

4-28-2012

Person to Person in Mexico

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Recommended Citation

Grant, Lulu, "Person to Person in Mexico" (2012). *2011-12 Field Notes*. Essay. Submission 13.
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Field Notes From Abroad: Person to Person in Mexico

One thing that had to be explained to me was the difference between almuerzo- lunch and comida- actual lunch. Comida is around 2-3 in the afternoon which is much later than what I'm use to and then dinner is around 8-9 and is usually much lighter. This isn't really a problem now because my family has learned that I eat a lot. Also, before I came to Oaxaca, I spent a month in La Paz, but I remember the first time I met someone from there and I wasn't use to greeting people that I didn't know at all with a kiss on the cheek. In the United States, we often have a very strict personal space bubble around us but here, people are much more friendly and open with showing affection. Another thing I quickly noticed was the fact that people buy food every day. In my house, my dad does the shopping for the entire week on Friday. However, here it is different because of how much people make a day. Romina told me about how much money a family has depending on their class and I remember being very surprised. What someone earns in a week is about what one person can earn in one's day work in the US. Also, Romina is 25 and still lives at home with her parents. This didn't surprise me, but I realize that in the US, this is uncommon. Many teenagers try to move out of the home as soon as possible and here that is not the case. As I have talked with others in the group about their families, I have noticed that many of the children of the parents live at home. To go with this, there is a much stronger sense of family.

Romina is like me in a lot of ways and I can't think of something that really distinguishes us from each other. I don't think the fact that her being from Mexico and me from Washington makes us that different of people. She's studying to be a chef at her university and only has a year left. She wants to go to the states and open a restaurant, so it's obvious that she has goals and wants to do something with her life. She wants to get married and have children one day. She jokes about her age and how she needs to find a "chico" but in reality, she's not that old. I

am only 20 now, but I'm not sure I'll feel in a rush when I am her age. However, I have noticed other things about the culture that are quite different from the US. There are many more people openly begging on the streets and often parents use the children to try and get money. It's quite sad and difficult to just walk by them. Also, the vendors here are more outgoing and really pressure you to buy something, which is usually frowned upon in the states.

I didn't really have any "bad perceptions" about Mexico because I've been here before. The majority of people think that Mexico is dangerous and yes, I've had some scary incidents, but it can happen anywhere. Turn on the news in Oregon and you'll find people shot or stabbed in the street.

There are a lot of aspects that I like about Mexico. I like the fact that in general the people are friendlier and easier going than in the US. When I'm out and about in the city, random people will come up to me and start a conversation. If I were to walk through Seattle, my guess is that this wouldn't happen. So, I like the fact that you can meet and form relationships easily. Also, I feel like here, life is at a slower pace. Most people know that most people aren't punctual people or it's the norm to arrive 10-15 minutes late. This again is not acceptable in the United States. One thing I'm surprised is that most of the people I have talked to want to learn English and a lot of the younger population try to imitate the culture from the United States. I am planning on researching this more for a final paper.

Interview with Romina Hernandez