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My Kiwi Host

My roommate has a lot of similarities and differences in her experiences when compared to mine. Aside from our different accents, slang, and pronunciations, there are few differences in daily life. We have some different words for foods and cook different meals, but we are all open to trying new things together. The larger differences lie in the larger picture things. For example, at university in New Zealand an undergraduate degree takes three years and you can start law school or medical school as an undergraduate. My roommate is Maori, and because of this she takes te reo language class, the native Maori language. She is very close with her family as I am, but there seems to be a larger emphasis placed on community and family here. Everyone is very close with their families and many university students talk to siblings much more frequently than I feel we do in the US. Additionally, dorms are called colleges and only first-year students live here. Everyone else lives off-campus in housing they have to find for themselves, which is a big difference from Linfield. Culturally, New Zealand is a very beautiful and welcoming place. I was at Otago when the Christchurch shooting happened, and I had many discussions about it with my Kiwi friends and fellow flat mates in the following week. Immediately, there was changed legislation which is one of the many ways their reaction differed to ours in the US. People here are also comfortable walking into your house if it's unlocked to say hi or ask questions. Overall, everyone here is very laid back and friendly.

My Kiwi host has very similar values to mine, but we have a variety of different behaviors. She will close the door to whatever room she's in, she usually dresses very nice for class unless she's planning on working out before or after, and she was immediately very comfortable and

friendly with all of my roommates. While I think I dress nice enough for class, casual clothing here is much more skirt heavy than it is at home where skirts are generally nice attire. When we take turns cooking, she always makes some sort of salad with beans which I don't eat a lot in the US. We are both vegan, so we mostly eat the same things. As far as school work, she always gets her work done way ahead of time. For example, she mentioned in the interview and when we would study together, she was working on an essay due in a month because she knew she wouldn't have the time later. I think this is more of an age difference than a cultural difference, with her being 23 and in her 6th year of university. Everyone here my age definitely still procrastinates on their work. We do talk a lot about social and personal issues and seem to have a lot of the same values of honesty, kindness, and a good sense of morals.

My interview made me think more about the big picture differences. It's easy to recognize the different words we have for things, try to imitate each other's accents, and eat new foods, but it's much more difficult to talk about the bigger cultural things we might not realize. I think being here during the Christchurch shooting really highlighted all of the major differences between New Zealand and the US, and the conversations that followed also help illuminate this more. My interview with my roommate helped us both pull examples from conversations, politics, and things we've studied to evaluate our two homes. New Zealand is a place a lot of people look to as an example across many sectors, whether it be humanitarian crises, political reform, or their public health system, and that recognition is deserved.