

Emilie Sears

Com 232 Visual Literacy

Self-Image (Compare and Contrast/ Now and Then) Essay

“Look I’m just like mommy!” as the little girl mimicked her very pregnant mother by stuffing a balloon under her summer dress. Both the mother and daughter have matching enormous smiles stretched across their faces as they stand alongside one another grabbing their stomachs. My mother was my idol, and still is to this day. When I was little I always wanted to be like her. Rocking my dolls back and forth, changing their pretend diapers, and feeding them bottles; much like my mother did with my little sister. If my mother was cooking, I would of course be too in my play kitchen set or *Easy Bake Oven*. She would go off to work as a nurse and I would take out my plastic stethoscope and *Fisher Price* first aid kit to pretend patch-up my siblings and teddy bears. As a young child, it went without a doubt I saw my parents as my role models. Both my parents work in the medical field; in fact, that’s where they met each other. When I was little I wanted to swap in my plastic medical tools for the real deal. However, what we think we want when we are younger is not necessarily what we evolve and decide to do later on.

For such a young girl inspired to go out and become a nurse or doctor, I was rudely awoken. Although I truly believe at this exact point in time, it is what was best for me. “Playtime” is nothing like real time. In the *Netflix* movie, *The Beginning of Life*, it was said “play is the major vehicle for children to learn.”¹ I could not agree more, that is until you grow up and learn “playtime” is not reality. Working in the medical field means so much more than giving your teddy bear a hug, and telling them the doctor will see them soon. It is blood, needles, wounds, defibrillators, IVs; much of things I do not like. When I was ten years old at a pitching clinic for softball with my dad, I took a ball to the face. It hit my eyebrow right on the bone and split the skin, so deep I needed to be rushed to the emergency room for stitches and x-rays. I do not remember that trip to the ER because immediately seeing my own blood in my hand, made me faint. I cringe seeing blood, diagrams, or even images of inside the body; especially those health class videos in middle school where they walk you through human anatomy deciphering the different systems of the body. I also am the biggest germophobe, attributed to me always getting sick; another deterrence from the medical world. To some, science is amazing; to me, not so much. Back when I was ten, sure. Loved it. But when you are introduced to reality everything changes, including your perception.

I admired my eagerness when I was younger. It was like nothing stood in my way. My dreams seemed tangible; all I had to do was put on an apron and I was a chef, a lab coat and I was a doctor, a baby bottle in my hand and I was a mother. Imagine being a mother at age nineteen. That would not be so thrilling to me. Perhaps when I was younger and did not

understand the context and dynamic of motherhood, it was justified that I simply wanted to be like “mommy.” Relating back to the doctor aspiration, this was another bust. As I grew and developed through my education I realized my strengths and weaknesses. I leaned more towards reading rather than math. I enjoyed working in retail during my part-time job at *American Eagle* in the local mall, where I enjoyed making sales and advertising to customers; sparking my interest towards marketing. Writing was also my strong suit and it showed through my academic performance. Chemistry was a mystery to me, and do not get me started on algebra. When I was little I did not know nor realize the requirements and heavy reliance based on science in the medical field. Now in college with multiple nursing major friends, I know firsthand what they go through. The rigorous chemistry classes and science orientated schedules they have leave me with a headache.

I entered college not really knowing what to do; a normal thing for most eighteen year olds. I however decided to go in as an international business and marketing major, rather than undecided. I thought this would be appropriate based off my high school knowledge, and it seemed relatable to my strong writing and communication skills, as well as my love for travel. However, applicable to the hindsight bias, it was not a good decision knowing how awful I am with numbers and calculations. I regret this decision primarily because I didn’t branch off and do my “own thing”. Following others, in the regards to choosing my major, is known as a social bias called herd instinct. I followed this “common tendency to adopt the opinions and behaviors of others to avoid conflict with my parents and friends.” I did not want to explain to them that I was unsure about my future, when it seemed everyone else knew what they wanted to do with theirs. Back home I had never heard of the degree “Advertising and Public Relations” or even less, “communications.” I went to probably the least diverse public high school of the northeast. My school was located in a large suburb that was ninety-eight percent white. The total population enrolled in my high school was 1,274 (this includes grades nine through twelve). The minority rate of two percent is significantly lower than the state average of thirty-five percent.ⁱⁱ As you can see from these statistics I was limited to diversity, or more-so what the real world actually offered. A collective study was done and published in 2015 on how high school is the “microsystem” when it comes to the comparison between college.ⁱⁱⁱ With these factors in mind it is easy to identify the bubble that shaped my adolescent identity. Even within my family I was limited to what was out there in the world. My older sister went to Northeastern to study neuroscience, my brother went here for marketing and doubled in ROTC where he now is learning to fly Black Hawks. My cousins and older friends went for things like law, nutrition, physician assistant programs, dental, and accounting. Due to my lack of knowledge in communications I casted this whole non-mainstream area of study out of sight and out of mind; limiting myself an opportunity.

Not until I began to align my interests and skills more in depth in college did I realize I wanted in on this study of liberal arts. Once I began my classes under the study of communications I felt at home. I met others who shared the same interests as me; I no longer felt

alone. I enjoyed going to class and engaging in topics rather than attending classes like economics, where I understood none of the equations thrown at us. I was opened up to so many career options that are out there in what is such a big and growing field. I began to feel confident in what I was pursuing like my friends. And now at this point in my life, based off of my never ending evolving interests I want to extend my studies into communication law. I dabble here and there, and of course am still figuring it out as I go along. I have done internships exploring multiple paths, and really am just soaking it all in as I go. I know just like my younger self I will keep crossing things off my list, and narrowing down my interests until I find something that makes perfect sense. Similar to the films we have watched in class I can relate to those main characters who also shared this life-long struggle of finding my identity. These characters, just like myself, were faced with the quest to find their life purpose. Fulfillment in life is something I think every person on this earth is faced with, and it shapes our unique, individual stories. Through my own journey I hope to continue this ambitious personality my younger self in the photograph embodies. I want to captivate this energy and of course that same belief “I can do anything I put my mind to.” I want to maintain this energy and put it to good use.

Looking back on my past I can apply many theories in how I saw and continue to see the world. I could have used my strong negative connotations with hospitals in favor of the self-serving bias. I could have also used the consistency bias by remembering all of these memories and past attitudes that resemble my present attitudes and behaviors today. Although whatever bias I am guilty of, does not really matter in the end. Everyday my view of the world shifts, just like everyone else in the world. Our young ten-year-old selves are gone; but never forgotten. Attempting to hold on to my energetic, bubbly young self is a goal I aim for every day. I think it is especially important to never forget where you came from because if you do, then you will have nothing to measure your progress. You have no evaluation nor a comparison of your perception of the world we live in. Every child is born a blank slate, ready to be imprinted on by the society and the culture we are raised in. Every child is born with a wide array of potential, but it is the journey that we individually make that sets us each on to a unique path. In my picture I took recreating the original photo I described, I could not help but laugh at ridiculousness of the final product. Sure the photo was silly but it made me reflect yet again onto my past self; untouched by society and free to be anything in the world.

ⁱ *The Beginning of Life*. Dir. Estella Renner. Maria Farinha Filmes, 2016.

ⁱⁱ "Silver Lake Regional High in Kingston, MA | Student Body ..." N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Oct. 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Park, Julie J., and Stephanie H. Chang. "Understanding Students' Precollege Experiences With Racial Diversity: The High School as Microsystem." *Journal of College Student Development* 56.4 (2015): 349-363.