

Anthropol Med. 2013 Aug;20(2):190-202. doi: 10.1080/13648470.2013.800806.

Crisis as deferred closure - clairvoyant counselling in contemporary Danish society.

Steffen V.

a Department of Anthropology , University of Copenhagen , Denmark.

Abstract

Clairvoyance, spiritualism and healing are popular ways of seeking guidance and personal development in contemporary Danish society. Although few Danes are self-declared spiritualists, many believe in the existence of ghosts and the ability of clairvoyants to communicate with the departed, and the market of alternative therapies offers a number of mediumistic activities. In anthropological writings, such activities are often associated with crisis and the re-establishment of order. The concept of crisis refers to a time of great difficulty or danger or when an important decision must be made. Looking at the people who seek guidance from the spiritual world, however, both the implication of a limited time span, the idea of great difficulty, and the indication of decision-making may be challenged. In some cases, spirit consultations initiate processes of new definitions and classifications of problems, but in others they just seem to confirm old problems in an ongoing effort to cope with the difficulties of everyday situations. The aim of this paper is to explore the diversity of outcomes from clairvoyance and spiritualist consultations. Focusing on the particularity of specific cases, the author wants to demonstrate the analytical implications of seeing these activities through the lens of crisis. Instead of pushing the framework of crisis, meaning and order, the author suggests a rethinking of spiritual healing as an integrated rather than extraordinary way of dealing with the challenges of everyday life, and of crisis as a context for the deferred closure of insecurity.