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Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person

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Person to Person in Ireland

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Field Notes From Abroad: Person to Person Ireland

I found that the culture of going out is very different from going out at home. At home being out on the town is something that happens once or twice a week and speaking as a college student it seems to be something that is for the younger generation to partake in, not just college age but people in there 20's and 30's as well. While I have been studying here I have noticed that going out is a nightly thing and it is not limited to a single generation. Being out and socializing with others seems to be a big part of the life style and culture here. This was actually a hard thing for me to get used to. I am used to it being acceptable to stay in on a weeknight. While I feel that many people that I meet go out on nights that I feel most people at home would stay in. There is something very social about this that I have to say I still do not fully understand even though I have participated in it. There is more to it then just going out and drinking, the going out culture permeates other aspects of Irish life as well. I think that coming to Ireland and not going out would be losing a major part of the cultural experience.

There is an openness here that feels very similar but also has some differences. Ireland is not a saving face society; it is more about openness and directness. People usually say what they mean; they do not run around in conversation circles or hide any secret meanings. One difference in the directness that I noticed is different then at home. Though people are direct in there statements often personal business is kept personal until two people get to know each other better. When I meet and talk to people in Ireland I often get a life story in the introduction. People are not just direct they are also very open about there personal lives what they have done, where they have been and where they are from. Sometimes this openness throws me back a bit. I feel that culturally I am used to people being open but only after you get to know. I am used to this underlying idea about being able to trust or know a person before you open up to them. That this barrier goes away in Ireland and as a result

people have a tendency to be more open than I am normally used to. For me this has been a little bit difficult to get used to but it means that I have learned a lot about someone in a short amount of time.

I love talking and getting to know people the more I do the more I feel like I understand my host country. I love hearing about different perspectives to something that I often think about. For example accents, there are many different accents around the United States often they are far apart geographically. I never really thought about Ireland having the same thing because geographically it is a lot smaller. However I learned since coming here that not only are there many different accents but that someone who is considered truly Irish will be able to identify all the different accents. Since learning this I have been paying more attention to the way people speak. I have noticed that people do have very distinct accents and that while some people might talk in one manner others will talk in another. However I still cannot identify what areas of the country these different accents come from. I think that my perspectives are constantly being changed, when I first got here I thought how can a place that seems so similar in some ways be so different in others. As I learn and figure things out I find that sometimes instead of making it easier to understand it sometimes just adds on to more of the differences.

I interviewed a girl I volunteer with named Larua O'Connell. I volunteer with a group called University for You that introduces older primary school kids to the NUIG and encourages them to go to school.