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An Ecuadorian Pace of life

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In interviewing Christian, I was able to learn about various cultural values and customs which were insightful in understanding the overall lifestyle of Ecuadorians. One of my favorite things I learned from both Christian my experiences here is how family oriented Ecuadorians are. Most young adults live with their parents and don't move out until their late 20's or until they get married. In addition, it is very common to live in a complex near your extended family or in the same neighborhood. In living so close, it is very common to see cousins and grandparents on a weekly basis. Two important cultural elements that often intertwine are family and food. In Ecuador, families make time for each other and prioritize eating together whenever possible. A big difference between the US and Ecuador is what meals consist of. Breakfast is normally eaten at around 8-9 and it's usually eggs, coffee, bread or a dish made of plantain. Lunch is the most important meal of the day and it is served at 2 pm. During this hour, most people have around an hour long break where they go to small local restaurants to eat. At these spots they serve homestyle food which is usually meat and rice with some sort of salad or beans. One of the best parts of "almuerzo" is that no one is in a hurry, you just sit and enjoy your meal with family or friends.

Although some claim that America is the land of riches, one similarity I've seen is the lack of liveable wages that exist in both countries. Here in Ecuador, clothes, medicine and groceries cost the same if not more than the United States, yet minimum wage is 500 dollars a month. Although rent is cheaper here, this simply isn't enough. This reminds me of the fact that in the United States so many

people working full time can't afford their own apartment (only with a spouse or roommates). Although the economic situation is much worse in Ecuador, the disparities between the rich and the poor are still equally as shocking in both countries. Another huge difference is the working culture and pace of life. Here people live on "Ecuador time," things are more relaxed and it's normal to show up late to things and not rush or stress to meet deadlines. In addition to this, people's top priority isn't typically working, you think about work when you're there, but there's more to life than just your job. As Christian stated " Work is just something that gives us the resources to do what we actually like, we prefer to spend time with family, go out with friends, and party." This is very different to US culture where people seem to be consumed with their work and this takes up most of their time and energy.

Due to my Mexican-American background and the fact that I've traveled extensively, this interview didn't necessarily shock me but it reaffirmed a lot of things I already knew. In particular, it made me think about the quality of life here, and how people may not earn as much financially but they have more peace, free-time and a deeper connection with family. Of course, Ecuador has a long way to go with socioeconomic problems and other issues, but it also has so many things and values that the USA is lacking. As someone whose parents left their family, comfort and culture for the United States, it gives you a deeper perspective and ability to see the good and the bad of both places.