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Ethnography Reflection

Union Square is one of the places I engage with consistently on a daily basis, as a commuter I'm forced to endure the stressful underground subway system in order to get to and from school. For my research I felt drawn to observations I could make based off the body language of others on the left side of the park. As an observer I felt somewhat intrusive, there were moments I noticed that I impacted the flow of others, which created awkward moments. Prior to starting this assignment I was interested in understanding how an individual's body language can showcase their familiarity with an area. By focusing on the left side of the park, I was able to observe patterns demonstrated through body language, which helped me to differentiate a New Yorker versus a tourist or visitor.

Throughout my research I felt that the varying times of day would effect my results. The morning versus the evening, or potentially peak versus non-peak hours. As a frequent visitor to Union Square I've observed the varying responses and stress levels strangers experience attempting to get to their destination. Observing the park above ground during 11am actually led to the same results that I've experienced throughout my regular commute. Some of my key observations were that New Yorkers were familiar with the vendors within the farmer's market. Several stopped to greet various vendors, and produced a casual conversation that stopped them from continuing their original path. People that I considered tourists or less familiar with the area were much more hesitant in their stroll through the market. Often pausing to stop in the middle, or gazing from afar, it was easy to sense that this section of the park was a new experience for them. There were several groups of tourists who stopped to photograph the area, instead of driving their way through the crowd. Throughout my field notes I coded my

observations and reflections. Throughout both body language and behavior, specifically that of New Yorkers and tourists coincided, this helped me to much better shape what I wanted to focus on throughout the ethnography map.

I felt engaged by body language and behavior because I am from the opposite side of the country. As a west coast native I always feel that the interactions that I have with people are so unlike those that I've had back at home. Prior to moving to NYC people I had formed an assumption that most New Yorkers had a bad attitude. After moving to the city I've come to realize that New Yorkers are more or less very straightforward, but also demonstrate an entirely different type of body language than that which I had experienced on the west coast. Body language and behavior can feel inviting, intrusive, and even dangerous. Observing others helped me to shape an understanding about how people engage with society when they are either native or new to an area.