

Socio-Cultural Autobiography

A persons' history plays a critical role in the individual they have become. Looking back through my cultural history has been a journey that has brought many memories to light. Some are good and some I can learn to live with. Yet all of these experiences have made me appreciate the person I am today. My family has driven me to this profession, way of life, and determined character I am today. While I cannot change my family, I can see that my cultural is ever changing. I strive to make the changes that I wish to see in the world through the molding of my culture by way of my interactions with the world around me.

I was in third grade when I realized the first time that I was poor. I lived in a single family home where mother worked long hours and was an alcoholic. We were left to fend for ourselves many hours of the day and lacked basic support, healthcare, and food. From a very early age I understood that the way my home was run, was not the way I thought it should be.

This fact weaken my self esteem greatly. More distressing than the fact that I though I was poor, was that my school had taught me this. I was one of maybe five students in my school that received free lunch. The school singled us out at lunch and called attention to our inability to afford the dollar lunch. Once I made this realization, my self esteem, ambition, and drive to succeed was forever altered. While at the time I felt this notion to be dreadfully devastating, I can see now that it has shaped who I am as a person and a teacher.

Comment [CM1]: I hate this old method used in schools!

Winzer & Mazurek state that disadvantaged children are more likely to underachieve at school and are regarded as problems. Also that poverty is tied to student's motivation and achievement. As a child I did all that I could to draw attention to my academic abilities so no one would notice what I wore or did nor have. I strove to be the best in all areas of school and succeed regardless of my lack of support. On the other hand, my brother embraced his poverty and used it to his advantage. He saw an opportunity to slide by and use the families chaotic state to become stagnate.

Comment [CM2]: You are exceptional!!!

Winzer & Mazurek maintain that socio-economic status may affect particular individual sand genders differently but insist that it is one of the most significant factors in learning and achievement. In my family I can see a significant difference in how siblings are effected differently. I recently asked my mother about the difference. She stated that if I didn't have what I needed, I found a way to get it. I understood that I wanted a different lifestyle that what I was given and I was the only one who could give it to me. I use education as my tool to get what I needed in life. Yet my brother and mother went with the flow and used the welfare system for many years. They were fine with just getting by. Many of my students receive free lunch, public housing, food stamps, and social security. Some children want a different life and others are happy where they are. I hope as a teacher that I am showing them their options regardless of their poverty level. I want them to see that they can go to college if they choose but continue to appreciate the lives their parents have provided for them. I want them to understand that regardless of their home life or financial situation they can make the choice with determination to have life they are proud of. |

Comment [CM3]: How special you realized this at an early age!

My mother was an irregular practicing Buddhist. She prayed vigorously in times of distress and periodically when happy. Her moods were greatly affected it seemed, by her praying. It brought her out of the deepest depressions and helped her fight alcoholism. In my household, the Buddhist life was to be positive and pray the change or help you needed and wanted. Throughout my childhood, I did not embrace this religion because it didn't seem to be 'working' for my mom. I continually saw the negative side of her and her situations and did not want any part of it.

As I got older I read more about the religion and saw a change in my mother when she was regularly praying and studying. In my freshman year of college I received the tools I need to practice the religion. While I was similar to my mother in our praying techniques and frequency, I saw a change in myself. I started to understand who I was as a person and become more positive. I understood that there is a reason for struggle and success. What you do with these experiences is what matters the most. We can either wallow in sorrow or learn and become a better person for it. I understand that for me this religion is changing who I am daily and opening me up to the realize my true potential and embrace who I am and how I came to be this way. Through this understanding and full embracing of the past and present I can contribute positively to the people around me. Buddhism has helped me to see the good in all people and motivates me to bring peace to everyone's lives. My religious beliefs led me to becoming a teacher and molds the way I interact and instruct children daily.

Everyone can see that religions have many different demands, beliefs, and practices. Daily people learn about my beliefs and they are often judgmental and tease me. At times it distresses me that people can be so ignorant. I do not expect anyone to understand the

Comment [CM5]: Seeing the goodness in people!!

type of Buddhism I practice, but I do not expect that I should be mocked for my choice and lifestyle. I find that as I teach people about my religion, I want to learn about others and support them in their way of thinking. I wish that everyone could be more open to the many different lifestyles and cultures that surround us in school and life.

Comment [CM6]: We may disagree but not disrespect!

McKibbin has presented many implications for professionals which I have personal experience with and need to embrace as a teacher. For example: a specific family member such as the father may be the spokesperson, families may not want home based care in the private home, or handicapped children are cased by fate. As a teacher I try to question rather than assume. Through my own faith I can see that most people have reasoning behind their actions and I need to stop and see what it is. For example, a student may not complete their homework because the mother is expected to help the student but she does not have the time do to the demands of the other siblings.

Comment [CM7]: Yes!

When I think of culture I don't initially think of my family. Traditions and practices weren't passed along through generations. I saw myself as a white American. A mixture of beliefs, ideals, and culture. According to Winzer & Mazurek culture as a whole consists of all the ways we think and do everything. This includes our attitudes, beliefs, and values.

When reading families from Anglo European Backgrounds in the book, 'Multicultural Students with Special Language Needs,' I could see how the people of this background may have similar practices which I too embrace. I consider my family to be my immediate brothers and sisters, mother, and father. I have cousins but don't speak to them often. We encourage independence as soon as possible. I had to learn to deal with what came my way at an early age and I see that as an adult I possess this same ideal. I moved

out of my house at eighteen and moved thousands of miles away from my family a few years later. I see this as a normal step in the progression of adulthood. I will expect that my children go to some sort of higher education to receive training and strive to work hard and be on time.

Comment [CM8]: Your own experience will also affect your expectation on your kids and how you rear them.

There are many more aspects which I may consider my culture, but these are the ones that are very important to me but may be conflicting with the cultures of the students I teach. Families in the Central Falls community are very large. What I consider to be distant relatives are my aunts and uncles and their children. We rarely speak unless my parents happen to be on the phone with them. I barely knew my grandparents when they were alive and when they were, I was treated almost like a neighbor. My family, is spread throughout the country and make little effort to visit each other unless they live in the same city.

This distance is rarely seen within the families in Central Falls. In this city, many families live in the same home or building. The extended family helps to raise and instruct the child daily. This sense of extended family is one that in the future I wish to possess. Yet I can see that it is hard to make this change in a family who keeps to themselves and does not find a real connection in their immediate household. While I have a need for a close family, I find that it is difficult for me to reach out to my family members and at times to my colleagues and friends that surround me.

As a professional I often stay to myself. I am very watchful and let other speak up while I take in all that is happening. I can see that my past experiences have taught me to give my trust to only those who have 'earned' it and be weary of what I do around everyone.

Through the mentoring program at my school I have been able to see the guidance that

veteran teaches can give and are willing to share. I have used that opportunity to open up and I am trying to become an active member of the school community.

Comment [CM9]: It sounds you had a good experience.

Becoming independent was expected. I was coddled for only a short period of time before I was expected to deal with life as it came. I use my independence as a tool to escape and create my own existence where I did not have to depend on others to take care of me. While I adjusted to this way of life as a child, I often look back on the experiences and become resentful. It is hard to see that those difficult times as a step to making me who I am. Recently I have come to the realization that they have made me a good teacher, friend, and wife. Those struggles have forced me to work hard and depend on myself. Yet I know, I will try to change this cycle that has been created in my family. I hope to create independent children and students with loving guidance and support.

Comment [CM10]: Tough experiences can make us strong. It's true.

Special Education 551: Socio-Cultural Autobiography Rubric

Areas of Analysis	Approaches Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
Demonstrate a comprehensive and reflective description showing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture ▪ Socio-economic ▪ Religion or spirituality ▪ Place of origin and/or present location ▪ Family structure, composition, roles ▪ Family characteristics and interactions 	Demonstrates some reflection and addresses adequately the cultural, socio-economic, and family characteristics and their contributions to the development of self. 2 4	Demonstrates a comprehensive and reflective description showing how cultural, socio-economic, and family characteristics have contributed to development of self. 6 8	Autobiography is very comprehensive and reflective and addresses cultural, socio-economic and family characteristics as well as other specific contributions. 10
Describes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family child-rearing practices ▪ Traditions, customs, and activities of importance Explains how they have contributed to development of self	Begins to describe how family child-rearing practices, traditions, customs, and activities of importance have contributed to the development of self. 2 4	Describes child-rearing practices, traditions, customs, and activities of importance and how they have contributed to self. 6 8	Provides a comprehensive description and reflection on child-rearing practices, traditions, customs, and activities of importance and how they have influenced perceptions and values of the individual. 10
Describes key factors and/or experiences that have greatly influenced development of self (i.e. schooling, neighborhood, church, significant life events etceteras).	Begins to describe key factors and/or experiences that have greatly influenced development of self. 2 4	Describes key factors and/or experiences that have greatly influenced development of self. 6 8	Provides a comprehensive description and reflection on key factors and/or experiences that have greatly influenced development of self. 10
Integrates course content in reflections on autobiography.	Begins to integrate course content in reflections on autobiography. 2 4	Integrates course content in reflections on autobiography. 6 8	Demonstrates a comprehensive integration of content in reflections of autobiography 10
Autobiography is well organized and clearly articulated. The autobiography is professionally written.	Autobiography shows some organization and clarity; demonstrates some degree of professionalism in the presentation of information 2 4	Autobiography is well organized and clear; demonstrates a satisfactory degree of professionalism 6 8	Autobiography is very well organized and is very clearly articulated; demonstrates a high level of professionalism in the presentation of information 10

Name _____

Point 50 /50