

Personal Statement

ANP 489

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I decided I want to continue my education in Anthropology, further building off of my minor of Gender and Woman's Studies, to further investigate feminine sexuality. I would like to explore how feminine sexuality takes on identity in its beginning stages. As well as how her experiences may show effect later with her relationship with sexuality. In the bigger picture of my research I would like to also see how feminine sexuality formation and representation, connects to the larger relationship between gender relations and how societal health is effected by the latter.

Many questions have developed throughout my undergrad at Michigan State University, as well as from my own experience as a woman. I begin with, how does society perceive and react to the sexual transitions of female maturity? What resources are available and obtainable for girls that aim to help them understand their "role" as a female? How does the female herself relate to her own sexuality? At what age does the female become conscious of her own sexuality and how is she effected by this experience? How do parents handle sexual maturity in their own children? Differ in approach for boy's verses girl's? What are the differences between female and male relations to sexuality? Should schooling systems play a larger or lesser role in sexual education? Does the experience of birth play in to the mother's idea of her own sexuality? This is only the first part of what I would like to better understand going into a graduate program.

Gloria Steinem is quoted as saying "the greatest indicator of the world's stability, wealth, and safety is the status of women," What would this "status" look like to qualify for stability? While I watched her Viceland documentary series "WOMAN", I saw the help being given in aid to women of physical and sexual violence. Grown women were being taught for the first time in most cases, sexual education. I began to question why such wide spread violence was being committed against women. What are the causes for animosity between the sexes? What are the adverse effects of rising woman empowerment? I question the split in mindset from women concerning their own ideas of sexuality and how they vary on a wide array within the sex itself. My aim is to better understand what drives the female social position to how it is defined. In a world where I see sexuality represented hand and hand with vulgarity but also women being sexualized how do these interrelate? How does one women come to embrace her sexuality and another refute it often times in hopes of being viewed as more professional? In today's day and age where celebrities lead pop culture influencing body image, and defending decisions of nudity as empowerment while continuing to bare name to products consumed by the masses, how does this factor into the female who isn't gaining off her body image but believing she too can be confident this way. Are the Kardashians body confident? Or are they confident because their body sells products?

The intersection between gender roles and health is what I believe encompasses my passion in understanding the treatment and its implications of women. The relation between the sexes sets an environment for the experiences of new generations. These children(s) experiences will shape their ability to be productive members of society. With the time children spend being dependent on their mother or a mother figure the implications of that relationship are vital for the human development. I would like to better understanding how to define what Gloria Steinem means by what constitutes a good “status of women” from culture to culture. I also would like to bring importance to the relevance of empowering women and how men cannot be left out of this new schema. Do these aid projects helping women in “third world” areas pit them against the men who are struggling in the same environment making the woman a target for possession and gain?

I have begun a case study that I would like to have follow with me from my undergrad. I began with the question, “What are the transitional effects of female sexual maturity and how are they responded to in society?” I have a focus family that I have begun to spend time with on the basis of them approaching me to “mentor” their daughter. I later was presented a class assignment and felt this would be a good start to begin answering many of my curiosities and to put into practice ethnological experience. I gained consent from four other couples who I decided upon based off of the criteria that was specific to each one. I involved a couple with no children as well. I believe different perspectives on how these parents will react and respond to my topic and the questions I have formed will be interesting to analysis. I am wondering if all the perspectives will differ significantly since no two couple shares the same age demographic of children. I wonder if the parents will have different outlooks and how that effects the child early on which later will lead to sexual understanding of the self.

Growing up and in today’s world I see a focus more so to “protect” the female from sexual activity and a lesson in responsibility. The emphasis on teaching young boys to respect their girl counterparts rings a common phrase of “never hit a girl”. Or even the exact opposite of “if he pushes you he likes you”. Why are these so accepted as nonchalant lessons in a child’s life?

Beyond my initial focus for going into a graduate program, I see an extreme benefit to learning about other cultures which in turn allows the individual the ability to re-analyze their own culture. I do not fall to the illusion that with Anthropology a more peaceful place for all is eminent. I do however wonder, stemming from my own experience of finding the field later on in my educational career, just how many people if earlier exposed would be more equipped in their own line of work to better handle the diversity that is our human existence.