



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2005 Volume II: The Challenge of Intersecting Identities in American Society: Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Nation

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## **Hispanic Heritage Month: What Are We Celebrating, Anyway?**

Curriculum Unit 05.02.06  
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### **Introduction**

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I teach 7th and 8th grade Spanish in an inter-district communications and technology magnet school in New Haven. The World Language program in the middle schools is a two-year course, which is the equivalent of the Spanish I course in the high schools. I see my students five days per week, in 47-minute periods.

Traditionally in my school, language has only been offered to those students that achieved high scores on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). Unfortunately, the numbers of students enrolled in World Languages in my school are quite small as a result. My students tend to be very bright and eager learners, which allows me to incorporate a lot into their language learning.

The majority of students in my school are from the city of New Haven. At least thirty percent of my school's students come from such diverse districts as East Haven, West Haven, North Haven, Hamden, Derby, Naugatuck, Ansonia, Milford, and Wolcott. Most of these are suburban areas, but they vary greatly in populations and incomes.

Most of the students in my school are identified as Black, or African-American. The next largest ethnic group in the school is Hispanic, or Latino/a. Whites, or European-Americans, comprise the third largest ethnic group, while there are very few Asians in the school.

Most students are native English speakers, but a significant portion of the Hispanic students in my school speaks Spanish at home, or has parents that do. Very few of the Hispanic students are fully literate in oral and written Spanish. The majority of Spanish-speaking students in my school can understand and speak, but cannot read or write in the language.

Teaching Spanish in an urban environment offers me the unique opportunity to work with a widely diverse student population, in a culturally rich community. Students will be able to take the knowledge they gain from this unit and use it to identify and create Spanish-speaking communities in their own local areas. In this respect, students are especially fortunate and advantaged to attend school in New Haven.

Having a sense of one's own identity is integral to fulfilling one's potential. Adolescence tends to be a

particularly difficult time for most people. Middle school aged children are no longer little kids, but are not yet regarded as young adults. They find themselves moving through transitions of social location, as well as of hormones. Children at the middle school age struggle with identity, and want desperately to fit in. As psychologist Beverly Tatum, PH.D notes, "The adolescent capacity for self reflection [results] in self-consciousness" (20). It is my personal belief that without a clear notion about who and what they are, children will never feel comfortable with themselves, and will have difficulty achieving success.

I have designed a unit that will explore identity and culture through the context of National Hispanic Heritage Month. I am designing this unit as a means to not only investigate Hispanic Heritage Month, but as a means to introduce students to the vast world of Spanish while developing a sense of what "identity" is. It is important that all students' cultures and heritages be recognized, appreciated, and celebrated.

I will teach this unit to both my 7th and 8th grade Spanish classes, during the months of September and October, to coincide with National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15). This 30-day unit can be modified to suit the needs of Spanish students from grades 6 through 12, and can easily be integrated with other content areas to create interdisciplinary learning units. Readings and activities can be added, modified, or omitted to adjust the curriculum unit to the needs of a particular group of students.

## Rationale

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### **National Hispanic Heritage Month, Identity, and Culture**

When teaching, students constantly ask, "Why do we need to know this?" This is usually followed by, "I'm not Puerto Rican," or, "I'm not Mexican." Many students do not find Spanish language and Hispanic culture to be relevant to their own lives. I enjoy answering the question, and creating a dialogue within the class. It is, however, sometimes difficult to relate the subject matter to each individual student because of preconceived notions. This unit will give me a chance to deeply explore what is really meant by such comments.

It is important to address these issues of heritage in a way that doesn't condemn anyone, but simply educates. European American History is a standard part of any U.S. school system's curriculum, and Black History Month is widely celebrated during the month of February. Hispanic Heritage Month, however, is not as well publicized, although Spanish culture and history are important parts of what America is.

Many of my Hispanic students face difficulties at school because of stereotypes and expectations. Some children will laugh at a Hispanic student who doesn't speak Spanish; not comprehending that language is a learned ability. Other students may resent Spanish-speaking Hispanic students because of their language abilities. Additionally, English Language Learners (ELL) often face challenges because of their limited English or accent. Hispanic students need to feel that their culture and history is valid, whether they speak English, Spanish, or both. The languages and cultures of all students should be acknowledged and embraced.

I want my students to understand that 'Hispanic' is not a race. They need to know that being White, being Black, and being Hispanic are not mutually exclusive identities. I want my students to have a sense of who they are, and to be familiar with all of the cultures and ethnicities that make up 'Latinidad' (Hispanic-ness). We will talk about African roots, Indigenous peoples, Spanish heritage, and how these have combined to create the vast population we identify as "Hispanic."

Although we will study the history of the Spanish Conquest thoroughly, we will only specifically study the peoples and cultures of Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Bolivia. I have carefully chosen these three regions for a few different reasons, including the degree of difference in their geographical locations, as well as their histories, and cultures.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's official website, the largest numbers of Hispanics in the U.S. today have Mexican backgrounds. More than half of Hispanic Americans claim Mexican heritage (U.S. Census), which makes sense since almost half of the contiguous United States was once part of Mexico (previously called 'New Spain'). Many aspects of Mexican heritage have become ingrained in popular U.S. culture, and American political issues often deal with our "neighbors to the South."

Puerto Rico, by contrast, is a small island in the Caribbean that is actually a U.S. territory. Puerto Rico's territorial status is often the subject of political discussions in the U.S. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens and those living inside the United States account for more than twelve percent of Hispanic Americans (U.S. Census), the second largest group after Mexicans. In Connecticut, Puerto Ricans are the largest Hispanic ethnic group (U.S. Census), and Puerto Rican culture is (at least in some small way) familiar to every one of my students.

Bolivia is a fairly obscure nation to most Americans. Many (educated) people that I talk to aren't even sure where Bolivia is located. Bolivia is my third choice for study and exploration because it is the place of my Hispanic heritage. My father and his family are from Bolivia, and I have actually experienced the land and its culture firsthand. I find that incorporating personal experiences into lessons helps catch student interest. My students love to discover that I am, in fact, human, and have an identity, family, and heritage of my own.

I think that by using these three diverse, distinct, and relevant regions as a vehicle for culture exploration, my students will really get excited about learning. This excitement will translate into successful Spanish communication, and hopefully extend into other content areas. In different circumstances, however, it may be more beneficial to substitute any of the focus regions for another that is more relevant to the students.

### **What do we Mean by 'Identity?'**

The Compact Oxford English Dictionary (online edition) defines 'identity' as: "1. the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. 2. the characteristics determining this. 3. a close similarity or affinity" (OED). In my own words, I would define 'identity' simply as "who and what you are." This idea of "who and what you are" is based on external as well as internal factors, especially the notion of "otherness." People identify themselves and are identified by others according to what traits either set them apart ("otherness"), or link them to others.

"Otherness" in the United States is marked by a combination of no less than seven distinct categories (Tatum 22). These include race and ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, and mental/physical disability. These seven categories are commonly used to distinguish similarities and differences between people. One's identity is a combination of each of these seven, though different people have varying degrees to which they acknowledge certain aspects of "otherness."

Culture is one of the greatest contributors to identity formation. 'Culture,' as I am using it, refers to the "customs, institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or group" (OED). Aspects of culture may include (but are not limited to) language, cuisine, ethnic makeup, family structures, traditions, education,

dress, celebration, arts, crafts, music, and literature. It is important to understand that culture, like language, is learned and can change over time and with circumstance. Many of the things that make up a person's identity also make up a person's culture.

Again, it is difficult to talk about identity or culture without addressing what it means to belong to a said "nation, people, or group." In the U.S. the most common terms used to describe these categories are 'race' and 'ethnicity.' Sociologist Tracy Ore uses 'race' to refer to "a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as possessing distinctive hereditary traits" (9). Ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to "a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as sharing cultural traits such as language, religion, family customs, and food preferences" (Ore 9).

The identity that is assigned to a person may not be the same identity that a person would choose for him/herself. "Externally created labels for these categories" are not necessarily used or accepted by the people that belong to them. In most cases, all members of a given group do not agree on one sole identifying term (Ore xiv). This will become an important factor when we discuss what it means to be 'Hispanic.'

My students often identify themselves based on where they are from, what their race and ethnicity is, who they live with, what type of music they listen to, and what clothes they wear. For some of my students, religion is an important part of who they are, while others define themselves in terms of academic or extracurricular achievements.

The concept of identity is difficult to grasp because it not only addresses the notion of who you are, but also hints at several questions, such as: Who creates your identity? Who decides your race? Who determines your religion? Who's to say whether you are disabled, handicapped, or just differently-abled? Why does it matter?

#### *What's Identity got to do with Learning Spanish?*

I have found that the majority of students that do poorly in Spanish are unsuccessful because they lack confidence in themselves and in their own abilities. Many others are resistant to language learning because they do not see its relevance to their lives. Developing students' self-awareness, pride, and open-mindedness will increase their likelihood of succeeding in Spanish and in life.

In order to understand the cultures of other peoples, my students will need to understand the different components of identity and culture. They can then apply this to themselves, and then to the different Hispanics we will study. This concept of identity will also help my students relate to the cultures and language of these Spanish-speakers.

The excitement and challenge of relating my subject to each and every student is compounded by their limited knowledge of other cultures, in addition to their own personal search for identity. Students will also see how history and geography have helped shape the identities and cultures of people, generally. Having a sense of who they are will help my students better relate to one another and to other peoples. This, in turn, will help me better relate the Spanish language and Hispanic culture to my students.

#### *What is National Hispanic Heritage Month?*

Hispanic Heritage Month grew out of Hispanic Heritage Week, which was established by Lyndon Johnson in 1968 as a way to honor Hispanic heritage. Hispanic Heritage Month has been (slowly) gaining recognition since its first observance in 1988, when Ronald Reagan extended this week to a month. Today, almost thirty

years later, Hispanic Heritage Month is becoming more widely acknowledged and celebrated across the country.

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from September 15 through October 15 each year in the United States. These dates were chosen because several important events in Spanish-American history are celebrated during this 30-day period. September 15 is the shared Independence Day of five Hispanic countries. Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua all declared independence from Spain on September 15, 1821. Mexico's Independence Day is celebrated on September 16 (the war for independence began on this day in 1810), while Chile celebrates its independence on September 18 (Chile declared independence in 1810). October 12 is "El Día de la Raza" (The Day of the [Hispanic] Race), which is celebrated in the United States as "Columbus Day." Throughout Spain and Latin America, "El Día de la Raza" celebrates the culture, heritage, and history of people of Spanish origin.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the fact that Hispanics/Latinos comprise such a large portion of the United States' population, their history goes largely unnoticed. These people have traditionally been grossly underrepresented in the media. For example, even though an estimated 16% of children in the United States are Hispanic, only about 2% of children's books published in the U.S. each year are written by or about Hispanics, according to Hispanic author Pat Mora (Mora website).

This "month" celebrates the contributions Hispanics have made to our country in much the same way that Black History Month and Women's History Month recognize historically significant African-Americans, and women, respectively. Unlike these other celebrated groups, however, the parameters of "Hispanic" membership are less clearly defined.

*Who are these 'Hispanics?'*

There seems to be much confusion as to what makes a person "Hispanic", "Latino/a," or "Spanish-American." Varying definitions of "Hispanic" and "Latino" abound, and many people have differing opinions about each, complicating identification and classification of ethnicity.

The Compact Oxford English Dictionary defines 'Hispanic' as "relating to Spain or the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America," or, "a Spanish-speaking person, especially one of Latin American descent, living in the U.S." 'Latino' refers to "a Latin American inhabitant of the United States," according to the OED online. Merriam-Webster OnLine defines 'Hispanic' in the following manner: "of, relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent living in the U.S." 'Latino' is defined as "a native or inhabitant of Latin America," or, "a person of Latin-American origin living in the U.S."

The U.S. Census Bureau, on the other hand, determines that Hispanics are people who originate from Spanish-speaking countries or regions, and that Hispanics may be of any race. The Bureau also uses the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' interchangeably. In order to keep consistency with the context of my unit, I have chosen to use the term 'Hispanic' to describe the people who populate Spanish-speaking regions, as well as those who are ethnically of Spanish-speaking origins or descent.

According to a survey conducted in 1995 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 58% of Hispanics preferred to use the term "Hispanic" to describe themselves. "Of Spanish origin" was preferred by about 12.3% of those surveyed. "Latino" was the preferred term for approximately 11.7%. A little more than 10% of those interviewed had no preference at all, while almost 8% reported preferring "some other term" (Tucker et al. 17). This indicates that there is no consensus on the issue, and suggests that there is not necessarily one

cohesive group identity amongst Americans of Hispanic/Latino/Spanish descent.

Generally the question of what a person of Spanish-speaking origin prefers to be called is simply a matter of personal preference. Ilan Stavans states that "the term Hispanic is used outside the United States to describe the cultures that developed as a result of Spanish exploration," in his cartoon history (5). "Latino is the term in vogue to describe Spanish-speaking people living in the United States...In the past other terms were also used including Hispanics and the Spanish people" (Stavans 7). Stavans jokes that "cultural fashions come and go so fast" (7), alluding to the way that time, location, and circumstance dictate what is socially acceptable at any given moment.<sup>2</sup>

Who are these Hispanics, Latinos, or, people of Spanish origin? Well, they are not only the celebrities (Jennifer Lopez, Antonio Banderas, and Salma Hayek, just to name a few) that we recognize from the pop-culture media. Over 35 million people identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino on the 2000 U.S. Census. Hispanics have recently replaced Blacks/African-Americans as the largest ethnic minority group in the U.S., comprising an estimated 13.7% of the population (excluding the 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico) (U.S. Census).

It is difficult to talk about Hispanics without inadvertently lumping them all into one category. I am going to narrow my focus to the Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Bolivian cultures. In this way students will be able to identify similarities and differences between national identities, as well as within each nation. This will help them recognize that "Spanish" or Puerto Rican" labels are not 'one-size-fits-all' for Hispanics.

### *Why so Many Spanish-speaking People?*

In 1492, several regions of the Iberian Peninsula (known as "Hispania" under the Roman Empire) were united under King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to create the nation of Spain (Española). In this same year, the king and queen of Spain sponsored Christopher Columbus's famous voyage, beginning a long series of explorations and land acquisitions in the New World.

While it is true that "in fourteen-hundred-ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue," it is untrue that Columbus discovered the New World. The lands that Columbus "discovered" were populated with indigenous peoples with distinct and well-developed languages and cultures. For example, Columbus found the Taíno (Arawak) people already established on the island of Borikén (later named Puerto Rico by the Spanish) on some of his first journeys.

As the Spanish expanded their explorations of the New World, conquistadores (conquerors) claimed more and more land for Spain. During the 1500s, it was said that the sun never set on the Spanish Empire. This empire included not only Spain, but most of Central and South America, as well as parts of Africa and the Philippines. Spanish control extended in the Americas up into the modern-day United States, and in Europe included occupations in Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands.

While the Taínos populated many of the Caribbean islands, the Spanish encountered several other indigenous groups throughout the Americas. In Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula, for example, the Aztecs and Mayan descendants created elaborate civilizations. By the time the Spanish reached the Andes Mountains of South America, the Incan Empire had already been thriving there for about 300 years, and spread out over two thousand miles. Just as they had done in the Caribbean, the Spanish invaders killed and enslaved the natives in these regions, destroying much of their cultures.

During the Spanish reign, many Spaniards took indigenous wives to bear their children, creating Mestizos

(people of mixed European and Native American descent). Later, in certain parts of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America, African slaves were also mixed into the Spanish and Mestizo blood. Hispanics, or Latinos, can be of Spanish, Indigenous, or African descent, or any combination thereof, and often display cultural and language aspects from each.

Spain held control of its vast empire for about 400 years, colonizing most of the Americas, and mixing with the natives. Independence movements swept Spanish America in the beginning of the nineteenth century, starting with Ecuador, in August of 1809. By 1825, all but five Spanish territories had ceded from Spain. The empire eventually collapsed in 1898, with the loss of the Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Spanish-American War.

## Objectives

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Throughout the course of this unit, students will engage in each of the 5 Cs. Students will be able to communicate in Spanish using appropriate vocabulary. Students will be able to ask questions about and give personal information, discuss cultural components, and describe people. Students will be able to properly use the verbs "ser" and "estar" to describe identity, culture, location, and emotions.

By the completion of this unit, students will be able to define 'identity' and describe its relation to culture. Students will be able to utilize a variety of resources (in English and Spanish) to obtain information, then use this information to identify and explain aspects of Hispanic cultures, histories, and regions. Students will be able make connections between Hispanic cultures and identities and their own.

## Strategies

Communication is the primary goal of any language education. As a Spanish teacher, my number one concern is to teach my students as much of the Spanish language and Hispanic cultural points as possible. It is my job to encourage language learning and cultural appreciation. This appreciation needs to first be fostered in the classroom, and is most effectively attained through creative, interesting, and relevant lessons.

Students will take what they learn from various English and Spanish sources, interpret it, and relay the information to others. Both formal and informal assignments will give students opportunities to share knowledge with each other. These written and oral tasks will not only offer assessment opportunities, but will comprise aspects of presentational communication.

Students will speak with one another on many occasions in Spanish about a variety of topics related to the themes of identity, history, and culture. As they engage in this interpersonal communication, students will speak in Spanish with me as well. In this way, students will have ample practice both hearing and speaking Spanish. Students will also be able to celebrate their own identities and heritages, increasing their confidence levels and personal pride.

Students will make comparisons between English and Spanish vocabulary and language structures. As they draw parallels between historical and cultural points in Spanish-speaking regions and those of the U.S., they will note differences and suggest causes for both similarities and variations found. I find that this type of comparison aids greatly in building self-confidence because it allows students to recognize the wealth of

knowledge they already possess or can easily access.

Students will learn about several aspects of the cultures of Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Bolivia. They will compare and contrast these cultures and infer from lectures, readings, music, art and other media reasons for similarities and differences between the different cultures. Students will also explain how history and geography have played important roles in shaping those cultures.

This unit provides an excellent opportunity to draw in interdisciplinary connections. Students will use previous knowledge as a basis to incorporate new material from this unit. Lessons will combine aspects of history, geography, art, math, science, and technology with Spanish language learning to create a broad view of Hispanic culture. This wide-ranging view will encourage students to seek out connections-- in other classes, and in their own lives.

Through the examination of these cultures, students will get a glimpse into the lives and stories of other people, helping them to connect what they learn with what they see on a daily basis. Discovering and examining evidence of diversity within Hispanic communities (in the U.S. and abroad) will offer students numerous opportunities to find and perpetuate learning outside the classroom walls.

### **The 5 Cs & The 3 Ps**

National and local standards state that world languages should always be taught in a cultural context, and lessons must include the 5 Cs (See Appendix A for a list of the national standards). The 5 Cs are Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities. Emphasis should also be placed on the 3 Ps – the Products, Practices, and Perspectives of the people who speak the language being studied.

The exploration of each and every one of the 5 Cs is facilitated through the incorporated study of the products, practices, and perspectives of Spanish-speaking populations (especially those of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Bolivians). In studying the 3 Ps of different Hispanic peoples, students will gain a more comprehensive understanding of the cultures found in Spanish-speaking regions.

Examining the products created by a given group lends itself to drawing comparisons, as well as suggesting cultural, historical, and geographical information. Students also have an opportunity to seek out examples of these products in their own local communities. Naturally, learning about the products offers subject matter upon which to base Spanish communication.

The practices of a people represent clear examples of culture and tradition. These practices may also reflect historical influences. Students enjoy discovering the many differences and similarities between the cultural practices of others and those of their own. Discussing cultures and practices is one of the easiest ways to inspire children to communicate (in any language).

Students can take what they know and learn about the products and practices of an ethnic group and draw conclusions about the perspectives of that group. Students can make inferences about how these perspectives have come about, and why. Students who are introduced to the perspectives of a group of people can compare these views with their own, and with those of Americans, generally.



## Classroom Activities

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My unit will begin with an exploration of the concept of identity. Students will think about what and who determines identity, and then read different materials on the subject. They will then use the provided materials, in conjunction with their own ideas to formulate a definition of identity. Students will then use these definitions to create personal and group identities for themselves.

I would suggest looking at each of the resources mentioned in the *Teacher Resources* section. Much of the information provided in those resources is commonly known, but there is also a lot of interesting (and less well-known) facts contained within the websites and books listed. These resources are excellent means to glean background information to share with students.

We will, as a class, determine what culture is, and how it relates to identity. We will discuss common cultural practices in the United States, noting not only commonalities, but variations as well. We will talk about possible explanations for both the similarities and differences we find in American culture, taking history and geography into consideration.

We will study the history of Spain, and the Spanish conquest of the New World. We will look at the way that the Spanish language has evolved in different regions, and examine the way that cultures in certain different areas resemble Spanish culture, and how they maintain aspects of native culture. For example, Catholicism is the dominant religion in most Spanish-speaking regions, but many of the religious festivals celebrated incorporate ancient Pagan beliefs and traditions. I would engage students in a discussion of why this might be.

Through both internet and traditional research, students will investigate different facets of the three regions we are studying. Students will present the information in small groups, and then to the entire class. In this way, students will be able to see each region as it relates to the Spanish-speaking world, and to the United States. This will foster cooperation among students, and each will become an expert in at least one aspect of Mexico, Puerto Rico, or Bolivia.

Throughout the course of the unit (and the year), students will communicate with one another and me in Spanish about Hispanic culture and heritage, as well as about their own identities. This communication will take many forms, and will be a vehicle for all types of learning in Spanish. This communication and learning will utilize strategies and activities for every type of learner, from logic-based learners to hands-on learners.

Sample Lesson #1: ¿Qué Es la Identidad?/ What is Identity?

**Duration:** 3-5 Days

*Objectives:*

- 1 Students will be able to define 'identity.'
- 2 Students will be able describe how culture relates to identity.
- 3 Students will be able to utilize a Spanish-English/English-Spanish Dictionary.
- 4 Students will be able to write in Spanish.

5 Students will be able to speak in Spanish about their own (general) identities.

6 Students will be able to understand spoken Spanish.

*Preparation:*

1 Students will already have learned the Spanish alphabet and basic phonetic sounds of letters.

2 Students will already have learned about cognates, and be able to recognize and give examples of cognates.

3 Students will have already learned basic Spanish vocabulary (including greetings, expressions of courtesy, numbers, and colors).

4 Students will have learned a simple definition of 'culture.'

*Materials:*

1 Spanish-English/English-Spanish dictionaries.

*Activities:*

1 Create a working definition of 'identity' in pairs, discuss as a class.

2 Learn appropriate vocabulary and basic language structures to talk about identity in Spanish.

3 Write Spanish presentations about own identity, along with a list of 3 questions for other students to answer about presentation.

4 Orally present to the class.

5 Answer other students' questions about their presentations.

*Closure:*

Review the definition of 'identity,' and discuss why it is important.

*Assessment:*

Students will be assessed based on their preparation, their presentation (content, pronunciation, and accuracy), and their responses to each others' questions.

*Modifications:*

Depending on the level of the students, more or less may be required of them. For example, I might ask my level IB students to elaborate on their presentations, and have them create and answer 5 questions instead of 3.

Sample Lesson #2: °Vamos a Investigar!/ Let's Investigate!

*Duration:* 1 Week

*Preparation:*

- 1 Students will already have learned a general history of Spain.
- 2 Students will have already been given an overview of the Spanish Conquest.
- 3 Students will have already the basic geographical information pertaining to the Conquest (locations of the continents, Spain, the Caribbean Sea, Central America, South America, and North America).
- 4 Students will have learned about the history of Hispanic Heritage Month.

*Objectives:*

- 1 Students will be able to obtain information from a variety of resources (in English and in Spanish).
- 2 Students will be able to identify and explain important aspects of different Hispanic cultures.
- 3 Students will be able to identify and explain similarities and differences between different Hispanic cultures.
- 4 Students will be able to create and participate in a Spanish-speaking community in the classroom.

*Materials:*

- 1 Construction paper or poster board, scissors, gluesticks.
- 2 Computer access with printer.
- 3 Books, articles, and websites as referenced in "Student Resources" section of unit.

*Activities:*

- 1 Each student will be assigned one or two specific points of culture for one of the three focus regions (Mexico, Puerto Rico, or Bolivia) for investigation. For example, a student might be assigned to find the "typical foods" and "traditional costumes" of Puerto Rico.
- 2 Students will have opportunities to use the Media Center and the Computer Labs for research during class time. I will also provide or suggest some materials for students where possible (books, magazines, websites, pictures, etc.). Students are encouraged to find relevant and appropriate graphics for their topic.
- 3 Students will meet in region-oriented groups to compile information about that region.
- 4 Students within each group will create two posters; one detailing general statistical information about the region, and another describing the culture and traditions.
- 5 Students will set up a mini-fair, where they walk around the room and look at all of the posters on display. Students will fill out a questionnaire for each of the posters they view.

*Closure:*

Discuss whether the mini-fair was successful. List interesting facts learned from each of the posters as a class.

*Assessment:*

Students will be assessed on their research and final product. A scoring rubric for the final product will rate students from 0 through 2 for the completion of each of three categories. These categories are research, accuracy, and overall appearance. A score of '0' indicates that no work was completed in a given category. A score of '1' indicates that effort was made, but that something is lacking. A '2' is awarded when the objective of a category has been successfully completed.

Students will also be held accountable for completing the questionnaires given. The questionnaire will include tasks such as: "List 3 similarities between the regions," "List three interesting facts you learned about each region," or, "Why do think that the regions have so much in common? Why are there so many differences?"

*Extension Activities:*

- 1 Students may prepare authentic dishes from their assigned regions to share with the class.
- 2 Students may partake in the creation of traditional crafts and decorations from these regions.
- 3 Students may incorporate food, dress, crafts, music, or any number of cultural activities into the mini-fair.
- 4 Where possible, guest speakers or other external resources may be utilized to increase student interest and subject relevance.

Sample Lesson #3: Ésta es mi Identidad/ This is My Identity

*Duration:* 2-3 Weeks

*Preparation:*

- 1 Students will already have learned about identity, culture, Spanish- and Spanish-American history, and Hispanic Heritage Month.
- 2 Students will have studied the regions Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Bolivia (including culture).
- 3 Students will have been exposed to many aspects of culture including visual art, literature, music, and food.
- 4 Students will, by this point, be able to use a variety of relevant and appropriate Spanish vocabulary to communicate with one another about the aforementioned topics.

*Objectives:*

- 5 Students will be able to communicate with others in Spanish.
- 6 Students will be able to define and express culture and identity.
- 7 Students will be able make connections between Hispanic cultures and identities and their own.

*Materials:*

Materials may vary depending on the demands of the individual students' projects.

### *Activities:*

- 1 Students will develop their own definitions of "culture" and "identity."
- 2 Students will create a visual representation of their own identities, using (Spanish) words and visual elements. Students must include at least two of the following: Hispanic images, Spanish lyrics, or Hispanic works.
- 3 Students will present their '*Identidades*' to the class, explaining the significance of each component.
- 4 Students will respond to every other student's *Identidad*, citing examples to back up their comments.

### *Closure:*

Discuss whether the *Identidad* project was successful. Offer positive feedback to others (e.g. "I thought it was cool that you used the picture of the pizza to describe how you are a mix of different things, and how that makes you American.").

### *Assessment:*

Students will be assessed on their preparation, completion, and explanation of their *Identidad* projects. Students will also be held accountable for completing the responses and participating constructively in the class discussion. Preparation will be assessed based on the overall appearance and content of the final visual product. Language components assessed include communication (content), language (vocabulary and grammar), and pronunciation.

### *Modifications:*

Again, depending on the level of the students, this project's requirements can be made more specific, or less structured. Also, the level of language expectations may vary.

### *Extension Activities:*

Students may either prepare a meal that they consider to be representative of their identity and/or culture. Students may wish to demonstrate a certain craft, dance, or other culturally meaningful task.

## **Notes**

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1. For general information (which is widely available from any number of sources), I consulted several websites and books. Unless otherwise cited, I gathered facts primarily from the following websites: [www.education-world.com](http://www.education-world.com), [www.factmonster.com](http://www.factmonster.com), and [www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com). I also obtained information from the following authors, whose works are listed in the *Teacher Resources* section: Halperin Donghi, Ochoa, Rowen, and Stavans.

2. For other interesting viewpoints on the "Hispanic or Latino" debate, see Al Sosa's article at <http://home.att.net/~Alsosa/page2.htm>, or Richard Vázquez's article at

<http://www.lasculturas.com/aa/aa070501a.htm>.

## Works Cited

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Halperin Donghi, Tulio. *Historia contemporánea de América latina*. Madrid. Alianza Editorial: 2000.

Ore, Tracy E. *The Social Construction of Difference & Inequality*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Stavans, Ilan. *Latino USA: A Cartoon History*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Tatum, Beverly. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

Tucker, Clyde, et al. "A Statistical Analysis of the CPS Supplement on Race and Ethnic Origin."  
[www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/96arc/ivatuck.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/96arc/ivatuck.pdf) . Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1995.

<http://merriamwebster.com>

<http://www.askoxford.com/?view=get>

<http://www.patmora.com/index.htm>

[www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

[www.education-world.com](http://www.education-world.com)

[www.factmonster.com](http://www.factmonster.com)

[www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com)

## Annotated List of Teacher Resources

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Habell-Pallan, Michelle and Mary Romero, eds. *Latino/a Popular Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.

Academic essays by various artists about many different facets of Hispanic pop-culture.

Halperin Donghi, Tulio. *Historia contemporánea de América latina*. Madrid. Alianza Editorial: 2000.

A very thorough history of Latin America beginning with the Spanish colonial period, written in Spanish.

Ochoa, George. *The New York Public Library Amazing Hispanic American History: a Book of Answers for Kids*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998.

An excellent source (for anyone) of general information as well as specific facts about all kinds of Spanish- and Hispanic-related topics. This book is extremely easy to navigate, and includes a glossary, an index, and a great list of recommended reading.

Ore, Tracy E. *The Social Construction of Difference & Inequality*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Discusses how differences between group identities affect individuals, and how they are perpetuated and institutionalized.

Sosa, Al. "Hispanic vs. Latin." <http://home.att.net/~Alsosa/page2.htm>. 2003.

An interesting look at the debate over the difference between "Latin" and "Hispanic".

Stavans, Ilan. *Latino USA: A Cartoon History*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

A witty cartoon history of Latinos in the U.S., beginning with the Spanish Conquest of the New World.

Suarez-Rivas, Maite, ed. *An Illustrated Treasury of Latino Read-Aloud Stories*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2004.

A variety of stories written in both English and Spanish, with themes and beautiful illustrations that can be appreciated by people of any background.

Tatum, Beverly. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

An interesting look at race- and ethnic-relations between children in schools. Discusses how children are affected by the differences between them.

Tucker, Clyde, et al. "A Statistical Analysis of the CPS Supplement on Race and Ethnic Origin." [www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/96arc/ivatuck.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/96arc/ivatuck.pdf) . Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1995.

The 1995 Supplement to the CPS (Current Population Survey). A very interesting look at how people identify themselves differently depending on the options for identification.

Vázquez, Richard. "Hispanic or Latino?" <http://www.lasculturas.com/aa/aa070501a.htm>. 2004.

Discusses the difference between the two terms and the author's view of each.

<http://www.askoxford.com/?view=get>

The website of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) 2005 edition.

<http://lasculturas.com>

A great collection of articles on a diverse range of Spanish and Hispanic themes.

<http://merriamwebster.com>

The website of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

<http://www.patmora.com/index.htm>

The website of Hispanic author Pat Mora has lists of children's books, as well as interesting facts and links.

[www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)

The official website of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Provides national standards and guidelines for language learning.

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

The U.S. Census Bureau's official website. Chock full of interesting facts and statistics about all aspects of American life.

[www.education-world.com](http://www.education-world.com)

A good website for general information that serves as both encyclopedia and almanac.

[www.factmonster.com](http://www.factmonster.com)

An encyclopedia- and almanac-like website designed for children. Very easy to navigate with activities, games, and interesting articles on a variety of subjects in addition to basic encyclopedia entries.

[www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com)

A basic encyclopedia/almanac website. The adult version of FactMonster. Very useful when looking for general information.

## **Annotated List of Student Resources**

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Ochoa, George. *The New York Public Library Amazing Hispanic American History: a Book of Answers for Kids*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998.

An excellent source (for anyone) of general information as well as specific facts about all kinds of Spanish- and Hispanic-related topics. This book is extremely easy to navigate, and includes a glossary, an index, and a great list of recommended reading.

Rowen, Beth, ed. *Time for Kids Almanac 2005*. New York: Time for Kids Books, 2004.

An almanac designed for kids to use, has very current facts about a vast amount of information.

Stavans, Ilan. *Latino USA: A Cartoon History*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

A witty cartoon history of Latinos in the U.S., beginning with the Spanish Conquest of the New World.

Suarez-Rivas, Maite, ed. *An Illustrated Treasury of Latino Read-Aloud Stories*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2004.

A variety of stories written in both English and Spanish, with themes and beautiful illustrations that can be appreciated by people of any background.

<http://www.askoxford.com/?view=get>

The website of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) 2005 edition offers several reference services.



<http://lasculturas.com>

A great collection of articles on a diverse range of Spanish and Hispanic themes.

<http://merriamwebster.com>

The website of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

The U.S. Census Bureau's official website. Chock full of interesting facts and statistics about all aspects of American life.

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[www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com)

A basic encyclopedia/almanac website. The adult version of FactMonster. Very useful when looking for general information.

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

The U.S. Census Bureau's official website. Chock full of interesting facts and statistics about all aspects of American life.

## **Suggested Classroom Materials**

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1 Maps: Old World, Modern, Europe, North America, South America.

2 A globe.

3 Spanish-English/English-Spanish dictionaries.

4 Construction paper.

5 Scissors.

6 Gluesticks.

7 Crayons, markers, colored pencils.

8 Magazines (for cutting up).

9 Paint, glitter, feathers, sequins.

- 10 A stereo and Spanish language and Hispanic music.
- 11 The resources mentioned in "Student Resources" section of the unit.
- 12 Lots of Realia (authentic materials from Spanish-speaking countries)!

## Appendix A

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ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages)

Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Communication (*Communicate in Languages Other Than English*)

*Standard 1.1:* Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

*Standard 1.2:* Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

*Standard 1.3:* Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures (*Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures*)

*Standard 2.1:* Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

*Standard 2.2:* Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections (*Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information*)

*Standard 3.1:* Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

*Standard 3.2:* Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Comparisons (*Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture*)

*Standard 4.1:* Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Communities (*Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World*)

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

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