Mannerisms and Greetings in the Northern Mariana Islands

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Abstract

The student researcher was curious on how people greeted one another in the CNMI, so Ada made a research paper on how people greeted one another on daily basis and considered various variables such as age, gender and environmental aspects. The student researcher gained qualitative and quantitative information through surveys, observations and interviews. Ada believes the finding will be beneficial to future visitors.

A student from the Northern Marianas College (NMC) proposed to write a research paper on greetings in the Common Wealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Greetings are important, because it portrays a person’s uniqueness and the CNMI is home to a diversity of unique cultures. This topic is important to the student researcher Ada; because he observed diverse greeting methods in the CNMI and he believes the information collected can be beneficial to donate to NMC for educational purposes. Also, Ada wants to donate the information collected to Travel agencies to inform visitors who come to the CNMI. The research paper would educate readers about the different ways people in the CNMI greet one another during daily basis, formal and informal events.

Background

The CNMI is composed of fourteen volcanic islands located in the western Pacific Ocean. (The CNMI Guide) Out of fourteen islands only six are inhabitant, these islands are Saipan, Tinian, Rota, Alamagan, Anatahan and Agrihan. Saipan, Tinian and Rota are the main residential islands. According to a census taken on 2010, Saipan has the greatest population of 48,220, Tinian; second with 3,136 and Rota the least of the main islands with 2,527. (Goworowska &Wilson, 2015) The people who live in these islands are originally Micronesians, but with the constant development in the economy, various ethnic groups had moved to the islands to settle. People adapted diverse cultural greetings, which led to a unique greeting system.

Methodology

The student researcher conducted multiple methods to help support his research. The first method was through surveys, second method through observations and the last method through interviews. The student researcher also, wrote letters to professionals from abroad, but unfortunately was not able to get a response back.

Surveys & Findings

The surveys were given to the general public of different ages and ethnic groups. These surveys were given online and manually to people from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Twelve surveys total were answered. The findings of the survey’s all come from various different people in different cultures. Yet at the same time some of these survey’s that were collected all had similar styles and greetings.

A couple of these surveys that were collected have the same cultural background. Six of the surveys were taken by Chamorros; Two from Saipan, two from Tinian, and two from Rota. Six of the surveys were taken from Filipinos; three from Saipan, two from Tinian and one from Rota. As these thirty surveys were taken the student researcher, Ada, noticed that even if they came from the same culture there were differences that stood out from each person. It seems that due to the differences in each person is what makes the mannerisms and greetings unique to the person.

The people from Saipan were less likely to greet people they were unfamiliar with and were also, less likely to greet family members compared to people from Tinian and Rota. The greetings are also based on age where they differ from each other, such as older, same age, and younger. Many of the greetings to an older unfamiliar person would be a causal “hello”, and greeting an older family member would be an occasional “hello” followed by a hug at times. Secondly greeting an unfamiliar person who is the same age is a casual waving of the hand and a simple nod of the head. Greeting a family member who is the same age is a bit more personal where you have a “hello”, and a hug that has much more meaning. Lastly, when greeting someone unfamiliar who is younger it is just a simple “hello”, and when greeting someone who is a familiar family member is a “hi” followed by the pounding of the fist or a nice compliment.

Next data collection is based of people from Tinian. When people from Tinian greet an older unfamiliar person they give a “buenas”, followed by a wave, and a smile. As they greet an older family member it is a bit more personal as they have the “buenas”, followed by a hug, and a how are you. Next when they are greeting an unfamiliar person who is the same age is a simple nod and a “how’s it going”, and when greeting a family member it’s “what’s up” with the name. Lastly, when greeting a younger person that they are unfamiliar with it’s a “what’s up buddy”, and when greeting a younger family member there is a “hello”, pinch of the cheek, and a hug followed by a small joke.

The last data collected is based on people who live on Rota. As greeting an older unfamiliar person would be a simple shaking of hands and when greeting an older familiar family member would be more personal as how they would give a hug and a simple pat on the back. Greeting an unfamiliar person who is the same age is a shake of the hand and how the person is doing. Lastly, when greeting a younger unfamiliar person is a smile followed by a small wave, and when greeting a familiar younger family member is a nice “hi” and smile.

Despite the differences in greeting between the islands they have certain similarities. All cultures in Saipan, Tinian, and Rota have the same greetings between the older, same age, and younger. When greeting an older person there would always be a greeting of amen where the older person’s hand is taken and brought to the forehead or nose. When greeting a person the same age would be a nod, hug, followed by a conversation. Lastly, when greeting a younger person would be a warm hug, followed by asking how the child is doing, and what’s new with them.

Observation

The student researcher observed people from different environments to see if environmental circumstances could alter a person’s way of greeting. The student researcher observed people from three different areas; two from Saipan and one from Tinian. The areas on Saipan where the observation took place were at the Thursday Street Market and at Star Sands Plaza. The area that was observed in Tinian was a birthday celebration.

The student researcher observed the Thursday Street Market for four weeks total. Street Market is an area where people enjoy each other’s company and purchase food from locally owed restaurants. Ada observed that people were likely to greet one another from a distance with a smile and a wave. When near each other they would shake each others’ hands or hug one another if they have not seen each other in a long time. It was hard for the researcher to fully observe the area, because people rarely greeted one another. Ada assumes that people went there to just get food and not socialize.

The second area that was observed is the Star Sands Plaza. Star Sands Plaza is a place people went to enjoy entertainment such as dancing and singing and also to go to shop with friends and family. Star Sands Plaza was observed a week total. Ada observed that people only greeted one another with smile and a wave. There was no verbal greeting. People were there for personal purposes rather than socializing.

The event in Tinian was observed for a day. The birthday celebration took place at the birthday celebrant’s home. Ada observed how gifts were given to the birthday celebrant and how each individual would greet him during this special occasion. The older people both male and female would hug and kiss the cheek of the celebrant. Not all the time the older male would kiss the celebrant, but would simply shake the celebrant’s hands .Ada assumes that the older people he observed were relatives of the child. Both male and female with the same age as the celebrant would hug and smile. Both males and females who were younger would hug the celebrant with an enormous smile, and then run and play with each other.

Interviews

The final form of data collection Ada had collected was through interviews. The student researcher asked one question, which was “In your opinion what is greetings and why is it important?” Ada interviewed a total of three interviewees. Participant 1 said, “In my opinion greeting is a verbal and nonverbal interaction between two or more people. It is important because it shows respect to each other.” (Aldan) Participant 2 stated that, “Greetings is used to welcome new people. I feel that is important, because it shows a person’s uniqueness. Lastly Participant 3 said, “Greeting is our first interaction with others. It is very important, because it will determine how a person is. It shows the person’s culture.” Throughout the interview Ada noticed that each person that was interviewed stated that greeting is associated with a positive, respectful and warm feeling.

Conclusion

A student from NMC was curious on how people from the CNMI greeted one another so he conducted a research paper on how people interacted on daily basis. He considered certain variables such as environmental, occupational and social aspects. He wanted to see whether variables would alter a person’s way of greeting. From the information he gain Ada concluded Environment aspects determined the degree of greeting one another, Occupational aspects had no change on how people greeted one another and social aspects played a big role on how people greeted one another. Unfortunately, Ada wasn’t able to observe the vast majority of the CNMI and still had other variables to consider, so he would like to leave this research open for further study.

Literature

The student researcher had collected a total six literature sources. Half of the sources mention the importance of greeting one another and how it can affect a person’s perspective in the first few seconds and other half of the sources provide a variety of unique greeting styles based off cultural values. The student researcher

According to the Laurie Wilhelm, greeting is very important when meeting a person for the first time. It can ultimately determine a person’s overall perspective of how the conversation will turn out to be. Wilhelm also states that, “When you can greet someone and in those first few seconds make them feel that they’re important to you and they feel good about themselves, chances are that you’ll have a better relationship with them and they’ll probably like you more.” “It’s the first opportunity we have to focus entirely on another person and the way we choose to use those initial seconds determines the tone of our interactions. (Wilhelm). She goes into detail on how different approaches of greetings retrieve different responses, for instance a warm greeting returns a warm welcome.

Scott Williams is another author who explains the importance of greetings. His perspective was similar to Laurie Wilhelm’s views, but Williams goes into detail on first and second greeting encounters and goes more into detail on greetings in daily situations. Scott Williams also provided a short reading about his personal experience when he arrived at Hawaii with his family.  When my family and I arrived at the airport in Hawaii yesterday, we were

greeted with beautiful fresh flower lei’s. A couple of the pastors from [**Hope Chapel**](http://hcwo.com/)greeted us with warm “aloha’s” and lei’s as a symbol of love and welcome to Hawaii. Aloha in the Hawaiian language means affection, peace, compassion, mercy and love. Hawaii has been very welcoming: Hotel, restaurant, people etc. (Williams, 2015).

Travel moments opodo is a site written by Carla, which briefly explain different cultural greetings. The site gives examples of greetings from twelve different cultures from around the world. An example would be the people of Tibet and how they would stick out their tongue out and cross their arms over their chest as a salutation. (Travel Moments opodo )

Here were some of the literature sources the student researcher was able attain for the study conducted. The sources explain the importance of greetings and provide some information of a variety of unique cultural greetings. The literatures also provide personal experiences some of the authors encountered when traveling.

A student from NMC was curious on how people from the CNMI greeted one another so he conducted a research paper on how people interacted on daily basis. He considered certain variables such as environmental, occupational and social aspects. He wanted to see whether variables would alter a person’s way of greeting. From the information he gain Ada concluded Environment aspects determined the degree of greeting one another, Occupational aspects had no change on how people greeted one another and social aspects played a big role on how people greeted one another. Unfortunately, Ada wasn’t able to observe the vast majority of the CNMI and still had other variables to consider, so he would like to leave this research open for further study.

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Appendix

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Table of Context

1 Appendix A Survey Questions

2 Appendix B Survey Answers

Survey

1. What is your ethnicity?
2. Where are you from?
3. How do you get people on a daily basis?
4. When greetings some does age alter the way you them?
5. Do you greet people the same in formal and informal events?

Answers

Person 1

1. What is your ethnicity and age?

* Chamorro/ Japanese. 19

1. Where are you from?

* Saipan

1. How do you get people on a daily basis?

* I bow and wave with a smile

1. When greetings some does age alter the way you them?

* Yes, it does I would amen them

1. Do you greet people the same in formal and informal events?

* When I greet people in formal parties I would usually amen and shake their hand and in informal events I would hug them and ask how are they

Person 2

1. What is your ethnicity and age?

* Full Filipino. 25

1. Where are you from?

* PI, but I grew up in Tinian

1. How do you get people on a daily basis?

* I would Amen the older people and pound hands with my friends

1. When greetings some does age alter the way you them?

* Yes, I would amen them

1. Do you greet people the same in formal and informal events?

* No there is no difference

Person 3

1. What is your ethnicity and age?

* Chamorro/ Carolinian I’m 29

1. Where are you from?

* Born and raised on Saipan

1. How do you get people on a daily basis?

* It depends. If I know them I would shake their hand if they are new I would I would introduce myself. From far we just nod our head.

1. When greetings some does age alter the way you them?

* I would amen them

1. Do you greet people the same in formal and informal events?

* Yes, it doesn’t make a difference.

Person 4

1. What is your ethnicity and age?

* Filipino, Arabian 24

1. Where are you from?

* PI, but I grew in Rota

1. How do you get people on a daily basis?

* It depends. I hug the people I’m close too. I don’t really interact with people I don’t know. I would probably shake or pound the hand.

1. When greetings some does age alter the way you them?

* I would hug and kiss my family members. I would also amen them. I would just smile and wave at them.

1. Do you greet people the same in formal and informal events?

* I am more open in informal events.

Person 5

1. What is your ethnicity and age?

* Full Filipino , 25

1. Where are you from?

* I’m from PI, but I moved here when I was only a kid. I been here for 7 years with my family.

1. How do you get people on a daily basis?

* I would hug my friends and pound their hand. I wouldn’t really greet my family members only the one I’m close too. If I hug them I would make them ashame.

1. When greetings some does age alter the way you them?

* In our culture we would put their hand on our forehead and maybe hug them if they are a female.

1. Do you greet people the same in formal and informal events?

* In formal parties I would bow and wave. I don’t want to make people ashame. In informal events It depends, if I know the person.