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Finding your identity at a young age is something every teen struggles with. The Ages of 10 through 18 are the most difficult in my opinion, coming from an 18 year old. Everyone has the thought that the person next to you is judging you. You find yourself Comparing yourself to others along with trying to just fit in. All things around us brand an impact on us even if we think they do not. Where we live, and who we hang around affects us way more than anyone could understand. Our physical and virtual environments are two of the most impactful categories when coming to find your identity.

My physical environment has played a big part in who I am . My city, Lorain, has shaped my outlook on life, but it does not define me. A personal encounter I had at my job with an associate is a perfect example of how someone could view you just based on where you come from. I was asked what school I attended, I responded with Clearview High School in Lorain. The girl was quick to judge me with an unpleasant look on her face as Lorain is known for crime, drugs and even considered “ghetto”. Living in Lorain has desensitized me. Things that shouldn't be considered normal are normal in my eyes. It is a recurring subject: drugs, shootings, and violence, but with that being said it has made me more aware or what one would say “woke.” Where I am from has made me realize there is more to life than just “the streets,” and most of all more than just trying to fit in.

Kids my age are in and out of jail. They think it is cool to flaunt weapons and drug use. No one wants to go out and just enjoy what's around us, like Lake Erie. Being by the lake has shaped me in a way. The lake is a big part of me and forever will be. From a young age I would look for beach glass, build sand castles, and now go there with friends making those forever memories. I would even refer to the lake as my safe place. It lets my mind wander away from the commotion that is within my city.

My virtual environment has established a big role in my identity as well. Social Media is one of the main focuses in everyday life of teenagers all over the world. Just like the pressures associated with a physical environment, being a young female while having social media can influence you to become someone you are not. Many women create this model image of who they need to be to please the eye. Instagram, facebook, snap chat, tiktok and other platforms are full of photoshopped perfect girls with perfect lives that take a toll on one's mind to base your own life off of pictures. I have found myself doing that exactly. During the Summer of 2021 I went through a big change in my life: I had medical issues that resulted in major changes to my body. I began to compare myself to others on social media, it even got to the point where I had to get off of all platforms of the internet to try and stop myself from having thoughts that I needed to be perfect. That phase in my life shaped me to become better than all those perfect lives captured into a fake image.

Your identity is something that forms within you throughout your whole life. Your environment changes, you're around new people everyday, your identity is sculpted more and more each day. Where you come from will never define who you are. How you were raised doesn't characterize you if you do not want it to. Humans are capable of change. We see it everyday. You prosper off of the lessons of your life. You are the one who forms you into you.