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Cycle of Socialization

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### Two Cultures in One

“Preservation of one’s own culture does not require contempt or disrespect of other cultures” (Cesar Chaves). Growing up in a place where there's misrepresentation and stereotypes towards my ethnicity made it difficult to understand where I fit in societal expectations on both sides as well as how this affected me and my norms.

Living in an area where you don’t feel comfortable creates a challenge within yourself. Going to a school in which the majority of the people there are different from you also creates this challenge. You see the barrier in between one another. To further explain, the “barrier” in between one another is the feeling of discomfort. But how is it possible if a barrier continues to exist? The first step is to acknowledge it. According to a TEDx talk by Raquel Pérez who studied the misrepresentation of people from the Latinx community in mainstream media mentions, “When you turn on the TV and see a Latin American character portrayed, they’re commonly viewed as drug dealers, illegal immigrants, or just one-dimensional characters. Growing up I would see this. I would see the world I was brought up in. I would see the people that I know and I would think to myself, how can culture be accurately represented? How can stereotypes possibly be fought if mainstream media tells us differently?...we clearly lack a seat at the table. There is not enough representation in front or behind the camera.” Growing up in a similar way, I could see this. This made me understand how racism and stereotypes work together. To further explain, my day-to-day life has been impacted and changed due to the stereotypes and racism

around me. As a kid I was put into school without knowing any English and was expected to fit and grow along with other kids despite not being able to understand one another. Although it was easier for me to just learn English instead of everyone else learning Spanish, it was expected from me to be “at the top”, or understand much more or much less than the others. As a small kid I had to change my normal to fit with others, to lose my accent, to be quieter, and learn to dress differently. This forced me to change who I was so society would accept me. I realized my voice was made weaker than others, it was made to be more dull and ignored. This made me realize that I hold a valuable place in this society. In which I can choose to change my true self, or create a new perspective for society. Although gaining me a better perspective, these issues starting from a young age affected me in a way in where I no longer felt “fit” or comfortable in my community. No one, especially a small kid should feel this way in the first place.

Next, the media is known to be one of this generation's power, but with power there are consequences. Due to this, the media made me feel the racism around me, making me want to look and be more like, “the white girls,” giving me negative beauty standards. As a latina I should have curvy hips and look “thicker” but being surrounded by different people made me have mixed feelings about myself. I was left wondering how I should dress and wondering why the clothes didn't fit my body type. At the same time I have the pressure to look like a copy and paste latina with long black hair, perfect makeup and a perfect body. As the media portrays, latinas are considered “spicy” and curvy, seeing this affected me in wondering how I should act and portray myself. Due to this stereotype, the latinx community is being over-sexualized. Latina women on TV are usually portrayed to have thicker, curvy bodies. They're loud, have an accent, and don't have a proper education. Latino men in tv are usually cholos, drug dealers. That again, did not get an education. Associated with “the bad people”, “loud people”, or gangs.

Which gives not only kids but adults the incorrect image of latinos. This makes it seem like the latinx community is dangerous. Making society create their own judgements and stereotypes. The media time after time continues to portray the latinx community as its stereotypes. A paper on “Latino Stereotypes in Television” by a Eastern Washington University student Micheal Hayes states that, “Mastro, BehmMorawitz, and Kopacz further elaborated that Latinos and Latinas are restricted to a small number of parts including, and often limited to, comic-relief characters, criminals, law enforcers, and sex objects (2008). These stereotypes in television are a subtle form of racism and can directly lead to judgements by Caucasian TV viewers and possibly others who don’t know any better simply believing Latinos and Latinas to be exactly what is portrayed on TV. These portrayals can also lead to low self-esteem by Hispanic English-language TV viewers”. This continues to show that these stereotypes, although small, are a big issue. The latinx community is repeatedly failed by the media. Although stereotypes continue to grow without the media, we can see that it has a huge impact on people's mindset. Not only does it affect how other cultures and races see us, but how we see ourselves.

In this community it is important to accept and acknowledge others for them to feel comfortable. Growing up here it’s been hard for me to find a feeling of comfort due to the misrepresentation of my culture and race. As shown on “Precious Knowledge” documentary, many Chicano students felt similar before implementing the Mexican-American Studies or Raza studies. Many before this program struggled with stereotypes and racism influencing one another. With this program they were able to create a safe space within themselves. They were able to learn more about their culture, helping them feel more connected within themselves, as well as creating a bond with one another. Yet, still learning about the cultures created here in the U.S. This program is a great example of how a group of people were able to find a feeling of

belonging despite the stereotypes and racism. Despite the area having a larger latinx community than other areas, they still faced many of these issues. As stated before, these issues create discomfort within yourself. As someone who has experienced this first hand, I want to be there for my community in times like these. In where no child should be put in a place where they don't feel welcomed and different. Although I am not sure how I will be able to do this, my first step is to make sure I can create a safe environment for the people around me, in hopes for it to spread and continue to others.

To conclude, fitting into society isn't as easy. As the media continues to rapidly change we can help change stereotypes and misrepresentation. But, as of now stereotypes in the media give us a fake view on latinos vs how we are. Growing, misrepresentation was a big issue, although now there's a larger latinx community shown, the racism and stereotypes shown in the past will never erase itself. This taints my people's reputation and opportunities. I want the readers to think back to the beginning of this essay. I want you to look at the people around you. Look at your community. Who helped this community grow? Who is truly the base of this community? Ask yourself again, should I contribute to these stereotypes and racism?