Experiences of Diverse Populations via Film

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by Giovanna Cucciniello

Narrative

"A pedagogy is that much more critical and radical the more investigative and less certain of "certainties" it is. The more unquiet a pedagogy, the more critical it will become." - Paulo Freire

It is my conviction that providing the best education for students requires that we plan educational experiences that take into account factors from two worlds, their life and the larger society. For most American students, the two worlds, their home and community, nonchalantly interact daily. Language and culture are inseparable and should, therefore, be taught together. However, second language learners face the unprecedented challenge of bridging together two worlds that are vastly different. Some students are unable to move successfully between these worlds because they never fully enter the mainstream school community. The mainstream classroom and the attitudes they encounter marginalize them. Eventually, many drop out and are often unable to succeed in mainstream society either. Even yet, some students reject their heritage language and culture in order to become part of the mainstream. Rather than experiencing the best of both worlds, they simply trade one world for another. Later as adults, they often regret having had to sacrifice their culture and heritage in order to succeed academically.

Migration and adaptation to a new country and social environment carry with it consequences that are not solely limited to language barriers. It is important to address these issues when taking into account our second language learners' needs. How does the need to cope with our physical environment shape our social behavior, and our material culture? What changes take place or have taken place within our lives as a direct result of moving to a different location?

To what extent are the behaviors that we observe across human societies determined by biology and to what extent are they determined by learned behavior. What do we do different from our "native" culture? What has stayed the same? What are some common characteristics among different cultures?

There are a number of reasons for movement even within a country from native areas into the cities: political, religious and economic. Through film and discussion, this unit will present various individual reasons for family
The students I instruct are 9-12 graders who have emigrated with their families from Central and South America and are no strangers to migration patterns. Their parents work in agriculture, fishing, and nurseries, and move often throughout the United States following harvests and economic cycles of prosperity and poverty. Historically, people have thought of farm worker migration as occurring in three streams; Western, Midwestern, and Eastern. More recent evidence however, points to more complex patterns of movement. While most farm workers move in pursuit of work, their patterns and length of migration can vary significantly. For farm workers working in the United States, there are essentially three types of migration:

1. Restricted Circuit, many people travel throughout a season within a relatively small geographic area. Examples of this include: the Central Valley in California; chili harvesting in the El Paso/Las Cruces/Cuidad Juárez area; and, migration that occurs in Nebraska along Interstate 80.

2. Point-to-Point, Another group of people will travel to the same place or series of places along a route during the course of a season. These people tend to live in home base areas in Florida, Texas, Mexico, Puerto Rico, or California and travel for part of the year working in agriculture and

3. Nomadic, still others travel away from home for a period of years working from farm to farm and crop to crop. Some of these people may eventually "settle out" in an area to which they have migrated, while others eventually return to their home base. 1

As a result, student education is often interrupted and they are most at risk of failing to meet the state's challenging content standards. Some have had English as a Second Language in their native countries if they come from large cities and have received a formal public education. Many come from the rural countryside and have never set foot in a classroom. They are often the poorest of the poor, maintaining their low socioeconomic status in the United States as well. They form tight knit communities with other immigrant populations and rarely step into the mainstream of high school classrooms or social activities.

New findings from an ongoing longitudinal study of over 400 immigrant children suggest that a high proportion (85%) of these children experience a separation from one or both parents during the migratory process. Carola Suárez-Orozco, Irina Todorova, and Josephine Louie, researchers from the Harvard Immigration Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, also found that 35% of immigrant children experienced separation from their fathers for more than five years. The quantitative and qualitative findings appear in "The Transnationalization of Families: Immigrant Separations and Reunifications," paper delivered at the American Family Therapy Academy in Miami. The findings also showed that children who arrived to the United States as a family unit involving no separations from their parents were less likely to report depressive symptoms than children whose families had separated during the migratory process.
“These proportions of separation are significantly higher than we had anticipated either from previous research or anecdotal evidence,” says Carola Suárez-Orozco. "Given that 20% of children in the United States are growing up in immigrant homes, we now know that substantial numbers of children are being affected by the separation phenomenon."

Data was derived from the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study (L.I.S.A.), an interdisciplinary and comparative study designed by the Harvard Immigration Project to document educational attitudes, academic engagement, and outcomes among recently arrived immigrant youth. This five-year project- currently in its fourth year- began by following 407 recently arrived immigrant youth from Central America (including El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua), China (Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Taiwan), the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico. Youth were between the ages of nine and 14 at the beginning of the study. The participants, sorted by gender and country of origin, were recruited from seven school districts in the Boston and San Francisco greater metropolitan areas.

According to Research:

Prevalence and Patterns of Separation

- 85% of the youth respondents in the study sample were separated from one or both parents during the process of migration. Significant differences between the ethnic groups exist. Children from the Chinese group tended to migrate with both parents most frequently (37%), while the circumstances of migration for the Haitian and Central American groups imposed a family disruption during migration in nearly all cases (96%).

- Nearly half (49%) of youth respondents in the sample were separated from both parents sometime during migration. Separation from both parents was most likely to occur among the Central American (80%), Dominican (61%), and Haitian (59%) families.

- 79% of respondents in the sample had experienced a separation from their fathers during migration. 86% of Haitian and 96% of Central American children experienced such a separation. The Chinese children (48%) were least likely to experience separation from their fathers.

- 55% of immigrant children respondents in the sample were separated from their mothers sometime during the course of migration. The Chinese children were least likely to be separated from their mothers (23%) while the majority of Central American (80%), Dominican (64%), and Haitian (69%) children lived apart from their mothers for a time. Mexican children fell within the middle range (42%).
- 28% of the children have been separated from their siblings as a direct result of migration. Separation from siblings occurs most often for the Dominican group and the Central American group.

Length of Separation

- Researchers found some striking differences among groups in length of time for which the children had been separated from their mothers. Of the Mexican children who separated from their mothers, 73% were separated for under 2 years. Of the Chinese children who separated from their mothers during migration, over half were separated to between two to five years (12%). For the Central American children, almost half (47%) experienced a separation from their mothers of 5 years or more.

- 35% of all children were separated from fathers for five or more children. When separation from the father occurs during migration, it is usually a very lengthy or permanent one. Of the children who were separated from their fathers, half had been separated for five years or more. These lengthy separations were particularly prevalent among Haitians (71%), Dominicans (60%), and Central Americans (54%). About a third of Mexican respondents (34%) and over half of Chinese respondents (56%) who reported separations from their fathers were separated for less than two years.

Effects of Separation

- Researchers found preliminary evidence that children who arrived to the U.S. as a family unit with no separations from their parents were less likely to report depressive symptoms than children who had experienced a parental separation during the migratory process.

- Children who left both parents behind in their country of origin to join other family members or who came to the U.S. with a parent leaving the other behind in country of origin reported higher levels of depressive symptoms. 2

Children often experience migratory separations as painful and complications in family relationships and dynamics often occur. The researchers stress, however, that the effects of the separation may be minimized if the child is cared for in the parent's absence in a supportive environment, if the parents and caretakers cooperate and are in regular communication, and if the child can make meaning of the situation.
"We know from previous research that if the child is well-prepared for the separation, and if the separation is framed as temporary and necessary and undergone for the good of the family, the separation will be much more manageable than if the child feels abandoned," says Carola Suárez-Orozco.

"Additionally, our qualitative data suggest that separations followed by reunification, after an initial period of disorientation, may lead to an increased sense of closeness and intimacy in some families. Many of our participants viewed the relationship between parents and children as having increased in intensity because of the need to 'make up for lost time' to fill each other in on all that has been missed."

It is important for high school students to feel that they belong to a particular group and are accepted during the difficult transition from adolescence in to young adulthood. This is especially true for transplanted students. School can also provide a defacto family or site of shelter and identity for students who lack the stable structure of a rooted family. Introducing students to diverse populations that they have never been exposed to will not only educate them about geography but promises to engage students by proving the commonalities that exist among vasty different cultures.

**Objectives**

Using film as a language of entertainment and an indicator of the wider world, students will expand their awareness of geography, appreciation of different cultures and the common social, political and economic problems they face.

Learning geography helps pupils develop curiosity in, and an understanding of, themselves, other people and places, and the relationships between them. The human race exhibits considerable diversity; diversity in physical appearance, in beliefs and in behaviors. In the course of our lifetime, most of us will encounter only a small fraction of the full range of the diversity manifested in the world. The secondary goal in this unit is to foster an appreciation of this diversity and to come to an understanding of how we may use this knowledge to enhance our lives and to make the world a better place. In exploring these questions we should arrive at a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us. The insights we gain contribute to general knowledge and hopefully to the construction of unique and effective solutions to pressing social problems in the modern world. If we look for answers to the challenges that currently confront us solely within ourselves, within American or Western or industrialized societies, we are only aware of certain kinds of answers. If we look across the entire spectrum of human behavior across all of time we expand our understanding of what is humanly possible and thus expand our ability to act and to shape creative solutions to the problems that face us today. This unit will provide a very limited introduction to this broader spectrum.
This unit acknowledges the central role of language in content learning, while responding to the specific needs of second language learners. It takes into account three national goals developed by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL): 1) effective communication, 2) achievement in content areas, and 3) achievement in a variety of cultural contexts.

The activities prior to the film will center on creating an awareness of the kinds of assumptions or preconceived notions students hold about people in ethnic groups different from their own and exploring the diversity of attitudes and behaviors within these groups as well as between them. This will be incorporated through a language arts component rich in vocabulary, speaking, reading, and writing; map assignments, data, and statistics and graph readings.

**Strategies and Incorporating New Haven Public School Standards.**

The strategies used for teaching these objectives are taken from a variety of resources and can be adapted according to the learner's specific needs.

Before introducing foreign films to students it is important to rethink the word "foreign" and its definition. Gradually introducing students to the concepts outlined previously, you will bring forth ideas and notions that are not so foreign; as a matter of fact they are quite familiar and universal in scope.

Most students form their opinions on the basis of upbringing, peer pressure, and personal or cultural bias. The following readings and activities have been selected to present students with materials that call into question their opinions and challenge the preconceived notions they have. Vocabulary will be an important way to facilitate new ideas and students should be given the opportunity to translate each word, idea or concept into their native language. Depending on the level of the English language learner, the teacher will select appropriate vocabulary. Journals can be kept where students can record their daily observations and personal insights they do not wish to share with their classmates.

The standards of New Haven Public Schools English as a Second Language are the same as the standards in the mainstream content areas. This unit is intended to provide a bridge to the mainstream by acknowledging the central role of language in content learning, while responding to the specific needs of second language learners. Emphasis will be placed on vocabulary and reading with the hopes of easing the initial fear and tension of reading subtitles.

The New Haven Public Schools Standards for English as a Second Language emphasize critical thinking skills, specifically the ability to express ideas, predict, compare, contrast, explore, experiment, analyze and evaluate. Learners are encouraged to speak, listen, read and write in both English and another language.

The Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language Standards are based on three national goals developed by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL): 1) effective communication, 2) achievement in the content areas, and 3) achievement in a variety of cultural contexts. The Standards also include a fourth local goal-4) the vision of achievement in more than one language. This fourth goal, New Haven's unique addition, is one in which native speakers of English and speakers of other world languages work together for mutual benefit.
This unit is intended for intermediate fluency ESL students grades 11-12 who are literate in their native language and are therefore able to transfer those skills to the academic subject of geography and eventual film analysis. Research indicates that academic achievement and school completion are significantly enhanced when English language learners are able to use their native language to study academic subjects. Not only does support in the native language facilitate English development, but it also helps academic skills transfer across languages.

Effective communication will be addressed for:

1) Social Interactions

*Students will:*

- Express interests, needs and opinions using more complex and/or fluent speech (complete sentences, question forms, negatives)
- Initiate conversations and share ideas using expanded vocabulary
- Listen to different points of view and express opinions fluently, using extended speech
- Comment and discuss ideas, debate, negotiate, compromise, and resolve conflict using appropriate language
- Respond to lengthy questions and explain answers in detail

2) For Personal Expression

*Students will:*

- Express likes, dislikes, and justify feelings using complete sentences and expanded vocabulary
- Describe experiences using descriptive details
- Read and listen to longer explanations in English and express reactions at length

Content-Area: Geography

*In classroom discussions and interactions students will:*

- be able to identify in complete sentences, using details and examples of locations of various countries and regions of the world
- Compare and contrast information from different sources: atlas, map, internet
- Recall, retell, and explain information

Reading:

*Students will:*

1. Become familiar with the specific reading strategies needed for the Connecticut Academic Proficiency Test (CAPT).
   a. Form an Initial Understanding
   b. Determine the main idea
   c. Summarize (select and use relevant information)
   d. Use context clues to determine meaning
2. Develop an Interpretation and respond to film
   a. Connect film with experiences and knowledge
   b. Describe the director’s use of details
   c. Draw conclusions and explain reasons with reference to the film
3. Demonstrate a critical stance
   a. Use the film to make a prediction
   b. Tell how the director uses literary devices such as irony, point of view and foreshadowing
   c. Evaluate explicit and implicit information
   d. Prepare written responses to material viewed
   e. Explain values, customs, ethics and beliefs included in film

Writing:

*Students will:*

- Do pre-writing activities (brainstorming) and demonstrate pre-writing strategies-i.e. select and limit topics, draw upon personal knowledge, set a purpose and define the audience
- Develop, clarify, organize, and support ideas for writing using graphic organizers- i.e. webbing, clustering, outlining.
- Use complex grammar and syntax in writing-i.e.:
1. Compound verb tenses: present, past, and future perfect

2. Conditional tenses

3. Other verb forms: gerunds/infinitives

4. Modals: may might, could, would, should, must, will, have to, can, can't

5. Comparative adjectives

6. Plural forms

7. Prepositional phrase

8. Subjective, objective, and reflexive pronouns

9. Dependent clauses

- Do proofreading - i.e. assess a piece of writing in terms of accepted standards for paragraphing, sentence structure and the mechanics of written English
- Edit, revise and rewrite to improve content and form
- Become familiar with additional writing strategies needed for the Connecticut Academic Proficiency Test (CAPT)

1. Demonstrate a critical stance

2. Express personal ideas, inform and persuade through writing

Cultural Contexts

*In various settings students will:

- Compare and contrast their communities to those of others.
- Gather data on diverse populations using library resources and media
- Understand the impact of social and economic influences in different situations.
- Share ideas, experiences and detailed points of view with others.
- Demonstrate cultural awareness in conversation and writing.
- Evaluate and interpret new information.
Films

There are numerous films which may be adapted for the themes and issues addressed in this unit. However, keeping in mind that we are introducing students to geography and therefore some place new and different I chose the following films:

Salaam Bombay: India, 1988

The history of the making of this film is as interesting as the film itself. The filmmaker, Mira Nair, whose more famous recent film is "Monsoon Wedding", gathered a group of street children from Bombay and talked with them about their experiences, visiting the streets and train stations, bazaars and poverty stricken districts where many of them lived. Out of these interviews emerged a film that was a composite of several lives.

Chaipau, a boy who works for the traveling circus, is one day sent on an errand and returns to find that the circus has packed up and disappeared. He takes a train to Bombay hoping to return to his native village and find his mother, who is also displaced. Chaipau can not read or write and he's not quite sure where his village is. He eventually disappears into the ranks of thousands of children who live on the streets of Bombay.

Although the streets are a cruel and dreadful place, they are not entirely without hope. A small community is formed among the children and they eventually manage to do the best they can for themselves.

Even though the film is filled with moments of occasional happiness and camaraderie, the tone of the film is predominantly bittersweet and poignant. It is important for students to see, without glossy Hollywood sentimentalism, the realities of children their age, in a vastly different part of the world.

Central Station (Central do Brazil): Brazil, 1998

Nominated for an Oscar as Best Foreign Film, Central Station takes place in Brazil. It moves from the busy central station of Rio de Janeiro to the rural landscapes of the countryside. It presents the story of Josue, a boy of nine, who has lost his mother in a car accident and whose only acquaintance is Dora, a letter writer for illiterate people. Together they embark on a hopeful and adventurous journey through Brazil in search of Josue's family. It is a touching story of one's woman loneliness and a young boy's quest to belong to someone.

This film deals with all the trials and tribulations of migration and adaptation. We are able to see the extent of displacement among Josue's family as he searches for his father and is presented with brothers he never knew he had.

Udju Azul di Yonta (Blue Eyes of Yonta): Guinea-Bissau, Africa, 1988
The story of three people: Vincente, a hero of the revolution and now a prosperous businessman, struggles to find inner peace as he weighs the benefits of Guinea's liberation from the Portuguese and the daily struggles of power shortages and unemployment; Yonta, the beautiful girl in love with Vincente. She represents the new generation of Guinea, reaping the benefits of Western luxuries like discos, music and makeup, and while she respects those who fought for the liberation of her country she wants the freedom to choose her own destiny; Ze', a poor student from the country, writes Yonta beautiful love letters, originally intended for a Swedish girl, thus the "Blue Eyes." He is all but ignored by Yonta as she pursues the much older Vincente.

High school students will relate to the young adults in this film which portrays the needs and wants that are common to most teenagers.

Throughout the film there are generational struggles, which exemplify the difficulties that not only countries, but cultures face, as liberation and ultimately modernization, take place. The wedding of Yonta's best friend allows us to witness how the old traditions of marital offerings such as liquor and gourds are interrupted with new, harsh realistic intrusions such as condoms, to ward off the reality of AIDS, being brought home by infidelity. The children throughout the movie keep optimism afloat and ultimately dream the possibilities the future holds for them, a future they are able to control thanks to their predecessors, who seem to have forgotten the reasons for which they fought.

Lesson Plans and Materials

Introducing Geography

Lesson Plan:


1. Identify and label countries/continents on map worksheet

2. Identify and label capital cities (Bombay, Rio de Janeiro etc.)

3. Identify statistics on population in cities and smaller countries. Compare and discuss differences and similarities between urban and rural populations. Why the change and growth?
Lesson Plans Prior to Viewing of Film

*Selected from Lockhart and Shaw: Teaching Tolerance

**Lesson Plan 1: Re-conceiving Notions**

Objectives: Create awareness of the kinds of assumptions or preconceived notions students hold about people in ethnic groups different from their own.

Materials Needed:

Copies of handout

Directions: Identify one specific assumption or preconceived notion you have had about people from the following groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic or cultural group</th>
<th>I think people in this group....</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Africans</td>
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<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>Buddhists</td>
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<td>Italians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Explain how you became aware of this assumption or preconceived notion within yourself. Answer the following questions:

- Where did your preconceived notions come from? Why do you hold it?
- In what ways has your experience with people from this group confirmed your assumption?
- How might stereotypes obscure differences between people of a specified ethnic group?
- How might stereotypes obscure similarities between people of different ethnic groups?
- How do these kinds of assumptions harm individuals? What opportunities might you have to benefit from associations with people of other ethnic groups if you did not hold preconceived notions about them?

**Lesson Plan 2: Writing about Racial Identity**
Objectives:

- Develop a perspective on the role of racial identity in people's self image.
- Analyze the influences of racial identity in various aspects of people's lives.

Material needed: Pen and paper

Directions: Students are instructed to write a four paragraph autobiography based on their racial identities, answering questions about ways it has influenced them (role it has in everyday life, in social activities, in school, do they benefit from this identity or do they suffer or miss out) Discuss in large group.

Lesson Plans Post Film

Lesson Plan 1: Class Discussion - Salaam Bombay:

I. The importance of family and home

- recalling prior knowledge: refer to student family and home

A. Krishna
1. Why does he need 500 rupees?
2. What are his relations with his brother like? Why does he set fire to his bike?

B. Chillum
1. Drifting all over India
2. No friends
3. A drug addict

C. Manju
1. The sweet sixteen
2. Her relationship to her mother; Is the mother a good mother?
3. Her father (Baba) lives on his wife's prostitution. How does this affect her conception of men?

II. Comradeship and Betrayal
A. Krishna's relationships with the other street kids

B. Bombay and its social problems of poverty, drug dealing, prostitution and class difference

Lesson Plan Post Film 2: Central Station
Vocabulary Words and Themes:

- age-difference
- transportation
- illiteracy
- letter-writing
- loneliness
- loss-of-mother
- missing-father
- on-the-road
- procession
- railway-station
- teacher
- aging

Students will brainstorm terms and use them to introduce various short essays reflecting on film and personal experiences.

Lesson Plan 2:

Objective: Students are asked to apply and refer to prior discussions and films to evaluate how they have evolved in their conception of diverse people.

Materials needed: pen and paper

Directions: Discuss some of the things that you think are necessary in order to effectively understand and work in a community with a culture very unlike your own. Think about what kind of preparation you might have to undertake if you were going to live in another culture for an extended period of time and hoped to have a meaningful and effective experience. For example, imagine that this summer we were going to send you far away to write a report say on the attitudes and behaviors of students in _____________. What would you need to do in order to do a good job of it? Would you prepare differently if we were going to send you to East LA, or Tallahassee, FL, or Williamsburg, NY?
Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

This bibliography serves as a guide for readers seeking more general background reading regarding analysis and support of the psychosocial needs of migrant children


Punamaki, Raija-Leena (2000) *How to Help Children Experiencing Traumatic Stress: An Evaluation of Long-term Effects of Psychosocial Assistance and International Solidarity Work*. STAKES, National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, Finland. An examination of how help received in childhood affects individuals' resources and mental health in later life. The study focuses on the experience of Chileans who lost their fathers in the context of political strife within the country through the 1970s and 1980s, and who were subsequently supported through Chilean-Finnish cooperation in the provision of psychological and educational assistance.

Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, and Louie, Harvard Immigration Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education: "The Transnationalization of Families: Immigrant Separations and Reunifications"

Training Manuals


manual has been designed as a starting point for discussion and training for teachers, social and health workers, mental health practitioners and refugee community groups. It provides a framework for understanding the circumstances of refugee children, and practical guidance on assessing their difficulties and making plans to help them.

**Bibliography for Students**


**Filmography**

*Salaam Bombay*, India  
*Central Station*, Brazil  
*Blue Eyes of Yonta*, Guinea-Bissau  
*Where is the Friend's House*, Iran  
*The Mirror*, Iran  
*Whale Rider*, New Zealand  
*The King of Masks*, China  
*Not One Less*, China  
*Into the West*, Ireland
Endnotes

1 International Migration Review, Vol.XII Num.5

2 Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, and Louie, Harvard Immigration Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education "The Transnationalization of Families: Immigrant Separations and Reunifications"