

Personal Culture Reflection Paper

Alicianna Flores

Old Dominion University

I grew up mixed race. My mother is Caucasian, and my father is from Mexico. By the time I reached high school I ended up leaning a great deal more towards by Mexican side and embraced my Mexican heritage due to racism I encountered from both Caucasian peers and even family. Being a member of this racial group, there were various customs, beliefs, values, and behaviors that I was exposed to. One that I am especially proud of is the high importance that is placed on family. Celebrations such as birthdays and holidays are seen as times to spend time with family and are occasions that are anticipated with excitement. Hard work is also extremely valued, both physical (jobs that require physical exertion like construction) and mental (educational achievement).

Something that I am not proud of is that a common practice or behavior is machismo, which is basically the idea that the man is the one who dominates the relationship, instead of it being 50-50 say like many other cultures. This is something that is problematic because it basically marginalizes women in the home by taking away both their power of choice and power of expression. Alcohol use is also something that is common and basically ingrained into the culture, which is evident even looking a popular regional music video. Something that I also am not proud of is that growing up I noticed that this group commonly shared a prejudice against African American individuals. I remember that many of my friends and I myself were told to not date African American men. In the overall Latino culture colorism is something that does exist and is prevalent not only among Mexicans but other Latin American countries. The ideal image of a partner or even a baby is white skin, straight hair, and green or blue eyes.

I grew up in the lower socioeconomic category. This means that I grew up having little income or wealth to buffer against negative impacts such as health issues, loss of a job, etc. The lower socioeconomic class has similar values and beliefs as my racial/cultural group, putting a

increased importance on both family and hard work. As I stated before, these are values that I particularly proud of. A behavior that I am not particularly proud of is that individuals who are in the lower class at times sometimes decide to join gangs and succumb to violence. The main reason for this occurring is usually that the teens who join these gangs do not have a strong support system when it comes to their home life. At times it can be seen as their only way to succeed, which is of course not true. This is problematic because the criminal activity that gang members partake in leads to increased incarceration rates. The incarcerated population has historically been one of the most marginalized groups in the United States, and also face stigma associated with their status even when they leave prison. I would still consider myself as belonging to the same status. I am only nineteen. I am married with two young kids, but not much formal work experience. After graduating next month this should hopefully help my family move up to the upper low socioeconomic status. There are challenges associated with this status such as money pressures and being limited in opportunities like moving to better areas or even going on vacations.

When it comes to ability status, I was blessed to have not have a disability. The values and beliefs that I am proud of that are associated with this group would be seeing productiveness as something positive. A belief/ behavior that I am not proud of is at times people in this group see disabled people as lazy. I believe that this helps marginalize disabled people and creates a stigma surrounding disabilities in general. The dominant religious perspective that I grew up with was Roman Catholic. Beliefs related with this religion is that while Jesus died for your sins one needs to live a good life according to the rules in the bible because you will be judged when you die. Something that I do not agree with in my religion is that everyone is born as a sinner because they carry the mark of original sin. I do not believe that a baby who has done nothing

bad in their life would be considered a sinner. I grew up as a girl/woman. My culture is one that holds strong gender roles, therefore there was quite a ridged set of beliefs that my culture held for a woman growing up. My culture strongly believes that the woman's job is to take care of the home. This means cooking, cleaning, and childrearing all falls into this domain. As I mentioned before, the idea that men have a greater say than women when it comes to deciding things is something that I do not agree with. I believe that the women should also have a say in decisions, and that there can be two heads of the household not just one. As I previously stated, this viewpoint leads to marginalization of women in society, leaving their needs and wants unheard.

Due to both to the ethnic group and religion that I grew up with, homosexuality was something that was looked down upon. It is seen as a sin, and something that should not be accepted. This at times to cause strain on the family bonds that also hold such a great importance in both my religion and ethnic group. I know a family friend who got kicked out of his house when his parents found out that he was gay. After about a year and a half they started talking to him again. Recently I saw him and his fiancée and a family cookout. I was happy to see how the family bonds were placed above those religious/ethnic views. I personally believe that love is a positive thing, and that it does not matter if it is something that is between a male and female, two males, or two females. I personally feel that religious views are often used to marginalize homosexual individuals and deny them rights such as the right to marry, the right to adopt children, and more.

In the racial/cultural identity development model, which is considered one of the most widely developed models, I would consider myself as being at stage five. This is because although I am proud of my background, I understand that as a person I am more than my racial identity. I am many things, such as a wife, a mother, and a student. I am able to understand that

there is not superior race or culture, and that no race or culture is to be considered bad or good. Each group has their own positive and negative aspects. In order to become a culturally competent human service professional, I strongly believe that I need to become more thoroughly educated on the backgrounds of many racial/cultural groups. There are many groups that I still have yet to learn deeply about, such as middle eastern and Filipino groups. I plan to do this by doing research as well as taking the time to talk with individuals and learn about things like their beliefs and values.