

Global Flows Ethnographic Exercise

This in-class exercise will prepare you for a homework fieldwork assignment (an ethnographic interview) conducted with a family member or friend outlining the context of family arrival in the United States drawn from the Silicon Valley region. The exercise will integrate themes and ideas outlined in the course. The U.S. differs from many countries in that the majority of those living within its borders have arrived relatively recently (in anthropological terms)—less than five generations ago. By some estimates, 60% of the local region is either foreign born, or is one generation removed from immigration. The movement of people from one part of the world to another is an important dimension of contemporary globalization.

The following assignment is designed to help you think about where, how, and why immigration takes place, and what the consequences are for the person you are interviewing—your *informant*. The assignment is made up of two parts: (1) an in-class training in which you will practice in teams of two—one person interviews using a series of open-ended questions, the second is interviewed; (2) a homework assignment in which you will ask an informant—a friend or family member (who will remain anonymous) to answer the same questions. The practice interview should be turned in after class. The completed homework assignment will be turned in _____. Both worksheets will ask you to describe the informant, and outline how she or he (or his or her family) arrived in Northern California, and how he or she evaluates migration. These observations are based on the informant's point of view and information, not yours. You will bring in your analytical voice to suggest which global processes—such as the push and pull of economics, politics, former colonial connections, chain migration or "brain circulation" might have played out in his or her (family's) life. Cairncross will be helpful in clarifying the larger context of immigration.

Interviews can proceed more smoothly if you follow a few basic principles:

1. Establish rapport: Try to make the informant feel comfortable. Remember that rapport—a relationship of mutual trust—is essential for doing good anthropology.
2. Listen to the informant: Carefully pay attention to what the informant is saying. Remember that this is not just a conversation—the informant should speak more than you do, and you should refrain from expressing your opinions or influencing the informant's answer.
3. Clarify responses: When you are unsure about a response from the informant, take the time to restate the question (perhaps in a slightly different fashion) or offer a summary to the informant for verification.
4. Take good notes: Write detailed notes based on your interview. Do not rely on memory.

Questions:

1. Ask the informant to provide general information about his or her life, which can be included in the introduction. This should include age, gender, description of family, location of household, education/major, and work.

2. Ask the informant to tell you where he or she was born (city/town and country) and how he or she or his or her family arrived in Northern California, including the route that was taken:

3. What nationalities were the informant's ancestors?

4. How and when did the informant's ancestors immigrate to the United States? Why?

5. How and when did the informant and/or family come to Northern California? Why?

6. Are there any family stories about migration? If so, briefly describe.

7. Ask the informant to discuss how migration has influenced his or her everyday life.

8. Did the informant or his or her family need to learn more than one language or culture?

9. Ask if or how the person (family) who migrated maintain contact with family and friends in different parts of the world?

10. How do they interact with people from different ethnic groups?

11. Ask the informant to discuss the following questions:

a. Has migration improved life? How?

b. Has migration made life more difficult? How?

c. Outline how she or she (or his or her family) evaluates the cultural experience of migration. (i.e. Was it a good or bad experience? Why?)

12. Which global processes such as the push and pull of economics, politics, former colonial or historic connections, chain migration or "brain circulation" might have played out in his or her (family's) life?

Use this map to show the informant or the informant's family's route of migration.



Appendix.: Attach legible notes and oral consent form.

1.This class exercise was developed by S. Cate, K. Fjelstad and R. Gonzalez, modified by J. English-Lueck, and Jennifer Anderson