

### Ethnography lab 1: Arrival stories

Ethnographic writing can sometimes be baffling for readers: it can be difficult to see the argument and evidence among all of the specific information presented by the author. In other words, it can, at first, be difficult to see the forest for the trees; readers sometimes complain that ethnographic writing feels like it's all "just background." However, good ethnographic writing—and all of what we're reading in this course fits into that category—carefully and subtly constructs a forest for the reader; the skill lies in learning how to read for it. In our first ethnography lab, we will be conducting a guided reading of the arrival stories from the two full-length ethnographies we are reading in the course. In some sense, we are blind readers, as we aren't yet familiar with larger texts yet. But arrival stories are meant to situate the reader, both in the physical site itself, as well as in the broader theoretical conversation the author hopes to engage. For your guided reading project, you will be practicing how to recognize these projects in the text. The following assignment is a means to prepare you to participate in our "lab" during second week, where we will come together as a group to practice our ethnographic reading and analysis skills by learning to identify "key words," "key passages," and "empirical focus" and "theoretical focus."

#### *Readings:*

From Lamb: "Entering a Net of Maya in Mangaldihi," pp. 27-30

From Briggs: "III. Arrival," pp. 17-24

**\*note: although we are reading both books in full, the two selected sections are available as annotatable Word documents on Chalk. Please download and read them in that form so that you can later upload your annotated versions.\***

#### *Guided reading:*

1. Read each of the texts fairly quickly. Mark passages that seem particularly significant: *italicize* them.
2. Go through each of the passages again. This time, **BOLD** terms that seem somehow significant for the author. Perhaps they appear many times, or strike you as unusual, a foreign word or a specialized concept. Perhaps you just get a vague sense that this word will be important. We'll call these keywords. Make a list of keywords for each text.
3. Return to the passages that you marked as significant in your first reading. Do any of the author's key words appear in those passages? If so, what does the author appear to be doing with them? What was going on in the language of the passage that helped you understand that it was particularly important?
4. Lamb and Briggs have very different voices. After having worked through steps 1-3, what differences do you notice?

5. Skim the two texts one last time (bear with me). Having worked through both of them, take a guess for each text:
- a. what do you think the author might be interested in *empirically*? In other words, what practices, people, and things might she be paying attention to throughout the book?
  - b. what do you think the author might be interested in *theoretically*? In other words, what ideas, concepts, or hypotheses might she be using her *empirical* findings to explore?
- There's no right or wrong answer for item 5, since we haven't read the books yet—just take a wild guess! You have some hints from our readings from the first few weeks. Then, look at your keyword list and underlined passages. What made you guess what you guessed? How is the author hinting at what is to come?

*Summary Report:*

In addition to uploading your annotated texts, include the following in your report:

Your list of keywords for each text

A written response to the questions in exercise 3 (about a paragraph)

A written response to the questions in exercise 4 (about a paragraph)

A written response to exercise 5: make sure to address both A and B.

All together, not counting your annotated text and list of keywords, your written work should total no more than 2 pages, double-spaced, TNR 12 point.