Reflection 1

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I will be using Urie Bronfenbrenner’s model for human growth to analyze my own childhood at age 16 in my Sophomore year of high school. A microsystem is one’s immediate surroundings. I lived with both of my parents. My sister was attending her first year of college at Virginia Tech. My amazing dog, Sweetie, lived with us. I attended Rustburg High School, which is a fairly small and pretty rural school in central Virginia. I had been running for their track and field team for three years at that point and participated again my Sophomore year. I was very good friends with the team captains (who were also on the relay teams with me) as well as the coaches. I mostly hung out with the track athletes outside of practice, but occasionally chatted with my classmates. My coaches were pretty supportive, but definitely had very high expectations of me. Our relay team made it to States in the winter, and the coaches became very intense and dedicated to winning after that. They offered encouragement only after I had performed above and beyond their goal. My teachers were very good that year. I enjoyed classes and did well in my grades. I had a really good English teacher who helped me figure out my writing style. My school was mostly country Conservatives, so I didn’t relate to most of my peers. I didn’t watch too much TV because I had track practice every day until 5:00 and then did homework until 11:00. This was my microsystem.

A mesosystem is how your parents and community interact with each other. My parents were always at my track meets and so became pretty close with my fellow athletes. They supported them and gave them food sometimes. They talked to my coaches and my coaches always said supportive and encouraging things about me to them. My parents were supportive of my school and my school work. They appreciated and respected my good teachers, but did email one that was assigning ridiculous assignments. This was the last year they went to parent-teacher conferences. The Rustburg community was supportive of the football, basketball and volleyball teams. However, they did not care much for track. When we made it to States, none of the school knew and even the administration who did know did not congratulate us. They would show up to a few of the meets, but track was definitely an underdog sport at Rustburg.

An exosystem is the parents’ jobs and vacations the family took. My dad works for the National Park Service at Appomattox Court House as the Natural Resource Manager. He is in charge of controlling the grounds at the park. My mom was a psychologist and diagnosed patients for mental disorders, but her contract with the company ran out and she got a new job that year. She got an office in a private practice therapy business and transitioned to adult therapy. She enjoyed this job a lot more, but it also took much more of an emotional toll on her. We had never gone on beach trips, but when I was 14 I asked to go. Since then, we had made our way to the beach every summer. My grandparents live in Arizona, so they fly out and see us every October and we go see them in the summer. There were never any divorces in my family. My parents have been married for 29 years in October.

Both of my parents are Caucasian. My mom was raised Jewish and my dad was raised Catholic. When I was a baby to about 5 years old, my whole family attended a Presbyterian church. We stopped going and when I was around 8 years old, my mom and I attended a Jewish synagogue. We stopped going after two years and I never had a baht mitzvah. My family still celebrates the major holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, Hannukah, and Passover, but there is really no religious affiliation. It is merely to have some quality time sharing a festive spirit with the family. We do not attend any church now. We lived in a rural setting, though a fairly urban town resided only 20 minutes away. My town was pretty small and, for the most part, everyone knew everyone. The town was home to a very conservative Christian, ever-expanding university that bought up every piece of land available. Most people from outside of the town who moved here came for the university. The university had very public political opinions that were quite different from my own, so I was used to keeping my opinion quiet and not relating to people on a deeper personal level. My family was in the middle class. We had plenty of money for expenses, but my parents, my dad in particular, is very frugal. He saved the money for important expenses such as cars, medical payments, and school materials. We bought clothes from new stores and went on fairly nice vacations, but we often bought used furniture and chose not to go out to eat to save money. I learned from a young age to be frugal with my money, so even now I hardly buy myself anything. Though, in the end, my family was friends with other middle class families and related to them more easily. This is my macrosystem.

The chronosystem consisted of Donald Trump winning presidency. My school was overjoyed, but I was far from it. His winning was a big event in the country with lots of protests and marches. It was around this time also that the Me Too movement came about. Many women came forward about their sexual assault experiences and the law, supposedly, began to crackdown more on the perpetrating men. This was very scary for me when so many women first came forward because I feared that every woman would eventually be raped and most men were indecent and vile. The Me Too movement, in the wake of the new presidency, gave me a very gloomy and fearful outlook on the future. It took a while to accept things as they are and learn how to live my own personal best life within all this mess.

Bronfenbrenner’s theory suggests that all these different levels of community have different and important impacts on a person’s growth and I do believe that these events have shaped me into the person I am today. Because of track, I have a pretty strong backbone for taking criticism and still believing in myself afterwards. Coming from two different religions, I understand more about global religion as a whole and currently do not feel the need to devote myself to any one particular. Because I was raised in a town with very different political beliefs from my own, I learned to respect other cultures and opinions that differ from my own, which I still value to this day. I am sure that even the subtleties of being Caucasian, being in the middle class, and having a supportive family have impacted my growth in becoming who I am now and still affect my current growth.