Antwone Quenton Fisher came to this world “an uninvited guest”. His father was shot and killed two months before he was born (he died not even knowing Antwone was conceived) and his mother was incarcerated at the time of his birth. He grew up as a ward if the state of Ohio in an abusive foster home. As he saw it, he was an uninvited guest in the world (Fisher, 2001, 323). In the end he made himself into a contributing member of society despite his circumstances.

I will explore different aspects of human development of which I have learned throughout the semester, using the experiences in *Finding Fish*, by Antwone Quenton Fisher.

The nature-nurture debate refers to the way a child develops. Nature is the influence of genes that one inherits while nurture is the influence of the environment (Berger, 2010). Antwone’s nature was one of determination. In the home he grew up there was absolutely no positive nurturing taking place. His foster mother, Mizz Pickett, took every opportunity to warn, “Nigga, I’ll take ya back where I gotcha from” (Fisher, 2001, 63). He was made to feel like nothing through name calling, being called “nigga” with disgust, was molested by a caregiver, beat with a newspaper which was on fire. His determination, I believe, began as part of who he was; the surroundings he was in also nurtured his determination, if for nothing else but to prove Mizz Pickett wrong about all that was said of him and done to him.

The negative nurturing that was taking place also led Antwone to the characteristic of self-preservation. He realized that he could only take care of himself. Seeing that a fellow junior high student had fathered a child, he made the decision to stay away from sex knowing he was not capable of taking care of anyone else. His self-preservation attitude also kept him from using drugs, smoking, and drinking alcohol. He focused on taking care of himself.
The socioeconomic status in which Antwone grew up was low. The foster family took foster children in purely for the money that they received by doing so. Mizz Pickett went as far as to tell the children that “Don’t nobody wont-cha. If they did, ya wouldn’t be here. But don’t think I wont-cha. I jus’ gotta pay mah notes” (Fisher, 2001, 63).

Child maltreatment is defined as intentional harm to or avoidable endangerment (including child abuse and child neglect) of anyone under 18 years of age (Berger, 2010, 190). Antwone gives example after example of maltreatment throughout his book as demonstrated in the section on nature-nurture. At age 4 he was repeatedly molested by the babysitter, Willenda. He was beaten on more than one occasion. He was abused verbally and psychologically through name calling, constant reminders of his worthlessness, and through false accusations of various, supposed wrong doings. When Antwone was a bit older Mr. and Mizz Pickett would disappear for weeks and months at a time. During their disappearances he was left to fend for himself, forage for his food, and forced to wear inappropriate clothing during the cold, snowy months. Antwone broke his arm and was advised to go straight to the hospital. It wasn’t until three days later that he was taken for medical treatment after enduring swelling, extreme pain and fever. These are all examples of child maltreatment.

It was discussed in class to save extreme punishments for extreme behaviors; otherwise the child may quit worrying about extreme behavior because the punishment can’t seem to get any worse. Antwone was exposed to many extreme forms of punishment. In one instance he was tied to a pole as a punishment (Fisher, 2001, 64) and told that his penis was going to be cut off for wetting the bed (67), and yet another time he was naked, tied to the end of his cot by his arms and whipped with a switch until he was beaten unconscious (74). He started skipping school because “no punishment loomed any worse than what I was already getting” (76).
You get behavior on which you focus. Antwone discovered this from a life changing elementary teacher, Brenda Profit. He remarks that she gave constructive criticism, encouraged rather than condemned, finding reasons to compliment (Fisher, 2001, 124). Mrs. Profit focused on positive things in Antwone and he started to notice small, slow, subtle changes in himself. He became a better reader and overall better student because she believed in him; his self-esteem began to slowly improve in the school setting. “Her honest, careful words are the equivalent of lightning bolts and thunderclaps. Outside I shyly accept her praise, but inside I’m flying with the birth of revelation. It’s the first time I’ve ever realized that there is something I can do to make things different for myself” (Fisher, 2001, 127).

In adolescence, neurological development is occurring. “The limbic system (fear, emotional impulses) matures before the prefrontal cortex (planning ahead, emotional regulation)” (Berger, 2010, 324). Antwone was able to demonstrate the maturity of his emotional impulses at the social worker’s office on the day Mizz Pickett kicked him out of her house for good. He articulately stood up for himself when Mizz Pickett accused him of stealing money by saying, “I don’t have her money and she knows I don’t have her money. She’s always accused me of stealing, [turning to Mizz Pickett] and you are lying. And you call yourself a Christian lady, but that doesn’t mean anything because we both know you are lying” (Fisher, 2001, 202-203). Before this time he has been unable to stand up for himself when falsely accused of anything. At this moment he was able to calmly articulate his feelings in a rational way.

As an emerging adult, Antwone had different things to focus on than other emerging adults. A typical emerging adult is breaking away from parents, making choices about marriage and accommodating the social norms. Antwone had no parents to break away from. As
mentioned before, he needed to focus on his own survival and could not focus on taking care of anyone else, so marriage was not on his mind. He was not accommodating the social norms. Instead he was working for a pimp and later living on the street as an emerging adult. These behaviors are more characteristic of edgework - ventures that involve a degree of risk or danger (Berger, 2010, 391).

Antwone Quenton Fisher did not have a typical upbringing. His experiences were not those of your average person. Despite so many negative experiences he was able to overcome challenges and defy odds. He never spent any time in jail nor been in trouble with the law, never tried to take his own life, he took care of himself his whole life, educated himself. “I made my way through terrible times, and I have never complained. I’ve become a good man and a good person” (Fisher, 2001, 319). Antwone Fisher has many great examples of many different stages of development we discovered over the course of the semester.
References
