

Barclay Barrios

ENC 1101.070

09/08/10

Fifteen Going On Broke

Barclay Barrios 9/10/10 2:45 PM

Comment: Great title!

Our world has an abundance of cultures, traditions, and rituals practiced everyday. These cultures were created as man created a community. Once man stopped in **their** nomadic ways they found the benefits to become part of a greater whole. They didn't have to rely on one's self for everything. Each person could expand on their specialty and fill a job in the community. Someone who is good with their hands would become the builder, and whomever had a green thumb was the local farmer. As these cultures developed they created ceremonies to represent a person's growth in their community role. In modern day we can still see some of these traditions. In Julia Alvarez's essay "Selections **form Once Upon a Quinceanera,**" she searches for the true value behind the quinceanera and the complex factors that create its worth. Even with these multiple factors, a cultural ritual has value as long as the individual feels the ritual has a purpose.

Barclay Barrios 9/10/10 2:46 PM

Comment: OK I see your argument. It's nice and clear.

In Alvarez's essay she talks to the the creator of *Quince Girl* magazine, Will Cain, who coins the term of retroculturation (45). He describes this newly developed phenomenon as the new generation of Latino girls rediscovering their heritage. Unlike the generations before them, "They live on MySpace.com and shop at Abercrombie, but they listen to Spanish radio and embrace diversity" (46). A cultural ritual such as the quinceanera lost its value for the earlier generations. They were new to the country and trying to model themselves into "The American Dream." The purpose of the quinceanera is for a family to present their daughter as a new woman, who is ready to marry and start

Barclay Barrios 9/10/10 2:47 PM

Comment: Start with a sentence that indicates the main point of the para. For ex: "Retroculturation has reconnected individuals to this ritual" or something like that that shows what the para is about and how it will relate to the arg

her adult role in the community. This ritual would have no value to this newly Americanized Latino girl because she doesn't relate to the purpose. She has no ties to her heritage roots and the value is gone. On the other hand, through retroculturation the new generation of girls have a desire to connect and flourish in this beautiful "coming out," party. The modern girl accepts her culture identity and finds a greater purpose in this birthday tradition. In this process she can find herself, which helps create more self value.

The quinceanera is a rite of passage. It celebrates a girl transforming into a woman. Before we had laws that said on your eighteenth birthday you were a legal adult, we had these rituals. Boys were given a series of tests in order to be considered a man. They had to catch fish or put out burning embers with their bare hands. These rituals had value not only to the person performing them, but to the community. They show maturity and growth in the person's role in the community. Madeline says, "Boys don't need a quinceanera. Boys are born men but girls turn into women" (qtd. in Alvarez 47). This quote shows that the value is in the eyes of the beholder. The girl must see the value in the ritual, of gaining maturity, self esteem and a support system of people for the rest of her life. If the goal is only to be pampered and the center of attention for the day then the tradition is worthless.

Value can also have many means in this context. Value can mean worth or cost. "But though fifteen-year-old girls are really good at knowing how much their dress or makeup cost, they're not so good at knowing the charges for halls, or what it costs to have beef Wellington instead of Swedish meatballs for a hundred people," (44). With this new generation of Latino girls we see more of the American consumer. In Alvarez's essay she describes her experience at a Quinceanera Expo (39). This old ritual has been

given a new face and has a high cost. The emotional capital of the quinceañera is almost smothered by the superficial cost of the celebration. Girls should see, “If the father is losing his little girl, the mother is gaining a potential girlfriend,” (48).

Isabella tells us, “Quinceañeras know no social or class boundaries. You might not have the money but you have a quinceañera for your daughter. The family is making that statement. We might not be rich but we value our daughter,” (qtd. in Alvarez 36). Even though each girl should experience this rite of passage the purity can be shadowed by the cultural capital. Cultural capital is described as, “A family’s throwing its daughter a lavish quinceañera represents a kind of cultural statement that counts for a lot more than the dollar cost” (52). The problem develops, though, as to what cost one is willing to give this party. Some families that Alvarez find are willing to “throw the house out the window,” in order to give this to their daughter (43).

Alvarez peels back the layers of this tradition to show its true colors. Even with the strain on the economics we still find the value of community. A girl could through the best quinceañera ever and never get a scrap of value from it. Rituals are all about the individuals. They help them mentally and emotionally connect to the transition in their lives.

Parkin:

You have a good start here. You have a clear argument and you have good individual points you make through quotation and work with the text. But you need to work on organization—both within a para and in the paper as a whole. For starters, begin each para with a sentence that makes it clear what the para is about and how it relates to the arg. Then also think about the order of your paragraphs given your arg.

Work Cited

Alvarez, Julia. "Selections from Once Upon a Quinceanera." 2007. *Emerging: Contemporary Readings for Writers*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. 34-53. Print.