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The Ancient Mayan

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THE ANCIENT MAYAN

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Senior Capstone: Creative Project

Communication Studies
Concentration

Professor Lee Ritscher

School of Humanities and Communication

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Concentration: Communication Studies

Capstone Title:



The Ancient Mayan

Project Description:

For my Capstone Project, I will be incorporating the meaning of gender communication in the Mayan era and how it has evolved. In contempt of this project, I will be unfolding the positive/negative Mayan traditions in gender roles that have evolved in my family root. I will analyze my family as a whole and write down how each of my family members demonstrate their understanding of gender roles. The best way to gather information is to critically observe. I will be gathering the life experience my grandmother Veronica lived. I will be creating a non fictional story that will also include my own DNA. To begin with, I will introduce to my readers a little bit on the Mayan culture and how they communicate within the tribe. Second, I will share different traditions that have influenced gender roles in my family. Third, I will include 23andMe genetic results to the audience and include any ancestry highlights and insights. Last, I will share my outcome and how it is in correlation to my own habits/lifestyle.

Significance:

It is important to understand how gender roles have influenced our communication. We are so accustomed to our daily lives that we forget details as we communicate. My goal is to have the audience amused and educated of many changes in communication. Diving into our roots would better explain the reason why in specific, my family communicates the way they do. My hope is to influence others to find an amazing outcome of unique history in their families.

Expectations: I have hope that this project will be informative. I also hope that it will help me understand certain beliefs, my family has kept for decades before, and be able

to share my experience. Perhaps this may shape my life differently and change the way I say or do things. This will be new information to myself therefore, I hope to dive in with an open mentality.

Required Skills:

In order to create a successful story, I will have an interview over the phone with my grandmother. This will allow me to critically understand the ways in which customs have been passed on. It takes time, but it can be successfully created with the right information. I must gather primary sources such as my family and historic Mayan museums. Picture clips throughout the story will help viewers understand and follow the storyline. One of the key elements is to focus on the specific theme and follow through.

The Finalizing Steps:

Once I have put all my information together I will review the whole paper to make sure there is a clear storyline. The goal is to choose specific pictures, insights and a connection between the reader and the story.

Timeline:

02.24.20 - Monday - Interview/Observation Outline Complete.

02.29.20 - Saturday - Draft Outline of Both Sides (Mayan / Family).

03.14.20 - Saturday - Beginning Half of Mayan Draft.

03.27.20 - Friday - Middle Half of My Mayan Root.

05.07..20 - Friday - Revise and Finalize.

05.09.20 - Wednesday - Submission.

The Ancient Mayan

Language has evolved throughout centuries making the history of dialect unique. We use language as a way to communicate our needs and desires. Language comes in different dialogues soon to eventually become a norm within human communication. Do you wonder where these gestures and/or words come from? If we critically analyze our own family communication skills, we can notice a relation from centuries ago in interpersonal communication. The beauty of language is visible and extraordinarily unique in the bloodline of the Esquivel family. The analysis and observation will distinguish a growth of communication and ongoing traditions. Gender roles will play a factor in this experiment and relations in family roles will give an insight of the culture. First, we will dive into the historic root within the tribes to understand the fundamentals of communication in the Mayan era.

The Mayans are known to be one of the most advanced civilizations before the Spanish conquest. They began their tribes all over Mexico emerging into Central America (National Geographic, 00:00:28 - 00:00:38). Over the years of 250 to 900 AD the Mayans had 40 cities with their population up to 50,000 people as per the National Geographic. Those years were known to be one of the most historical times due to the amount of urbanization and development the Mayan's created. The mayans had multiple stone pyramids that had significant meanings and symbols (Fig.1). They had a strong belief that human species began where corn was created. The Mayans were extraordinarily intelligent and although they lacked the high advanced technology we currently have, they were known for their mathematical and astrology skills. It is surprising the amount of time and effort put into the development of the hieroglyphs. The National

Geographic states that about 7 million Mayan's are currently still living in the Yucatan Peninsula.

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The Mayan culture is filled with different groups that share a variety of common daily traditions. Some of the Mayan subgroups are Huastecan, Yucatecan, Cholan, Tzeltalan, Kanjobalan, Mamean, Quichean, Pocom, and Kekchi. The dialects have a distinct active, passive or instrumental continuous monotone that are distinguished from tribe to tribe (Dayley 5). With those different tones of verbal dialects tribes are able to distinguish what region a person belongs to. The Yucatan Peninsula is filled with over 6 million Mayan's continuing to speak different dialects (Verhoeven 5). The Mayan's have left behind many stories through their hieroglyphs. The stories were specifically on marriages, wars, and deaths (Coggins, 11). Their sinkholes, or "cenotes," were located in different areas in the peninsula and were used to communicate with the Gods. They signify as water doors to the Mayan homelands and another the entree to a new universe. Women and children were the ones sacrificed and drowned to the unknown bottom. Men were not sacrificed because women and children were viewed as fragile and innocent. The male Mayan's believed that in order to continue their growth of population they must sacrifice their family members to the Gods.

How does this tie into the Esquivel family? It began in a small city called Merida where a young woman named Veronica Reyes, of Mayan descent, lived (Fig. 2). Veronica was originally born in Belize before it became an independent country. Her mother was born and raised in Belize and her father was born in Yucatan. Veronica's parents could not financially care for Veronica, and therefore, she was sold to a couple who could not conceive children. Veronica was

an only child but had a lot of responsibilities at an early age. When she was eight years old, Veronica left with her father for six months to work for a tree-cutting company. During those six

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months she was in charge of packing wood and delivering water with a carrying pole (Fig. 3) to all the workers. When they were back in town for the remaining six months, she made flour with a grinder (Fig. 4) and sold it to the neighborhood. Her parents worked from sunrise to dawn and had no free time.

It was difficult for her to think about getting an education. She only reached 6th grade with a dream of becoming a business owner and model. Although she was helping as much as she could around the household, there was not enough income or space. The parents began to have issues and decided to go their separate ways. Veronica was forced to leave with her father at the age of thirteen. Knowing that her mother was no longer going to provide for them, she had to take her mother's roles. Veronica was now responsible for her father's daily meals, and made sure all their clothes were cleaned before he arrived. There was no time to socialize since she spent most of her days working for the tortilla company. The income she received was always her father's. Veronica had no free time for herself nor did she have any friends. This was a norm in the small town of Peto and all across many places in Mexico. Women were not brave enough to speak up or have their reputation ruined.

As for Veronica, she had to escape the culture she had been drowning in for years. She was very friendly and always communicated with the neighbors in Peto. She had fallen in love with a young boy during the time she was selling tortillas at the factory. Veronica was intimidated to mention him to her father but she took the chance. That was the worst mistake she

ever made! Her father did not want to accept him because the young boy's last name was "Euhwam." "Euhwan" meant dark river, which was not appropriate for their future bloodline.

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There is a belief that those who have a bad last name were cursed from the ancient Mayan's. It was unfortunate for Veronica.

One day, a lady from a few houses down her street asked her if she was single. Veronica had no idea why the lady was asking such a weird question so she replied, "yes". The lady said, "I have three sons who are single, you can date one of them" Veronica declined the offer. Sooner that week, the lady went to go speak to Veronica's father to offer one of her son's. Veronica's father accepted the offer due to the amount of wealth their family had. Veronica had no choice and was forced to date Geronimo. Veronica did not understand why her voice was silent and never heard. After a month of dating, Veronica got pregnant and continued to work in the woods. Geronimo took her to a new job site where the labor was extremely intense and hard. There were days where she would starve because of the long shifts. After giving birth to Jose, Veronica decided to file a divorce. It was not an overnight process and Veronica was now expecting a third child with Geronimo. One night, she packed all her belongings and escaped with a friend named Julian. They both had a dream to live in California, so that night they made that happen. The pain of leaving her children behind was taunting but, she had to escape the patriarchy of her society.

Why is Veronica's story important? Her story says a lot about the ancient Mayan ways of living and continue to stay within her family tree. There is a dominant figure in the story which is Geronimo and Veronica's father. I took my grandmother's story to observe and investigate habits, traditions and communication skills in today's time. Gender roles are visible in my family

and are unconsciously performed in our everyday lives. My mother is in charge of making sure my father's clothes are washed. She always makes sure the breakfast, lunch, and dinner is made

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on time. It is expected for the oldest to clean around the house as a way of preparing her for marriage.

There is a tradition before marriage and that is for the groom to give twenty-four turkeys to the mother-in-law. That signifies future, wealth, and protection from the groom to the bride's family. The day of the marriage all the aunts and cousins get together to cook a large breakfast to the close members of the family. This would include banana bread, hot chocolate and atole. Many traditions and beliefs have been passed on for years, so I decided to try out 23anMe. After sending my DNA, I waited patiently for my results. One month later I discovered my ancestry composition (Fig. 5). I was shocked to see a high percentage of European so, I decided to call my grandmother. My grandmother mentioned that my grandfather's father was born and raised by European parents. She also mentioned my great grandmother was African descent.

I went further to find out where my ancestor's homeland was located and found a map where they migrated. They began their journey in central Asia and travelled East towards Beringia where they could have mixed-raced. My ancestors continued to move East until they arrived in what we call now the United State of American and migrated South towards Mexico. There had to be a mix in traditions that have travelled along the way. The Mesoamericans travelled and made the South their homeland was the beginning of the Mayan era. From this whole experience, I now have a better understanding of who I am.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

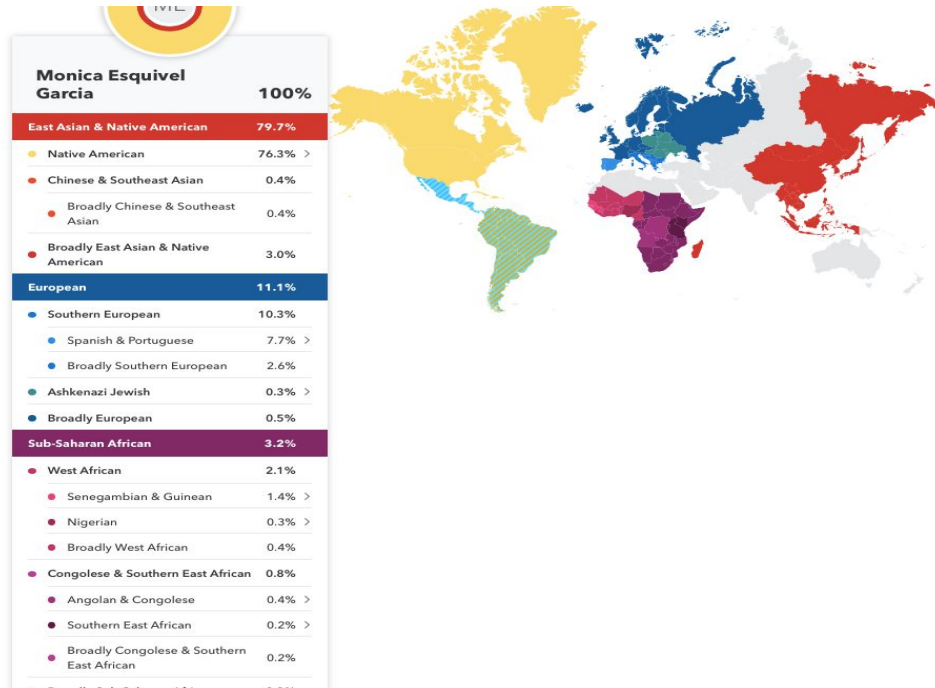


Figure 5.

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Creative Project Reflective Essay

During this extraordinary exploitation on the ancient Mayan's there were many discoveries unknown to the Esquivel family. Gender roles follow throughout hundreds of years explaining why women and men are accustomed to certain roles. The critical process of this experience was not easy. It became challenging to comprehend the gender gap between women and men. For my current generation, women and men are as likely to be viewed at the same level. Centuries ago, women were to obey their husband or whomever represented as the father figure. It became sickening to accept the cold reality of sexism. For this specific setting, I was able to share the struggle of gender division in the life of my grandmother Veronica.

The purpose of the overall development to the creative project was to first share an insight of the Mayan's. Moving forward to the lifestyle Veronica lived and how Mayan traditions played a role. Towards the end, I was able share my personal lifestyle and trace my path back thousands of years. 23andMe is high in price but, worth the amount of information given from your DNA. It shows the movement of your ancient ancestors and the latest arrival to your bloodline. I was astonished to see the results and high percentage of Native American. Before all this, I had begun to only think I was only Mexican due to the fact that both my parents are. It was shocking and everything began to fall into place. The story was not for my audience to feel sorry for the lifestyle Veronica lived or share my background. The storyline is to inspire in search of

your own history. To have a better understanding of where your traditions and beliefs came from.

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It was important to begin with some history for the audience to better understand where it all began. If we look at today's society there are more opportunities and gender roles are much more intertwined. We cannot gain the experience that history had and shared at the time. The framework here is to show a clear image of a century that was not experienced but acknowledged and learned. It was a critical process having to experience a pandemic towards the end of the semester. I had to make a life changing choice and give my full dedication towards the observation of this project. It was important to gather the story and connect it to the ancient Mayan times.

There were moments where the whole project process was emotionally disturbing. I was in denial of the amount of sexism women had to face during that era. It was even more impactful to hear my grandmother's sad story as a young woman. Independence continues to run through our minds but society made it difficult in her time. However throughout this experience I was able to appreciate the privileged life I live. The outcome was accomplished and the overall theme of the story connected to the capstone section. There were many weekly historic articles that were supportive for this creative project.

When we take a look at the larger framework of our current social context, we may see that we have improved gender barriers. There still may be many families who hold on to their tradition and beliefs. History does not fade away as centuries pass by they

stick within us and become a norm within each family. The importance to our culture in the United States is to understand and respect each and every culture we come across.

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Final Synthesis

HCOM 475 Capstone has been an amazing experience working side by side with professor Ritcher and all my fellow classmates. At the beginning of the semester we began with a historic textbook called, “A People’s History of the United States” by Howard Zinn. I felt an enormous connection with the book itself being Hispanic-American and how my ancestors were not given the credit. The textbook by Zinn gave a different perspective that showed how a minority group was racially divided. Zinn’s goal was to prove a point and show how marginalization began and shunned certain groups from the spotlight. The triangular slave trade was not only a tragic history but, an important one to appreciate. Our classroom was always open for discussion with different inputs and free from judgement. We grew an environment that allowed us to communicate effectively.

Other great articles that were very useful during similar topics at the beginning of the semester were; “Willie Lynch Letter”, “How Privileged Are You?” and, “What Is Privilege”. During that week, I had to take a step back and process my own privilege status in the world I live in. When I break down the term “privilege” I think about my current environment and how/where I am placed in society. At moments, I tend to feel like I may lack some privilege due to my Hispanic heritage. I have experienced some sort of discrimination because of my features and loss of many opportunities. I have been told by many friends and acquaintances about my

wealth status because of the area I currently live in. My area is a nice private apartment complex near the new Highland homes. My apartment in particular has an ocean view and the Bayonet Golf Course view. When I first invited my friends over the first question they asked was “how

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can you afford to live here” I didn’t think too much about it until they left. I had remembered that we were talking about privilege two weeks prior and how it applied to each and every one of us.

I remembered taking the quiz on how privileged I was and my results were impacting. In my opinion, I had only seen privilege from a one sided perspective. Privilege is different and can vary depending on someone’s environment, financial status, etc. I was caught up in my own culture and how I see a lot of my hispanic people not as privileged. In reality and based on my quiz results I was privileged. I began to critically analyze how that was possible and it made sense. I realized that I have a privileged life by being able to have a full-time job, education, healthy life, my own apartment, my own vehicle, etc. Privilege may not be a large obstacle in my current life but, I know there are others who face a tougher lifestyle due to their privileged status.

After a month into the course, we began to have discussions on one of my all time favorite feminist, author and social activist Bell Hooks. We also had discussions on certain chapters of the New Jim Crow book which is also my favorite! Especially on the actual movie that Netflix provides. Yes, the storyline to both book writers are amazing and both have such a talent to capture you emotionally. Both authors are very informative and how the white elites have constructed a racial caste system with minorities. Giving many statistics on the amount of people of color incarcerated for minor drug offenses. I am very glad we got the opportunity to

talk about the introduction to a very important issue in society. Hopefully, those who have not read the book will soon decide to take the time to read it.

I may not be as fierce as Alexander or Bells but, one thing I am is feminine. It was a proud week when we discussed women in history. Women in the 19th century did not have many

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opportunities as we have now. Privilege was not at their advantage and by law women were to follow their husbands commands. The poem by Patmore, “The Angel in the House” explains how women were submissive towards their husbands. Patmore represented a model of how women should be towards their husband. It became one of the most known poems in the 19th century when the women’s movement was just beginning.

Which brings me to the TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi, “We Should All Be Feminists” while we all watched this video in class, I couldn’t help to embrace the amount of gender binaries in her culture. Women in American and many other countries are immediately assumed to be guilty of something just because they are female. Girls cannot discuss the amount of men they have been with because she would be portrayed as slut. On the contrary, young boys can freely talk about multiple girlfriends in their lives. There is a divided unfairness in men and women that left me with the thought on how I can make a change. Perhaps, this would include having discussions with my family as a whole and how we are currently living in different times. I can definitely incorporate different ways to approach gender binaries in my daily life or in my future children’s life. Ngozi does not want women to be stuck into “good wife material” just because of the way we were taught growing up. She wants to all freely express our true feelings and feel as if we came for our own purpose in life.

Although gender is culturally formed there is still freedom of agencies that control the ideal norm. Which many of us have created challenges we have learned into our capstone project. We came to our capstones well prepared and critically explored important context. We wrap up the end of the semester with many creative projects, research essays or internships that

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have left an impact during our time at CSUMB. With my creative project, I can look back in the future and appreciate how my creative project on my family mayan ancestors changed my perspective on life.