in its turn, affected by it. (Because this world often also has religious dimensions of meaning and experience, I prefer not to use the term "secular", which implies that it is denuded of such meaning). As this everyday world is modified or affected by social and cultural change, this, too, will have its repercussion in the ritual sphere, in the concepts and images of the spirits and in the messages that are expressed by the spirits.

Here is a key element of the possession trance religions under discussions: The spirits appear -- as enacted by human beings -- among humans; they express their will, give advice and direct human behavior. In so far as they call for innovations or react to changes that are affecting the human group, they are themselves both expressions of change and agents of change or of resistance to it. If the behavior of the spirits and their adaptors were restricted to ritual space and time, their impact on the world of practical affairs would be negligible and we could see religion as a shared fantasy analogous to the private dream or daydream. What we have learned about the effect of religion on social action, and of ritual on the individual, suggests that, at least as far as the type of religion under discussion is concerned, we need to look to its practical impact outside its narrowly defined sphere.

As has been shown elsewhere (Bourguignon, 1973) possession trance is a very widespread phenomenon, and as is apparent over and over again in the literature, it is predominantly women who engage in this behavior. The behavior is the enactment of another identity or personality, the subjective
experience associated with it is that of a particular type of altered state of consciousness, and it occurs in the context of a belief system referring to spirit entities and their ability to take control of human beings. There exists an intimate relationship between belief, experience and behavior. Experience, which is subjective, is structured and informed by belief and in turn gives it support. Behavior is that side of the experience/belief which is visible to the observer. The very enactment of belief in behavior constitutes a significant experience, confirming belief but also reflecting and reflected in extraritual intra- and interpersonal perceptions and behavior. To use current language (Csordas, 1990; Grimes, 1990) possession trance constitutes the public presentation of belief through its embodiment.

Why do possession trance institutions, where they exist, attract women, who are generally the most numerous and most active participants? Indeed, the activity and the group may be the exclusive province of women, but even where this is not the case, the high proportion of women as possession trancers has struck observers over and over again. A number of explanations have been proposed, none of which have been entirely satisfactory (Cf. Lerch, n.d., for a reassessment of these as they apply to Brazil). Also, a strong connection to cultural and social change of these religious institutions has been noted. It is this connection between these religious practices, the strong female presence in them, and culture change that is of principal interest to us here. Where women’s possession trance cults flourish, we may expect certain correspondences, at various levels, between that which is expressed by the performance and the rituals, either directly or symbolically, and the social world. Specifically, we need to consider the concept of possession, the
behavior and experience of possession trance and the religious institution themselves.

Our concern here is with those religious institutions in which possession trance is desired and the spirits are invoked intentionally. This applies primarily, though not exclusively to the African, particularly West African, religions and the Afro-American ones that are significantly descended from them. However, much of the symbolism to which I shall turn presently is not limited to these, nor are a number of their functions, such as healing.

Very prominent among the explanations which have been offered for these phenomena is the stress on fantasy and the substitute gratifications it provides. For example, Onwuejeogwu (1971, 289) writes about the Bori cult of the Hausa of Northern Nigeria:

The spirits of the Bori [by whom the women are possessed] represent and symbolize Hausa values such as status, authority, political power, prosperity and the pomp of public life. Since women are .. excluded from public life and from holding state office, and since the compound is a physical barrier which helps to shape and intensify their psychosocial isolation, it appears that in Bori Hausa women experience in fantasy the trappings of officialdom.... It is a symbolic way of escape from the role of female to that of male.

The analysis is tempting. The theatrical, sanctioned and supernaturally grounded enactment of prestigious male roles by women appears to lack reality to this observer. The idea that it allows women to escape, symbolically and temporarily, from being female to being male, is reminiscent of the fantasies of the Zambian girls, in Powdermaker's study (1965), who wanted to be men. A closer look, however, suggests other, or at least additional dimensions to be
considered. For one thing, for the Hausa, the women are not turning into men, but into spirits -- spirits who are a great deal more powerful than human males -- although they enact roles that resemble those of human males: mallam (teacher of the Koran), nobleman, etc., but also others such as the spirit who causes people to go mad and who manifest himself as a madman. Secondly, the possession trance behavior affects the behavior of non-possessed persons, the husbands of the women: "Husbands treat wives who are possessed with a deference and submission that are totally absent in their normal relations" (Onwuejeogwu, 1971, 289). If it is fantasy, it is indeed a shared fantasy that is enacted and no more a fantasy, then, than any other aspect of the culturally constituted behavioral environment. That is, from the Hausa emic point of view, this is not fantasy but reality.

Since women are over and over again possessed by the same spirits, a woman over time has two distinct relationships with her husband -- the marital relationship, and that of the spirit with the husband. We are told that such possessing spirits may exert various pressures on a man: forcing him to give away goods and money or to make gifts to the wife, and this, again, will have "real life" repercussions in the household, perhaps particularly if it is a polygynous one. The experience of domestic life is reflected in Bori ritual and at the same time, the ritual behavior and experience affects the relationships among household members.

In general terms, a similar picture has been drawn of the Zar cult, a women's religion which, with variations, is distributed from Somalia and Ethiopia to Sudan and Egypt.

Two features of these cult institutions are worthy of attention in the present context. On the one hand, they are tightly interwoven with everyday
reality, including the reality of cultural and social change. On the other hand, they share a basic, common symbolism that reveals, and refers to, the feminine dimension. In considering the example of the Hausa, I suggested that a woman's possession by a particular Bori spirit had an impact on the practical aspects of family life. Indeed, insofar as membership in the cult offers status, provides healing or advice in practical matters, the shared fantasy expressed in religious symbolism and of the symbolic interactions within the religious context has practical import. And indeed, it is this practical import that often attracts individuals to participation in these institutions. It is one aspect of this which has led Lewis (1971) to speak, with reference to what he terms "peripheral" religions, of "mystical attack" on superiors.

Culture change and possession trance religions are related in many ways. New people or groups encountered may be given embodiment: Boddy herself found herself represented, or "caricatured", for a time, in the Sudanese Zar group she studied. She suggests that through possession "Hofriyati women might step outside their world and gain perspective on their lives" (Boddy 1989, 354). In some respects alien and dangerous figures are mastered in fantasy through identification with them to the point of temporary embodiment. Also, the spirits, through their human vehicles, may promote or inhibit innovations. Brown (1989) has shown how the ancient African spirits have been transformed in the course of Haitian history, and continue to be transformed in their migration to New York. In Brazilian Umbanda, spirits, through their mediums, give their clients advice on how to deal with life situations in the modern world, and indeed, give them orders for specific actions in various practical matters (cf. Lerch, 1980). 8
In a different context, Curley (1973) sees increase in spirit possession among Lango women over the preceding half century as a response to frustrated new wants and expectations of women. Ong (1987) documents the rise of spirit possession trances among Malaysian factory women, and speaks of "spirits of resistance," as Fry (1976), in an African political context, had spoken of "spirits of protest." In some aspects possession trance religions belong to the larger class of "crisis cults" (LaBarre, 1971).

Obyesekere (1981, 84) distinguishes between "private image (fantasy) and (cultural) symbol" and describes the negotiations between the two that are necessary for individuals to be properly possessed. He refers to a particular culturally constituted religious idiom. Here, however, we wish to look beyond the specifics of the cultures used as examples to some common underlying features they share.

The alteration of consciousness experienced (Obyesekere, 1918 prefers to speak of "hypnomatic" states) is structured and given meaning by a belief in "possession." Such a belief is made possible by the basic idea of a separation of the body and (one or more) indwelling spirits. Thus, a woman who obeys her husband or resists his demands, is different from the spirit who commands him, though both appear in the same body. This has implications not only for social organization and for interpersonal relations, but also for the individual's relations to her (or his) own self. Elsewhere (Bourguignon, 1965) I told the story of a little Haitian girl playing at spirit possession to the amusement of her elders. When "he" (the enacted spirit) was told that "she" (the child) had been bad, "he" attempted to beat "her," that is, she struck herself. In a ritual context, I have seen an individual, in this case an adult male, beat himself when possessed by Ogoun as a punishment for an
offense. Brown (1989, 75) writes: "Ogou's anger and his attack on his wayward followers are key elements in the possession-performance of Ogou.... Ogou may even discipline his own chwal, 'horse,' the very person possessed by him."

The notion of the possessed individual as a horse, mule or other mount of the spirit who rides her is very widespread. It applies to Hausa Bori, to the East African Zar, Haitian vodou and its Afro-American cognate cults from Brazil to Cuba (and now the U.S.), as well as their West African ancestral religions. The concept of riding or mounting by spirits also appears in Ancient Greece (Jeanmaire, 1951) and among the Temang of Nepal (Peters 1981).

The image of horse and rider strongly presents a fantasy of power and domination, of abdication of the possessed person's will to that of the possessing spirit, as, indeed, does the English word "possession." However, it also has strong sexual connotations. This is underlined by the observation that such women are often spoken of as the "wives" of the spirit. In Haiti, ritual initiation (kanzo), was explained to me by some participants as a wedding ritual, although the much more general interpretation is one of death and rebirth. Boddy (1989) says that the Zar ritual is a "parody" of a wedding. Spiro (1967) describes a Burmese shaman's wedding to her spirit husband. He also comments on examples of Christian female mystics and their link to Jesus. Maltz (1978), in a paper entitled "The bride of Christ is filled with his spirit" speaks of the "feminine metaphor" of possession.

In addition to the formal wedding symbolism, there is also another, but contradictory set of evidence concerning the relationship between sex, reproduction, and possession. Thus Boddy (1989), in her study of the Zar cult of the Northern Sudan, collected quantitative data, showing that 90% of possessed women had marital or reproductive problems or both. Non-possessed
women experienced such problems at a much lower rate. Women turn to the spirits for help with these problems, to have children and repair marriages. On the other hand, Obyesekere’s (1981) Sinhala female ecstasies are ascetics, who give up sex and family life. They, like the Sudanese women, ascribe reproductive failure to spirit interference, but rather than seek spirit help in remedying the problem, they accept the spirit’s demands and give up sex, marriage and motherhood.

There is more direct evidence of sexual dimension in the possession experience: To Serve the Gods, a film of Haitian vodou rituals by Karen Kramer and Ira Lowenthal, shows the clearly orgasmic seizures of several women who are possessed by Petro spirits, who are especially known for their fierceness and sexuality. Obyesekere (1981) speaks of Sinhala female ecstasies reporting a feeling of being shaken inside during their trance. Henney (1980) has shown the similarity between the female sexual response cycle as reported by Masters and Johnson (1966) and the development of a collective ritual dissociational state among both male and female trancers in a West Indian enthusiastic church.

Thus on an experiential basis possession trances reflect aspects of sex and power, and they do so on a symbolic level as well. The sexual experience, as symbolized in ritual and language, is that of the woman. This also applies to males in many of the cults, and they are often referred to as effeminate and/or homosexual (cf Spiro, 1967 for Burma, Leacock, 1972 for Brazil, Onwuejeogwu, 1971 for the Hausa).

These, however, are only two of the aspects of the symbolism of possession trance, those dealing with power relations and sexuality. Underlying all of this is the basic aspect of belief that makes the
conceptualization of possession possible: the image of a separation between body and indwelling spirit. What is the source of such an image? Where, in human experience, is the body double, inhabited by another? Phrased in this manner, the answer is clear: the model is human pregnancy.

Speaking of the work of the sculptor Henry Moore, the Jungian analyst Erich Neumann (1959, 124-127) writes:

The mother-child relationship, which as the primary relationship between the containing mother and the contained child, determines the life of man and characterizes his existence in the world, expresses itself over and over again in Moore’s work as a participation mystique. On a deeper archetypal level, this relationship forms the background of the mythological relationship of body and soul, where the soul appears as the body’s inhabitant.

In possession trance, the place of the child is taken by another entity, a spirit husband -- which brings us back to the subject of sex. These symbolic meanings are expressed partly verbally, partly enacted in ritual; they may be experienced intensely on a personal level. They are, however, not the subject of myths in the form of narratives. To the contrary: the mythic understanding of the spirits derives from their theatrical enactment in possession trance rituals through their behavior, their dances, songs, musical rhythms, their preferences for certain colors, foods and drinks, and so forth. The concepts of possession as mounting and marriage are background to other accounts; there are no tales to explain how these relationships originated. They are taken as given. The fantasy of the containing human body and the contained spirit is even further removed from mythic elaboration.

Discussion and Conclusions.
In possession trance rituals, as in career decisions, we find an underlying wish/fantasy. In neither case is this wish/fantasy kept private but is acted out in a culturally approved or acceptable manner. In the sphere of religious activity, as in career decisions, the wish/fantasy arises out of personal need and of familial and social settings. However, though the desires of the graduate students may well involve personal, private, unconsciously rooted issues of motivation, there is little admitted symbolism and ritualization in the Western educational context of what are perceived to be activities oriented to practical reality. Possession trance cults, however, are frankly ritualistic and engaged in a world of symbolic manipulation.

In the possession trance religions the women often appear to be and perceive themselves to be chosen by others -- the spirits and the specialists who interpret the will of the spirits to them. Moreover, as Spiro (1967) has pointed out for the Burmese shamans (or spirit mediums), individuals so chosen may manifest considerable reluctance to accept the call. The trajectory is one of apparent passivity, of being a vehicle rather than an agent. Our graduate students, to the contrary, for the most part present themselves as agents. This is particularly true of the EuroAmericans. In the words of one young woman, the decision "was made by a committee of three: I, me, and myself."

In the religious context, the wish/fantasy, dressed in culturally appropriate garb, leads to ritual actions, but has implications for the practical life of the individual, her family, often for the larger society. Indeed, if it did not, if the shared fantasy/symbol were limited in its efficacy to the ritual realm and the inner life of the individual, and did not
spill out into the workaday world, it would be of much more limited interest. The personal/wish fantasy is only in part unconscious: the desire to gain control passively (as the mount or the vehicle of another), the desire for sexual satisfaction, the desire for a child or its substitute. Ethnographic data show that these wishes may have conscious dimensions as well (cf Boddy 1989, Obeyesekere 1981) -- that these are precisely the reasons why women engage in this behavior, why they join the cults that offer them an opportunity for acting out their fantasies and perhaps changing their lives. The wishes of the graduate students, directed toward the construction of careers, are not specifically female in this sense and have quite a different character.

Some of the ritual behavior is stimulated or modified by, and expressive of, culture change; others of its aspects contribute to change in the society as a whole or to resistance against it. The wish/fantasy may be covert, expressed in illness, dream or other personal symbolism. Or it may be integrated into ritual and other types of social action. At that level the phenomena are culturally variable; at a deeper, underlying level, they reveal and express common female experience and are widely shared across cultures.

These images and fantasies are to be inferred from the symbolism of ritual and its language. They are not given in the form of myths or other types of narratives.

For Freud, religion has its roots in the parent-child relationship, more particularly, in the relationship of sons to fathers. The symbolism of possession trance suggests, by contrast, that it refers to the mother-child relationship, and of that of the woman to the man. Here, too, beyond the varying family constellations, there is also a common set of elements.
There remains the further question of why it is that certain types of societies have ritualized -- or have given women the opportunity to ritualize -- all of this, whereas other types of societies have other preoccupations. In the domains of activity in which women's career decisions are made and career paths develop, these preoccupations are given quite different expressions. They appear in questions concerning conflicts between career and motherhood, and indeed, between career and marriage. There, the lives of women and men are played out on a common stage.

Perhaps this type of exploration can bring us a step closer to answering the Spindlers' question concerning "the consistent tendency of women to want something different from what they have" (G. & L. Spindler, 1990, 198).

This paper has attempted to do so by considering a variety of studies on women's relation to culture change. The variety of circumstances of women's lives reflected in so broad a spectrum of research settings and the diversity of aims and methods of the original studies are very great. And yet, fantasy as well as adaptation to practical reality can be seen in all. When the Spindlers asked questions about adaptation to change among the Menomini, among their tools was the Rorschach test, an instrument for the study of personality which is often presented to subjects as "a test of the imagination." Thus, the instructions allow free reign for "projections," that is, to fantasy guided both by objective reality (the shape of the ink blots) and by the individual's habitual response to new situations, so that people tell us about themselves. In the IAI, the Spindlers focus less on personality than on choices people make. Here, too, we see fantasy at work, for the question is not, "how do I perceive the present?" but "what kind of future activity would I choose, if I could?" Fantasy is also at work in women's career plans, so
that the career path may be seen as a negotiation between aims grounded in the individual's (and her community's) fantasy life and practical possibilities. And, finally, in the symbolism of women's possession trance religions, fantasy is most clearly visible to us because we are outsiders. As such, our cultural distance from the phenomena studied is greatest: the less we share emic constructions, the more fantastic they appear to us.

Paradoxically, the more "fantastic" and "symbolic" the materials, the more transparent the central concerns of the fantasies become. What we see at work are concerns with power and sexuality, with child-bearing and marriage, with isolation and participation, and with the means of dealing with them. Clearly, these concerns are inherent in the condition of women and as such are found in all societies. The cultural expressions these concerns receive, the degree of awareness of them that is encouraged (or permitted) varies, and yet we find some evidence of them in all the instances we examined. None of the societies have found entirely satisfactory solutions, for each solution creates new problems. As the changes in the Remstal show, a reduced workload for women and a greater integration into the "modern" world brings with it the danger of greater isolation, loss of influence and of complementary sex roles. Where the Sudanese women of Boddy's study wish for children and child survival, our graduate students struggle with finding a place for children in their busy, competitive, individualistic lives. They have access to careers that offer some degree of equality with men, but also competition and conflicting goals.

We have arrived at a familiar insight: that cultures are made of compromises, that certain problems are constant, and that each solution creates its own difficulties.
NOTES

1 Hallowell (1951) notes only minor differences in the Lac de Flambeau Rorschach scores by sex, so that the discussion emphasizes group features. Hallowell (1956) presents the Rorschach protocols of the Ojibwa (Chippewa) Indians of Lac de Flambeau by sex. Bourguignon and Nett (1955) in a study of popular responses in Rorschach records of a sample of Haitian respondents shows some differences by sex as well as class.

2 In his introduction to volume 3 of A History of Private Life (1989, 15) Roger Chartier writes:

It is generally agreed that the limits of the private sphere depend primarily on the way public authority is constituted so that the private as we know it today is the product of the modern state.

The American historian R.H. Bremner (1982, 28) notes:

In the 1950s, as before and since, reverence for the ideal family and its autonomy limited the scope of public efforts to help real families meet their responsibilities.

The reference is to the United States, and suggests the role of ideology -- ideas of how things should be rather than information on what they are -- plays a role in public policy.

In an unpublished, exploratory study of U.S. college students, we found few elements of social life to be perceived as entirely private/domestic. Most were either seen as public or as a mixture of the two. For instance, 14% of our respondents placed the decision to have children in both the domestic and the public domain (Bourguignon et al. n.d.).
3 For example, Hallowell (1952, 109) writes that among Canadian Ojibwa, "while some individuals, especially women, were making excellent social and psychological adjustment, there were other individuals, men in particular, who were much less successful."

4 See, for example the following quote from Rabuzzi (1982, 94): When women's housework is viewed as having intrinsic merit for its own sake, then we begin to glimpse beneath the articulated visible masculine edifice of culture a tenacious belief system for which there is cultic ritual but essentially no mythos. And at the heart of this cultic ritual lies the shadowy presence of a deity -- the goddess Hestia. This brings us back to our earlier discussion of the distinction between public and domestic spheres, and sees it as based on fixed archetypes.

5 The term "fantasy" appears to be most widely used at present by writers on popular culture. Coyle (1981, 1-2) writes: "To signify the creation of an alternative world as opposed to realistic transcription of the observable, the term fantasy is perhaps most suitable." And he goes on to remark: "Fantasy ... is a way of perceiving human experience."

6 This research was supported by a Distinguished Scholar Award from the Ohio State University. My collaborators in this work are Anna Bellisari and Lisa Chiteji, whom I wish to acknowledge here.

7 This is not in contradiction to Mulhern's (1989) comment cited earlier. Though romance novels may be supportive of the values of monogamy, by stressing women's "true identity in the world" the romance novels encourage women's independence and valorize their struggle, i.e., give public acknowledgement to an idealized individual trajectory.
8 A striking example of spirit possession trance religion as a form of coping with the modern world is to be seen in the Haouka cult of the Songhai and Zerma (Rouch 1978, Stoller 1989). Here, however, in an arena which is primarily political, and which originally involved mostly male migrant workers, the cult is mostly a male phenomenon.
References


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