

Sample

Anthropology Internship Proposal

In the United States, it is normal for both boys and girls to go to school, at least through most of high school. Often there are more girls in school than boys. However, African women have less schooling than any other region in the world (Kane 1995:vii). This “‘gender gap’ is widest in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. And while it applies to every age, it is particularly worrisome at the secondary level, where the benefits are especially high” (Herz et. al 1991: xi). 54% of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa don’t even finish primary school and only 17% make it to secondary school (Herz, Sperling 1991:18). This startling number has begun to change with the increased awareness of this gender gap through NGOs, non-profits, activists, and anthropologists. There also needs to be a theoretical analysis of the state of education in Africa because it has been dominated by ‘white man’. Anthropologists can greatly assist in making sure the African people can decide their destiny, rather than foreigners.

“Education in Africa has been and mostly remains a journey fuelled by an exogenously induced and internalized sense of inadequacy in Africans, and endowed with the mission of devaluation or annihilation of African creativity, agency and value systems. Such cultural estrangement has served to reinforce in Africans self-devaluation and self-hatred and a profound sense of inferiority that in turn compels them to ‘lighten their darkness’ both physically and metaphysically for Western gratification” (Nyamnjoh 2004:161).

To erase this degrading feeling, anthropologists and humanitarian works alike, need to address this issue, which I believe Daraja Academy has done well to address. Often, foreign aid is used in the implementation of girl’s education. However, the different cultural views on education and other practices that effect education can cause conflict. Anthropologists can assist in calming tensions between foreigners and locals.

One example of a successful mixture of cultures is the Daraja Academy of Kenya. It is the first all-girls secondary boarding school in Kenya. It was founded in 2007 by the Carr Educational Foundation, which is based in Marin, California. The school opened in 2009 with 26

girls in the first class. There are now 77 girls at the school taking up three grades (forms). The girls come from all regions of Kenya (rural, urban, North, East, etc), multiple religions (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim), and many different tribes (Maasai, Turkana, Luo, Kikuyu, etc). This diversity in students is important to recognize as Kenya has been faced with intense conflict between tribes, as shown in the 2007 political violence. Unfortunately, this diversity is uncommon as local public schools normally have only one or two tribes represented.

Daraja is a scholarship program and the girls don't have to pay a cent to be at the school. Without Daraja, the girls would not be in school. All girls are girls of poverty and could not find another school. They are girls who have great potential to go to college, have a good job, and become strong and inspiring women in her community. Although there are only 26 girls in each grade, the impacts of their education on the local community are already showing. All classes are taught by Kenyans as well as the staff on site. This is important because "commitment and the sense of vocation were dwindling among teachers in Africa, who were 'often underpaid and in some countries they were not paid at all for months on end'. Meanwhile, in Malawi, imported teachers on three-year contracts lived in European-style bungalows with salaries in hard currencies (Nyamnjoh 2004:171). The founders of Daraja have recognized the lack of Kenyan teachers and if the school begins a trend of hiring well-qualified teachers and empowering them to continue, it might reverse the trend of foreign teachers as well as empower the students to become teacher as well. Volunteers come from abroad to include an international perspective that is unique to Daraja as some of the lessons (permaculture, photography, computers, creative writing) are not taught in public or even private school in Kenya. Each of these aspects of the school are characteristics have been noted by anthropologists, educators, and politicians as the key to educating more girls.

This summer, I will be working at the school from July 2nd to mid-August. I live on campus in a traditional Kenyan hut (banda), eat Kenyan food, and work with the girls and staff. I will have a few jobs while I am there. Living the same lifestyle as native people is one important characteristic of ethnographic work of anthropologists. One, I will be tutoring the girls every night in their 3 hour study hall. I will most likely work with specific girls who are struggling in certain subjects. I will also be working in the kitchen and cleaning staff, learning how to prepare traditional Kenyan food as well as care for the campus and land. I will also be teaching the PE/sports class every day. Exercising is vital for the girls as they are sitting in class from 8-4 each day. Lastly, I will be an assistant in the administration office, running errands, and learning about all the small things that help a non-profit succeed. This last task will be especially interesting because the small things, such as getting food, constructing buildings, etc are very different than in the US. Anthropologists work to make this successful by finding commonalities between the two groups. Daraja has found that balance and I am interested in seeing what that is, but also what has still been difficult. For example, the Muslim girls at the school cannot eat meat unless it is cut by a Muslim man who has been trained how to properly slaughter. In the US, we would not think about this.

In addition to on campus tasks, I will also spend time in the local villages and communities talking with the children and working with the adults. As such, learning Swahili, will be important. I have some knowledge of the language, but a teacher at Daraja will be teaching me more so I can communicate better with the locals. Surrounding the school are Maasai, Turkana, Kikuyu, and Nandi tribes. Having both tribes nearby has been successful for many years, but it is uncommon to have these groups living in close vicinity to each other. I will

be looking at why their relationship has been so successful and how it can be put on a macro-scale for the entire country.

The education of young girls, especially those living in poverty, is vital to the success of many nations. The monetary benefits are big, as one extra year of education beyond the average can increase the wage for a girl 15-25% (Herz, Sperling 1991:18). “One of the most important aspects of economic growth and development is investment in human capital, or more simply put, investment in education” (Nyamnjoh 2004:162). In addition, more productive farming learned in school can lead to 43% less malnutrition in children (Herz, Sperling 1991:18). More specifically in Kenya, if men and women had the same level of education, crops would yield 22% more. Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya has shown this as she educated women on the benefits of sustainable farming, and the yield of the women drastically increased.

As is true in many regions of the world, poor, rural families tend to have more children to increase the workforce. However, this does not lend to educating girls: “given the economics of poverty and the traditions prevailing in much of the world, from the parents’ perspective – though not from society’s – male education may understandably be a better investment and female education a luxury they can ill afford” (Herz et. al 1991:xi). Understandably, it is hard for poor families to see the long-term benefits when the short term is hard as well. However, the cycle of poverty and uneducated girls continues. Parents are skeptical their daughter will get a job and often it seems more lucrative to ‘marry out’ their daughter and receive a dowry. Some of the other challenges are that girls perform more of the chores at home and families seldom rely on boys because they are at schools (Herz et. al 1991:xii). In addition, girls require more protection. For example, there were two girls accepted to Daraja, but they ran into bandits on

their trip to the school and their parents forbid them to continue at Daraja. But, as I will continue to explain, the benefits will outweigh the costs. Communicating this to local people is difficult, especially if it comes from a foreign aid service. Thus, anthropologists should be used in the process to make the local people feel more comfortable and explain the importance in a way they will understand.

Educating girls also reduces infant mortality rates as with each extra year of education, the chances of a child dying decrease up to 10% (Herz, Sperling 1991:18). HIV/AIDS education is vital, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Kenya, which has the 4th most number of deaths from the disease in the world. In Kenya, girls are four times more likely to be a virgin if they are in school (Herz, Sperling 1991:33). “A controlled two-year study of a school-based intervention program found that, of students in their last year of primary school who had been exposed to the program, only 11% were sexually active, compared to 43% of students who received only standard health education [in Uganda]” (Herz, Sperling 1991:34). In the classroom, girls realize their potential and increase their self-confidence, and thus, are more likely to stand up for their rights. Genital mutilation and domestic violence decrease by up to 40%. (Herz, Sperling 1991:18). Much of this number is due to the empowerment of women as they are in school. Daraja has seen this happen and expanded on empowerment through a class entitled “Women of Integrity, Strength, and Hope” in which they learn how to stand up to themselves when they are told to have sex, safe sex practices, etc. With all these benefits, one can see how educating girls is important to a sustainable society.

There are a few ways governments and organizations can increase the education of girls. Many of which Daraja is trying to implement. Making school affordable or free can increase enrollment by up to 70% (Herz, Sperling 1991:46). Daraja waived fees. Secondary school in

Kenya is still not free, so money is the biggest issue for parents. There are other actions that might not seem so obvious to Westerners. Providing separate toilets to boys and girls is vital for girls to feel protected as rape in latrines is all too common. Female teachers provide role models for the girls. They are easy to relate to and girls can confide in the teachers if something is wrong.

However, not all of these can be achieved easily. It took Daraja a few years to realize these difficulties. Often, the founders, who are American, need the Kenyan teachers to explain certain issues that aren't apparent. The founders are very receptive to Kenyan ways of life, yet there are often NGOs and non-profits where communicating with locals is almost impossible. For example, a Baptist Church from the US is building a massive complex next door to Daraja, however, the Kenyans dislike it because it is an eyesore and has a pool (in a region that is going through a drought). It is going to be hard for the church to work with the Kenyans because they don't respect the Kenyan way of life. An anthropologist could be much help in this situation. Assisting in communication between the two groups has been difficult because the Baptists don't speak Swahili. The Kenyans are very hostile toward the Americans. Anthropologists would be able to act as a mediator between the two groups. This is just one example of the conflicts that foreigners face when in a foreign country, but also ones in which anthropologists could provide assistance.

Why anthropology? There are numerous reasons why anthropology is valuable in education, especially when multiple cultures collide. Colonialism greatly affected the Kenyan way of education and there is a mismatch between the British education system (which is now the Kenyan system) and native, holistic teaching techniques that are more applicable to Kenyan life. "Schools or organizations recognize or fail to recognize the linguistic and cultural diversity

of different groups and develop adequate (or not) pedagogical responses to this diversity” (Mein 2009:353). Anthropologists can help organizations and the government understand how they are not embracing the cultural diversity and how they can apply teaching techniques to their teaching style. Varenne writes in her article about working abroad as a form of research rather than observation and writing as a way to learn. She makes the claim that often, anthropologists are caught up in the research side of their work, rather than helping the people they are researching. Interacting with the people as people, rather than as research subjects (Varenne 2008:357-358). I truly believe in this statement because I have learned much more working abroad and I could learn in a classroom (there is much importance to school that I don’t want to knock). There needs to be a place where people can critique the current state of Kenyan education, or as Mein states, “a space of critique and contestation of the dominant forms of literacy and knowledge associated with the neoliberal paradigm. Importantly, it also represented a coherent political space, that of grassroots civil society, where different literacy practices formed the basis of social analysis and critique” (2009:364). It is difficult to navigate between the Kenyan government, which is corrupt, the British government, which sends money for education, and the Kenyan people. Anthropologists would be very valuable to work with the British and Kenyan governments to have them see there is a balance between the two styles of learning.

Using Kenya as a case example of how educating girls can be accomplished is vital to help increase the education projects for women as 9/10 youth projects around the world are aimed at boys and only 2 cents of development dollar goes towards girls (Gibbs 2011). One can see the importance of educating girls. There are numerous ways to do this and Daraja Academy is just one example, however, we can learn from it as to what has been successful and has hasn’t. As an anthropology major, I will be able to understand how navigating the cultural differences is

extremely important to the success of schooling as well as working with the local community and foreign aid. As James Wolfenshon, president of the World Bank said, “increased emphasis on girl’s education is the most important contribution the Bank can make to strengthening women’s role in development” (Kane 1995:vii).

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