Presentations of the paranormal: The impression management strategies and professionalization tactics of psychics and spirit mediums

Abstract

This is a study of psychics and spirit mediums. It focuses on concepts of deviance neutralization and professionalization. Using a literary ethnography, it identifies five types of psychics and mediums. They are charismatic, intraorganizational, cross-occupational, interorganizational, and charlatans. The findings show that each fight off the stigma associated with working with the "paranormal." This often involves various impression management strategies and professionalization tactics. These strategies and tactics have created acceptance by the dominant culture in traditional fields. They have also opened the door for a "psychic liberation movement" that is seeking to further the use of metaphysics in everyday life. This analysis builds on other studies of paranormal beliefs. It specifically complements a recent study by Evans, Forsyth, and Foreman (2003) examining stigma management among psychics.

Impression management strategies has a lot to do with the protection and maintenance of power and has an impact on organization's culture and performance (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Jones & Pittman offered five strategies of impression management: Self-Promotion, Ingratiation, Exemplification, Intimidation and Supplication. Use of a particular strategy depends on what attribution the first party is seeking from the second party. Also these strategies can be used independently of one another (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Supplication is used by individuals who are not able to use any of the strategies presented previously, as it involves exploiting ones weaknesses.