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First and foremost, I define myself as a Canadian. Canadian culture rests on an instilled set of principles: equality, peace and respect for different cultures. These principles have engendered an inclusive and highly multi-cultural society.

While in school, Canadians are taught to be proud of the fact that Canada is a cultural 'mosaic' as opposed to the cultural 'melting pot' of the United States.¹ Our current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, declared Canada as "the first postnational state" with no "core identity, no mainstream."² Growing up in a highly sensitive environment meant that it was inevitable my personality would embody the Canadian stereotype; I am polite, humble and agreeable. When meeting new people, especially abroad, I am not only respectful, but more importantly compliant. Having been indoctrinated with tolerant values, I arrived in September with the belief that I was equipped to tackle any disagreements, based on cultural difference, which might arise during my time at Cass Business School.

The workshops organised by Cass at the start of the academic year focused on how to address disagreements students may have with peers as a result of differing cultural backgrounds. On a number of occasions, I questioned the efficacy of these workshops which encouraged introspection. Frankly, such questioning was naive. During my first term at Cass, I not only discovered my shortcomings, I had to constantly re-evaluate my fundamental values in order to combat them. Prior to attending Cass, I had never worked so intimately, over a prolonged period of time, with a small group of international students. It became clear that each of my group members arrived at Cass with a different set of customs, beliefs and work ethic. Our viewpoints varied on a number of topics, from politics to writing style. An additional challenge was the fact that each of us had a different native language. Through intimate group work, I have learned that I am not only stubborn, but also impatient. I have had to learn to communicate in a clear and concise fashion. In addition, I have had to exercise patience when group members have misunderstood my ideas. Despite cultural differences, I came to appreciate the perspectives my colleagues offered over the course of the first term. I found it fascinating that the group's diversity resulted in unique solutions for various marketing problems. In order to establish a feasible group environment, we had to make an effort to get to know one another - outside of the university setting. This enabled us to understand how each of our dispositions evolved. However, the most important lesson I have learned was to become more outspoken. In group meetings, I often feared offending my peers. As a result, when I disagreed with a group member, I found it difficult to express my opinion. However, being consistently compliant is often detrimental to group efforts.

It is clear that at Cass students benefit from the experience of interacting with foreign colleagues. I am grateful that I am attending Cass prior to establishing my professional career. I believe that learning how to work with various personalities takes practice. This type of practice is something I would rather not experiment with in the workforce where mistakes rarely come unscathed. It is reassuring to know that while at Cass, students are able to learn from their mistakes and are also offered strategies on how to address them. I intend to leave Cass with an enlightened tolerance for cultural difference – likely, with many mistakes behind me.

Works Cited

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