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Cultural Similarities and Differences of Ecuador

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Ecuador
4/02/20

Cultural Similarities and Differences of Ecuador

Throughout the last three months I have had the opportunity to meet a wide range of people living here in Ecuador who each have shown me a new perspective on life from the way that they live and go about each day. Within these last three months I have had the opportunity to live with an amazing family of three; my host mom, and her two daughters. Not only have I been able to learn from them through this interview, but also from being included in their everyday life and experiencing the same things they do. I think what surprised me the most was how they are so independent but family oriented at the same time. This was the biggest surprise to me because before coming on this exchange I was told time and time again that families in Latin America are very close and usually very open - have doors to rooms open at all times, eat all meals together, etc. - and while they do have a great relationship with each other, they, especially the daughters, are very independent and often keep to themselves. It was interesting to see this mix of independence and closeness of family relations because in the U.S., at least in the families I have encountered, they are either very independent and do little to nothing together, or they are constantly together. Another thing that surprised me was how important the habit of playing card games (like cuarenta - a very popular game in Ecuador) and drinking a soda with friends or family was. This is something that they have been doing on a regular basis and has become a very important aspect in bringing the family together and spending quality time with one another. This is true in the U.S. as well, but I feel like in my

generation we have gone so much toward electronics that the card and board game days seem almost lost, so this was cool to see how valued it is in this family.

Within this interview I found a mix of both culture similarities and differences. In both cultures I feel that there is a great value in education and striving to learn, especially in the sense of language. Here in Ecuador, for the majority of children, they start learning another language at a young age in elementary school and continue this up in their high school or even college career. I believe this is also part of the culture in the U.S. since there is such a diverse ethnicity living there. Along with this there is an importance of working hard; not necessarily working often, but making sure that whatever you are doing you are putting in all your effort to get a job well done, and this, in some aspects, is very similar to that in the U.S. Regarding differences, I believe that the value of family that they hold here in Ecuador greatly exceeds that of the U.S. due to the fact that often times they live together until they are married, and even then grandparents often live with the family; however, in my family while I am still close to my family, the majority of them live in a different state so I hardly see them and don't have that personal everyday effect. Also, there is a difference in flexibility regarding time because time and punctuality isn't something that is valued super high here; instead there is a greater importance of building relationships with people rather than what time things need to happen which is very different to that in the U.S.

This interview changed my experience here so far because it made me value more each experience I have with my host family because I know that they are taking time out of their day to spend time with me and build a relationship with me regardless of what else they have going on. It also opened up my eyes to their positive outlook on life because throughout this

interview I realized that no matter what negative circumstances they have gone through they look for a way to see the good that has come out of it. This way of viewing things has improved my experience greatly, especially with all of the changes occurring through the effects of coronavirus.