Anthropology Article Review Assignment

Goals:
1. Students exhibit research skills as they successfully use library resources to find a magazine or journal article in a specific field.
2. Students gain exposure to the literature of anthropology in searching for their article, which is hoped will help them as they research their later paper(s) in this course.
3. Students demonstrate that they understand the nature of anthropology and the special interests of this particular course by finding an article that relates to the course.
4. Student demonstrates critical thinking skills through analyzing an article’s good and bad points (as an article) and articulating how the article relates to the area of the course’s focus in anthropology.

Assignment Objectives and Notes:
Please note that the point values below are supplementary to those in your main writing guidelines and apply only to this particular assignment (see also #11 below).

1. Student selects an article of not less than 500 words in length as the focus of the assignment. Note that Internet sites, books, and the textbook are NOT appropriate sources for this article. (-10)
2. Article is relevant to the course’s area of focus in anthropology, as demonstrated by clear statements in the student’s introduction to and analysis of the article. For example, a student in Cultural Anthropology should not select an article about the genetics of Mad Cow Disease. (-10)
3. Student writes a 2-3 page paper (typed, double-spaced) about the article.
4. Paper includes a short (1-2 paragraphs) summary of major points in the article. (-5)
5. Remainder of paper critically analyzes the article’s content, focusing on its relevance to the course material. (varies)
6. Student may use other sources in the completion of this paper, although this is not required. Any other sources used (if any) must also be cited, however!
7. Paper is properly formatted as per class discussion and the instructor’s written guidelines.
8. A separate “reference cited” page is not required, although a “references cited” section must accompany the paper at the end. A title page is still required.
9. A photocopy or print-out of the article (if taken from a database) accompanies the finished paper, paper-clipped to the back of the paper. This article copy will NOT be returned unless specifically requested by the student. (-5 if not present)
10. Article copy must include full citation information on it somewhere. This article will become a permanent part of the instructor’s files and will be made available to students seeking resources in succeeding semesters. (-3)
11. This paper will be graded according to the written guidelines/rubric discussed in class, modified by the above requirements.
Relevance of *The Human Zoo* to Anthropology

Anthropology College
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January 24, 2004
John Q. Public
One does not necessarily associate ethnography with fast growing fields of employment and practical business applications, but Justin Smallbridge’s article “The Human Zoo” details one of the ways in which it can be (2003:1-3). Smallbridge illustrates his points with varying degrees of success. It is the intent of this paper to review the main points of the article, and to discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses it contains. Before the critique, a brief highlighting of the article’s points is required.

Smallbridge writes about cultural anthropologists Emma Gilding and Johanna Shapira, who conduct ethnographies for corporations through an advertising agency (2003:1). Ethnographies are shown to be effective, and to have advantages over traditional researching methods used by advertising agencies, such as polling and study groups (2003:1). The article briefly describes the rise of the technique and some of the methods employed (2003:2). A price comparison between the main research methods is made, presented alongside arguments made to show that ethnographies are a superior method (2003:3). In conclusion, it touches upon the future plans of the particular company to expand the practice worldwide (2003:3).

**Overall Smallbridge’s article was concise, easily readable, and engaging.** Smallbridge is effective in demonstrating to prospective students of cultural anthropology how the discipline can be applied in the global marketplace, connecting corporations with customers’ mindsets and culturally linked preferences. In particular, the tool of ethnography is shown to be vital and useful. This article shows that cultural anthropology and ethnography can be implemented not only in foreign, dwindling cultures located in far-off, strange environments, but also in industrial societies and in the business world. Ethnography is shown to be valuable for the purpose of documenting the usage of knowledge derived to gain an economic advantage. The two subjects— cultural anthropology and business advertising— are tied together well. The
advantages of ethnography over polls and study groups are presented well, particularly in regards to the discussion of how ethnography avoids the pitfall the other two methods share, of subjects having a tendency to provide only the information they feel the researchers are looking for (2003:1). Smallbridge is quite persuasive in promoting the technique, while also fairly including some drawbacks, such as the cost, which can range from $33,000 to $100,000, while other methods typically cost from $3,500 to $15,000 (2003:3).

While Smallbridge does offer some interesting information on Gilding and Shapiro’s techniques, he could have written much more precisely and been more inclusive and descriptive. In particular, he includes Gilding’s criticism that her competitor, Bill Abrams, does not conduct “true ethnographic or anthropological research, although they use many of its techniques” without qualifying what constitutes a ‘true’ ethnography (2003:2). Also obviously lacking, especially given the specific numbers regarding price and the blatant undertone that ethnography is a superior marketing tool, is any hard data on how much more effective it is. While stating that it has pulled products out of sales decline and that it “yields better information” than the other methods (2003:1), the author never makes a solid comparison between the effectiveness of the three methods, or any numbers derived from consumer response to advertising based upon the methods. A percentage, or even a few relevant examples of each method of research being applied and the advertising that resulted from each would have strengthened the article.

Despite these shortcomings, Smallbridge has written an article that should inform and interest both the businessmen and women interested in staying on the edge of market research, and students of cultural anthropology pondering the various career paths before them.
Reference Cited

Smallbridge, Justin