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PSY 417

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Identity Piece

Identity is the manifest of self, in its most raw form. I myself would love to think that I know myself best, but is that entirely true? On one hand, I am me, and everything I have ever done, thought, and said has gone through me. On the other, I am filled with bias, and I might only look to make myself seem as appealing as possible. So how do I properly convey me? In order to accomplish what I aim to achieve, I must first be honest with myself.

I will admit here, for the first time outside of my own head that I have questioned my existence, both as a man and as a heterosexual. I have a sister one year apart in age to me, so it was not uncommon for some of our features and beliefs to meld growing up. My sister was definitely tomboy-ish growing up, and I would say I grew up adopting many feminine traits as well. For instance, I am much more in tune with my emotions, and overall, I am more emotionally expressive than my fellow males. This has its downsides unfortunately. As someone who finds it more difficult to conceal my emotions, I am often ridiculed for it. This has left me with self-hatred, because I believe that I am somehow unjustly acting, or some part of my character is flawed because I don’t conform to the standard masculine traits society imposes.

Growing up, I have found that culture not only influences myself, but those I surround myself with. Having a background in psychology, history, and philosophy has made me a hyper critical thinker, for better or worse. Because of this, I often think outside of the cultural framework, which has made me live a fairly unconventional life, with even more unconventional interests. I was never interested by sports growing up, and often looked to videogames as my main pastime. This interest has been present my whole life, as it was the way I bonded with my older brothers, who both were really into videogames and taught me how to play. In high school I used it as my way of connecting with friends and making new ones. Having played them my whole life has made me ridiculously good at videogames. I have been globally ranked in the game Rainbow Six Siege and now I play for the University at Buffalo’s Varsity Rocket League team. As someone who grew up during the digital age, an internet culture rich in ideas from around the world has made me overly aware of the universal human struggle.

My race is another aspect of my life that has raised some interesting self-dynamic. While I am white, I was not raised in a homo-racial community. A majority of my friends from home are from minority groups, which has led to some very interesting breakdowns of certain social barriers that others face. I become overly sympathetic to some of my friends growing up, as most of them did not receive the upbringing or even the resources growing up that I got. An unfortunate circumstance I had to face related to this was gun violence, as one of my friends passed away over the summer, the day after my birthday. We shared so many of the same values, yet we lived on opposing sides of this evil socially constructed barrier that cost one of us our future.

I was raised to be a Catholic, but as I grew into my teen years I become more rebellious. Religion faded from my life, as I stopped going to my church of worship, and had by that time finished being confirmed. I still have not assimilated back into my religion, but I still identify with the values that church tries to teach. From my own perspective, I see Catholicism as a guide for morality, but I myself can dictate right from wrong without religion. I feel like this exemplifies my individualistic nature, and my tendency to question what is taught, in an inquisitive sense.

In life, whether or not you believe it, everyone is trying to accomplish what seems right to them. Even though the justifications may seem wrong. I think this is a positive aspect of myself, my ability to walk in others shoes. The perspective I hold in life is that everyone should be heard, no matter how far they stray from my personal beliefs. I won’t learn anything from staying in an echo chamber of thoughts.

Something that occurred in my life that forced me to lose my “childhood innocence” was the day my brother left to live with his dad. My half brother was one of my role models growing up, and I learned so much about snack making and the fun of playing videogames with him. The day my half brother left, my parents asked him to step outside to talk. My bedroom faced our backyard, so I headed to my room to overhear a conversation I was not meant to hear. I was only 8 at the time. My parents broke down crying, pleading with my brother to stop his drug use. This was the first time I had even fathomed my brother could use drugs. After all, I was raised religious, and the idea of using drugs was extremely taboo for my family. He was given two options, to stay with us and to stop abusing drugs or leave that day. It crushed me when he chose drugs over being my brother. Even as I write this now, the memories are flooding back, and I only now understand why he would act so weirdly around me at times. I never told my other siblings, nor my parents that I knew the truth.

People often question why I am a quiet person. The typical assumption is that I am nervous to speak, or there is something wrong with me. I just don’t like talking to people in large social interactions, unless I know all of the people. I think a combination of cynicism, my overly sarcastic attitude, and the non-genuine nature of people talking in social settings has gotten me into enough trouble for one life time. I like when people speak their truths and lack a filter.

Thinking about myself for this paper has made me realize just how negatively I view myself. I feel like I am such a pseudo intellectual. I feel like a bother all of the time, so much so that I refused to ask people what they think of me for this paper. I fear how others might feel about me, and I think that plays into my more introverted nature. Why do I feel this way about myself though? My self-esteem is seemingly low, and perhaps this all ties back into how I self-identify. A great saying that I think of often is this idea “If you were not yourself, but rather an outside viewer, would you be more or less critical of who you are?”. With this, I have often considered the possibility my self-identity is greatly different from other identities of me. Maybe I am simply too harsh on myself, so much so that my self-identity actually misrepresents me more than others that know me.

So, what is my self-identity? I am introverted by choice, but I speak up when I hear something inaccurate or offensive. I have become more emotionally mute due to the recent events in my life, but overall, I am more emotionally expressive than the average man of western society. I am an overly sympathetic and empathetic person, because of my acute awareness of other peoples struggles and problems. I am not a competitive person, but I still thrive in competitive environments because of my fast reaction time and decision making. I self-isolate sometimes, because I find it easier than confronting who I am all of the time. I am a student, boyfriend, friend, son, brother, and esports player. I am compassionate, sarcastic, authentic, introverted, an advocate for others, and above all else… a human.