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The Bigger Picture in Costa Rica

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San Ramon, Costa Rica

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The Bigger Picture

Something that surprised me the most is the fact that their lives are very similar to the lives of people who live in North America. There are different classes (upper, middle and lower), and each class has their specific way of living depending on their income or social status. The people here strive for success, in both education and careers, and they always go out of their way to help family or friends. Something that I found interesting was that they do all of their family gatherings on Sundays, usually for lunch, which carries over into coffee time (around 3 in the afternoon). Also, when they have family gatherings, they have about 20 or more family members show up, and it is a big get-together. Something that did surprise me was that the people here can't vote, drive or drink alcohol until they are 18—all of it has to wait until 18. Paola told me that there are a lot of people in CR that have their own little businesses, whereas a lot of people in the States work for big brand name companies.

Honestly, there wasn't much difference in values, outlooks and preferences. My host niece listens to American music, wants to be successful in school and does the same things any normal teenage girl would. What is different is that family seems to be a bit bigger part of her life. I'm not saying family isn't a big part of my life, but most of her extended family lives close, whereas mine doesn't. She also does a lot more activities with her family. She said that younger people wouldn't ever dare to leave the country, let alone move out of their own house, until they are in their mid-20s. The people here are really close to their parents, which is different for me to experience.

The interview experience changed my perceptions of the host country in the aspect that it is just another country and the people are just living their own lives. It's nothing to be surprised at or

something people should think isn't normal. The interview experience changed my perceptions about the US more than anything. It made me realize we are sort of ungrateful as a whole and take a lot of things for granted. We (as a whole) tend to think that we are high and mighty, but in all reality, we are the same as any other country, people living their own lives.