

MEDIUMS' ORIENTATION TOWARD THE VALUES
OF INDIGENOUS **ESPIRITISMO**

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

Towards a Classification of Mediums

Through my participant observation at spiritist centers and interviews with mediums I began to develop a criteria for identifying the kinds of mediums I had met. Mediums tend to differ in terms of their practice of **Espiritismo** and their conception of the ideal medium. The medium's healing style and values about the ideal medium are heavily influenced by the spiritist movement in which the medium has been socialized and educated. In order to understand this point it is necessary to examine the five spiritist movements as a group of subcultures sharing a basic belief system but with

differences in their conception of the ideal medium. Each spiritist subculture or movement holds specific values about the education and development of good mediums. Thus, the affiliation of mediums with one of these spiritist movements has strong influence on their mediumship development. Through a process of socialization within a spiritist movement, mediums acquire a set of standards which define the characteristics of the "ideal medium".

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

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

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

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

differences in their conception of the ideal medium. Each spiritist subculture or movement holds specific values about the education and development of good mediums. Thus, the affiliation of mediums with one of these spiritist movements has strong influence on their mediumship development. Through a process of socialization within a spiritist movement, mediums acquire a set of standards which define the characteristics of the "ideal medium".

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florida, incense and other kinds of paraphernalia as part of the healing ritual.

- B. Preference for the unconscious trance.
- C. Emphasis on the procedure of **pasar** the spirits in order to give light to them. Healing approach emphasizes the working of **causas**.
- D. Use of a "folkloric" spiritist vocabulary in order to express their ideas about healing and illness (**causa**, **cuadro espiritual**, **auxilios**, and so on).
- E. Positive attitude towards the role of religion, especially Catholicism. Use of prayers and religious hymns in the spiritist meetings.
- F. Emphasis on the experiential dimension of mediumship development rather than its academic or intellectual side.
- G. Use of healing techniques such a **santiguos**, herbal medicine, **despojo**, spiritual injection and other traditional healing practices.
- H. **Pruebas** are considered to be a central element in the process of becoming a medium.

The adoption of values opposed to those described above may indicate that a medium is moving away from Indigenous **Espiritismo** and moving toward adopting the values espoused by Kardecian **Espiritismo**. As a criterion for classifying

mediums in this study I established that a medium is an Indigenous one if six or more of the Indigenous model's values are held by him or her at the time the study was done. Contrarily, if a medium's development is characterized by less than six of these values, it would be interpreted as a sign that he or she is moving away from Indigenous **Espiritismo** and adopting a new set of values about mediumship development.

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

<u>Name of the medium</u>	<u>Letter of the value held by the medium</u>	<u>Total of values</u>
Aida	A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H	8
Aúrea	A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H	8
Generosa	B-C-D-E-F-G-H	7
Gela	A-B-C-D-E-F-G	7
Mayo	A C-D-E-F-G-H	7
Ernesto	A-B-C-D-E-F-G	7
Diana	A-B-C E-F-G	6
Miriam	C-D-E-F-G	5
Juanita	D-E-F-G-H	5
Luisa	D-E-F-G	4
Luz	D G-H	3

Rosa	A	C		2
Peruchín			F H	2
Félix			E	1
Marcos			E	1
Emiliano			None	0

Based on these results, the mediums can be classified into three groups. First, there are seven mediums who may be considered as strongly Indigenous because more than six values characteristics of Indigenous **Espiritismo** can be attributed to them (Generosa, Mayo, Aida, Diana, Ernesto, Áurea, Gela). There are five mediums who seem to have gone far away from Indigenous **Espiritismo** (Rosa, Félix, Peruchín, Marcos, Emiliano). All of them have been influenced very much by the model of Kardecian **Espiritismo**. I am calling this group of mediums the Kardecian mediums. There is still another group of mediums who cannot be classified as Indigenous or as Kardecian mediums (Miriam, Luz, Juanita and Luisa). These mediums seem to be moving in two directions: moving away from Indigenous **Espiritismo** but also moving towards it. They hold several values attributed to Indigenous **Espiritismo** but they have developed values which are not congruent with it. I am calling this group the "mediums in transition". These mediums have made several innovations to the indigenous spiritist model but their

practices are still very much characterized by indigenous elements.

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

A. Use of ritual objects

1. Indigenous mediums:

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

mediums if "they use them with faith".

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

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

it was difficult for her to feel the guides' vibration or **fluído**. The ritual objects help her to make contact with the guides.

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

2. Kardecian mediums:

None of the Kardecian mediums are using ritual objects in their healing practices. Peruchín and Emiliano remarked that they have never used ritual objects, considering the mediums who use them as

ignorant. However Peruchín said that the use of ritual objects may have the function of increasing the medium's self-confidence in his or her healing power.

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

Rosa's decision to stop using ritual objects in her practice as a medium was very much influenced by the philosophy of the spiritist center she is attending which is based on Kardecian **Espiritismo**.

However she still considers that using some of these objects increases the medium's power to heal others. She believes it is more effective to use a handkerchief when giving a **despojo** than not to use one.

3. Mediums in transition:

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

Miriam and Juanita used ritual objects in the beginning but at some point in their development

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

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

B. Unconscious mediumistic trance

1. Indigenous mediums:

With the exception of Mayo, all the other Indigenous mediums usually go into an unconscious trance for any kind of spirit manifestation. It appears that they prefer this kind of trance state in

order to **pasar** the spirits. This preference may be influenced by a popular belief within Indigenous **Espiritismo** which considers unconscious mediums better than conscious ones. The unconscious mediums are seen as the ideal mediums because they do not "contaminate" the communication from the spirits.

2. Kardecian mediums:

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

3. Mediums in transition:

Similar to the Kardecian mediums, this group also prefers to go into a conscious trance state in order to contact the spirit world. They said that to be conscious helps them to have more control over the spirit manifestations. These mediums believe that

the unconscious mediums have less control over the spirit communication, which makes them unable to control the inappropriate language of the ignorant spirits.

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

1. Indigenous mediums:

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

2. Kardecian mediums:

Two mediums in this group are opposed to the working of **causas** as it is usually done in indigenous

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

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

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

this group.

3. Mediums in transition:

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

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

Luz and Luisa's approach to educating the spirits is not to **pasar** the spirits but to talk "mentally" with them. They will agree to be taken by the spirits when there is no other alternative. For Miriam, **pasar** the ignorant spirit is an important dimension of the healing work but she also prefers to

help a person without having to do that.

D. Use of a folkloric spiritist vocabulary

1. Indigenous mediums:

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

I consider the folkloric spiritist vocabulary a great contribution because it helps the community to articulate issues of healing and illness by using its own concepts. Experiences of healing and illness

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

2. Kardecian mediums:

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

As I described before, Félix uses concepts from the field of parapsychology such as "telepathy", "**aura**", "telekinesis", and "extrasensory faculties" among others. He also uses concepts from psychology

such as "the unconscious", "hypnotism" and "suggestion". However Félix still uses several concepts from the folkloric spiritist vocabulary (**causa, despojo, consulta, templo**).

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

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

3. Mediums in Transition:

With very few exceptions, this group of mediums described their experiences using a vocabulary based on Indigenous **Espiritismo**. These four mediums talk about their development employing concepts such as **despojo, causa, pasar** the spirits, and **protecciones**.

They have not adopted concepts from parapsychology, psychology, or metaphysics in order to conceptualize their practices.

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

1. Indigenous mediums:

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

For the Indigenous mediums there is no conflict between being Catholic and Espiritista at the same time. Most of them consider Catholicism to be a complement of **Espiritismo**. At a theoretical level they define **Espiritismo** as a "science" which give

them the opportunity to be Catholic without experiencing any kind of "dissonance". Gela was the only Indigenous medium who stated that her religion was **Espiritismo**, making clear that she meant "Christian **Espiritismo**". The rest of them declared that they were Christian or Catholic.

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

2. Kardecian mediums:

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

he is opposed to the idea of transforming the spiritist centers into temples or churches.

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

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

3. Mediums in Transition:

Luz and Juanita sustain the idea that **Espiritismo** is a science, not a religion. They are also against the mix of **Espiritismo** with other religions. Luz believes that religions enslave human beings because one has to believe with blind faith. In the practice of **Espiritismo**, Juanita is more open to the integration of religious elements. She

celebrates most of the important religious holidays at her center. Also she believes that prayers and religious hymns have a positive function in the practice of **Espiritismo**.

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

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

1. Indigenous mediums:

Most of the Indigenous mediums believe that the intellectual dimension is not essential in the development of a medium. To acquire knowledge about **Espiritismo** by reading books is not emphasized. This

kind of knowledge is not considered very valuable because it is obtained by "material means". According to them, a good medium should base his or her spiritist practice on knowledge obtained from the spirit world.

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

It seems to me that most Indigenous mediums are not criticizing intellectual knowledge per se but the excessive reliance on this kind of knowledge at the expense of the mediums's personal experience and knowledge obtained from the spirits. Only Gela remarked that she has not read any book on

Espiritismo. The other mediums maintained that the reading of Kardec's books was helpful in their development as mediums. As Áurea expressed:

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

2. Kardecian mediums:

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

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

Most of the scientific **Espiritistas** believe that wisdom is found in books.

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

3. Mediums in Transition:

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

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

G. Healing techniques

1. Indigenous mediums:

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

2. Kardecian mediums:

Of the five mediums in this group, four have replaced traditional healing techniques with "modern" psychological techniques. Félix's healing approach is based on hypnotism, magnetism and suggestion. He very rarely uses traditional healing techniques. Peruchín, Emiliano and Marcos use relaxation techniques, guided imagery, music therapy, massage, and meditation. Marcos referred to the working of **causas** as a counseling process in which a medium has to use therapeutic techniques in order to help the ignorant spirits.

Rosa is attending a center which is against the use of traditional healing techniques. She has begun to substitute most of the traditional techniques, although she still relies on some of them when she is

working as a medium out of the center. Rosa's position is that when her guides get enough education, she will not have to use traditional techniques anymore.

3. Mediums in Transition:

These mediums have continued using healing techniques which are based on Indigenous **Espiritismo**. Although they have abandoned the use of ritual objects, their practices are still based on the prescription of herbs, the giving of **despojos**, the use of magnetized water and prayers.

H. Pruebas

1. Indigenous mediums:

Four mediums in this group consider themselves to be "mediums of **pruebas**" (Generosa, Aida, Aurea, Mayo). Mediums of **pruebas** is an emic category which refers to those mediums who in their development have undergone a great deal of suffering, illness and/or problems of any nature. The purpose of the **prueba** is to purify the medium's own spirit and body from imperfections and defects. These four mediums believe that the attitude toward the **prueba** should be one of acceptance and resignation. In their stories,

they greatly emphasized the essential role that **pruebas** have in mediumship development. As Áurea declared: "I do not want anybody to take away my **pruebas**".

Gela and Diana said that they have not experienced **pruebas**. Ernesto declared that although he has undergone several **pruebas**, he does not think that one has to suffer in order to become a good medium. In contrast to other Indigenous mediums Ernesto believes that resignation is not the best attitude toward the **prueba** but "one has to confront the **prueba** and make an effort to change the circumstances which cause it".

2. Kardecian mediums:

None of these mediums consider themselves to be "mediums of pruebas". Moreover some of them (Emiliano, Rosa and Félix) criticized the validity of the concept of **prueba**. For Emiliano it is senseless to believe that God is testing people by making them suffer several trials. In addition, he criticized those mediums who believe that one develops **facultades** through the suffering of **pruebas**. He argued that suffering in itself does not make a medium better - he or she has to learn from and be

changed by it.

Marcos and Peruchín believe in the concept of **pruebas**, considering that some mediums have to suffer **pruebas** in order to accept that they must develop **facultades**. Peruchín made the point that **pruebas** help a medium be more sensitive to the spirit world.

3. Mediums in Transition:

Two mediums in this group, Juanita and Luz, described themselves as "mediums of **pruebas**". They recognized that their decision to become mediums was strongly influenced by the **pruebas** they were suffering. Juanita and Luz saw the **pruebas** as an instrument of their education as mediums.

Miriam and Luisa told their stories making very little reference to **pruebas**. However both of them agreed that through **pruebas** individuals can purify their spirits. Miriam compared the **prueba** to a test that one has to pass in order to fulfill the standards of a course.