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The ultimate guide for the content creator:

**A cross-cultural comparison of British and
American societies**

Treball de Fi de Grau/ BA dissertation

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Grau de Traducció i Interpretació

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Abstract (en)

The rise of new occupations such as content creators entails the creation of new tools, and there is where our paper comes into action. Deep knowledge of societies is essential to reach the target public, but unfortunately, there is not enough investment in research. Therefore, this dissertation aims to provide an overall view of British and American societies and their main differences for a further understanding of their culture and social system. Some of the most crucial topics are analysed and compared to each society. And they are mainly divided in three sections: linguistic, cultural and social.

Keywords (en)

Comparison, United Kingdom, United States, society, culture, language, British, American, population, system.

Abstract (es)

El surgimiento de nuevas profesiones como los creadores de contenido conlleva la elaboración de nuevas herramientas, y es ahí donde entra en juego nuestro trabajo. Para poder llegar al público objetivo es esencial tener un profundo conocimiento de las sociedades, pero lamentablemente, no se invierte lo suficiente en investigación. Así pues, esta tesis pretende aportar una visión global de la sociedad británica y estadounidense y sus principales diferencias, para una mayor comprensión de las culturas y los sistemas sociales. El trabajo consiste fundamentalmente en analizar y comparar algunos de los temas más trascendentales, los cuales están desglosados en tres secciones: lingüística, cultural y social.

Palabras clave (es)

Comparación, Reino Unido, Estados Unidos, sociedad, cultura, lengua, británico, estadounidense, población, sistema.

Abstract (ca)

El sorgiment de noves professions com la dels creadors de contingut comporta l'elaboració de noves eines i, és aquí on entra en joc el nostre treball. Per poder arribar al nostre públic objectiu és essencial conèixer en profunditat les diferents societats, però malauradament, no s'inverteix suficientment en investigació. Així doncs, aquesta tesi desitja aportar una visió global de la societat britànica i nord-americana i les seves principals diferències, per poder comprendre de ple les cultures i els sistemes socials. El treball consisteix fonamentalment en analitzar i comparar alguns dels temes amb més rellevància, els quals hi són desglossats en tres seccions: lingüística, cultural i social.

Paraules clau (ca)

Comparació, Regne Unit, Estats Units, societat, llengua, britànic, nord-americà, població, sistema.

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INTRODUCTION

This Bachelor's dissertation corresponds to a cultural comparative study of British and American societies, although due to time constraints it only represents a small piece of bigger empirical research.

This research is addressed to content creators, mostly non-native English speakers, as they usually are not provided with enough resources or time to be able to carry out the deep research.

The main goals of this dissertation are to highlight the most relevant differences between English and American societies in order to understand their culture and social systems. And to introduce the basic ideas to consider when creating cultural content for or about these countries —basically, to make work easier.

The rise of digitalisation and with it, the rise of new occupations, has motivated me to contribute with my work for the not-so future careers. My passion for sociology combined with my fascination for English-speaking cultures have led me to write this dissertation. To be accurate, I will explore some linguistic, cultural and social aspects of the two cultures. Also, I would like to mention that this paper is written from a Spanish cultural vision, and therefore, the approach might differ from that of a native speaker who could speak from a more introspective perspective.

Additionally, I would like to apologise in advance for the generalisation of identities found within this study. I'm fully aware of the different idiosyncrasies that co-inhabit within the same regions. But understanding the patterns of the cultures and generalising is the only method to process the information. And in that way, provide answers on what to expect of certain cultures. Therefore, this whole work is based on cultural generalisations as it would make it much more difficult to specify each type of identity.

It is worth mentioning that the United Kingdom consists of four countries (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) with distinct features. And that within the American territory there are different cultural and ethnic identities, which interestingly enough, often make a good blend.

The main structure of this dissertation is broken down into four parts: preface, chapter one, chapter two and chapter three.

The preface, before getting straight to the point, embraces briefly the commonalities that bind both cultures together. The first chapter focuses on the main linguistic variations of British English and American English and how they coexist. The second chapter outlines the cultural behaviour of each society. And last but not least, the third chapter, which goes deep into social-structural environments.

Methodology

At the very beginning of this project, I immersed myself in both cultures through daily reading of articles and books about specific topics or comparative studies, apart from viewing documentaries related to English-speaking cultures. Throughout the writing process, I have thoroughly checked the sources of information and as a non-native English speaker, I have relied on academic material to contrast the words' usage frequency and the genuine syntactic structures of sentences against official dictionaries and reliable corpus, which are conveniently referenced at the end of the document.

Moreover, I have conducted a survey to non-English speaking people about their perceptions of both societies. The results will be displayed at the "Conclusion" section and there will be direct access to the original answers through the link shared at the "Appendices" section.

PREFACE: Commonalities

Before address the matter at hand, it is crucial to highlight the commonalities that bind them together. As Winston Churchill said, there is a ‘special relationship’ between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America because of their history and cultural heritage. They share ancestors, a legal system, a measurement system and a common language. What is most relevant is that they share the same interest in prosperity and security. Both great powers are allies in war times and world affairs, but they have also had their ups and downs. The British-American relationship is unique in its way, and consequently, they exert considerable influence on other countries. Nevertheless, after decolonization, Americans have fought proudly until today for distinguishing themselves from the ‘old country’. Moreover, the British became more independent of the Americans after joining the European Union and are aware of what sets them apart. From the outside, it can appear they hold an odd love-hate relationship, but the truth is that in the worst of times, they seem to be there for each other.

CHAPTER ONE: Linguistic comparison

To start with, language plays a significant role. Even though both countries share the same language, each variety is characterised by four historical and social facts.

The first fact is that American English is older than British English as a consequence of colonialism. One example is the rhotic /r/. In the southern cities of the UK, upper-class people began to soften the ‘ars’ to differentiate themselves from others. This phenomenon started to spread in southern Britain, while back in America, the rhotic /r/ was still commonly used – and it hasn’t changed since the first settlers arrived. The second fact is that there is a stronger influence of French in British English than in American. In the 11th century, England was invaded by the French, and thus they established French as the preferred language for institutions and among upper classes. It did not go through but instead evolved into Middle English. Besides, in the year 1700, in England, there was a tendency towards the French style.

The third fact is that the official dictionaries of each variety have several differences because they were written from different perspectives. In the UK, dictionaries were composed by London scholars, while the American dictionary Merriam-Webster was created by Noah Webster, who wanted to demonstrate their independence from the old country. For instance, he decided to drop the *u* from words ending in *-our* (which at the same time was a French influence).

The fourth fact is that each has borrowed words from different languages, depending on their proximity to other countries. Most of that vocabulary is related to food, such as *coriander* in British English (influenced by French) and *cilantro* in American English (influenced by Spanish).

Regarding the English situation, although sometimes speakers struggle to understand variations —especially non-standard accent variations—, they are not disturbed by the sound of the opposite accent, which is the case for Spanish from Spain and Spanish from Latin America.

For instance, on the one hand, the British are happy to watch an American film as long as it is genuine. However, they hate to feel the falsehood of American actors when playing British characters. On the other hand, Americans appreciate the authenticity of British films, but still like stories better when they are about themselves —perhaps induced by their powerful national pride.

CHAPTER TWO: Cultural comparison

2.1. Society

In the next section, the most common preconceptions of both societies are outlined. The following information is based on generalisations and in no way intends to offend

British people possess characteristics like class consciousness, politeness and a strong feeling of privacy; although not all may apply due to their different national identities within their territory. In contrast, Americans are difficult to label due to their numerous economic and cultural backgrounds, but there are few values that every American share: individuality, independence and patriotism.

When talking about British culture, inevitably the word *Britishness* comes to mind. This term embraces the British mindset of determination, stubbornness and collective work. In general, they stand out for their reserved and evasive personality—usually, the latter trait leads them to act falsely in order to avoid conflict—and last but not least, for their famous dry humour.

When defining Americans, automatically a few adjectives come to mind: independent, friendly, straightforward and patriotic. Their society may be described as a set of self-sufficient individuals with plenty of personal space for each one; where parents prepare children from a young age ‘to fly the coop’. They were the inventors of the individualistic society, in which maintaining a competitive spirit is required to achieve better results. Their motto is “Always go the extra mile”, sometimes giving themselves too much importance. Americans think there is still a nature to overcome and a territory to conquer, hence their fixation on the military forces. Consumerism and entertainment are the preferred American way of life, and it has expanded into many countries, replacing their ancient customs. What is more, their policy-making is based on acquiring territorial and financial successes.

Even though the UK and US have higher levels of income in comparison with other developed countries, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) places them in the top positions of the economic inequality

ranking. However, Britons occupy a lower position than Americans.

On the one hand, according to the House of Commons Library data, in the UK around 22% of the population live in poverty. Rates are higher for those household heads who are lone parents or ethnic minorities such as Bangladeshi or Pakistani, followed by families with members with intellectual or physical disabilities. On the other hand, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that in 2019, 10.5% of Americans were poor people and the most affected collectives were women, children and Native Americans.

Demographic reports show Britain as a small densely populated island with almost 90% of its people living in towns and cities such as London; something that evokes the idea of smoky grey cities in which lifestyle is sad and lonely. However, living in cottages surrounded by nature with its distinctive meadows, winding paths and wet roads has become increasingly popular.

The United States, with a larger territory and a higher number of inhabitants, has its population more distributed. Whereas 82% of the people live in packed urban areas—like the isle of Manhattan—, many others choose to live in rural areas. Where, usually, customs and manners of the harsh countryside lifestyle are associated with the conception of the dry southern American farms surrounded by huge cornfields.

2.1.1. Etiquette

Some of the most common British polite codes are based on over apologising, making orderly queues and over saying *please* and *thank you* to everyone. Britons are known for hiding their feelings and emotions and shielding their personal space. The weather is their top subject and is the starting point for all conversations. Tea as a daily routine and greeting cards to convey good wishes are basics of British everyday life. Some of the most traditional taboos in discussions among the British are salary, age, voting intention and bargaining—which is considered distasteful.

Some of the most common American polite codes are built on directness, like getting straight to the point in a conversation or introducing themselves to strangers

without waiting for others to do so. Tipping, they usually give a 15-20% extra of the overall service cost. And, saying *please* and *thank you* all the time, the same as Britons do. Americans are known for not being very modest about themselves; for overly appreciating time —it is considered extremely important to them; for being ‘Good Samaritans’; and lastly, for being opportunistic in business and huge sports fans. Some of the most traditional taboos in conversations among Americans are terrorism, slavery, gun control, the death penalty, abortion, weight, salary, age and mocking the United States (because of their patriotic sentiment).

2.1.2. Humour

On one side, the famous British dry humour is considered smart and subtle. Essentially, it is based on the absurdity of everyday life, containing elaborated jokes and wordplays. The main ingredients are witty comments, cynicism, irony, sarcasm and failure —the latter component has a major part to play. The flawed loser type, the personage who fails miserably while everything around him or her is going wrong; that is exactly the typical stereotype to be seen in a British comedy. A great example of this is the iconic Mr Bean.

On the other side, American humour on the surface is simpler to understand. It consists of formulated jokes and more obvious sarcasm. It includes physical humour such as ‘slapstick’, which consists of exaggerating body movements making it easier for viewers to understand.

The main difference between their comedy productions is the number of writers they use. In the UK, few writers are usually hired on a limited budget. Instead, in the US it is exactly the opposite; every show has its own dynamic so that many talented writers can cooperate and contribute to the script. A great example of a comedy mismatch between both cultures is *The Office*, where the creators of the second season of the American version, adapted the manager, Michel Scott, to appear more like a fool and less unpleasant than the British version.

2.2. Relationships

In the United States, the importance of being self-reliant seems to push family and friendships aside. But maybe, individual recognition is their priority and possess a different approach to relationships. Friendships might not last as long as they would like due to their frequent changes, as they move from one place to another for work or studies. Consequently, it is easier for them to not relate with others. Family is often relegated to second place, but interestingly enough, everyone is willing to drive miles to celebrate and spend time with the family on specific dates.

In the United Kingdom, relationships play a central role in British society. Since they spend most of their leisure time at home, being in touch with others is essential to make contacts and progress in their personal and professional lives. In friendship matters, the low proportion of people affirming to have few close friends usually lived in remote areas, in contrast to most urban people who say to have excellent quality relationships. Although there is a strong feeling for success without relying on relatives, daily family life is customary. Furthermore, family reunions are frequent, hence the popular Sunday Roast, which traditionally brings family members together every Sunday.

2.2.1. Family structure

The reduction of members in nuclear families is being experienced in Great Britain and the United States, along with the rest of developed democracies. Birth rates have also decreased due to delays in having children, and a high percentage of them are conceived out of wedlock. New realities such as lone and same-gender parent families, unmarried couples and singles are replacing traditional families. Besides, the number of stepfamilies and remarriages has increased considerably and is becoming commonplace.

When comparing the two countries, there is a very significant difference in terms

of marriage rates. Historically, Americans have always been devotees for what was 'conventional' and proof of that are previous generations' marriage records, —most likely induced by the influence of religion. Although, in general, marriage rates have fallen by far in recent years and currently are at the lowest point of all time.

Something that stands out from the US is that still to this day, the idea of the so-called 'Family man' is usually associated with being a male head in an American family. Fathers are seen as the 'breadwinners', those who earn the needed money to support a whole family and provide stability and protection to the family unit. For years, women were the chosen ones to raise their children and took care of the family home; hence the famous image of the 'Good wife' of the 1950s. The television industry has fuelled these stereotypes of the hero father, the homely mother and the perfect American family. And so, many films and series have arisen out of these clichés.

2.1.1.1. Teenage pregnancies

According to the Teenage Births in Rich Nations study by UNICEF, the highest rate of non-marital birth among teenage girls was found in the United States of America (more than twice compared to other first-world nations); followed by the United Kingdom, in terms of the larger proportion of adolescent childbearing in Europe.

In both countries, sexual intercourse is practised by more than two-thirds of teenagers. Moreover, figures show that the US ranks first among other industrialized countries with the highest percentage of teenagers affected by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

These figures are subjected to the powers of education and health authorities. As proved before, they have not acted correctly. Some US states are less likely to deliver sexual health guidance and give away free contraceptive samples. While the American Government struggles to impose sex education in public schools, the British Government includes this subject in its National Curriculum and established it

compulsory for children over eleven years old and onwards. Furthermore, the distinction between benefiting from public healthcare systems or not makes a difference. Whereas in the UK, citizens have access to free sexual healthcare services; in the US, those are classed as payment services unless their health insurance covers them.

2.3. Food

British food is usually associated with the lack of variety, in which cooked meat and vegetables are spiced with many herbs to provide flavour.

Fish and chips, full breakfast, trifles, bread-and-butter pudding, spotted dick, rhubarb crumble, shepherd's pie, bangers and mash among others are the quintessential dishes of British cuisine. In any home, what can not be missed is the gastronomic pride Sunday roast. On Sundays, a joint of meat is served along with Yorkshire pudding, roasted potatoes, vegetables, horseradish, mustard and loads of gravy.

It is a fact that British gastronomy has especially adopted influences from Indian cuisine. However, it is important to note that British cuisine has an assortment of local dishes beyond the traditional ones. The four main regions have produced their own specialities, of which some such as the Cornish pasties or the Scotch eggs are recognised to a particular geographical location.

Nowadays, London is a place where some of the world's most exclusive restaurants meet. There are 66 restaurants with Michelin stars, of which five are included in The World's 50 Best Restaurants list. And some of the most renowned British celebrity chefs are Jamie Oliver, Gordon Ramsey, or Delia Smith.

American meals distinguish themselves with size; foreigners often find it oversized and ridiculously exaggerated. Its cuisine is basically a blend of all influences from all immigrant cultures and has mostly borrowed recipes from Europeans, Native Americans and Mexicans.

Hamburgers, pizzas, hot dogs, corn dogs, steaks, potato chips, macaroni and cheese, meatloaf, apple pie and key lime pie among others are the traditional American dishes. Nevertheless, there are also regional styles that can be broadly divided into three: North-eastern, Southern and Midwestern. The North-eastern diet is rich in fish and seafood due to its location right next to the Atlantic ocean; two of its main meals are the lobster roll and clam chowder. Strong flavours are attributed to Southern-style dishes, where barbecues and fried chicken are the daily bread—in addition to the Tex-Mex culinary dishes. Finally, there are the Midwestern countries that are the main providers of grain to the country, and their dishes are experienced as comfort food. One of the most famous Midwestern dish it's the Chicago-style pizza.

For instance, New York has 67 top restaurants with Michelin stars, of which five are included in The World's 50 Best Restaurants list. And some of the most well-known American celebrity chefs are Guy Fieri, David Chang, or the mythic Julia Child.

2.3.1. Obesity

Even though the British population has significantly changed its habits, the UK is the fattest country compared to other European countries. Nowadays the consumption of potatoes has been shifted to pasta and rice, and butter has been replaced by vegetable oils. Altogether with the growing trend of vegetarianism and veganism, the consumption of fatty foods has been reduced considerably.

As a consequence of the Northern European diet, which is lower in fruit, vegetables and fish than the Mediterranean diet, 28% of adults in England are obese, and correspondingly, 36% are overweight, according to the House of Common Library.

American diet consists of low intakes of vegetable and fruits and excess fat and calories. The average American eats in fast food chains or buys packaged food in 'grocery stores', where most items don't have nutritive value or where healthy food is usually more expensive.

As a result, obesity is a cause of great concern, 31% of adult Americans are diagnosed with obesity, one of the highest rates of obesity worldwide —and hasn't shown any signs of decline. Research has proved that it has a greater impact on women and African Americans. Also, in 2018, 10% of the total population had been diagnosed with diabetes, which is one of the primary causes of death in the US.

2.4. Sports

In the United Kingdom, the most popular sports are football, cricket, rugby, tennis, badminton and horse racing. The latter is the most popular spectator sport in Britain, after football. The British seem to be obsessed with football as it was created in England and consequently feel a strong sense of pride towards it. All in all, it is the most popular sport around the globe.

London has hosted the Olympics three times, in 1908, 1948, and 2012, and almost held them again in 1944, but they were cancelled as war persisted.

Among others, Britain's main sporting events are Wimbledon, the oldest and more prestigious tennis tournament; Premier League, the top football league in England; Epsom Derby, the most distinguished horse race attended by some of the most affluent spectators; the British Grand Prix at Silverstone Circuit, one of the most important motor race in the world; and the Boat Race, the traditional rowing races between Oxford and Cambridge.

Some British sports celebrities are David Beckham, Lewis Hamilton, Zara Tindal, Andy Murray, Bobby Moore, Gary Lineker, Mo Farah, Wayne Rooney, Michael Owen, Bobby Charlton, Jackie Stewart, Ríó Ferdinand and Alex Ferguson.

In the United States, the most celebrated sports are American football, baseball, basketball, ice hockey, and soccer. All five are actively watched across the country and have their own professional leagues.

Sport is a mirror of society. Baseball symbolises individuality, the hero running towards success by himself, and American football represents team effort, the union

to triumph. That is why sports are so meaningful to the point of granting scholarships to potential athletes.

The US also have held two Olympic Games, the 1904 Summer Olympics in St. Louis and the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah. And in 2028, it is expected to be hosting the Olympics again in Los Angeles.

Among others, America's main sporting events are the Super Bowl, the final match of the National Football League; the NBA All-Star Game, a friendly match in which only the best players of each year can participate; the US Open, the third of the four biggest men's golf tournaments; the World Series, the final games of the Major League of Baseball championship; and the US Open of Surfing, a one-week surfing event—the largest in the world—held in California.

Some American sports celebrities are Michael Jordan, Michael Felps, Muhammed Ali, Magic Johnson, Serena Williams, Tiger Woods, Kobe Bryant, Lance Armstrong, Mike Tyson, Floyd Mayweather, Babe Ruth, Jesse Owens, LeBron James and Tom Brady.

2.5. Television system

British and American televisions have different purposes and ways to develop their programmes. Three main elements have an enormous impact on both methods of making television: budget, quality and competition.

American television gives priority to profit through advertising. And because of that, shows can be produced with large budgets and feel free to think bigger. One of their priorities is to sell airtime. In contrast, British television producers have a tighter budget because it is widely supported by public funding, not by advertising companies. Thus, they focus on other aspects rather than commercializing, like giving excellence with less.

When it comes to quality, both are valid methods of making TV, but a significant difference comes to the surface. The British approach is totally about

providing great shows with a tight budget in a compact time length, whereas the American is about producing massively to make a profit from it. But instead, they can use larger funds and develop impressive Hollywood-style productions.

British television focuses on developing a positive reputation. The real threat for all broadcasters is the BBC; they all compete against it because of its historical success. In contrast, American television centres itself to create stunning products with high rates of the audience, while all networks compete against each other and at the same time against big companies such as ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX.

Oddly enough, in the case of series, the British series have a length of 6 up to 8 episodes per season, while the American have between 18 and 24. British programs often have a shorter run and big gaps between seasons. If there is no story to tell, the production can wait because there is no need to sell advertising time, unlike American television. That also explains why Americans create mid-season replacements —a manner to fill the time slot while the rest of the episodes are being shot.

In other words, the UK television companies have a tighter budget, traditionally provide quality in a more compact time and seasons are shortest. On the contrary, US television companies have a larger budget, regularly produce much more dramatic content with script twists and seasons are longer. With their pros and cons, both systems have two utterly different ways to operate.

CHAPTER THREE : Social comparison

3.1. Economy

The UK is the third-largest economy in Europe, with a GDP per capita of $\sqrt{40,447}$. Britain owns coal, natural gas, and oil resources —although oil and natural gas reserves are diminishing. And services such as insurance, banking and business services are the driving force of British GDP growth.

The US is one of the most powerful economies worldwide, with a GDP per capita of \$63,742. Americans are leaders in technological advances, especially in computers, aerospace and medical and military equipment. Nevertheless, their vantage point has lowered since 2014, when the largest economy in the world for over a century slipped into second place behind China (nowadays, it is back in the first place).

Overall, both countries are wealthy and can offer a wide range of products. Private companies run the economies and the vast majority of them provide intangible services. Both countries are modern capitalist societies with free-market systems. In the international trade market, they take leading positions, although the United States undoubtedly tops the list of the world's most powerful economies.

3.1.1. Employment

In the following section, different elements of the employment field are discussed and compared between both countries. For further understanding, each domain is based on statistics, as it is the most accurate way to provide information. The figures used in this section are recent (around 2020 and 2021), and they are extracted exclusively from British and American governmental organisations.

Informal economy

The informal economy of a country is usually associated with a deterioration of the state. The more submerged the economy is, the poorer the country will be. Over two million people in Britain work illegally, which means that over 12% of its GDP traces back to the informal sector. In the USA —with a higher number of inhabitants—, 9% of its GDP comes from this unofficial economy.

Unemployment rate

The most recent unemployment rate represents 5% of the population in the UK, the highest figure for five years, meaning that 1.7 million citizens are jobless. In the US, compared to previous years, the percentage has decreased to 6%, with a number of 9.7 million unemployed persons.

National minimum wage

The minimum hourly rate for all employees in Britain is £8.72, while in America, it is approximately \$7.25 per hour.

Average wage

The average annual pay for full-time employees in 2020 was £31,461 in the UK, whereas workers in the US earned about \$51,168 per year.

Paid holidays

British employees, whose weekly working days are five per week, usually receive at least 28 paid days a year to take some time off. On the contrary, the US is the only developed country in the world that does not have a mandatory number of off-work paid days. Usually, there is a previous agreement between employer and employee to

settle this paid holiday entitlement. Perhaps, it has to do with the fact that, in America, paid time off is seen as a benefit and not as a right.

Legal week duration

The average British full-time employee usually works 35 hours or more a week, whereas American workers are expected to work at least 40 hours a week.

Sick leave

In the UK, if employees get sick for at least four days in a row, they can receive from the fourth day onwards the Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), which is the minimum amount employers must pay to workers on sick leave. However, self-employed workers aren't entitled to get SSP. In the US, employers are not bound by law to pay sick leave to employees. Nevertheless, progressively more companies are joining the initiative to offer paid sick leave, although terms might vary in each state.

Parental leave

Britons can obtain paid maternity leave for nine months and paid paternity leave for two weeks. In contrast, for most American companies with less than 50 employees, there is no legal obligation to offer paid or unpaid leave to take care of newborns or recover from childbirth. It seems that only five states (New York State, California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Washington state, and Washington D.C.) are currently enforcing enterprises to provide paid parental leave to their workers.

Retirement Age

Concerning the retirement age, nowadays is a problem as it needs to be extended in order to afford to pay state pensions. The population aged over sixty years old has access to better medical care and a healthier diet; consequently, increasing the global life expectancy. But still, this entails risk as ageing societies receive state pensions for

a longer time and make more use of health care services, increasing public expenditure. Without further ado, the official retirement age in the UK nowadays is sixty-five —although gradually has been increased to sixty-seven. However, in the US, the system works differently: if a person retires before its ‘Normal Retirement Age’, his or her benefits will be reduced. And if they do otherwise, their pensions will increase. The Normal Retirement Age varies by year of birth and ranges from sixty-five to sixty-seven.

Social security contributions

In the UK, on the one hand, employers pay 13.8% for National Insurance on all earnings over £169 per week and are deductible for corporate income tax. On the other hand, the amount of National Insurance paid by employees is subject to their employment status and how much they generate. If their income goes from £184 up to £967 a week, they must pay a 12% rate, and if they earn more, the rate is deducted to 2%. In the US, the current tax rate is paid equally by employer and employee, which implies paying 6.2% each. In total 12.4% of taxes go to state coffers.

Comparative table

	UK	US
Informal economy	12%	9%
Unemployment rate	5%	6%
National minimum wage per hour	£8,72	\$7,25
Average wage	£31,461 a year	\$51,168 a year
Legal weekly duration	35h	40h
Paid holidays	28 paid days	0 paid days
Sick leave	Paid from the 4 th day	0 paid days
Parental leave	9 paid months / 2 paid weeks	No paid parental leave
Retirement age	+65 years old	65-67 years old
Social Security Contribution	13.8%+12% or 2%	6.2%+6.2%=12.4%

In conclusion, analysing the previous data, the UK generally seems to offer a better work-life balance. But we must not forget that the United States is an immense country with a large population; therefore, it is more difficult to provide employment benefits to a diverse population with different requirements. Also, the American culture seems to be based on success through ceaselessly hard work, as OECD figures corroborate that Americans work more than 107 hours a year compared to the British.

3.1.2. Health care system

On the one hand, the British have universal access to healthcare. In particular, to the National Health System (NHS), which provides healthcare for all citizens regardless of their income. The NHS is funded essentially by taxation and provides free health service at primary —provided mainly by General Practitioners (GPs)—and hospital levels. Nevertheless, as in most countries, health expenditure on services is getting cut; there are financial shortages, long waiting lists and structural deficiencies.

Although the procurement of services is managed at a national level, the healthcare system is decentralised and is regulated by competent authorities from each country. Despite having this public service, private healthcare coverage is in huge demand. Actually, according to national surveys, 12% of the population buys additional private health services.

On the other hand, Americans don't have universal access to healthcare. The health system is a combination of public and private services through free and paid insurances. In this country, the health system is financed at three levels: the first one is the federal government, it provides Medicare, which benefits people over sixty-five years old; the second one is the state government; it manages local coverage and provides Medicaid to veterans, low-income families, individuals with disabilities, etc. —as well as the Children's Health Insurance Program, which functions as an extension of Medicaid but primarily designed to help children in low-income families that haven't been considered for Medicaid—; and the third one is private insurance, which is the predominant form of coverage and in most cases is provided by employers.

According to the United States Census Bureau figures, in 2018, 8.5% of the population (approximately 27.5 million people) did not have coverage. However, it was a significant improvement compared to the figures before 2010, when the Affordable Care Act —colloquially known as the “Obamacare”—just became an official law. It was a reform planned to provide health coverage to uninsured Americans at a lower price.

Based on the World Health Organisation's report "Measuring overall health system performance for 191 countries", the UK spends 6% of its gross domestic product on health services, ranking the 18th position out of 191, while the US spends a higher portion but ranks 37 out of 191 countries.

3.1.3. Social welfare

According to the 2019 OECD figures, the social spending in the UK for healthcare, security, education, housing, cultural and social services was 20.6% of GDP in comparison to 18.7% of the US.

Each government designs aid programs to protect the most disadvantaged from economic risk. These programs mainly provide benefits to support widows and widowers, retired, long-term sick and disabled people, low-income families, unemployed people and military service members or veterans. In order to be able to do so, the respective administrations must collect funds.

In addition to the government figure, which collects income through taxation, in the UK, the National Insurance (NI) is the other main authority in control of employers and employees' contributions. Retirement pensions—which constitutes almost 90% of benefits—, maternity allowances and unemployment depend on the NI.

In the US, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is the other official administration in charge of social contributions. It is an independent agency that aids about 64 million people, most of them the elderly, disabled people, children, widows and widowers. Thanks to the contribution of 178 million people who work and pay taxes to the SSA.

3.2. Education

School systems in both states are hybrids between private and public funding. This method is socially divisive and perpetuates class segregation. It is no secret that many

of the leading figures in politics, military and business industries have been educated in private institutions and ancient universities. But there are differences in the approach.

The British system bases the students progress on examinations. Moreover, A-Level exams (for university admission) and GCSE exams (to certify a certain level of knowledge or get the school-leaving certificate) are required to enter specific institutions. Instead, the American system assesses its pupils; sometimes with similar tests, but not homogeneously across the state.

A large number of the world's best universities are located in the United Kingdom and the United States. Additionally, a few associations like the American Ivy League or the British Russell Group assemble some of the best universities in their countries. They include ancient institutions such as Harvard and Yale, and Oxford and Cambridge, respectively. Some universities that belong to these organizations are seen as the most prestigious universities in the world.

Generally, the main difference between both systems lies in their means to teach. It is said that American education is 'broad', it provides general knowledge of different subjects; whereas British is 'deep', it focuses on particular matters to specialize better.

3.3. Religion

Even though most Britons describe themselves as religious, it plays an insignificant role in British lives since they occasionally attend religious services. Protestant Christianity is the official state religion. And the British Monarchy persists at the head of the Church of England, or also known as the Anglican Church. The monarch—considering the advice of the Prime Minister— appoints the church leaders, who will be allowed to take a seat in the House of Lords.

About 71% of the population is Christian, for the most part, Roman Apostolic and Anglican. Catholicism is the second most professed faith, followed by Islam and

Judaism. More specifically, whereas the national church of Scotland is Presbyterian, Northern Ireland and Wales proclaim to be secular states.

In American society, religion plays a significant role, something that is unique among developed countries. According to the Pew Research Center Study, almost 73% of Americans acknowledge being Christian. However, the second most practised religion depending on the state may be Islam, in 20 southern and central states; Judaism, in 15 Atlantic coast states; Buddhism, in 13 Pacific coast states; Hinduism, in Arizona and Delaware; and Baha'ism, in South Carolina.

In the same way, Americans are also known for being good devotees. In fact, they pray more often and, traditionally, are more likely to attend religious services. An example of that is their way of speaking. For instance, the well-known phrase “God bless America” —which is the original title of a peace song written by Irving Berlin— is used to express gratitude to America and its people.

Although, in general terms, in both countries, the number of people who don't believe in God has increased dramatically in the last few years.

3.4. Migration

The main sources of migration in Britain are India, Pakistan, the Caribbean, Africa, Bangladesh and China. And about 8% of the population, that is to say, 5 million people belong to an ethnic minority.

Over the course of migration history in Britain, there have been few historical episodes that triggered great waves of immigrants: the British Empire and its fall, the post-war years and the annexation to the European Union.

In the first place, as the British Empire was growing in the 17th century, migrants from Africa, Asia and America began to arrive for the first time. And people from the same home country started to gather in specific locations such as Chinese immigrants, which renamed London's docklands as 'Chinatown', where opium dens and Chinese

shops were quite busy. Also, in order to fill employment vacancies, the British Nationality Act in 1948 allowed 800,000,000 migrants to reside in the United Kingdom without a visa.

In the second place, as the Second World War ended, especially Indians and East Europeans were invited to help recover the country. A large number of the Polish population migrated too; this ongoing trend dates back to that time, so there is nothing new under the sun. Also, many Pakistanis came to Britain after the independence of Pakistan, usually were lower-skilled workers who would take night shifts.

In the third place, since Britain joined the EU in 1973, waves of people from southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal...) have moved to seek work as their countries' working conditions aren't as good as they are in northern countries.

But how do Britons feel about migration? What is the public opinion about it? The opinion on migration in the United Kingdom is divided as it was one of the main concerns before Brexit. On average, leave voters are more conservative and against immigration, and remain voters are more liberal and think of immigration as a positive development. Also, surveys have revealed that Britons have preferences depending on the type of immigrant, in terms of the home country, customs and skills.

On the other side, America is a country founded by immigrants and even today, thanks to their work the American economy is growing. According to the Migration Policy Institute, in 2020, legal immigrants represented about 26% of the total population, approximately 85.7 million people.

As in any country, the US had great periods of waves of migration. The first migration boom happened during colonial times, where English families —or also called Pilgrims— arrived for the first time in America in the Mayflower. Later, the Irish accounted for the second in number only behind the English. Until the end of the American Revolution in 1783, the British transferred over 50,000 criminals as part of the Transportation Act.

The second wave flourished in 1880 when there was a period of industrialization and urbanization, with the arrival of more than 20 million immigrants. And at that stage, the number of Chinese immigrants was quite large and, as a result, the

government created the law Chinese Exclusion Act to ban them from entering the country, after they had already helped to build the first transcontinental railway and worked in the hardest environments.

The third most important period was in 1892 when for the first time Ellis Island opened to receive immigrants. And from where the Statue of Liberty could be seen as a symbol of the ‘American dream’ for those hopeful immigrants. The first immigrant to set foot on the island was Annie Moore (an Irish teenager), along with 12 million others.

In addition, from the founding of the United States in 1776 to the creation of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, slavery was practised in British colonies. Many West Africans were brought constantly through the triangular trade route. In total, over 12 million Africans were enslaved and forced to work in America—it is considered to be the largest wave of forced migrants in history.

Another rough time was when labour shortages were greatest. It was during the Second World War, back then, Mexican immigrants were recruited to work in fields and were allowed to stay in the country temporarily. And this practice has continued until very recently.

Another big community to migrate were the Cubans; 1.4 million Cubans rushed to the United States driven by the Cuban Revolution in 1953. After the event, Cubans kept migrating to the US, and so there were various remarkable periods such as the ‘Mariel exodus’ or the ‘Balseros crisis’, among many others. Since then, Cuba is known for the desperation of its people to emigrate to other countries, especially to its northern neighbour.

By 1920, more than 4 million Italians arrived in the US and represented more than 10% of the foreigners. After Italy’s unification, about 27 million Italians went abroad, of which 4 travelled to America. The causes for emigration were different, but they were most affected by crises, such as the agrarian crisis. They basically settled in the same urban areas, so the concept of “Little Italy” was born.

It should not be forgotten that the original inhabitants of North America are the Native Americans. However, they have suffered devastation and also constant

discrimination throughout history, something that has tangible evidence as only 5.2 million Natives remain, of which 22% live on reservations.

Nowadays, immigration is a big concern for Americans, but when asking their opinion, they say immigration is a good phenomenon for the country. Although dangerous personalities with negative thoughts against immigrants have arisen, for instance, Donald Trump. However, his actions against immigrants have awakened public protests, such as the 'Black Lives Matter'. It is a fact that Americans are becoming increasingly aware of racial discrimination.

3.5. Crime

The enforcement organisations in the United Kingdom are divided into three different systems depending on the region: England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland. But in all systems, police forces carry out their tasks in regional police stations within their jurisdiction. And are reinforced with agencies such as the National Crime Agency.

According to Statista —a leading provider of data on thousands of topics—, in 2019, 6.43 million crime offences were reported, of which most took place in northern urban areas such as Yorkshire and Humber, North East and London, with 94.9 crimes in 1,000 people; versus Northern Ireland which had the lowest crime rate with 59 crimes in 1,000 people. Also, men between 18 and 24 years old are the most frequent perpetrators. What is more, in the face of this crime increase, British governments have reduced the number of police officers due to austerity measures.

Some of the major crimes that have marked British society were: the intruder who entered the Queen's bedroom, the murder of James Bulger, the Mary Bell case, the Barry Williams killing spree or the murders of the not convicted Jack the Ripper.

In the United States, the different police forces are mainly distributed into federal, state, county and municipal. They basically work as police agencies, which are recognised as law enforcement agencies (LEA); some can be known as 'sheriff's

offices’, whereas the investigative services are usually called ‘bureaus’, for instance, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

According to FBI figures, property crimes are more likely to occur than violent crimes. In 2019, an amount of 2,109.9 property crimes in 100,000 people were reported, compared to 379.4 violent crimes in 100,000 people. Crime rates are higher in states such as Alaska and New Mexico, with 800 violent crimes in 100,000 inhabitants; compared to Maine and New Hampshire with 200 in 100,000 residents. Besides, some of the cities best known for their bad reputation are Detroit and Memphis. In addition, young and black males are the most common profile of the perpetrator in violent incidents.

Some of the numerous murder crimes that shocked America were the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Manson family murders, the murder of John Lennon or Tupac Shakur.

It is worth mentioning that the US has the highest incarceration rate across the world, with 655 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2020, about 2.12 million people in the United States were prisoners, and a considerable amount were black and Hispanic males. Moreover, another particular feature is the life imprisonment and death penalty as criminal punishment. Against other developed countries judgement, some states impose these sentences, although there is no conclusive evidence that the death penalty reduces crime. Similarly, states that have abolished the death penalty have not experienced yet any substantial change.

Firearms

The US has an unusual gun culture among developed nations. Compared to others, the country has laxer regulations and the right to possess firearms is protected by the Second Amendment in the Constitution. It has higher levels of violence related to firearms since it has the largest number of civilians owning guns, with more than 390 million citizens.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention figures showed that in 2019, firearms were the lethal weapons used in 38,300 crime cases, of which almost half of them were suicides.

Public opinion on gun control is quite divided: while some are concerned about mass shootings and ask for more restrictive laws, others such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) —a powerful lobby that disagrees with gun control— campaigns against it by stating that the more guns, the safer the country will be.

3.5.1. Violence and sexual crimes

3.5.1.1. Violence against women

In 2020, the Office for National Statistics computed that 4.9 million women in the UK were victims of sexual assault at least once in their lifetime, of which 1.4 million were raped, or suffered attempted rape. Overall, most attacks were made by people the victim knew and nearly all of them represented the male gender. On top of that, most sexual offences do not get solved or even reported; almost a third of women who are victims of rape (or attempted rape) don't tell anyone, less than one in six women report it to the police.

Since lockdown began because of Covid 19, there has been an increase in domestic violence with 1.6 million reports and the source Femicide Census indicates that half of the victims died at the hands of their partners or ex-partners. In addition, 7 in 10 women had experienced some kind of sexual harassment.

In the US, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), 1 out of 4 women have experienced domestic abuse. On a daily basis, 20,000 telephone calls to helplines are made concerning domestic violence.

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) indicates that 19.3% of American women are raped at some point in their lives. And almost half of them will be raped by an acquaintance or a partner. In addition, over 21.8% reported being gang rapes.

Day by day, sexual assault is becoming much more relevant as a public matter. For instance, in 2017, in the aftermath of the sexual abuse accusations to the film producer Harvey Weinstein by over a hundred women, the #metoo movement became popular with the aim to expose how common sexual assault is.

3.5.1.2. Child Abuse

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), which is the British leading children's charity that has been caring since 1890, points out that the real number of abused children can be difficult to obtain. It is basically because many refuse to speak and it is difficult to unearth the facts of what happened to them.

However, the truth is that these types of cases are awfully frequent; approximately 50,000 children have required child protection, as 1 out of 10 children is affected by neglect in the UK. In the last year, around 23,000 sexual offences were reported, of which 5,500 were against children under 11. Also, in the last decade, an average of 62 children per day were dead by maltreatment and abuse.

The Child Protective Services (CPS), which is the American agency for child protection par excellence, mentioned that in 2019, 656,243 cases of child abuse were reported, and by far the most usual maltreatment was neglect.

Taking race into account, the highest rate of child abuse is found especially in American Indian and Alaska Native children, with a rate of 14.8 in 1,000 cases, of which children between two to five years old were the most usual age victims.

Since 2007, approximately 1,809 child deaths have been reported as a consequence of abuse and neglect. Most of them were mistreated by their parents.

3.5.1.3. Human trafficking

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which is a UK Government instrument that identifies and supports potential victims of modern slavery, showed in its 2017

statistics that 5,145 people were in forced labour. Over 1,744 cases were related to sexual exploitation, with 559 involving children; and Albania, China, Nigeria and the UK were the most usual nationalities implicated.

The 2017 Federal Human Trafficking Report, which is an American annual report of the Human Trafficking Institute, published that there were 8,759 human trafficking cases and almost 95% of all involved sex trafficking, of which 65% implicated children.

3.5.2. Illicit drugs

Every year, the UK registers the second-highest rate of drug use in comparison with the European countries. It has a severe problem with over 3,000 drug-related deaths every year, in other words, 76 deaths per million inhabitants. It seems that drug awareness has yet to get through the youngest, as the issue is a great concern. The main drugs used by Britons are opioids, cocaine, benzodiazepines, MDMA and ecstasy and Ketamine.

At the same time, in 2019, the police performed 108 thousand cases of cannabis seizure, most of them in the London area. While approximately 68% of citizens support cannabis legalization, the government has no plans to legalize the plant. The Ministry of Justice noted that two-thirds of arrested persons tested positive for drug use. Overall, 15% of British prisoners are incarcerated for drug-related offences.

In the US, the drug-related death rate in 2018 had an average of over 17 cases in 100,000 people, that is to say, 67,367 that year. And the growth of treatment facilities had increased since previous years with the amount of 16,000 centres. The most common types of drugs used by Americans are opioids, cocaine and benzodiazepines. It is worth mentioning that prescription drugs are also a matter of public concern as there is a misuse in pain relievers, tranquillizers, stimulants and sedatives —which are commonly abused.

According to Statista, in 2018, over 14,8% of prisoners (about 190,000 people) served sentences for drug offences. The most common causes were trafficking and

possession.

When it comes to cannabis, approximately 127 million citizens use it. And it wouldn't be a surprise if the digit would rise due to its legalization in 15 states and medical marijuana laws in more than 30 states. According to Pew Research, 66% of voters support the adult usage of cannabis and 91% support it for medical use.

CONCLUSION

The significant growth of new market niches entails a rapid rise of new professions like content creators, which to operate efficiently require tools such as this research. In fact, deep knowledge of societies is essential to reach the public.

Having said that, I have attempted to draw comparisons between the British and American societies, focusing my attention on culture and society structures. However, due to the complexity of the theme, not all necessary subjects to understand these societies have been included. Also, it is inevitable to influence my work with a foreign view, which is present throughout this dissertation.

Additionally, two final observations are presented below:

The first one is the difficulty in finding data about all four countries of the United Kingdom. It has been one of the toughest jobs in this paper, as each country has its own institutions and ways of collecting data. For instance, statistics were made according to three different areas: England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. And sources, where I could find an ensemble of all information, were scarce.

It leads me to ask myself how systems really work in each country; which system hierarchy do they follow? The key lies in the roots of each country. On the one hand, the British have always had their disagreements to the extent that some of the citizens do not feel British at all. Therefore, the UK is a country that confers power to its counterparts through independent institutions. On the other hand, Americans feel tremendously proud of their country, in their different ways. Consequently, its institutions have a hierarchical structure where there are federal, state and local governments.

The second one concerns the level of influence that cultures have. Britain was once a very powerful nation but now its culture might be seen as old-fashioned. Although we should not underestimate the mother of English-speaking nations, only time will tell. Instead, America is well-known for its strong culture, which is seen as a benchmark for others. It is a mass culture where everything is for sale and success is everyone's target. But how far will it get? Only time will tell.

To conclude, in order to expand my sociological knowledge about these two nations, I decided to conduct a survey myself to a Spanish-speaking public, about the ideas they associate with each country. A list of the most echoing words in their responses, from the most popular to the least, will be specified as follows:

The United Kingdom: Monarchy, Rain, Fish & Chips, Conservatives, Brexit, Pubs, London, Cold, Tea, Arrogant behaviour.

The United States: Fast Food, Guns, Capitalism, Patriotism, Hollywood, Trump, Hamburger, Racism, Egocentrism, Obesity.

The detailed information presented before is just a hint of what these societies represent overseas. Although, everyone should feel free to make their own assumptions.

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