

Young Adults Perception of Family Dynamics in Single Parent Households

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This summer, I had the opportunity to collaborate with Professor Van Vleet and expand on a project that was first started in my Anthropological Research Methods class. In that class, you were able to choose your own research topic. My project initially focused on the college experience of students coming from single parent households, looking at economical, social, and cultural factors. This was a qualitative study with several college students of different identities where semi-structured interviews were used to gather information about college and family experiences. A specific section of these interviews focused on experiences with family and how they described their family when questioned.

For this specific project, I decided to look into how young adults view their childhood having grown up in single parent households. This included looking at their relationship with various family members as well as analyzing how they described their families when questioned in a semi-formal setting. Results varied for each individual which was expected even though they all came from single parent households. Factors such as siblings, economical class, and race appeared to have an influence on each experience.

For some, sibling dynamics were stronger than with their parent whilst others found their parent to be their rock. Some still had both parents in the picture but grew up with just one parent, therefore identifying themselves as a single parent household. There were also varying results of how much people were willing to share about their family. Some people were very open about talking about strained relationships whilst others were more emotional and stand-offish, often not giving complete responses or avoiding parts of the question.

This summer was an excellent opportunity for me to engage with anthropology in a way I hadn't thought of before. I have found a new appreciation for research revolving around family and kinship and it has also allowed me to reflect on what my family means to me.

Faculty mentor: Professor Van Vleet

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