

Anthropology has not only taught me more about the world and the people within it, but it has taught me so much about myself. For my final project I wanted to talk about the events that led to my worst personality trait, my negativity, and how I have been able to reconcile with it. In anthropology we learn that everything is connected. Everything that I am is a product of what came before me and how I respond to the environment I have been given. This semester has provided topics and papers that discuss the various ways in which Anthropology affects our daily lives, and my video is a reflection of some of those topics.

My life was incredibly privileged. The hand I have been dealt in life has been a very lucky one. It feels difficult to talk about my life in a way that explains that I recognize my privilege while also caring about myself. My personal experiences led up to my change in major from molecular biology to anthropology. I wanted to help people and do something that matters, but I kind of realized I am not meant to be good at everything. I failed biology, and I needed to be humbled in a lot of ways. I was even fired from a job for my negativity. The truth is that I had an attitude and needed to learn to work with people I dislike. At my next job I focused on everything positive, and the result was an incredible boss who praised me at every corner and valued my work ethic and positive attitude. The Nesse article that we read early on this semester outlines the ways in which our emotions are driven by natural selection. Darwin recognized that human emotions played a large part in our evolution. Nesse combines Darwin's original ideas with modern research in psychology and neuroscience to conclude that our emotions are responses to stimuli in our environments. The physical changes, like a rapid heart beat when nervous, could mean we are recognizing danger and thus increasing our fitness (Nesse, 2009). Like in my video project, I talk about how my family's attitude toward me is what drove me to negativity. I was told I was dramatic a lot as a child, laughed at when I would cry, and just

generally teased about being “passionate” about things. I learned to shove down a lot of emotions in order to avoid being teased and led to the “funny” pictures my mom always took of me when I did not notice. When I told my family I got a raise at that new job after only 2 months because of my “new positive attitude and incredible work ethic,” they thought that anyone calling me positive was a huge joke. I brush it off now and try to see the good in what I have done for myself. I changed my emotions that I was putting towards other people which helped my mental health too. Always complaining about work and people was draining me and my partner, and stopping the self destructive behavior was so important for me.

I was raised to see all people the same and that everyone was “normal” and equal, so I was surprised to learn about disadvantaged groups and where I also fit into one as a young girl. Reality hit me in the face when I was in the second grade and a black girl in my class told me that I did not understand racism like she did. She was right, and I was confused, but when I got older I realized how young she was to learn that the world has always been unfair to you. As a woman I deal with microaggressions of sexism every single day, but it still feels like nothing in comparison to learning about women around the world. In a field that in the modern day is focused on information and equality, the history of it represents the exact things we aim to deconstruct. Taking the History and Theory of Anthropology was one of the most painful experiences of my life because every single one of the men was responsible for allowing misinformation to exist in the field. It routinely left out women and discounted the wants and needs of indigenous groups. One of the most pivotal articles I have ever read in an Anthropology class is, “How race becomes biology: embodiment of social inequality” By Clarence C Gravlee (2009). Unsurprisingly, a majority of the population still believes in race as a concept because it is a social construct. I had often wondered as a biology student how certain diseases could affect

groups more when there was no genetic reason. As it turns out, racism has a huge part in lack of resources and impoverished areas that create disparities between groups of people in America. This article has become personally important to me as I continue to think about my privileged life that is interconnected with my physical health.

My physical health and feminism are at a crossroads with the reading, “Becoming an object: A review of self-objectification in girls” from Elizabeth Daniels et al (2020). It feels impossible to want to be healthy when the modern world is full of an obsession with self-image and modified “healthy” products and propaganda. This read really hit home for me because of the way women continue to perpetuate and modify healthy habits into sexist topics. Some examples include hot-girl walks, which are just walks around one’s neighborhood. Walking is the best form of exercise because of its accessibility yet it has been modified in order to market it towards women and girls. Feminism is a huge part of my life and is a topic I cannot get away from because of the way outsiders perceive me.

Another theory that is consistent in the field of Anthropology is that of identity. The paper about genetic testing among Native American groups stood out to me. Studying other cultures through an ethnographic lens has been one of the more interesting subjects in cultural anthropology. Identity means something different to everyone and different cultures experience it differently as well. Some people see it in terms of ethnicity and culture, others view it as language, and some think of it as your family. One of my favorite memories is from when I still went to school at Denver University. I had a classmate who was in my freshmen seminar and my chemistry classes so we became study buddies. He was a very sweet guy from South Korea who told the class his name was Donghoon but we could call him Lee since it was easier. When we became close I told him that it was his name and thus his identity and therefore it was important

to me, but I would call him whatever he wished. People have gotten my name wrong all my life, and mine is a common white girl name! I could only imagine what people from other cultures felt when it happened to them. I will never forget how his face lit up and how grateful he was. I could always hear him scream my name across campus when he saw me and we had a good relationship that first year. It is such a simple gesture that means a lot to me and people's names are so important to their identity and life. I just give them the same energy that I want returned to me. Identity pops up again and again within anthropology, but also within my life.

Topics in Anthropology reach far and wide, connecting seemingly different categories to those of hardships and human rights. Learning about other people has helped me learn about myself. People from the ancient past were not so different from us, which helps me feel less alone in the universe. People today experience hardships at the hand of governments and greed, which connects us all if we choose to see it. Anthropology has woven its way into every facet of my life and will follow me forever.

Resources

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