

3-29-2022

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Recommended Citation

Brown, Isabel, "We are the same! But are we actually?" (2022). *2021-22 Field Notes*. Essay. Submission 14.

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Spring 2022

Galway, Ireland

March 28th, 2022

We are the same! But are we actually?

This semester I am studying abroad in Galway, Ireland at the National University of Ireland, Galway. I have already learned so much about my host country's culture from my time observing and being a part of it. There have been a couple times that I have noticed the differences between the US and Ireland, and I was able to learn more about our similarities and differences through interviewing my roommate from Carlow, Ireland. One of the things that we noticed was that although Ireland and the US both use the English language, there were several bits of slang or common dialect that were different and a bit confusing for us to hear for the first time. As well as the English differences in common words and sayings, Ireland also uses the Irish language, which is used everywhere from things like road signs, to things like products in stores. My roommate studies the Irish language as her major for college, and she is very dedicated to keeping it alive in Ireland today. She believes that this tie to the culture of Ireland is an important one to foster, and this tie to her heritage is important in her values.

Another thing I have learned is that in Ireland, family is an important aspect of their culture. All my Irish friends visit their families often and have strong ties to their family. We also have noticed that our preferences for things that we eat are different. There are things that we love that they tend to dislike or avoid, and the same goes for us with their things. We have tried to become involved in various aspects of culture here by celebrating holidays like Pancake Tuesday and St. Patrick's Day. When we celebrated these holidays with people from this country, it allowed us to feel closer to them by participating in key factors of their culture.

From this interview experience, and my experience abroad so far, I have learned that our cultures share a lot of common ground. We are able to relate to each other on many factors, but we are constantly finding slight differences in the way that we live our lives on a day-to-day basis. I have learned how to respect and value a culture that I did not grow up with and find new ways to bond with people from different backgrounds.