

Dan-Linh Le

Professor Suzara

Oakes Core 80A, sec 19

22 October 2015

Essay Project 1, Final Draft

Identifying Identity

The words “you” and “me” combined together may constitute an “us”. However, the word “you” is not the equivalence to “me”. You are different from me and I am different from you, because both of us have identities that are composed of different physical appearances, personalities, beliefs, intelligence, and any other type of skills whether it’s something significant like having a photographic memory or something trivial like being able to whistle through the nose. Though the English grammar department states that the words “you” and “me” or not the same thing, society and education system will tell everyone otherwise. The system merges “you” and “me” together to create a robotic human population to think and act the same way. This allows society to easily control the human race since no one will be aware enough to question authority. Therefore, the education system aims to help people fit into society rather than help them find their identity.

Primarily, the education system prevents individuals from finding themselves and how they are important to constructing society. The nation’s education system is supposed to teach technical skills such as language and mathematics to implement them in modern life and technology. However, these skills prove to be more than a practical purpose in daily life. These skills will eventually reveal a person’s talents and abilities which composes parts of his of her identity. These skills are eventually revealed as a person goes through his or her education, since

the system is supposed to expose children to different fields in hopes of bringing a person to his or her passion. Though, this is the purpose of an education, the reality proves the contrary. The system is only forcing these students to get an education in order to receive acceptance from society. It's either obtain an education or face social scrutiny and rejection. In the article, "Internalized Oppression and the Culture of Silence", Osajima explains this phenomenon by portraying the stereotype of Asian American students being quiet in classrooms as evidence that the education system is not fulfilling its purpose of helping each student find his or her individual value. Society targets Asian Americans as part of an oppressed group which leads to these Asian American students having "feelings of inferiority, of uncertainty about one's identity, [leading] oppressed people to believe that the solution to their problem is to become like or be accepted by those in the dominant group." (Osajima, 153-154) These Asian American students shift their identities in order to accommodate society's demands. As a result, this prevents them from understanding their own identity, because society is defining who they are and how much they are worth to society. The fear of rejection and hopelessness limits these Asian American students from perceiving their own identity and what they're worth as a human being, since they "come to believe that the source of their problems lies, not in the relations within society, but in themselves, in their own inadequacies and inabilities." (Osajima 153). Instead they work to please society, and change their personalities, beliefs, and anything about them in order to fit in which hides their genuine self.

Furthermore, even if students are able to find their confidence and identity, the education system will force them to deny their identity if it does not coincide with the rules and policies of the system. In the article, "Student (In)visibility", Langhout discusses how the education system pushes pupils to be part of a uniformed, strict society which prevents them from claiming their

real identity. “All children in this classroom are to behave in exactly the same way, which is to walk in a uniform manner with no expression of individuality; in other words, they are disciplined and their identities are controlled.” (Langhout, 137) Through this control, an identity is altered from the “higher authorities”. In this case, the “higher authority” is the school system who forces students into someone that’s basic and easy to influence. Consequently, the system forces students to abandon their identities and “uniformity and silence are facilitated, which consequently renders students both homogeneous and invisible.” (Langhout, 128) As mentioned earlier, an education should inspire individuals to think outside the norms of rules and policies that govern us in order to trigger creativity and independence. However, society sees this as dangerous, because when society “[feels] afraid, it isn’t what [they] *don’t* know that frightens them, it’s what [they] *think* [they] *do* know.” (Johnson, 13) Society thinks that free thought and expression would lead to chaos, since everyone is *free* to believe in what they want and act upon it. Society feels that disagreement and conflict results when people are on different pages. However, disagreement should be embraced because disagreement outlines diversity in thought, which add meaning to an identity. However, society barely tolerates these free thinkers such as an elementary student, Kelly who “asserts the right to define what counts as good behavior, or to self-define good behavior her than having the teacher be the only person deciding when is on- and off-task.” (Langhout 144) In order to maintain these rebels, society sees rules, regulations, and control necessary to maintain tranquility and keep everyone together, at the cost of each and every individual’s identity.

On the contrary, people do have the ability to defend their identity through resistance, either in extreme mass movements or subtle everyday acts of protest. The most significant form of resistance is “[reclaiming] a part of [one’s] identity that [one] is taught to despise; reclaiming

is another resistance strategy.” (Langhout, 145) Society taught everyone to always follow the “normal” thing done by everyone, “normal” as defined as by society. By doing the exact opposite of what society teaches, this is a form of struggle and resistance that keeps one’s identity alive. “The act is oppositional because it is not designed to facilitate an expressed school goal.” (Langhout, 147) The school’s goal is to have everyone be part of the system, where everyone is taught to be governed by annoying and technical policies. These policies “prevent students from naming what is wrong and developing a shared critique.” (Langhout, 128) These kinds of teachings tend to brainwash students over years of exposure. Therefore, people cannot blame future generations for being too reluctant or oblivious to the current problems that occur in today’s world. With this in mind, when an individual resists and is doing something outside the social norms, this is already telling of one’s identity. This act shows that he or she is persistent and fierce as an individual, because it takes an abundance of humility, courage, and intellect to see the world through a different set of lens. Society does not teach persistence and spirited personalities, rather they teach uniformity and conformity. As a result, that resistant individual is acting based on personal instincts rather than social control. Those personal instincts lead back to that person’s identity, because an identity is based off perceptions based on the human mind free of negative influence.

Identity does more than just reveal how old a person is or the ethnicity of where the individual came from but rather an identity inspires independence and is the foundation of diversity. Though it is beneficial to be together as a team, society should never push people to be part of one big, uniformed, and conformed human demographic, because it is simply impossible. People are just too different with their own unique identities. There will be no one biologically, emotionally, mentally, academically or psychologically similar to you in this world. Regardless

of what society thinks, it would be an honor for people to see each other for who they really are. The whole journey of life, after all is to identify the multiple identities that everyone was blessed with.

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Dan-Linh Ton Le is a San Diego native who is currently a freshman at UC Santa Cruz, working on her Bachelor's of Science Degree in Chemistry. She hopes to attend medical school in the future in order to become an obstetrician and gynecologist. Though her interests are based in science and technology, she also takes an interest in social justice and history as noted in her internship under immigration lawyer and Vista councilman candidate, Erubey Lopez and her support for One Body Village, an organization to combat sex trafficking. Aside from school and internships, she enjoys going to the beach, reading *Lord of the Rings*, and spending time with her sisters.