

Society

Introduction

In Nicaragua there is a vast disparity between the rich and the poor. Few within Nicaragua's population can be considered "advantaged." This segment of Nicaragua's population, referred to as "la sociedad," are able to provide the best educational opportunities for their children in private and parochial schools within the country or even abroad.

Most people in Nicaragua, however, experience a different lifestyle. Nicaragua is a developing country that is very poor in health and wealth. The very little money that a family makes goes toward the benefit of the whole family not one individual of the family. The family is an important structure within the Nicaraguan culture. The children play an economic role within their family as early as age 5. The children begin to work and make money for the family by selling various items such as pottery, chic-lets, candy, bottled water or fruit such as mangos.



The lessons in this section of the *Resource Guide* are structured to provide students with insight into Nicaraguan family life and the struggles and concerns of the various elements within Nicaraguan society.

Identifying American and Nicaraguan Stereotypes

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- define “stereotype” and list the different stereotypes that exist in our culture.
 - hypothesize concerning the purpose and impact of stereotyping.
 - analyze photos of Nicaraguans to construct a portrait of the Nicaraguan people.
 - identify any prejudices or biases that may affect their view of who a Nicaraguan is.
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Materials

- Student Handouts: **Pictures A – J**
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Activities

1. Direct students to take out one sheet of paper and something to write with.
 - a. Explain that they will have three minutes to draw a picture of an “alien”.
 - b. Direct students to not look at any other students’ work and to cover their own.
 2. After everyone is finished, direct the students to answer the following questions:
 - a. Whose alien has eyes? A nose? Ears? Hair? A body? Mouth? Whose mouth is a smile? Frown? Any with tongues?
 - b. What other distinguishing features does your alien have?
 - c. How do you know that aliens have these features?
 3. Explain that none of us has actually seen an alien, but we like to make a lot of presumptions about what they look like.
 - a. Write the term “stereotype” on the chalkboard.
 - b. Asks student if they know the word and can give an accurate definition.
 - c. Emphasize that stereotyping occurs when we make presumptions about what people are like before we actually get to know them. It also involves categorizing a person or people into one specific group.
 4. On the chalkboard draw two columns. Label one column “Teenage Stereotypes” and the other column “American Stereotypes.”
 - a. Ask students look upon their own culture and to list some of the categories they use to stereotype people in their own schools.
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- b. Follow-up the discussion by asking students to examine Americans as a whole group and to list stereotypes people tend to use to categorize Americans.
 - c. Continue the discussion by asking the following questions:
 - Are these stereotypes fair?
 - Where do they come from?
 - Why do people stereotype others?
 - Have you ever had someone stereotype you? How did you feel?
5. Divide students into pairs or work groups, depending on the size of the class.
 - a. Distribute one of the photo pages to each pair/group.
 - b. Ask each pair/group to write a description about the person they are assigned. They may wish to include such information as:
 - Where do you think this person lives?
 - What do they do for a living?
 - What religion and culture are they from?
 - What might their hobbies be?
 - c. Ask a few of the pairs/groups to read their description for each picture, being certain that each picture has been discussed.
 - d. Following the discussion ask the students the following questions?
 - What was the deciding factor in determining where they were from?
 - Did you think you stereotyped these people when you made your judgments? Why or why not?
 6. Explain that the people in these photographs are all of Nicaraguan descent and currently live in the country.
 - a. Ask students to reexamine the photos. What do these pictures tell you about the people of Nicaragua?
 7. Concluding Activity
 - a. Direct students to write an essay in which they address the following issues: Imagine your family has been transferred to Nicaragua and you must begin your life over again in a foreign school with new people and customs.
 - What aspects about your life do you think may have to change? Would these changes be difficult?
 - What would you want your fellow students to know about you so that instead of stereotyping you as a typical American, they would get to know the real you?
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A.



B.



C.



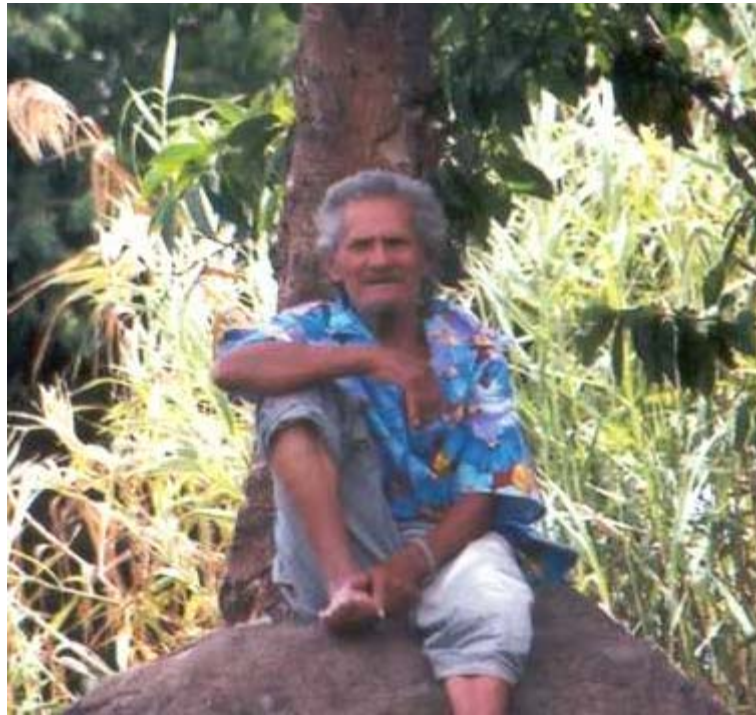
D.



E.



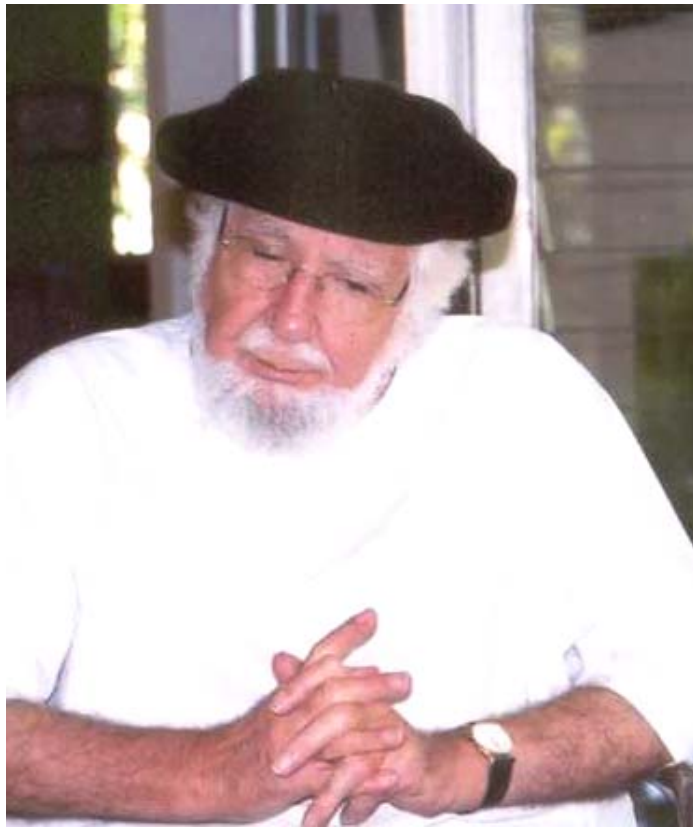
F.



G.



H.



I.



J.



The Nicaraguan Family

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- define common terms concerning family life.
 - evaluate the importance of the extended family in contemporary Nicaragua.
 - compare the Nicaraguan family structure to that of today's American culture.
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Materials

- Student Handout: **Family Life in Nicaragua**
 - Poster board
 - Pictures of people from magazines and newspapers
 - Glue, tape, colored pencils (optional)
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Activities

1. Distribute the student handout entitled **Family Life in Nicaragua**.
 - a. Direct students to read the first four paragraphs of the handout.
 - b. Place each of the following terms on the chalkboard and ask students to define them based on the information in the handout.
 - **compadrazgo**- the relationship between a child's parents and the child's godparents.
 - **Padrino** – godfather
 - **Madrina** – godmother
 - c. Ask students to explain the significance of godparents in Nicaraguan family life.
 - d. Ask students to explain why the extended family has an important role in economic life.
 2. Direct students to read the remaining paragraphs of the handout.
 - a. Place the following term on the chalkboard and ask students to define it based on the information in the handout.
 - **Machismo**- eccentric male pride, where men believe they are superior: the “macho man”.
 - b. Explain that *machismo* means that a man cannot let anything detract from his image of himself as a man's man, regardless of the suffering it might bring on himself and the women around him.
 - c. Reinforce that according to *machismo* the proof of every man's manliness was his ability to completely dominate his wife and children, to never let anyone question, deprecate or attempt to thwart his manhood, and never to reveal his true feelings to anyone lest they somehow take advantage of him.
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Activities

- d. Ask students to evaluate the impact of *machismo* on family life, particularly upon Nicaraguan women.
 3. Provide each student with a posterboard.
 - a. Explain that each student is to imagine that he/she is from a Nicaraguan family, and the assignment is to create an extended family tree with all of their relatives using the following format:
 - The student should cut pictures out of magazines or newspapers for his/her “unique” family.
 - Direct students to glue pictures on the poster board creating the formation of a family tree.
 - Direct students to label the pictures of their family members with their name and position in the family, madre, padre, hermano, etc.)
 4. Concluding Activity
 - a. Direct students to write an essay comparing the similarities and differences in American family life to that of the Nicaraguan family life.
 - OR**
 - b. Have students create a story about the family life of a child/woman/man in Nicaragua.
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Family Life in Nicaragua

Latin Americans are known for their large kinship patterns. These kinship patterns shape family life in Nicaragua. There are two forms of family structure, a nuclear family and an extended family. The nuclear family is the basic form of all families. It consists of the mother (madre), father (padre), and any brothers or sisters (hermanos). The extended family consists of the larger family, such as grandparents (abuelos), cousins (primos), aunts and uncles (tios). But in Nicaragua, a very strong aspect of the family is the godparents. The godmother (madrina) and godfather (padrino) play an important role in the social, economic, and political relations in Nicaragua.

Social prestige, economic ties, and political alignments frequently follow kinship lines. If you are born to a poor family with none of the above mentioned ties, how is your child to achieve a better life than the one you have lived? Through the compadrazgo system (the relationship between a child, the child's parents and the child's godparents), your child can achieve a better life. This system relies on people who are unrelated to you by blood or marriage to establish bonds of ritual kinship that are also important for the individual in the society at large. Through the institution of compadrazgo, the attributes of the madrina and padrino are extended. When an infant is baptized, the parents choose a madrina and padrino for their child. Even though the Roman Catholic Church practices this around the world, in Nicaragua it assumes a broader social significance. The godparents are responsible for the baptism ceremony and the festivities afterwards. They are also expected to concern themselves with the welfare of the child and his or her family, and come to their aid in times of hardship.

Godparents are typically trusted friends of the parents. However, lower-class families often chose godparents of superior economic, political or social status, who are in a position to help the child in the future. Bankers, affluent business people, government officials and politicians may become godparents to the children of social inferiors in order to build up a system of personal loyalties. For example, if a Nicaraguan male owns a bank, he would give a job to his godchild. Godparents are sometimes called compadre/comadre, which means co-father/co-mother.

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Both the nuclear family and extended family play a large role in the economic well being of a family. Because of high fertility and the presence of the extended family, households are large, six to eight people living in a household is common. Large families help supply the parents with the labor needed for everyday labor needs. Children in Nicaragua work at an early age. They begin to sell products in the park, in the market, or on the streets as early as age five. Some children go to work before they attend school or work late at night in the central parks. In time of economic crisis, the survival strategies of the urban poor often center on mutual assistance among their relatives.

Besides economic hardships, the Nicaraguan family also has to deal with crime. Someone reports a crime in Managua every 90 minutes. The real crime rate may be three to four times greater, but in this poor, overcrowded city, residents often don't bother to report them. Reporting a crime means a trip to the local station and waiting until an overworked officer can listen to your complaint.

A crime the family has to endure is the crime from one of your family members, abuse. There is a long tradition of machismo or male pride, where men believe they are superior over any woman and that women are the property of men. Men turn quickly to violence as a response to life's problems: "Nicaraguans like to have things settled, one way or the other. There is a winner and a loser," says Manuel Ortega, a student who studies the roots of social attitudes.

When men bring home the defeat and despair of their daily lives, the losers are often the women. Violence and abuse of women and children is very much a part of domestic life in Nicaragua. To Nicaraguans it is not a crime; it is part of life. The United Nations estimates that 75% of married Nicaraguan women have been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in some way. Why is abuse so common in Nicaragua? There are quite a few possible reasons: debilitating poverty, 50% unemployment, incredibly high teen birth rate and one of the youngest, fastest-growing populations in Latin America. Basically, more people and no new jobs results in increased tension, and lots of poor young women who are forced to rely on men.

Women are beginning to see things differently because of Law 130, which allows for women to ask for a restraining order against their partner, and domestic violence can bring a prison sentence up to one year. This law helps put a glimmer of hope for Nicaraguan women living in Managua's barrios (neighborhoods), but what can they expect from their future?

Intercultural Teenage Concerns

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- list social, political and economic concerns that American teenagers have today.
 - compare the concerns of an American teenager to those of a Nicaraguan teenager.
 - role-play inter-cultural situations to promote understanding of others.
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Materials

Student Handout: **Somos Diferentes, Somos Iguales**

Activities

1. Brainstorm with students some of the different issues they face as teenagers and place their responses on the chalkboard.
 - a. Issues that may come up: drugs, popularity issues, alcohol, racism, bullying, adults telling them what to do, no one understanding them, not getting enough respect, enough credit, teasing, sexism etc.
 - b. Leave these on the board to refer to later.
2. Distribute the student handout entitled **Somos Diferentes, Somos Iguales**.
 - a. Direct students to read the quotes in the first section—"Adulthood."
 - b. Afterward generate discussion with such questions as "Do you agree or disagree with these comments? Why?" "Have you ever felt this way?" "Are these significant issues?"
 - c. Continue this process through the remaining sections.
3. After all the sections have been discussed, explain to the class that these are all quotes from young adults in Nicaragua of all genders, races and backgrounds.
 - a. Ask students if that fact surprised them. Why or why not?
 - b. Ask students to explain the significance of the fact that teenage problems and concerns are similar regardless of country, race, socioeconomic status and gender.
4. Concluding Activity
 - a. Divide the class into groups of 4-5 students.
 - b. Direct each group to develop a short skit in which they role play a situation that reflects one of the issues that have been discussed. Explain that the role-play should focus on how they would act in the situation that would help to remedy the problem.
 - c. Allow 15 minutes for the group to develop the skit and then have them perform for the class.

Somos Diferentes, Somos Iguales

Adultism

- “We always get told, we’re too young to understand.”
 - “Being young means that I can form my own opinions, I like that.”
 - “It’s important that adults think that we are capable. That is how we get better at doing something.”
 - “I want adults to know that we are sincere, intelligent, we have our own opinions, we make mistakes, we should be given another chance if we make mistakes and that we are responsible when someone gives us the chance to be.”
 - “I wish adults would respect our way of life.”
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Machismo

- “Women are neither kings of the jungle, nor queens of the home.”
 - “When women say no, it means no.”
 - “We are not obligated to do anything men tell us.”
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Racism

- “What would be a rainbow without all of its colors?”
 - “Yes, there is racism in Nicaragua.”
 - “Sometimes class affects racism.”
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Discrimination

- “I need people to realize we are all equal.”
 - “It hurts when people make fun of you for who you are or what you don’t have.”
 - “We are all different but we are all equal.”
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Classism

- “The people who have money have more power.”
 - “Nicaragua is no different than in the U.S., money is good.”
 - “The lighter your skin, the richer you are.”
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La Misa Campesina

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- explain how *La Misa Campesina* reflects the concerns of the underclass in contemporary Nicaragua.
 - compare and contrast religious freedoms in the United States and Nicaragua.
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Materials

- Student Handout: **Vos Sos El Dios De Los Pobres**
 - Student Handout: **Kyrie**
 - Music from *La Misa Campesina*:
 - “Vos Sos El Dios De Los Pobres”
 - “Kyrie”
 - Student Handout: **Questionnaire**
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Note to the Teacher

La Misa Campesina is a song to God from the people of the Nicaraguan countryside. They sing to God of their life and hope. They resist the oppression all around them while at the same time building a new community out of the ruins—sun up to sun down. It is a song of love and liberty, a fight for just causes, for a normal everyday life.

La Misa Campesina proclaims the sacrifice and liberty from the point of view of the “pueblo” that gathers around the altar of god mustering all of their faith for a better tomorrow.

La Misa Campesina represents an era of frustrated hope. The Catholic hierarchy banned it from Nicaraguan churches, and a decade later it still is. Since the time it was conceived it has been performed in 6 different languages throughout the world.

Activities

1. Write the following excerpt from the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution on the chalkboard.
 - a. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .”
 - b. Ask students to discuss their interpretation of the amendment. How much religious freedom to we have as Americans?
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Activities

2. Play the first song of *La Misa Campesina*—“Vos Sos El Dios De Los Pobres.” Ask students to listen carefully and to interpret its meaning.
 - a. Distribute the student handout entitled **Vos Sos El Dios De Los Pobres** and direct students to listen to the song again.
 - b. Ask students to underline cognates and words they already understand.
 - c. Divide the class into small groups to translate the song.
 3. Distribute the student handout entitled **Questionnaire**.
 - a. Direct students to answer Section A of the questionnaire.
 - b. Ask students to share their answers with the class and to discuss the meaning of the song.
 4. Play the second song of *La Misa Campesina*—“Kyrie.” Ask students to listen carefully and to interpret its meaning.
 - a. Distribute the student handout entitled **Kyrie** and direct students to listen to the song again.
 - b. Ask students to underline cognates and words they already understand.
 - c. Divide the class into small groups to translate the song.
 5. Direct students to answer Section B of the **Questionnaire** handout.
 - a. Ask students to share their answers with the class and to discuss the meaning of the song.
 6. After the students have discussed the “Kyrie,” direct them to answer Section C of the **Questionnaire** handout.
 - a. Ask students to explain the evident purpose of *La Misa Campesina* based on these two selections.
 - b. Ask students to hypothesize why this folk mass was banned by the Catholic Church? What type of changes do the songs call for?
 - c. Ask students to explain how the banning of the mass by the Catholic Church reflects on the issue of religious freedom?
 7. Extension Activity
 - a. *La Misa Campesina* has been translated into many languages around the world. Ask students to hypothesize why the underclass in many countries might embrace the ideas reflected in *La Misa Campesina*.
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Vos Sos El Dios De Los Pobres

(coro) *Vos sos el Dios de los pobres
El Dios humano y sencillo
El Dios que sudá en la calle
El Dios de rostro curfido.
Por eso es que fe hablo yo
Así como te habla mi pueblo
Porque sos el Dios obrero
El Cristo trabajador*

Vos vas de la mona con mi gente
Luchás en el campo y la ciudad
Hocés fila allá en el compomento
Para que te poguen tu jornal.
Vos comés raspando allá en el parque
con Eusebio, Poncho y Juan José
Y hasta protestás por el cirope
Cuondo no te le echan mucho miel.

(coro) *Vos sos el Dios de los pobres...*
Yo te he visto en uno pulpería
instalado en un caramanchel.
Te he visto vendiendo lotería
sin que te avergüence ese papel.
Yo te he visto en las gasolineras
Chequeando los llantas de un comión
Y hasta patroleando carreteras
con guantes de cuero y overol.

(coro) *Vas sos el Dios de los pobres...*

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Kyrie

Cristo. Cristo Jesús,
identificate con nosotros.
Señor, Señor mi Dios
identificate con nosotros.
Cristo, Cristo Jesús,
solidarízate
no con la clase opresora
que exprime y devora
a la comunidad
sino con el oprimido,
con el pueblo mío
sediento de paz

Questionnaire: La Misa Campesina

Section A

Vos Sos El Dios De Los Pobres

1. How does this music compare to other church or mass music that you are familiar with? Be specific.
2. What form of speech is used in this song? Formal /Informal? (give examples)
3. Explain the title of this song and its meaning.
4. Do you feel that this song respects God? Explain your answer.
5. What do they mean when they say: “Yo te he visto en una pulperia. Te he visto vendiendo loteria... te he visto en las gasolineras ... Y hasta patroleando carreteras?”
6. What is this song about?

Section B

Kyrie

1. What is this asking of God to do?
 2. Who is “la clase opresora”
 3. How does this song demonstrate the feelings of the people?
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Section C

Comparisons

1. As demonstrated in these songs, how do the Nicaraguan people feel about God?
 2. Why do you think this mass was banned from the Catholic Church?
 3. Going back to our discussion at the beginning of the class, compare religious freedom in the US to religious freedom in Nicaragua. What are the similarities and differences?
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