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The English Culture Experience

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11/25/2022

The English Culture Experience

Ethnocentrism: the tendency to look at the world from the perspective of your own culture and, often, the idea that your culture is superior. It isn't until you go and experience, or even just witness, another culture that your perspective truly changes. Luckily, I was granted the chance to experience another culture firsthand. I have been living and studying in England for a couple of months and even made some amazing friends. I interviewed one in particular to get a more in-depth idea of what English culture is like.

A few things surprised me about the lifestyle, norms, habits, etc. Firstly, the food habits and norms. Certain foods that are common to my interviewee, aren't so common to me, and I have to say I was quick to judge at first. My interviewee, in fact, had me try a couple of British staples. One specific staple is beans and toast. It is common here in England to have such a staple for breakfast or even a snack, but I had never heard of such a thing till coming here and, to my surprise, I liked it. Vice versa, fast food is normal to me but discouraged by my interviewee. Another surprise was how non-ethnocentric the English are compared to very ethnocentric America. Maybe it's because England is so close to so many other cultures, and America is secluded, so large and away. Maybe it's because of the amount of American-based tv, movies, and music in England. Whatever the reason may be, my interviewee knows a lot more about America and other cultures than I did about England and other cultures. In fact, it seems that my

interviewee was taught to be more open, welcoming, polite, and friendlier than I ever grew up knowing. Lastly, the norm of walking and public transport was a surprise. It is so common for me not to walk, and I was taught as a kid to never walk alone or take public transport alone because the world is a scary place. However, after talking to my interviewee, that is not the idea in England. It is a lot safer to walk alone and take public transport, it is encouraged. The world is not so much a scary place, but America sure can be. My interviewee has a bus and train pass. I don't think I have ever ridden a train. Also, not many college students have cars, whereas most people I know back home my age do have cars. My interviewee does have a car, but he said he doesn't take it to college because it's useless.

To compare my interviewees' culture and mine, similarly, the obvious, both cultures practice the same language. Differently, the obvious, England and America practice different spelling of certain English words or completely different names of certain things. For example, what I call band-aids, my interviewee calls plasters. What I call pants, my interviewee calls trousers, and pants to him are boxers to me. It can be confusing. In addition to that difference, is the slang terms. My interviewee and I both had to sometimes translate certain terms, so we understood what each other meant. Another difference is the social culture. On top of people seeming way more friendly, the pubs, the clubs, the drinking, it's all very different for me because well, I have never been to any. The drinking limit in America is 21 and I am only 20. However, my interviewee, 19, has been going out for the past year and a half of his life, and from what I gather, it is crazy. There's even a bar in my dorm. It seems almost encouraged everywhere to drink or get drunk whereas it's the complete opposite in America. Next, a similarity, both my interviewee and I take pride in our education and have been taught by our families to take education seriously. However, I do spend a lot more money on my education

than he does. Lastly, another difference is politics. I seem to know more about my politics and the British royal family than my interviewee knows about his politics and the royal family. I also vote but my interviewee has never voted, nor do I think it's even encouraged amongst the younger generation as it is in America. I could go on and on about the differences.

Overall, the interview experience was eye-opening, and so has this whole experience. I have a new love for a new culture. I have learned not to judge something till you try it, not to underestimate, and not to stereotype because a majority of British stereotypes aren't true. I was always under the impression that the British are mean, but they are far from that.