

# Reading and Doing Ethnography

Social Anthropology 314

# 1.3 Research Project Workshop

# Class research projects

Submit a 1-paragraph statement of your project. Explain briefly:

- >> What site you want to work on;
- >> Why you are interested in the site;
- >> Whether you have any existing relationship to the site, and if so what; and
- >> An anthropological research question about your site.

# What makes a good class project

- >> You can get access to the site.
- >> Low risks to you and to the research participants.
- >> You are truly interested in your site.

What makes a **good** research  
question?

# Good research questions

- >> Address a puzzle.
- >> Clearly and precisely stated.
- >> Answerable with the tools and resources available.
- >> Relevant: other people care about the answer.
- >> Don't smuggle in gratuitous opinions of your own.

Are all research questions good?

# Research questions that need work

- >> Why are men different from women? *[Impossibly broad, no clear site.]*
- >> Do Americans believe in destiny? *[Too broad, factual, no clear puzzle.]*
- >> Why do poor Americans vote against their economic interests?  
*[This implies that you know what their interests are, prior to doing research.]*
- >> How can ethnography can illuminate gender dynamics? *This is too nebulous.*



# Research questions that need work

- » How are prices different at a farmers' market than in a supermarket?
- » What is the physical layout of a (particular) bookstore?
- » What attracts people to interfaith church services?

# Good research questions

- >> What does the word "oriental" mean to staff and visitors at an Oriental Institute?
- >> In a tense rural environment, how do recreational rock climbers perceive those outside their group?
- >> In a science exhibit where magical techniques and scientific facts interact as part of the educational process, how children are taught to delineate what science can and cannot share with magic?

Research questions are not  
supposed to be finished or perfect.  
They're just a moment in a  
process.