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Final Group Project Paper

Our presentation shows many lenses of each of the four topics we have covered this term. We have created a poster that represents multiple aspects of evolutionary biology, primatology, language and culture. By creating a visual interpretation we are able to better explain our understanding of human nature.

Evolutionary biology is represented by five images. Creationism and intelligent design are represented by a timeline of existence according to the intelligent design theory and an image of god reaching down to man. I believe this lens reflects both a nature and nurture aspect of human nature. For those who believe in God would say that this is simple nature and what we are naturally but for someone who does not believe in God would say that creationism is nurture because people are taught and nurtured to believe in the bible. In the article “Introduction to Evolutionary Biology” it defines evolution as, “Evolution is a change in the gene pool of a population over time. A gene is a hereditary unit that can be passed on unaltered for many generations.” This definition reflects the two images of evolutionary biology, Darwin and the image of ape turning into man. The theory of evolution is one that has withstood the test of time and is widely believed in throughout the world and it is a major contributor to understanding how we came to be. Both nature and nurture contribute to evolutionary biology. Nature is the genes and physical aspect of evolution and how we have become independent from apes and become self aware and highly intelligent. The nurture aspect is our ability to teach, build and establish our species in a very productive way by passing information through generations that has made society and our understanding of evolution what it is today.

Primatology has always been seen as a family tree. Humans and primates are connected by our ancestors but because changes in our DNA it caused a split in the tree. The most important differences between us and them are our ability to speak and produce language, our opposable thumbs, and long term memory. In our group project, the Primatology section shows that primates can learn numbers and words by practicing the number game shown in Kimberly Mukobi’s presentation. The drawings of human hands versus chimpanzee hands show the difference of our thumbs. Human hands have the ability to grip objects that primates are not easily able to. Like Pollard said “… mutations that help an organism survive and reproduce are more likely to be passed on to future generations.” Our change in brain helped give us language and our long term memory. We added the word “lignua” because it means language in Latin, Latin is the base of five romance languages; French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian. For language, we examined how language could have originated. We display how nature and nurture plays a key role in language. Aitchison shows how we have the physical tools to produce language. Thus, he demonstrates the nature aspect of having the ability to produce language. Like the teeth, lips, tongue, larynx, brain, lungs and mouth. Aitchison states, “Changes in the form of body or structural changes are the most direct indications of innate programming.” Hauser shows how we have the ability to produce language and do special things with language. Production of language is demonstrated with generative computation and abstract thought. This is the nature aspect due to the natural ability to be able to produce language. Special things with language are demonstrated with combination of ideas and mental symbols. This is the nurture aspect because language is developed once produced. Lakoff explain the abilities we have acquired while using language. He demonstrates metaphorical thinking. For example, time is money. This is the nurture aspect because language is further developed after it is produced. Farb shows how we do special things with language. He demonstrates how we use language as categorization and language as conceptual pattern. This is the nurture aspect because language is manipulated in certain ways after it is produced.

As you look at the pictures on our poster board you see that each group of people are wearing different types of clothes and hats and their backgrounds literal and figuratively are different in more ways than one. When looking at non-practical things in culture such as religion, something that without it being passed down would probably never surface in the culture again, you see that it differs from culture to culture. People whose culture it is to be catholic do things a lot differently than someone who believe in spirits of the forest. Ridley states “The behavior of a human being owes much to his nature; but it also owes much to the rituals and habits of his fellows.” Ancient Aztecs passed on the rituals of human sacrifice; this obviously has no practicality and is detrimental to society. They believed that it was necessary to appease the gods this way and they passed this on their children. Eventually their society completely collapsed. Each country has their own culture, even in the same country there can be many cultures, but culture is a part of what makes us human.

In conclusion, out project has represents all the lenses studied this term. We have shown through visual imagery the different beliefs that exist in our world and how nature and nurture influence each. Evolutionary biology, language, culture and primatology all are factors in what makes us human and influence human nature.