

SAMPLE RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL

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Final Project Proposal

Shamanism: An Exploration in the “Technique of Ecstasy”

Introduction: The introduction provides a brief overview of shamanism as an ancient practice that is found throughout history and across cultures. This paper will examine traditional forms of shamanism, as well as neo-shamanism, the re-emergence of shamanic practices in contemporary Western culture. Ultimately, this paper argues that shamanistic practices are effective methods of healing developed and utilized as a spiritual path for thousands of years.

Working Thesis: Despite the prevailing dismissive and often negative Western scientific attitude toward shamanism, this ancient method of healing is an effective practice that, through a transpersonal experience in which an individual undergoes a change in consciousness, the individual gains access to his or her archetypal, inner resources which results in healing, insight, and self-empowerment.

Structure:

I. Traditional Shamanism (the first part of this paper briefly answers the following questions concerning traditional shamanism):

a. What is a shaman?

This section discusses the definition (and issues of defining) the traditional concept of a shaman. It provides a brief overview of the origin and distribution of shamanic practices around the world throughout history.

b. How does one become a shaman?

This section discusses a shaman’s initiation process, training, and death-rebirth experience.

c. What does a shaman do?

This section examines the methods of healing performed by shamans, (for either individuals suffering from illness or for a community as a whole) including: healing of the spirit, herbal healing, bodywork, divination, soul-leading, ceremony and ritual. It also provides information about a shaman's guides or "spirits" and the processes by which a shaman travels to the "other world" (or induces a "shamanic state of consciousness"). A brief discussion of cultures that use various hallucinogenic or mind-altering substances is included, as well as major archetypal themes individuals experience during their shamanistic journeying.

d. How does shamanic healing work?

This section examines the practices of shamans and the question of "trickery" or deception surrounding their methods of healing and how it was viewed as a form of neurosis or schizophrenia since the Enlightenment.

II. Neo-Classical Shamanism and "core shamanism" (the last third of the paper focuses on the contemporary emerge of shamanistic practices and the personal, social, and cultural implications):

a. What is neo-shamanism? What is "core shamanism"?

This section explores the emergence of interest in shamanism in contemporary, Western world and discusses the concept of "core shamanism" developed by anthropologist Michael Harner. It examines the contributing factors for this interest within the context of other non-western healing or spiritual practices (such as yoga or meditation).

b. What is our contemporary understanding of shamanic methods?

This section examines the psychological (with an emphasis on Jungian psychology), physiological, and chemical mechanisms involved in altered consciousness and its ramifications upon an individual.

c. How can anyone use shamanistic practices to heal themselves or others?

This last section explores the personal benefits of using core shamanism as a healing or spiritual practice.

Conclusion: The conclusion examines the broader personal, social, and cultural implications of shamanistic healing in the 21st century. It discusses how various shamanistic practices can aid the individual, how it can be used in our community, and the intended ramifications for the earth at large.

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