



Exploring Gender Stereotypes of the Latinx Community in the US

COIL Final Project

Spring 2022

Group Conclusions

The Poet X (2018), written by Elizabeth Acevedo, presents the coming-of-age story of fifteen-year-old Xiomara Batista. The novel focuses on the journey of discovery and self-acceptance in which she embarks. Xiomara feels objectified and underappreciated and is desperately trying to stay afloat in the midst of a cultural and social environment that is oppressive and renders her silent. Xiomara's experiences are clearly enmeshed in the socially constructed dichotomy of the "good girl/bad girl". Her experiences with sexuality are marked by the concepts of sin and shame that her family and religion seems to impose on her. Through poetry, Xiomara finds her own voice and is finally able to rise above the limiting hindrances that surround her everyday life. This artistic expression empowers her and gives her a new sense of belonging.

The novel tackles a wide range of topics, but it especially delves into identity, sexuality, faith, and cultural stereotypes. The dichotomy of the "good/bad girl" is especially prevalent in a white American society that considers that Latinx girls are more prone to have sex and conceive children at earlier ages. Acevedo enhances her narrative style with the use of symbolic imagery that underscores some of the novel's core ideas and to express how harmful stereotypes are, even among the members of the same community. For instance, the notebook constitutes a crucial symbol: an allegorical representation of Xiomara's "soul" that provides her with a way to establish meaningful relationships and to express her feelings. *The Poet X's* structure consists of different short poems written in verse that end up crafting Xiomara's own personal diary. The way she writes the poems expresses how she is feeling and gives readers an insight into her mind.

Link to the Project

A **poster** focusing on sexual stereotypes/gender issues and their intrinsic relation to racism and prejudices:

[ACADEMIC POSTER - THE POET X -GROUP 4 - Presentaciones de Google](#)

Glossary

Definitions

Stereotypes: A generalized belief that applies to a community.

Objectification: Treating someone like an object and not a person.

Coming of Age: A journey made throughout adolescence in which one learns valuable lessons and individuality.

Alienation: The feeling of being isolated or alone.

Trust: Belief in the reliability of someone to be there for you.

Religion: Belief in a superhuman power.

Community: A group of people belonging to something.

In *The Poet X*

In *The Poet X*, Xiomara faces stereotypes regarding her identity as a Latina woman.

Xiomara faces objectification when men in school and in her town make sexual comments only about her body.

The entirety of *The Poet X* is a coming of age story, as Xiomara learns many things struggling through her teenage years.

Xiomara and Twin both experience alienation both at home and at school.

Xiomara struggles to find trust in people, specifically her mother.

Xiomara faces struggles with faith, especially because of Mami's persistence with acting 100% faithful all the time.

Xiomara often feels like she is not a part of a community, as her struggles seem very unique to her. Nobody in her family or in school really understands what it is like to be her.

Quotations

Stereotypes and Objectification:

Page 32, Questions I Have:

“Without Mami’s Rikers Island Prison-like rules, / I don’t know who I would be / when it comes to boys (...) / This stew of mixed-up ingredients: / partly flattered they think I’m attractive, / partly scared they’re only interested in my ass and boobs, and a good measure of Mami-will-kill-me fear sprinkled on top.

What if I like a boy too much and become addicted to sex / like Iliana from Amsterdam Ave.? / Three kids, no daddy around, / and baby bibs instead of a diploma hanging on her wall (...)

How does a girl like me figure out the weight / of what it means to love a boy?”

Quotations

Coming of Age:

Page 151, The Last Fifteen-Year-Old:

“My body was trouble. I had to pray the trouble out of the body God gave me. My body was a problem. (...) / I wanted to forget I had this body at all.”

Post-project Conclusions

Our project has proven useful to provide us with a better understanding of the Latinx culture in the US and all the stereotypes concerning this community as a whole and their individuals. The exploration of this perspective through *The Poet X* has been crucial to have an account of these issues and thus a starting point to discuss them in our group.

In a multicultural exchange, we have been able to remain open-minded regarding different stereotypes (specifically gender and sexual stereotypes) and how they change in the American/Spanish society. The analysis of this novel would not have been so enriching if the group members had not raised and tackled these stereotypes from their respective socio-historical contexts.

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