Diario de Fotos de Guatemala

Amanda Paragon
El último lugar que nosotros visitamos fue El Basurero. Necesitamos ir en el cementerio en la Ciudad de Guatemala para ver El Basurero. Cuando salí de la coche, podía oler la basura antes de que pudiera ver la basura. Vi muchas personas buscando en la basura para vendirla. Hay muchos buitres arriba de las personas. Los camiones conducen en El Basurero y los trabajadores miran para la basura cuando los camiones ponerla en las pilas. Después de aprendí del Basurero, estuve triste para visitar este lugar and mirar a los personas que trabajar en El Basurero.

The dump is located in Guatemala City, where 1,500 tons of trash are produced everyday making El Basurero the size of 24 football fields (Benz, 1996). Guajeros are people that scavenge through the trash in order to make a living. Although people used to live in the dump, there are now restrictions on the hours that people are allowed to spend in the dump. Guajeros are allowed to work from 6:00am until 6:00pm and no one under the age of 14 is allowed inside to work. These limits were set after a fire occurred in the dump in 2005 (Recycled Life).

After seeing El Basurero, Steve discussed his insights into the lives of the guajeros, as he has seen while living in Guatemala. Steve stated that Guatemalan people compare the workers to their job and think of the people as trash themselves. This makes it hard for a worker to ever find a new job and change his or her lifestyle. However, as Steve agreed, the workers see their job of selling their findings as a good source of income.

I experienced the dump as a sojourner and tried to see the work through the employees’ perspectives. Rather than viewing the people as others see them, I tried to understand their lives and their work. The guajeros are very hard working and help to recycle a lot of the garbage that is produced each day in Guatemala (Benz, 1996). Recycling in the United States can be contrasted to Guatemala because in the U.S., we recycle to help the environment; however, in Guatemala, people recycle in order to live (Reparando). Even though I know the people are making a living for themselves, I was still very sad to look out over El Basurero. Occupational therapists aim to help their clients participate in meaningful occupations. Spending most of their day scavenging through the garbage may not allow time for the workers to do something that they enjoy. Luckily, children whose parents work in El Basurero are now being provided with an education and learn that they do not have to grow up and work in the dump like their parents. The goal behind their education is to provide these children with other jobs and end the cycle of poverty in the families (Recycled Life).
El Hogar de la Esperanza
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En El Hogar de la Esperanza, yo encontré doce niños que viven con Daryl y su familia. Nosotros pasamos dos días en el hogar. Trabajamos con Lisa, el terapista ocupacional en el hogar. Utilizamos el cuarto de terapia y el patio trasero para trabajar con los niños. Hay equipo y muchos cuidadores en el hogar. Aprendí mucho de las terapistas sobre los diagnósticos y técnicas de terapia. También, aprendí sobre problemas culturales en Guatemala como la adopción y malnutrición.

The children at Daryl’s Home experienced homelessness because their parents were unable or unwilling to care for them. Daryl and his family have opened their home to these children and consider the kids to be part of their own family. Many children were malnourished before they moved to Daryl’s Home. One young girl at the home was malnourished because her parents could not provide a safe diet for her or their family. Once she is healthy again, she will return to live with her parents, as long as they are able to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle for her. Her story illustrates the issue of malnutrition in Guatemala. Her biological parents’ inability to nourish her properly resulted in them temporarily giving up caring for her. However, they continue to show her their love by visiting her at El Hogar de la Esperanza.

Daryl’s wife, Wanda, shared her insights into the restrictions on adoption in Guatemala. International adoption of children from Guatemala has been closed since 2008, due to corruption in the adoption process. The issues regarding adoption in Guatemala are included in the invisible culture on Edward T. Hall’s Iceberg. The adoption policies are not visibly seen, but affect the lives of many, including Wanda’s family. Wanda hopes that the adoption will be reopened to the United States in order to increase the likelihood that the children in her home will be adopted. She stated that there are not many Guatemalan people interested in adopting children with disabilities, which is why there have not been many children adopted from their home. She believes that families from the United States would be interested in adopted her children. Therefore, by hearing from Wanda, I can see how the policies on adoption in Guatemala have affected her family. The restrictions on adoption have created issues in her life in Guatemala and have prevented her children from finding new homes.
El Transporte
El Transporte


Traveling in the bed of a truck is one unique mode of transportation in Guatemala. Although the roads in Guatemala City were packed with cars, a lot of Guatemalan people do not own a car. Therefore, it is common to walk or travel by chicken buses. These buses are seen throughout Guatemala, usually crammed with people who pay a fee to ride the bus. Transportation can be contrasted between Guatemala and the United States. For example, after a therapy session at Missionaries of the Highway, a mother and her son sat back down in the front room and waited for a bus to arrive. She could not leave after her appointment because she needed to wait for her transportation. Although public transportation is an option in the United States, most people take advantage of having their own cars and being able to drive any place at any time. This difference in our cultures caused me to appreciate being able to drive a car every day; however, I realized that this is a luxury and is not necessary. By noticing the differences among our cultures, I have changed my outlook on daily life in the United States and realized that we could survive with a lot less.

On the back of the truck, I experienced the curves and hills of the streets in Guatemala. I enjoyed this unique experience as we explored many areas of Santiago Atitlan. The children who travelled with us as we explored Santiago Atitlan asked Steve for permission to ride with us on the back of the truck. They stayed with us until it was time to travel back across the lake. These children exhibited the roles of Guatemalan children. After spending the day with us, the children asked us to buy souvenirs from them. Many children in Guatemala must work, along with their parents, in order to support their families. This is different from the roles of children in the United States where laws prevent children from working. Also, the children were allowed to travel with us, without the supervision of their parents. This is also different in the United States where a parent would not allow their child to spend the day with strangers, especially without knowing where they are traveling to.
La Educación
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Visitamos la escuela que se llama Amigos Por Siempre en La Vega. Los estudiantes nos enseñaron sobre la cultura de los Mayas. Los estudiantes prepararon las parodias y las presentaciones. Ellos jugaron canciones con las marimbas. Ellos vistieron en la ropa típica de la cultura. Ellos hicieron las alfombras para mostrar parte de la religión de los Mayas. Aprendí sobre el calendario Mayan, rituales de las bodas, Corpus Christi, la ropa típica y otras cosas. También, aprendí vocabulario de español y Kaqchiquel. Aprendí que otra palabra para los estudiantes es las alumnas. Los maestros y los estudiantes fueron muy simpáticos y nos llamaron sus amigos por siempre. Estuve feliz conoci los estudiantes y me gustan sus presentaciones.

As part of the curriculum at the school, the students were required to prepare presentations for an audience. Therefore, similar to the United States, the school follows a required curriculum with graded assignments and the faculty expects a lot out of their students. Each of the students receives a scholarship to attend the school. It was evident that the teachers and students strongly valued the education; however, it is not likely that all of the students will continue their education after middle school at La Vega. Therefore, unlike in the United States, there are not laws requiring the children to attend school and get an education. Many children, especially the girls will need to stay home and take on roles helping around the house. Because education at this school is a privilege to those who receive scholarships, the children all seemed enthusiastic to be at school and be learning. The teachers encourage the students to continue their education after middle school and teach them to believe in themselves.

Their strong value for education at the school was evident as the students taught us a lot in the small time that we were there. The presentations were interpreted, which allowed me to practice comprehending the language, then hear it translated in English to comprehend what I did not understand in Spanish. The principal of the school also taught us a few Kaqchiquel words, which is a Mayan language. The students incorporated visuals into the presentations, which they worked hard to prepare for us. In each classroom, huipiles and cortes of different towns were displayed on the walls. Indigenous women dress in this typical clothing which illustrates her belonging to her town (Glittenberg, 1994). Because the clothes are seen in everyday life, the typical clothing is included in the visible culture of Edward T. Hall’s Iceberg model. The students also created alfombras in order to teach us about the religious values and beliefs, which is a part of the invisible culture of the iceberg model. Alfombras are rugs made out of sawdust and laid out in the streets during religious procession for the priests to parade over. The students created beautiful alfombras which gave me an idea of how the streets look during these Holy Weeks.
El Lago Atitlán

Lake Atitlán is a common tourist site, which helps the towns near the lake (Benz, 1996). While visiting Lake Atitlán, I experienced what it was like to be both a tourist and a sojourner. As we approached the lake in the bus, I was overwhelmed by the beautiful sight. I felt like a tourist on the boat as I took multiple pictures of the scenic lake and volcanoes surrounding it. However, when I was reminded of the issues surrounding the lake, my experience changed to that of a sojourner. Unlike a tourist who might only admire the scenery, a sojourner examines the scene from the perspective of the local people. Lake Atitlán has increasingly been polluted with sewage, which affects the way Guatemalan people are able to use the lake. Activities like fishing and swimming have become less common because the contaminated water no longer allows for people to safely participate in these activities.

I also saw women washing their clothes in the edge of the water. In the United States, most people take advantage of having a laundry machine and dryer in their home. In Guatemala, people must wash their clothes by hand. Although the lake is contaminated, the women may not have access to any other areas to wash their clothes and must do so in the lake. By thinking of the issues that the Guatemalan people may face because of the contamination in the water, I experienced the lake as a sojourner.

Furthermore, not only is the safety of the water an issue by the lake, but water contamination is an issue affecting Guatemala as a whole. Human waste and garbage is disposed in lakes, causing the untreated water to be unsafe to drink. I adapted my lifestyle during my week in Guatemala based on the issue of the contaminated water. The only water we were able to drink was purified and sold in jugs. Although it was not a problem to avoid drinking the faucet water, we were fortunate to have the purified water already provided for us. Poverty is an issue in Guatemala; therefore, buying purified water may be a large expense for many families. Therefore, this is a serious issue which affects the daily lifestyle and affordances of Guatemalan people.
En el martes, nosotros comimos con los estudiantes de terapia ocupacional de Rafael Landivar. Tuvimos una cena deliciosa en el hotel Santa Ana. Steph, Kathryn, y yo hablamos con María, una estudiante de terapia ocupacional. Ella fue muy simpático. Hablamos sobre nuestras programas de terapia ocupacional y carreras futuras. Después de la cena, nosotras practiquemos las juguetes que podemos usar en la terapia. Fue una buena experiencia para practicar el español.

As a college student, Maria seemed to have a similar experience as we do in the United States. Maria’s home is eight hours away from her school but she lives near her school during the year, which is also common in the United States. During our conversation, we also shared information about therapy in each of our cultures and found that we shared similar goals. As a practitioner, Maria hopes to work with mothers and teach them how to care for their children with disabilities. In the United States, therapists also share this goal and aim to advocate for their clients by educating others on how to help them.

By hearing about Maria’s experience as an occupational therapy student, I gained insights into the medical field in Guatemala. Maria stated that the children that therapists see have already received a diagnosis from their doctor. This is similar in the United States; however, during therapy, many therapists find that the client has been misdiagnosed. Therefore, therapists must make sure the diagnosis is correct when meeting with a client. This illustrates issues in the medical field in Guatemala because a misdiagnosis may lead to improper care of a child.

Not only was the meeting with the therapy students an interesting way to learn about therapy in Guatemala, but it also allowed me to practice my Spanish speaking skills. Maria taught us the Spanish words for different diagnoses which will likely be helpful to know in my future career. For example, parálisis cerebral y autismo are the Spanish terms for cerebral palsy and autism. While speaking to Maria, she was patient with my Spanish and spoke slowly to that I could comprehend. I enjoyed this dinner and chose this picture because it was the best experience that I have had, utilizing my Spanish skills.
Los Mercados
Los Mercados


On the first day in Guatemala, we visited a market in Antigua. Rather than exploring the tourist market, we journeyed into the local market to experience the culture. The market was tightly packed with people and products, making it difficult to even walk through. There were many fruits and vegetables, some of which I had not seen before. I enjoyed this cultural experience when I was able to see what it is like for Guatemalan people to go the market.

The markets are an important source of income for many Guatemalans. Many people sell their handmade items or produce in the markets for cash or barter in order to earn a living (Glittenberg, 1994). Family members work together in the market systems and depend on each other to make an income (Glittenberg, 1994). I saw many children near the markets selling handmade bracelets and other textiles. Therefore, rather than participating in play activities, children are required to work for the family. Families also work together to set up their markets. Indigenous people wrap their products in a servilleta, or an all purpose cloth, and carry them on their head or back (Glittenberg, 1994). Not only do families come together to earn money in the market, but it is also a social gathering.

Going to the markets can also be seen as a pastime in Guatemala. Near the markets in Antigua, people were seen relaxing and talking with others. Many people had baskets of handmade items to sell but others were simply spending time in this crowded area. Ryan LaValle discussed the scene from an occupational therapist’s point of view and pointed out that many people were not participating in any sort of meaningful occupation. However, with the many people present, the market can be a very social place and a good opportunity to interact with others.
Accessibilidad
Cuando caminábamos en las calles de Antigua, vi los signos que dicen las aceras son accesible para las personas que usan las sillas de ruedas. Las calles son de las piedras. Creo que es difícil para usar las sillas de ruedas en este ciudad. Una silla de ruedas no puede usar los bordillos altos. También, hay muchas colinas y por eso es difícil para empujar una silla de ruedas.

Based on my observations while walking through Antigua, I could see differences between the culture in the United States and in Guatemala. In the United States, there are laws that require public places to be accessible to all people. Even though there are signs on the sidewalks in Guatemala claiming to be accessible, it is evident that one would have difficulties using a wheelchair there. Because the city does not require adaptations to be made, people in wheelchairs adapt for themselves (A Wheelchair for Petronilia). For example, people learn how to lift the wheels in order to pull the chair over the curbs and onto the sidewalks. However, even if a person is able to use their wheelchair on these rough pathways, the wheelchair must be durable enough to avoid damage from the uneven ground (A Wheelchair for Petronilia). If a wheelchair gets damaged, they are hard to repair and it may be difficult to replace a broken wheelchair due to the poverty in Guatemala.

This issue is important to me as I witnessed how the inaccessible sidewalks may affect children with disabilities. Accessibility became an issue when we provided a walker for a child at Missionaries of the Highway. The boy was able to walk using the donated walker; however, we needed to make sure that he would be able to utilize it in his home and community. Our goal was to make walking easier for him, but if he could not use his walker on the rigid floors, we would be doing the opposite and making it more difficult for him to walk. Fortunately the boy had an area in his home where the floor was flat enough in order to use the walker with ease.

The lack of accessibility in Guatemala is a serious issue as it impacts the participation of individuals with disabilities. Being unable to access an area of the community may result in the person being confined to certain areas of the town. This can lead to a lack of participation in meaningful activities and therefore is an important issue relevant to occupational therapy.
Centro de Capacitacion Ocupacional

Children with disabilities ages 14-18 must apply to get into this day program. At the center, the children learn many subjects in order to be well rounded in skills needed to find a job. The center illustrates the importance of the value of work in Guatemala. Because it is necessary for all family members to work, the center ensures that these individuals are not discriminated against when looking for a job. With the needed skills, every individual should be given the opportunity to work.

During our visit, we watched their soccer team practice for the Special Olympics. I enjoyed watching the students play and engage in an activity that they found to be meaningful. The students had access to a nice soccer field in a local park which shows a positive aspect of the community.

The staff at el Centro de Capacitacion Ocupacional discussed the difficulties an individual with disabilities faces when trying to find a job in Guatemala. Therefore, the center teaches these individuals skills related to jobs that may be suitable for him or her. For example, the jobs that the students are likely to find illustrate the gender roles seen in Guatemala. At the center, boys learn to cook while girls learn beauty school skills. This is because most places do not hire women to work in the kitchens in Guatemala. However, the center is not successful in finding jobs for everyone. Even if the teenagers do not find jobs, they still learn multiple skills in order to increase their participation in occupations that they find meaningful.
La Familia
La Familia

La familia es muy importante de las personas en Guatemala. Durante de mi servicio, yo ví la importancia de la familia con mis clientes. Una madre visitó la casa de Daryl con su niña para la terapia. La madre fue muy interesado en las técnicas y quiso a ayudar su niña. Las familias fueron una parte de la terapia en Missionaries of the Highway también. Ví mucho amor para los niños que yo conozco que los padres dan buena atención a los niños.

Similar to the culture in the United States, family is very important in Guatemala. Throughout the trip, I was touched by the amount of love and support shown by family members. The value of family is part of the invisible culture on the iceberg in Guatemala. This value was evident in the families that I met throughout the trip. Although the children in Daryl’s Home were previously homeless, Daryl’s family accepts the children as their own family members and shows each and every one of them an equal amount of love. At Missionaries of the Highway, the children I met all had family members with them who were interested in being a part of the therapy session in order to learn how to help the child. These family members included mothers, grandmothers, and siblings. Each person expressed a desire to learn about their child’s diagnosis and therapy techniques. By travelling to receive therapy, the families showed their concern, love, and devotion to their children’s well-being. The caregivers also gratefully thanked us for our service, which showed how much they valued our help to their children.

My experiences with the families in Guatemala represented what I learned about the Guatemalan culture. The indigenous people, who take life as it is naturally, value family as the most important aspect of life (Glittenberg, 1994). The strong value of family is part of the invisible culture of the Guatemalan iceberg. As Glittenberg (1994) noticed while in Patzun, Indian families stay together when they go out into the community. The families travel close together in unity. To me, this illustrates that nothing can separate the family members. This closeness is unique to the culture of the indigenous people in Guatemala.
References


• Videos:
  • A Wheelchair for Petronilia
  • Recycled Life
  • Reparando