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Social Stereotypes-Don't Judge the Book by Its Cover

By Arianna Tong

Cheerleaders, jocks, nerds, you name the label . . . high school has a reputation for stereotypes. Social stereotypes impact the collective atmosphere creating an unjust social system. An individual's reputation is created before we ever meet them.

By "judging the book by its cover," we miss opportunities to encounter very interesting and influential individuals who could be different from ourselves. Stereotyping ignites a chain reaction, similar to fireworks. The net effect is an assumption based on the label plus a judgment with limited knowledge without personal interaction.

Why do we teenagers have the need to misjudge and misinterpret one another simply based on reputation or looks? "I would define social stereotypes as a mental organization of people that I use to determine who I might or might not be comfortable with," said Miramonte senior Arjang Asadi. "Social stereotypes define the hierarchy at our school, at any school in fact. It's like how economic indicators define an economic hierarchy." Campolindo sophomore Hannah Grubs added her thoughts. "I think social stereotypes are the way people frame other people by who they hang out with or how they act. It's not just teenagers who do it. I did when I was five and I will probably do it when I'm older. It's a bad habit I have and need to work on," commented Grubs.

Christina Cisneros, a soccer player and sophomore at Acalanes feels there are cliques at her high school. "People with similar interests spend time together. For example, students on teams tend to eat together. If you are on the baseball team, you sit with you're your players. Drama club members seek out their fellow actors. People have opinions about who is cool and who is not. Those choices don't affect me. I don't have lunch with my soccer team. I eat with my friends who are on the lacrosse team."

In the end, no matter where we go, or whom we encounter, social stereotypes play a large role in our lives as high school students. Whether it is "the jock" that sits next to you in physics, or that "band geek" in your PE class, instead of judging by first glance, open the book to get to know the person. Stereotyping stigmatizes. Cliques exclude. Anyone can be cool when given a chance.

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The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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