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Person to Person in Japan

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Person to Person in Japan

Although the person I interviewed has different customs and norms than me, honestly nothing about her daily life or outlooks was especially surprising to me. Despite that of course the way people live in Japan is notably different from the way I live in America, there is historical, logical and other reasons behind the customs, mores and habits of the people here and these differences, even if unfamiliar to me, are in no way wrong or weird; they are simply different

Even at home I meet people every day with different lifestyles and perspectives than myself. In the end, the similarities far outnumber the differences between me and the person I interviewed. We both value family, like similar music and fashion. We both like to look for good deals when shopping and both like drinking coffee. Differences? I don't like tofu as much as she does and I can't use chopsticks as well as her. Opposite of her, I prefer to take a shower over a bath. She rides a bike as a means of transportation more often than I do. The differences were really as trivial as these examples. We discussed and agreed that although of course there are different ways of doing things between the two cultures, each person also has their own way of living and in the end, despite cultural differences, people everywhere have a fundamentally similar human experience. Cultures and individuals may seem to be vastly different, but at the core we are all people with similar needs, struggles, thoughts and desires.

One thing that the person I interviewed mentioned that she thought might be a notable difference between the cultures of Japan and America, however, was the amount of people that practice religions/the prevalence of Christianity in America as opposed to Japan. Although it is true that there are more people who proclaim to actively practice religions in America than in Japan, religious (namely Shinto and Buddhism) influences can be found weaved into Japanese daily life and customs, and many people who would not necessarily recognize themselves as religious take

part in customs with religious connotations such as visiting a shrine for New Years. Religious practices in America are extremely varied and quite individualized and the same can be said for Japan. Religion has a notable influence on both cultures, although in America these may seem more pronounced at first glance.

This interview experience helped me to realize that even if two cultures appear to be vastly different, even two given people of the same culture are also quite unique. At the same time, beyond these cultural differences, people are quite similar in nature anywhere in the world; everyone holds their own opinions, like and dislikes and everything else that makes us human. Through this realization I can look at both my host and home country with new eyes to appreciate the differences that distinguish and similarities that tie us.

Miki Kurokawa, host mother, interviewed 10/27/11