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## Cultural Bubbles in Ecuador

Haley Parson  
*Linfield College*

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Haley Parson

Quito, Ecuador

October 27, 2016

### Cultural Bubbles

Over the past two months I've had the opportunity to observe the lifestyle, norms, and habits of my host mom first-hand. What surprised me most is that the assimilation process was easy; there are not a lot of significant differences between our lifestyles, norms, and habits. I think a lot of that stems from the similarities we share as individuals (in terms of our personalities). The things I've noticed have mostly been small everyday things. The way we eat is a bit different—she is accustomed to three solid meals a day, which I (likely due to my college lifestyle) am not. She also puts the television on before going to sleep (which I've learned is really common here). She is always talking on the phone to some family member or friend. Other than these minute differences, the main thing I've noticed is the intimacy of family and friends. When you greet someone, you really take the time to hear about their life and their day. And family members especially are constantly checking in with one another, no matter if they live in the same building, same city, or far apart. As someone from a close family I really appreciate and value that quality here in Ecuador.

It's hard to note a lot of similarities and differences because for the most part I try to view things here in Ecuador without comparing them to things in the States. Everything is different but not better or worse, just different, and for the most part can't and shouldn't be compared. As I stated above, family definitely has a huge value placed on it here, which I think is different from the majority of people in the United States. Also, I would say that Ecuador is more conservative generally than what I've experienced in the U.S., which probably stems from the fact that it is a much more religious society. As far as similarities, right now I've been noticing a lot of similarities in terms of the people's sentiments about the government. The majority of the people I've spoken

with here do not like the current president and are unhappy with the current political system.

Obviously that rings a bell for a lot of people in the United States during this chaotic election season.

The interview experience itself didn't change my perceptions of Ecuador and the U.S. *per se*, but that is due to the fact that I've been observing and interacting with my host mom (my interview subject) for the past two months or so. Therefore, I'd already gained a lot of information to inform my perceptions of both countries. Mostly what I've gathered is that these are two amazingly different and diverse and beautiful and for the most part great countries but with some major differences. I feel like I often live in a bubble within both Ecuador and the United States. In the States I live in the middle class, white, college-educated (or in the process of) bubble and have a lot of privilege. Most of my negative experiences/connotations with the U.S. are centered on the fact that I am a woman. Therefore I have a somewhat inherent fear of violence against women and am more conscious of oppression against women. Here in Ecuador my perspective and my bubble are both completely different. I attend the most expensive university in Ecuador and live in a really nice, often touristy, mostly safe area. My only negative connotations have been centered on the fact that I am a gringa and therefore receive more attention for this. I am also much more concerned about being robbed than any other crime here (versus in the U.S. I am much more concerned about violent crime, such as assault, due to its insane prevalence on college campuses and against women). This study abroad experience thus far, more than anything, has helped me better recognize the bubbles I reside in in both of my homes and the myriad effects those bubbles (and the privileges they provide me) have on my life and on the lives of those around me.