

¿Cómo son los hispanohablantes?

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Introduction and Objective

As I approach my sixth year of teaching, I realize how little my students know about the culture that they are electing to study. Year after year I ask students why they want to take Spanish and they inevitably express their desire to speak. They seem to have a full understanding that our country's population is becoming more diverse- specifically with respect to the Spanish-speaking population. They seem to lack, however, the understanding that Mexico is not the only representation of Spanish-speakers in the United States.

North Carolina has been a destination of growing interest for immigrants over the past two decades and the numbers of foreign-born in the state and her cities continue to grow.¹ In a banking city as large as Charlotte, second largest in the United States, there are a lot of job opportunities from entry level banking to landscaping and building up-keep ensuring a comparative measure of job security. As such, settlement in Charlotte is attractive to a significant number of the state's immigrants – many of whom are Spanish-speaking.

My vision is to teach my students about the push and pull factors that exist in the process of immigration.² I want to replace their surface and stereotypical understanding of immigration with a factually based one that encourages on-going curiosity about the issue. I also want them to have a better understanding of the Latino migration experience as it pertains to the Spanish culture that they are learning. In a time when discussion about “illegal” immigration and policy are widespread on the TV and radio, I want my students to be critical thinkers before drawing conclusions on such a complex topic.

On the first day of class when I ask my students why they signed up for Spanish, their minds immediately jump to Mexico. They recognize the growing number of “Mexicans” in this country and want to be able to speak to them (specifically, they say, to their landscapers or cleaning lady). They want to be able to communicate when they take vacations to Cancun or Cozumel. When asked why so many people think of Mexico when they hear Spanish, many are quick to say that there are so many Mexicans in the United States or because the United States and Mexico share a border. This is the Spanish-speaking culture with which they are most familiar but there are definitely some misconceptions. My hope is to expose my students to what life is really like in Mexico-

beyond tacos and guacamole. I understand that one's perceptions are their reality as it is all they know. I'm hoping that by exposing them to facts; it might give them a clearer perception and understanding.

I want students to also think critically about the language they choose to use. Presently many adolescents are faced with bullying threats and are aware that language can be hurtful.³ In addition to forcing them to think about the motivation behind immigration; I want them to think about the language that is often used to describe the individuals that we study in Spanish class. The "Drop the I-Word" campaign is a youth-led advocacy group of the Latin American Coalition that is striving to eliminate the use of "illegal" to describe people.⁴ A second goal for this unit is to create awareness of just how dehumanizing language can be. Calling a human illegal builds a negative stereotype of the people who come to this country in search of a greater life.⁵ The 6.8% of the Latino families that make up our school have migrated to Charlotte for a reason. They seek and crave opportunity that many cannot access in their home countries.⁶ I want my students to consider the possible push and pull factors that lie behind migration and think about why Latinos in our community settle where they do.

Background Information

I am a Spanish teacher in Charlotte Mecklenburg, an urban school district comprised of over 150 schools. Though CMS is a city school district, the population that I serve is suburban. Our schools' mission is to provide students with rigorous lessons, differentiated instruction and a plethora of academic enrichment clubs. In addition to their core classes, students engage in classes rich in culture, art, and technology.⁷ In the 10 years since its opening, the school has received exemplary scores in the state-wide assessments, Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by the No Child Left Behind initiative and named a School of Excellence as well as a School to Watch.⁸

Jay M. Robinson (JMR) is made up of 1115 students in grades 6-8.⁹ According to the most recent and comprehensive information on student demographics for the 2010-2011 school year, JMR's ethno-racial demographics were broken down accordingly: 66.9% Caucasian, 12.7% African American, 9.1% Asian, 6.8% Hispanic, and 4.8% Other. Of the students, 17.5 % of students are considered economically disadvantaged and receive Free or Reduced Lunch.¹⁰ Another characteristic of a school's profile includes the mobility rate. This is "a measure of how many students are transferring in and out of a school. Mobility is of concern since higher mobility tends to correlate with lower achievement."¹¹ JMR's mobility rate is 7% which is low compared to the rest of the district.¹²

In addition to the course curricula, our school offers enriching extracurricular activities: Math Counts, Future Business Leaders of America, Chess Club, Manga, Model United Nations, Generation Nation, and our nationally ranked Science Olympiad.¹³ Our success

not only comes from the wide variety of academic opportunities for our students but the support they receive at home and within the community.

The support that students and teachers receive from our parents plays a large role in our success as a school. Our Robinson parents financially support our school through their donations and through our PTA. Due to their generosity, most classrooms are equipped with technology ranging from projectors, SmartBoards, and iPads. They demand excellence in their students and are active participants in their children's education.

This curriculum unit will be implemented in my Level I part I classes. World Language classes taught at the middle school level are taught over the course of two years. Part I is taught in seventh grade and part II is taught in eighth grade both finishing with an End of Year (EOY). The EOY assesses the students' ability to comprehend spoken or written language as well as their ability to produce the language through oral and written expression. Upon earning a 70% overall, the students will continue to Part B in 8th grade to earn the second half of their high school credit.

The students that I teach come from a variety of backgrounds. The majority of my students have migrated from other states while some were born and raised in Charlotte. In addition, I have students who were born outside of the United States; Iran, India, Korea, Singapore, China, Mexico, Colombia, and New Zealand. Although earning high school credit is a motivational factor for a number of my students, many choose to take Spanish so that they can communicate. When asked why they want to learn to speak, they often recognize the importance of speaking a language that is increasingly present in this country.

Rationale

The inspiration for this unit came primarily from a course I'm taking entitled, *All Immigration is Local: The New Geographies of Immigration*. As implied by the title, the course focuses on logistics behind a complex topic such as immigration as well as its impact on North Carolina. According to the article "Growing Up American: The Challenge Confronting Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants," North Carolina is one of the fastest growing states for the Hispanic/ Latino population.¹⁴

The seminar began with an explanation of push and pull factors.¹⁵ These factors explain why people migrate to new areas. The push factors help us understand the reasons why people leave an area and the pull factors explain why they choose to relocate to other areas. I was immediately fascinated with exploring the push and pull factors for the Hispanic/ Latino population's relocation to places like Charlotte, NC. Some common push factors include economic devastation, environmental issues, lack of jobs, family/ divorce. Some common pull factors are job opportunity, education, family and weather.¹⁶

The New Curriculum

The revision of the World Language Curriculum focuses on proficiency levels. Students in Level I are at the Novice Low to Novice Mid level.¹⁷ This capitalizes on what the students can do with the language; how they can use it. To reach this goal, 90% of the instruction is delivered in the target language with use of gestures and pictures. The philosophy is such that students receiving large amounts of input will enhance the quality of output.¹⁸ The output consists of the following:

- Respond to simple questions on the most common features of daily life (e.g.— “What is your name?”; “How old are you?”; “What do you like/dislike to do?”; “Where are you from?”; “Where is your mom/dad from?”)
- Convey minimal meaning by using:
 - Words
 - Lists of words
 - Memorized phrases
 - Some personalized combinations of words or phrases
 - An occasional short sentence
- Satisfy a limited number of immediate needs

Modes of Communication

The proficiency levels are determined by what the students are able to do in the different modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational. Ideally, they work through these modes in each lesson.¹⁹

Interpretive communication is the students’ ability to comprehend the language. When learning a second language this is the mode students are exposed to the most. It is crucial because as humans we first experience language through listening.²⁰ In a World Language classroom, students interpret the teacher’s use of the language, song lyrics, video clips, reading comprehension, podcasts, etc. In this unit, some of the interpretive activities include:

- Podcasts of various Hispanic/ Latinos describing themselves
- Tweets from Spanish-speaking students
- Responses from student interviews
- Student vokis

Interpersonal communication is the students’ ability to communicate with another person. At the novice levels, students show proficiency through asking and answering questions. They practice questions as memorized phrases. Then they build on these phrases and make connections to create with the language.²¹ In this unit, some of the interpersonal activities include:

- Interview questions

- Asking their classmates what they are like?

Presentational communication is the most difficult mode for students at the novice level. This is the mode in which they relay information verbally or through writing. This mode is possible as a result of the other two modes. Students interpret, ask questions, and then present the information.²² In this unit, some of the presentational activities will include:

- A voki in which they create a dialogue as a native Spanish-speaker
- Recording the information they learned through their voki
- A written biography of a famous Hispanic/ Latino of their choosing

Strategies

The purpose of Charlotte Mecklenburg's new World Language curriculum is to expose students to conversational language that they will be able to use in real-life situations. In talking about themselves in unit one and carrying over into where they spend their time in unit two,²³ I want to compare how life here compares to life in Hispanic countries. It has been my experience that many students assume that all Hispanics living in this country are "Mexican." In an effort to eradicate this misconception, I will make comparisons to countries that are more similar to the United States like Spain and those that clearly differ from the United States such as Honduras or Peru.

A strategy that is used regularly in my Spanish classes is the Total Physical Response method (TPR).²⁴ Dr. James Asher developed this method after 30 years of language acquisition research. The idea is that second-language learners benefit from instruction in the target language with dramatic gestures. When parents begin talking to their children, they use single words complimented with hand motions: "ba ba," "eat," "doggy," "come here." In a Novice Level classroom the same type of introduction is taking place: "write," "take out a pencil," "raise your hand," "listen." This method can be very effective in a language classroom if done properly. When students are immersed in the language during an 80-minute block they are likely to pick up the language in a functional way. Students will put the pieces together and make connections not only in the classroom but more importantly outside of the classroom.

Another strategy I will use is a Socratic seminar. This approach is highly effective when discussing mature topics such as cultural differences, borders, and immigration. This strategy offers a structured, respectful, and educated way to share options.²⁵ It is something that can be used throughout the year after they have been exposed to new information through movies, articles, or authentic letters. The students form an inner circle and an outer circle. The students in the inner circle can only speak when the floor is open. The teacher proposes a question such as "Why do you think there is a growing number of Hispanics/ Latin Americans migrating to the United States? What are reasons they may be leaving their country (push factors)? What are they reasons they are

choosing to come to the U.S (pull factors)?”²⁶ This forum is student-led: they must wait for their peers to be finished before they speak rather than raising their hand and waiting for the teacher to call on them. They must also use evidence to back up their options. The students in the outer circle are writing down key points that are made by their classmates in the inner circle. If someone on the outer circle wants to add a point, they must tap out the person in front of them and they switch roles. Before the discussion has either wrapped up or hit a dead end, the inner and outer circles switch positions. A new question is posed and the discussion continues. It is important to teach procedures for Socratic seminar so that it is beneficial for all students participating.²⁷ Students are assessed for the ideas, opinions, and evidence that they contribute during the seminar.

Throughout the unit, students will engage in discussion strategies in which they will discuss difficult topics and develop their own views. They will also use critical thinking skills to collect their thoughts so they will be prepared to engage in the Socratic seminar.²⁸

Classroom Activities

The activities and tasks in which students will participate will revolve around the Hispanic culture; specifically as reflected in Spain, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Ecuador. This theme is always present in my instruction but this unit will develop a foundation deeper than just different dialects, cuisine, or geography. This will lay the groundwork for the language itself. I want students to understand where the language comes from, what being Hispanic encompasses.

This unit will be taught throughout the first semester. I will introduce the unit at the beginning of the year as an introduction to the course so that students have a broader perception of the various Hispanic cultures they will be studying. The final activity in this unit must take place towards the end of the first unit to ensure that they are able to articulate themselves in the target language. The Charlotte Mecklenburg mandated curriculum for Part I is broken into two units. The first is “It’s All About Me” and the second is “Where I Spend My Time.”²⁹ I will use these thematic units to build bridges between the life of a Non-Hispanic student and a Hispanic student.

The activities and assessments for this unit will be generated from a thematic teaching strategy. The central theme will be “¿Cómo son los hispanohablantes?” (what are Spanish-speaking people like?). Unit 1 is designed around the essential question “¿Como eres?” (what are you like?) which will lend itself naturally to building on the concepts previously learned. We will read articles/ stories surrounding the Hispanic culture, listen to songs that illustrate the journey, and watch film clips to give students a visual understanding of who in fact we are studying.

Prior Knowledge

The students will be asked to brainstorm and asked what comes to mind when they think about Spanish. I anticipate responses ranging from food, to athletes, to races/ethnicities, to appearance. Then I will ask students what makes a person Hispanic/ Latino. Students associate a person's ethnicity with the language that they speak. I explain that their country of origin or their family's country of origin characterizes one's roots. I will clarify using Jennifer Lopez's history. She was born in the Bronx but her family was born in Puerto Rico. Does this make her Hispanic? Does this make her an immigrant? I anticipate that some students will say yes but others will disagree. To stretch their thoughts a little further, I will ask them who decides someone's ethnicity. Do those labels define us? If so, is that fair?

Building on the brainstorm, I want to start the students with an informal assessment on culture. I understand that they may not know anything about the Spanish-speaking cultures we will be exploring in class but this will give me an idea of the culture(s) they have been exposed to either from travel or Social Studies classes. I will begin by reading random facts from the various Spanish-speaking countries. They will give a thumbs up if they believe the statement is true and a thumbs down if they think it is false. On the SmartBoard, I will give a brief explanation of the answer. Ex. In Spain, many cities shut down from 1-4 to eat lunch with their families. The answer is true and I would offer a brief description of how and why this tradition or "culture" started.

Activity One

The unit will start with a strategy adopted from "Freedom Writers." I have placed blue masking tape down the middle of my classroom that we will use for various activities throughout the year. For this introduction, students make a decision between two things. I explain that they must make a choice - both or neither are not options. The questions that follow start out simple: chocolate or vanilla, movies or music, moving to more complex concepts such as: rush to get things done or take my time, walk to work or call-in because I can't find a ride (See Appendix 1). I will end the activity with questions pertaining to culture such as: set yourself apart or do anything to fit in, work hard for things that are important to you or settle for what you've been given. Once the activity has closed, I bring the students together for a whole group discussion. I ask them why they believe I chose an icebreaker that focuses on differences. The goal is to generate a discussion on culture. We discuss how many cultures are represented at their tables and in the entire room. Once they begin to talk it becomes clear that culture is more than where we are from, but the values and traditions we have.

I reiterate the importance of respect for other cultures especially in the class. I share with them my first meal experience when studying abroad. I explain that I vowed that would not be "weird" but different from what I know. I then quickly challenge them to react maturely to the following statements: "in Mexico, cow tongue is often eaten as their piece

of meat.” or “in Ecuador they eat guinea pig.” Many of them “pass” the test but it is a quick and innocent way of getting my point across. After I will ask students to discuss at their table a similar experience they have had while traveling abroad. Then, as whole group instruction, we will discuss some things that newcomers to Charlotte may be faced with as they try to settle in a new place such as having to ride the bus if they come from an area without access to public transportation.

Activity Two

In this activity students will illustrate their own migration journey. In preparation for this lesson, students have been asked to write down the various places they have lived and the push and pull factors for their move. To ensure accuracy, students will complete this part of the activity at home with their parent/ guardian. They will be provided a map that includes the cities, states, or countries that have been a part of their journey (See Appendix 2). They will start by placing a star or dot on each place that they have lived. Then they will connect the dots to create a visual migration map. After they have collected their data, they will create a migration map highlighting their journey. They will have many maps (North Carolina, United States, and World) available for the students to accommodate the various journeys. Once they have completed their maps they will explain their journey to their shoulder buddy. Then the students will complete a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the two journeys (See Appendix 3). To wrap up the activity, I will ask students to share their push pull factors in order to point out that most families relocate for similar purposes regardless of race, ethnicity or country of origin.

Activity Three

I will start by projecting an image of Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez. I will ask them which one is an immigrant. When a student incorrectly guesses Selena, I will bring it to a whole group discussion. I will start with asking them the reasoning behind the guess. Why do many people believe Selena is an immigrant upon a glance? To build on that concept I will ask students to write down what word comes to mind when they hear the following: constructor, football player, actor, lawyer, NASCAR fan.³⁰ Then I will choose 2 of the words: contractor and NASCAR fan. As a class, I will ask for the words that they came up with. Students will invariably start listing stereotypes. I will project the definition of stereotype according to Webster’s Dictionary: a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. Then I will ask the class if the list we came up with as a class is accurate and how these stereotypes can be verified. I will ask them to think about what benefits come from learning more about a topic before considering a stereotype.

During the discussion, I will ask students: why are the words or labels that we use powerful? Why are the words that we choose important? The students will then read the article “Drop the I Word.” In this article, two writers argue their points regarding this controversial topic. I will ask the students to take a side. Then they will participate in a friendly debate. I will remind students of our classroom rules on respecting others’ opinions.

Activity Four

In the class prior to this lesson, students were given a list of questions to complete (See Appendix 4). When students enter the room, projected on the screen will be the definitions according to Webster’s dictionary of culture: the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; *also*: the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time and ethnicity: a particular ethnic affiliation or group. Students will be given pink, blue, and purple post-its at their tables. They will write terms that exclusively define culture on the pink, terms that exclusively define ethnicity on the blue, and terms that define both on the purple. They will base these words on the definitions given as well as the answers they surmise on the previous class’ homework. As cooperative learning teams, the students will share their answers with whom they are sitting. Then they will then come to a consensus as a table. I am anticipating some discrepancy among groups. After bringing the discussion to the whole group they will read the article “Don’t call me Puerto Rican; I’m Ecuadorian.”

After reading the students will create a collage of who they are. This illustration must include things that they would be willing to shed and the things that they feel define them. To focus their thoughts, I will pose questions such as: When you moved to Charlotte, did you adopt the culture of the city? Do you drink sweet tea? Do you cheer for the Panther’s? What things do people adopt when they relocate and what things do they shed? How do people wish to be defined ethnically or culturally and why?

Activity Five

This lesson will start with a warm-up that asks students to answer critical thinking questions that are relevant to the unit such as “why do borders exist? Why are there borders in the main office or the border around a teacher’s desk? Then we will spend the next couple of classes watching the film *Sweet 15*. This film depicts the story of a Mexican American family who struggles with the immigrant legalization process. Though the plot is based around the daughter who was born in the United States, the viewer is sympathetic to her father who holds the secret of his undocumented status.

Once the movie is completed the students will participate in a Socratic seminar. Prior to the seminar students will review the expectations and procedures of a productive seminar.

The questions used for the discussion will be relevant to undocumented immigration, solutions to this problem, and the motivation behind relocating and crossing borders.

It is my hope that by the end of the movie, the students will view immigration in a different way. They will see that the documentation process is much more complex than portrayed in the news. They will see that those who are undocumented are not bad people but in many cases, similar to *Sweet 15*, people trying to do what's best for their families.

Activity Six

Students will participate in an interview of students from the youth group of the Latin American Coalition in Charlotte. They will generate questions in English for this activity. The goal of this activity is for the students to have a clear understanding of why these Hispanic students and/or their families have ended up in Charlotte. What are the push and pull factors their families faced? I also want them to learn more about the receptivity of Charlotte and of their school. Are Hispanic and/or immigrant students welcomed at Robinson? What can the students of Robinson do to help make an immigrant's transition to their new community easier?

Activity Seven

Students will be creating a voki. Vokis are an interactive way for students to design and create an avatar and then produce the dialogue for their creation. Students will choose and research a person from a Spanish-speaking country. Then they will narrate as if they are that person. In this presentation they must include:

- Their name
- Where they are from
- Their age
- How many people are in their family
- Where their parents/ family come from
- What they like and dislike about living in the USA
- What their favorites things are here and in the country from which they migrated

After they create their vokis, students will go on a tour de los paises hispanohablantes. I will reserve the media center and the students will have their vokis up on their computer. Students will then engage in an "intercambio" where they listen to 7 different vokis. They will be given a graphic organizer to record their findings (See Appendix 5). The students will be graded using the PALS rubrics for Novice speakers.³¹

Appendix 1- Either/Or Statements—Tell me which side you would take in the following situations. You must choose one.

Yankees or the Phillies

Coke or Pepsi

Go skiing or go to the beach

Pizza or ice cream

Chocolate or peanut butter

Math or Science

Country or Hip Hop

Watch TV or go to the movies

Hot dogs or hamburgers

A beautiful convertible that runs like a dream or a beat up car that cranks up every time

Take your time to get a project done or wait until the last minute and work

Someone tell you what to do or you do it yourself

Work hard for what you do or let someone else work for you

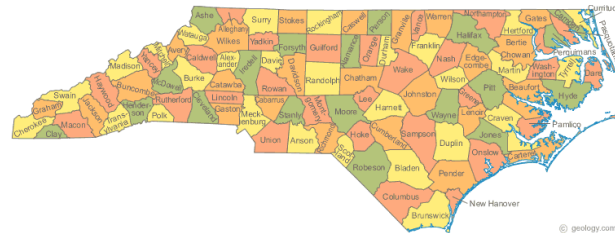
Set yourself apart or do anything to fit in

Work hard for things that are important to you or settle for what you've been given

Appendix 2- Migration Map

Homework:

1. Interview a parent or guardian to learn about you/ your family's migration story.
2. Next, map the migration story on the map below.
3. Then, write the push and pull factors for each of the destinations.

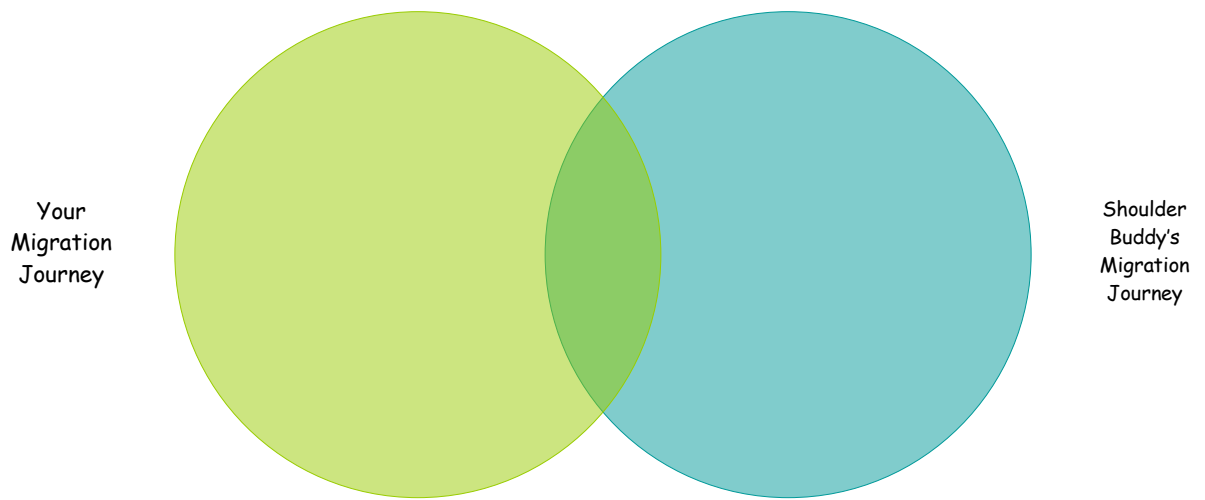


<u>Destination</u>	<u>Push Factors</u>	<u>Pull Factors</u>
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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Appendix 3—Diagrama de Venn

Now that you have completed your migration journey, compare your push and pull factors with your shoulder buddy. Once you have done this, fill in the Venn Diagram accordingly.



Appendix 4: Pre-reading Critical Thinking Questions:

- 1.) Where were you born? Your parents? Your grandparents?
- 2.) What is ethnicity?
- 3.) Which ethnic group or culture do you belong to?
- 4.) How important to you is your racial, ethnic or cultural identity? Why?
- 5.) Which Spanish-speaking cultures are represented in your school/ community?
- 6.) How are these cultures celebrated or acknowledged?

Appendix 6: *Implementing Common Core Standards*

The Common Core Standards—Literacy Standards for Levels Kindergarten to First Grade*

1. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
4. Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.
9. With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.
10. With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.
10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

*Based on novice-mid proficiency levels, students should be able to do meet these objectives in this unit of study.

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This is an article that discusses an experience of an Ecuadorian girl who was profiled as Puerto Rican due to her appearance.

Materials for Classroom Use

1. Technology for audio recording—you will need technology that allows students to record their voices.

2. A class set of computers with access to the Internet
3. Sweet 15- the film students will watch in Activity 5
4. Unit worksheets

Notes

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- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

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²³ Ibid.

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