

10-16-2018

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Recommended Citation

Bissey, Nicole, "My Ecuadorian Host Mother" (2018). *2018-19 Field Notes*. Essay. Submission 11.
https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/intl_fieldnotes_1819/11

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Quito, Ecuador

October 16, 2018

My Ecuadorian Host Mother

One of the best decisions I have made during my abroad trip in Ecuador is developing a very close relationship with my host mother. I am certain that I have made a friend for life. From new personal experiences and personally interviewing her, I have learned about the typical Ecuadorian's lifestyle, mores and norms. When including this interview over one of our long talks during *cafecito* at night, I was most surprised when we discussed the topic of eating meals in Ecuador. My host mother told me about how she considers meals a form of family time. Most Ecuadorians eat together around a table and talk for hours after finishing the meal, specifically lunch. Lunch is a very important meal here in Ecuador, and when I first arrived, I was shocked to hear that lunch is like dinner in the United States. Whereas, dinner in Ecuador is called *cafecito*, which is when people drink coffee or tea during dinner time with a piece of fruit or bread. We talked about how, at first, I was nervous to eat a large lunch and not dinner because that is not what I was accustomed to. However, from this experience, along with many others, I have been able to broaden my character and cultural self.

I would consider America and Ecuador to share cultural similarities as well as differences. Both country's cultures respect the idea of family, hard work, friends, food, and religion. However, in my opinion, there is a large difference between the idea of hard work and family. In America, most families encourage their kids to never give on their dreams and always work hard in school. This idea is the same in Ecuador; however, I have realized that many Ecuadorians make extra time to spend with their family and the people around them, usually

putting their loved ones first before anything else. In America, everything is very fast paced and I believe that sometimes it is easy to lose track and forget about the main focus in life which in my eyes is happiness and being around those who you love. For example, my father works late at night every day, and sometimes I do not get to see him on a daily basis or share a meal with him, since he is working hard to provide for his family. However, I have noticed that my host mother always finds a way to make time for me each day whether that be during lunch and dinner or going out to the movies. In my opinion, America is a fast paced country that focuses on hard work whereas Ecuador is a slower paced country that focuses on family and spending time with loved ones.

My mother and I always find ourselves talking about the topic of dance. Dancing is a very important part of the Ecuadorian culture, whereas in America I would argue that it is not. In Ecuador, people of all ages dance salsa, bachata and tango depending on their personal preference. My mother encouraged me to join the salsa club at USFQ because almost every school night after cafecito she would teach me the new steps she learned in her bachata class. She inspired me to embrace my inner love for dance and express it by taking a dancing class just like her. Now, almost every night we teach other the new moves that we have learned in our dance classes. She teaches me bachata, and I teach her salsa. I am very thankful to have created such a wonderful and beautiful bond with my host mother because it has taught me how to expand my intercultural self and not be scared to mess up when speaking Spanish. I have learned that it is part of the process of learning a new language and accepting a new culture. I am currently more confident with my Spanish and am not afraid to mess up. From these personal experiences and talking to my host mother, I have learned how to accept others without prejudging them just because they are different from what I am accustomed to.