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### Language and Cultural Differences

Through increased practice with a second language, I have begun to recognize and participate in cultural communication differences both verbally and nonverbally; I have also been able to draw connections between multiple personal experiences and issues related to language and culture within Colombia. This has allowed me to gain an emerging awareness of the varied contexts and boundaries of my own culture, its cultural rules and biases.

Through increased practice with Spanish, verbal communication within Colombia has become more understandable and recognizable to me; this has allowed me to see that within Colombia many verbal communication differences can be seen compared to the United States. To begin, in Colombia it is seen as impolite if a person does not address someone using Mrs. or Mr. (señora or señor); this type of verbal communication is very typical in Latin American countries and can be seen across all generations. Similarly, in Spanish there are two ways to say “you”. Knowing when to use the formal version “usted” or the informal version “tu” is very important within the culture. Another verbal communication difference is the frequent use of provocative words in normal daily conversation. After discussing this with many middle class Colombians, I was informed that it is not uncommon to hear this kind of talk even in the work place with a boss. Next, another verbal communication difference that can be seen in Colombia is the use of flirtatious language towards young women by men of lower classes. I have been able to experience this first hand while walking to my university each day and hearing men

whistle at me or call me things in Spanish like “little momma or delicious” to get my attention. Finally, within friendships and families in Colombia, a person can hear many comments regarding weight; it is very important here for people to be skinny. With this being said, if a person gains or loses weight, his or her family and friends are sure to tell the person that they notice a difference in their physical appearance. Overall, there are many verbal differences that can be seen between Colombia and the United States.

After having lived in Colombia for five months, I have been able to understand many nonverbal communication differences that are not typically seen within the United States. To begin, in Colombia it is normal for a man and a woman to greet each other by kissing on the cheek; this is a sign of respect and is done across all generations. Another nonverbal communication difference is the way that elder generations dress. In Colombia, it is a way to show wealth and class by dressing nicely in dress pants and a blouse or dress shirt daily. Next, a big difference that can be seen is the use of dance to express emotions. Within Colombia, dance is an important part of their culture and is used as a way to express love or friendship with another person. Finally, the use of eye contact is very important; this shows the listener that you have their full attention and is seen as another sign of respect in Colombia. By comparing and contrasting nonverbal communications styles within Colombia, I have been able to better understand the Colombian culture.

Next, with my increased level of Spanish I have been able to recognize similarities within communication styles between the United States and Colombia. To begin, the importance of religion in older generations can be heard. Both in Colombia and in the United States it is very important for older generations to be catholic and attend church weekly. Next, being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender is seen as a personal decision and is discriminated on; within both

Colombia and the United States this issue can be seen mostly within older generations but is still occurring across all other generations. Continuing on, family celebrations also are very similar in the United States and Colombia. Birthdays or holidays like Christmas are seen as a time where family can get together, converse about their lives, and have a few drinks. Lastly, the night life of young adults is very similar within Colombia and big cities within the United States; the weekends are a time to gather with friends, drink some beers or liquor, and dance the night away. This reflecting experience allowed me to understand important communication aspects of my own country and Colombia.

Through increased practice with Spanish and the Colombian culture I have been able to understand and make realizations about the United States; these realizations allowed me to understand cultural rules and biases along with contexts and boundaries within the United States. For example, I have been able to better understand and recognize micro aggressions that are present in the United States that are not commonly seen in Colombia. These micro aggressions include racial comments, subtle discrimination, and gender inequality. I have also been able to realize the white privilege that exists within the United States; white privilege can be seen within the work force, education, and social institutions. Within Colombia there is not a lot of racial discrimination present; power is based heavily upon social class. Finally, I have realized the prevalence of the melting pot culture within the United States and its influence on our society. I was able to make this realization by noticing a wide variety of cultural values within Colombia and better understanding how our melting pot society stripes away other cultures' uniqueness.. With increased practice of Spanish and with another culture, my views towards my own culture have been expanded.

Through increased practice with Spanish I have been able to recognize and participate in cultural differences within Colombia; This allowed me to be able to draw connections between multiple personal experiences and issues related to language and culture within Colombia and the United States. This experience has allowed me to be aware of the varied contexts and boundaries of my own culture and cultural aspects of Colombia.