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Assignment: Writing Example (From my FHS 1500-042 class this term)

My naiveté and curiosity about the human form usually got the best of me. The first time it did, I was four years old. Sadly enough, I don't even remember what we were doing when we got caught "being bad." I do remember I was in the clubhouse of my friend who was a little girl my age when "it" happened. I am certain she was a "she" and that fact seemed to intensify the "badness" of the situation.

I imagine it started with something like, "You're a girl and I am too. Does that mean we look exactly the same?" I have no idea if we were touching each other. I think I had my pants off, but recall no lecherous thoughts. I only have this vague sensation of curiosity. Plain, simple, childish curiosity.

Then her mother walked in, suddenly and soundlessly appearing as if by teleportation. The sound that came out of her mouth is all I confidently remember. It was like nine hundred thousand fingernails scratching down a chalkboard. I don't remember what we were doing when my world exploded in a screech, startling me so badly I almost peed my pants - pants that I may or may not have had on at that moment.

The next thing I remember is sitting on my bed worriedly as my father paced the small confines of my bedroom. At that point, I still didn't know what I had really done, but I did know that, whatever it was, I was in super big trouble. My father stopped in front of me and I cranked my head back to look up at him. I think he remained standing to add to the intimidation.

The lecture that was to follow his pacing was something I would never understand in my four-year-old mind. However, when I was fifteen – and still very curious, but uneducated, about the human body – I would be making out with my boyfriend and from some ethereal space, I would hear my father’s words landing in my brain with a lecture energy unlike anything I had ever cognitively experienced.

For a very long time, I couldn’t place where the words were coming from and it wasn’t until 2006 – 32 years after the incident and 18 years after I first started recalling his words – that the memory came back to me in a therapy session and I discovered that my seemingly innate sense of being fundamentally flawed and broken stemmed from that day in the clubhouse and the resulting lecture. My father was doing his very best to be a loving father and wanted desperately to guide me toward a good, clean life and to be a morally upstanding young woman. However, because I had no idea what I had done wrong or why it was wrong, I equated the situation to meaning my natural curiosity was evil and therefore, *I* must be evil too. And, if I were evil, then I was seriously very broken.

In the process of healing this thinking pattern, I’ve done years of body-centered, experiential counseling and emotional release therapies. One of the mentors with whom I counseled and trained on this path was a person in whom I had the utmost trust. Often times I would ignore my own sense of ethics and moral right/wrong and listen to her and follow her words. Frequently, I would find myself frustrated because I was following her example and listening to her words, instead of my own.

She touted, “The best way to live life is to be 100% accountable, 100% transparently honest and 100% responsible for your own life.” I bent myself inside out to live as she was instructing me and *seemed* to be doing by example. I was following her example to gain her

approval only to discover, seven years into the training, that she was not at all living up to anything she was teaching. The very things she would berate me about were the very things she was doing. She was being dishonest. She was being secretive and she was living completely without accountability. When I discovered that I had been framing myself around someone who was living so unethically, I experienced a complete dissolution of all that I thought to be right/wrong.

This experience left me in the place where I started when I began training with her – Angie, you've *got* to follow your own knowing.

These two situations are seemingly unrelated. However, interestingly enough, in writing this paper, I now see the correlation. Both experiences surround my own innate knowing. In the first incident, I almost instantaneously discovered that I *couldn't* trust myself because my innate curiosity got me into serious trouble. This particular learning experience most closely matches with Erickson's Psychosocial Theory (Santrock, pg 21-22) especially because it addresses how the early childhood years of 3-5 is where the child is learning about initiative versus guilt. I can confidently state that, in this situation, my initiative resulted in huge, lifelong guilt.

Through the second experience, I learned over a very long period of time how important it is to trust myself. In a way, this experience has unwound my childhood experience and I don't find it at all coincidental that this childhood memory surfaced in the middle of my training with this woman. This experience in my adulthood most closely reflects Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Santrock, pg 26). This theory states that development is based on a combination of behavior, cognition and environment. Bandura extensively researched observational learning which is learning by emulating an example. I *was* learning by example and emulating that example. I just didn't realize the example was a fraud.