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Person to Person in Ireland

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Mid-Semester Assessment, IDST 031

Emily Griffin
Ireland

4/2/2015

The person that I chose to interview was my friend Sebastian. What interested me most about him is that he moved to Ireland from Poland when he was 10, so he has been influenced by multiple different cultures and places.

I would say that one of the biggest differences between home and Ireland is the religion. Ireland as a whole is mostly Catholic, and people tend to be very religious. While people at home are also religious I don't think that they openly discuss their religion as much. For the most part it seems that people are pretty quiet about what religion they believe in at home, but here people are a lot more open about it because it has been such a tradition in Ireland for so long. Sebastian's family is Catholic and he was pretty open with me about it. He did however ask if my parents had a "proper wedding" because he knew they were not religious. For him the only "real" wedding is one that takes place in a church. I learned later that many Irish believe this as well, that weddings are meant to take place in a church regardless of if the couple is both overly religious. In America many people decide to get married in places that mean something to them, their homes, a beach, a park, or somewhere they find particularly beautiful.

I would say another difference between home and Ireland is the gender roles. I think that Ireland (particularly older generations) has some very specific ideas about gender roles that mirrored ours from a long time ago. The idea that the father takes care of the family moneywise and that the mother looks after the children, maybe works, but is also kind of the head figure of the family. Sebastian told me that for a while his father would travel back and forth from Ireland to Poland for work until his mother got sick of taking care of the boys on her own so she moved the family to Ireland. From what I've heard his mother definitely runs the household, but she also works and is able to share responsibilities for the house with his father. Our family dynamics seem to be pretty similar. Both my parents work and share the responsibility of helping out around the house.

Something else that is very interesting about Ireland is the influence that American pop culture has on it. Our TV shows and our music are very accessible to them, and our history is taught to them in school. I wish that I had learned more about Ireland in school and had been exposed to some of their culture more before coming here. But I have learned so much from being here and love talking to people to learn about the differences and similarities between our two cultures.

One of the main things that I admire about the Irish culture is their flexibility with time, and the laid back attitude. Americans are obsessed with being on time and prompt for everything, to a point where I think that sometimes we miss opportunities or the chance to enjoy life. The Irish are late sometimes, but they are

not in a hurry and know that life isn't going to wait for them so they might as well enjoy the ride. It was hard to get used to at first because things seem less organized, but I actually think that it works out for the best now. I have a new appreciation for the pace that life moves at.

Sebastian and I definitely come from different backgrounds and places, but I think that it is what makes him such an interesting friend. We always have something to talk about because of our differences. I am getting to see the world from a new perspective and I think that it's a good opportunity and experience for me to learn something about a person and the place they come from.

Sebastian Skura, student at NUIG, April 2nd 2015