My identity has been changing and developing throughout my entire life. After closely analyzing the various aspects of my cultural identity it became apparent that my identity is dynamic and created in spurts overtime through communication and social interactions. There are many different types of identities that apply to me and my upbringing which exemplifies the fact that identities are multiple. My unique cultural identity has had a big impact on my life, is continuously evolving, can be challenging at times, and shaped me into the person that I am today.

 Many aspects of my identity play a major role in my day to day life. The first important identity that impacts my life is age. Being 22 has its advantages such as being able to vote and drink alcohol, but it also means that there are cultural norms, set by society, that I must adhere to. These norms range from how I should dress and present myself to how I should behave in public.

 The next identity that plays the biggest role in my life is my personal identity. This is who I see myself as which drastically influences how I act every day of my life. My self identity effects my mindset, how I act is determined by who I think I am, how I view myself.

 Throughout my life I have had a strong religious identity. My parents raised me to be a catholic from birth and being baptized, to my first communion as a child, and finally to my confirmation at my church as a teenager. One relic that I wear everyday is a cross that is on my necklace. My cross nonverbally communicates my religious identity to anyone who sees it. My religious identity was formed by what was preached to me, which also affected my values and how I think.

 Finally, my regional identity has an impact on who I am as a person. I take a lot of pride in small regions that I have lived in such as my hometown and Morgantown. I communicate this identity everywhere that I go both verbally and nonverbally through my various sports jerseys.

 My cultural identity has continued to evolve over the course of my life. This evolving happens in spurts so I evolve and stay that way for a while before evolving again. A great example of how my identity evolves over time is age. My age identity evolved numerous times before it got to where it is today. Things that used to be socially acceptable now are not and the opposite is true as well. For example drinking underage is illegal and frowned upon but now it is a cultural norm and legal. When I was very young my mom bought all of my clothing, as I got older I began going with my mom to pick some of my clothes, now I live on my own and buy all of my own clothes. I was not just born able to drive to a store and buy clothes for myself, but over time as I got older I evolved multiple times developing the ability to buy clothes, and the style that I have today.
 I learned the hard way that sometimes it takes an extremely negative event to evolve my identity. When I was young I had a low to average amount of national pride, but this drastically changed in just one day. I was in 8th grade when the attack on the Twin Towers occurred on 9/11. Living only 20 minutes away and being able to see the smoke from the terrorist attack from my hometown, as well as having friends who lost parents in the building was devastating. The amount of help and support that the entire nation gave to this problem was extremely eye opening to me and gave me a great sense of national pride. This event drastically evolved my national identity and was the main reason that it developed into what it is today.
 My class identity also evolved over the last 22 years that I have been alive. When I was young I had no income but I was fully supported by my parents in an upper middle class family. Growing up I had good sports equipment, clothes, and various status symbols that were part of my identity. After highschool was over my parents stopped giving me money and I had to get a job to pay for college and all of my expenses. It is safe to say that with a part-time income mixed with the debt that I am acquiring through student loans my standard of living has drastically changed. I am working hard and hoping that this is just a speed bump in my identity, and after I graduate the next evolution spurt will occur in the form of fulltime employment and paying off the tens of thousands of dollars of debt that out of state tuition has accrued. All of the evolutions throughout my life have added to my overall identity and will also contribute to my identity in the future.

 An aspect of my identity that experienced the most challenges was my regional identity. Before coming to Morgantown for college, the only place I had ever lived was my hometown in Northern New Jersey. I had a very strong sense of pride for my hometown and state so leaving and moving by myself to West Virginia was a culture shock to say the least. This transition in culture is a perfect example of the U-curve theory before I came to WVU I was excited and unsure what to expect. Upon arrival I experienced culture shock, living on my own and experiencing the wild and wonderful, beer and football loving culture was a lot to take in. Now that I am a senior at WVU I have adapted to the way of life here and it has formed a major part of my identity. It was challenging at first because my original regional identity was being confronted by a new culture and also some negative stereotypes of New Jersey that I was previously unaware of. On numerous occasions people from the state of West Virginia let me know that Jersey is a terrible place that smells bad, even without ever visiting it. Also people stereotype and assume that people from New Jersey are all incompetent guidos much like the cast of the television show The Jersey Shore. Having to hear these negative incorrect stereotypes was challenging because I had a very strong regional identity, but it helped develop who I am today and now I have many friends from this state.

 Looking back, my identity is always changing and was shaped through my past experiences. Before moving to West Virginia I was oblivious to the negative stereotypes of my home state, and I was lacking a knowledge of other cultures. Since the challenging move, my identity has grown and I am much more self-aware. Experiencing people making uninformed stereotypes about my home state has also made me more culturally sensitive. I also feel more understanding and I judge people on their actions, instead of just jumping to conclusions based on what people say.

 In conclusion, there are multiple aspects that make up my overall identity and play a big role in my life. My identity is formed over time and evolves based on events and life experiences. Even negative challenges in my life can yield a positive result and contribute to my overall identity. Finally, after closely analyzing several aspects of my cultural identity it became clear that identity is a continuously evolving developmental process that makes up who I am and how I view myself.

Written Assignment #1
Mike Wiese
Comm 316: Intercultural Communication
Section: 002 (T,R 2:30-3:45)
10/2/2012