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Option 1

Research Essay: Ethnography of Community

In our communities, we see many different ways in which people communicate with one another. It could be in a native language or in a different language. Most people feel comfortable communicating in their communities with the language they are most literate in. In my study, I will examine the literacy practices of my father, my uncles, and my aunt, as they are immigrants who came from the country Kosovo, where the dominant speaking language is Albanian. This study will allow me to fully understand the way my family members communicate with one another in American society, I will examine how comfortable they are with speaking English to one another since it isn't their most fond way of communicating with each other.


First, starting with conducting an ethnography, I needed to find a way in which I could get my father and his siblings to communicate with one another all at the same time. I chose to have a group facetime call for an hour a day every 3 days over the last couple of weeks, I found what time where their lunch breaks were, and I set up this study. At first, it was quite difficult to get grown men, to express their feelings in a way that allowed me to study their literacy practices with one another. When I was studying my aunt, it wasn't as difficult because she has a soft spot, and can express her feelings in a multitude of ways, but my father and my uncles weren't as open to sharing their thoughts, but sooner or later they started to open up and talk about the ways they communicate. I would say the reason my uncles were hesitant at first was that every time I talk to them about certain things, they have this persona of being strong and tough, not to say there is



anything wrong with that but it did make it more difficult to find the true reasoning of their communication with one another.


To start off this study I had all people who participated make a list of their favorite ways of greeting and communicating, and since they are close siblings, I noticed a similarity in their lists and some practices that were written down were talking about life growing up, and the impact it had on living in the US. I realized that the way they communicated was affected by their emotions for one another, they embraced one another, by sharing stories about their hardships growing up, and the massive impact it has on their lives today. It's a bit different from what I've noticed in the Albanian community around New York City because what I've noticed is that family friends who are Albanian don't much talk about the past, they tend to focus on the future, because they live here now, and have a slight feeling of moving on from the past. This was important because when I asked the group participant about this they said "Our plan wasn't to remain in America till we retired, our plan was to always come back home earlier, the way we looked at it was different from most Albanians". I realized why they used this literacy practice when communicating with one another, and I found out that they talk about the past, because they always want to go back, and live the lives they sought to live. My father for example talked about his retirement, and he stated that "Once I turn 62 and I retire I will go back home to Kosovo, because it is my dream", and my aunt and all of my other uncles shared the same feeling. I can understand why because, their mentality is that many immigrants come to America to work, and all you can do is work, I've noticed with people who are born where I'm from think the same way, especially my family members.

In Addition throughout this study, I also asked my uncles and aunt to communicate with each other only in the English language, and they found it quite weird because they've never would



do it on a daily basis, they didn't feel comfortable doing it. What I found was quite surprising, because they have lived in the United States for 20+ years, and never really communicated with one another most of the time in English. I asked questions about why, and they all answered the same way as my father, said "we never thought it was a big deal, this is our life and we have been communicating the same way for all our lives, even in America, why to change it?." This response was very interesting because using the English language day to day can help you break many barriers, especially when communicating with people who only speak English. Obviously, they talk to their coworkers in English, but If you can learn and fully understand the English language it would make your work life 100 times easier. Literacy helps us develop our communities, and it helps us assist other people in need if they aren't quite familiar with a new language. But my family uses the tendencies of the counter-hegemonic discourse because they don't view speaking English, a necessity when speaking to their family members. It's quite different compared to Albanian Americans in New York because they will communicate with their kids and family members in English most of the time. My family isn't similar because at home we speak Albanian, and when we are outside we speak English to our neighbors and people in school or at work. Those literacy practices my family partakes in are different from the average American home because in my community many Albanian parents want to teach their children the Albanian language first, so they can get the basics down. It is looked at negatively in my culture if your kids cant speak Albanian because it's what has been taught to my parents and they want to teach the same thing to their children.

For my uncles and my aunt, they didn't recognize a problem with only communicating in Albanian because of their cultural values, but when educating them about the advantages of speaking English on a day-to-day basis, I informed them that it could open so many new doors, and



opportunities to meet new people. Finding new friends is amazing because you can learn about each other's cultures, and those friends are also trying to get used to the English language, and you can both grow together in the English language. The advantages are endless, because the English language is known universally, and you are able to connect with people you wouldn't have thought of before. But also there is an aspect where I see a similarity with the Native American perspective we learned in this course. By that, I mean that my Aunt Lori explained how the Albanian culture isn't brought about much in New York City and how not many people even know what Albanians are. Some people have never heard of the country, and my relatives do feel a sense of shyness throughout their communities. Speaking Albanian is a comfort zone for them, and that is the way they see it.

Finally, I asked my father, his brothers, and my aunt to make a list of how using the English language day-to-day will help them work more effectively in their jobs. I asked this because many of the participants noted that it can be quite difficult to communicate with the managers of the companies they work for, and they stated ways they could improve their use of the English language. My uncle Fatmir and Bujar brought up a strong point of how they can watch the local tv news stations to better understand the English language. They felt this would be more effective because then they could learn the language Americans use on a day-to-day basis. It was actually pretty interesting because they don't typically watch American news, and this was something new to them, and it can help them in many ways. My father brought up how he could talk to me and my siblings in English, so he can better understand the meaning of some words he isn't familiar with. I and all of my cousins understand the English language fully because we use it every day, and we are born here. It's difficult for our parents because of their environment growing up, it's different compared to acculturation in the United States.



In Conclusion, this study I conducted helped me understand the reasoning behind my parents and their siblings communicating in the way they do. We agreed that there are ways in which they can better understand the use of the English language and the importance it has on their day-to-day lives.