

Narration of my life  
experiences that i  
consider significant in  
shaping my worldv...

[Psychology](#), [Personality](#)



Raised in a legalistic Christian home, it was somewhat oppressive. My parents were extremely loving and caring and very much fun but in terms of our faith, they raised us the way they were raised, legalistically. My mom born and raised on a farm, my dad born and raised in a row home neighborhood in Philadelphia, neither one of them exposed to much more than what was “ just outside their front door.” However, their union brought about some wonderfully interesting experiences for us three girls in our childhood (I’m the youngest of the 3). My parents were curious about the world beyond their front door. With us three girls in tow, my parents set out to travel and experience the world as much as their pocketbook would allow them. As a result, we criss-crossed the country several times as kids and later as teenagers camping out of a tent or staying in a hotel. We dipped into Mexico and traveled extensively into Canada exploring much of the entire Canadian East coast throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and several other remote islands off the East coast of Canada. Travel was important to our parents as they wanted to see the world and wanted us kids to see and appreciate various people, places, and cultures of the U. S., Mexico and Canada. My mom, a nurse, somewhat demure, transformed into an open and responsive person to others as we traveled. She encouraged us girls to observe and notice and appreciate the similarities and differences of the people and places we visited. My dad was a businessman in the 1960’s, 70’s and 80’s who worked in downtown Philadelphia and was a strong advocate for black people. He always told us girls that the black folks in this country have been and will always be treated inferiorly and therefore we as Christians must advocate for them and other people of color and to be aware

of their struggles in our racist society. I don't think it was an accident that his secretary was a black woman or that he had the largest number of black people working for him. I'll never forget the story he told us of a woman (white) who was a supervisor working under my dad and who was "quite racist" in my dad's opinion. One day, he overheard this white supervisor loudly berating a black employee in the ladies restroom. My dad burst into the ladies restroom and fired the white woman supervisor on the spot. I'm pretty sure the white woman supervisor would have sued my dad/the company if such an incident would have taken place in today's times, nonetheless my dad would have nothing to do with anyone who was disrespectful to anyone else, especially black folks.

My elementary school years were quite difficult. I was an extremely anxious child probably due to my father's strict, sometimes punitive, and legalistic rule. I was highly anxious with regard to my schoolwork. My kindergarten and first grade school teachers were very strict and punitive in their ways that only exacerbated my anxiety in school and at home.

As I look back I now realize I "hid" in the gym from these anxiety producing circumstances as I trained as a gymnast practicing 6 days per week 4 and 5 hours per day for 13 years with a coach who later became the 1984 Women's Gymnastics Olympic Coach. I did not make it to the Olympics but I did compete internationally and became the 1979 Pennsylvania State All Around Gymnastics Champion. As a very shy and anxious child, the gym and the sport of gymnastics were my refuge and some relief from my anxiety, as I absolutely loved the sport and excelled in it.

As my older sisters got into high school, they were both heavily involved in and became the Presidents of the International Friendship Club. This allowed our family to host foreign exchange students from all over the world into our home. As a youngster I was completely enthralled with the different students, their explanations of their lives in their own countries, and their comparisons of life and cultural differences with America. We became friends with these students and learned much about their representative countries in Europe, South America, and the Pacific Rim. These experiences opened our family's eyes to traveling abroad.

I remember in the late 1970's my mom took my oldest sister to England to meet my sister's pen pal who lived outside of London. This trip had a huge impact on my mom and sister who traveled abroad for the first time and a huge impact on our whole family. My mom and sister's experiences only intensified our interest in traveling to other countries.

I went to a small private college in North Carolina. Oddly enough, for as small as it was and for as remote as it was there was a large international student population. Many students from Europe, India, Australia, and New Zealand attended this college on athletic scholarships. With my interest and background in various cultures and travel, naturally I gravitated toward these students. My roommate was from India, my first boyfriend was from India, my girlfriends were from Sweden, Germany, India, and New Zealand. However, for the first time in my life I felt out of place as a "Yankee only visiting the South for a short while" as some of the Southerners said. For example, it was highly uncommon for a white girl to date a "boy of color,"

my Indian boyfriend. One parent of one of the Southern students asked me if my parents knew about me having an Indian boyfriend. I had to explain to her that not only did they know about my “ Indian boyfriend” but my parents welcomed him into our home in “ The North” several times on school breaks living under the same roof, going to family gatherings, and attending church with my family.

After graduation, with my Swedish friend’s connections I lived and coached gymnastics in Sweden for a year. During that time my parents and sisters traveled to Europe. I met them in Luxemburg and our family traveled together all throughout Western Europe. Since living in Sweden and traveling throughout Europe and communist East Germany before “ The Wall” came down, I have returned to Europe and especially Sweden several times to attend friend’s weddings and visit friends over the years.

My interest and travel to other countries has greatly wet my appetite for more expansive travel with my own family to develop our cultural curiosities and experiences. With my husband and children we have traveled to Latin America, Europe, and Africa where in 2013 we stayed in Uganda for 3 months to adopt our Ugandan twins. As a mixed race family we are a standout in some areas of our lives but we are a very happy, close-knit family steeped in travel tradition and various cultures and experiences. I only want to travel more and more with my family and will encourage my children to do the same as they get older.

## Analysis of How My Experiences Have Shaped My Culture, Standards of Thinking, and the Context of Society at Large

My culture, standards of thinking, and my concept of society as a whole has been molded and shaped by my childhood and upbringing, my experiences in my school years, my experiences as an athlete, my religious life, my family life, my peer relationships, and my encounters with individuals of various cultures, social backgrounds, and nationalities.

Certainly, my experiences as an anxious child being raised in a legalistic Christian home along with my early school years with the legalistic and punitive teaching styles has affected me in a way that I shall not be oppressive, restrictive, or punitive in my interactions with my children and those people I encounter in everyday life.

My parent's curiosity of life, various cultures and societies, and willingness to explore the world has greatly influenced and shaped my view of the world as a place of adventure that is wide open to explore. I have learned to take each country, language, and culture as it is and for what it is without judgment or strict opinion. To adopt the language and social mores of the culture where I am visiting is imperative for a pleasing and successful visit for myself and for the people of the country. To somewhat "fly under the radar" of where I am traveling will only enhance my experience of my travels as to not draw attention to myself and to only graciously experience the country where I am. Kind, gentle, and soft-spoken interactions counteract other's intuitive opinions of Americans as large, loud, and less than gracious.

My mom and dad's attitudes about African-Americans has only educated and encouraged me to be loving, empathetic, and sympathetic to the plight of people of color in our society, in America, and in other societies around the world. My parent's attitude toward African-Americans was a huge influence to adopt African children. My travels to Uganda, Africa helped me to understand so many things about the human race. For the first time in my life I (a white person/family) was the minority in black Africa. We were many times the only white people around for many miles and many days at a time. The Ugandans would stare at us and surely wonder what we were doing in their country. Despite the sweet and loving nature of the Ugandan people, when shopping at a local outdoor market we were discriminated against as the price for various items only went up when us white folks were shopping. Such " discrimination"

toward us as white folks was a strong message and experience however it was nothing compared to what African-Americans, Africans, and people of color around the world experience with prejudice, racism, and discrimination.

My experiences as a heavily trained athlete taught me perseverance and persistence. I realized that the struggle of competition and being judged for a score on my performance by a professional gymnastics judge is subjugated by guidelines and rules for judging but can also be greatly determined by the judge's subjective point of view about the person performing such as a black, Hispanic, or Asian gymnast or the country the gymnast is representing.

I realized at a very young age that with my sister's involvement in the International Friendship Club in high school and having all of those foreign exchange students live with us that we as people are all members of the human race. We all needed to eat, sleep, and breath just like any other human. We all had moms and dads who loved us and although we spoke different languages with different cultures we were still connected and similar as humans in more ways than we were different.

While my college experiences were quite fun with the large number of international students becoming my friends, sadly for the first time I was shocked to be frowned upon and humiliated as a "Yankee" and as a "Yankee dating an Indian boy." It was there in college in the South that I learned that our country was still severely divided with regard to race and racism and that probably that part of our country may never rise to the occasion of love, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all of our citizens.

My Christian faith has grown and developed away from the legalistic upbringing I once had into a more loving and less restrictive faith from the examples Jesus has provided us in the Bible. It is my mission in life to meet and greet anyone of any religion, nationality, or cultural background with the love and the acceptance of Jesus Christ.

In summary of my analysis of how my experiences shaped my culture, standards of thinking, and the context of society at large, I am fully aware that my wonderful parents, the life experiences they provided me and my

sisters and my adult and married life experiences are very rich in developing me as a citizen of the world. I continue to crave travel and learning experiences having to do with other cultures.

My culture is to welcome all cultures. My standards of thinking are to love, be humble, be gracious, and be an advocate for those groups and cultures that are marginalized and oppressed by the elite white society. The context of my society at large is that we as Americans desperately need to address the needs of all of our people especially the poor and groups not protected, represented, or benefiting from our laws. We need to amend and change laws that protect, represent, and benefit only the white race or group of people. We live in a country whose culture personifies the white, rich, and powerful male as the dominant one while the millions and millions of others suffer and struggle with the dominant white man's laws, decisions, and cultural oppression. In the name of Jesus, I believe it is His will for me to spread His word through love, patience, kindness, and understanding to all people I encounter in my life. And it is my duty to raise my children to love Jesus and all of His children.

My reflection on the process of writing my own cultural autobiography and how it has helped me discover my multiculturalism?

As I write about my life experiences and influences from others I feel like I have crammed a great deal of living in my years. Of course, I have had ups and downs in my life. I've disappointed myself and others during my process of living but I will say all-in-all I am grateful for the parents I had, I am

grateful for my sisters who have a similar cultural autobiography and live much like myself in terms of our cultural existence and interest in traveling to other cultures. I am grateful for where God has led us particularly to adopt our precious twins from Uganda, Africa. A life experience that would never have happened had I not had the parents and grandparents who loved Jesus and loved me, who set examples for myself and for my sisters to love, accept, embrace, respect, and foster giving to others. To reach out to those in need or those who are marginalized by society. I still have a long way to go in terms of learning more about my cultural stance and myself. I believe for as long as I am alive, I will continue to learn and grow in Christ, in myself, and through others. I think about the people I have met and the places and people I will meet in the future. I can only hope I will be a cultural asset to my culture and to the culture of others.

It was somewhat difficult to pull out some of those memories from my mind as I wrote the narration of my life experiences. I miss my mom deeply. My dad is still alive (age 88) but does not remember much of the past. They were the pioneers of their families as they were the only ones to go to college and the only ones of their parents and siblings to travel as extensively as they did.

Once again, I find myself grateful for the impact these experiences have had on my life as I work, present day, in the school setting. As a school nurse I will start my first certified school nurse job in an urban setting documented as the 88th most dangerous city in the United States. I will see children in the health suite who are not only marginalized by society but are afflicted

with the worst a society has to offer such as neglect, abuse, abandonment, trauma, and even disease. The children I will see have already started school way behind in terms of the academic achievement gap. These students are highly likely to receive lower grades, score lower on standardized tests, and drop out of high school. My response to these students will be to show Christ's love by listening to them, teaching them, and to foster the healing of their illnesses with as much care and kindness as I possibly can show. It is my duty as a school nurse and a Christ follower to search for resources for these children and families so that they may get the guidance and help they need to keep their children as emotionally, psychologically, and physically healthy as possible. I would like nothing more than for these children to gain the self-respect they deserve for their lives.

As stated above, we are connected and similar as humans in more ways than we are different. Most parents want their children to do better than they have done. Most parents want their children to do well in school, achieve greatness within themselves, and contribute to their life and wellness of others. These children in this terribly dangerous city where I will serve need guidance and a great deal of support. For all of the places I have traveled in the U. S. and the world this 88th most dangerous city in the United States will be the most culturally foreign to me. My multiculturalism will be in full swing as I work in this dangerous urban setting. I will only further develop and expand my multiculturalism with my everyday experiences working with this population in this setting. These will be experiences I could never experience in any other culture except our American culture of so much

wealth and so much poverty and despair. We are a nation of rich and poor. We are a nation who does not treat their most marginalized people with dignity, respect, or resources to meet their needs. It will be quite a challenge for me but far less a challenge for me than for those children desperately trying to survive the perils of this urban city.