

# Intercultural communications essay comparing new york, california and italy

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



## New York City Suburbs, Middle Class Orange County, And Italy: Explored

There are many definitions for “ culture. ” The best definition and the definition that we use is “ Culture is a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms and social practices which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people. ” Culture is often times taken for granted because we aren’t constantly reminded of our culture. It is not until we leave our culture and our everyday norms that we start to realize our own culture and the variances in cultures.

This experience will help to expand our knowledge of other cultures, as well as allowing us to understand our own culture better. The first culture that we look at is Zach’s culture. When looking at my own culture, it is difficult to identify which culture that I belong to the best. I think I best associate myself with the culture of my hometown. In a small town just outside of New York City, a variety of different ethnicities occupy this town. Although this is the case, the vast majority of the inhabitants are Italian-Americans, and everyone lives quite a similar lifestyle.

As a young adult in this culture, you either start working or go to school. It is expected of both men and women to do one of the two options. Considering the fact that everyone does one of the two, or both, it is unusual and frowned upon to be doing absolutely nothing. The individual in my culture is very important. Everyone is expected to be the best they could be. So, if school isn’t their forte, then getting into the workforce is the path they should take. Whether you go to school or go straight to work does not determine whether you are a success or a failure.

Being successful just means that you are doing something that you want to do and making a substantial amount of money to live. People in my culture are glorified more when they have white-collar jobs. Being just outside of New York City, many families have someone that works there. The idea of taking the train to work is something that many adolescences strive before because that is what they believe is what it means to be successful at the time. Young adults in my culture all partake in similar activities and ways of life. There are minor differences in some areas, but for the most part we are quite comparable.

In my culture, young adults are always keeping busy. Activities include: from working out, playing sports, going to movies, attending ball games, going out to bars and relaxing at a friend's house. It is very common in my culture to have a very large friends group, especially guys. A typical day off for anyone could include any of those activities. The day in a life of any person in my culture is busy and stressful. Work and school take up the majority of the day and then other activities, like attending the gym or being part of team, occur post work and school.

Dinner is the only time of day that everyone has a little bit of time to relax and enjoy family time. During dinner, families converse about events that took place during the day and about upcoming events. Family is very important in my culture. Family always comes first. Whenever a family gathering is taking place, it is more common to attend that event than it is to do some other activity. Pride is something that is in full affect in my culture and any culture

in my area. Although everyone associates himself or herself with our local culture, they are still very proud to be a New Yorker.

Often times we are thought of as overly confident or cocky. This is probably because we have this mentality that we are the only people on the earth and everything else revolves around us. My culture accurately defines me. I lived in my hometown and with my culture my whole life and I have been surrounded with the norms and beliefs of my community. I am a part of a friends group that partakes in every activity that is common in my culture. We love sports and fitness, as well as going to the movies or a ball game. Although I take pride in having such a strong friends group, I don't forget where I come from.

I love spending time with my family and always dedicate adequate time to seeing them. For example, every weekend I go out to dinner with my parents and my sister. I look forward to events where I can hang out with my extended family because I don't get to see them often due to how far they live from me. I like to think I have a successful future ahead of me because I am attending a university and have plans of working and living the American dream. Conclusively, my life and personality coincide greatly with my culture and community.

Next we take a look at Troy's culture. In my culture, I have noticed that making a connection with someone, even if they are a stranger you may never see again, is extremely prevalent. Common "small talk" like asking how their day's going is highly valued in my culture and to me personally. I have taken small acts of politeness for granted growing up in Orange County

and did not notice them until entering other cultures around the world. For example, I find it rude to not hold the door open for someone behind you even if they are ten feet away from entering.

Basically everyone does it in my culture but this is not the same everywhere else. For example, I noticed that it is common for people from the East coast to not even realize this small aspect of everyday life. One thing I have begun to miss is the absence of eye contact and smiling at random strangers during everyday activities in public. It personally brightens my day when someone I don't know passing by gives you a genuine smile without a specific reason. Here in Italy, I have noticed that it is common for Italians to avoid eye contact if possible and it is rare to randomly smile at a passerby.

At first I viewed it as they were cold or in a bad mood, but now I understand that it simply is a cultural difference between our countries. One of my best friends from elementary school through high school is a perfect example of an Orange County middle-class male. His name is Robbie Jepson and he possesses a majority of the qualities of a young male from Southern California. He has long beach blonde hair and tan skin all year round. He loves to skateboard, snowboard, and surf depending on the season. He listens to alternative rock while recognizing the popular Top 40 music.

He is unbelievably genuine and extremely close with all our group of friends. Plus, his family is not just his family; they are his best and closest friends. He was always very popular with everyone at our high school, which is why he won Prom King our senior year. He works at Active Ride Shop, which is a well-known skateboarding company, and is training to become a Real Estate

Agent. He attended a junior college for two years and then transferred to a university, which is extremely common for students in Orange County trying to save money.

He is religious and values meeting people who are equally as genuine as him. He enjoys volunteering in his free time and will always hold the door open for you no matter what mood he is in. All of these aspects I just previously mentioned are extremely common for males in my culture. Over the years, I have viewed him as a role model and try and imitate some of his qualities to become a “ better” person. A typical day for a middle class male in Orange County must be adventurous. I feel that we share a common desire for some sort of adrenaline rush no matter what it involves.

We consistently go to the beach, mountains, or desert depending on the time of year. For example, in my life, I have been skydiving, bungee jumping, zip lining, and parasailing which all result in an adrenaline rush. However, there are aspects of my culture that I tend to differ with. For example, country music is unbelievably popular with my culture but I cannot stand listening to this genre of music. There are country concerts that basically everyone goes to during spring break every year called Stagecoach, which I never plan on attending even if it was free.

I cannot explain exactly why I dislike country music; I just cannot stand when I hear some play it. Another aspect I differ from my culture is the popularity of eating “ fast food” like Taco Bell, Carl’s Jr, McDonalds, etc. I use to eat at these places as a child but I have now realized how unhealthy they are for my body so I choose not to anymore. The only “ fastfood” places I will eat at

now are Subway and Chipotle and these are not unhealthy like the places I mentioned already. I enjoy cooking at home and would rather save my money to spend on something else.

Overall, I have enjoyed being a part of my culture growing up and learning the values and ethics that are apart of being from Orange County. There are still aspects of our culture that can be improved upon when comparing to others but that can be said for every culture no matter where you are in the world. This course has broadened my understanding of my culture in a positive way because I had never put much thought into it before because I have grown up in it so it is difficult to question why things work the way they do.

Before, I looked at our culture with the mindset of “ it’s just the way it is” which correlates with the story of a fish knowing if it’s wet or not. After reflecting on our own cultures, we interviewed Italians and read articles and books to take a deeper look at the Italian culture. The Italian culture is a fascinating entity. Their norms, beliefs and values are remarkable. The three most highly valued aspects of Italian culture are: religion, food and family. Religion is very important to the Italian culture. The Catholic Church is something that “ present in every community” (Solly 54).

The Pope is highly recognized amongst Italians. The Catholic Church is preferred to tangible and visual, hence pictures of Madonna, the Pope, local saints, and football stars are posted everywhere” (Solly 55). This goes to show the importance of religion and the big part that it plays in the household. Sunday is a day where everyone gathers at the local parrish for

Sunday Mass. This is another way of bringing the family together, all dressed in their " Sunday Best. " As Lisa Anna Izzo describes in an interview regarding Italian culture, " the fact that Italians are usually always together and eating says a lot! This is nothing short of the truth. Food is so important to Italy and a conversation about Italians and Italian culture cannot end without the talks of food. Pasta is a staple of an Italian meal. It is also one of three course of the Italian lunch. This three-course meal includes a lot of food, like pasta, meat and vegetables. As Lisa Anna says " You will never go hungry in an Italian household. " Lunch is the meal during the day where the family gathers. Over this three-course meal, they enjoy each other's company and talk about all different topics, including politics, religion, and calcio.

Giuseppe D'Aloisio comments on the importance of family in an interview regarding his idea of the Italian culture by saying " the town that I am from is very small, therefore everyone is extremely close to each other and sometimes we consider people who truly aren't family as family. " This is a very interesting quote because in the United States and in my culture it isn't that common to have such a small town where everyone is that close. But, it just goes to show how important family is for the Italians.

For one of my classes, I had the opportunity to go on a field trip to the Grevi hat factory and interview the owners and a few of the employees. Bepe Grevi, the main owner today, talked a good amount about the family company, which was started in 1875. The fact that the company has been in the same family expresses the Italian's high-context culture. This exemplifies their strong interpersonal bonds, their high commitment, and their closeness



between families. In the United States, family businesses do not exist for as long because children often do not want to follow in their parent's footsteps.

They would prefer to branch out and create their own legacy and encourage their children to do the same. It is intriguing to see a day in the life of a young adult in the Italian culture. Football is very prominent in the Italian culture. Most kids and young adults are always kicking a football around with each other. Lisa Anna states, " kids usually go to the football field and play and everyone goes to hang out and watch them. " Even the people that do not play football are still involved with it because it becomes a retreat for all the youngsters to gather.

It is extremely common for friends and family to get together on Sundays to eat a big meal with each other and watch their local football team on TV during the afternoon according to Solly's Xenophobe's Guide to the Italians. Spending time with friends is a common practice my young adults. Giuseppe talks of " riding around on vespas with friends until everyone has to go home for dinner. " Other regular routines included relaxing in the piazza or going to a bar or discoteca at night. Drinking is something that occurs amongst teens and young adults in Italy.

There is no drinking age in Italy allowing for teens to start drinking a lot earlier than in the States. In Italy, however, teens and adults, alike, are consuming alcohol in a different manor. They are casual drinkers. For example, it is very common for teens in Italy to have a glass or two of wine with dinner and their families. They are not going out and binge drinking, like teens and young adults often do in America. When comparing the United

States and Italian cultures, Italians are much more high context than Americans. Small aspects of their everyday life will provide evidence to back up this statement.

For example, when looking at Hall's taxonomy, Italians tend to use more indirect messages than Americans who rely on direct messages, especially in the classroom. My classes abroad have been much less structured than back home and give far fewer directions for assignments. By no means is this a negative aspect because it allows students to be more creative with their projects and essays. Another aspect of Hall's taxonomy is the Italian culture's orientation to time. It is far more loose and flexible when compared to the American's orientation to time.

An example of this would be the commonality for an Italian to be late to lunch with you because they saw one of their friends on the way and talked to them for twenty minutes because of the combination of their strong interpersonal bonds and their flexible and open time schedule. Whereas, an American would be offended if you showed up late to lunch because they view it as wasting their time. The well-known concept of "time is money" could explain the difference of cultures more effectively. Americans always have to be on the go and productive or else they feel like they are wasting money in a sense.

Whereas Italians are comfortable going through the day "wasting" their time talking to someone because they enjoy making strong personal connections with friends and family, which I strongly prefer over the hectic American way of life. In our interviews, we unfortunately did not ask anyone about

superstition, but it is something we have noticed since coming to Italy. Even as baseball players while growing up, which is a game that involves a great amount of superstitious habits, we have realized that Italians are even more superstitious just by observing them over a couple month p.

One example is when talking about their local football team, Fiorentina. They do not like to seem overconfident or say anything before it happens because they do not want to “ jinx” their team. There are other aspects of life that they are superstitious but this is what we felt was strongest and most prevalent when coming to superstition. The Italian culture has a lot of captivating aspects to it. The prevalence of religion, family and food are great intriguing. These three highly valued aspects of their life all work together.

The family is a huge staple in Italian culture. Lunch is an important three-course meal that brings together the family with a large quantity of food. The Catholic Church is highly recognized and has great power in the Italian culture. Sundays are dedicated to relaxation and attending Sunday Mass, where again the family is brought together. Italy has a much different view of time, as it is much more lackadaisical than back in the United States. Superstitions are widespread in the Italian culture, especially with soccer.

Soccer in the Italian culture is a way of life and many youngsters could be seen playing at the field or in the streets or piazza. Conclusively, by looking at the Italian culture and its different aspects has allowed us to strengthen our intercultural competence and overall knowledge of a different culture than our own. After looking at these three different cultures, we came to

realize the differences that occur between each. The high importance of friends and friendships is a common ground between all three cultures. A difference amongst the three is the meaning of food and the different types of food.

New York City suburbs and Orange County both have their many fast food businesses as well as local restaurants. Food in the Italian culture is all about quality and appearance. Their famous three-course meal supplies an abundance of food for families to gather and feast. In conclusion, by exploring the social norms, beliefs and values of these three cultures we are now have a stronger sense of intercultural competence and have a better understanding of not only our own culture, but the Italian culture and a different culture within our own country.