How stereotypes affect a Person

When being a first generation immigrant in America, it could be difficult for people like Hasan Minhaj and Alex Dang. **In the standup comedy on Netflix, *Homecoming King*, written and presented in 2017 by Minhaj, who was born and raised in Davis California, expresses that he feels generalized and stereotyped in his own culture. Minhaj feels that he can not fully be himself being a first generation immigrant and being a Muslim around people who do not believe in the same religion. Having expectations from his family and being held back from who he wants to be. Where as, Dang’s spoken word poem, *What Kind of Asian are You,* presented in 2014, communicates that he can not show his true self of being Chinese and Vietnamese in Portland Oregon, without being stereotyped into one type of Asian culture;** similarly, both men can share experiences that show others around them that their cultures are both meaningful no matter where you live, and that you can not generalize someone’s identity. Both Minhaj and Dang, show **how stereotypes affect a person** in their everyday life while the two formats explore both the differences and similarities of their experiences.

Hasan Minhaj found it hard fitting in with the kids around him in his childhood as a Muslim and a first generation immigrant in the United States. In the case of Minhaj’s stand up comedy *Homecoming King*, he explores topics including: racism, 9/11, language barriers, relationships, terrorism, identity, and family dynamics. Minhaj conveys in his standup that his father had once told him; “Hasan, whatever you do, do not tell people you’re Muslim or talk about politics.” (Minhaj, *Homecoming King*) This incident put a big impact on them and made Minhaj look at things differently. Minhaj and his family felt unsafe and ashamed of their religion when they were terrorized at their own home from people in his community. As he grows as a person, he learns that he can not be ashamed or hide who he is, he needs to embrace it. He chose to show who he really is by creating a stand up comedy to inform people that you can not let stereotypes effect you. To demonstrate how Minhaj feels about his family, when his father had to go to the hospital for a quintuple bypass, he was not prepared. Minhaj thought nothing of it and decided to do his set at a comedy show,

then he would go visit his father. He had no idea what had happened and put his career in front of his family because he remembered of all the discrimination he had encountered which made him ashamed to not put his family first. Regardless, when he had got to the hospital and was waiting for his father to go into surgery he gave Hasan a very important advice: “Hasan, you have to be brave. Your courage to do what’s right has to be greater than your fear of getting hurt. So, Hasan, be brave. Hasan, be brave.” (Minhaj, *Homecoming King)* This is when Minhaj realized that he needs to appreciate his family more and be grateful for them everyday, because it shows how much they matter even though he feels shame for being part of their family. In addition to the discrimination they faced, Minhaj faced his own inequity at school and decided to put himself out there, like asking girls to prom, and going to commercial auditions. These acts helped Minhaj cope with these everyday struggles being a first generation immigrant by taking his mind of the stereotypes; therefore, making himself feel confident about him and his families culture.

Alex Dang is a Vietnamese and Chinese spoken word poet, born in Portland Oregon. Dang expresses in his poem *What Kind of Asian are You,*  how he feels stereotyped into one type of Asian culture. Dang uses pop culture and historical allusions to create emphasis on how the media is swallowing up his Asian culture. An example would be: “ I can give you / Tokyo drift, Jeremy Lin / Mario kart / Tiger woods / and blinker left on for about half a mile” ( Dang, 12-17 ) Dang conveys that there is an unfair representation of his culture in America and how he feels like he is being ignored. As he states; “Let me tell you about being so marginalized it’s to the point of ‘I really cant believe that’s Asian”’ (Dang, 35-37) Dang also expresses that he feels forgotten and ashamed for being Chinese and Vietnamese, that he is stripped away from his own individuality. He alludes the Canadian Pacific Railway when he references the clanking of metal, meaning when 17,000 Chinese men came to work as labourers to build the railway. Dang also faces the struggle of having generational gaps and language barriers between him and his parents. All these are situations that Dang had to overcome, and he did that by expressing his feelings towards the stereotypes of being Asian through his spoken word.

Even though Hasan Minhaj and Alex Dang come from separate cultures, they have more in common then differences. Considering all factors and topics they explore, they can both relate to being a first generation immigrant in America: generational gaps and feeling shame for their culture. Both men have high expectations for school and grades, and not to disappoint their parents. Another reason why they have a lot of similarities is because they both face stereotypes and discrimination because they are first generation immigrants. Society, media, and cultural influences are all what creates one to stereotype people like Dang and Minhaj. People who are not like them, and do not live the same life as them do not know the struggles that they have to face. In Dang’s spoken word he says; “ our English is already that much better than your guardians” (Dang, 44-45) while Minhaj says; “We really are from two generations” (Minhaj (*Homecoming King)* proving the generational gap between their parents is prominent in their life. In addition to having a generational gap, they also feel shame for being part of a first generation immigrant; however, they try not to let it effect them too much, consequently when Dang expresses he still makes sure to feel pride in himself, like he declared: “And I still feel pride / and I still feel heritage / and I still feel Chinese / and I still feel Vietnamese / and I still feel American / and I still feel” (Dang, 89-94) These are just a few of many reasons why Dang and Minhaj can both relate and share their experiences together and share with people around them.

In conclusion, In *Homecoming King,* Hasan Minhaj feels generalized and stereotyped in his own culture. He feels that he can not fully be himself being a first generation immigrant, having expectations from his family and being held back from who he wants to be in Davis, California; however, Minhaj makes sure not to let anything come in his way, and allows himself to love his culture . Whereas, Alex Dang’s *What Kind of Asian are You,* expresses that he can not show his true culture of being Chinese and Vietnamese in America without being lumped into one type of Asian culture. Dang still allows himself room to grow and lets himself make sure that he is not forgotten. Similarly; both men have shared experiences that can show each other and others around them that their cultures are both meaningful no matter what.

**Works cited**

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