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Applying Developmental Theory Part One

To begin my activities that would help me to write this paper, I started with the bias test that told me about my “religious bias.” Completing this test will inform you about the biases you have while you go about your daily life, that you may not even recognize are there. Specifically, this test deals with religions Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The test uses your personal information such as age, education level, demographics, and religious affiliation as well as activities that use association to determine what type of bias you have. After completing the test, the site informed me that my biases were “moderate automatic preference for Judaism over Christianity.” However, the test did not give me insight about my bias towards Judaism versus Islam, nor my bias towards Christianity versus Islam.

While I was taking the test, I assumed that I did not have any particular biases, and if I did, they were minor at most. The results I got were not extreme, but according to the site, I do prefer Judaism to other religions. We all like to think that we go about life with an open and “color blind” mind, or so it is called. However, sometimes we cannot control our biases, they just exist. For me, it is natural to prefer Judaism over Christianity. Judaism is how I was raised. It is my home. I grew up in a place where being Jewish was what made me the minority; I was different. I learned to embrace it and be proud of who I am. Christianity was never something that I got to participate in, the same way I never participated in Islam. I am more prone to be bias towards what I know. This idea is backed up by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of

Development. According to Bronfenbrenner, there are sections of a human's life that interact with each other to form 5 "levels." Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem are the five pieces of his theory that make up all the aspects of someone's life. For me, my bias directly effects my microsystem; this being because my religious affiliation is how I was raised, and it is carried with me in my daily life.

After I took the religious based bias test, I took the skin color based bias test. This test was the same format as the last test where there were questions beforehand about demographics, religious affiliation, etc. There was also an association game that was played, just as last time. My results, this time, came back saying that "my data suggest a slight automatic preference for Light Skinned People Over Dark-Skinned People." The results explain that this test can predict patterns such as hiring preferences, medical treatment, and criminal justice discrimination. It also gives you results of these tests on an average of everyone who has participated in them. For this particular test, 17% of users fall under the same category as me, slightly preferring lighter skin to darker skin, while 23% strongly prefer lighter skin over darker skin.

I thought about the results of this test a bit more than I did the last one. No one, with an open mind, wants to hear that they prefer one race to another. While I was in the middle of the test, I realized that I was almost trying to force myself to pick the "right" answers that would show me as having no bias towards either type of skin. However, then I realized that this is not accurate to life. Just as I explained with the last test, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of child Development still applies to this topic. We, as humans, tend to stick to our own kind, or people who are most like us. My microsystem involves me growing up in a place where it was mostly ethnically white people. My contexts of development supported this. My school, my community, my family, they were all, mostly, white. These biases are naturally based on where you come

from, however, the important part is being able to recognize we have them and not letting them stand in your way when making decisions.

The next part of this assignment was to read about “racial identity.” This page was about determining what you identify as, race wise, and then following the arrows to see the path you follow regarding racism. I identify as white, so I read that path. There were six different stages in the first model that explain how most white Americans feel about racism from a moral standpoint. Because we are dealing with moral growth, Erik Erikson’s model is the theory of development that is associated most closely. In his model, he addresses the different stages of growing up in terms of social/emotional growth, rather than physical growth, like Freud. In each stage of the racism identification chart, we can use Erikson as a reference point and compare his stages to these. The top of the chart starts with “Contact.” This stage shows that racism is being recognized, however, the subject is, in a way, in denial about it. The key phrase that was used to describe this was hearing a person say that they are “color blind,” when in fact that is impossible to be. As we found out from the previous activity, we all have biases towards particular races. It all depends on how you were raised and where your background comes from. As you move farther down the chart, there are differing levels of acceptance and recognition of racism. It shows just how uncomfortable some people are talking about it. Personally, it’s not my favorite subject to talk about either. It can be tense and uncomfortable if you're speaking with an audience that you're not used to speaking about it with, or if you are the minority in the conversation. This chart shows just how difficult it can be for people based on the specific stage they identify themselves in, however, if we make the conversation more widely talked about in a calm, not hostile environment, it will not be such a taboo conversation and feelings can be expressed more clearly.

The identity wheel is a way to step back and look at who you are under certain lights that you identify yourself with. My identity wheel consists of:

- Ethnicity: White
- Socio-Economic Status: Middle Class
- Gender: Woman
- Sex: Female
- Sexual Orientation: Straight
- National Origin: American
- First Language: English
- Physical, Emotional, Developmental (Dis)Ability: I have a chronic autoimmune-like syndrome.
- Age: 19
- Religious or Spiritual Affiliation: Jewish
- Race: White

Along with the wheel, there are five questions that can help you to better understand who you view yourself as. These questions include:

1. Identities you think about most often: For me, the top of the list would be my “physical disabilities.” I have IBS and it is something that is constantly going through my head because it affects everything I do. It is a syndrome of the central nervous system, so it affects my entire body. It is something that in recent years has begun to define me, but it is something that I want to break free from. I also think about my religious affiliation a lot. I was raised Jewish in Chesapeake Virginia, a mostly Christian town. It was something that caused me to feel isolated year-round, but especially during the holidays. Because of this, it is a factor that makes me unique and it’s a quality of my life that I hold near and dear to my heart.

2. Identities you think about least often: I tend to not think about my origin or first language most of the time. Growing up in America, more specifically in a middle-class region of Virginia, most everyone, with the exception of a few outliers, was American, white, and spoke English as their first language. It was something that was always the same, so I never really thought about it.
3. Your own identities you would like to learn more about: I would love to learn more about my ethnicity. I have been told stories about my huge family immigration from all over the world, including some from Argentina. I think it would be fascinating to hear more about my ancestors.
4. Identities that have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself: My Physical Disability identity strongly affects how I see myself. Every day is a sort of struggle against food and what will and will not make me sick. It makes me feel weak and powerless sometimes and can take a great toll on my happiness.
5. Identities that have the greatest effect on how others perceive you: I thought about this one a little harder than the others, but I think most people would identify me with my age and gender first. Being young has its advantages and disadvantages for day to day activities. But it does hold power when making a first impression.

The identity wheel part of this essay is interesting to me. The first part of the essay was about an outside source taking your information and spitting back to you what an algorithm says about you. However, this part of it is your own opinions about yourself. This can be hard. Most of the time I go about life just being myself and living my life. But I don't always stop to recognize the fact that I identify and associate myself more strongly towards certain parts of myself over others. I think by using this exercise we can determine what our strongest values, strengths, and weaknesses are.

A theory I have mentioned several times before in this essay is Bronfenbrenner. He has an interesting theory of development that involves layers of a person's life. With each layer the setting becomes much broader. Starting with the first layer, Microsystem, this is a very personal section. This has to do with your family, friends, and any immediate factors of your life. There are many times in my childhood that I can think of having an effect on me within this immediate reign of factors. However, I am going to talk about the very end of my childhood, in high school. The short four years I was in high school, I was impacted in a positive way more than I can put into words. To start at the base, I had a supportive family. I loved them very much, and still do. My home was always a nurturing environment and I liked being there. My parents and brother were loving and supportive of everything I did, even when I made mistakes. High school was challenging. I went to a very highly ranked school, so the academics were tough. It was exhausting, I was burnt out, but it prepared me well for college. My activity of choice was theatre. My friends and I all did it together and we made so many incredible memories while at the same time learning major important life lessons along the way. My friends were amazing. I still talk to my inner circle of friends every single day and we have a bond that will stay strong for a long time. They helped me build a solid foundation and even though saying goodbye when we all left for college was incredibly difficult, I am so lucky to have had those strong relationships that made saying goodbye so hard.

The next level is the mesosystem. This layer is one in which different aspects of your life overlap with each other. For me, my mesosystem was constantly mixing and matching different pieces of my life. Because of theatre, I built a community that bridged the gap between my school life, social life, and family life all together. My parents were heavily involved in helping out the theatre company, so they got to know my teachers very well, especially my drama teacher and choir teacher. I had the entire theatre company come over to my house quite often, so my

parents also became friends with my friends. I got to know my friend's parents and all aspects of my life were all sewn together. As far as my grades go, my parents always trusted me to maintain my grades without enforcing any type of punishment system, so they were involved but in a positive way.

After Mesosystem comes Exosystem. This layer is all about the family information. My parents always had secure jobs. My father worked for, and still works for, a family owned business. He worked with my uncle and grandpa every day and it has been steady for a long time. My mother is a physical therapist and for a long time she worked very hard and it was a rewarding job for her emotionally, but not as much as she would have liked monetarily. Just like teaching, you do not do that job for the money, you do it because you love it and want to make a difference. However, when I was in high school, she went back to college and got her doctorate. That was hard for her, but it made a major difference to how she is treated in her field. My mom and dad are and have been happy in their marriage and they are still married now. Thinking about a divorce, luckily, was not something I ever worried about in high school. We even took a few fun vacations. The main one I remember was going down to Florida to visit Disney and Universal Studios.

The next layer is Macrosystem. This one is bigger picture of how you were raised. Personally, I was raised in Chesapeake, a very suburban area. It was not a small city, so most people I would see when I was out at Walmart I would not know. My school was huge, with 2500 people attending. Although we had a little diversity, the school was mostly white. I fit in to Chesapeake very well except for one major factor, my religion. The majority of people at home were Christians, meaning Christmas, Easter, and any other big holidays were emphasized. I never participated in any of them because I am Jewish. Being Jewish as a kid, especially in high school when I was old enough to feel isolated, it was difficult. No one understood what my

holidays meant, and even worse, for me we never got off for important Jewish holidays, even though we got off school for the major Christian ones. I had to skip school to go to synagogue, and that made me feel as though my religion was not valued as much as Christianity was. It was hard growing up like that.

The last layer is Chronosystem. This layer is the broadest of all of them, being that it is about the world around you, not just your personal bubble. At the time, there was a new president, Donald Trump. This was the main focus of the time because there was a rigid divide through the country based on who supported him and who did not. The other main issue of the time was the mass school shootings happening in the country. It was very scary for me because going to school to become a teacher is something that I have always thought about doing, but the fact that becoming a teacher, for that reason, scared me, as well as still being in school myself, was a whole other ball park. However, despite that issue, I still had a great time in high school, and I would not change my childhood even if I had the chance!

