GYPSY FORTUNE-TELLING IN HOUSTON:
The Study of a Profession

by

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ABSTRACT
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This study deals with the Gypsy subculture in Harris County, Texas, and focuses upon the profession of fortune-telling. A review of the literature on the Gypsy in twentieth-century America is undertaken, and this information is related to contemporary Gypsy life in Harris County.

Approximately forty-five sedentary Gypsy families reside in Harris County, the majority centered in Houston. These Gypsies retain their ethnic identity, speak Romany, maintain a tribal organization, arrange marriages with the customary bride-price and observe other basic traditions.

Fortune-telling is the exclusive and sole profession of the female Gypsy and probably provides the principal source of income to the Gypsy community. Data about fortune-telling were obtained primarily from examination of Gypsy advertising, case histories from clients of the Gypsy, and consultation with six Gypsy practitioners.

Gypsy fortune-tellers appeal to Negro, white, and Mexican-American clients by costly and extensive advertising that emphasizes culturally legitimized traditions of each group. For blacks the Gypsy is often identified as a spiritual advisor or may assume the role of a conjurer; for whites she serves as a counselor, palm reader, or handwriting analyst; and for Mexican-Americans she may pose as a
Catholic Sister or as a curandera. The same practitioner may advertise simultaneously to all three groups.

Case histories were obtained from former clients of Gypsies as well as ten subjects who responded by telephone to a Gypsy-type advertisement that was placed by the author in a local black newspaper. Most of the individuals were born in Southern states and had seen faith healers, Indian readers, as well as several local Gypsy spiritual advisors. Advice was sought for a variety of matters and several clients seemed in need of medical attention. The Gypsy fortuneteller was not recognized as a Gypsy per se but was viewed as an authentic agent of God. Clients often expressed dissatisfaction over the Gypsy's high prices and ineffective treatment.

The writer consulted six Gypsy fortune-tellers in the context of a fortune-telling session. A highly stereotyped style of fortune-telling is practiced, with prophecies about the distant future, the past, and the present made in that order and in terms of similar categories.

Highly rational advertisements and adoption of current modes of divination may suggest some acculturation in the fortune-telling profession among Gypsies. Samples of advertising in other large cities are almost identical in form and content and Gypsies have continually modified their style of divination to fit popular demand. It is proposed that Gypsy fortune-telling remains a traditional profession and provides information that is relevant to the study of Gypsy culture.
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Although various estimates place the number of Gypsies living in the United States between 100,000 (*Colliers Encyclopedia*, 16: 341, 1967) and 200,000 (Lynden, 1967: 42) remarkably few publications devoted to the American Gypsy have appeared in professional journals in the last three decades (Bonos, 1942; Weybright, 1945; Murin, 1950; Cotten, 1951; Coker, 1966; Clark 1967; Gropper, 1967; and Cohen, 1969). Four unpublished theses (Cotten, 1950; Harper, 1951; Bhatia, 1963; and Miller, 1968), a number of articles appearing in popular magazines, and a variety of newspaper accounts constitute the other major printed sources of information about the American Gypsy.

This study reviews literature on the Gypsy in twentieth-century America and relates this information to contemporary Gypsy life in Harris County, Texas. Particular attention is placed upon describing the chief occupation of the Gypsies; i.e., fortune-telling, including its economic and social significance to both the practitioner and her client.

The lack of reliable and complete research concerning the American Gypsy can be traced to several factors. Gypsies have maintained a closed society and have been strikingly untouched by the surrounding *gajo* (non-Gypsy) world. Gypsies speak a traditional
language called Romany, which is unwritten and has only one modern English translation (Bhatia, 1963). Marriage is still arranged. Behavior is governed by a legal system called the kris. Since most Gypsies live under constant fear of being arrested for various illegal practices used in producing their income, few investigators have ever become familiar with the life styles of the Gypsies. The study of fortune-telling is a particularly difficult area. Jan Yoors, who became accepted as a member of a band of Lowara Gypsies in Europe and travelled with them for several years, was forbidden to discuss the subject of fortune-telling. Yoors found that fortune-telling carried a double restriction: it was practiced exclusively by women and directed exclusively to gajos (Yoors, 1967). The study of Gypsy fortune-telling has, consequently, received little attention.

This study is organized into sections concerning 1) United States Gypsy social organization, 2) Gypsy beliefs and practices, 3) migratory and sedentary groups, and 4) the profession of fortune-telling. In each section an attempt is made to relate American Gypsy twentieth-century references to Gypsies currently living in Houston.
Origin of the Gypsies

At least two lines of evidence -- analysis of blood type and analysis of language -- indicate that all Gypsies originated in India. One of the earliest discoveries of the genetical method was the finding that the blood type of Hungarian Gypsies is distinctly different from other Hungarians but similar to people of India (Boyd, 1963). Secondly, linguists have found that Romany, the international language of most Gypsies, is derived from two of the Indic groups of Indo-European languages, Sanskrit and modern Hindustani (Bhatia, 1963: 3). The root of the word Romany is Rom which means people or men (Clebert, 1963: 123). Gypsies call their people the Romany Rye, the latter term meaning gentlemen. The use of the term Rom designates Gypsy people.

A concise statement concerning the migration of the Rom is provided in the following excerpt (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 10: 1077, 1967):

Neither the precise date when they left India nor the reason for their exodus is known, but it is probable that they left on a number of occasions and for different reasons. It is generally accepted that they were to be found in Persia by A.D. 1000, and that they then split into two branches, one traveling south and west through Egypt and the north, the other taking the southern route into Europe and the Balkans. They spread westward into Hungary and by 1417 had reached the western parts of Germany. By 1422 they arrived at
Bologna, and by 1427, were encamped at the gates of Paris. There are records of their being found in Russia, Poland, Great Britain and Sweden during the early years of the 16th century.

With their journey to various countries, Romany itself was altered so that Syrian, Armenian, and European dialects can be identified (Colliers Encyclopedia, Vol. 20, 1967: 167). Among the highly acculturated English Gypsies (Cuttriss, 1915: 198) Romany is spoken with an irregular admixture of English words. Most American Gypsies speak a hybrid form of Romany, but a few speak a Serbo-Croatian tongue (Mitchell, 1955: 57) that Romany-speaking Gypsies cannot ordinarily understand. Several of Houston's Gypsies claimed they spoke "pure" Romany. When they spoke to each other in Romany, however, a number of English words could be detected.

Since their migration from India, the Gypsies have been identified with a number of occupations including fortune-telling, entertaining, horse trading, and metal working (Clebert, 1963: 96). That Gypsies have been long identified with fortune-telling is indicated by Borrow (1901: 102).

In all times, since we have known anything of these women, they have been addicted to and famous for fortune-telling; indeed, it is their only ostensible means of livelihood, though they have various others which they pursue more secretly. Where and how they first learned the practice we do not know; they may have brought it with them from the East, or they may have adopted it, which is less
likely, after their arrival in Europe.

The origin of the word "Gypsy" derives from the term "Egyptian" which was applied to all mountebanks and traveling showmen in Europe. When Gypsies entered a town they would bestow the title "Duke of Egypt" or "Earl of Little Egypt" upon their chief. To this day some fortune-tellers still call themselves "Egyptians." Other terms used to describe the Gypsies are "Bohemian" in France, "Flemish" in Sweden, "Tartars" in the Netherlands, and "Heathens" in parts of Germany. (Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. 10, 1967: 1076).

The first Gypsies in America were transported from Scotland to Virginia in 1715 to work on plantations, and others were deported from Holland and France in early colonial times (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 10, 1967: 1076). According to Brown (1927: 11) some fused with the Dutch families of Manhattan and the Creoles of the South; other Gypsies, the Chikeners, followed the Pennsylvania Dutch from the Rhine country.

Some evidence indicates that there was intermarriage with American Indians. Parry (1941) noted that a Gypsy leader named Steve Kaslov, who was born in Georgia in 1888, claimed his mother was a Cherokee Indian. Bercovici (1929: 272) also indicates that such intermarriage probably occurred. Of interest in this regard is the claim of one of my Gypsy informants, a woman of seventy
who calls herself Sister Annie, that she is half Indian. Many Gypsy fortune-tellers, particularly those located off main highways, have large signs with an Indian chief or maiden and the words "Indian Reader, open every day from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. including Sundays and holidays." Though American Indian extraction may have a part in this, a more likely explanation is that the identification with an American Indian is far less threatening to potential customers than is identification as a Gypsy.¹

Today, most Gypsies live in the larger American cities, though a few are nomadic like their forebearers in Europe. The heaviest migration of Gypsies occurred since the latter half of the 19th century when half of these immigrants came from Eastern Europe to the United States (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 10, 1967: 1076).

The customs and beliefs of American Gypsies usually apply to their European counterparts. On this point, Clebert observes (1963: 216, translator's note):

It is indeed strikingly remarkable that, in spite of the Atlantic Ocean and the distance of separation between American Gypsies and their roots in Europe, the Near

¹Several Gypsies interviewed in Houston claimed their earliest ancestors were from Eastern Europe, including Serbia, Romania, and Yugoslavia.
East, or countries of the Communist world, the general pattern of Gypsy life remains fundamentally more or less the same as that of Europe.

Social Units

According to legend, the original Rom gave rise to a number of distinct tribes, the Lowara or rulers, the Macvaya or tradesmen, the Kalderaşa or coppersmiths, the Churara or warriors, and the Sendi or outcasts (Lynden, 1967). The Lowara, a prominent tribe in Europe, is rarely encountered in the United States. In the New York area, Gropper (1967: 1051) observed that they were referred to as French Gypsies. The Macvaya is a well established tribe in the United States but little is known about them in Europe. Gropper (1967: 1051) speculated that this was a small tribal group that immigrated to the United States in the 1880's and 1890's. Cotten (1950: 16) estimated that half of the American Gypsies were Kalderaşa, an extremely large and diversified tribe both in the United States and in Europe. I have seen no mention of Churara or Sendi Gypsies in literature dealing with American Gypsies.

Numerous lineages derive from each of the tribes. A member of a lineage can trace his ancestry back to a real or fictional member of a given tribe. All members of a lineage who trace their ancestry to a male member identify themselves as a vitsa. All members of a
lineage who trace their ancestry to a female member identify themselves as a mina (Mitchell, 1955: 57).

Some of the vitsas and minas have descriptive titles such as Saporeschti (the snakes), Cuneschti (the knifers) and Foosoo Yarri (the bean eaters). Legendary attributes are given to some famous ancestors. Mina Demetre of the Ma'bvaya tribe is said to have fathered thirty children and to have lived to be 120 years old. Four brothers of Demetre left Russia -- Zlatcho, Groffo, Bortchi, and Wasso -- and each formed a separate vitsa (Mitchell, 1955: 57). One local Gypsy, who calls himself Frank Wasso Marks, retains the middle name Wasso to indicate his vitsa.

Gypsies who do not identify themselves as a member of a particular vitsa or mina may use geographic lines. The Rusorie are Gypsies who have traveled largely in Russia, the Ungeresorie are from Hungary, and the Horolane are from Turkey. A single group, however, may use both vitsa and geographic lines (Brown, 1927: 9).

Gropper (1967: 1051) observed that while in theory a vitsa is patrilineally defined, a husband and his family have the right to affiliate with any vitsa with whom paternal or maternal consanguineal ties can be claimed. The husband also has the right to vitsa membership on the basis of marriage ties.
The size of a *vitsa* varies from under 20 to over 200 adults. Some *vitsas*, particularly larger ones, are prestigious to belong to. A *vitsa* becomes powerful, in part, through having many adult male members; and Gropper noted a tendency for small *vitsas* to align with larger ones. Beyond a certain size, however, the *vitsa* is less able to protect its members from legal prosecutions. Nomadic *vitsas* beyond a certain size have difficulty in supporting all of the group.

Gypsies who came to the United States often adopted the surname that appeared on a stolen passport or any name that struck their fancy. Even with their new names, however, they still retained an awareness of their respective *vitsas* or *minas*. Mitchell (1955) has provided a description of 23 *vitsas* to be found in New York City, which included Gypsies who identified themselves as Russian, Serbian, Kalderasa, Argentinian, Mexican, Macvaya, and Greek. For example, the *vitsa* names Jainkureschti, Macholeschti, Richurchti, Wankuraschti, Gureschti, and Yotzurschti belong to the Gypsies who presently use the last names of Stevens, Thompson, Ristick, Johnson, Marks, Evans, Wunko, Eli, Stanley, Demetro, Urich, Costello, Ephraim, and Morgan. The same last name, such as Evans, may often have numerous *vitsas* to which it could belong, making it impossible to identify an individual's *vitsa* on the basis of
his last name alone. Two of Houston's prominent groups of Gypsies, the Adams and the Georges, both claim Serbia as their home and are believed to be Mačvaya tribesmen. The Adams are thought to be members of the Koleschti vitsa.

Members of the same vitsa represent more than a theoretical entity. During the funeral of a prominent leader, all vitsa members are expected to journey from their homes or trailers in various parts of the United States to pay their last respects. ²

Gypsy Occupations in the United States

In spite of rapid technological change, Gypsies engage in essentially the same classes of occupations as did their ancestors centuries ago, with only few exceptions. While fortune-telling, as we have already noted, is the exclusive occupation of women, most males, when they are employed, have traditionally been associated with metal working, horse trading, and entertainment.

Kalderasâ Gypsies in particular have been professional tinkers, and have repaired items such as copper kettles, copper cooking utensils, boilers, and brass pots. Others have been blacksmiths

²The selective use of the mina among American Gypsies has received little study and information is unavailable to the writer.
The mass-production of iron and steel utensils in the 1930's made the sale of hand-made copper articles extremely difficult. Since factory-produced metal goods were relatively inexpensive, Gypsies found it hard to earn money by repairing such broken objects (Cotten, 1951: 24). Today, their talent has been applied to repairing automobile bodies; and some Gypsies in Southern California have a prosperous business of cleaning and repairing grocery carts.

The traditional Gypsy horse trader, the chief occupation of the male Gypsy, has now been replaced by the Gypsy car dealer. Most of Portland's eastside Gypsies drive used cars from California to Oregon, where they are sold at a profit (Oregonian, September 21, 1966). Several members of the Adams tribe, including Houston boss Gus Adams and two of his sons, John and Lou, have sold used cars in the Houston area. In the George tribe, the new groom of one of Leo George's daughters sells automobiles at the bride's house (Sister Rita's fortune-telling parlor), where he currently resides.

Male Gypsies are commonly employed as jugglers, acrobats, or animal trainers at American carnivals. The women are almost always fortune-tellers (Houston Post, February 17, 1960).

As long as Gypsies can make a good living from these
traditional occupations, there is little prospect of their entering into other trades. Lack of formal education in most cases favors continuation of the traditional trades.

Gypsies and Gajo Law

To understand the context in which the occupation of fortune-telling is practiced, it is instructive to consider some of the legal steps taken against the occupation. The 1824 Vagrancy Act, which is still in force in Britain, condemns as a vagrant:

> every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes, using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any of Her Majesty's subjects..." (Ralph, 1952: 425)

Laws in the United States are similarly written. According to the Texas Penal Code, for example, Article 607 under the heading of Vagrancy reads, "The following persons are and shall be punished as Vagrants," including "All companies of gypsies, who, in whole or in part, maintain themselves by telling fortunes," (Paragraph 7, Article 607), as well as "All persons who advertise and maintain themselves in whole or in part as clairvoyants or foretellers of future events, or as having supernatural knowledge with respect to present or future conditions, transactions, happenings or events." (Paragraph 13, Article 607). These latter two sections, according to local officers, have recently been declared unconstitutional.
That Gypsies are suspicious of gajos may in part be due to the way in which they were treated by the police. The attitude of various law enforcement officials is reflected in a general assignment bulletin of the Miami Police Department.

What can be done about the infiltration of Gypsy thieves? Well, here are suggestions from representative officers from around the state: . . .

Immediately fingerprint all arrested gypsies, no matter how minor the charge. They may be wanted for other jurisdictions. Widespread and consistent enforcement pressure of this type throughout Florida should go a long way toward ridding this state of these undesirables.

An example of fingerprinting Gypsies on a minor charge was the subject of a legal case in Houston. On Christmas Eve, Gypsies in a trailer camp had been arrested for connecting a plug onto an outside electric outlet. Seven adults and seventeen children were fingerprinted and imprisoned for the night. Officers observed that instead of singing Christmas carols, the Gypsies had been singing popular songs like "Goodnight Irene" and "Your Cheatin' Heart."

The lawyer who was involved in this particular case told me of a male Gypsy in his early twenties, who had been jailed for driving a stolen automobile. The law permits only one call to a prisoner, and since the person was new to town and illiterate, he knew of no one to call. The lawyer happened to notice the jailed Gypsy a month later and managed to release him.
On the other hand, Gypsies have notoriously taken advantage of gajo officers. According to the Miami Police Department, officers who have made frequent arrests of fortune-tellers have been accused by anonymous phone calls of having sexually assaulted a fortune-teller. In addition, wealthy Gypsies are said to pay off various lawyers or judges in order to avoid being convicted of telling fortunes (Brown, 1924: 105).

**Family Structure**

Coker (1966) offered some insight into the patterns of social organization and the family structure of Gypsies living in Philadelphia. Three major residential patterns were observed:

1. The most permanent type, the patrilocal extended family, consists usually of an old couple who live with some or all of their married sons, their sons' wives and children, as well as all of the elder couple's unmarried daughters and sons. The daughters leave the patrilocal extended family to live in the home of their husband's parents once they become married.

Two families in Houston have been identified as the patrilocal extended form. The married son usually has private quarters in the form of a garage apartment to provide him a measure of privacy. The length of time the married son may live in the same family is
indefinite and may range from a year to twenty-five years or more. Coker wrote that the length of stay may last up to the time the
son's children are of marriageable age (1966).

2. A second, less stable form is the nuclear family. Such
a family might consist of a middle-aged couple with half grown but
unmarried children. The main reason why the nuclear family is
unstable is a relatively high rate of divorce or separation. In the
case of divorce, the mother ordinarily is assumed responsible for
the children.

3. A relatively rare form, the joint fraternal family,
consists of two or more brothers, their wives and children. In
the late 1950's when a band of Gypsies had ventured from California
to Houston, a number temporarily assumed a joint fraternal form.

Coker used the adjectives "suspicious" and "uncooperative"
to describe interfamily relations. He maintained that Gypsies often
distrusted Gypsies of other statuses. In Houston, two tribes ordinarily
exclude a third tribe of Gypsies from their social ties. Nevertheless,
Gypsies cooperate in a number of ways. During police arrests, all
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local households are alerted. Gypsies of different families help

each other with their fortune-telling businesses. Families cooperate by distributing each other's advertisements and by offering to a family about to take a vacation the services of one of their own fortune-tellers. In addition to numerous feast days which bring various collectivities of Gypsies together, almost all Gypsies attend the annual Greek festival which is held at a local Greek Orthodox church. All Gypsies except hated enemies attend each other's funerals.

Gypsy Leaders

Some sources claim that Gypsy leaders have always been matriarchs. Clevert (1963: 58) for example, wrote:

... from the first years of their stay in Europe, the Gypsies lived in closed tribes and that if each tribe was officially led by a chief, it was a woman, true to the race and aged, who governed this matriarchal-type in a more or less occult way.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (Vol. 10, 1963: 1076) maintains that Gypsy tribes are still matriarchal, each having a tribal mother known as a puri dai, who acts as a guardian of the tribe's moral code. Additional evidence in support of this view is offered by Starkie (1963: 28) who noted that in the past, a man once married became a member of his wife's family as well as their children.

On the basis of publications concerning the American Gypsy, the social organization of each vitsa, or collectivity, cannot be
considered matriarchal. Even so, as the principal bread winner, the woman has substantial, implicit control over the finances of a single family. When the men get any money, they give it to their wives for safe-keeping or for needed goods (Cotten, 1951: 19). Elder women are occasionally given the status of a respected elder, with moral influence rather than legal power. Inheritance, however, is said to go to the eldest female in the family. The newspapers occasionally carry an article dealing with the death of a "Gypsy Queen." The title of "Queen," however, is almost always bestowed upon the individual posthumously. By the same token, there are no real "Kings" of all the Gypsies, even though there are numerous male leaders. There are at least two forms of leaders. One is the head of an entire vitsa. The other refers to a local chief who is usually a self-appointed leader whose principal responsibility is to protect his followers from the police.

Gypsies of wealth and authority have often attempted to band together as many families as possible for mutual help and protection. Such leaders may derive their authority by inheriting the position, by being chosen by a tribal council, or by a popular vote. In the case of elections, Brown wrote (1927: 9):3

3It is not clear how local leaders acquire their authority.
An aspirant to chieftainship sends out messengers to announce an election, usually is in the first hall of some large city. The Gypsy selected collects a tax from his supporters, and demands a certain obedience. In return he pledges himself to fight their battles with the law, or with other Romanies outside the organization, to lend them money in case of need, and to entertain them royally when they visit him.

Bonos (1942) delineated some of the characteristics of such a leader. He must have influence to merit the support of his followers, and wealth for financial and political aid in case of arrests, trouble, and prosecution. It is his role to issue tribal decrees, to preside over or represent tribal members at all big celebrations, and to provide food, drink, gifts, and entertainment during the Christmas feast. Sometimes he is the spokesman for a number of families who are collecting welfare or relief benefits. Finally, it is his responsibility to protect the fortune-tellers he represents from police interference. In return for his services the leader collects a tax from each family under his protection. 4

To protect his members from gajo law enforcers, the chief may send a representative to the local police. For example, Yoors (1967: 95) observed that a member of his Gypsy caravan identified himself to the Chief of Police as "The King of the Gypsies," in order to persuade the

4 For an account of various leaders in New York City, see Gropper (1967: 1051-1055).
police to grant the caravan temporary permission to camp at a certain site. The Gypsy claimed, "This is the eve of a great religious feast among my people, the feast of the patron saint of all Gypsies."

In Houston two Gypsies pose as "King" of their respective organizations of Gypsies in order to deal with the local police force. These two "kings," who are actually following the directions of their leaders, have worked out an informal agreement with the Vice Squad.

Brown (1927: 9) has also noted that the system of chieftainship sometimes leads to exploitation. The thousands of dollars the local Gypsy chiefs are reported to collect each month for police protection, a tax commonly referred to as "protection money," is not used to bribe various officers. Instead, the chiefs become remarkably prosperous. Evidence that this occurs in Houston is presented in a later section.

A local "king" may be "dethroned," forced out of town by his own subjects, if he is unable to fulfill the terms of his obligations. For example, a local chieftain named George Adams had been run out of town following numerous arrests of the females in his group.

Cooperation with the police is common in other cities as well. In Portland, for example, Harper observed (1951: 8) that, the families cooperate with the police to the extent of warning
them of the arrival of other gypsies who may cause trouble, commit fortune-telling swindles that would be unfavorable to the reputation of the established gypsies in the community and most importantly interfere with the number of free clients. (That is, the number of potential customers).
Naming Practices

Each Gypsy received or adopts a variety of different names. An attempt to classify the various forms of names becomes rather complicated since most Gypsies are reluctant to discuss anything as confidential as one's real, secret, Gypsy name. A number of different names are applied under the following conditions:

1. After birth an infant receives a secret name which he is given during his Baptism or at an early age. The name is never used by the individual in his life, but appears on his tombstone.

2. Each infant receives an "American" name which is to be used at school or among the gajos.

3. Most children have nicknames. Adults also have nicknames which are commonly applied. Nicknames like One-handed, Colonel, Eagle, Driedwood, and Bald pate are supposed to reflect attributes of the person so named (Starkie, 1937: 377). A prominent local leader with a large nose is invariably called "Big Nose."

4. The child may use both his mother's and father's vitsa name, depending on whether the parents belong to the same or to a different vitsa (Coker, 1966). The vitsa name may be used as a
middle name.

5. Adler wrote (1960: 66) that the first son customarily receives the name of his father, the first daughter the name of her mother. Presumably this name would be either the "secret" name or the name used for gajos.

6. Certain popular names such as Adams, Williamson, or George are adopted by families under the protection of a leader who happens to have that surname. The same name may be adopted in differing parts of the United States such as Los Angeles, Houston, Tampa, and New York City.

7. Gypsy surnames may be of ancient derivation or anglicized. Stefanovich may become Stevens, and Mixail becomes Mitchell (Brown, 1927: 20).

8. Gypsy fortune-tellers adopt a variety of names either to hide their identity or to determine which name brings the most customers. One practitioner used the professional names of Sister Gaylor, Sister DeAngelo, and Sister Sandra before sticking to the name of Sister Gaylor.

9. Names are instantly invented when a family is investigated by a gajo. Starkie wrote that:

   Even when they look upon you as a friend they will give you false names and you can only find out the correct ones by listening intently to what they say amongst themselves in Romany when they do not think the
gorgio (gajo) is listening. (Starkie, 1937: 110).

10. When a Gypsy is seriously ill, reported Adler (1960: 66), he may change his name in hope of becoming an entirely different, healthy person.

In ordinary life most Gypsies go by a first name only, though it is not entirely clear which class of first name is used. Some of the common first names used are Peppa, Mara, Zarko, Ellia, and Johnos (Bonos, 1942). Nevertheless, with the great variety of names not much concern is attached to one's name (except in the case of illness). A great-grandmother, Adler reported, had actually forgotten her earliest Gypsy first name (Adler, 1960: 66). The preceding discussion offers a warning to future researchers regarding the complexity of Gypsy naming practices.

**Ethnomedical Beliefs**

At the time of delivery the mother is considered unclean. She is provided with separate food and utensils. According to ancient custom she should give birth outdoors. Her period of "uncleanness" lasts for a week or so. An old Gypsy woman living in Houston, who described the custom, stated that today most women have their children delivered at a hospital. Some years ago at a large hospital in Houston, a Gypsy mother and her infant
of only a couple of days escaped from the hospital with her husband and avoided paying the medical bill.

Reference to the belief in "evil eye" was noted by Cuttriss (1915: 251) who observed that coral shells were attached to the caps of small children to protect them from the malady. An individual who is reasonably acquainted with a couple of families reports that at least some of Houston's Gypsies believe in "evil eye." According to the belief, some individuals possess a glance that can induce illness or even death on weaker, more benevolent mortals, particularly small, attractive children. In this respect, the belief parallels the form of "evil eye" as it is accepted in much of Latin America today. Unlike the Latin American form, Gypsies also believe that evil from the "evil eye" has the power to attach itself to valued possessions, possibly to render them unlucky or unclean. To counter this effect, shells, particularly coral shells, are affixed to possessions that are not highly valued such as trappings of camels, horses, or other animals. The coral attracts the sight of the evil eye but distracts it from more precious objects (Cuttriss, 1915: 251).

Investigators of European Gypsies have noted the use of coral shells (Leland, 1960: 102 and Starkie, 1963: 282) as well as chants (Leland, 1960: 52), and the use of a bamboo can with a horn
handle (Starkie, 1963: 289) to protect against the effects of "evil eye."

From time to time, a Gypsy fortune-teller will advertise that she has the power to protect against or cure the effects of the "evil eye." For example, Madam Cherokee, Spiritualist, claimed to "remove a curse of the evil eye or any other bad luck." (Forward Times, Houston, Texas, November 16, 1968). Evil eye is diagnosed by the presence of a foreign object, inserted by sleight-of-hand, in the yolk of an egg. Rubel's (1960) study indicates that Latin American curanderas diagnose evil eye in a way that is similar, though not identical, to the way performed by Gypsies.

A second concept of importance is that of "luck." Though Gypsies are becoming increasingly wealthy, lucky charms are used to increase or protect their wealth. Early literature describes the use of pink coral horns in a necklace (Berry, 1902a: 566), gold or silver charms, a bit of bone, a portion of a bat, and a small brass charm (Cuttriss, 1915: 253) to prevent ill luck.

One amusing example of the belief was provided by a local printer. One day a Gypsy and his wife had stopped by, as they periodically did, to pick up their newly printed advertisements. The printer happened to have in his hand a "lucky buckeye" and jokingly said that it would bring good luck to anything it touched. The
husband took the joke entirely seriously. He called back his wife who was on her way back to their Cadillac. Together they performed a small ritual where each said a sentence or two in Romany, one after the other, while passing the lucky buckeye back and forth and then rubbing it against their advertisements.

Though there is probably a considerable residue of beliefs about illness that stem from the earlier beliefs that "every disease is caused by an evil spirit which enters the body and can only be driven out by magic" (Leland, 1962: 13), most Gypsies today use commercial brands of medicines and rely upon the care of the best physicians they can find. Dr. Michael DeBakey and Dr. Denton Cooley have been consulted and have operated on at least one Gypsy patient, but modern medical practice is accompanied by other more traditional practices such as the burning of incense, the use of certain oaths, and the maintenance of a constant vigil around the dying Rom.

**Godparents**

Godparents are selected by Gypsy families in both Europe and the United States for the expressed purpose of helping to baptize their child. When the infant is still only a few weeks old, Godparents are selected from either married or unmarried friends. The Godparents bring the child to the church. He is placed in a container
of holy water mixed with his bathwater. At this time he is given his "official" Gypsy first name which is otherwise kept secret. Along with the new name, the Godparents present him with a new suit (Harper, 1951: 18). After the ceremony the parents hold a breakfast party during which alcoholic beverages are served.

Like the customs of Latin America where compadrazgo is practiced, the Gypsy parents, godchild, and godparents treat each other with polite respect according to formal rules (see Harper, 1951: 17-19). When greeting each other, both the father and godfather raise their hats and bow several times. When parting, it is impolite for one to turn his back on the other. The godfather is always addressed as Kirwo, the godmother as Kirwe. Care is taken not to offend a godparent. Profane behavior such as the telling of dirty jokes is strictly forbidden. A godchild cannot marry a child of his godparents; it would be considered incestuous because of the closeness of the two families. It is not clear, however, what activities determine the closeness of the two families. The godparents are expected to assume responsibility for their godchild if his parents are unable to provide for his care.

Although godparents are almost exclusively selected from among other Gypsies, a gajo occasionally is chosen. Yoors, (1967: 53) writing of European Gypsies, mentioned that at times when
a wealthy landowner liked a particular Gypsy child and acted as a protector for the family, he might receive the honor of becoming the child's godfather. The honor in such instances was more ceremonial than formal.

**Marime (Uncleaness)**

*Marime* is the Romany word for an object or individual that is considered "unclean" or "dirty" (Miller, 1968). Contact with unclean objects is thought to cause all types of disease including cancer, and considerable care is taken to avoid being contaminated (Miller, 1968: 16). During menstruation and six weeks following the birth of a child, a woman is unclean and is banned from all contact with men (Cotten, 1951: 18).

Utensils or dishes that have been used are considered unclean until washed. Under certain circumstances, a cup or dish belonging to a Gypsy, but which had been used by a *gajo*, may be destroyed rather than used. Articles of underclothing are separately washed since they are considered unclean. A woman must not brush her skirt against a pot or against a table where food is placed (Adler, 1960: 58). A woman may make her husband *marime* by intentionally lifting her blouse, or by pulling her blouse over his head.
Gajos are thought of as unclean at all times. After a fortune is told, the Gypsy washes her hands (Miller, 1968: 37-38). Miller notes that the home the Gypsy rents from the gajo may be made "clean" by paint, shelf paper, bleaching powder, and drapes to cover furniture. Houston's Gypsies protect their homes from unclean gajos by placing plastic covers over couches where fortunes are told.

The concept of Gypsy law is intimately involved in the subject of uncleanness and will be discussed in the next section. Violation of Gypsy laws renders the individual unclean. The Romany kris or Gypsy court of law condemns as unclean individuals who have committed any of a wide variety of crimes. Strict prohibitions are placed on women against having extra-marital affairs, though much less emphasis is placed on the husband's extra-marital affairs. The rape of a virgin is considered the worst of all crimes. Marriage with a gajo or with the child of the Godparent is considered a serious crime. The penalty in being declared marime is loss of the privilege to eat with members of the family.

A man at death is considered unclean; and according to the custom of European Gypsies, his property must be set ablaze if he should die within the caravan or in contact with his possessions. This practice will be discussed under the heading of funeral customs.
Romany Kris

According to Gropper (1967: 1092), the semantic boundaries of the word kris refer to the following:

1) the personnel required for court trials; 2) the body of pertinent customary law; 3) the prescribed ritual for holding the trial; and 4) the underlying value system.

The Romany kris or simply kris has the power to condemn a Gypsy as marime as well as to declare the person clean again (uzho). When an individual is accused of a crime, he is brought before the secret court which is said to meet at night. According to Murin (1950: 34), the eldest male in the family of the accused acts as the defendant. The judges are selected from male tribal elders who have the reputation of fairness and may include the local or vitsa leader. The judge or judges are not ordinarily known to the individuals on trial.

Before a new family could occupy the same camp, wrote Adler (1960: 143), the kris had to be held to pass judgment on the state of cleanness of the new band of Gypsies. In these cases the kris was more a formal welcome than an actual legal trial. Adler's account of the kris in Germany is quite interesting. A wise council of elders sits in a darkened room. The family head of the strange family enters, and the door is then shut and bolted. The defendant states,

I swear by almighty God, by my mule (dead ancestors) and by the skull that I speak the truth. Neither I nor
any other member of my family seeking to join your camp have committed a crime which makes us unclean.

The spokesman for the council of elders then says,

God and your mule hear you and know that you speak the truth. May the Lord bless you and may He guide you through your life and bring you happiness.

With this formality concluded, the new family is permitted to join the camp.

In legal matters, the kris may decree that a man judged unclean may not eat or drink with another person until declared uzho (clean), since whoever eats or drinks with an unclean person also becomes unclean (Brown, 1927: 9). The court has the power to exile a member from his tribe. When a spokesman of the Kalderasa Gypsies in Chicago had been convicted by the kris of breaking many laws, he was exiled from his tribe (Weybright, 1927: 35). Brown wrote that the kris exerts a profound influence upon an individual's conduct.

More than one Nomad thus shamed has been driven from the tents in ignominy and his own father and mother forbidden even to speak to him. For a Gypsy there can be no greater punishment. . . . Gypsy law has no policemen and no jails. Its strength lies in the moral force of united opinion. (Brown, 1927: 9).

1It is not clear whether the kris has modified its traditional modus operandi or whether it even exists in the Houston area.
Most cases brought before the kris concern marital problems and the return or refund of a bride-price. For example, a runaway bride is cause under some circumstances for a return of the bride-price, though various exceptions to the rule exist. The matter of marriage and divorce is discussed in the following section.

Though the Gypsies may be accused by gajos of being lawless, the assertion is evidently false because the kris has a compelling impact upon Romany conduct. Thus, while Gypsies may not regard the laws of the dominant culture, they are faithful to their own laws. A case cited by Yoors (1967) illustrates the point. In a caravan of European Gypsies, some precious gold coins were missing. Every member of the caravan was called before an improvised kris and was conditionally cursed. That is, if the person were innocent, the curse has no effect; but if the person were guilty, the effect would be dire. No one admitted to stealing the coins. Years after the incident, a dying woman confessed the crime and correctly revealed where the gold was hidden. In confessing, she finally rid herself of the curse the deed had attached to her.

Marriage

Gajos are explicitly excluded as potential brides or grooms among Gypsies, though an occasional unsanctioned marriage does
occur (Brown, 1924: 34-35). Gypsies are also prohibited from marrying a first cousin, from marrying a member of the family of their Godparents, and from marrying Gypsies of various classes or tribes. Members of wealthy families or of high status tribes such as the Lowara are far more restricted in their choice of mates than is a poorer or lower class Gypsy. Two Gypsy groups living in Houston are both thought to be Macvaya tribesmen who judge their origin to be Serbian and have similar if not identical original ancestors. These two groups intermarry. A third group of Gypsies located just outside of Houston are thought to be of a distinctly different status (though it is far from clear whether the status is higher, lower, or simply different) and do not intermarrry, let alone associate with the other Gypsies.

Virtually all Gypsy marriages are arranged. The boy's father, according to tradition, pays a sum of money to the girl's father. The payment is called the bride-price. The price has been estimated by different writers to range between $500 and $1200 (Harper, 1951: 28), between several hundred and several thousand dollars (Mitchell, 1955), and between $2000 and $5000 (Houston Post, January 15, 1961).

The factors that govern the bride-price are many. Yoors (1967: 183) noted some of them:
Aside from her family background and her personal character and temper, they considered her capability of running a household, her patience with small children, her health and physical stamina, her behavior under stress, her ability to tell fortunes, and her willingness to provide for the immediate needs of her prospective family. After these specific qualifications had been discovered, they discussed her cooking and her courtesy in dealing with guests. Lastly, the Rom considered her beauty and her skills as a singer or dancer.

In order to find a bride who meets the above qualifications, the boy's father may visit a number of cities throughout the country. Coker (1966: 85) observed that Gypsies in Philadelphia had kinship ties with others in New York, California, and Texas and that marriages were commonly contracted in these distant states. Recently the father of one Gypsy lad, who was said to be in his early teens, visited Pensacola, Florida, to bring home a potential bride for his son. In the past the son had little influence over the choice of the bride. In this case, however, the son distinctly disapproved of his father's choice; and the marriage was never enacted. As a rule, both bride and groom are under twenty years old, but the bride is frequently a few years older than the groom. The reason for this practice seems to be, as Harper suggests (1951: 23), that the wife is expected to be mature enough to earn a living. The husband is not necessarily expected to be a breadwinner. For that reason extra care is taken by the parents of the prospective groom to select a bride who has definite skill in fortune-telling.
An odd custom, which Harper (1951: 24) cites called the "announcement party," is a party that is held for a young girl who is being reserved for marriage to a particular family. Gold pieces are worn around the neck of the child as an indication of the agreement.

Under ordinary circumstances there are usually two marriage offers, an informal transaction involving the terms of the bride-price and a formal celebration. The celebration has been reported in detail by a number of investigators (Brown, 1924: 53; Farre, 1957: 143; and Harper, 1951: 32) and will not be described here as fully as various other, less documented subjects.

Regional customs are commonly adopted in Gypsy marriages, although certain features are distinctly different from gajo customs. The marriage ceremonies and celebration last about three days. The bride now wears white, though in the past she wore red. During the celebrations the bride must display sadness in having to leave her family. She is expected to cry all day and not want to leave her home. A dowry feast is held. In the center of a large table, a round loaf of French bread called the dowry loaf contains the monetary contributions of friends and relatives of the married couple. The name of the donor and the amount of the gift is announced. Sometimes the nearest relative makes a short gash across the right wrist of the bride and groom. As the
blood flows, the bride turns her arm so that her palm touches the groom's. A white handkerchief is tied around their wrists to unite them. A large feast is served following the blood ceremony.

A scarf (diklo) is hung on a pole to indicate whether the bride is a virgin. If she is, the wedding ceremony is allowed to continue (Murin, 1950: 27, 32, 33). From that time, the wife is expected to wear the diklo when among other Gypsies. No unmarried Gypsy would ever think of wearing one. Houston's fortune-tellers can be observed to wear the diklo; although, a ribbon rather than a scarf is now acceptable. Much less concern is paid to the purity of the prospective groom.

After marriage, the bride-price usually remains with the girl's father. Brown (1924: 53), however, observed that the couple was expected to pay back the groom's father as soon as they could afford to do so, a custom not reported by other investigators.

According to Harper (1951) a newly married couple is required to remain with the bride's parents for a limited probationary period. During this time the father must judge the son-in-law to be a worthy husband. The period of probation is ordinarily nominal, but probably serves the important purpose of introducing the groom to the bride's immediate family. Next, the married
couple is expected to reside in the home of the groom's father for an indefinite period of time.

Although the bride has received intensive training from her mother in the art of fortune-telling, she receives additional instruction from her mother-in-law. On two occasions, I have seen a girl, presumably the newly married bride as indicated by her diklo, intently watching the mother-in-law tell fortunes.

Divorces are common among Gypsies today. Harper's data (1951: 35-36) show this trend to be true of Portland's population, and no particular attempt is taken to prevent divorces unless there are young children in the family. Divorce is relatively easy to obtain, requiring only the mutual agreement of the partners and sometimes the sanction of the kris (Brown, 1924: 37). Legal action by the kris may be taken by the boy's parents to retrieve at least a portion of the bride-price. A full refund, however, is not expected since the girl's virginity is lost and her "resale" value is markedly reduced.

More common than divorce is a "runaway" wife. One local Gypsy couple has been noted for their marital difficulties. According to the girl's parents, the husband is harsh, does not spend his money wisely, and beats his wife. According to the boy's parents, the wife is stingy with the large quantities of money she earns with her
practice, lazy as a housewife, and has a terrible temper. On a number of occasions, the wife took a jet to Los Angeles for a temporary stay with her parents. Each time, the husband had to visit Los Angeles and apologize formally to both his wife and her family. It seems the girl is ordinarily supported by and remains close to her family whether married or not. The same claim is less true of a young male, according to Harper (1951).

Religion

Little is known about the religious beliefs of the Gypsies. Reincarnation may have once been a part of their religion. Marta Adler, the wife of a Gypsy, once heard her husband state:

Old people say that many of our dead who did not live a good life while on earth became animals to be punished for their sins (Adler, 1937: 138).

For example, people with great responsibility who had treated others unjustly as well as the rich who mistreated their servants, would have to return as a horse. An emperor or king who had mistreated his subjects might return as a lion or tiger. Whether these beliefs were generalized among the Rom has not been determined.

Concerning the contemporary nature of Gypsy religion, a number of investigators agree that it consists of a mixture of
ancestor worship and east European Christianity. Yoors (1967: 16-17), for example, wrote the following:

Under a thin veneer of Christianity or of Islam, their true religion remains a form of ancestor worship. Their legal system or kris derives its coercive force from magic based on this concept of ancestry.

Furthermore, the Rom believe that the mule (ancestors or souls of the dead) may also die. There is no heaven or hell but an indefinite hereafter. This is quite close to the Jewish (pre-Christian) belief of Sheol, as it appears in the Old Testament.

Yoors (1967: 175) observed a variety of religious articles among a band of European Lowara Gypsies including a primitively made cross, a small bunch of wild flowers representing the premature death of a member, a yellow wax candle, and several photographs of the dead of the group.

There have been various versions of a story about the crucifixion which Gypsies are supposed to tell. In one version, a Gypsy stole one of the nails (or a silver spike) used to crucify Jesus. For this kindness God granted Gypsies the right to steal wherever they went (Clark, 1967). A second version is found in Clebert (1963: 3-4). When Roman soldiers demanded an old Jew to forge the nails, he refused. The soldiers next found a Gypsy who would do it. He proceeded to forge three of the four nails. The fourth and longest of the nails was to be inserted in the heart, but
it remained hot and red as if a living, bleeding body. The nail followed the forger wherever he went, and it casts its glow to other nails. This nail appears in the tents of Gypsy descendants and signifies that the Rom are condemned to wander the earth.

Most United States Gypsies, when asked their religion, will profess to be either Roman Catholic or of an Eastern Orthodox faith. Berry (1902a: 565) observed Gypsy baptisms in America. He also observed rosaries, pictures of the Madonna, as well as images of the Saints in the wagons of Gypsies who had recently immigrated from Ireland. Parry (1941) reported that New York Gypsies, although not regular church attenders, did not miss Easter or Christmas services at a Greek Orthodox church.

There is some question of the degree to which these religious symbols and practices per se indicate genuine belief. For example, the ofisa (fortune-telling parlor) is prepared to give the appearance of a small, authentic place of worship. The shrine containing pictures of Catholic Saints, candles, and other religious objects may be for the gajo since the shrine does not display the revered photographs of the last Gypsy of a family to die. Such photographs which are cherished by the Rom and are found in most houses or trailers are probably legitimate religious symbols. European Gypsies, however, commonly acknowledge a patron saint, a belief which undoubtedly
Beliefs about Death and Funeral Customs

According to traditional belief, at the moment of death, the corpse becomes "unclean." If the body happens to be touching a particular piece of furniture, e.g., a bed, it too becomes "unclean." As mentioned earlier, it was customary among certain European Gypsies to set ablaze all of a dead person's possessions, caravan, and animals (Farre, 1957: 106). For that reason it was considered essential that a person die outside, to prevent him from contaminating his possessions.

The belief that "uncleanness" or "sickness" can be transmitted through various contaminated objects has its opposite. A person's health may be restored after coming in contact with an object that has been touched by a healthy individual. Clebert (1963: 178) reported that a revered elder "Queen Mimi" became gravely ill and was taken outside. In an attempt to restore her health, she gripped the leg of a chair while a healthy Rom also gripped the chair to transmit his "vital flux."

Most American Gypsies probably now die in hospitals, often after receiving expert care. In 1961, 81 year old John Adams was operated on by Dr. Denton Cooley for a coronary ailment. Gypsies
"camped" in the hospital halls for a number of days until Adams' death was made known.

Although the practice of burning a dead person's possessions is not observed in this country, a corpse is still considered "unclean." American Gypsies avoid touching the "unclean" coffin (Cleveland Press, January 20, 1968) except as pallbearers.

Shortly after the word of death has spread, the friends and relatives come in great numbers to participate in the funeral procession. A number of distinctive practices characterize a Gypsy funeral whether performed in Europe or in America. The ceremony usually lasts for three days. Large bees wax candles are lit continuously, incense burned, and mourners come near the open casket to view the body. The deceased is dressed in his best suit or in her best gown, silk and velvet, with gold jewelry, bracelets, or diamond rings. Sometimes the body is buried with a fortune in gold coins and precious jewelry. Some Gypsies believe that the possessions help the dead individual's journey to an afterlife; some even imply that the wealth is used to bribe saints or religious agents.

During the three day period, men do not shave, wash, or change their clothing. This custom is observed in Europe according to Yoors (1967: 67) and has been observed among local Gypsies.
It is unclear whether women adopt the same practice. The writer has not obtained an explanation for the practice. The custom may have its roots in the belief that the close proximity of a dead person renders the mourner and his clothing unclean.

Yoors (1967: 79) noted that European Gypsy men during the funeral procession formed a distinctive cross-like formation in single file, and "gave themselves totally to sorrow, unlike behavior under any other circumstances." Women expressed their grief by prolonged wailing. In Europe the individual is usually buried while authentic Gypsy music is played. If the ceremony is conducted at a church, it is usually Roman Catholic or Greek, Russian, or Serbian Orthodox. Since Gypsies do not ordinarily register births or deaths with gajo officials and have "unusual" funerals, they are occasionally refused permission to use particular graveyards and may be required to bury their dead secretly (Farre, 1957: 106).

American Gypsies prepare for funerals by purchasing plots of land at various cemeteries. Certain families reserve space for their members in graveyards located in Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Brooklyn, and Miami. The Adams family of Houston, for example, has purchased a number of plots at the Forest Park Lawndale cemetery in north Houston. At this cemetery Frank Adams was buried beside his wife Rose.
The deceased may be transported across the United States in cold storage to be buried at a certain cemetery. Along the way smaller funerals may be held in several cities. For instance when "Queen" Rachel Adams died in Cleveland, Mississippi, in 1966, funeral services were first held in Mississippi. Next, her remains were transported by train to a funeral home in Houston, where she had once lived with her late husband Nick and her numerous children. Finally, the casket was sent to Los Angeles where Rachel was buried next to her husband under an elaborate and expensive shrine. Separate pictures of the late husband and wife were affixed to their shrine.

Like European Gypsy funerals, American Gypsy funerals are accompanied by large feasts. The deceased may be provided with objects that characterized him during his life. For example, Frank Adams was reported to be shown in his casket with two towels and a shaving kit (Houston Post, November 17, 1970). Hundreds of dollars in the form of gifts were put across the man's chest, and $500 in travellers checks were placed in his pockets. A glass of water and a sandwich were placed at the side of Rachel Adams' casket in case she might wake up and wish the food and water.

Sometimes a fortune may be buried with the casket. "Queen Callie," the wife of Emil Mitchell, died in childbirth in Lilita, Alabama, in 1915. She was buried with hundreds of precious stones,
twin necklaces of ancient gold coins, and gold pieces entwined in the braids of her hair. It was rumored that the wealth totaled $900,000. The legend of the buried treasure made the grave a sightseeing attraction and brought about a number of attempts to plunder the steel casket (Newsweek, 1947).

During the funeral procession, the casket is usually carried by an odd number of pallbearers (5, 7, or 9). Sometimes horses are used to move the casket. Whereas in the old country Gypsy musicians were ordinarily called upon to participate in the funeral, American Gypsies make use of gajo musicians. During Frank Adams' funeral, two violinists and an accordion player, musicians from the Houston philharmonic orchestra, played popular tunes, such as "Hello Dolly" and "Strangers in the Night," songs the dead man once liked. As the music continues, the coffin is lowered into the earth. It has been reported that an elder throws a handful of dirt upon the tomb symbolizing its return to the earth. After this, the older and then the younger women pour liquor or wine into the grave (Cleveland Plain Dealer, October 19, 1967) while men toss quantities of paper money and coins into the pit. The liquor is supposed to purify the grave; the money is supposed to help the dead man on his journey.

In both Europe and the United States there are five occasions
during which the family members and their friends mourn the individual's death. Little mention of the custom appears in the literature except for a useful account provided by Harper (1951). On the third day after the death, the men once again change their clothes, shave and wash themselves. There is a feast on this day to start the dead on his journey. Four candles are kept burning continuously while blankets are placed on the corpse. Many people stare at the body. A large feast is held and representatives of the main tribes are expected to attend. The immediate family does not eat but serves the guests (Houston Post, November 14, 1970).

On the ninth day, a second feast is held in honor of the dead man but now only close relatives attend. A separate table is prepared for the deceased. No one sits at this table, which may contain a pot of coffee, cake, fruit, a couple of eggs, or whatever the dead person liked to eat. After the feast the food is thrown away.

The third feast is held six weeks after the funeral. It signifies the completion of his journey into his new life. The family selects a member of the same tribe who is about the same age, sex, and has the same appearance as the individual who died. This person is provided with a suit of clothes which he is supposed to wear as a representative of the dead man. The representative occupies the most prominent place at the table. Incense is passed over the
clothes three times, and the name of the deceased is spoken three times before the representative wears them.

Two formal feasts are held, one after six months, the other after a year. At each, two men hold bunches of candles and walk along the table, one on each side, providing a candle for each guest. After everyone has a candle, the old man with the new clothes sits down first and the rest follow. Everybody sticks a candle into a loaf of bread. At the end of the table opposite the representative, the table is left open and is supposed to face east. Not until the representative stands up may other individuals stand. On these two occasions, the name of the deceased is never mentioned (Harper, 1951: 38-39).

Limited Good

The following description of the world view of limited good is largely based on social anthropological studies of Latin American peasants. This discussion will define limited good in terms of the Latin American studies and compare the data with studies of the American Gypsy.

According to the interpretation of George Foster (1965), peasants that have been conditioned by centuries of limited access to property, wealth, and prestige develop a definite world view --
a view that all good things in life within their society are available in limited quantities. Since it is thought that the total amount of wealth in the community cannot be increased, one man's gain is interpreted as another man's loss. The overall wealth in these communities is partially leveled by forms of social exchange including reciprocity and redistribution. The forms of social exchange are thought to reduce the greed or envy of the less affluent members.

Reciprocity is manifest in the *compadrazgo* (godparent) practice. The *compadre* (god-father) is selected to baptise the father's child. A lasting bond of friendship that is maintained on formal terms exists between the families of the parent and godparent. Godparents, who gain prestige by sponsoring the baptism, are often selected from wealthier members of the community; and various economic agreements to the mutual benefit of each family are formed as a result of the tie. A second form of reciprocity is an informal one consisting of small gifts that are regularly exchanged between friends and neighbors. The acceptance of such a gift as food is a tacit agreement that such a small gift will be given in return. Social ties are enhanced by these forms of exchange commitments.

Participation in the civil-religious hierarchy is a form of redistribution of wealth. Wealthy individuals spend a huge sum of
money for food, drink, and fireworks to celebrate one of the many religious holidays. A titular status and prestige is accorded to the benefactor. Numerous informal fiestas, such as those offered between patron (landlord) and tenant, fulfill the same goal.

Foster's description of Tzintzuntzan (1967), a Mexican peasant village, indicates that limited good is reflected in several practices that are intended to reduce possible envy. Since young children are highly valued, a pregnant woman is often kept hidden. Newly purchased groceries are carried in baskets that are covered with blankets to disclose the contents. Wealthy homes have deceptively shabby exteriors.

Latin American folklore contains examples of limited good. Mal de ojo (evil eye), a folk-defined illness, is believed to be caused by the greedy glance of a stranger. Small and beautiful children are particularly susceptible to the evil eye. There are numerous legends of wealth acquired by forming a pact with the Devil or by discovering a buried treasure, two ways to increase one's wealth within a static economy.

Several comparable examples suggest that Gypsies living in the United States have similar practices and beliefs about limited good as does Latin American peasant society.

Stealing from the gajo is considered justified by most Gypsies
since the wealth and prestige of the gajo cannot ordinarily be obtained. Limited access to the valued things in life is further restricted by traditional occupations and lack of skills provided by formal education. Among fellow Gypsies, a conspicuous generosity is practiced including reciprocity and redistribution. Yoors (1967: 35) noted that,

The Rom praised extravagant lavishness and most of them practice an all-consuming generosity, at times to the extreme of outright squandering. In their language thriftiness, or any word denoting carefulness, was translated as stinginess.

Reciprocity is also practiced. The account provided by Cuttriss (1915: 100) is an example.

Upon one occasion a young fellow offered me some fine plums in return for a slight service I had rendered, all circumstances pointing to his having stolen the fruit for the purpose on his way to see me.

We may then take it that pilfering from a gorgio is reckoned a venial offense, --a trifling matter, but failure to show proper appreciation of services rendered is considered "low down" behaviour and unworthy of a self-respecting Gypsy.

A second example of reciprocity is in the practice of Godparentage, much as it is found in Latin America. The word sevrimos in Romany is the equivalent to the Spanish compadrazgo (Miller, 1968: 25). Miller observes that the "Sevrimos relationships are the most respectful and valued of any between Gypsies and furnish formal bonds between families that last a lifetime" (Miller,
Considerable exchange of wealth occurs during numerous formal occasions. During the Baptism feast, for example, the Godparents present the family of the Godchild with a bottle wrapped with gold coins. Gold coins wrapped around a bottle are also presented to the bride's family from the groom's. A considerable redistribution of funds occurs during the bride-price transaction. Friends and relatives present the bride and groom with a generous contribution that is placed in a special loaf of bread, the dowry loaf. Also, conspicuous displays of money are placed before the casket during a funeral.

Gypsy folklore contains examples of limited good. Like the Latin American peasant, Gypsies believe in "evil eye" and protect their infants and prized possessions from the "eye." The excessive wealth of gajos also has its place in Gypsy lore. Leland (1962: 258), for example, recorded the story of a wicked miser who kept his money in a large chest, only to discover that his entire savings had turned to toads.

I suggest that Gypsies may consider individuals or objects "unclean" when they threaten the limited good of the Gypsy community. A Gypsy who steals from other Gypsies may be declared "unclean" by the kris. A fortune-teller who accepts the
gajo's money must wash her hands (Miller, 1968: 37-38).

The Gypsy custom of burning the dead person's estate immediately after death may be based on the idea that at death, the inheritors would acquire an excess level of wealth and upset the limited good. The custom of burying the dead with large quantities of wealth may be another way of expressing the idea that the inheritors should not benefit inordinately from death.

Several factors seem to be opposing the continuation of the beliefs and practices of Gypsies that are characterized by the idea of limited good. Some American Gypsies have enjoyed unprecedented wealth and have purchased many of the status symbols of the society: flashy new cars, color televisions, and mink coats. Kings who receive "protection money" from their subjects may enjoy a standard of living far above other Gypsies. The kompania or band of Gypsies that receive and pay for protection of the king, need not be of the same tribe. Local monopolies and uneven levels of wealth may produce conflicts and rivalry between Gypsies of the same tribe and result in a breakdown in reciprocity and redistribution exchanges. When King Adams' home was gutted by fire, it was rumored among local Gypsies that his jealous rivals had been responsible. Whether the example is symptomatic of the prevailing quality of social relations cannot yet be determined, though it would
well be a sign of the breakdown of a limited good ethic.
Part IV: MIGRATORY AND SEDENTARY GYPSIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Contemporary Migratory Gypsies

Having specified some of the distinctive customs, beliefs, and practices that characterize most contemporary Gypsies, it is now necessary to indicate the differences in life style between present day migratory and sedentary Gypsies in the United States. The distinction between these two types is not arbitrary. Various Gypsies in Houston indicated that the migratory Gypsies or "travelers" were nothing but "thieves and criminals."

Those Gypsies who habitually migrate may have a focal territory, a geographic site to which they return periodically; others migrate without a specified reference point. Although the majority of Gypsies are thought to be sedentary, almost any middle-age Gypsy has likely camped for months or even years in fifteen or more cities across the country (Lynden, 1967).

A sizeable number of Gypsies migrate to the warmer southern states during the winter months (Brown, 1924: 156). The traditional horse-drawn caravans have been replaced by expensive trailers. In addition to using trailer camps, Gypsies often liked to camp at state parks. The trailers are still parked in a U-shaped pattern, as was the practice hundreds of years ago for horse-driven caravans. The leader's trailer is parked at one extreme end of the U (Putnam, 1961).
Little is known about the migratory activities of most Gypsies, though various groups presumed to be Gypsies, often of partly Irish or Scottish descent, such as the "Reprehensible Rileys," the "Crooked Kelleys," and the "Terrible Williamsonsons," as they have been nicknamed by the police, have been reported in newspaper accounts. A series of articles that have appeared in the Cincinnati Enquirer over the past two decades provides us with an account of the Williamsonsons.

A nomadic band, the "Terrible Williamsonsons" have been in the United States since 1885 and trace their descent to an Irish Gypsy. The group presently consists of several hundred members under the authority of "Two Thumbs" and his wife Jennie, the "Black Queen." (Cincinnati Enquirer, Jan. 23, 1957).

In their fleet of Cadillacs, the caravan passes through a number of states each year including Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio. Cincinnati is presumed to be their home base. (Cincinnati Enquirer, November 1, 1968). In their traveling, women tell fortunes and sell phony lace which is said to be "hand-woven" and imported from Scotland or Ireland. The men also engage in a number of fraudulent activities. Driveways

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1 As early as 1902, Berry (1902:562) observed Gypsy women attempting to sell lace in the United States.
are repaved with a mixture of black asphalt and paint thinned with gasoline; houses are painted with a paint that has been diluted with crankcase oil, which lasts until the next rainfall (Cincinnati Enquirer, June 2, 1956). Imitation handwoven and imported rugs are also peddled along with lightning rods fashioned out of rope or wood and painted with metallic colored paint to give the appearance of metal.

These commercial ventures net the "Terrible Williamsonsons" a reported several million dollars a year (Cincinnati Enquirer, October 23, 1956). The group is purported to purchase around 35 new Cadillacs each year from a Cincinnati car dealer. An "excess profit tax" is collected by "Two Thumbs" from each member (Cincinnati Enquirer, September 8, 1956). The tax may help maintain their distributing house, a five story brick building in Cincinnati (Cincinnati Enquirer, October 23, 1956).

Members of the band are buried at the Spring Grove Cemetery outside of Cincinnati. Each Easter the Williamsonsons place bouquets beside their cherished memorials. Since all of the group are buried at this particular cemetery, a body is commonly shipped in cold storage from a distant state. At one such funeral Catherine Williamson, a woman in her 80's, was provided with a bronze casket lined with white velvet and adorned with white flowers. From over
much of the United States came numerous relatives to mourn her death (Cincinnati Enquirer, October 23, 1956).

The Gypsies in Houston who were questioned about the Williamsonsons said that these "thieves" were not "true Gypsies" and that no authentic Gypsy would ever marry one. Brown (1927: 11) observed that there are several groups of wanderers, groups incorrectly identified as Gypsies, who are referred to as English, Irish, and Scotch Gypsies. Brown indicated they possess at best only a trace of Romany blood. While it is not clear to the writer the criteria that true Gypsies use to differentiate themselves from the "Terrible Williamsonsons," it is probable that individuals who do not speak Romany, belong to an identifiable tribe and vitsa or mina, arrange marriages with the customary bride-price and observe other basic traditions, are not considered as "true" Gypsies.

Sedentary Gypsies

Gypsies have settled in most of the large cities of the United States generally in direct proportion to the population. New York City has an estimated 10,000 Gypsies (Lynden, 1967). Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, Washington D.C., Boston, Houston, San Antonio, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Portland are cities known to have relatively large populations of Gypsies, based upon newspaper accounts and police estimates.
Once excluded from residential areas, Gypsies have posed as Armenians, Portuguese, and Negroes to purchase property in Philadelphia (Bonos, 1942). To collect relief money during the depression, 2,500 Gypsies in New York State demonstrated that they were residents of the state by giving up their wanderings. Over $100,000 a year in relief money was provided for Gypsy families on relief (Parry, 1941: 20-21). All but ten families received the relief benefits.

The cities have proved to be excellent areas for fortune-telling. Store-front locations in crowded sections of the central city, which usually have a mixture of ethnic groups, are ideal locations for telling fortunes. Mitchell (1955) observed that a prime location is one where a customer can come and go without being seen publicly, yet where there is a substantial amount of pedestrian traffic.

The store-front of is a is ordinarily partitioned into a number of sections. The first floor contains a "waiting room" and one or more rooms where fortunes are told. Curtains are ordinarily hung in order to separate various areas. On the second floor, one or more families may live. Although in some cities a whole block will be dominated by Gypsy enterprises, often called tea rooms, as a rule they will not live next door to each other, usually not even on the same block (Plain Dealer, Cleveland Ohio, March 17, 1959).
As is the case in Cleveland, most Gypsy practitioners have a tendency to scatter throughout an area. This allows Gypsies a better chance of dispersing the competition. Tribal bickering, perhaps, also accounts for the scattering. Finally, protection from possible police raids is a further reason for maintaining a dispersed pattern. The dispersed pattern has been identified by Harper (1951: 7) in Portland, by this writer in Houston, and seems to be the case in other cities such as Boston.

An interesting residential pattern exists in Houston. Although dispersed, there is a certain degree of territoriality claimed by the three major Gypsy groups: the Costellos, the Adams, and the Georges. The Adams and George clans occupy central locations, areas just outside of major Negro neighborhoods, on main boulevards where bus lines exist. The Costellos are found exclusively northeast of Houston just outside of Harris County and show a highly dispersed pattern.

To specify residential characteristics of Houston's population of Gypsies more carefully, a directory of the addresses of all practitioners was created. Based on advertisements in two Negro newspapers, the Houston Informer before 1962 and the Forward Times between 1962 and 1969, the locations of a large number of practitioners were recorded. The majority of these individuals were
identified by the staff of each newspaper as Gypsies. Only two white practitioners and six colored practitioners were found in 72 separate addresses. The remaining 64 addresses were of Gypsies. Without a single exception, all of these were on large streets, major highways, or highly traveled sections. None of them were on side streets or hidden in residential areas that were not on major streets. The finding indicates the deliberate attempt of the practitioner to find prime locations.

The 1970 Houston Criss-Cross directory identified most of Houston's dwellings as either being in residential or in commercial districts. Forty-four of the 64 addresses could be identified in the Criss-Cross -- 61.36% (27) were in commercial areas; the remaining 38.64% (17) were in residential districts. To assess the relative value of these dwellings, the Criss-Cross index was again consulted. A nine point scale ranging from 0 to 8 ranked property according to its estimated value. Lower numbers signify higher property values. Table I is presented which shows 42 of the 44 addresses according to their estimated value.
These data indicate that the dwellings are primarily in marginal or poor areas of town. The information is somewhat deceptive in that the actual value of some of these homes is considerable owing to high investments in interior decorating. Second, most of the homes are relatively large; and this does not seem to be reflected by the values indicated in the Criss-cross directory. Judging by inspection, the trend has been toward more prosperous locations. There is an expensive, new car in almost every Gypsy garage. Most families can afford to make trips and hire a house-keeper; many have color televisions.
A number of poorer Gypsies live in a Mexican-American section of Houston. The dwellings are usually houses that are rented for $60 to $80 per month. Little information is known about these Gypsies, as data are based primarily upon the accounts of one informant, a landlord. These Gypsies adopt Mexican surnames, occasionally speak Spanish, but do not mix with the Mexican-American population. It is clear that few of the women tell fortunes since, of the estimated ten families in the area, there have been only two fortune-tellers at various times. The rent is usually paid by the elder woman of the household; the elder male is conspicuously absent. In the past there was considerable crowding; as many as thirteen people lived in a two-bedroom house, and seventeen in a three-bedroom house. The informant observed that when a Gypsy family inspected a house to determine whether they would rent it, the children would open every drawer and closet to search for valuables that might have been forgotten. No known tribal affiliation has been identified for these particular Gypsies. Indications are that they are relatively transient and do not reside in Houston for more than two or three years at a time.

Some Gypsies have indicated that many families migrate to warmer southern states during the winter months, particularly to cities such as Miami, Pensacola, and New Orleans. Houston is
also said to receive a sizeable number of migrating Gypsies each winter. Between 1962 and 1969 a total of 64 separate addresses of Gypsy fortune-tellers were identified. The month of the year in which the first advertisements were placed in a local newspaper was counted. It was assumed that a predominance of new addresses during winter months would indicate a migration, particularly if a new address was not the effect of a Gypsy family's moving from one part of Houston to another. This latter possibility cannot be excluded since it is often difficult to determine whether the same family has moved, as the practitioner often changes her professional name at each new location. In addition, the practitioner does not usually adopt a fixed form of advertising which would indicate stylistic differences.

The results of this survey indicate that of the 64 addresses, \(35.8\% (23)\) appeared during the warmest six months of the year (May through October) while \(64.2\% (41)\) new addresses appeared during the coldest six months (November through April). An \(X^2\) test (df=1, \(X^2=10.1\)) indicates that the difference is statistically significant \((p < .005)\).

\[\text{Table II, presented in a later section, indicates a slightly higher rate of Gypsy advertising (about 4.6\%) in the \textit{Forward Times} during the coldest six months.}\]
Education of Urban Gypsy Children

It is assumed that nomadic Gypsies provide their children with a minimum of formal education. Urban children, on the other hand, receive at least a few years of schooling. Most parents are semiliterate and do not place a strong emphasis upon having their children receive more than a minimal education.

Guernsey (Oregonian, April 9, 1967) cited a number of reasons why Gypsy school children in Portland were chronically absent or never attended school:

1. When the father travels out of state for several weeks he often takes his entire family with him.

2. During the spring, whole families travel out of state for work at various carnivals.

3. Gypsy children usually do not need formal education in order to engage in the traditional occupations which most Gypsies perform. Females in particular are discouraged from much schooling; they are needed around the house to observe fortune-telling sessions, screen potential customers at the front door, and help with house work. Males are not encouraged to obtain more than a sixth grade education, enough to acquire basic skills in reading, writing, and most important, arithmetic, which is essential for business transactions.
4. Since most Gypsy parents are at best semiliterate, they are unable to help their children with school lessons. Furthermore, Romany, which is an unwritten language, probably is considered by Gypsy parents to be more important than English; and since one does not need to write in Romany, parents reason, why bother to write in English?

5. Girls often drop out of school after they marry in their early teens. Furthermore, establishment of residence in a different household often brings the girl to a different city or state. Finally, at the time of marriage, the girl is expected to begin her profession on a full-time basis.

For the above reasons, Guernsey found that 62% of the 150 Gypsy children of school age were chronically absent or did not attend school. King Ellis, a spokesman for many of the Gypsies of the Southeast part of Portland, emphasized the importance of schooling for his children. Ellis' statement may reflect a change of attitude about the importance of education among adult Gypsies.

A lawyer who visits Gypsy homes frequently estimates that perhaps half of the Gypsy children of school age are not attending school in Houston. The writer has also observed Gypsy children of school age playing during school hours. The eldest daughter of one prominent Gypsy family currently attends high school and has
completed the eleventh grade.

The apparent lack of education among most Gypsy children has a number of implications. It signifies that the style of life among local Gypsies is not likely to be altered. Acculturation to a set of \textit{gajo} values is markedly reduced when one of the fundamental institutions, the school, is avoided. The lack of schooling also limits the possibility of Gypsy children establishing enduring social ties with their \textit{gajo} peers.

The Adams Family

A sketch of the Adams clan is provided from accounts of local Gypsies, other informants, and newspaper articles.\textsuperscript{3} The Adams family are members of the \textit{Macvaya} tribe and males trace their descent to the \textit{Koleschti vitsa}, a band of Serbian Gypsies. An English Gypsy who went by the name of John Adams immigrated to the United States in the late 1860's. Hundreds of other American Gypsies are descendants of his. A number of John Adams' sons became prominent Gypsies: John II, George, Frank, and Gus.

John II, the eldest son, lived in Sacramento and Los Angeles and was the family head. He died in 1961 at the age of 81 in Houston

\textsuperscript{3}The factual content may have been fabricated by the Gypsy informants in various portions.
under the care of Dr. Denton Cooley. During his life he had five sons and five daughters, fifty-five grandchildren and fifty-seven great grandchildren.

Frank, the second oldest son, assumed leadership after John II's death. In his youth, Frank was a traveling entertainer. He made his home at that time in Topeka, Kansas. Later he lived in New York City where he served as a "Chief Justice" of the kris. Due to his reputation as a fair and wise judge, he was invited to settle legal cases in Spain and Scandinavia. Frank and his followers in New York were instrumental in electing Mayor Impellitteri, noted one local Gypsy. Frank Adams died at the Ochner Foundation in New Orleans in 1960 (Houston Post, November 17, 1970).

George Adams, the third brother, lived during the depression years in New York, and helped his tribe obtain welfare. A popular man, he was nicknamed "Bongo Nock" or "big nose" because of his appearance and also went by the name "Big George" when dealing with the Los Angeles police. He later moved to Lynwood, California, where he founded what is now said to be a quarter-million shopping cart business in which shopping carts are repaired and cleaned for grocery stores. After George's death in July 26, 1964, (Houston Chronicle, July 24, 1964) the business was headed by a son named Mark. John Adams, another of George's sons was convicted for
having attempted to bribe the Los Angeles police department with an annual sum of $150,000 for protection of alleged bunco and fortune-telling operations (Houston Post, March 25, 1966).

Gus Adams, the fourth brother, is currently living in Houston and is the local boss of the Adams families. Gus is described as a gruff, middle-aged man who wears suspenders, smokes a cigar, and drives a white Impala with special license plates reading "Adams."

An anonymous letter to the Houston Police Department, perhaps by a victimized Gypsy, describes his activities.

He (Gus) gets hundreds of dollars from each fortune-teller so that they can operate in Houston. The ones that don't, he frames them up and gives false charges and has (sic) chase (sic) out of town for several years. He has been doing this for several years and drives expensive cars and has expensive suits and diamonds. He makes over $2,000 a month for protection money including several places of his own in town. The Adams are from California.

Gus is currently married to Zorkia (Mother Roberts) and has at least two sons, John and Louis. John is married to Lula (Sister White); and Louis, who goes by the last name of Alma instead of Adams, is married to Diana (Sister Alma). Betty (Sister Dora) and Nancy (Sister Dorothy) are two unmarried daughters of Gus; Sister Rose and Sister Rita (whose gajo first names cannot be determined) have both married into the George family and are currently telling fortunes in Houston.

John and Louis live only two blocks apart on Fannin and jointly
own a fenced-in lot on the same street. Several years ago, John Adams was instructed by his father to negotiate with the police for protection of local fortune-telling operations. At first "King Adams" was unable to make any progress; an attempted bribe failed. Later, however, he worked out an agreement with the Vice Squad that has been satisfactory both to the Gypsies and to the police. In return for a relative immunity from prosecution, John and his members were required to do two things. First, they were to report any new Gypsies. Second, they were to settle complaints that reached the police by refunding money that the victim had lost. The Adams have reported new Gypsies in Houston in order to help insure themselves of a reduced level of competition among fortune-tellers. In addition, the Gypsies have returned to the police on various occasions sums of money obtained from a customer for fortune-telling expenses. Few individuals, however, ever admit they were "taken" by a seer.

Gus' wife Zorkia, a rather plump woman in her sixties, claims to have been born in New York City. Her ancestors are thought to be Yugoslavian. As "Mother Roberts," she drew thousands of customers each year and received numerous gifts including a mink stole valued at several thousand dollars. She stopped her professional activities after developing a heart condition in 1969. One or more of her daughters have subsequently adopted the name of "Mother Roberts"
and have also been successful.

Although the Adams family is probably wealthier and more prominent than a typical Gypsy family, basic patterns of social organization are seemingly representative of other urban Gypsy families. It is more difficult, however, to generalize to migratory Gypsy units.
Part V: GYPSY FORTUNE-TELLING IN HOUSTON

Introduction

This section describes the practice of Gypsy fortune-telling in Houston. The role of divination in fortune-telling is discussed with the aim of indicating how the Gypsy seeks to legitimize her profession to Negro, Mexican-American and white clients. Advertising for her colored clients, for example, contains claims by the Gypsy to remove hoodoo and evil spirits, powers often attributed to Negro conjurers. For her Latin American clients, the Gypsy offers to remove spells caused by brujería or witchcraft, a power sometimes claimed by the curandera (a practitioner of Latin American folk medicine). The Gypsy seeks respectability of all ethnic groups by claiming to receive her powers of prophecy and healing from God.

This section also describes the variety of clients who seek the Gypsy's help. Data was gathered by observation of the Gypsy's customers and by first hand conversations with would-be clients. Description of the fortune-teller's home and the way in which fortunes are told are based on personal observation, reports of clients, and supplementary accounts appearing in newspapers, journals, and books.
Gypsy Fortune-Telling and Divination

The Gypsy's professed power to look into the future, to diagnose, and to heal are popularly thought to be achieved by divination. Several aspects of divination are discussed:

1. Factors that help the fortune-teller convince her client that she actually has divinatory ability;
2. Objects required for divination;
3. Rules the Gypsy uses to interpret her objects of divination; and
4. Classes of knowledge revealed by divination.

1. Convincingness as a diviner

It has been essential for the diviner to appear authentic to her clients. To do so the Gypsy has borrowed many systems of divination from European folk beliefs. For example, palm reading, which was a common form of divination in Babalonia and Chaldea, as early as B.C. 4000, gained great popularity in Europe during the 16th century (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 9, 1967: 645). ¹

¹Between 1520 and 1534 a number of books describing the techniques of palmistry were translated into several European languages (ibid).
Phrenology (the analysis of a person's character by the shape of his head), the reading of playing cards, and astrology have also been employed by Gypsies. During the early 20th century, ofisas (store front quarters) and tents had giant posters of the appropriate objects of divination: human palms, phrenological heads, and astrological symbols such as crescent moons and stars.

During the past several decades, Christian prophecy and faith-healing have become popular forms of divination for Gypsies in the United States. Although not a member of any sect or denomination, the Gypsy practitioner derives a good deal of her appeal from Christian symbols. For example, the Gypsy uses the religious titles of Reverend, Sister, and Mother, claims to derive her power from God's and embellishes her fortune-telling room with religious objects including crucifixes, pictures of the Madonna, an altar, and a large Bible.

George Louis Adamo and his wife, two Gypsies who lived in Miami Beach, Florida, established a "church" called the Miami Beach Reader Spiritualist Church, Inc. The non-profit charter reads, in part,

This organization shall be a member of the Mother Church of the Kingdom of Peace under the guidance and direction of the Reverend Sister Mary Adamo.

In June, 1964, it was reported that Adamo sold other Gypsies an impressive "Certificate of Ordination" in the church, complete with
a forged signature of the Secretary of State, Tom Adams, for as much as $1000 each. The church was to give credence to the use of titles such as "Reverend" and "Sister." (Information provided by the Miami, Florida, Police Department.)

2. Examination of Selected Objects for Divination

The Gypsy claims to acquire knowledge of the past, present, and future by examining an assortment of selected objects. The most popular forms of divination used by Gypsies have been palmistry (Chiromancy), Tarot card reading (Chartomancy), and tea leaf reading (Kypormancy). Less common forms of divination by Gypsies have included the study of mirrors (Capnomancy), bones (Osteomancy), the shape of the head (Phrenology) and the lines of the forehead (Metoposcopy) (Clebert, 1963: 119). Although from time to time Gypsies may employ crystal balls and devise astrological charts, these two latter techniques are currently the primary domain of non-Gypsy fortune-tellers.

3. Invariant Rules in Divination

Where the study of divinatory objects would bewilder the novice, the Gypsy claims to obey invariant rules to interpret them. The knowledge her objects provide is supposed to indicate only what her indices foretell, not her own personal judgment.²

²The very claim of employing invariant rules may, of course, help convince the client that the divinatory power of the Gypsy is authentic.
Marta Adler, a *gajo* who received honorary status as a Gypsy after marrying a Rom, was trained by her mother-in-law to tell fortunes. Adler describes the way she was taught to read Tarot cards:

My mother-in-law kept mixing the cards and putting them in front of me to be interpreted. Eventually I learned all the phrases and became quite convincing. The strangest thing was that the Gypsy women really believed in this mysterious oracle (Adler, 1960: 65).

The Tarot deck, which consists of 78 cards, is shuffled and spread in a fanwise pattern. Twenty-two of the cards describe historical periods, the migration of Gypsies from Persia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Seven keys describe an "Iron Age," seven a "Silver Age," one depicts the "Gold Age," and seven prophesize the overthrow of man and the Last Judgment. Each period in turn is related to the client's past, present and future life.

The numbers 3, 4, and 7 are thought to be mystical, each available in one of four colors and standing for the four seasons. Each color has twice seven cards that correspond to the seven days and nights of the week. There is one ace and nine other cards in each of the four suits: sceptres, chalices, swords, and pentacles. The nine cards other than the ace represent the nine months of pregnancy. The four suits of nine cards make up the 36 decades of the year. The ace of sceptres is thought to represent the eye of the
serpent used by Hercules and the crook of the shepherd. The ace of chalices is the symbol of truth to be found in the sky and is the source of knowledge of earth. The ace of swords deals with war, defeat and victory. The ace of pentacles represents the single eye of the Supreme Being and all source of life (Adler, 1960).

While in theory the Gypsy uses invariant rules, in practice she probably derives most of her information about her client from an interpretation of external cues: from the fears or hopes he expresses, from his appearance, his mannerisms, and his style of speech. Hence, the fortune-telling is more likely to be based upon the Gypsy's assessment of situationally specific cues than upon a mode of divination, as it has been described.

4. Classes of Knowledge Obtained by Divination

The client comes to the fortune-teller to gain specific information about social, financial, physical, and metaphysical matters. If the client does not indicate a special concern, the Gypsy is prepared to tell his fortune and mentions a variety of prophetic statements. The statements include the individual's life span, future health, wealth, family, number of children, and luck. There may be a hint of happiness, disappointment, or illness in the future and a warning of a mishap about to occur. If the client comes with no particular problem to have solved, the fortune-teller may create one. She may indicate that enemies are attempting to
harm the person and that to avert the danger, she will emphatically say, "I'll go to the crossroads and pray for you. When I have said three prayers, the worst will be averted. What are you prepared to give me out of the goodness of your heart for all my trouble?" (Adler, 1960: 61).

For social problems the Gypsy claims to bring back lovers or cast away enemies. For monetary problems, the Gypsy claims to uncover buried treasure or to increase a person's money by blessing it. For physical problems, the Gypsy claims to diagnose the condition by determining whether it has been caused by natural or supernatural malevolent factors, and to heal the affliction. An egg is often used for diagnostic purposes and constitutes another form of divination.

In summary, divination, as it is discussed here, consists of the analysis of objects by culturally legitimized practitioners according to rules that reveal special knowledge. The definition is intended to indicate how divination is purported to be practiced by the Gypsy rather than an indication of how fortune-telling is actually performed. The study of Gypsy fortune-telling in Houston largely concerns the attempt on the part of the Gypsy to appeal to black clients. By advertising as a spiritual advisor, the Gypsy often claims powers that are intended to be similar to those
attributed to the Negro conjurer.

**Negro Conjuration and Gypsy Fortune-Telling**

The Negro belief in hoodoo or voodoo has been traced to the belief in vo, a python deity worshiped in the Ewe territory of Africa and brought to Haiti by the slaves (Puckett, 1937: 177). The conjurer is credited with powers to locate lost or stolen goods, to furnish love potions, drugs and charms, to cast or remove spells, and to forecast the future. Conjuration, spoken of as hoodoo, is now inextricably mixed with elements of Christianity. For example, those who cast evil spells are thought to use the Devil's power while those who can exorcise evil spells possess God-given power.

Aware of the prevalent belief in conjuration, Houston's Gypsies may assume the role of a conjurer and advertise in black newspapers such as the *Forward Times* and the *Houston Informer* to "remove hoo-doo from the body or home." From case histories I collected, it became clear that Negro clients often consult the Gypsy, as if she were a conjurer, for the purpose of diagnosing, removing, or casting hoodoo. Both Gypsy and conjurer prescribe candle burning to influence people and events; both offer to tell the future, to locate lost or stolen goods, and to heal.

Several differences exist between conjurer and Gypsy fortune-teller. Most professional conjurers are respected or
feared members of their ethnic community and gain most of their clients by hear-say rather than by deliberate advertising. Gypsy fortune-tellers live outside of the Negro community and rely to a large extent upon advertising. The Gypsy is considered by her Negro clients to be an American Indian, an "Indian reader and healer," or an emissary from the Holy Land. Furthermore, the conjurer is usually a male, while the Gypsy practitioner, a female. Finally, the conjurer uses many remedies, while the Gypsy uses relatively few remedies.

Several drug stores in downtown Houston specialize in products for professional Negro conjurers and do-it-yourself practitioners of the art. Candles are sold for many purposes: red ones for love, green ones for money, and black ones to hoodoo. To increase its strength the candle may be dressed with variously named oils: zodiac oil, High John the Conquerer oil, and bouquet oil. A special confusion oil is said to counteract an enemy's black candle. Incense of various kinds are sold: Green Money incense, Crazy-about-me incense, Moses' Ashes incense (for money-making endeavors), Evil Removin' incense, and Happy Home incense. Floor washes like the New Orleans Lucky Scrub, brings good luck; and a special Chinese wash is used to wash away evil spirits. Many other products, including perfumes, root bags, bath salts, charms, and lode stones, are sold for occult
purposes.

Compared to the highly elaborate and specialized assortment of goods for the conjurer, the Gypsy requires relatively little: candles, several household items for diagnostic purposes, and small gifts that are given to her customers such as holy water, lucky charms and prayer clothes. The candles the Gypsy uses for fortune-telling and for authentic ceremonial purposes are usually purchased at shops specializing in religious goods. The candles are reported to be of the Purissima brand, which is of 100% beeswax, and are purchased in dimensions of 42" x 2-1/16".

Gypsy folklore contains several beliefs similar to those of Southern Negroes. Both believe that there are witches, that people can inflict the evil eye, that the last of seven daughters is gifted in fortune-telling, and that a girl born with a double caul\(^3\) has a special divinatory skill (Leland, 1962: 36; Puckett, 1926: 45, 110). Both groups have legends about uncovering buried treasure.

Leland, a scholar of Gypsy sorcery and folklore, observed that there is a strong parallel between Gypsies' belief in spirits

\(^3\) A caul is a part of the fetal membrane sometimes covering the head of a child at birth.
of the forest and stream and the voodoo belief in such spirits (Leland, 1962: 10). Both practitioners of voodoo and Gypsy fortune-tellers make use of Catholic symbols, and both believe that a dead person can render his nearby possessions unclean (Leland, 1962: 109).

Gypsy Advertising Directed at Houston's Negro Population

Houston's Gypsy fortune-tellers advertise in a variety of media: newspapers, radio, buses, and circulars. A local printer, who has printed circulars for Gypsies for over a decade, stated that several of his Gypsy clients spend as much as $500 a month for advertising. Most of the advertising is directed at potential Negro customers, although white and Latin American clients are also sought.

Most Gypsy advertising that is directed to Negro customers is found in the Forward Times, a local black weekly with a circulation in excess of 30,000. All of Houston's established fortune-tellers (as opposed to transient practitioners) as well as several Gypsies in the near-by cities of LaPorte, Pasadena, Baytown, and Galveston, have advertised in the Forward Times. The advertisements are classified under a section called "spiritual advisors." While there have been occasional white and black
individuals who have advertised here, the great majority have been Gypsies. According to members of the Forward Times' advertising department and verified by personal observation, all but two of the approximately thirty to forty individuals (one black woman and one white woman) who are currently advertising as spiritual advisors are Gypsies.

Since back copies are available from 1962 when the newspaper was started, a study of the volume and thematic content of Gypsy advertising between 1962 and 1969 was undertaken. The analysis covers the names and titles assumed by the Gypsy, the powers she professes, illustrations appearing in the advertisements, the types of problems the Gypsy offers to solve, and other commercial appeals.

1. **Name and Title of the Practitioner**

Gypsy seers almost always adopt a religious sounding title such as "Sister," which is the most common, as well as "Reverend," "Mother," and combinations such as "Reverend Sister." "Madam" is not frequently used. Few Gypsies were without some kind of title, and none described themselves as a Gypsy.

The practitioner's professional name appears after the title. While a few used esoteric sounding names such as Sister
Zora, Sister Palm, and Sister Hindu, many names were selected that evoked religious associations, such as Angelina, Christina, DeAngelo, Divine, Eve, Glory, Madonna, Mother Mary, Mother Superior, Temple, and Veil. A number of Gypsies located just outside of the Houston city limits and who advertise as "Indian Reader" had names like Cherokee, Pocahontis, Shanee (sic) and Sue (sic).

Practitioners often selected names that were conspicuously similar. There are different local Gypsies who have called themselves Sister Ann, Sister Anna, Sister Annie, and Mother Ann. There are two different Sister Rainbows listed in the telephone directory as Sister Rainbow #1 and Sister Rainbow #2. (Most Gypsies do not include their professional names in the phone directory.) There are several Northside Gypsies named Sister Gay, Sister Faye, and Sister Gaylord, all thought to be members of the Costello tribe. The most obvious reason for selecting similar sounding names is to confuse the police.

The present study was complicated by the finding that many Gypsies had more than one and occasionally as many as seven different professional names. To determine which practitioners had these different names, it was necessary to associate the professional names with their addresses, phone numbers, gajo names (as indicated in the Criss-cross), and information available in police
records. Although the analysis is not complete due to the difficulty of establishing the identities of transient Gypsies, the identities of many practitioners have been determined. Of 83 names appearing in *Forward Times* between 1962 and 1969, it is calculated that only 55 different practitioners are represented. Zorkia Adams, for example, has called herself at different times Sister Lola, Mother Florence, Mother Robinson, and Mother Roberts. Betty Costello has used the names of Mother Rosia, Sister Gaylord, Mother De Angelo, and Sister Sandra. Of the few Negro practitioners who have advertised, multiple names are also used. Mother McGowen Barrymore, the widely known black founder of the local Spiritualist Church, is thought to have used the names of Madam Pauline, Sister Eva, Madam Marie, Reverend Mother Mary, and Madam Veil. In addition to the attempt to evade police investigation, I learned that some practitioners try a variety of names to find the ones that bring the most business. Other practitioners use different names in different advertising media to determine the source of their clientele.

2. Powers claimed by the Practitioner

Since the words "palm reader," "phrenologist," "clairvoyant," and "fortune-teller" are illegal to use for commercial purposes, advertisements exclude these words. The terms "reader" or
"Indian reader" are used in place of "palm reader." To indicate that the practitioner claims the God-given power to advise, the terms "spiritual advisor" or simply "advisor" are specified. Finally, to indicate that ailments of physical and metaphysical origins are diagnosed and treated, the word "healer" is used. Practitioners list their powers. Some claim all three, such as Sister Rita, who advertised as a "reader," "healer," and "advisor."

3. Illustrations Appearing in Advertisements

Four general types of illustrations are found. The first and most common type consists of conventional religious pictures such as of Christ and the Virgin. Christ is usually depicted as a preacher and healer. One illustration pictured Christ with the Devil in the background. A second, relatively common type consists of occult illustrations: palms, candles, stars, and evil spirits. A third class of illustration consists of pictures of an Indian girl with a bonnet or of an Indian chief; this signifies that the practitioner is an "Indian reader." The last form of illustration contains the photographs of individuals who are supposedly providing testimonials on behalf of the Gypsies' miracles. The authenticity of the testimonials are suspect since different Gypsies across the country may use identical testimonials.
4. Problems that the Gypsy Claims to Solve

The Gypsy guarantees to solve virtually any personal problem, whether it is social, economic, physical, or metaphysical. Each kind of problem is discussed in turn.

a) Social Problems

Marriage counseling is offered. One testimonial reads, "I was unsuccessful in marriage and separated for years. One visit with Sister Ruth and we are back together and very happy." The practitioner gives "never failing" advice for unmarried individuals seeking the love of a sweetheart. The Gypsy also claims the ability to call friends and enemies by name and to control their actions.

b) Economic Problems

Matters of employment, finding and keeping a job, and increasing a salary are aided. "I have been under evil influence," reads one testimonial, "so I went to Sister Ruby and now I have a job and I feel happy." The Gypsy provides her clients with ways to locate buried treasure or to locate lost property. She also advises her customers of the lucky and unlucky days of the month for financial transactions.

c) Physical Problems

The most frequently cited problems appearing in the
advertisements are for physical disorders. The practitioner guarantees to remove sickness of many kinds: alcoholism, arthritis, asthma, bad habits, bad nerves, eye trouble, pain in the head, pain of the stomach, problems with the legs, and restoration of lost nature. One commonly cited testimonial borders on the miraculous. "I was flat on my back from an incurable disease," reads the caption under a picture showing a man in a hospital bed. "There was no hope until I heard of and saw Sister Ruth the Indian Healer. Thank God for her I am well." Another testimonial reads, "I have been sick for many years but when I visited Sister Ruby I have (sic) seen results. I am working steady (sic), and never felt better in my life." Gypsy advertisements claim to cure alcoholism, the single most cited affliction. "I was a habitual drunkard. I had lost my loved ones and my job but one visit to Sister Rita has helped me. I now have my loved ones back. I stopped drinking and have a steady job." One statement apparently appeals to individuals who feel that they have a serious ailment but do not wish to consult a physician. "One visit with Sister Dorothy keeps you off the operating table. It may even keep you out of the cemetery."
d) "Metaphysical" Problems

The Gypsy often links social, financial, and physical problems of the client with a metaphysical cause. The focus of her treatments are the diagnosis and cure of such conditions. The severity of metaphysical afflictions ranges from mild (the word "bad luck" is used to describe this condition) to severe (hoodoo, unnatural influence, and being under the "Devil's influence" all describe this condition). Owing to the great frequency with which the word "hoodoo" appears in Gypsy advertising, it is presumed that it has significance for a great number of clients. Although in no advertisement to my knowledge has the Gypsy offered to cast the spell on a person's enemies, the avowed ability to control enemies seems to suggest this possibility.

5. Other Commercial Appeals

Gypsy advertising contains many slogans that are widely used. A number of them are presented below, much as they appear in advertisements.

Just arrived in Houston from the Holy Land. . . Upon reaching womanhood and realizing she had God-given powers, she has helped thousands of people. You owe it to yourself to consult this gifted lady. . . she lifts you out of sorrow and darkness with her God-given power to heal by prayer. . . What your eyes see your heart will believe. . . no problem is too big or too small. . . crippled
have walked, blind have seen. . . People have come from the four corners of the world to see her. . . all walks of life are welcome. . . she won't just talk to you, she will show you her work. . . but there is no pity for those knowing they are in hard luck and need luck but do not come for it. . . tomorow may be too late.

While most Gypsy practitioners identify themselves as holy and religious women, sometimes as American Indians, others indicate they have just returned from places like the "Holy Land," India, or the East Indies, occasionally Jamaica or Spain, where they had helped thousands of people. Their "return" is heralded as if they were religious leaders of considerable fame.

Rapid beneficial results are promised by the Gypsies. Some guarantee results after exactly "three days"; others offer a cure within the "first 24 hours"; and a few offer immediate results.

As added inducement, Gypsies often offer free gifts and discounts. One practitioner provides her clients after each "reading" with a free lucky charm "blessed by the Saints of Jerusalem." Other Gypsy seers offer goods such as free oil from the Holy Land, free holy water, and free oil and candles for Easter. Several Gypsies offer a discount on the price of a "reading" by 50% or by several dollars. One practitioner claims to have a special prayer room; another has a charmed statue of Saint Thressa. Almost all local Gypsies sell candles. Several Gypsies sell prayer
cloths, an idea probably borrowed from radio faith healers.

To help direct the client, the bus lines that pass near the Gypsy's home are often specified in the advertisement; and a map is occasionally provided. The business hours are from 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. daily and weekends including holidays.

A week-to-week analysis of the thematic content of the Gypsies' advertising indicates that the practitioner constantly revises and updates her commercial appeal to include the latest gimmicks or fads. Certain phrases and pictures, however, remain unchanged for a given practitioner since they serve in a sense as her trademark. Although Gypsies are responsible for some of the content, I was told by a local printer that he made up a good deal of the materials that were found in several Gypsy circulars.

Advertising Volume

Between 1962 and 1969 the amount of classified space devoted to Gypsy advertisements has greatly increased, and the total number of advertisements has more than tripled. At present as much space is devoted to "spiritual advisors" as to any other classified heading. Gypsies are required to pay cash weekly to receive continued coverage, and their husbands usually handle the financial transactions. Gypsies who advertise regularly receive
discounts for their advertisements. Although the Forward Times would not indicate how much was annually received from Gypsy advertisers, a conservative estimate would be over $5000.

A study tabulating the number of advertisements appearing in the Forward Times by Gypsy spiritual advisors is presented in Table II. The results of the tabulation indicate that the month-to-month number of such advertisements are relatively constant. Slightly more advertisements appeared during summer and fall months (June to November) than winter and spring months (December to May). During the Novembers of 1964 and 1968, the time of the presidential elections, somewhat more advertising appears. Finally, the data indicate that a steady year-to-year increase in number of advertisements exists, with a 335% increase in number between 1962 and 1968, and an average annual increase of 55%. If these figures can be taken as a relatively valid index of the Gypsy fortune-teller's prosperity, then it appears that the prosperity has steadily increased.
Advertising Rates of Spiritual Advisors
In the Forward Times Between 1962 and 1968

**TABLE II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>366</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>144</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>2202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **(Nov-Jan)**
  - Winter: 559
  - PERCENT: 25.4%

- **(Feb-April)**
  - Spring: 493
  - PERCENT: 22.4%

- **(May-July)**
  - Summer: 530
  - PERCENT: 24.1%

- **(Aug-Oct)**
  - Fall: 620
  - PERCENT: 28.1%
Although exact data cannot be compiled owing to incomplete knowledge of the practitioners of the different tribes, it appears that the Adams tribe (active members include Mother Robert's daughters, Sister Alma, Sister Dora, Sister Dorothy, and Sister Thressa and Sister White) account for well over 50% of the total advertising volume. Less paid advertising is accounted for by the George family and least by the Costellos.

Advertising on the Radio

Five or six different Gypsies have advertised on KCOH, a local Negro radio station, for about ten years. All such broadcasts are restricted to Sundays when low rates are provided for religious programs. According to the station manager, a half-hour broadcast costs in the neighborhood of fifty dollars.

Each Gypsy follows a similar format in broadcasting her message. A taped message lasting about two and a half minutes and read by a black announcer is repeated five times. The other twenty minutes consist of various selections of gospel music. The words of the songs such as "Standing in wonder which way to go/so much confusion in this world of woe/" and "Have you ever been sick, but you could not get well/ but you know the Lord heals your body and you sure get well/" appeal to the fears and hopes of the potential customer.
A verbatim transcription of a typical radio broadcast is provided. The particular practitioner, Sister White, has not altered a word of it for over a year.

Pay attention to what you are going to hear. It might change your entire life for the better. If you have been suffering too long or too much, why suffer when you can get help, when Sister White can help you with your problems no matter what your problems are. No problem is too big or too small. Sister White says she can help you. She has helped hundreds and thousands, why not you? If you have trouble in your home or with your husband, wife, or sweetheart, take your problems to Sister White, and she says she will help you with them. The more people that Sister White helps, the more power she gets to help others. If you have bad luck or if you are sick and can't hold a job, go and see Sister White and she says your entire life will change for the better.

Call her now at JA8-7766. She is waiting for your call or go by 5008 Fannin. What your eyes see your heart will believe so call JA8-7766 or go by 5008 Fannin. If your husband or wife gambles, drinks, or comes home too late, and if you want them to be as they were before, Sister White says she will help you with these problems in just a matter of days. Sister White says this, if you don't see results you don't pay one penny. She is open every day including Sunday from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Call her now. She is waiting for your call at JA8-7766 or go by 5008 Fannin. No matter how many readers you have seen without result, just call Sister White. Just the sound of her voice will put your mind at ease. Call her now, tomorrow may be too late. Call JA8-7766 or go by 5008 Fannin. Sister White will not just talk to you, she will show you her work. So call Sister White today and be rid of your problems tomorrow. Call her at JA8-7766 or go by 5008 Fannin right here in Houston. Out of towners, call or write. All cards and letters will be answered.

Circulars

Circulars are printed by local printers in quantities of one
to ten thousand at a time. The circulars are distributed by the Gypsies in many areas throughout Houston, particularly in mail boxes of poorer neighborhoods, and on parked cars in shopping centers. Colored boys, who are driven by the Gypsy, are paid a small fee to distribute them. The leaflets are often written with one side in English, the other in Spanish. While the content of the English portion is substantially the same as found in the advertisements appearing in the *Forward Times*, the portion written in Spanish differs in several respects; and a discussion of advertising for Latin Americans will appear in a separate section.

Circulars identical to the ones found in Houston were provided by the police departments of several cities including Miami, Florida; Buffalo, New York; San Antonio, Texas; and San Francisco, California. The same professional names were found, such as Sister Lola or Mother White. Some circulars had places in which the Gypsy could use a stamp to indicate the city, address, and phone number of the practitioner. Owing to the similarity in form and content, it is thought that there may be national distributing centers for some of the circulars. One printer in Houston, who until recently was the most prominent local circular maker, said that he did work for Gypsies as far away as Alabama and Louisiana. Examples of several local and out of state advertisements are presented. (See figures 1, 2, and 3.)
I have had hard luck and been under evil influence for many years. I could not hold a job, but one visit to Sister White and I have a steady job and I am free.

SISTER ALMA

All Prayers and Healing Free

The religious holy woman healer who guarantees to heal the sick and the ailing, to remove all suffering and bad luck from your body and home. She will call your enemies by name and tell you who to keep away from. Sister Alma will not just talk to you but will show you what is wrong in your life. She has been sent here to earth to help those who cannot help themselves. For we all know that God works in a strange and mysterious way. For Sister Alma is a tool for God’s work. Sister Alma says that you can read her ad day in and day out but without coming to see her you will not rid of any of your problems. Does your wife or husband drink excessively or come home late? Would you like for him or her to be as they once were? Then come to see the God gifted woman who can and will help you. Do not listen to anyone else until you see me. All mail will be answered promptly.

Open from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 P.M. Daily and Sunday
For information call JA 8-4926, 4818 Fannin at Arbor, Houston, Texas

Figure 1
SHE IS THE ADVISOR FOR ALL READERS IN ATLANTA
LOS ANGELES, CHICAGO, NEW YORK, LOUISIANA AND HOUSTON.

MOTHER KENNEDY
Kennedy has helped our people once -
Kennedy can help our people again

I have had hard luck and been under evil influence for many years. I could not hold a job, but one visit to MOTHER KENNEDY, and I have a steady job and feeling fine.

Listen to what I have to tell you. I know you have a lot of problems, but you do nothing about it. You waited too long and you're going to be sorry. Because I've been doing this work all my life. Come to me so I can talk to you and see what your problems are. When you come to my house I don't want you to tell me anything, I want to do all the explaining to you so I can help you with all your problems and show you what to do for yourself. I want to help you so you can along always, not just for a little while. I'm not going to explain too many things to you in this ad I want to see you with my own eyes, then I can tell you what kind of person you are. I want you to get along with your husband or wife. Be sure to call before you come. Don't listen to anyone else until you see me and then you'll know, through this letter the difference. You might not understand this letter until I talk to you, by the time I get through with you you'll understand what I'm talking about. This is MOTHER KENNEDY talking to you. I have my daughter and granddaughter working with me to help all the people that is in need for my help. Don't make a mistake come and see me. I'm building another church. Thank you for listening and reading my letter.

KENNEDY HELPED YOU ONCE--KENNEDY CAN DO IT AGAIN.

514 W. Elgin  JA9-0002
WEST ON ELGIN FROM MAIN
See Or Call Mother Kennedy As Soon
As You Read This Ad Gauanteed
To Help A You In Three Days
GUARANTEED TO RESTORE LOST NATURE

Figure 2
Come and touch the Statue of Saint Theresa and your prayers and wishes will come true — in her Healing Room.

HOLY WATER FROM JERUSALEM TO SAFEGUARD YOUR HOME

GOD'S MESSENGER

DON'T CONSIDER HER JUST ANOTHER READER

GOD SENT

SISTER BELL

Don't compare her with any other reader you've consulted before. You've heard her on the radio, read about her in the papers — NOW SEE HER IN PERSON

Religious Woman _________________________ Healer & Advisor

Friends, we urge you to see this Religious Holy Woman healer, God's messenger who guarantees to heal the sick and the ailing, to remove all suffering and bad luck from your body. She will call your enemies by name and tell you who to keep away from. She is a religious and holy woman who will show you will show you with your own eyes how she will remove sorrow, sickness and pain, and all bad luck. What your eyes see your heart must believe, and then your heart will be convinced that this is the religious holy woman you have been looking for. The touch of her hand will heal you. She has the God-given Power to Heal by Prayer. Everyone welcome at her home. Are you suffering? Are you sick? Do you need help? Do you have bad luck? Bring your problems to her today and be rid of them tomorrow. She is in this vicinity for the first time. She guarantees to reunite the separated and solemnly swears to heal the sick, and help all who come to her, and remove all evil spells. She has devoted a lifetime to this religious work. She guarantees to cure you where others have failed. Why go on suffering? — When just one visit to this woman will take the sickness and pain away from you. One visit will convince you that she is God's messenger on earth. With God's help on this earth she will show it to you. She has helped thousands and thousands and is guaranteed to help you too. She removes all pain. This religious healer will help you where others have failed. If you suffer from alcoholism and cannot find a cure, don't fail to see this gifted woman who will help you. She also guarantees to restore your lost nature, and she guarantees her work. Through her prayers cripples have walked and the blind have seen light.

565 Duboce Ave.
Near Franklin Hospital
Open from 7 in the Morning until 10 at Night — Open All Day Sunday —

431-7984

Figure 3
Advertisements in Buses

Bus lines in central Houston as well as several lines in neighboring areas such as LaPorte have commercial signs and bilingual circulars that are payed for by several prominent Gypsy families. A sample of the form of advertising is provided below. (See figure 4.)
Do not mistake me for any other reader I have come to help to save the suffering.
You know God works in a mysterious way.
If you have faith in God, don't fail to see:

MOTHER ROBERTS
PSYCHIC READER AND ADVISOR
THE ONE & ONLY GIFTED HEALER

was born with the God-given powers to help humanity and has devoted her life to this work. Tells your friends and enemies' names without asking a single word. She will tell you what you wish to know regarding health, marriage, love, divorce, courtship, speculations and business transactions of all kinds.

She will tell you of any changes you should or shouldn't make, good or bad. She removes evil influences and bad luck of all kinds. She never fails to reunite the separated, cause speedy and happy marriages. She lifts you out of sorrow and darkness and starts you on the way to success and happiness. She will give sound and important advice on all affairs of life, whatever they may be. You will find her superior to any other reader you have consulted in the past. A place to bring your friends and feel no embarrassment.

½ PRICE WITH THIS SLIP
OPEN DAILY & SUNDAYS 8 A.M. TO 10 P.M.
1012 Alabama No Appointment Necessary Phone JA 4-1036
BETWEEN MAIN AND FANNIN—Look For Address
ACROSS STREET FROM BIG BONUS REDEMPTION STORE

Figure 4
Advertising Directed to Latin-Americans

Advertising appearing in Spanish is found in circulars, on buses, and in a small Mexican newspaper, El Sol. In most respects the Spanish version is essentially the same as the English with the following exceptions:

1. The Gypsy calls herself a curandera even though she does not ordinarily know how to treat illness such as susto, empacho, and callida de la mollera, which legitimate curanderas are familiar with. None of the Gypsies I met claimed to know of these illnesses, and not all the Gypsies who advertised in Spanish can speak the language.

2. Supernaturally defined illnesses included males espirituales (evil spirits) and brujeria (witchcraft), terms rarely found in other advertising.

3. Only for the Spanish-speaking customers did the Gypsy advertise to divine by astrology and to indicate the content of amulets and talismans.

4. Illustrations of the crucifixion, the Madonna and Child, and other scenes that seem to have particular appeal to Latin American Catholics were conspicuous. One advertisement offered clients free holy water blessed by the Catholic Saints after each "reading."

5. While faces appearing above the testimonial are negroid
in appearance when presented in the Forward Times, they are changed to a medium, Latin-American complexion in Gypsy circulars found in San Antonio, Texas, where a larger Latin-American clientele exists. Examples of advertising directed to Latin-Americans are provided below. (See figures 5, 6, and 7.)
SISTER WHITE
HEALER
READER
ADVISOR

CALL ME AS SOON AS YOU READ THIS AD
Promise to help you in three days

See SISTER WHITE. She has the God-Given Power to heal by Prayer. Guarantees to heal the sick and the ailing, but there is no pity for those who know they are in hard luck and don’t come to see SISTER WHITE. Promise to help you in three days.

I have had hard luck and been under evil influence for many years. I could not hold a job but one visit Sister White and I have a steady job and feeling fine.

I was flat on my back suffering from an incurable disease. There was no hope until I heard of and saw Sister White. Thank God for her, I am well.

I was unsuccessful in marriage and separated for years. One visit Sister White and we are back together and very happy.

These are but a few that have been healed and helped by SISTER WHITE. There are thousands of others that have been helped by SISTER WHITE. So come today—tomorrow may be too late. Remember if there is God’s help on earth it can be found through SISTER WHITE. She heals by the hand of God. Remember there is a lucky charm that has been blessed by the Saints of Jerusalem given free with each reading.

SISTER WHITE is open daily and Sundays from 8 in the morning until 11 at night. SISTER WHITE guarantees to remove the sickness and hard luck. Her prayers remove all pain. SISTER WHITE will heal you free. What your eyes will see your heart will believe.

Do not classify her with other readers. Where others have failed she can help you.

6731 So. Flores St. SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS WA 3-5751

Figure 5
DIRECTIVAS
Conciéntrese en la vista en los 4 puntos en la nariz por 30 segundos, luego mire en la pared en un solo lugar por 10 segundos y la imagen se le aparecerá. Siga las mismas direcciones y vea al cielo, contra el sol y se le aparecerá en el cielo. Para mejor resultados vea al cielo cuando esté oscuro.

SI ESTE IMAGEN SE LE APEARCE A UD., LA MADRE GAYLORD LE PUEDE AYUDAR.
NO DEJE DE VER LA HOY!

MADRE GAYLORD
NO LA COMPARE CON NINGUNA OTRA ADIVINADORA
QUE HALLA CONSULTADO

SUFRE USTED? ESTA USTED ENFERMA?: NECESITA AYUDA?

El toque de su mano la aliviará. MADRE GAYLORD tiene el poder de la mano de Dios para aliviarlo con oraciones. Bienvenidos todos a casa de MADRE GAYLORD. Lo que vea con sus ojos, su corazón lo creerá! Sufre usted? Esta usted enfermo? Necesita ayuda? Tiene usted mala suerte? Triaga sus problemas a MADRE GAYLORD hoy y librese de ellos mañana. Ella le aconsejará en todos sus asuntos de su vida, No hay problema tan grande que no le pueda solventar (como retener su trabajo después de haber fracasado y como tener buen éxito, adviña los nombres de sus amistades y enemigos sin preguntarle una sola palabra, y reúne los que están separados).

En su adolescencia, MADRE GAYLORD, realizó que tenía este poder dado por Dios para ayudar a la humana y devota su vida en este trabajo. De todas partes del mundo vienen a verla. Hombres y mujeres de todas razas y de todas clases de oficios. Garantiza remover mala influencia y mala suerte. Ay que lamentar aquellos que sabiendo tienen mala suerte y necesitan ayuda, no viene por ella una visita le convezer a. Le anuncian días y manos de buena suerte. Le ayuda a disipar la tristeza y la oscuridad. Y le envía por el camino de la felicidad y del buen éxito. Si sufre usted de alcoholismo y no encuentra la curación no deje de ver a esta mujer talentosa. MADRE GAYLORD le invita a su casa.

HORAS: 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. – DIARIO Y DOMINGOS
Consultas privadas y confidencial en su casa.

4214 SO. FLORES
NEXT DOOR TO REBELS CLUB
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Figure 6
PRIMERA VEZ EN HOUSTON

MENSAJERA DIVINA

HERMANA WASSO

CURANDERA ESPIRITUAL, ADIVINA Y CONSEJERA

NO LE COMPARE A NINGUNA ADIVINA QUE UD. HAYA CONSULTADO,
SI USTED SUFRE, ESTÁ ENFERMO, O NECESITA CONSEJO

Consulte a la HERMANA WASSO. Ella tiene el Poder Divino para curar por medio de Oración. Garantiza sanar al enfermo y al afligido, mas no hay piedad para quienes saben que tienen mala suerte y no vienen a ver a la HERMANA WASSO Benefactora. Mensajera de Dios que garantiza sanar al enfermo y afligido, quitar todo sufrimiento y mala suerte. Ella llamará sus enemigos por nombre y le dirá de quien se debe cuidar,
Hermana WASSO es una mujer SANTA que le enseñará ante sus ojos como quitar tristezas, enfermedad y dolor. Cuando sus ojos vean ésto, Ud. quedará convencido que ésta es la mujer Santa que Ud. buscaba. El toque de su mano le sanará TODO BIENVENIDOS, blancos o negros a la casa de la HERMANA WASSO. ¿Esta enfermo? ¿Necesita ayuda? ¿Tiene mala suerte? Traiga sus problemas a la HERMANA WASSO ahora y deshágase de ellos mañana. Ella está aquí por primera vez. Le garantiza reunir los separados y jura solemnemente que sanará los enfermos y ayudará a todos los que se lo pidan; y quitará embrujos. ¿Porqué sufrir más cuando una visita a esta Santa Mujer puede acabar con sus enfermedades y sufrimientos? VISITELA y quedará convencido que ella es Enviada de DIOS. LA HERMANA WASSO ha ayudado a miles y garantiza ayudar a usted, LA HERMANA WASSO QUITA TODO DOLOR. LA HERMANA WASSO garantiza devolverle la naturaleza perdida. Traiga esta carta.

SE ACEPTAN DONACIONES

HORAS DE CONSULTA DE 7 a.m. A 10 p.m. DIARIAMENTE
Conferencias Privadas y Confidenciales en su casa. Sin Reservación.
3411 HOUSTON AVENUE, APT. B
Teléfono UN 4-2092
Para llegar a esta dirección tome vd. en el centro el bus Enid o Airline o Studewood y bajese en North Main y Houston Avenue (frente al Weingarten). Camine vd. al sur hasta el numero 3411. (½ block)

Figure 7
For the first time in Houston
Divine Messenger
SISTER WASSO
Spiritual curandera, advisor and counselor
She cannot be compared with any advisor you have consulted

Consult SISTER WASSO. She has the God-given Power to cure by means of prayer. She guarantees to heal the sick and afflicted but there is no pity for those who know they have bad luck and who don't come to see the blessed SISTER WASSO. As God's messenger she guarantees to heal the sick and afflicted, to remove all suffering and bad luck. She will call your enemies by name and will tell you who you must watch out for. SISTER WASSO is a holy woman who will show you before your eyes how to remove sickness, sadness, sickness and pain. What your eyes see your heart will believe that she is a HOLY woman who can help you. The touch of her hand will cure you. EVERYONE IS WELCOME, whites or blacks to the house of SISTER WASSO. Are you sick? Do you need help? Do you have bad luck? Bring your problems to SISTER WASSO today and be rid of them tomorrow. She is here for the first time. She guarantees to reunite the separated and solemnly swears to heal the sick and will help all that come. And she will remove witchcraft. Why continue to suffer when one visit with this Holy Woman can end your sickness and suffering? Visit her and you will be convinced that she is God's messenger. SISTER WASSO has helped thousands and guarantees to help you. SISTER WASSO REMOVES ALL PAIN. SISTER WASSO guarantees to restore lost nature. Bring this card.

Donations are Accepted

Hours of consultation are 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Daily
Private and confidential talks in her house. No appointment necessary
3411 Houston Avenue, Apt. B
Telephone UN4-2092

To arrive at this location take the downtown bus at Enid or Airline or Studewood and get off at North Main and Houston Avenue (in front of Weingarten). Walk south to the number 3411. (1/2 block)
Advertising Directed to White Customers

The only advertising directed exclusively to a white population is found occasionally in several local newspapers such as the Houston Tribune and the Memorial Mirror, which have largely white readers. The two major newspapers in Houston, the Houston Post and the Houston Chronicle, do not accept such advertising.

Several distinctive aspects of advertising directed to white customers are noted:

1. The only form of divination cited with any regularity is analysis of handwriting, presumably a form that is given credence more often by white clients.

2. The practitioner rarely indicates that she is a healer or reader but does mention that she is capable as an advisor.

3. Supernaturally caused afflictions and physical ailments are conspicuously absent, while more mention is made of social and financial matters.

4. The name of the practitioner is less commonly given a religious title, such as Sister, Mother, or Reverend. Madame or Miss are more common.

5. Illustrations are not common.

Of interest is that several Gypsies such as Sister White have simultaneously advertised in the Forward Times, El Sol, and the
Houston Tribune, thus seeking to attract Negro, Latin-American and white clients. (See figure 8.)
SISTER GAYLORD
READER AND ADVISOR

She will tell you what you want to know about your friends, enemies and rivals, whether your husband, wife, sweetheart is true or false, how to gain the love of one you most desire, control or influence the action of anyone, even though miles away. She further guarantees and promises to make you no charge unless you find her superior to any other Reader you have consulted.

Open Daily 9 In The Morning Till 10
In The Evening No Appointment Necessary

7713 Airline Houston, Texas
HI 7-5740

3 Blocks North, Little York Food Look Reader & Advisor Sign

Description of Gypsy Homes

The following descriptions are intended to indicate the variety of homes of Gypsy fortune-tellers living in or near Houston. The data were obtained by visiting three such homes in central Houston and three in areas just outside the Houston city limits. Supplementary information was provided by former clients.

An "Indian Squaw" is usually seen in front of all three homes visited in Houston and several cities such as Beaumont and Galveston. We also reported in November 2, 1969 and Rochester, New York, (Rochester Times Union, July 14, 1964) and may be a trademark for the more rural Gypsy fortune-tellers.

The rural homes, usually about twenty or thirty years old, have interiors that indicate a reasonably high standard of living, although they are not as lavish as Gypsy homes in central Houston. Separate rooms are devoted to seating customers and telling fortunes.
Description of Gypsy Homes

The following descriptions are intended to indicate the variety of homes of Gypsy fortune-tellers living in or near Houston. The data were obtained by visiting three such homes in central Houston and three in areas just outside of the Houston city limits. Supplementary information about the residences was provided by former clients.

The rural homes are found along main roads and highways. An "Indian Reader and Advisor" sign appearing in front of all three homes visited contained a characteristic, hand-painted, American Indian Squaw with a feathered bonnet. The signs indicate that the Indian reader is open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Similar signs, sometimes illuminated with neon light, appear along highways between Houston and several cities such as Beaumont and Dallas. Indian reader signs are also reported near Phoenix, Arizona, (The Arizona Republic, November 2, 1969) and Rochester, New York, (Rochester Times Union, July 7, 1964) and may be a trademark for the more rural Gypsy fortune-tellers.

The rural homes, usually about twenty or thirty years old, have interiors that indicate a reasonably high standard of living, although they are not as lavish as Gypsy homes in central Houston. Separate rooms are devoted to seating customers and telling fortunes.
In two of three cases, separate quarters apart from the homes were observed. These are thought to house the family of a married son.

The urban homes, also relatively old, seem larger than the rural homes. Many have garage apartments that are occupied by other Gypsies. Instead of "Indian Reader," which might cause unwanted attention, the urban practitioner relies on other forms of advertising. Large address signs with blue numerals are the only external indications that the occupants are Gypsies. Most urban homes are painted white with a fresh coat applied to the front, while the less conspicuous sides may lack the new coat. Many of the urban homes have glass front doors that allow the Gypsy a better view of the outside than the visitor has of the inside.

The interiors of such homes are lavish. The air-conditioned waiting room contains at least one or two huge couches, often protected with plastic covers. Plastic also protects large lamp shades. Most homes have expensive, plush rugs and wooden furniture. One "waiting-room" had mirrors on two opposite walls that reflected several huge crystal chandeliers.

The room where fortunes are told, sometimes called the "reading room" or "prayer room" is usually a den or dining room, and occasionally a bedroom. (Some Gypsy homes have more than one room where fortunes are told). The room is ordinarily adorned
with religious articles: a shrine with candles, pictures of the Savior, the Virgin, and the Saints, candles and a family Bible. In one home I saw color photographs of John and Robert Kennedy hanging beside a print of Leonardo DiVinci's "Last Supper." A comfortable chair or couch is provided for the client.

**Observational Studies of Sister White's Clients**

Sister White, an urban practitioner located in central Houston, was selected for study because she advertised to all three major ethnic groups -- Negroes, Latin-Americans, and whites. The writer observed Sister White's practices from a nearby flower shop, after explaining the purpose of the study and receiving permission from the owner of the shop.

A total of twenty visitors were observed in the times during which the study was conducted (Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays at selected hours). The visitors were predominately blacks (17) with two whites and one Mexican-American. Most of the customers arrived by car; the remainder came by bus or even by taxi. About half of the visitors were male/female couples who were probably married, as judged by the presence of wedding rings. Of the customers who came alone, the majority were women. Most of the clients appeared to be between 25 and 50 years of age. Although treatment was provided almost entirely for adults, on one occasion
a child with crutches was brought in by her parents.

Since observations were not extended to cover the entire day (8 a.m. to 10 p.m.) during which Sister White is available for consultation, the mean number of customers per day was not obtained. Sunday business was most intense between 12:00 noon and 5:00 p.m., during which five to eight customers were observed. Customer traffic during week days was heaviest around 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The duration of treatment, apart from time required for waiting, was only about ten or fifteen minutes per customer, although in some cases as long as forty-five minutes were spent with the client.

Description of the Fortune-Telling Sessions

To describe the practice of fortune-telling, the paper will be divided into sections concerning the introductory session, the diagnostic session, and the final session. Since Gypsy fortune-tellers would not openly discuss their occupation, information was obtained by having my fortune told by six different practitioners -- three in urban areas and three in areas just outside of the Houston city limits. Additional information is provided from case histories

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4 Sister White's radio broadcast at 11:30 a.m. on Sundays may help account for the heavy turn-out.
of clients; from articles appearing in magazines, newspapers, and books; and from police records. The overall impression is that fortune-telling is practiced in a remarkably consistent fashion. Since individual differences in the style or form of fortune-telling are difficult to distinguish and do not substantially contribute to the presentation of materials, they will not be emphasized.

1. The Introductory Session

As a standard practice, a person other than the fortune-teller greets people at the front door. Legitimate customers are invited into the waiting room while an unwanted visitor such as the curious gajo reporter or policeman is told that the "reader" is at church, on vacation, or now living in a different city. The host may be a teen-aged daughter of the mother, or she may be her newly wedded daughter-in-law. To see which sources of advertising are paying off, the host may inquire how the person learned of the practitioner. The host may tell fortunes in the same household; and when she does so, she usually adopts the name of the senior practitioner. Four mother-daughter teams

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5 I have not seen any advertising in the same newspaper which indicates two differently named practitioners in the same household.
have been observed in Houston (Sister Alma, Sister White, Sister Miriam, and Mother Roberts, before she retired).

When the fortune-teller is ready, she appears before the client, usually wearing the diklo, gold earrings, a loose, low cut blouse, a full skirt, bracelets and lucky charms, and high heeled shoes. Lipstick, brassiere and dyed hair are not permitted of Gypsy women. On almost every occasion I was asked, "Who sent you to me?" I replied that I had seen her advertisement and needed some help. I presume that the client usually makes known the reason for seeking the Gypsy's help before the session is begun although the Gypsy does not always inquire much at the beginning. It is my impression that she begins to tell the person his fortune with the intention of convincing him that she indeed possesses powers that could enable him to receive the help he sought.

Before any fortune-telling can begin, the practitioner must be compensated for her services. Five dollars was the most commonly cited price, though one Gypsy requested ten. The money is taken from the palms and is often placed inside a huge family bible that is not far away.

The forms of divination practiced by the Gypsies I consulted were limited to the examination of my palms (by four practitioners) and macroscopy, the examination of the lines of my forehead (by
two practitioners). I have been told, however, that one local practitioner claims to divine by receiving "vibrations" from the patient, presumably something like extra-sensory perception. Another Gypsy, reports one of her clients, claims to communicate with the ghosts of the dead, apparently a form of spiritualism. Under no circumstances would the Gypsies I visited discuss how they divined.

The fortune is spoken rapidly in a practiced, sing-song voice, sometimes sounding as if the message had been memorized. Owing to the often accented and rapidly spoken words, it was not always possible to understand what was being said. The fortune seems to be told in a relatively fixed sequence. The distant future is prophesied first (usually favorable), followed by statements that are supposed to reflect the client's past (favorable and unfavorable) and finally statements regarding the present status of the client (most often unfavorable).

A representative sample of the prognostications that six Gypsies provided the writer are summarized below.

A) Prophecies about the distant future

1. You will live a long life.

2. You will be (or are) happily married to a (blond or brunette) wife.

3. You will have (2-4) children.
4. You will take two journeys, one to a far off land, one not so far.

5. You will be successful in your work.

B) Prophecies about the past

1. You have travelled near and far but always return where you started.

2. You have trouble saving money.

3. You have started many things but never get them done.

4. You have not gotten along with your parents.

5. You have had many friends but they have not returned the kindness you gave them.

6. You have had two girls friends, one with dark hair, the other with light; but you preferred the one with dark hair.

7. You have been expecting money in the mail.

8. You have been notified of a funeral.

C) Prophecies about the present

1. You smile on the outside with your face but inside in your heart you cry.

2. I see you do not want to bother people, but they give you trouble.
3. There are two people (never just one) -- you think they are your friends but they do not like you. They have jealousy for what you do (or of your success).

4. You have not been sleeping well at night.

5. Your stomach has been upset

6. You have hurt your leg.

7. Your suffering has been caused by two people who have put something on you; it is hoodoo, a spell, that I can remove. 6

D) The cure

Once the problem is clearly set forth by the Gypsy, the solution is expounded with equal clarity. The client is told that he needs further consultation and understanding of his problem. He is asked to return at an appointed time with a sum of money ranging between $9 and $60 (with an average of about $40). The exact amount requested varies according to the client's compulsion to receive further help and his ability to pay for it. The Gypsy declares that the money is needed so that she can purchase a number of candles (nine is very frequently indicated). The

6 It is of interest that the prophecies quite similar to the ones reported here have been noted elsewhere (Arizona Republic, November 2, 1969).
payment may be a multiple of nine such as $27 or $36 to indicate to the client just how much each candle would cost. The Gypsy may refer to one of the enormous candles in the reading room as an example. The client, however, does not actually purchase the candles for his personal use. The Gypsy states that she must burn them herself, in her home, in her "church" or up in the "mountains." Since the practice of candle burning is accepted by a portion of her Negro clients, the way the candles are burned is not questioned. Instead of money for candles, one Gypsy asked me to bring three twenty dollar bills for a lucky charm that would protect me from two enemies.

In addition to cash, clients have been asked to bring with them in a paper sack goods such as a jar of mayonnaise, a jar of ground coffee, a spool of thread, three small T-shirts, a pair of medium sized underwear, and an expensive white dress. When the client is short of money, she may be asked to perform some task for the Gypsy such as to help clean her home, iron her clothes, or vacuum her floor. For example, an auto mechanic told me that he once agreed to have his fortune told in payment for repairing the car of the eldest son of a Gypsy fortune-teller.

2. Diagnostic Session(s)

Owing to the high cost of consultation and treatment, only a small proportion of clients return. Consequently, somewhat
less information is available about events occurring on the second session. The object of the second session is usually to diagnose the client's problem; i.e., to determine whether it has been caused by natural-physical conditions or by unnatural-metaphysical conditions (hoodoo, evil spirits, and bad luck). The egg provided by the client is cracked into the glass of water; and a handkerchief, also belonging to the client, is used to cover the top of the glass. The client is warned that a dark spot appearing in the yolk is a sign of evil, of an unnaturally caused affliction. The idea probably is that the person's handkerchief can transmit to the egg yolk any evil that the user carries. By sleight of hand, the Gypsy places a dark object on the egg yolk: a large ugly spider, some hair, an ivory skull or the actual skull of a pigeon's head, or a piece of dirt. The appearance of the dark spot convinces some clients of the Gypsy's exceptional powers and induces them to pay for further, more costly treatments.

The forms of treatments that are required take several forms such as blessing the person's money, convincing the person to pay for healing rites, and convincing the client to bury money so as to make even more money.

3. Final Session

The final session ordinarily consists of an alleged cure for
the client's problem, be it metaphysical, social, physical, or financial. Since the cost of each successive session increases, it is probably common for the client to discontinue his "treatments" before the expense becomes prohibitive. The Gypsy, however, is aware of the financial status of her clients and may induce her patients to bring valuable possessions such as jewels or expensive wearing apparel. Consequently, it is presumed that the treatment is ordinarily terminated by the patient for financial reasons, unless of course, the Gypsy's treatment has actually been beneficial.

4. Case History of a Fortune-Telling Session

Edward Sarason, a middle-aged, white male, was born in Regan, Texas, into a family of six sisters and two brothers. He received a ninth grade education and worked as a longshoreman in Houston until he was drafted during the Korean war. During the conflict he received a spinal injury that left him entirely crippled for two years at a Veterans Administration Hospital. After regaining his ability to walk, he remained in continual pain in spite of constant and expensive medication. His sole concern was to relieve the chronic pain.

Mr. Sarason first became acquainted with the alleged powers of Sister Dorothy, a local Gypsy, whose advertisement guaranteed
to remove all pain and bad luck. Mr. Sarason reasoned that since a cure was "guaranteed" he had nothing to lose. Sister Dorothy set up appointments with her client as if he were visiting a physician.

In the initial session Sister Dorothy examined the man's palms and forehead. She indicated that she might be able to relieve his pain after diagnosing the condition. Sarason purchased three candles at the cost of $20. On his second visit, Mr. Sarason brought, as instructed, a glass of water covered with a handkerchief. Sister Dorothy warned her patient as she was about to remove the handkerchief that if he saw anything strange in the glass to make the sign of the cross. Mr. Sarason was frightened when he saw a large spider inside. The spider was supposed to indicate that the illness was unnatural and that it could be definitely cured, provided that the patient paid for his cure.

On the second diagnostic visit, Sister Dorothy received, as requested, $300. In a glass of water provided by the patient, the Gypsy cracked two eggs and covered the top with another of the patient's handkerchiefs. Once again he saw the spider. As added inducement to return for his "cure," he was introduced to a woman who claimed that Sister Dorothy had removed her arthritis.
On the third and what he was led to believe would be the final session, Mr. Sarason was required to bring $600 in cash, which he borrowed from a sister. To effect a cure, Sister Dorothy produced a black hen and declared that she was going to kill it in cold blood. The idea was that as the fowl suffered and died, it would draw Mr. Sarason's pain away. The animal was bled to death by inserting a pin to the jugular vein. As the animal staggered about, Sister Dorothy went into a state of frenzy, or chanting, and saying over again, "Look at it suffer; see it die!"

Since his chronic pain was unrelieved, Mr. Sarason returned once more, this time to ask for all of his money back. Sister Dorothy tried to reassure him that further treatment was necessary, at a cost of $2,200 for new furniture. When Mr. Sarason told one of his sisters that he needed still more money, this time for furniture, she notified the police. About that time, however, Sister Dorothy had disappeared and to date the money has not been recovered.8

7 According to Leland (1967: 21) Gypsies believe that the bones of sorcerers turn into black hens and chickens.

8 The police records available on this case made it possible for me to contact Mr. Sarason and to have him reconstruct the events he had witnessed.
Specific Strategies Employed by Gypsy Fortune-Tellers

1. **Bojour**: Removing a curse from the client's money

*Bojour*, the Romany word for beautiful flower, is the most lucrative swindle in Gypsy fortune-telling. Mitchell (1955) described the way bojour was practiced in New York City. His information was obtained from police detectives who had wired several fortune-telling parlors. Additional information is drawn from police reports and newspaper references.

The victims of *bojour* were frequently wealthy middle-aged women, unhappily married or divorced and afflicted with a morbid concern about their health. As they were generally socially isolated and had few friends in whom they could confide, they came to trust the advice of the Gypsy.

After gaining the confidence of her client and inquiring about any unusual pains, moles and checking the palms for prognostic indications, the Gypsy said, "I don't want to scare you but I see something bad in your life -- the spirits must have sent you to me!" The woman is instructed to return with an egg that has been placed on the client's navel overnight after she has slept with her warmest covers.

The egg is returned to the Gypsy in a handkerchief. The fortune-teller ceremoniously cracks the egg into a glass to reveal, inside of the yolk, a ball of tangled hair, a spider, a devil's head,
or some stringy green matter. The foreign substance reveals to the woman that she had been cursed. Several sessions later the Gypsy "discovers" that the curse is from the woman's "dirty, stinking money piled up in the vaults of her bank."

The woman is warned that if her curse is not removed, her teeth will loosen and fall out, that she will develop a goiter in her neck, hairy moles on her face, that her bones will rot away, and the blood in her veins will clog until the heart cannot beat. For some women the fear of the curse is so strong that they can be convinced to withdraw their entire savings so that the money can be blessed, thereby removing the curse. As instructed, the woman withdraws her savings in large denominations and brings them in a plain brown paper bag.

After an elaborate explanation of how the curse will be removed, the Gypsy takes the bag and performs a frenzied blessing ritual. So compelling is the Gypsy's ritual that she may even scratch her face to the point of bleeding. During the ceremony the money sack is secretly switched for another sack containing worthless paper. The woman is told the good news that the curse has been removed, but she must not open the sack for two weeks lest the money turn to paper. The bag is sewn to the underside of the woman's skirt, and the woman is escorted home.

A variation of the practice of bojour is to perform the money
blessing ritual, but then to indicate to the client that the curse cannot be entirely removed unless the money is destroyed. Before the woman has a chance to protest, the sack is set on fire (the one containing paper money) while the Gypsy retains the client's money. According to Mitchell (1955), this latter form of bojour is somewhat safer from prosecution since the woman feels there is no way for her to retrieve the money. Nevertheless, the bojour victim rarely reports her case to the authorities.

Mitchell cites the case of a mentally defective Italian immigrant who lost $17,000 and of a three-time divorcee, who lost $12,000. A New York grandmother was convinced her money ($118,273) had developed a curse that caused chicken blood to flow in her veins and also caused her daughter's eczema as well as her granddaughter's rash (Birmingham News, February 19, 1960). The Gypsy was caught several years later after returning from Europe on an ocean liner, and much of the money was returned.

Another variation of bojour is cited in the Rochester Times Union (July 7, 1964). After several visits the Gypsy rubbed a tomato over the client's arm and back and had the man, a police deputy, step on it. A voodoo skull with hair on it, which the Gypsy termed an evil spirit, appeared in the tomato. The Gypsy, who advertised as Sister Hanna, character reader and advisor and had an Indian reader sign, requested $500 for burying the skull
Another variation of bojour is the promise of the Gypsy to increase her client's money by blessing it.

Mrs. Rosie Eli, a Gypsy fortune-teller and palm reader in Cleveland, convinced Mrs. Gorkos, an elderly black woman, that she could make a lot of money for her through a series of rites that would more than double her money. The elderly woman gave the Gypsy $100, returned the next day and got back $200. That was doubled as well. She took the money home, returned a few days later and again got $400 for $200. A few months later the amounts grew larger until Mrs. Gorkos was giving as much as $1,300 at one time but no money was coming back. Mrs. Gorkos finally became suspicious when the woman refused a large check, saying that she could only perform the rites on cash. But then the Gypsy began giving the woman $50 as interest; the rest, however, was controlled by the "sun, wind, snow, and rain" (Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio, March 17, 1965). The Gypsy was arrested on April 26, 1966, in New York as she stepped from the Queen Mary after a trip in Europe. Mrs. Gorkos, however, dropped charges when $8,500 was returned (Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio, April 29, 1965).  

Bojour is not practiced in the Houston area to the writer's knowledge.
2. **Hokkane baro**

*Hokkane baro*, which means big trick in *Romany*, refers to the trick of convincing a client to bury his money in the belief that he can make it more valuable. When the client digs up the treasure, both the money and the Gypsy are gone. Frequent mention of locating buried treasure appears in Gypsy advertisements, and suggests that *hokkane baro* is practiced in the United States today.

The history of *hokkane baro* dates back many centuries. A Gypsy in 17th century France instructed her client to dig a hole in a part of the kitchen floor, and to pour holy water into it while chanting the Lord's prayer -- all to increase his good fortune and wealth. As this proved fruitless, the client was convinced to bury his own money outdoors in order to make it attract an even larger sum of money (Clebert, 1963: 53).

3. **Promise of Seduction**

When Gypsies solicited people who were pedestrians, one of the popular schemes was for an attractive girl to lure a customer into the store-front of *isfa*. While wrestling with the client, she manages to pick his pockets. When she has procured the money, she calls out "rape" and brings in her husband who is
bearing a knife. (See Mitchell, 1955).  

Case Histories of Potential Clients

None of the Gypsies I encountered would openly discuss their profession or their clients. Since first hand data were lacking as to the factors that motivated people to seek the advice of a Gypsy "spiritual advisor" as well as information about their age, sex, and occupation, I adopted a method that was suggested by the work of Puckett, a white investigator of Negro conjurers and their patients. Realizing he was unable to acquire information by ordinary means, Puckett found that by posing as a conjurer, he could learn a good deal of information from his "patients" and share professional "secrets" with other conjurers (Puckett, 1926).

A. Method

The writer placed an advertisement in the "spiritual advisor" section of the Forward Times during one week in September, 1969. The advertisement contained the name Sister Anne, a name that was so commonly used by different practitioners that it would be difficult to determine whether a new practitioner had adopted the name. The name of a female practitioner was necessary since

10While the illusion of seduction has probably been a successful guise, it is important to indicate that owing to Gypsy morals, prostitution is unknown and extra-marital affairs extremely rare.
virtually all spiritual advisors were women. The wording of the advertisement and the presence of a Christ-like picture were representative of most Gypsy advertising. (See figure 9).

When a caller asked for Sister Anne, I indicated that she was not home but that I was her helper. To gain the caller's confidence I stated, "I can tell just by the sound of your voice that you need some help with your problems." The caller almost always expressed emphatic agreement. I continued, "Also by the sound of your voice I can tell that you have a great need to be liked and admired by other people, but that you have found it unwise to be too frank with other people!" Several other such statements were read from a list of "universally valid" items provided by Forer (1946) which are applicable to most people (see Appendix A).

When the caller indicated these statements reflected the truth and expressed a desire to receive help, I mentioned that there would be no charge for my help "since God's work is free." The "interview" was unstructured except for an attempt to determine the age and occupation of each caller and the experience each subject had with other "spiritual-advisors."

B. Results

Ten subjects, seven females and three males, responded to the advertisement. Since the Forward Times is read by a
SISTER ANNE

She guarantees to succeed where other advisors have failed. Put an end to your sickness, worry and bad luck. Call Sister Anne at JA 9-1318 for FREE, IMMEDIATE and LASTING help. Troubled by alcoholism, problems with your job, matters of love or unnatural influence? Call this gifted healer and advisor with God-given powers. She restores lost nature. She has helped thousands, why not you. Call JA 9-1318 between 8 A.M. and 10 p.m.

Figure 9

(The spelling mistake (alchollism) was made by the Forward Times.)
predominantly black audience, I assumed that all callers were Negroes. The content of each discussion is summarized.

1. A 28 year old woman wanted advice as to how she could obtain employment in Galveston as a practical nurse. She said she had been without work for several months in Houston, had no money, and no place to go. I advised her to advertise in a Galveston newspaper and to consult the employment agency.

She had recently separated from her husband, a freight worker, after two years of marriage because he had an extramarital affair. The caller had no children by her present marriage but had a child out of wedlock who had been delivered by a midwife in Louisiana. The midwife, also skilled as a conjurer, found foster parents for the child.

The subject had twice consulted Sister White during 1965 to determine if her boyfriend's mother had been burning candles to stop the affair. After paying ten dollars to have her fortune told, Sister White requested an additional $50 for a second session that would answer the woman's question. The woman had been instructed to bring an egg in a handkerchief. Sister White warned the woman that if a black spot appeared inside of the
egg, it was a sign that the boyfriend's mother had been burning candles for evil purposes. The black spot appeared. The high cost of additional treatments prevented the woman from seeing Sister White again.

2. A twenty year old male high school student wanted to know if his Port Arthur girl friend, whom he had been dating for five years, really loved him. After they had been briefly engaged and she had granted him sexual privileges, they had an argument and she returned his ring. Following the argument, the girl refused to date. The caller had never attempted to consult a spiritual advisor before. I advised him to talk to his girl and to propose engagement again.

3. A female aged 32, who worked as a maid, was worried about her brother of 21 who had been acting strangely. The brother stayed in his room all day, would not eat, speak, and would not sleep. The caller expressed the possibility that someone had caused his odd behavior by using hoodoo.

After hearing Sister White's Sunday radio broadcast, the woman thought she might be able to help. She traveled across town by bus to Sister White's home but was told by a young male Gypsy that Sister White
4. A 24 year old male computer operator at a local bank called several times for advice on a variety of matters. His neighbor had borrowed $172 six months before but was unwilling to repay the loan. I advised him to consult a lawyer. About a week later he called again to indicate that his lawyer could not help him as no witnesses to the loan were to be found. He also requested advice on whether he ought to find another job. I told him to use his own judgment.

In the course of our conversations he indicated that he had been reared by his aunt in Louisiana where he had been acquainted with candle burning. He asked me whether the burning of a candle would help him get back the money or win him the love of a girl and whether the candle should be burned continuously or at selected intervals. I told him to try out different methods of candle burning to see which worked best.
The caller had previously visited several spiritual advisors. He had consulted a black lady in Louisiana named Mabel Sam for advice in a love affair and a "Prophet" named R. L. Edmunson in Louisiana, a black faith-healer for advice about obtaining a job. The caller indicated that he regularly attended a Baptist Church and felt that candle burning was a legitimate way to channel God's power.

5. A middle-aged housewife, referred by the previous caller, inquired about her daughter's ailment. Of three physicians who had examined the girl, two diagnosed her malady as worms; the third said it was a cyst. I was asked to tell which diagnosis was correct. I referred the woman to the diagnostic clinic at Baylor College of Medicine.

6. A housewife, age not determined, who lived in the third ward, indicated that there was another man in her life and that she was not sure whether he loved her or not. She revealed further, that several years ago her husband had "lost his nature" after lifting a heavy object. The woman wanted to know whether it would be acceptable for her to sleep with the other man since her husband was impotent.
She had consulted Sister Alma, a local Gypsy advisor and healer, to help her husband. Sister Alma asked the woman to produce some dollar bills; but much to the fortune teller's disappointment, the woman had only about a dollar and a half in change. To cure her husband's condition the Gypsy requested a particular $49 white evening gown. The client doubted a gown could be of any help and never visited her again.

I suggested that she discuss the problem with her physician.

7. A male age 25 who worked as a clerk was anxious about a male employee whom he had known about a year. The co-worker had asked the caller on various occasions if he could "fool with him." The caller said that he did not want to do anything "unnatural," but he did not want to offend his friend. I suggested to the caller that he use his own judgment.

8. A woman of 29 who worked at a rest home called regarding her husband who had recently left her with her three young children. After her husband was gone, she fell in love with a young man, only to discover that he was having another affair. The turn
of events upset her greatly, and her grief was sharply conveyed. No advice was given.

Before her marriage she had twice visited a black spiritual advisor named Sister Josephine in the Sunnyside area of Houston. After diagnosing her condition, Sister Josephine told the woman that she needed help, that neighbors were lying about her, and that she was afflicted by evil spirits. The cure cost her $30 for nine candles; and at no additional expense she received some special oil and a small jar full of sawdust that was to be burned like incense. Sister Josephine told her that to win the love of any man she had only to pour the oil in his bathwater. The woman admitted to me that the treatment was ineffective.

9. A woman born in 1904 and raised in Arkansas had taken various medically prescribed drugs for several years to reduce swelling in her feet and legs caused by high blood pressure. The woman, however, was convinced that her ailment was caused by a malicious woman who had lived with her in a previous apartment. The caller firmly believed the woman had put something in her shoes to make her feet and legs
swell. Fearing further evil, she moved to another address but here, too, she felt endangered. She was convinced that neighbors who drove past her apartment were tossing a foul-smelling concoction from their automobile windows to make her move away.

The woman has worked as a kindergarten helper but has recently been unable to continue working because of her physical condition. I contacted the local Social Security office to see if they could determine the woman's eligibility for social security. I further suggested that she discuss these "evil" people with her physician.

10. A woman who had been married for 26 years (from 1940 until 1966) said that her husband was now living with another woman. The caller suspected her husband's mistress had put something in his drink to attract him. To bring back her husband, she consulted Sister White (actually Sister White's daughter) who required for the first session a $3 consultation fee and some housecleaning. On a subsequent visit, Sister White's daughter requested $45 for the purchase of nine candles that would be
burned at Sister White's "church." The woman felt the cost excessive and terminated her visits. She has consulted other faith-healers in Texas for various reasons, one in Palestine and one in Waco, and has written to a Mrs. Bertha Smith of Athens, all without success.

Since the caller requested advice for getting her husband back and told me she had just bought a red candle for the purpose, I suggested that she first burn it in the moonlight, then invite her former husband over for his favorite supper and to include plenty of champagne, a beverage he particularly enjoyed. The woman called about a week later to exclaim that the candle-burning treatment and the dinner had actually convinced her spouse to return. She was unable to understand why I would not accept a donation for her services.

C. Discussion of Case Histories

As expected from customer counts of Sister White's patients, the majority of the callers (7 of 10) were women. All three males who called were all in their early twenties and single, while most of the women were in their thirties or older and had been married. Most of the callers had been reared in the Southern
states where they had become acquainted with conjuration and candle-burning. Most of the subjects were religious insofar as they attended church and believed in God. The use of candles to influence events was also seen as compatible with Christianity. Moreover, their justification for seeing a "spiritual advisor" was for a more rapid solution to their problems than could be otherwise obtained from conventional faith and prayer. Most of the callers sought confirmation of fears rather than general advice or counsel.

None of the callers with whom I spoke had any knowledge of there being Gypsies in Houston. They identified practitioners who were Gypsies as "Indian Readers" as American Indians.

The case histories suggest that many individuals have been seeking relief from physical disorders by receiving the healing rites offered by Gypsies. Several subjects valued the advice of both their physician and their spiritual advisor while others relied exclusively on the advice of the Gypsy. More data are required to determine the number of individuals who have consulted Gypsies exclusively for medical help.
Part VI: CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes with 1) an assessment of factors that seem to reduce the rate of social change in the Gypsy community; 2) an evaluation of conditions that might lead to a more rapid acculturation to gajo norms; and 3) an evaluation of the Gypsy fortune-teller's role as a healer and advisor.

1. Factors that reduce the rate of social change

Considerable solidarity and consistency have been observed in the beliefs and practices of Gypsies in Harris County. Several factors are discussed that may have bearing on the continued preservation of this Gypsy community.

a) The Romany Language

Romany remains the language which Gypsies ordinarily use. The language maintains the ethnic identity and creates social distance between Gypsy and gajo. A speaker of Romany has no term for "man"; he must indicate whether he is talking about a Gypsy (a Rom) or an outsider (a gajo) (Cohn, 1969: 477).

b) Isolation from Gajo Community

While the Gypsy comes in contact with numerous gajos, the context of the associations are almost always in terms of business transactions; i.e., clients, lawyers,
printers, and the police. Moreover, secrecy is ordinarily needed to protect extralegal activities and the Gypsy's ethnic identity. The gajo community is almost entirely unaware of the Gypsy's presence. It is felt that divulging detailed information to an unauthorized gajo on the part of a Gypsy would impair the social standing of that individual. It should be remembered, as Miller observed (1968: 9), that Gypsies are taught that the typical gajo is inherently unclean, "stupid, crazy, ignorant, filthy and no good."

The striking lack of research of the American Gypsy demonstrates careful exclusion of the gajo from acquaintance with Romany life. It is felt that the few comprehensive studies in the past two decades were of exceptional Gypsies, those not currently engaged in fortune-telling (Coker, 1966 in Philadelphia) (Harper, 1951 and Miller, 1968, in Portland). For the present study, unobtrusive measures were ordinarily employed.

c) Traditional Occupations and Denial of Formal Education

The Gypsy child generally receives only a few years of formal education -- the minimal formal skills helpful for business transactions, such as the ability to calculate and to sign one's name. Gypsy parents may fear that
education will cause their children to reject traditions.

Clarke (1967: 207) cites a Gypsy parent in El Cerrito, California, who feared the consequences of *gajo* education.

The child who learns too much about the outside world may not be content with the old ways. They know our Gypsy world could be ruined—become American and they do not want that to happen. Some learning is good though. My son can now read enough to tell me what it says on medicine bottles and read signs, which is helpful.

Limited formal education probably reduces the Gypsy's chance to assess his life-style apart from the influence of his ethnic group and reduces his opportunity to enter *gajo* professions.

From the point of view of the parents, however, the expertise ordinarily required for the traditional occupations is provided by the family. The mother and mother-in-law systematically instruct females in the art of fortune-telling. Fathers teach their sons their trades.

d) **Maintenance of Family Solidarity**

The social customs leading to marriage are characterized by a puritanical code. While dating is permitted with expressed parental approval, a chaperone is ordinarily provided (Clark, 1967: 207). Most marriages are still arranged by parents and bride-price transactions
are made. As indicated previously, marriage outside the Gypsy subculture is forbidden and is exceedingly rare. Moreover, the nuclear and the extended family maintains stable social relations. Yoors (1967: 5) wrote that, "The inner cohesion and solidarity of the Gypsy community lies in the strong family ties which are their basic and only constant unit." According to Harper (1951) the family is the basic cultural focus of the Gypsies.

e) Social Solidarity Enhanced by Rituals and Customs

The Gypsy subculture observes numerous rituals and customs including receptions, councils, weddings, baptisms, pomanas (feasts in commemoration of the dead) and the patchiv (party). Holidays providing occasion for communion include Christmas observed once in December and again in January, the Greek Orthodox Christmas or Romano Kretchuno (Brown, 1927: 10). A Greek festival held each October in Houston affords another such occasion. Feasts are also held during Easter and Halloween (All Souls Day) (Bonos, Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio, February 26, 1969). A celebration during Easter called Saint Guadalupe's Day, is held by local Gypsies. It is felt that these occasions reinforce and extend social solidarity. The remarkably elaborate funeral observances
for a single person may bring together from all over the country Gypsies linked by kinship or friendship.

f) Social Change and Fortune-Telling

Since Gypsy fortune-telling is the most reliable source of income, considerable effort is devoted to supporting the profession. Carefully prepared advertisements are circulated to black, Mexican-American and white communities in great volumes. The overall success in attracting customers, it is suggested, is one of the factors that has permitted the Gypsy community to maintain its cohesiveness. Indeed, the Gypsy subculture seems to be relatively unique among ethnic groups in their singular ability to retain a consistent life style, even after centuries of contact with gajo civilization.

2. Conditions conducive to rapid acculturation to gajo norms

A reversal of the factors that retard social change is, of course, likely to increase acculturation to gajo norms. The Gypsy community is likely to acculturate if the Romany language is eroded, if isolation from the gajo community is reduced (i.e., by television and other mass media), if traditional occupations are replaced by conventional ones, if formal education is increased, if family solidarity is eroded, if basic customs and rituals are abandoned, and if the clientele loses its trust in the Gypsy's powers.
An intriguing possibility is that Gypsy fortune-tellers might become too numerous to profit from their trade.

This study demonstrates that the Gypsies in Harris County are highly organized and adopt a tribal system. Relative immunity from arrest is believed to occur in exchange for cooperation with the police. Gypsy kings, who represent their respective tribes, settle claims out of court and inform on Gypsies who enter Harris County. Evidence has been presented that the king commands "protection money" from the members of his tribe. Failure to pay the protection money may result in a police conviction. If kings are capable of having the police remove most new Gypsy families, competition is markedly reduced. Alternatively, if new Gypsies can pay protection money to the king, they may be added to the king's subjects and thus add to his power.

On the basis of increasing numbers of Gypsies who advertise each week as "spiritual advisors," it seems reasonable to assume that there is a marked increase in the number of local Gypsy families. At the time of this writing, perhaps forty-five families are currently advertising as Gypsy fortune-tellers in Harris County. Part of

\[1\] Estimates are based on the number of different Gypsy clients named by a local printer, who probably prints most of the circulars for local Gypsies.
this increase is thought to be due to migration and part is due to the relatively large families that have brought many young practitioners into the profession. Future increases in the number of local fortune-tellers might produce a margin of diminishing returns, which in turn could produce a greater dispersion of Gypsy families or could encourage members to engage in more accessible, legitimate professions. The rate of acculturation to gajo norms might rapidly increase if the Gypsy were denied income from fortune-telling.

3. The Gypsy fortune-teller as healer and advisor

From data collected by interviews with potential and former clients, it appears that a sizeable number of individuals seek and accept advice that is legitimated primarily by religious or divinatory practices. The Gypsy is merely one agent to whom such individuals respond. There is little evidence to indicate a particularly beneficial effect of the Gypsy-client interaction. There is, however, ample indication that a sizeable number of clients in need of medical attention receive, in return for expensive fees, diagnosis and ineffective treatment by the Gypsy. The overall similarity of the form and style of the Gypsy's diagnosis and treatment indicates a highly traditional modus operandi. Moreover, the lack of a highly articulated system of treatment is evidence that fortune-telling is essentially a commercial venture. Continued
research is needed to assess the ethnomedical implications of the Gypsy's practice. It would be of value to determine whether Gypsies refer patients with serious disorders to physicians and whether they can detect signs of heart disease, cancer, or tuberculosis.
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APPENDIX A: The Fallacy of Personal Validation

The tendency to be overly impressed by vague statements and to endow the diagnostian with an unwarrantedly high degree of insight was termed by Forer (1949) the "fallacy of personal validation." Based on a personality test given to a class of psychology students, a private personality profile was prepared for each student containing identical statements that Forer obtained from a newsstand astrological book. Nearly all of his students rated the profile as "good" or "excellent" until they realized that they had received identical profiles. Forer's experiment was successfully replicated by Ulrich, Stothenik, and Stainton (1963) even when other students served as administrators of the personality test. The list of thirteen "universally valid" statements used by Forer is indicated below: (Forer, 1949: 120)

1. You have a great need for other people to like and admire you.
2. You have a tendency to be critical of yourself.
3. You have a great deal of unused capacity which you have not turned to your advantage.
4. While you have some personality weaknesses, you are generally able to compensate for them.
5. Your sexual adjustment has presented problems to you.
6. Disciplined and self-controlled on the outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure inside.
7. At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing.

8. You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.

9. You pride yourself as an independent thinker and do not accept others' statements without satisfactory proof.

10. You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others.

11. At times you are extroverted, affable, sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary, reserved.

12. Some of your aspirations tend to be pretty unrealistic.

13. Security is one of your major goals in life.

Forer noted that the "universally valid statement" is true of the individual, "...but lacks the quantitative specification and proper focus which are necessary for differential diagnosis. In a sense a universally valid statement is a description of a cultural group rather than a personal psychological datum." (Forer, 1949: 118).

"The crystal-gazer," Forer observed, "is likely to be aware of these points and other pseudo-diagnosticians, though they may be unaware of the fallacies inherent in the procedures that make effective use of 'universally valid' statements."

Since the vague kind of prognostications of the Gypsies often resembled "universally valid statements," the writer
employed Forer's list to assess their effect upon individuals who responded to the author's Gypsy-type advertisement.