

International Symposium and Work Groups

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Cultural Norms and Views

Symposium Reflection

This International Collaboration project formed by faculty and students from India, China, and the United States was easily one of the best things to ever have come out of the Pandemic. We were given the chance to dive into our interests with those who share our passions while having widely different perspectives, giving us all a chance to dig deeper. Not only was I honored with the role as one of the United States TAs, I also took on the responsibility as the facilitator of “Cultural Norms and Views.” This group consisted consistently of Aarati, Jay, Sagarina, Jojo, Andrew, Sean, and I with Meimei, Sparkles, and Kelly joining us on many occasions, giving vital input. We were given the chance to meet every other week thanks to scheduling but continued with some conversations through email. Of which, I shared on our class’ canvas page. All together, we created a powerpoint presentation putting three views and three norms of each of our countries side by side.

When we were introduced to this project back in Winter, I became immensely excited. Contacting and befriending people on an international level is a skill that I started developing with my Junior Project, during which I aimed for three penpals from three continents. I ended up with six penpals from four continents. Having this background, I had no anxiety going into this, only enthusiasm for learning more from those with such different perspectives from mine. I am so thankful that my group members brought the same levels of interest and responsiveness to

each topic that was brought up. Our conversations flowed naturally, only needing me to step in every once in a while to give others chances to talk if they needed it.

We discussed all sorts of topics, from Education and language to LGBT+ and marriage to views on death and superstitions.

Unfortunately, because we were all so engaged in our active conversations that we didn't get the chance to take many notes on what we learned from each other. However, because we didn't have a chance for as many meetings as we would have liked, I borrowed an idea from Grant and emailed my group with questions for them to answer and I was not disappointed. The responses below were also posted to the Social Norms and Views discussion board on our Canvas page.

“Hello Everyone! This week I emailed my group members asking about different superstitions they, their families, and their countries have. As an example, in the US, if you say you hope something will happen, a lot of people will knock on wood because they're afraid of jinxing it. It's a similar idea to not saying your wish out loud.

Jay shared: The very first superstition my family has is that we (usually males) cannot have either their nails cut or have a haircut on a Tuesday or a Saturday, the reason is some astrological norms like the Saturday i.e. the lord Saturn and lord Mangal (Mars, Tuesday) does not appreciate it.

Jojo responded: Listening to this, I think of the superstition my family has about haircuts is that we can not have our haircut in the first lunar month, or there might be something happens with uncle. And another superstition is about chopsticks, that is, once someone

drops his/her chopsticks during a meal, the person who next to him/her would slap him/her twice to “get rid of bad luck”.

Aarati shared: Menstruating women are not allowed to go to a place of worship or to temples. Some are not even allowed to cook food or touch anyone else because they are believed to be "dirty" during that time and will soil anything they touch. In extreme cases, they are shut in a room and kept in isolation till their periods are over.

Then Meimei most recently shared: Before I immigrated here in the USA, I was born in Hong Kong. What I know is: whenever there is a big tunnel's project to be built or after it is finished, a woman can never be the first one to go in that tunnel; otherwise, a big disaster will follow. No matter how esteemed her status is, she just cannot. But I don't know it has been changed or not.”

Conversation on foreigners.

I started with: What are some of the social views you, your family, and your country has on foreigners? How do you feel when a foreigner wants to learn your language and about your culture? What are things you wish foreigners understood about your country?

For example, I find it really interesting how people from other countries usually only know about LA and New York City, so that's where most of the tourism goes. Even though there are so many other amazing places in the United States. I've been to LA twice and I've never been to New York City, but as a person who isn't big on giant cities, they don't amaze me as much as Seaside and Cannon Beach, Oregon or the Redwood Forest. Of course, if we're

talking cities that people should visit, I practically grew up in Portland and I go to Seattle every once in a while.

Usually, people learn English because it's the international language of trade, but regardless of why people learn English, I'm always super impressed. English is a hard language and we make fun of it all the time in America. Because so many people work so hard to learn English, I want to return that favor and learn whatever languages I can. As for culture, America's culture is all about being free to do whatever you want, even if that's not always how it goes. American culture very much depends on the individual.

We also have this air of patriotism in our country, which makes it seem as though we all think America is great and there's nothing wrong with it, but that couldn't be more wrong. Sure, there are some who view it that way, but at least half of us will talk about how awful we are all day long. The only time Americans will all defend America is when someone from England starts to insult us. Then we get super defensive, which is really funny to watch honestly.

Aarati responded with: "Atiti devo bhava" is a common term used in India. It means "guests are like God" So everyone is often welcomed with open arms. As for foreigners, whenever they do visit they are given a lot of importance and care and it really makes the people happy when they see someone from another country learn the language or sing the songs native to India.

Not just language, people appreciate when foreigners adopt Indian culture, cuisine, religion and lifestyles.

Until a few decades ago, there were few ill feelings towards England because of how they ruled over India and looted the wealth but those feelings have not seeped into the emotions of the new generations.

Talking about Language, India has around 19500 dialects or mother tongues(as we call it) based on area and 21 official languages. Our states are divided on the basis of the major language spoken in the area.

One day we didn't have enough time to finish our conversation on LGBT+, so I sent out this:

Just wanted to finish up my thought.

(For those who don't know, we started discussing the LGBT+ Community and acceptance in our countries. Please add to the conversation if you like.)

Not only is Evergreen's population essentially 50% gay, but we also have a large population of non-binary people. Non-binary is a blanket term for anyone who don't identify as male or female. Often using different pronouns, a good portion use they/them/theirs as a singular pronoun. But people also mix pronouns going by she/they, he/they, she/he/they, etc. It's a well-accepted topic of gender being a social construct.

Meimei responded saying:

I also find this strange condition occurring in Hong Kong---my birth place. Hong Kong is an international metropolitan. where the people live there think that they are open-minded to absorb many new and strange things. Yet they can't accept homosexuality and binary love, tec.. In recent days, there is a case discovered which incurred the hot topic about homosexual marriage should be legalized or not. Also,if both the husband and wife are of the same gender, should the Hong Kong government recognize this marriage? In addition, under this case, should one of this spouse be able to apply the spouse's benefits in his/her working company. Should the denaturation be able to legitimize?

Nowadays, denaturation or homosexuality become a global problem. Even in the U.S.A., the country where every of us think that it is the most modernized nation; however, still there are numerous states not yet legalize the two above-mentioned problems. Gays and lesbians still cannot too publicize their activities or their inclinations in sex or their personal statuses. Under this condition, I really know that I would not discriminate against any of his/her personal options since everybody has his/own freedom to choose what he/she likes. They are not committing any crimes since they do not hurt anybody.Although I am not really comprehensive their mindsets, but I also empathize their difficulties.

I felt these were important to share, even if they were a little late.

Thank you to Hirsh, Amity students and faculty, Wuyi students and faculty, my fellow classmates, our special guests, and everyone else who made this Symposium so amazing. I am so grateful and I hope we can continue with this relationship that we have begun. I am very proud of all of us for creating something so profound.

Thank You!