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Person to Person in Japan

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Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person in Japan

Today I interviewed Daiki Miyaoka. He was one of our buddy's in the 2012 KGU buddy program. He was always very interested in Japanese and American cultural differences, so he seemed to best fit the criteria of this assignment. Daiki and I talked throughout the year, but we had our interview on December 25, 2012.

What really surprised me the most was how many students in Japan have part time jobs. They become almost completely self-reliant even if they live at home during the time they are in college. In Japan, students rely heavily on their parents during their jr and high school years because they are constantly studying and preparing to take tests to move onto the next level of education. Therefore, parents will do whatever they can in order for their child to move on, and into the best school possible. This usually results in spending lots of money on cram schools, and hiring personal tutors. Once the student is able to get into college, they must "pay back" their parents, and try to be the best student as possible, so that they can enter the workforce with a really good job. The students often feel as if they have been a burden to their parents, so many of them will find a part time job so they can pay for their own activities, and personal expenditures. In America, we rely on our parents during our primary school years to feed us and to buy us toys but we do not expect them to pay for prep school or cram school. Then, the majority of the time during college many students will get part time jobs in America, but if we need a little bit of help from our parents, they will be able to give us a bit of money to get by.

There were not a lot of similarities between the cultures and many differences. In Japan, there is still a strong hierarchical system, where you must speak in a formal manner to anyone older than you, or people when you first meet. If they are younger than you, then you can speak in an informal style to him or her. In America, there is not a lot of polite language that must

absolutely be used with certain people, but in Japan there is. This was not surprising because I have studied Japanese for about 9 years, but to see it put into use was very interesting to hear, and it helped me to know what style of language I could use to talk to a certain person. For example, in the club I joined, I listened to how someone my age would talk to someone else, and from that I would know how to talk to either someone older than me, or younger than me. For similarities between the Japanese and American culture is that the two cultures absolutely love baseball. Daiki played baseball as an elementary student all the way up until the end of high school. He said he always dreamed of becoming a professional pitcher for some big name American team. He said that a lot of Japanese pay attention to baseball, because there are a lot of rivalries within the two leagues in Japan. In America, baseball is known as America's favorite pastime, so that is one cultural similarity between the two states.

My perceptions on Japan and America remain the same. I was not too surprised by the differences, and I was pleased that there were easy to find similarities. Someone could get by traveling around Japan or America by knowing these very obvious similarities and differences.

Interviewee: Daiki Miyaoka (friend)