Khyatee Desai

**Partner Assignment**

Going into this assignment, I was fairly anxious. I had this preconceived idea that conversation between Jed and I was going to be forced and awkward. I wondered what we could possibly talk about for an entire hour. As I knew we would be talking about our social identities, I wondered how I could possibly relate to this white, straight man on the topic of our identities.   
 Immediately as I met his eyes across Bert’s however, I felt a wave of relief as he motioned me over. I gauged that Jed probably had anxieties about similar things before we met up, and that situations are only awkward if you make them awkward, so I began to feel at ease once we started talking.

From our conversation, I learned that Jed is an extremely friendly guy, and a very attentive listener. My fear that our differing social identities would make the conversation stunted was immediately quelled when I realized that this fact gave us all the more to talk about. We talked about what its like to wake up and live life as a queer woman of color, and a straight white man respectively. We bonded over a mutual love and admiration for our families. Jed’s eyes lit up just a bit brighter as he explained the close bond he shares with his younger sister. I was surprised to find that the conversation did not feel forced at all; on the contrary, the only forced aspect was that we kept getting lost on tangents and would have to return to our assignment sheet to address the next question being asked.

Despite the easy flow of our conversation, the differences in our social identities did become evident to me. I gained a lot of insight on what it’s like to live a life free of worry about the color of your skin or the person who you love. Jed acknowledged the idea that its very easy to be blind to the privileged social identities that one holds in society. I hope that perhaps I gave him some insight into the realities of being different and the feelings of isolation that can come from having marginalized identities. I really appreciated that he was open to listening and learning from the experiences I had to share.

Going forward, I think the conversation I shared with Jed will definitely stick with me. I have never had the opportunity to hold such a conversation with someone so different from me, and I don’t think I’ve ever gained so much insight from a conversation before. I think the listening/ communication skills I practiced with Jed will definitely come in use for the remainder of this year and into the next.