Western culture is an idea implanted by years of colonization that started in order to oppress indigenous people. Native culture is the set of ideals passed down through the development of colonization as a standard of the civilization of indigenous people. Both native culture and western culture are social taboos created to divide and conquer the indigenous people and only exist due to colonization. The autobiography of Helene Cooper, The House at Sugar Beach, and Katherine Boo’s ethnographic study, Behind the Beautiful Forevers, questions the existence of culture and westernization. Then the TV show, Culture Clash, takes those ideas of culture and westernization one step farther and criticizes the effects of internalize oppression of westernization in the Chican@ community.

In, The House at Sugar Beach, Helen Cooper compares her ideals of culture and beliefs as she tries to find her own culture. Through Helene’s love of the dominant culture of the colonizing group she is idealized as at a higher standard of civilization in Liberia. Throughout her autobiography she is blamed for giving up her native culture to become Americanized but in reality Helene didn’t give up her native culture because she didn’t have one. Helene compares herself to the “American black girl weight down by racial stereotypes”, the “sub-Saharan Black girl” who dies young and only lives to recreate, and finally describes her life as a “one-in-a-million lottery ticket: [born] into what passed for the landed gentry upper class of Africa’s first independent country…” (29). She was the top of the food chain and didn’t have to fight for any rights because she was at the top and she was living the ideal life. She belonged to the dominant culture although her culture was just being created. Her ancestors founded Liberia after they were sent back to Africa from the United States. They were the future colonizers of West Africa and the new sub oppressors of
Liberia. Although Helene’s ancestors had been freed physically for many years she still felt like she was part of the western culture and to her as that was the ideal life style. She mentions in her book about her daily interactions with American culture as in books, cloths and shows admiration for such. After the revolution in Liberia, her family is forced out of power and migrates to the United States. When Helene comes to the United States she is no longer part of the dominant culture but because her previous culture was created from the crumbs of admiration towards American Culture she had no problem assimilating to the new culture of her home town. Her cultural ideals were not part of any racial structure because she didn’t belong to a specific racial group.

In Behind the Beautiful Forevers, the people from the slums created their own culture and laws in order to survive the slums. The people from the slums are migrants from the other places and because there was no dominant race or ethnicity they don’t have a native culture as a whole and they have to create their own culture there. The people create a culture as a whole as a survival compromise although they have aspirations of becoming part of the popular culture around them. Throughout the ethnographic study the book introduces different characters fighting to join the popular culture. They all want to get out of the slums and are determined to fight and do all at their power to escape that culture. For some like Asha the new culture exterminated the oppression and gave her life a purpose. Asha’s life is looked through her eyes and it is said that her “eyes looked far more radiant now than they did in the photograph she possessed of her youth” (21). Asha had never been as happy and as hopeful as she was now she had a chance to send her daughter to college. Asha wanted to feel accomplished and powerful and for such she embraced the slum culture and wanted to someday be able to be part of the popular culture around them in the classy, expensive hotels. Although Boo goes into depth about the characters she encounters in the
slums she doesn’t tell the life or cultural expectancies of the individuals taking away the importance of their culture before the slums. The characters are introduced with limited culture and culture is looked as a property of wealth, making a connection between poverty and wealth give the reader the idea that poor people don’t have a culture and can only aspire to become part of the dominate or popular culture.

Culture clash portrays Chicanos as a non-existing race and confused individuals and implies such as causes of violent communities. Their culture or native culture was created by oppression and for that they have to try to recreate a new culture around western culture. They are force to follow the guideless that the westerners have laid out for them because colonization recreated and shaped the native culture. The native culture is a sub-oppressor of indigenous people as it orbits around western world views as central ideals. In Culture Clash: A Bowl of Beings a sketch of the 1492 invasion of the Americas expresses the rape of America’s indigenous people through a girl name America who confronts Colon and fights with her as she goes to assassinate him for the damage done to her. Colon kills America but as he does this one of his songs walks up and screams mother as a result of Colon’s sexual relationships with America. Colon then commands his other son to kill his brother and as he tries to do so he kills himself. The son of America and Colon then confronts Colon as he expresses his confusion about where he comes from. The sketch critiques the destruction of the imposed native culture as the rape of America to impose western colonization. The rape or destruction of the indigenous people results in the destruction of the self-identity and creates a struggle in the individual as it criminalizes and objectifies the nonexistent ideals of being part of an unknown hybrid people. The confused people then create a new culture as oppressed peoples from the leftover ideals of western society and indigenous believes which then becomes the native culture of Chicanos.
The idea of a native culture is the effect of the western colonization as a cause of civilizing indigenous peoples. The involvement of the western hemisphere shapes their ideology as the dominant world culture and oppresses the indigenous peoples ideas of pre-colonization eras as non-exist which devalues and objectifies indigenous people as uncivilized and uncultured. The oppression of indigenous people is traced back to the enslavement of native culture as an idea of civilizing and the beginning of acknowledgement of culture as a whole. Migration has also changes and clashes upon the ideals of individuals creating a new culture as a survival technique for the oppressed people. Culture should not be a constitution that stays the same for it is only a survival technique that changes throughout environments and interactions. The commercialism of western culture has destroyed the main purposed of culture as it used the idea of culture to divide and conquer. As of today the western culture still remains dominant because it is encouraged by the media as it manifests its reproduction in mass quantities and spreads through ideals of civilization.