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Identity Formation

The social characteristics that define my identity are based on my race, gender, sexuality, and class. First, I am an African American with dark skin and believe my ancestors' origin is somewhere in Africa. On gender, I am male. This is defined by my dressing code which is masculine and also body parts and the expectations laid by the community. I am from a middle-class family earning average wages, which are enough to pay my bills but not to give me a luxurious life. On sexuality, I am straight. I like people of the opposite gender, that is, females. I found myself with these characteristics as I grew up, and I have embraced them and made them part of my life.

There are various aspects of racial formation which had a significant impact on my identity formation. One of these aspects is appearance. This ranges from skin color to body physique. I am dark-skinned, and this classifies me as an African American. Only Africans are expected to be black. The other aspect is language. Growing up in black neighborhoods, there is slang that, as individuals, we learn. This language originates from the slavery days when the Africans held as enslaved people developed a set of phrases which is a coining of some African words and English (Ray 29). That language significantly impacts my identity

formation since it is through communication that individuals get to express themselves. The other aspect is the environment. As a black American, I was raised in a tough environment which made me understand that being black means being tough and facing the world with resilience.

On the other hand, there are also aspects of class formation that significantly impacted the formation of my racial identity. One of those aspects is the types of occupations most black Americans venture into. I grew up in a neighborhood where most people were earning low incomes. This means that they were in a low social class. Therefore I grew up accepting that as a black kid; I did not have equal opportunities as a white kid who grew up in the affluent suburbs. Another aspect is the way the public interacts. I have witnessed many people being discriminated against in public places not only because they are black but also because they are from a low social class. Low social class is attributed to the blacks, significantly contributing to social identity development. The last aspect is that blacks are less advantaged and, therefore, have to work extra hard to achieve the levels of whites. This has motivated me to work extra hard and ensure that I maintain a medium social class.

Additionally, various aspects of ability construction also impacted my racial identity formation. One of these aspects is the perception of other races on the abilities of black people. I grew up facing various racist comments about my

ability. This motivated me to see myself as a black man with a higher ability to compete effectively with all the other people. The other aspect is the way I view myself. I am my motivation. I have learned my worth and understood that being a black person does not mean weakness. Instead, it means hidden strength, which can be exploited to do great things. The last aspect was the motivation of the fellow members of my race. I have seen various black men beat white men in success and prosperity. This has impacted my racial formation by making me understand that if there is a black man who achieved a certain level of success, I also can.

Lastly, various aspects of sexuality construction have also impacted my racial identity formation. One of these aspects is religion. Religion makes individuals believe that being homosexual is a punishable sin (Jackson 47). That is one of the reasons I grew up being straight because since I was born, I was taught in the church that being homosexual would lead me to hell. The other aspect is the view of the people on sexuality. Sexuality is viewed in our community as everyone having to be heterosexual (Young and Shipley 33). Therefore the sexuality of an individual is designed once they are born based on whether they are male or female. The last aspect of sexuality construction was my emotions. I am interested in the opposite sex and not a sex similar to mine. That is something in me and has significantly shaped my identity by making me become straight as I am today.

Works Cited

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