**Madi Lockamy 4/29/20 Cross Cultural Term Paper**

**Family History/Ethnic Identity**

Regrading family history, my great-great-great grandmother on my mother’s side moved to the United States from Poland while my great-great-great grandmother on my father’s side moved to the United States from Germany. Thus, my ethnic identity would be considered white/Caucasian I suppose. However, If I’m being honest, I feel like the fact that my great-great-great grandparents migrated to the United States from Poland and Germany has little to no bearing on my current life. I know practically nothing about my great-great-great grandparents. On the other hand, one of my great-grandparents on my dad’s side is still alive (she’s 94) and I know her pretty well. She lives in North Carolina on a small farm where she raised my grandmother and her four siblings. They grew up in poverty and made all their own clothes and furniture, which I thought was sad but pretty resourceful. My grandmother told me each of her siblings had two outfits: a school/play outfit and a formal/church outfit and that they would swap clothes so they could wear something different each week. It sounds like such a different life than what I’m used to. After my grandmother got married, she moved to Virginia and had my father. He’s lived in Virginia his whole life. He met my mother right before he left for Bridgewater College. They got married two years after he graduated and had me seven years later. I don’t know much about my great-grandparents on my mother’s side, as they had passed away before I was born. However, my mom’s father grew up in Virginia and was drafted in the Vietnam war when he was only eighteen, but he no longer entertains any conversation about this time in is life. My mom’s mother also grew up in Virginia and was the lead singer/dancer in a local band during her teenage years. She met my grandfather at the restaurant where she waitressed when they were 23 and got married later that year. They’ve been married forever, it seems, and their love for each other has always been apparent to me.

**Childhood Experiences**

The biggest event that shaped my childhood was my parents’ divorce. They got divorced when I was only two years old, so I never knew my parents as a couple. I was an only child, so I had no siblings to share the experience with. After the divorce, my mother moved back in with her parents, and my dad rented a townhouse. I lived in 8 different houses throughout my childhood, all within thirty minutes of each other. My dad and I lived in two different townhouses, a condo, and an actual house. My mom and I lived with her parents, and then moved in with her new husband (my step-dad) after they got married when I was six. Now my mom and step-dad live in a townhouse five minutes down the road from my dad. Up until I graduated high school, I would “switch houses” every two days. In other words, I would stay with my mom Monday and Tuesday, my dad Wednesday and Thursday, and my mom over the weekend, and then it would switch the next week. Even though this sounds complicated, it taught me how to be responsible at a very young age. I’m extremely lucky, because my parents are on great terms and they’ve both been able to be a part of big moments in my life like graduation, sports, and more. They are truly great friends! All three of them (my dad, my mom, and my step-dad) will hang out together and play cards or go out to dinner together. It’s been really beneficial for me because I rarely have to deal with my parents fighting. They simply were better as friends than as husband and wife. However, even though my parents have a great relationship, I haven’t always had a great relationship with both of them. I’ve always had a deeper connection with my father rather than my mother. Ever since I was little, we just understood each other. I always favored him and it bothered my mom. My mother and I are not very close. When it comes down to it, we are just very different people. We would constantly fight, she wanted me to be someone I wasn’t. She also suffered from bipolar depression throughout my childhood, which is hard for a kid to understand (especially when it’s never explained to them). When I finally found out about her mental illness, it was too late and the damage had been done. My mom and I are on better terms now versus when I was a child, but it’s still hard to overcome those wounds from years ago for me personally. With this being said, I have always felt like my father had more of a lasting impact on my childhood and development than my mom did.

**Where I Grew Up/Educational Experiences**

As I touched on earlier, I moved eight different times throughout my childhood. But I always lived in generally the same area, never more than 30 minutes away from my previous house. For almost my whole life, I lived in a town called Dumfries in Virginia. There’s nothing particularly remarkable about it, other than that it’s 45 minutes from Washington D.C. I lived in many different houses, but they were all a rather comfortable size and in a middle class area. I never had to deal with poverty or famine. In other words, there was always food on the table and we rarely had to stress over money. Education wise, I went to preschool and then attended a generic public elementary school. I was in the gifted program from Kindergarten to my senior year of high school. I attended a rather sketchy middle school in a questionable neighborhood because they offered a great math and science program, which my dad was very keen on getting me in. Also, all of my friends from elementary school were planning to attend. We had lockdowns about once a week, and one day I saw a gas station about a mile away being robbed on my way to school. It was a unique three year experience for me, but ultimately I’m happy I went to school there. I think it allowed me to open my eyes to different life experiences and get outside of my little bubble of privilege. Then I attended a pretty preppy high school five minutes down the road from my house. I committed to play soccer at Longwood University when I was a sophomore in high school, so I didn’t really have to deal with the whole crazy college application process. I graduated from my high school, and went off to Farmville, Virginia in August of 2017. That was definitely a change from my high school, as Longwood was barely bigger at the time. However, I am perfectly happy with my choice to attend college there and can’t wait to go back!

**Religious Influences/Traditions**

Growing up, I attended church with my father and grandmother almost every Sunday. They were both Christians and passed on their beliefs to me, as I chose to accept Jesus in my heart when I was nine years old. The beliefs of Christians influence my ethics and morals immensely. In Chapter 12 of our textbook on page 488, the author talks about an ethic of divinity which he describes as “actions being seen as immoral if they cause impurity or degradation to oneself or others, or if one shows any disrespect for God or God’s creations.” Additionally, this ethic is “framed in terms of sinning against the sacredness of God.” This is the ethic I grew up around and the ethic I have come to apply to my own life. Clearly, being a Christian has influenced some of my family’s traditions. For instance, we go to church every year on December 24 to celebrate the birth of Jesus instead of, say, having a big Christmas Eve party. Moreover, we attend church on Easter Sunday to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in addition to having Easter egg hunts and eating plenty of candy. These traditions may seem rather obvious, but they are a big part of my life, especially growing up.

**Hobbies/Travel Experiences**

I believe many of our hobbies/interests in life can be derived from our personalities. It makes sense that our personality would align with our interests. In Chapter 6 of our textbook on page 246, the author describes what is commonly known as the Five Factor Personality Model. This model consists of “five underlying personality traits or core traits” These traits consist of “openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.” I took this personality test in college and scored very high on agreeableness and very low on neuroticism, the rest of the scores were in normal range. Relative to my hobbies, I enjoy reading, playing soccer (or really any sport), watching reality tv and shows like Dr. Phil, cooking, going to the beach, hiking, being a camp counselor over the summer, and gardening. A lot of these traits make sense in relation to my big five personality score. Agreeableness is “the extent to which a person tends to be warm and pleasant.” Many of the hobbies I listed like reading, cooking, gardening, and going to the beach are associated with warm, cozy, and happy things. This is just one example of how our hobbies tend to align with our personalities. Another thing I love to do that I did not mention before is travel. Unfortunately, I have not had many opportunities to travel in my lifetime. I’ve been out of the country two times, once to Jamaica (for my Aunts wedding) and once to Aruba (for my mom’s 50th birthday celebration). While both of these trips were amazing, they are not the kind of travel I want to partake in. We just stayed on a resort and learned almost nothing about the culture of the area. When I get older and (hopefully) have more money, I would love to travel to different places in Europe and Asia and Australia and learn about the different cultures of the world.

**Friends and Enemies**

I’ve had the same best friend since I was 8 years old. We met in second grade and have been best friends ever since. She lives ten minutes away from me and is neighbors with my boyfriend of three years. That being said, I see her a lot! Additionally, I have met some wonderful lifelong friends in college. In Chapter 11 of our textbook on page 458, the author describes friendships as “one of the best predictors of happiness.” However, the textbook also mentioned enemies. In my lifetime, I can truly say I’ve never had a single enemy. Sure, I’ve had people I wasn’t overly fond of, but no one I would consider an enemy. My experience aligns with that of the majority of Americans, as our textbook conveys “only 26% of Americans in one study reported that they had any enemies.” In contrast, in other countries that are seen as more interdependent, like Ghana, “71% claimed that they were the target of enemies.” This data is just one example that emphasizes the differences of both friendships and enemies in varying cultures.

**Technology**

While technology was certainly evident in my life growing up, I wouldn’t say it was a central theme in my childhood. Yes, I liked to watch cartoons on Saturday morning and listen to my ipod shuffle, but I was much more concerned with being outside and playing with my friends or playing sports. I received my first phone when I was twelve, I was going to a week long leadership retreat in Washington D.C. and my parents got me a small flip phone with three numbers programmed in (my father’s, my mother’s, and my grandmother’s) so I could contact them whenever I pleased. Then, when I was fifteen, I got my first iphone (the iphone5). About a year ago, I updated that iphone5 to an iphone11. So, I’ve had three phones in my lifetime (that may seem like a lot or a few depending on who you ask). While I recognize that technology has greatly changed my life and my opportunities, I believe I have restrained from letting it take over my life, as I have observed with some of my peers.

**Attitudes and Philosophies of People in my Life**

There are many different people in my life who have had a big influence on me, but I’ll touch on one particular attitude/philosophy that my parents differ on. In Chapter 8 of our textbook on page 322, the author talks about agency and control. Specifically, an entity theory of the world versus an incremental theory of the world. The author describes an entity theory as seeing “the world as something that is fixed and beyond our control to change” and describes an incremental theory as “thinking of the world as flexible and responsive to our efforts to change it.” My mother has more of an entity theory of the world while my father has more of an incremental theory of the world. This had an interesting affect on me, as I think I am more capable of both theories. While I understand that the world is largely outside of my control and there’s little I can do to make a huge change, I also believe that every person is capable of making a difference. I believe I lean more towards an incremental theory of the world.

**Values of my local, regional, and national culture**

Locally, I think there is a deep value of staying active in the community. Where I live, there are so many hiking trails, parks, pools, playgrounds, etc. that it’s hard not to be active. I also live five minutes away from Prince William Forest Park, which is 16,000 acres and the largest protected natural area in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area! Regionally, I believe there is a deep appreciation for the arts. Like I mentioned earlier, I live about 45 minutes away from Washington D.C., where there are tons of museums, art, history, etc. Growing up in this area allowed me to take endless field trips to dozens of different places in D.C. where I was able to learn and appreciate culture with a hands-on approach. Nationally, the United States clearly values individualism. In Chapter 6 on page 218, the author describes individualism as “cultures who are more likely to elaborate on independent aspects of themselves, come to feel distinct from others, and emphasize the importance of being self-sufficient.” Additionally, I believe the United States (generally) tends to be rather ethnocentric. In Chapter 12 on page 483, the author describes ethnocentrism as “leading people to assume that their own culture’s way of life is in some ways better or more natural than that of others.” I think these views are apparent when other countries do something we find disgusting or abnormal, and we turn our nose up at it. I’ve witnessed this a lot, it’s even hard to keep myself from doing this sometimes!

**Mental Health**

In my family, my mother suffers from bipolar depression and my grandmother suffers from depression and anxiety. In Chapter 14 on page 572, the author talks about universal syndromes, which “highlight the biological foundation of mental illness.” More specifically, the author mentions depression, and how it’s “one of the most commonly identified psychological disorders in the west” along with the “most familiar disorder.” Additionally, he goes on to list the nine symptoms of major depressive disorder: depressed mood, an inability to feel pleasure, change in weight or appetite, sleep problems, psychomotor change, fatigue or loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, poor concentration or indecisiveness, and suicidality. A person must experience/show evidence of experiencing at least five of these symptoms for two weeks or more. Reading this definitely shed some light on what my grandmother, specifically, went through for most of her life. Luckily, I have never experienced any symptoms that would lead me to believe I followed in the steps of my mother or grandmother when it comes to mental illness.

**Identity**

Everything I have touched on throughout this essay has somehow shaped the person I am today. It’s weird to think that culture can have such a big impact on my life, as lots of people like to believe they have complete control over their decisions/life outcomes. I enjoyed exploring my family history and looking back on my educational experiences. Reminiscing on my childhood and religious traditions left me feeling warm and happy. I appreciated thinking about the attitudes and philosophies of my parents while also looking into the values of my local, regional, and national culture. Overall, culture plays a much bigger role in my life than I ever would have considered.