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(CUNY)

CLDV 100

Introduction to Multicultural Studies

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## OUTLINE

For the final paper, it will be surrounding **Prejudice, Race, and Ethnicity**. Discussing the topic of prejudice is much more in-depth and how it is engraved within American society. The reason being I've experienced prejudice at first hand, and so has my family, so I believe I can tie in even real-life events within my paper.

## OUTLINE OF FINAL PAPER

-Introduction to prejudice, race, ethnicity

(Thorough explanation/ definition for each.)

-Being born/ raised in a country that has racism embedded within its system/ how it affects children of different races/ ethnicities growing up.

(Plus experiences of others.)

-GROWING UP FIRST GENERATION AMERICAN

- Mini interview with family regarding the topic's

(Along statistics of Prejudice within NYC)

- Finishing thoughts + conclusion.

- RESPONSE PART OF FINAL

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FINAL

### **Introduction**

Ethnicity and race will forever be tied into a person's life no matter what country or culture they were raised within. It is the essence of one's being, for it's what people are first presented with. The facial features of an ethnic person hold Millenials of history, their culture having been carried throughout history to the present time. Though such things should not matter in the treatment of people, it all comes into play in a country that's notoriously done everything in its power to hinder the lives of people of color. Prejudice becoming a norm within American society, creating a culture surrounding racism leading to self-hatred and disproportionating minorities.

### **Prejudice**

"Prejudice is an unjustified or incorrect attitude (usually negative) towards an individual based solely on the individual's membership of a social group." ( Dr. Saul McLeod, 2008) Having an already set bias towards a group of people is something many people develop from a very young age. In spite of that, plenty of people don't act on these set of thoughts, yet there are a handful who go out of their way to spit bigotry at those who are different. Having a preconceived opinion on people is nothing but harmful, it can lead to innocent people being incarcerated, being followed in a shop, having the police called on innocent people walking, and a million other scenarios. Prejudice has been relevant since the beginning of history, though it expanded through European conquest.

## **Ethnicity & Race**

Ethnicity and race have always been mixed together, even though both have entirely different definitions. Ethnicity refers to one's ethnic group that shares culture, language, and religion. On the other hand, race is defined as people grouped by similar ancestry and features.

Ethnicity plays a pivotal role in everyone's life; it sets up a set of values and beliefs to go day by day. Allows individuals to find people who are like-minded and allow them to form bonds.

Race, depending on how you're raised, either matter's to you or doesn't. Though it can provide comfort to people to be surrounded by does who look like them and resemble their family. On the other hand, it can create a barrier between individuals, especially those who are ignorant and decide to separate themselves from others completely who don't resemble them.

## **Personal Experience Regarding Prejudice**

### **(How it can affect young minds.)**

I have been constantly reminded of my race and ethnicity; unwanted and unneeded commentary on my background had become a norm. Though my skin is lighter than my fellow family member's, it seems that was not enough to keep the preconception of my people away from me. The first time I experienced prejudice has been deeply engraved into my head, being used almost as a warning for the rest of my life. Me being a young and naive eight year old had believed no one was different; we were all cut from the same stone, which was quickly broken by the comments a white woman had made towards me. "Had you been born with fairer skin, you would have been beautiful" Beautiful, I had thought I was already beautiful, that my caramel-like skin was pretty and carried the sun-kissed flavor of my ancestors. Was I supposed to be ashamed? That is what I asked myself, that my skin wasn't white like flour but rather dirty.

Had my mother lied to me when she called me gorgeous. The self-doubt that racially motivated comments cause children is horrendous and hardly ever addressed. Now at eighteen, whenever I get the chance, I remind my little cousins just how pretty they are. Their nose is not big, that the bump on it is just like our Mesoamerican ancestors, that their skin isn't dirty but a rich brown like caramel.

Being raised in a country that implements self-hatred into the mind of the young, who don't resemble the ideal American, has always been damaging. Prejudice against those who don't resemble you, who don't speak the same language as you, or follow the religious customs you have been raised with, does not require you to point out the difference and belittle them. When remarks about someone's ethnicity or race are demeaning, it's expected of them to brush it off. Nonetheless, creating a cycle of self-hatred and self-doubt. "Children are sensitive to and suffer the impacts of discrimination as young as 7 years old." (UC Riverside 2018) From a very young age, kids are victims of prejudice, coming face to face with the ugliness the world holds.

## **GROWING UP FIRST GENERATION AMERICAN**

Having been born First-generation American, I have been granted nothing but an abundance of blessings, as well as challenges. However, I would not have it any other way. Being born in the U.S., I have interacted with people from many different backgrounds. Growing fond of the melting pot that N.Y.C. is, many kids my age are first-generation. We are all trying to achieve the American dream our parents imagined for their children in such a vast city. Going through all the ups and downs this world has cast, we can find refuge in the idea that other children like yourself are going through the same ordeal.

Growing up a first-generation American, I believe it has given me a much more profound love for my ancestral roots and culture. It made me have a much deeper tie to my ethnicity, growing fond of all it has given me. I have learned how important one's ethnicity/race is to every individual and just how much value there is to connecting to your ancestral background. For this same matter, I can only hope for younger kids to never grow up in a place full of prejudice, instead a place that will allow them to grow their love for their race and ethnicity. That the color of their skin is just as beautiful as any others, that the way their nose curves and bumps is perfect, that their hair curly or wavy is breathtaking. For I had wished that as a young girl, I had not grown to hate the way my nose has a bump and that my brown skin was not dirty but as beautiful as caramel. After all, being first-generation means experiencing a whole new world that parents cannot help with understanding.

### **Mini Interviews w/ Family**

#### ***Interview #1***

My family has stories of cousins experiencing prejudice within their classrooms. A rather disheartening fact, yet relevant even within today's time. One of my cousins mentioned a specific story that was the most captivating. His name is Jorge C. He is 20 and attending college upstate. This story, in particular, took place when he was 16, within his high school.

#### **Question:**

In the past few years living in the U.S.A., specifically N.Y.C., have you been a target of prejudice, racial profiling, or any other form of racism/ discrimination due to your race/ ethnicity?

#### **Answer:**

*"Sadly, my answer is yes. It happened when I was 16, still in high school; I never expected it; hence my high school had a good amount of Hispanic kids. I was having chemistry class, one of the only classes I didn't have with any of my friends, so I sat in the back. This group of white guys surrounded me; one of them turned to me and asked, "Do you do track?" I was confused by the question, no I didn't do track in high school; I played soccer, one of the guys was in my team, so I was even more taken aback by the question. I tensed up and answered with a simple "no," the guy who had asked the question giggled and answered, "I think you should. Don't you Mexians run and hop to get here anyways." I don't condone what I did afterward, but I wouldn't change my reaction, which was an instant swing to his face. It was a spur-of-the-moment act; I was immediately taken over by anger and pretty shaken up. The expected happened.*

*I ended up in the Principal's office; I just stood there and I refused to apologize. What angered me the most was the Principle trying to sympathize with the guy, saying he didn't know it was offensive and I should apologize for reacting the way I did. Our parents were called, I still refused to apologize. Though it was clear his parents were as racist as their son, they didn't do or demand anything. My mother was vocal about how horrible it was to have the Principle side with the racist remarks the kid said, rather than expecting both of us to apologize to each other. That whole drama ended up in him switching classes and avoiding me in the halls.*

*I refuse to have racist remarks regarding my people be said without any consequence; the guy had it coming. I heard stories afterward of him saying racial remarks to the few black students within our school. Pretty sure it ended up in his expulsion.*

*I can't sit here and act like this didn't affect me; I can't sit here and act tough about the whole event. Because it genuinely hurt having that said to me. I don't mean to sound sensitive, but it did leave a bad taste in my mouth."*

Prejudice within schools is hardly addressed; hence most assume a school is a safe space for students. Though it is hard to think about, race and ethnic background still matter to particular students. As proven through my cousin's interactions, his ethnicity was targeted and belittled. Though his high school was predominantly white, one would assume that within the 21st-century, teenagers would be much more educated on other people's race/ ethnicity.

Racist jokes/ remarks have never been tolerated within N.Y.C. schools against their code of conduct, yet his Principles tried playing off the situation, as the kid was simply ignorant. However, can an individual truly be called ignorant when they live in one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world? It could be assumed he wanted to appear 'cool' in front of his friends, though when has it ever been deemed all right to make fun of someone.

The social interaction students might have could depend on the school's lack of diversity, allowing for the student to feel much more isolated. As well as allowing other students to feel entitled to giving the student different treatment, hence without a diverse group, students would most likely be narrow-minded. "In short, greater alignment between adolescents and the student body of their schools facilitates social integration, leads to more consistent self and social comparisons, and reduces opportunities for differential treatment (Bearman & Bruckner, 2001), and as a result, "effects" of adolescent characteristics can change in magnitude or even direction depending on their prevalence in the school." ("Schools, Peers, and Prejudice in Adolescence") Prejudice within an adolescent's life can be highly detrimental; though some might believe it can only affect a young child, the effects are just as severe. The feeling of isolation and depression might set in, which can lead to a teenager's academic life to suffer as well as their social life.

"When prejudice and discrimination occur in schools, it reinforces a normal social order teaching students that it is acceptable to discriminate against others."("Prejudice and Discrimination: The

Prominence and Effects in Schools") As my cousin mentioned, "I can't sit here and act like this didn't affect me; I can't sit here and act tough about the whole event. Because it genuinely hurt having that said to me." Prejudice within school grounds affects one's self-esteem and self-worth; it almost makes it an option for other students to do as well. Had my cousin not reacted the way he did, it is far more likely that the kid would have continued saying racist remarks to other students. Overall the lack of cultural diversity is no excuse for racist behavior, yet it can factor into the lack of awareness someone might have. After all, the more people one interacts with and learns from, the more knowledgeable and self-aware of those who surround you.

### ***Interview #2***

I have had stories told to me by uncles of being detained by police with no warrant nor reasoning, though one of my uncles had a much more serious encounter with the police. My uncle's name is Jaime A. He is 50 and has lived in NYC for the past 33 years. When he was 25, he was stopped in Roosevelt Ave. Station waiting for the 7 train to head towards work by two NYC police officers.

### **Question:**

In the past 25 years of living in the U.S.A, specifically NYC, have you been a target of prejudice, racial profiling, or any other form of racism/ discrimination due to your race/ ethnicity?

### **Response:**

*“Through the past 25 years, there have been a few instances where I believe I was genuinely being racially profiled due to my race/ ethnicity. Once when I was 30, I was pulled to the side on Roosevelt 71 st ave train station by a pair of (white) NYC police officers. They proceeded to tell me they had reason to believe I was either involved or affiliated with a gang. I admit that I had a*

*few tattoos, and during that time, discrimination against black and Latino men was at an all-time high, especially if they caught a glimpse of a tattoo. Though I denied any involvement, they insisted on stopping me and searching me. I did not want them to get mad or agitated, so I simply let them.*

*As the police officers turned me around, they kept patting me up and down, searching for any weapon they thought I had on me. They turned me around, and I caught a glimpse of another three men lined up on the wall. My heart sank, one Latino guy and two young black guys; they looked like teenagers. It was terrifying; they ended up taking us to the police department for about half the day. They cleared me of any suspicion and let me go; I went home defeated and lost out on a day of wages.”*

Though my uncle had the opportunity to leave this encounter safe and unharmed, the same cannot be said for thousands of Latino and Black men within the United States, though more specifically NYC. After he relived this moment, at the end, he told me, *"In all honesty to this day, I feel scared and uncomfortable whenever the police are present or near me. I know nothing happened to me, but you never know. I don't want to end up a statistic."* The idea of not feeling comfortable or safe around those meant to protect you is extremely disheartening. Though some might say times have changed, the amount of prejudice still embedded within the justice system is astronomical. The public gets news of men of color being wrongfully arrested or killed by the police year after year. As stated within "Black and Hispanic Men Perceived to Be Large Are at Increased Risk for Police Frisk, Search, and Force," “ Recent events have drawn public awareness to issues of police violence, and specifically, the relationship between citizens’ race and officers’ behavior... Although suspects perceived to be tall *or* heavy have increased risk of physical police punishment, suspects perceived as tall *and* heavy are at still greater risk and tall,

heavy, black and Hispanic men are at the greatest risk of all.” (*Black and Hispanic Men Perceived to Be Large Are at Increased Risk for Police Frisk, Search, and Force*) Arresting and targeting men based on them looking dangerous or threatening to police has always been a problem. Demonstrating the prejudice embedded so deeply within them significantly affects men of color who more than likely will fit into the "big and scary" stereotype society has created. After all, no slender white men will ever be deemed a risk to police officers. The idea that men of color are threatening is incredibly isolating; it leads POC to keep themselves away from any circumstance that might make them subject to police violence. Though NYC is a massive melting pot, I've seen how some family members avoid attending celebrations or parties in fear of a noise complaint being filed which has proven in many cases to escalate to arrests. Connecting to how cultural diversity and tolerance does not always lead to a safe space, as long as figures of authority in this instance police deem certain races/ ethnicities with hateful eyes.

### **Conclusion/ Final Thoughts**

Ethnicity and race will forever be tied into a person's life no matter what country or culture they were raised within. It is the essence of one's being, for people are first presented with it. The facial features of an ethnic person hold Millenials of history, their culture having been carried throughout history to the present time. From the color of one's skin to the bump on their nose. An individual's race and ethnicity will forever be tied to them. For this very reason, it is essential to be kind and loving to all those of different features and cultures than us. When being raised in such a culturally diverse city as N.Y.C., some forget that there are still people who hold prejudice towards those different. By sharing the story of some of my family members, I hope there will be a deeper understanding of just how stressful and traumatic being belittled for your ethnicity/ race

can be. For this same reason, I will always encourage everyone to be much more educated regarding every person's race and ethnicity, see beyond them and appreciate them fully.

### **RESPONSE (PAPER PART OF FINAL)**

The topic of Prejudice, Race, and Ethnicity interested me because of just how impactful each of those has been towards my life. Especially prejudice, after all, I spent my teenage years growing up in one of the most hateful times. A president who openly bashed my people, along with every other ethnic group within America, held power, and with his power, all those who thought and believed the same as him felt empowered. Mexicans were made out to be rapists, cartel controlled, criminals and thieves. Supporters of this horrendous person would openly harass and yell at Mexican workers. Though I would have loved to believe this was only occurring due to who was the president, this large sentiment towards my people has always been there.

Race and ethnicity will always come into play and always have; people will always see your skin color or an individual's ethnicity before anything else. As much as I and everyone else wish, this will never change. There are people who have been raised and conditioned to fear what is different, to generalize people and group them along with the worse they have heard.

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