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Interview Assignment

*The interview answers and questions in this paper have been roughly edited for clarity.*

Throughout the years, Queer media has grown in popularity and acceptance. Many different generations have either had no experience with seeing Queer people on their television screens or in popular culture. However, Queer representation has expanded and a larger variety of identities has been shown on the screen. For this interview paper, I thought that it would be interesting to interview my cousin Aditi Martyniouk. Martyniouk is 31 years old, which makes her a millennial. I am fully aware that I could have interviewed someone who is a little older, probably my parents or uncle and aunt, but I wanted to interview someone who was close enough to my age, but further enough to where the experiences we had growing up were completely different. I was curious to know if at any point in Martyniouk’s growing up stages where there was a dramatic shift of Queer representation and whether or not she had grown up either being accepting of the LGBTQIA+ community or if she was sheltered from that. The following paper exhibits some of the questions I asked her and her answers to these with a short explanation on why I find some of these answers interesting.

I started the interview off with an easy and pretty straightforward question.

“When was the first time you remember seeing a Queer character on a TV show or in a movie?”.

Martyniouk was quick to answer, telling me that the first time she can recall seeing a Queer character was in the television show “Pretty Little Liars”. Shay Mitchell who identifies as Queer in real life, played the character Emily Fields who is a closted lesbian who gets outed on the show. It was a simple answer so I moved onto something a little more interesting with a little more depth.

“What were your thoughts on gay people, lesbian people growing up? What was your view on them?”.

“I mean, people weren't as openly gay when I was a teenager, so I mean, we definitely threw around words like, oh, oh, that's gay without really thinking much about it. And then as we got older, of course, people were more and more open and we realized, or at least I realized, okay, I am not going to just throw that around and just say that.” Martyniouk said.

Martyniouk told me that she never grew up having a problem with people who were a part of the LGBTQIA+ community and so it makes it hard for her to look back on these topics since it was not something she ever really thought about.

“It wasn't really a big part of the way I thought about things. I'm like, oh, okay, cool. He, gay, or she's gay, whatever. But it wasn't like that for everyone. If they did find out that someone was gay, it was a talking topic, for sure.”

Since Martyniouk is a millennial, I was not surprised by this answer. I think only as of recently, people have started to just not really care about people's sexuality, at least my generation. Obviously, there are always exceptions to the rule. I then moved on to ask if Martyniouk is more exposed to the Queer community nowadays and she said she was.

“Yeah. I mean, now it's not even a thing. I feel like it's not really a thing of like, ‘Oh, he came out or she came out.’. It's just like, ‘I'm gay,’ or they won't even say that. They'll just say, ‘Oh, my husband or my boyfriend or my girlfriend.’. It's not something that they have to announce anymore. If they're talking about their partner, they're just using the pronouns, and that's kind of how you assume that they're gay.”.

This was actually really comforting for me to hear because it reminded me that, even though there are so many terrible things happening in the world, the world is still changing in positive ways and we are always going to overcome the bad. I then moved onto asking her a question that had more to do with racial representation within the Queer community.

“What race or ethnicity do you tend to see more often? Do you feel like there's more representation of white people, or do you feel like it's more of people of color?”

“For men? I've definitely noticed it's more white people. I feel like I don't even know. I can't even remember seeing a gay black couple. I feel like, especially in the trans community, I see a lot of black women. So I think that kind of gray zone, even for Asian people, you're not really seeing it much. Oh, especially Middle Eastern people and Indian people.”.

I found this to be a super interesting part of our interview and overall conversation because it showed that even within marginalized communities, there are always still going to be even more marginalized individuals and people who lack the representation that people are still fighting for.

The last part of this interview I will mention is the idea that at some point in time, Queer representation boomed, or some might say, peaked. The way I worded the question led into a conversation which allowed the answers to become a little more broad.

“Is there anything about queer representation in media that you don't like, that you think is not necessary, or there's something about it that you just don't like?” I asked.

“No, not that I don't like, but I do remember when it went from pretty much no representation to every movie or every show, especially Christmas movies. I feel like they were just trying too hard. Representation matters for sure, but it almost felt ingenuine because it was just happening in every show and every movie. But that didn't bother me. It was just something that I noticed, and now it's not like that again. So it's just here and there again. I think because it doesn't bother me, I don't really think much about it, so it's good to think about it now that you're asking me these questions.”.

I thought that I was the only person that noticed the spike in the representation of Queer people in films and television shows, but my cousin noticed it too.

Overall, I felt like this interview really helped me put into perspective that even though my cousin and I are only about 10 years apart, things still change and are constantly changing. I feel as though Queer representation is still a huge debate and talking point for a lot of people and people in the LGBTQIA+ community, but I think at the end of the day, different identities and different gender roles, norms and expressions are ever changing and that is something that will start happening as the years go by.