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Classic British Response in England

Chase Stowell
Linfield College

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Chase Stowell

England

November 13, 2016

Classic British Response

Frankly, I was surprised by how similar our lifestyles were. We both enjoy an active, healthy lifestyle. We both have a pragmatic view of the world and are both interested in hearing the perspectives of outsiders on the poignant issues of today—for instance, the votes to elect Donald Trump and to leave the European Union. In short, it is interesting to see how similar two people can be when they have grown up thousands of miles away from one another in different cultures.

These similarities, however, apply to the interviewee and I and not necessarily the rest of the people I have met in England. Like the people I encounter back home, the people in England are relatively varied. There are people who are simply looking for a good time, there are people that only want to better themselves, and a great many in between. But the variations seem to hold a common pattern in England and America. It's like we are all human or something.

The glaring difference between Richie and I is our stance on guns. This is tied to overarching cultural norms and the rampant gun culture in the United States, but the only people he knew who owned guns owned them illegally and were petty criminals. This is a sharp contrast with me, since I personally own several guns legally—and while it may go without saying, I feel as though it is necessary to add that I am not a petty criminal.

I was surprised by the prominent role of alcohol from an early age in England. While America most certainly has underage drinking, English underage drinking seems—

from his accounts—very different. The key difference is how socially acceptable underage drinking seems to be. Finding bars and clubs that do not card minors, even when they are as young as fifteen, seems like a normal undertaking in England. Richie, the interviewee, said this perhaps was more of a local thing in his home city of Hull. However, based on my conversations with other English students, this indifference is not at all surprising. Instead, they agree that it is reasonably common. I am sure that I could find similar anecdotes in America, but perhaps not on the same scale.

In regards to our outlooks on our respective countries, we both expressed a degree of worry. Both of us do not agree with the reactionary stances the voters have taken. However, while I professed a desire to make some impact somehow on the direction of my country, Richie said he was more of a follower of the ‘classic British response,’ as he called it. This so-called ‘classic British response’ is most adequately described by the cliché emblazoned on so much merchandise today: Keep Calm and Carry On. In Richie’s opinion, the people of Britain may see problems in their everyday lives, whether petty or systemic, and decide to not comment, instead opting for a passive endurance. Richie neither endorsed nor condemned this approach, which seemed appropriate given the context.

I think the single largest takeaway from our talk was that there was a great deal of similarity in our countries as well as our own selves. Specific norms differed radically, from drinking culture to gun culture. Notwithstanding these relatively minor differences, we generally see our countries and our cultures in the same light: They are flawed systems currently undergoing an upheaval that could lead to negative change in the coming years. Yet we both found a common thread of hope, a nationalist belief that our

countries, despite their flaws, would endure and prosper in the future. So, in conclusion, the interview helped me to put the turmoil currently bubbling in the United States in context. Systems are flawed, and so are people. But there are good people everywhere, and we aren't all destined for an apocalyptic future due to our recent electoral mistakes.