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ABC Assignment

1. B - Cultural Biography

1.1 Cultural Traditions

I was able to interview a college student in Ecuador, who I'll call B, that I met while she was a foreign exchange student in Orem, UT in 2015. I video chatted in English with her and we spent more than 45 minutes talking about her culture. She describes her culture in Ecuador as being unique because of its "four worlds in one small country". These "worlds" include the Amazon, the Sierras, the Coast, and the Galápagos Islands. B says the Ecuadorian Spanish dialect, especially among young people, is particularly unique. However, she views her Spanish as not "correct", but different. B is adamant that no "correct" Spanish exists, that all dialects fit into the continuum that is Spanish. The holidays that are celebrated in B's culture are more often celebrated by the older generations. However, her parents celebrate Christmas and Semana Santa (Holy Week) along with most older Ecuadorians. Most of the holidays have religious traditions and histories. Although B's parents are not particularly religious, they still practice the holidays due to the special days being culturally significant traditions.

Graduation from high school and college is celebrated by all Ecuadorians. Additionally, B loves Halloween, a holiday celebrated by many young people in Ecuador. During Halloween, groups of people have large costume parties, often pooling together money to celebrate the event. Although birthday celebrations are also common, Ecuadorian girls additionally celebrate

“quinceañeras” to mark their fifteenth birthday (B, however, did not have a quinceañera). B notes that many Ecuadorians celebrate “confirmación” after completing Bible studies.

1.2 Education

B started kindergarten at the age of 5. She had many classes that involved arts and crafts, and began English class from the first day of school. She learned about history, math, science, and Spanish. B notes that she was not allowed a choice on what to study, whereas she was given choices while attending school in Utah. From second grade to fourth grade, school started around noon and ended at six. In middle school and high school, she additionally took physics, chemistry, and physical education. When B graduated from high school, she took a graduation test instead of completing a thesis.

All schools attended by B were private Ecuadorian Navy schools, although her father was in the Army. She did not enjoy the military experience in her education. All of the attended schools were only 15-20 minutes away from where B and her family resided. Although B would not have chosen to enroll in military school herself, her parents did have the choice whether to have her attend or not. B says the quality of education she received from the Navy schools was high, with her high school receiving higher test scores than all schools in Ecuador. However, B feels like there was too much of a focus on math and science with not enough studies in the humanities like English and indigenous languages.

1.3 Ethnic Influences

B has difficulty identifying her ethnicity. She considered herself mestiza (of European and indigenous American heritage), and does not go into the specifics of her ancestry when explaining her ethnicity. B’s ethnic identity is similar to most people who live in her area, as Ecuador has one of the highest percentages of people identifying as “mestizo”. She describes

herself as a proud and loud Latina, but her cultural identity, along with many young Ecuadorians, has become very globalized over the years. B describes her social interactions in Ecuador as very outgoing and collective and realized during her exchange that people in the US are much more individualistic and focused on their own lives. B notes that people in the coastal region of Ecuador are more outgoing and extroverted than those in the Sierra mountain region. B's identity as mestiza and Ecuadorian is very important to herself and views the force of globalization with caution.

1.4 Family

B's parents are married, and she has one older brother. B's grandparents are very young, being in their 60s. She views her family as traditional, although it's comparatively smaller than most in her country. Interestingly, B says her family is different from many in Ecuador based on their interpersonal interactions. She is not physically affectionate with her parents, grandparents, or her brother, but says most Ecuadorians are the opposite with their family members.

1.5 Personal Accomplishments and Disappointments

B says her most important accomplishments are being an independent woman and her studies for her profession. In Ecuador, there is a lot of machismo (ultra-masuline attitudes) that contributes to the inequality of women. B is studying law, but views it more as a backup. However, she views her education as a counteragent to the machismo attitudes in Ecuador. As for her failures, B jokes that she's perfect, although she questions herself every night as to why she did something previously. Although, in high school, she did not view herself as a good student. Her biggest disappointment was the humiliation she received from her teachers in Ecuador. Comparatively, her experiences in college have been much better and continue to shape her into a better person.

1.6 Religious Tradition

Both of B's parents were raised in Catholic households. Now, B's father is not religious but B's mother still identifies as Catholic and strongly believes in God. B and her family previously attended church every Sunday and read the Bible often, but do not now practice the faith once B and her brother grew up. B personally believes in God, but does not identify with any particular religion. She says Catholicism is extremely important to Ecuadorians, particularly in the mountainous Sierra region of the country.

1.7 Socioeconomic Status

B says her family is middle class, with her family able to afford travel and education. Her family's socioeconomic status has changed a lot. In the beginning of her parent's marriage, the family struggled financially. However, the flux and flow of B's family finances squarely put her in the middle class. B does not view her socioeconomic status as an advantage or disadvantage for her family, although she does note the opportunities she's had because of her financial circumstances. B's particular city is known for being a "rich city", with many natural resources and business opportunities. Finally, B thinks many Ecuadorians work hard to have a better economic status. Because Ecuador has a relatively high rate of poverty, B thinks many Ecuadorians see education as the primary source of improving their socioeconomic status.