

# is cultural diversity proving to be compatible with social unity? essay sample

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Britain has changed quite significantly over the past few decades in terms of cultural diversity. Whereas Britain was largely white not so long ago, the number of ethnic minorities has been steadily increasing and this growth does not look likely to stop anytime soon. Demographic experts have, in fact, predicted that by 2050, 1 in every 5 British person will belong to an ethnic minority. The question issue I will be discussing in the following essay is: what effect does this influx of immigrants and their cultures have on the social integrity of Britain and its people?

Cultural diversity can be said to weaken the social unity of a country and an example of this is the United States of America. The USA is home to a large population, which consists of many different, diverse cultures, whether they be Hispanic, Afro-American or Native American. Sweden, on the other hand, is a population who share culture, kin and many other aspects and is largely considered a homogeneous society. Swedish citizens are happy to pay 50% of their wages towards a national health system, as they see each other as being the same and feel that they must help each other, through loyalty to one's own people.

However, it may be unlikely to ever see a national health service in America, as, unlike Sweden, the population is made up of different groups, races and cultures. A white American will not feel the same affinity towards an Afro-American or a Mexican that a Swedish person would feel towards a Swedish person, who is likely to be the same in culture, kin and appearance. 70% of the poor in America are part of ethnic minorities, in a country where over half the population is white, and so a relatively rich white American will not

be able to relate as well to the poor 'foreigners', who he sees as different, and be unwilling to sacrifice half his income for them.

People in a diverse society drop start to lapse in being responsible for the welfare of the entire country, and start only to look after their ethnic group. They believe that they have to treat people of their own ethnicity better than they treat those of another ethnicity, although, more often than not, they achieve this not by treating their own better, but treating others worse. Studies also show that the countries with the highest standards of living are in Scandinavia, and all of them have largely homogeneous populations. This may be because, people are more willing to pay a government that will help them and people like them, rather than 'waste' money on people who are different and are trying to exploit the government, a common accusation aimed towards immigrants or asylum-seekers in a country with a welfare system. Similarly, a study conducted in the UK found that those councils who were the most diverse when it came to culture and ethnicity were also the least popular ones with the local population.

Adding to this problem is the fact that humans have an innate tendency within us to form groups with those who are similar to us and we can relate to. These groups isolate the people within them from the indigenous population and this means that the minorities have problems fitting in with life as they are not used to British culture, through being isolated or, some times, by choice. These ethnic groups have stronger bonds between their members than Caucasian Brits do (i. e. immigrants are more loyal to an

immigrant of the same race than a British person is to another British person).

This can lead to the break down of British solidarity, as more and more people distance themselves from the term ' British' and instead opt for ' Polish-British' or ' Iraqi-British' and so on, or even reject being British and name themselves simply as ' Polish' or ' Iraqi'. An example of strong loyalty to some one of the same nationality would be the Don Pacifico Affair, where one British subject was oppressed by a small group in Greece and refused compensation by the Greek government and so the largest ships in the Royal Navy were dispatched to blockade Greece, a country with a navy which was envious of British trawler boats. Had Don Pacifico not been a white British man, would London have gone as far to protect him as they did? Would the reaction have been the same? Probably not, and this is threatening to the unity of a society if minorities feel left out and unjustly treated.

The formation of groups may also lead to crime. For instance, the Rochdale Affair was an instance of an ethnically minor group seeking out and abusing teenage girl of the local population. Furthermore, because of the lack of a bond between, say, a Somali immigrant and a British national, the immigrant is more likely to carry out a crime on that person, seeing them as different and not ' one of them'. There is also a lack of trust between the indigenous people and the migrants, for the same reason. It is surprising to learn that 8% of all arrests in the UK during 2009/10 were arrests of black people, in a nation where they only make up 1% of the population.

However, on the other hand, a multi-cultural society can actually help to combat crime. To tackle crime you need a strong, self-disciplined society with moral values and, as aforementioned, minority communities are usually well-knit units of people that have a strict, albeit unofficial, code of conduct amongst themselves, often based on justice systems from their native homelands or based on their religions. This means that, far from committing crime, many minority communities are actually ideal for helping to combat it. The strength and self-discipline of these communities also helps against social fragmentation and rising incivility among groups of people.

In addition, a culturally diverse society can be a great help to the local community and can make the lives of the locals better. Despite what many conservatives claim, it has been shown this week that immigrants pay more in tax than they receive in benefits. Further more, many of the immigrants who come into the United Kingdom bring with them traditions from their homeland. When lots of immigrants who share a homeland come together then amazing things can happen. For instance, the Notting Hill Carnival is a major source of revenue for the local area. It was set up by West Indians who wanted to improve relations with the locals and has been an annual event since 1966. The carnival is famous in many places and brings many people to the area, where they spend their money and enjoy themselves. The area of Notting Hill is now synonymous with the Caribbean carnival and, what would have otherwise been a dull, bleak area of what would be an ordinary city without immigration, is now famous for one of the most vibrant and flamboyant events in England.

Without immigration, as I mentioned, London would be an ordinary city, but it is the cultures that immigration brings with it that unite London and Londoners in being extra-ordinary. Another example of this is Chinatown in London, again a major tourist attraction and a source of revenue and business opportunities. Again, this little spark of red in the grey and urban environment of London is what makes London seem special to the Londoners that live here and it is places like these where tightly knit communities are formed, living side by side with white British and Black-British communities. The influx of culture into Britain is also beneficial to the ordinary person as without it, many of the services we take for granted today would not be available to us. The massive variety of ethnically themed restaurants (such as Turkish, French, Spanish, Indian, Chinese, etc.), where many couples go to enjoy their evening, enjoy a wide range of native specialities that just would not be available to them without the multi-cultural society that Britain is today.

In a multi-cultural area, there will inevitably be a drive by local schools to teach the students about their friends from different backgrounds and about their customs and lifestyle. This makes children more familiar with the world and it also has the potential to rid an entire generation of children from racism, a despicable mind frame that can only be counter acted when you are young and open to what you are told by those in authority. At this age, you are taught the things which you will base your life upon, and to be taught all about different cultures, not only stops the infective spread of racism to children, but it would also help you if, say you were to grow up to get a job abroad. It will also help for communication and understanding in the

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workplace, as studies have shown that 35% of Canada's research chairs are foreign born, important contributors to the community.

It could be said that multi-culturalism is necessary for the development of a healthy, unified society, as proven by Alexander the Great. Alexander built up his massive empire by adopting the cultures of the conquered people, creating a feeling of unity between the people he conquered. This meant that the civilisation of Greek culture was mixed with the traditional Persian culture of his conquered territory, and this meant that a new culture, better than the two different cultures on their own emerged and the conquered people in Alexandria's empire were welcoming of this culture and hailed Alexander as their king and, in Egypt, as a god. Whereas the multi-cultural policy of Alexander helped him build up the largest empire the western world had seen (most subjects happily united under the same leader), the fiercely nationalist Spartan civilisation eventually died away, due to the inflexibility of the Spartan model at adapting to a changing world. It also limited the Spartans' population, as Spartans were not allowed to breed with foreigners, and in effect reduced their fighting potential.

In conclusion, I think that cultural diversity can work with social unity but only to a certain extent. For instance, once Alexander the Great had died, his empire fragmented, partly due to the lack of a figurehead under which several cultures could unite. The death of Alexander reminded them that they were different and the empire was split. Once you get too much cultural diversity and differences between the home culture and the cultures that have arrived from elsewhere, then it is very difficult, but not impossible to

unite people under a common social group and rift begin to appear. Even so, I think there that the conservative views of what social unity is and how to achieve it are often exaggerated and unrealistic in practice in a liberal country like the UK and the extent of how diverse culture is in the UK is often exaggerated for effect by conservatives who want to make a point.