

Quinnly Raducha

[graducha@une.edu](mailto:graducha@une.edu)

Prof. Paterson

11 April 2025

### The Unfolding of Identity

"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken." Oscar Wilde.

Society, a word with many meanings. It can simply mean a group of people living together. But it can also mean; community, humanity, culture, and many other words that describe society as something positive. But when society imposes identities on individuals that one does not want. It is seen as something negative. Society imposes identities on people by providing us with labels that we use to categorize the people that we either meet, see on television, or see on social media. For example, celebrities we all see as how they represent themselves online, but it is up to us on how we perceive them.

In recent events, the mother of the famous youtube channel "8 Passengers" was arrested for child abuse. The followers of that channel were shocked, they had no idea that that was happening when the camera turned off, but that was because they showed us what they wanted us to perceive them as. What people watched online caused them to give the "8 passenger" family the identity of being the 'perfect' family. That identity we as a society imposed on them. But in this case the mother wanted to showcase her family in a positive light so we didn't see the negative. The mother getting arrested showed people that we as a society labeling this family the way we did was not true and that just because society imposed the identity of a perfect family does not mean it is true.

When we accept an imposed identity, we are acknowledging and adopting the identity others assign us. It could be based on characteristics like ethnicity, nationality, or perceived roles. An example of that is a person being expected to act a certain way because of their gender. Now, it depends on who you are if you decide to accept what identity you have been given, or to steer away from that identity. When we reject an imposed identity, we disagree or disassociate ourselves from the identity others are trying to give us. A large part of steering away from an imposed identity is self-discovery. When you are able to define your own identity and express how you disagree with what identity you have been given, you are rejecting that forced identity.

In the essay “We Liked You Better Fat: Confessions of A Pariah,” Patrick Stump deals with social judgment of him leaving Fall Out Boy to become a solo artist. Throughout the essay Stump talks about how he dealt with the hate from fans who did not like him because they were all stuck on who he was at eighteen years old. At eighteen, Fall Out Boy produced an album that did really well. But when he wanted to start a career as a solo artist, people did not like that, and they liked him the way he was when he was a part of the band. As Stump says, “The reality is that for a certain number of people, all I’ve ever done, all I ever will do, and all I ever had the capacity to do worth a damn was a record I began recording when I was 18 years old.” Stump also talks about how he had been going through a hard time and ended up gaining a lot of weight but ended up losing the weight and was excited to get on stage and show them the man he is proud of. However, he did not expect the reaction he received from fans: “What I wasn’t prepared for was the fervor of the hate from people who were ostensibly my own supporters (or at least supporters of something I had been part of).” He dealt with the hate of people saying, “We liked you better fat.” This essay represents how Stump had to deal with this new identity in the public eye where people made him feel not good enough, rather than dealing with it behind

closed doors where he was proud of his new and improved self. Being in the public eye has the power to change how you see yourself.

In “Born a Crime” by Trevor Noah, He highlights the struggle of navigating a racially divided society. But, rather than accepting the limitations that he has to fit into one category, he resists that categorization and embraces the fact that he has a unique position, which does not fit perfectly into either side of the racial divide. In the essay, Noah supports how life will force you to pick a side at one point in your life: "But the real world doesn't go away. Racism exists. People are getting hurt. And just because it's not happening to you, doesn't mean it's not happening. And at some point you have to choose; black or white, pick a side. You can try to hide from it. You can say, oh I don't take sides, but at some point, life will force you to pick a side” (Noah, 2016). Throughout Noah’s “Born a Crime,” he resists the categorization that society is giving him and that leads him through a journey of self-discovery. Noah's relationship with his mother, Patricia, is a large theme. “My mom did what school didn't. She taught me how to think.” (Noah, 2016) He shows how love can encourage self-growth by teaching people lessons about others' humanity and creating relationships in which people can fulfill their potential.

After these readings I was able to see the imposed identity I have been given in my life. I am the oldest daughter in my family, that alone comes with expectations of my identity as it is. As the oldest daughter I took on more responsibilities than my sister, strived for perfection in everything, I never got in trouble or grounded, I remained well behaved. I’ve never asked my mom for help with my homework, or needed my dad to remind me to study for a test, while my sister was the opposite. They gave me the identity of having this type A personality and sometimes do not see past that. While I agree I love being independent and knowing that I can handle things myself, the given identity my parents gave me has a negative side. The negative is

that they assume I always have it all under control and don't need their help, but sometimes it is the opposite.

On the other hand, my parents never gave me any idea that I couldn't do whatever I wanted to do, or be whomever I wanted to be. This type of support they gave me shaped me into who I want to be today, which is a Formula 1 journalist. Throughout the years of my dream to work in Formula 1, I have dealt with the shocked answers of people who I shared my dream with. Most of them are taken back by what I have said and always ask how that started. While it does not bother me to answer the question of how that dream got started, the stunned looks on peoples faces are what makes me question my dream. Women in motorsport is not something as common as seeing a man in motorsport. A part of me wants to change that, I want to be a woman in a male dominated sport. Only recently a Formula 1 team hired a woman race engineer, she is now the first women race engineer in formula 1 and it is 2025. Most boys my age, if I ever mention Formula 1, will start asking me questions about the sport, not in a way that they are interested in but in a way that they want to test my knowledge as if they don't expect a woman to be interested in the sport. "What does DRS stand for?", "Do you watch it for the guys?" "Are there any female journalists in the sport?" When I look back on these questions I think of how different it would be if it was a man standing in front of them sharing their dream. Women in motorsport are labeled as people who are not fit to be in what is called a "Male dominated sport" these labels have affected my identity today. They make me question if I will be able to achieve my dream of working in motorsport. Being able to relate to these readings showed me how almost all of us are given an identity throughout our lives.

**Sources:**

Noah, Trevor. Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood

Spiegel & Grau, 2016

Stump, Patrick. We Liked You Better Fat: Confessions of A Pariah

Alternative Press, 2012