

Assignment Option 3 (Diversity Interview)

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For this interview, I chose to speak with my friend, Stephanie Fernandez-Delgado. Stephanie is an 18-year-old Hispanic female from Costa Rica who uses she/her pronouns and identifies as gay. I chose to talk with Stephanie for this assignment due to our differences in ethnic groups. Based on our friendship, I know my friend is deeply passionate about diversity and its impacts on individuals, making her the ideal person to speak with. During our conversation, we discussed her family's history, which has shaped her identity, as well as her perspective on diversity and its influence on her life.

Starting off the interview, I thanked Stephanie for her time and commitment to speaking with me on this assignment's topic. With an icebreaker, I began with the basic question of: "What does diversity mean to you?" Responding, she said, "It means to be different and embracing those differences with other people. I.e. peers. It's like a salad." I found the phrase, "It's like a salad" to be a unique way to describe diversity. Just like different components of a salad, each person adds something to the mix, and when put all together, they create a harmonious whole. Growing up Costa Rican, Stephanie experienced negative struggles of being Hispanic. To further clarify, I asked her, "What are common challenges that come to you?" Answering pensively, she said, "Not getting taken seriously—people undermine my intelligence." Different from my experience growing up Asian, where the stereotype is that I am smart in certain subjects, this interviewee emphasized the positive use of her knowledge from my follow-up question of "Does being Hispanic affect your academic life?" Yes, it did. Stephanie found that because she is bilingual, certain things come easier to her. Answering the question, she said, "In english, for example when it comes to deciphering texts, and I don't know, I can look at the Latin roots and make out the word that I don't know based on the word in Spanish". Continuing, the interviewee spoke on her need to strive in her academia, faulting her culture's values:

Because of my family's hispanic values, there's a lot of pressure to succeed academically, especially if you look at my family's history, my parents came here it was a big sacrifice, so I feel a responsibility to pay them back so that they are proud of me and wouldn't regret that they moved to a whole new country and left everything behind.

From this response, it seems that Stephanie has experienced non-material culture, as her family's values have impacted her psychologically. The "values" she speaks on are what I learn to be successful, working hard, and self-invention. As I carry on with the interview, she applies those values in other parts of her answers.

Aside from her academic life, I wanted to know about diversity affects her work. So, I asked, "How might this type of diversity affect them in a workplace in a positive and a negative way?" In a positive light, Stephanie is proud to be bilingual when someone who is Hispanic and non-English speaking comes into her work, she can aid in talking with them in Spanish. This helps the process of the customer putting in their order smoothly. She added that she feels nice to be able to help and see the relief on the customer's face when they realize there is another Spanish speaker in the restaurant. In this question, we also touched base on other parts of her identity, including her gender and sexuality. While being gay does not affect her in the workplace as she does not outright tell people when they meet her, she noted that "As a woman, I get hit on; its unwanted attention and I'm just trying to do my job." While she enjoys her work as a hostess, the unsolicited attention she receives reflects a form of gender stratification, making her feel inferior. In the next few questions, we focused on how her race and sexuality cause stereotypes to occur.

Earlier, Stephanie mentioned that her family's Hispanic values have influenced the way she moves in her academic life. To discover if it affects her other parts of her life, I asked, "Does being gay cause a disruption in your Hispanic identity?" In the sexual orientation part of her identity, Stephanie talks about the internalized homophobia stemming from stereotypes. She says

annoyed, “[When] talking to any person of the opposite gender, they automatically think I’m into them. Because of the negative stigma surrounding the gay community it causes a lot of internalized shame. I keep it very hidden.” Adding on, she says that due to the Hispanic standards, it is very looked down upon to be gay. Her family is not very accepting of her identity, and “It causes the two aspects to clash.” Stephanie sometimes experiences racism for being Hispanic. Answering my question of “Do you receive any stereotypes for being Hispanic?” she says, “When I say I’m Hispanic, people I assume I’m Mexican. It’s funny when you’re trying to be funny. But not old white men. It’s frustrating because they skip over a huge part of my identity”. While Stephanie can tolerate jokes made from others of the same race because they understand the struggles of being Hispanic, those made from someone different from her are not accepted. After interviewing my friend, I thanked her again for coming to school and speaking with me.

Reflecting on this interview and its questions and answers, I feel that I have learned more about my friend of three years. Being a gay female Hispanic has not only affected her work life, but also her academics. The three traits have influenced her life tremendously, from the need for success in school to internalized homophobia, Stephanie Fernandez-Delagado, an 18-year-old who grew up in a Costa-Rican household holds the values of her family close to her heart.

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References

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