HALLUCINATORY (DRUG-INDUCED) TRANCE VERSUS POSSESSION TRANCE:
MALE AND FEMALE FORMS OF ALTERED STATES?

by

ERIKA BOURGUIGNON

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
HALLUCINATORY (DRUG-INDUCED) TRANCE VERSUS POSSESSION TRANCE:
MALE AND FEMALE FORMS OF ALTERED STATES?

ERIKA BOURGUIGNON

As I indicated in the title of this paper, I wish to set forth the hypothesis that certain types of altered states of consciousness occur more typically among men and others more typically among women. However, before presenting some supporting data for such an hypothesis and exploring some of its implications, I must begin by offering some definitions as well as some background information.

The statistical data I shall present are taken from a large-scale cross-cultural study of altered states of consciousness which we conducted at Ohio State over a period of several years.\textsuperscript{1} The materials accumulated in this work have so far been analyzed and published only in part. For the present, I wish to limit myself to a comparison of certain portions of the data dealing with the Americas, on the one hand, and with sub-Saharan Africa, on the other. These world regions offer a host of interesting contrasts in socio-cultural features. For example, they contrast greatly with respect to subsistence economy. The Americas far exceed the world average in percentage of societies heavily dependent on the combination of hunting, gathering and fishing, while sub-Saharan Africa has only a handful of societies in that category. (World average: 38\%, sub-Saharan Africa: 7\%, North America: 83\%, South America: 70\%. These figures are taken from Chart IC, p. 66 Bourguignon and Greenbaum, 1973.) The reverse is true for heavy dependence on
agriculture or a combination of agriculture and animal husbandry. Yet in all three areas, hunting and fishing are predominantly male activities, gathering and agriculture predominantly female activities. A whole series of societal features follow from these basic economic factors and show us highly contrasted groups of societies which are therefore particularly suitable for comparison.

The data I shall deal with in the following concern a sample of societies taken from Murdock's _Ethnographic Atlas_ (1967). They are traditional societies, although the dates of investigation vary, some being quite recent. The altered states and the beliefs systems which we coded refer to the realm of the sacred and the ritual and involve institutionalized patterns of behavior, not merely personal practices. Thus, where we deal with altered states induced by drugs, for example, we include the peyote cult, although its spread to some North America societies is still recent. We do not include non-ritual states induced by opium or hashish, for example. We include tobacco where it is utilized in massive doses and with specialized patterns of behavior as among South American shamans, leading to unconsciousness.
Among North American Indians, we note only the relatively rare instances where its formal ritual use involves altered states. We do not consider the personal, social or secular use of tobacco. Similarly, for alcohol and other stimulants and depressants.

We have found it useful to distinguish between two kinds of institutionalized altered states of consciousness. In one type, the behavior is interpreted in the particular cultural tradition as due to possession by spirits. That is to say, one or more personalities or forces other than that of the individual subject himself, or herself, is believed to take over some of the psychological and often physical functions of the individual. We have termed this state "possession trance." In the other type of altered state, termed "trance," other kinds of explanations are invoked, such as: the soul of the trancer goes on a trip, encounters spirits, or is abducted by spirits, etc. I should note that there is also a widespread type of belief in spirit possession which does not refer to altered states at all. It may refer to illnesses of certain sorts, or to changes in capacity or power. This will not concern us in what follows, however.

It should be noted to begin with that sacred altered states of consciousness are institutionalized in some form in most human societies. In our world wide sample of 488 societies which, as I have noted, was
drawn from the Ethnographic Atlas, one or more types of such institutionized states was found in 90% of the societies. And if we erred, or if the literature on which our work was based erred, the error was surely in underestimating the frequency of these patterns rather than in over-estimating it. There is, however, some variation in the incidence in the different ethnographic regions. For the regions which interest us here, we found altered states institutionalized in North America in 97% of the societies, in South America in 85% and in sub-Saharan Africa in 82%.

Interestingly enough, the distribution of types of altered states, that is the presence of possession trance, trance or a combination of both, differs greatly for the Americas and for sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, trance alone is present in only 17% of the African societies, but in 72% of the North American societies and in 54% of the South American ones. Possession trance alone is present in 45% of the African sample of societies, but in only 4% of the North American sample and in 8% of the South American one. In 20% of the African societies, furthermore, we find both trance and possession trance and this is true of 21% of the North American and 22% of the South American societies as well. Thus, while the predominant form of altered state in Africa is possession trance, in the Americas it is trance. Let me cite a few examples:

Africa

Gussler (1973) has summarized a large body of information dealing with possession trance among the South African Nguni, including among others the Zulu, the Swazi and the Xhosa. Several different sorts of possession trance states exist among these people; most typical, however,
is the cult of the diviners, who at present are, for the most part, women. Their supernatural call is generally manifested in illness which is then diagnosed as spirit possession by an established diviner. The spirit is induced to manifest himself in possession trance and state his wishes. The patient is cured of her illness by being initiated into the cult and the possessing spirit then appears only during ceremonies. She may become simply a cult member or may develop into a diviner and eventually head a cult group of her own. This pattern is very similar to one which is also found in a somewhat broken distribution among a series of East African peoples, and is not limited to Bantus. Beyond the area defined by Murdock as sub-Saharan Africa, it also occurs in the form of the zar cult among the Moslem Somali, the Christian Amhara and it also occurs further to the north in the Sudan and in Egypt. I. M. Lewis (1971) has referred to this type of cult as an "amoral peripheral cult" and considers that it reflects the deprived situation of women, and that it includes supernatural coercion by the women of their menfolk. I have referred to this sort of cult as the "East African type" (Bourguignon 1974) although it also occurs among such West African people of the Moslem Sudan as the Hausa. This type of cult is characterized not only by possession trance but also by the special role of possession illness as the precipitating factor in seeking membership in the cult. On the other hand, the spirit is not exorcised in this situation but an accommodation is worked out, so that the former patient becomes a devotee or even a professional diviner or cult head, active in the curing of others.
This type of cult, which is typically African, may be contrasted with what I have called the West African type (Bourgignon 1974) and the descendants of which we find among Afro-Americans in the Caribbean area and in Brazil (Lerch 1972). This is in some respects closer to I. M. Lewis' "central morality cult" (Lewis 1971). The spirits worshipped are the principal gods of the society or the ancestors of the dominant clans. (However, we may note parenthetically that in the East African type of cult the spirits which possess the Zulu diviner may well be her own ancestors.) Illness may be a cause for entering such a cult, but it is thought of as "sent" by the gods and it is believed that initiation into the cult will cure it. The spirit is not causing illness by possessing the individual but by sending it, and spirit possession trance is not induced as part of the diagnosis. The spirit is neither exorcised nor come to terms with, but installed, and the novice acquires the proper possession trance behavior. Initiation may be long, in Dahomey (Herskovits 1938, Verger 1957) as long as a year. Both of these types of cult groups are characterized by a majority of female possession trancers, and in some East African societies these groups may be entirely made up of women. Possession trance appears sometimes spontaneously, sometimes it is induced with singing and drumming and dancing, but with few notable exceptions there is little clear evidence of the use of drugs.

These types of possession trance are not the only ones found in Africa. Among the Muer, for example, Evans-Pritchard (1956) tells us of male prophets and among the Nuba, Nadel (1947) also reports on the presence of male prophets. The diviners among the Ganda (Roscoe 1911) were men, and the shrine priests of Ghana are apparently also men.
(Field 1960). Nonetheless, we may take these female-dominated cults as typical in view of their frequency and wide distribution through various parts of the continent. In a trial run I coded a series of 26 societies of sub-Saharan Africa with possession trance for sex of actors. In 15 of these societies both men and women were reported as experiencing possession trance, with information inadequate for an estimation of possible numerical predominance of one sex or the other. In 10 societies possession trance was reported to be either predominantly or exclusively practiced by women. In only one society did the sources indicate possession trance to be a predominantly male activity.

North and South America

We may contrast these types of groups and their behaviors with typical forms of altered states as they appear in the Americas. We have seen from the figures cited above that possession trance is relatively rare in the Americas and that the overwhelming number of societies in the Northern and Southern continent have trance. In North America, this is often linked to the widespread guardian spirit complex, with its vision quest. The vision is typically sought alone, and isolation may well be a factor in inducing the altered state involved here, as are fasting and perhaps some other forms of mortification, as well as the use of such drugs as datura and more recently peyote. Although in many tribes the vision quest is and was open to women as well as men, the general impression is that more men than women participated. The vision quest among American Indians was an individual and not a group activity. It established a private relationship, in many cases one not to be spoken of or to be revealed to others, between the supplicant and
his guardian spirit. It gave him certain powers and he remembered the experience, unlike the possession trancer who is generally amnesic for the events of the period of altered consciousness.

In more recent religious movements among American Indians we find a change here, with emphasis on group activities as in the Ghost Dance or the peyote cult. But there is still concern for a private, inward passive experience. Drugs were often used in North America to induce trance. In a trial coding of 10 North American societies (Bourguignon 1968) we identified 23 trance institutions, i.e., societally differentiated ritual situations in which an altered state of consciousness is induced. Of these, all but one involved trance rather than possession trance. For six of these, sex of actors was not specified. We also sought to distinguish trance involving a group situation from trance involving only a single participant.

We found no trance institutions involving women only; the single case of a trance institution involving mostly woman concerned women in a group situation. Six institutions with both men and women trancers were divided equally between group and individual situations. Of the nine trance institutions involving all or mostly men, however, there were twice as many individual situations as group situations: only three group situations as compared to six situations involving trance as an individual activity.

In South America, the dominant form of altered state is again trance. Henney (1968:7) has noted that there is a much wider distribution and use of drugs to induce trance in South America than in North America. Trance is most frequently sought by shamans and shaman candidates, and societies of trancers are not reported. Such shamans are generally men.
As I have reported elsewhere (Bourguignon 1968b:20), we attempted to explore the relationship between drugs and altered states of consciousness for the Americas. Combining the data for North and South America, we found that there exists a statistically significant relationship (at the .001 level) between drugs and trance as opposed to possession trance. This is true although in most societies neither trance nor possession trance usually depend on drugs. But where drugs are used, this is more likely to be the case in connection with trance. Such a linkage "makes sense" since possession trance requires greater awareness of the physical environment and of body coordination, to be able to act out the role of the spirits, as in dancing. It also requires awareness of social cues to act as the mouthpiece of the spirits. The linkage of drugs to hallucinatory trance as contrasted to possession trance has an almost experimental verification in a case outside American Indian societies. In Haiti, in an Afro-American setting, there is widespread possession trance, but no formalized trance and no drug use. Francis Huxley (1966) reports that he gave a Haitian vodun priestess, much practiced in possession trance, some LSD. The woman did not go into possession trance but hallucinated an appearance by one of her principal spirits. The communication made by the spirit to her was of the kind she might have received during a dream or which the spirit, in the person of the subject, might have made to others. Although the cultural content was not modified by the drug, the form was. The altered state triggered by the drug was atypical to the ritual framework.

**Drug Use in Africa**

I have sought to find comparable data on Africa and have met with
considerable difficulty on this point: 1) There is little reference to such drugs in the African literature and 2) when there is reference, it is often so vague that it is difficult to evaluate. For example, Evans-Pritchard (1940) speaks of Azande medicine men who take "medicine," then go into trance and divine. It is not clear—and Evans-Pritchard does not know—whether these "medicines" are pharmacologically active substances. He, himself, raises the possibility, but cannot confirm it. Yet note that while the trancers are men, possession trancers among the Azande are women (Evans-Pritchard 1962). Schapera (1938:245) refers to an unidentified flower which produces "a sort of cataleptic trance" in women among the Nama.

However, in recent years several studies have appeared which shed somewhat more detailed light on African drug use. One of these is the work of James Fernandez on two drug using cults among the Fang of Gabon (1972). He describes two syncretistic, relatively recent cults, Bwiti and Mbiri. Bwiti is predominantly male and concerned with relations with the ancestors. Mbiri is predominantly female, and primarily a curing cult. Both use several drugs, but particularly the hallucinogen *Tabernanthe iboga*. In Bwiti, heavy doses of the drug are limited to initiation into the cult, with smaller amounts taken regularly at ceremonies. Possession is not expected, that is, under the action of the drug an alteration of consciousness is expected to occur, including visions, and with lighter doses, modifications of body perceptions but not the acting out of other, spirit, personalities. When such possession trances do occur during Bwiti ceremonies, Fernandez (1972:250) says, this is considered to be "nonsensical," and sometimes, undesirable and the "result of an individual's imperfections." Yet possession trance
does occur, under the influence of small quantities of the drug, "particularly in women." By contrast, the female dominated MBiri curing cult where larger quantities of the drug are taken regularly, "takes just the opposite view and regards any instance of possession as having high positive value." Thus, both the male dominated and the female dominated cults use drugs, and, from the point of view of this discussion, somewhat surprisingly, the female cult uses larger doses of the hallucinogen. The cults differ not only in membership and ritual but also in aim. In the male cult the emphasis is on visions and on trips to the land of the dead, facilitated by the drug. Possession trances are undesirable but do occur, primarily among female members. The women's cult on the other hand, considers possession trance desirable, since it permits contact with the spirits causing illness.

Another example of African use of a hallucinogenic drug, in this case Datura fastuosa, is reported by T. G. Johnston (1973) for the Shangana-Tsonga. It is used as part of girls' initiation rites together with specific drumming patterns, energetic dancing and several other factors to produce visual and auditory hallucinations. The visions expected, and reported, deal with assurances of fertility, which are indeed the aim of the girls' initiation ceremonies. This is the only example of the use of hallucinogens in girls' initiations of which I am aware. However, although trance, as here, is reported during puberty rituals (albeit usually boys' rituals) I do not recall a case of possession trance as part of this process.

A third example comes from still another part of Africa, from the Hausa. Jacqueline Nicolaj (1968) reports that in the bori cult, a curative possession trance cult predominantly of women, a psychotropic drug
Datura metel L. is used. The drug is used during a portion of the initiation rites in which the candidate is expected to be possessed by black (evil) spirits that are exorcized to obtain the patient's cure. The possession trances during these rituals are numerous and violent. The following days, when white (good) spirits are ritually called to possess the patient, the drug is not used. In spite of these differences, the author notes striking similarities between drug induced and non-drug-induced possession trances, and suggests that the association of music and drug leads to a conditioned reflex, so that in the later stages of initiation (or cult learning) the music itself suffices to produce the patterns of behavior experienced first under the influence of the drug.

These three studies, which are summarized here in but the briefest terms suggest that African drug use is, in many ways, quite different from that found in the Americas. In two cases of four it is linked to trance and in two to possession trance. In the latter cases, the subjects are women. Where possession trance occurs in the male dominated Bwiti cult of the Fang, it is considered undesirable. Interestingly, the association women-possession trance is somewhat more strongly confirmed here than the association men-hallucinogen, or hallucinogen-trance. As far as the relationship between hallucinogen and one or the other form of altered state is concerned, another element about which we have insufficient information would appear to be significant; the strength and quantity of the drug. One would expect a strong dosage to produce visions and make the bodily coordination and mental alertness to cues required of possession trance impossible.
In Africa drugs may also be used to bring people out of an altered state rather than to induce the state. Thus, for the Ambos, Stefanszyn (1964:160) tells of various roots (e.g., *cisco*) which are soaked and drunk by a person to terminate possession trance. The substance, however, is not identified adequately, and its use is not to induce an altered state. Sometimes, it is the possession spirits that take drugs or drink alcohol, i.e., the possession trance is induced prior to the taking of the drug, thus the drug cannot be said to cause the state. For example, among the Lovedu (Krige 1936:245) a possession trancer may smoke hemp, requested by the spirit.

In summary we may say that for a sample of 114 societies of sub-Saharan Africa, 1) there is not a sufficient amount of good data to replicate our American test of a relationship between types of altered states and drug induction, either because no mention of plant or other substances is made or because the substances are not identified, and it is not known whether they are in fact pharmacologically active, and if so, in what way; 2) substances, usually in the form of fumes, may be used to terminate rather than induce an altered state, and 3) drugs may be used during an altered state neither apparently inducing, nor terminating it.

Thus, we must admit the failure of this attempted replication for Africa of our American finding concerning drugs. Nonetheless, since drug-inducing altered states tend to be characterized by hallucination, and since hallucinations—or visions—are almost by definition linked to trance rather than possession trance, we may consider drug-induced trances of South American shamans to be the epitome of the hallucinatory
trance. And on the basis of the limited materials presented so far, it may be helpful to discuss a bit further the contrast between trance and possession trance. To do so, we should note that these terms do, in fact, represent ideal polar types. In reality, we do know that trance and possession trance tend to shade into each other and that there is a very great variety in the types of altered states experienced by individuals and categorized by human cultures. Thus, there are important differences, for example, between the types of possession trance experienced in enthusiastic Christian churches and among West African or Afro-American cultists.

The construction of ideal types, nevertheless, is a worthwhile heuristic enterprise, which allows us to explore the implications of our categories as well as of our empirical data. Dividing altered states of consciousness, perhaps a bit arbitrarily, then, into trance (T) and possession trance (PT) we may begin by asking what we know, statistically about their distributions and about the variables with which they are, or seem to be, associated? We may then proceed to contrast our two ideal types in terms of two levels of analysis: First, we may ask, what are the patterns of interaction between the actor and others? And second, what symbolism and imagery are associated with each type?

To begin with then, we have already noted that trance (T) is a great deal more frequent in the Americas and possession trance (PT) more frequent in sub-Saharan African societies. This difference in the percentage of societies in each region which is characterized by one or the other type of altered state is linked, as we have reported elsewhere, with relative societal complexity in non-industrial societies (Bourguignon 1973). Greenbaum (1973) has suggested, for Africa, that the incidence
of PT may be associated with societal rigidity as well. The preceding
discussion of the relationship between trance and drugs which is so
important in the Americas suggests also that there may well exist an
important nexus between these two variables. La Barre (1972:271) points
out that "whereas New World natives knew eighty to a hundred such
\textit{psychotropic} drugs, the Old World had only about a half-dozen. There
is good reason to expect the reverse to be true." And he goes on to
explain this as due to "the ubiquitous persistence of shamanism in
aboriginal hunting peoples of the New World" (p. 272). And, he con-
tinues, "...it should be noted that ecstatic-visionary shamanism is,
so to speak, culturally programmed for an interest in hallucinogens and
other \textit{psychotropic} drugs." (Italics in original.) He stresses, further-
more, that Old World religions, however much they were originally also
based on the shamanism of hunting peoples, were massively modified by
the Neolithic Revolution. And the great majority of African societies
in our sample with their possession trance patterns, are agricultural-
ists and/or pastoralists. And, indeed, his statement is confirmed by
our findings: our statistics show an association of trance with small-
scale hunting and gathering societies, of possession trance with more
complex agricultural and pastoral societies. Thus, for a world-wide
sample of 302 societies, we found trance much more likely to be present
than possession trance among societies depending heavily on a combination
of hunting, gathering and fishing for their subsistence as compared to
those whose subsistence is derived from other sources (agriculture and/or
animal husbandry). This association, as measured by $X^2$ was found to be
significant below the .001 level of probability. The reverse of this,
that is, a heavy reliance on agriculture, was found to be associated with possession trance, again at a level of probability below the .001 level. Note also that a heavy reliance on hunting, gathering and fishing is found among 77% of the North American societies coded in Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas*, among 23% of South American societies, but only among 4% of the societies of sub-Saharan Africa (see Bourguignon and Greenbaum 1973:Table 6).

Trance, in North America, is found in various contexts most notably as part of the virtually ubiquitous guardian spirit complex. Swanson (1973) has studied the typically North American guardian spirit quest as a rite of empowerment. The vision, through which the guardian is contacted is one of the defining features of this complex. Swanson explicitly distinguishes it from possession and characterizes it as bestowing power to the individual as a gift that the beneficiary "on his own volition, might use or neglect" (Swanson 1973:360). And, furthermore, "power was authenticated through its successful application" (p. 361).

The seeker for a guardian spirit inducts himself, as it were, into adulthood. By contrast those who undergo corporate initiations, as in the widespread African puberty rites, are inducted by a group. Swanson sees the guardian spirit complex as characterized by individual initiative, and by the individual's own need and desire for the power to be achieved. He hypothesizes that such quest for a guardian spirit constitutes a test of the individual's independence and discretion and of the strength of his motives, and that these are important in societies where, in addition to collective interests, individuals have a large degree of autonomy in the pursuit of goals. Yet there must be collective interests as well,
and the pursuit of individualism must not be extreme. Swanson takes his cue from the findings of Barry, Child and Bacon (1959) of a relationship between hunting and fishing subsistence economies and pressures toward self-reliance and achievement in socialization. Such societies should, in Swanson's view, however, not produce totally individualistic types, but persons concerned with the social order as well. He expects, therefore, and indeed finds, that the guardian spirit complex, entailing charisma of the office of adulthood, is present in societies emphasizing individualism, but not having such exclusive dependence on hunting and fishing as to produce total self-reliance and independence. Another expectation that is confirmed statistically is a rule of virilocal residence. And, finally, societies allowing in their political organization both for common and special interests are found to be more likely to have a guardian spirit complex than those with other types of decision-making processes. This study, which is based on a sample of 42 North American societies, concerns itself with the guardian spirit complex of which the vision is one diagnostic item. Consequently, it covers a smaller scope than our concern with the more varied concept of "trance." Yet what it tells us fits well into the broader pattern which we seek to discern. The vision of the guardian spirit complex involves a relationship between a human individual and a spirit. Although the point is not made explicitly by Swanson, the guardian-seeking hunter or fisherman is a male, seeking power from a spirit. And the office for which he is empowered is that of adult male. As La Barre has put it in quite a different context (1972:274):

In this male centered hunting society, curiously a boy's manhood and manly prowess in hunting and war and sexuality
all came as gifts from the outside—that is, as "medicine power" imbibed from the outside, generalized, impersonal, mana-like, supernatural. ...All aspects of male potency came not...from within. At adolescence, this power was acquired.

Such power is acquired in a hallucinatory contact with spirits, that may be produced in several ways. The hallucinatory contacts of the North American guardian spirit complex involve such inducing factors as isolation, fasting, self-mutilation. Another, typically American factor is, of course, the use of psychotropic substances.

The above discussion suggests a link-up of ecology–subsistence, socialization, social organization and adult sources of power, trance types and sex differences. A further point may be added: Barry et al. (1959) have shown important differences in socialization between low accumulation (hunting and fishing) and high accumulation (agricultural and pastoral) societies. They also show important differences between the socialization of boys and girls, regardless of economy. Thus, nurturance and obedience ranked high in the socialization of girls in all types of societies. Furthermore in high accumulation societies, the characteristics stressed—obedience, responsibility and nurturance—were emphasized more strongly in the training of girls than boys, whereas the variables stressed in the low accumulation societies—achievement, self-reliance and independence—were emphasized more strongly in the training of boys than of girls. In a sense, the low accumulation societies are societies stressing and rewarding the "male values" of achievement, self-reliance and independence, the high accumulation societies, particularly the agricultural societies, are societies stressing "female" values of obedience, responsibility, and nurturance.2
It is interesting that ecological and socialization variables also are found to be linked to another area of behavior, perception. Berry (1966) compared the performance on a series of perceptual tests of a group of Temne (West Africa) with that of a group of Baffin Island Eskimos. The Eskimos were consistently superior in performance, but, more importantly from the point of view of the present discussion, less "field dependent" and "group reliant." This appears to relate to differences in socialization between the two groups, with the Eskimo hunters showing greater self-reliance and independence, than the African agriculturalists. Such differences in perception are perhaps also relevant to the experiential differences in altered states of consciousness to be noted below. And this, too, is relevant to sex differences: Witkin et al. (1954) have noted the greater field-dependence of women in perceptual tests, a finding which has been replicated in a number of societies (Witkin 1966). (Interestingly enough, this has not been found to be the case for Eskimo women. Berry 1965, MacArthur 1967.) For as already indicated, possession trance is often and typically associated with cult groups, whereas trance is not and is frequently engaged in as a solitary activity.

Having reviewed some statistical information concerning trance and possession trance, we may now turn to further contrasts between our ideal types.
1. Patterns of interaction in altered states of consciousness: Trance versus possession trance.

Trance characteristically involves interaction with one or more other personalities, beings or forces through hallucinatory experience, possession trance involves the impersonation of another personality; that is to say, the trancer sees, hears, feels, perceives, interacts with another, the possession trancer becomes another. Trance, in short, is an experience, possession trance is a performance. An experience is an end in itself, although it may be lived through before others or for others; a performance is carried out in front of an audience, requires an audience to be truly possible. For possession trance, typically, is followed by amnesia, so that without an audience no memory of the event is recorded. It may be the audience who must report the actions of the spirit to the impersonator. The trance experience is remembered, and without this memory the experience is often incomplete. That is, what is experienced must be reported to others to be effective—as in the diviner who returns from his spirit trip with information for his clients, or it must not be reported but remembered for one's own sake. The visionary must remember the instruction of his guardian, the power that he has acquired. The trancer is typically (though not always) a man; the possession trancer is typically (though not always) a woman. Trance, typically, is induced by hypoglycemia due to fasting, sensory deprivation, mortification, drugs. The experience is preceded by learning what to expect and how to interpret what is perceived or felt. Possession trance is induced by drumming, singing, dancing, crowd contagion, more rarely by drugs. Here learning involves the
behavior appropriate to each possible visitor to be impersonated. The 
trance experience is intrapsychic, and essentially passive on the part 
of the trancer though it may lead to actions involving patients to be 
cured. The passivity is particularly true of initiatory experiences. 
The possession trancer, acting out her role before an audience, is 
involved in an active performance. Yet the passive visionary interacts 
with the spirits, while the possession trancer’s body is used as a 
vehicle through which or by means of which the spirits interact directly 
with her audience.

2. The imagery and symbolism of altered states of consciousness: Trance 
versus possession trance.

We may now turn to a comparison of the imagery, the symbolism, the 
fantasy aspect linked to each of our two states. In each case, the 
imagery concerns two basic themes: mastery and sexuality. Note that 
the passive trance is linked to an active imagery: the trancer sends 
his soul on a trip, a spirit journey; he speaks with spirits or even 
struggles with them to bring back the soul of a patient. He obtains a 
boon from them, be it a cure, some special power, or knowledge. Active 
possession trance, on the other hand, is represented by a dependent, 
passive imagery. The possession trancer is the spirit’s wife, his 
mount (horse, mule, camel), his vehicle or vessel. She is mounted, 
ridden or entered, indeed possessed, by the spirit. The trancer remains 
himself and gains power by interacting with another entity, whether 
through the pity of that other, as in the vision quest, or through 
struggle, as in the shaman’s spirit journey. By contrast, the possession 
trancer ceases to be herself; she becomes another through identification
and for a time loses her own identity, becoming the passive instrument of that other. In both instances, however, the theme of mastery is striking: the trancer achieves mastery by having power, knowledge, success or special gifts bestowed on him by a supernatural entity. The possession trancer achieves it by abdicating her own self, by identification with (or making room for) a more powerful self who takes over her body and who performs powerful acts while residing in that body. Thus it is indeed striking that the typical altered state of women involves an active performance linked to a passive fantasy while the altered state typical of men involves a passive experience frequently linked to an active fantasy. We may ask how these types of states and experiences are associated with the socialization practices of the societies in which they occur, with the typical roles assigned to men and women, and with the stresses which are given relief in these ritualized states. We have already noted that socialization of women typically emphasizes obedience and dependency. In possession trance, such obedience and dependency is given its ultimate expression. Yet it also shows how this very obedience, by reaching a maximum, becomes a means for manipulating life situations. One ceases to be oneself, one identifies with and impersonates a more powerful other. And it is as that other that the apparently obedient and passive individual may not only ventilate suppressed or repressed feelings but may also initiate changes in her own life as well as in the life of others. Thus, as I have suggested elsewhere on the basis of Haitian data (Bourguignon 1965) possession trance may afford the actor greater freedom to manipulate a difficult life situation. On the basis of African data, Greenbaum (1973) has suggested
that possession trance is more typical of societies with rigid social structures rather than of those with more flexible social structure, providing the individual with greater elbow room. And I. M. Lewis (1970) has argued that possession trance, specifically possession by peripheral spirits, gives women a weapon in the war between the sexes.

Hypotheses concerning trance, on the other hand, also deal with problems of mastery. Thus, D'Andrade (1961, p. 322) hypothesized that "anxiety about being alone and on one's own gives rise to the use of dreams to seek and control supernatural powers." He confirmed this by showing a relationship between such use of dreams with the distance the son moves away from his parents at marriage. Working with D'Andrade's sample of societies I found (1972) that those using dreams in this manner also tended to be the ones having hallucinatory trance, rather than those having possession trance.

D'Andrade also found that societies with low accumulation economies were significantly more likely to seek and control supernatural power through dreams than those with high accumulation economies. And as we have already seen following Barry, Bacon and Child (1959) low accumulation societies (hunting and fishing) are those which stress independence and self-reliance in socialization. High accumulation societies (agriculture and animal husbandry) in contrast, stress socialization for obedience and reliability. And the low accumulation societies in D'Andrade's sample, again, are more likely to have trance rather than possession trance (Bourdieuqnon 1972). The male taught to be an independent and self-reliant hunter seeks the protection of an imaginary helper in the person of the hallucinated spirit in visions as well as in dreams.
Thus, we may suggest, trance and possession trance express on a symbolic level, the stresses derived from unsatisfied dependency longings of the independent, and, on the other hand, the desire for freedom of action of the compliant. They not only serve to give expression to these situations, but provide remedies as well, at least, to a degree.

Another level of symbolic meaning of trance on the one hand and possession trance on the other must not be neglected. I have in mind the frequent sexual themes associated with each type. Here we may best turn to some examples.

Janet Siskind (1973) describes the ritual of drinking shori (Banisteriopsis caapi) among the Sharanahua in the jungle of Eastern Peru. The men drink the prepared hallucinogenic as a group, but each man sings his own songs, calling his own spirits. Among these people women do not take the drug. Through the songs and through the mythology associated with shori as well as through the telling of their visionary experiences young men must "learn to shape the visual illusions and the physiological sensations into the mold and form of the spirits. . . . Men sing of what they see and their singing calls the visions" (pp. 136-7). Furthermore, the taking of shori is frightening, and this fear is linked, in Siskind's view, not only to the sensations and visions produced by the drug but also by the group:

When Sharanahua first take shori they are frightened. The hallucinated snakes that encircle them are only slowly transformed, after months of taking part in the ritual, into beautiful images. This transformation of terror into euphoria . . . is a significant part of the ritual. The terror of shori for a Sharanahua is the terror of strangers, the very men with whom one takes shori. For most young men these are not his (sic) kinsmen, but strangers in whose village or household he has found a wife. As the young men continue to take part,
their fears fade, the snakes are beautiful, and they begin to learn to call the spirits and "to know" (Siskind 1973: 137).

Among these matrilocal people, a boy seeks a wife in the family of his father's sister. The men of the village, thus, are unrelated to each other. Shori ritual, Siskind believes, functions as a ritual of solidarity for the men. The women, being related to each other, do not require such a ritual. However, beyond the establishment of solidarity, there is another level, that of fantasy and regression, which relates to the matter of mastery referred to above:

The terrors of shori are childhood terrors, and the experience of trance is one of helplessness. Like an infant one is in control of shori and the spirits. By giving up the cultural role of adulthood, as the man /in the myth/ gives up being a hunter to imitate the tapir /by copulating with Snake-Woman/ one again experiences desires long buried for freely given satisfaction, sex without antagonism, friendship without rivalry. . . . The intense pleasure of shori lies in these moments of connection. . . . (Siskind, 1973:141).

She suggests (p. 147) that the true meaning of the ritual is a repeated "hallucination of social unity" where none exists in truth.

The dynamics of the ritual, says Siskind (p. 145) involves "a feeling of communality between the men achieved through their shared desire and antagonism toward women. There is no other basis for male solidarity at Marcos." The myths and some of the songs are evocative of sexual images, and at least some of the visions involve women as well as snakes. Some men liken shori to sex, and feel sexual desire.

The ritual and the symbolic meanings associated with the same drug are reported on by Reichel-Dolmatoff (1971, 1972) for the Tukano Indians of the northwestern Amazon region of Colombia. Summarizing the myth describing the origin of the drug, he states:
Therefore, in the context of Tukano mythology, yaje [the drug] has a marked sexual character. Hallucination and coitus are equivalent, not in the sense of procreation or gratification but rather as an experience full of anxiety, because of its relationship to the problem of incest (1972:96).

Various sexual associations link the plant, the making of the drink, the vessel in which it is macerated and various other ritual elements. The pot, with its decorations represents the uterus, and while drinking from it the men may insult it, as they would insult "a female being who had defied them, presenting a danger they are ready to confront" (p. 101).

Men take the drug in order to return to the uterus, to begin at the beginning of the universe and of humanity, to encounter the tribal divinities. The creation of the universe is associated with the establishment of the social order and of the laws of exogamy.

On the other hand, a return to the womb is considered an incestuous act, since the person becomes identified with a phallus which enters into the maternal cavity, where he now passes through an embryonic stage to a state of rebirth.

And again:

For the Indian the hallucinatory experience is essentially a sexual one. To make it sublime, to pass from the erotic, the sensual, to a mystical union with the mythic era, the intra-uterine stage, is the ultimate goal, attained by a mere handful, but coveted by all. . . .In the words of an Indian educated by missionaries. . . .'To take yaje' is a spiritual coitus; it is the spiritual communion which the priests speak of' (pp. 103-104).

A full analysis of these citations and of the rich data presented by Reichel-Dolmatoff would take us far afield indeed. Here the masculine, sexual symbolism associated with trance and hallucination as it appears among these Amazonian peoples is to be stressed.

We may now turn by contrast to an example of the sexual symbolism of possession trance. We have already mentioned the very widespread
view of the possession trancer as the spirit's wife or mount, of the concept of being mounted or ridden by the spirit. Zempleni (1966) has reported at some length on the possession trance rites of the Lebou and Wolof peoples of Senegal. These are part of primarily women's healing cults. Among the ailments are reproductive disorders of women, which are said to be due to spirit fiancés or spirit husbands that must be exorcized. Many of the possessing spirits, however, are ancestral spirits and the symbolism of the ritual is basically one of submission. Nonetheless, initiation is referred to as a marriage between the possessed woman and her possessing spirit. During ritual dances, overt sexual behavior may be mimed, including rape, and it is said that some women experience orgasm during possession. All of this is made somewhat more complex by the observation that women may be possessed by female as well as male spirits, that women possessed by male spirits may mime sexual interactions with other women, etc. None of this is unique to the Wolof and Lebou, but to the contrary is widespread among African and Afro-American groups. The whole symbolism of human-spirit relations as marriage, however, goes far beyond this culture area. For example, Spiro (1967:212) reports on the marriage of Burmese female shamans to their spirits, and cites Christian references for comparison: the marriage of Catholic nuns to Christ and the writing of certain mystics, such as Mechthild of Magdeburg. St. Rose of Lima might also be cited as an example, as well as the various Christian (and Jewish) theological interpretations of the Song of Songs.
having possession trance. These two subsistence types are also distinguished by differential patterns of socialization. Yet patterns of socialization also distinguish the sexes, with males—particularly in hunting societies—being socialized for independence and self-reliance, and women—particularly in agricultural societies—being socialized for obedience and compliance. In view of the differences in socialization associated both with subsistence differences and sex differences, it is not surprising to find differences in altered states also by sex as well as by type of society. We have suggested, on the basis of some evidence, that hallucinatory trance, often induced by drugs, is ideal typically more characteristic of males, particularly in hunting societies, whereas possession trance may be considered ideal typically of women, particularly in agricultural societies. The nature of the altered state institutionalized and the nature of the institutionalization itself reveal points of stress within a society. These typical points of stress vary from society to society, but most particularly, from subsistence level to subsistence level. The stresses relate to socialization patterns and sex roles, and to the types of positions in the social system which are under greatest pressure, e.g., young men or newly married women. In young men it may be the pressure to perform and achieve as independent individuals, often in hostile settings (as in hunting, warfare or sex), in young women it may be the shift from natal home to the control of a mother-in-law, conflict with co-wives, or the need to produce off-spring. It is suggested that this variation in types of stresses, together with differences in socialization goals and practices, which leads to a society's "choice" of a "female type" of
altered state (possession trance) as proto-typical or to the "choice"
of a "male type" (hallucinatory trance).
NOTES

1. This study was conducted during 1963-68 and was supported in full by NIH grant MH 04763 from the National Institute of Mental Health.

2. Poirier (1973) reviewing data on the socialization of non-human primates finds a distinction in the maternal socialization of male and female young. Consistently, males are pushed toward greater independence, females are provided longer nurturance. He concludes that this prepares females to offer nurturance to their own young, and that such differential socialization constitutes behavior which is obviously adaptive in biological terms.

3. A. F. C. Wallace (1969) traces the wide cross-cultural distribution of the image of the trip as a cultural schema for interpreting hallucinatory and mystical experiences. He concludes that "every real trip is also a trip of spiritual growth, and every spiritual trip brings heightened awareness of the real world" (p. 185). It is perhaps no accident that every example he cites, whether of actual or television drama, involves male protagonists.

4. The phenomenon is, of course, much more widespread and many more examples could be cited. The theme is represented in somewhat attenuated form in such familiar American Protestant hymns as: "And he walks with me and he talks with me/ and he tells me I am his own," and "Jesus, lover of my soul."
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bourguignon, E.

1968a Maladie et Possession: Eléments pour une étude comparative. Colloque international sur les cultes de possession.


D'Andrade, Roy

Evans-Pritchard, E. E.


Field, M. J.

Greenbaum, Lenora

Gussler, Judith