

5-8-2023

## The Nuances Between Spanish and American Culture

Will Lierheimer  
*Linfield University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/intl\\_fieldnotes\\_2223](https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/intl_fieldnotes_2223)

---

### Recommended Citation

Lierheimer, Will, "The Nuances Between Spanish and American Culture" (2023). *2022-23 Field Notes*.  
Essay. Submission 9.

[https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/intl\\_fieldnotes\\_2223/9](https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/intl_fieldnotes_2223/9)

This Essay is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield, with permission from the rights-holder(s). Your use of this Essay must comply with the [Terms of Use](#) for material posted in DigitalCommons@Linfield, or with other stated terms (such as a Creative Commons license) indicated in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, or if you have questions about permitted uses, please contact [digitalcommons@linfield.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@linfield.edu).

Will Lierheimer

Spain

May 8, 2023

### The Nuances Between Spanish and American Culture

This past week I decided to interview my intercambio, to talk about some of the main cultural differences both between us and our home countries. Though we were previously aware of most of these differences, having a discussion about them made us both think about them much more deeply. The first thing I asked him about was time, and how the sense of time here in Spain is much different than in America. Though I adjusted fairly quickly to the Spanish lifestyle, he still thought that my sense of time was much different than his. For example, during the week my intercambio has to work, so he usually gets up around 8, goes to work, and comes home around 3 or 4. He then eats, takes a siesta, and gets back up around 7. We both go to the same gym, and often find it hard to coordinate going together because I like to work out around 7 or 8 so that I can eat with my host mom at 9 or 9:30, but he will often go to the gym around my dinnertime, and not eat until 10 or 11. Because of this he stays up much later than I do, and on days that he doesn't work will sleep until early afternoon. This lifestyle is much different than in America, where instead of taking a siesta, people will continue working or running errands so that they can eat and go to sleep earlier.

Another thing I've noticed is that my friend almost always pays in cash, and when I asked him why, he didn't really have a reason for it other than that it's just normal here in Spain. Sometimes I use my card to pay for very cheap things or a drink at the bar, and he thinks it's

silly. However, this cultural difference is definitely beginning to change, especially after Covid when people began tapping their debit and credit cards instead of exchanging cash in order to prevent the spread of germs.

The other big cultural difference that I talked about with my intercambio is smoking. Though he is a nurse and doesn't smoke that much, he still enjoys doing it socially and says that he often feels obligated to do it when all of his friends are. In America tobacco has come to be seen by the younger generation as a poison, and most people think it's gross to smoke, especially cigarettes and tobacco. Here, however, it is almost the opposite. If you don't like to smoke tobacco a lot of people might see you as an outsider and it can be more difficult to integrate oneself socially. Though this is also beginning to change, as more and more people have transitioned from tobacco to vaping, as has already happened in America, tobacco is still very integrated into Spanish culture.

One of the big differences between Americans and the Spanish, and between my intercambio and I, is family. Though family is also very important in America, once kids move to college and get a job they often go months without visiting their parents. Here, families seem much more interconnected and people visit their parents much more frequently. Though he works in Sevilla, every other weekend or so he goes to visit his parents and siblings in his hometown which is about two hours away. Though my brother lives in Portland which is only about an hour away, I only see him every month or so since he works and I go to school. Additionally, my host mom's sons visit her almost every week despite the fact that they are doctors and lawyers. Friends and family here seem much more closely connected than back

home, and though this may be a generalization I have heard a lot of other Americans say the same thing.

Most of what my intercambio and I discussed in the interview were things that we already knew or had talked about before, but thinking about it on a deeper level made me realize how strong the cultural differences between certain countries really are. As a result, the people who grow up in these countries are all unique in their own ways and have adapted to the cultural norms and tendencies that surround them. When interacting with someone from another country or culture, the most important thing is not to see them as weird or different because they are accustomed to things that we are not, but to try and understand and appreciate their differences. This way we can learn from them and gain a better understanding of the many cultures that are present in the world rather than being ignorant and just focusing on our own.