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Embracing Cultural Differences

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Nottingham, England
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Embracing Cultural Differences

While speaking with my interviewee, I noticed how much she emphasized the importance of fun and relaxation, which is something that I have begun to embrace since arriving in England. The culture here tends to be centered around fun social events such as clubbing, going out for drinks with friends, and other types of group activities aside from work/academia. Shops around Europe also typically close early or altogether on Sundays, to allow people the opportunity to attend church or have a rest day. This type of idea is unfamiliar to me because rest days usually aren't intentionally placed in the schedule. I think this type of climate is good for everyone within the community to encourage relaxation, like with family dinners, which are incredibly common in the U.K. In the U.S., I think we tend to focus on our careers with such seriousness, that we feel like we always have to work harder and better than everyone else, even if that means avoiding fun and relaxation. In England, I feel as if the community and the relationships that one forms help prevent the type of tunnel vision that many people in the States face.

Social norms and attitudes also differ at the University of Nottingham. My interviewee mentioned that accommodations around campus don't always take priority, which is something that I've noticed as well, especially compared to my experiences working as an RA at Linfield. At Linfield, college housing embraces community life through hall events, meetings, and theme bulletin boards, but that type of stuff doesn't exist at schools in England. On campus here, socialization tends to occur in more natural settings such as interactions in the dining hall, meeting with neighbors, and spending time in common spaces. This also means that students are

more responsible for creating their social circle and engaging with the community, rather than relying on RAs or other school-sponsored events. This difference is important because it teaches people how to be more self-sufficient in creating relationships, however, this can be hard for those who struggle with social dynamics or meeting new people.

My interviewee shared that since being here, she has felt more inclined to share and discuss her own beliefs and principles with others. This type of mindset aligns similarly with ideas of free speech in the U.S. In terms of cultural differences, she also discussed how she believes that social niceties are more prominent in England than in the U.S., which I agree with. People here are more naturally inclined to greet everyone with a friendly and warm demeanor and are always willing to help out, whereas people in the States tend to exist in their world and aren't always enthusiastic to help others. I have enjoyed my time here so far and I am starting to adjust to some of the more communal aspects of society. I am now embracing some of the common values and practices of the people here, which has allowed me to reflect on myself and the U.S. I think that everyone would benefit from more cultural exposure and socialization with others. You never know what you'll learn!