

FROM THE DESK OF DAVID L. SCHUTZER

MINI FIELDWORK PROJECT: SUPERNATURALISM

INTRODUCTION

Fieldwork is the single most important method used by anthropologists to gather data. To be successful, the anthropologist must learn to be an objective observer. The act of observing is not easy—the observer may have preconceptions that get in the way, or she may be tempted to label and interpret from an ETIC perspective. The fieldworker must also learn to conduct effective interviews to elicit the EMIC view.

OBJECTIVES

- ☞ To gain experience doing anthropological fieldwork.
- ☞ To gain experience objectively observing and recording data.
- ☞ To gain experience interacting with and collecting data from an informant.
- ☞ Apply some of the fieldwork techniques presented in Chapter 3.

THE PROJECT

This project will give you a chance to be an objective anthropological observer of ritual within a belief system. Your task is to present a *descriptive* paper of your observations. In addition, you will include information from an informant.

Procedures

1. Locate an informant who is very familiar with a religion that is unfamiliar to you.
2. Explain this class project to your informant. Emphasize that the paper is to be *descriptive* in nature. Be relativistic, and be careful not to offend your informant with value-laden comments.
3. Determine how you will record your observations.
4. Attend a religious service with your informant.
5. Carefully observe everything that goes on from the moment you arrive until you depart.
6. Record your observations in detail after departing.
7. Describe the attire of each category of participant—*i.e.*: priest, lay reader, choir, usher, and congregation.
8. Make a list of the objects you observe during the activity. Describe them and why they met the anthropological criteria of being *supernatural*.
9. Describe the supernatural beings referred to in the service.
10. Elicit information from your informant about his or her perception of the objects considered to be supernatural.
11. Elicit information from your informant about what she or he considers to be supernatural beings.

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PAPER FORMAT

1. The paper is to be prepared in *Microsoft Word*, double-spaced; all margins are to be one inch. The font should be a serif font not to exceed 12 points. The paper should be 3–5 pages long. Submit to me as an attachment to an e-mail. My e-mail address is:

anthroprof@gmail.com

2. Include name, class, and date submitted.

3. Cite the activity attended—name, address, date and time of activity, length of activity.

4. List the first name of the informant.

5. Include a chronology of the service, *including subject* of songs, sermons, chants, and prayers.

6. Using an ETIC perspective, describe the supernatural objects and beings.

7. Using the EMIC perspective of the informant, describe the supernatural objects and beings.

8. List the supernatural functions, and provide an explanation of how each was applicable during this activity.

9. Attach your rough field notes and additional information—for example, brochures or programs that were used during the activity.