

Is multiculturalism dead? essay sample

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Introduction:

This essay will appraise and analyse the contention that multiculturalism is dead. It will consider arguments for and against in conjunction with relevant written frameworks of ; Barrow: 2009: 2012; Claval: 2010; Crick: 1989; Cowie: 2003; Miene: 2006; Gordon: 1998; Guttman: 1999; Modood: 2007: 2010; Richardson: 1990; Rosado: 1996; Young: 1999; etc The essay will also evaluate the interlinking variable such ' race', faith and ethnicity that conceptualise multiculturalism and at the same time explain the main causes of these salient issues as well as their implication, socially, economically and politically in Britain to date. Based on different social policies as well sociological and political theorist and their approaches, the essay will determine whether multiculturalism has been displaced by the current concept of Britishness. As a nation, Britain has without doubt moved on from an Agrarian society mostly troubled with traditionalism, through an Industrial Society concerned with independence and equality, to our present Information Society concerned with diversity within a global context of a Universal Society of the 21st century(Meine: 2006).

To date, Multiculturalism is a paradigm that still varies in its interpretation and has been a subject of great upheaval both culturally and politically; and a concept that is greatly misused and highly misunderstood. Since for most it is also ' a value-laden concept' which has been constantly targeted by different sections of the public who because of their societal position see the world differently i. e. ' the fact that where you stand determines what you see is a reality in most situations, and it is especially true for the concept of multiculturalism' (Rosado: 1996: 2). In America, the term is very contentious <https://assignbuster.com/is-multiculturalism-dead-essay-sample/>

especially politically and is associated with ideas of humanism, human rights and equal citizenship resulting to the rise in controversies of group differences exemplified in the ideas of Afro-centricity, ethnicity, femininity and gay rights to become the politics of identity (Young, 1990; Guttman, 2003)

Whilst in Britain and other parts of Europe, multiculturalism is considered to be more constrictive in its connotations, embodying a new orientation towards the future; therefore identifying today's livelihood to be a multicultural society via the fundamental movement of people rather than an emergence of a political movement (Modood, 2007).

Definition:

To many the aims of attaining social solidarity, social integration, citizenship, mutual respect and acceptance are suggested within a context of growing contradictions in relation to understanding and defining multiculturalism. It is quite clear that the terms multiculturalism, ethnic pluralism, assimilation, integration, race and racism had a contested history in intellectual thought. However these concepts have been used in racial discourses to define governing patterns of social interaction within race relations across the UK (Gordon: 1998). Meine (2006) defines Multiculturalism as a doctrine of rather more than one national culture co-existing amiably and equitably in a single country. He states that multiculturalism is often viewed as cultural pluralism defining the equal cohabitation of various cultures in vicinity without one culture governing the region. He articulates that this concept is more than just the condition of a society but also can represent a certain kind of public

policy with a methodology for handling cultural diversity to include tolerance and mutual respect in a society.

While theorists of multiculturalism, are inclined to emphasize their arguments in defining multiculturalism as being used widely to identify the political and moral aims of a diverse group of disadvantage individuals based on ethnicity and religious minorities such as the Latinos in the U. S., Muslims in Western Europe, as well as minority nations such as Catalans, Basque, Welsh, Québécois, and indigenous peoples e. g. Native peoples in North America, Maori in New Zealand; they tended to ignore the other under-valued group of individuals such as women, gays lesbians and the disabled(Guttman: 2003). Political theorists Sir Bernard Crick (2003) suggest that there is little difference between what is commonly understood by multiculturalism and integration. Integration according to Crick is the cohabitation of communities and the unrestricted movement between them. It is well defined as the requisite to becoming ‘ fully a member of community rather than remaining in a separate (especially racial) group’ (Cowie: 1989: 651). It is also important to note that while multiculturalism and integration share similar concepts, there is an important difference between these two to assimilation.

Assimilation is a more radical term requiring or forcing one to become comparable to a society by completely Multiculturalism was founded in Britain nearly 2000 years ago with the invasion of Romans who ruled for 400 years. They encountered a mixed population of Britons, Pict s and Celts. Since then Britain has had a continuous influx of migration, which meant a long history of ethnically diverse population through several invasions <https://assignbuster.com/is-multiculturalism-dead-essay-sample/>

throughout the course of the early 4th to the 7th century by the Jute, Saxon and Anglo. It was also consequently invaded by the Viking and later own by the Normans who ruled from 10th century to the late 14th century. Therefore the Influx of different cultures, beliefs and religion was already in existence in Britain by the turn of the 15th century. By the 16th, 17th and 18th century a great number of immigrants fleeing persecution in Europe entered England i. e. the protestants escaping religious persecution, the Jewish migration, the massive migration of the Irish (1820-1910) and the Polish migration of 1945 (Barrow: 2009: 2012; Richardson: 1990).

Colonialism also significantly contributed to the incursion of people or colonists who were in fact invited to come and build Britain (i. e. the Indians and the Jamaicans). There was a severe shortage of labours and the economy of Britain was on the decline after having faced two World Wars. The National Acts of 1914 and 1948, enforced severe restriction on immigration from almost all parts of the world except for those who were subjects of the British Empire and from Commonwealth states; this resulted in the largest collection of immigrants (i. e. from Asia and the Caribbean) in to Britain since the Second World War. The colonist or those Subjects of the British Empire had legal rights to enter Britain either to join the armed forces, vote or live and work. (Richardson: 1990). Sociologists such as Marx named this period in time as one of ' pre - capitalist social forms and capitalist exploitation through market labour' (1964: 109). According to Weber (1963) the context of colonialism underwent change from the beginning of the 19th century as the philosophy of capitalism in Europe moved from Mercantilism to Free trade. Therefore he argued there was a

distinction between ‘ Capitalism peacefully oriented to market opportunities and exploitation capitalism’ (1963: Chs. 5&6).

The inflow of predominantly non-white immigrant into Britain leads to the acknowledgement of group differences within the public domain of laws, egalitarian discourse, policies and national identity and shared citizenship. Between late 1940’s and the oil crisis of 1973, certain western societies, particularly Britain, Netherlands and Sweden started to import labour in order to reconstruct their post-war economies. This allowed the stream of illegal and legal migrants into the country which created a new workforce response and enabled refugees to attain shelter. In view of an inadequately diverse society caused by large scale immigration of people perceived to be different, various “ multicultural” and “ multi-faith” dynamic forces came into being (Modood: 2007) Britain was amongst the first countries to recognise they had become a multicultural society due to long historical experience of immigration. Until the 1960’s and the 1970’s assimilation in Britain (anglo-conformity) was what was expected of migrants and their children.

The increased labour demand and the loosened migration policies allowed non- white migrants into Britain thus leading to the formation of a new culturally diverse group of people. It was expected that assimilation would without doubt take place but was not essentially a requirement due to the varied ‘ political recognition of differences’, and that migrants should preserve their divergent cultures while embracing to, living and working in their new countries (Modood: 2007: 3). But Marxist theorists such as Castles and Kosack (1973) saw the migration process as an international capitalist

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system which exploited the immigrants who were not accepted for their different divergent cultures but were rather considered inferior in all aspects of their life. This was confirmed in a study conducted by Castles and Kosack in 1973, based on migration to Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland where by similarities existed within the migrants of the four countries: they all suffered from poor housing conditions, were all clustered in run-down areas, all had lower positions in the labour market, lacked educational opportunities, encountered extensive prejudice and racial discrimination from both the host population and the authorities.

In an attempt to understand the several proponents that contribute to the problems faced by multiculturalism, issues of race, racism ethnicity and faith are at the forefront of the policy agenda's in the UK. Banton (1987) states that various efforts have attempted to try and differentiate human beings into distinct biological or racial groups. He states that there are three central types of theory, those which perceive as which see race a lineage, those which understand as type and those which see it as sub-species. Biological theories of race attempts to establish a relationship between physical characteristics (such as hair, skin and colour) to underlying genetics differences between groups of humans. In Banton's opinion the term " race" was not used in English until 1508, at that period the bible was accepted as authority on human affairs and thoughts on racial difference was thus based on biblical traditions, which meant that it was widely accepted that all humans were ultimately decedents from Adam and Eve and the notion of " race" as lineage adopted a view that humans belonged to a single species and had a mutual origin.

Although it was also thought that as humans became dispersed around the world, unique lineages developed. These related to variances in physical appearance and geographical roots between human groups. It was supposed that people became dissimilar as a result of migration to different appearance and geographical roots between human groups. The idea of “race” as type is based upon a belief that all humans do not share a common origin and that humanity is divided into distinguishing groups. It is consequently a theory that notes humanity has numerous origins as opposed to one (polygenetic theory); while the third theory denoted that race as subspecies combined elements of the ideas of race as lineage and that of race as types. The origins of this conception of race are to be found in the works of the British biologists Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution. According to Banton, ‘ Darwin saw a species as a class which was distinctive because, its members inherited common characters but inherited them in different combinations which were subject to continual modification’ (Banton: 1997: 145). According to Blum (1992) ‘ race’ has a narrower role in multicultural discourse, although he states ‘ antiracism and multiculturalism are distinct but related ideas: the former highlights victimization and resistance whereas the latter highlights culture life, cultural expression, achievements, and the like’ (1992: 14).

Gooding-Williams (1998) agree with Blum’s view, but also articulate that it is vital to recognise racial differences and racism in the context of multicultural education with respect to acknowledging the historical aspects of the different groups in terms of subordination, culture and related experience. Levy (1997) attempts to explain that group differentiated rights should

include assenting to funding for minority language schools and ethnic associations, religious exemptions, multilingual polls and representation of minorities in government bodies (e. g. ethnic quotas for party lists or legislative seats). He states usually, a group-differentiated right is the ability or a right of a minority group (or a member of such a group) to have choice of action or freedom of action to acting in a certain way in accordance with their religious obligations and/or cultural commitments without being prejudiced. The period between the late 1970s and 1990s was a time of increased racial tensions in Britain. The UK government had accepted that from the mid-19th Century on-wards, radical changes would be required if the UK was to compete with other world economics.

It was noted that although domestic industry still depended significantly on unskilled manual labour, the increasing changes in the industrialisation process and increased competition from W. Europe and the USA ‘ would ultimately result in increasing demands for professional non-manual and skilled manual workers and that the educational system should therefore be organised as far as possible to prepare pupils for their roles as differing types of employees’ (Fulcher and Scott: 2007: 601-603). The introduction of the National Curriculum was viewed as a major way to increase diversity within the multicultural state system through the principle of Public Choice Theory. The New-Liberal government operated on the concept of development of “ Quasi Markets” within the education system. Solomos et al (1995) see this period in time was initiated through political, social and economic factors which have given rise to the concept of New Racism and suggests that

emphasis should be based on cultural differences between ethnic groups rather than biological supremacy or subordination between races.

While Neo- Conservatives were supporters of traditional institution which advocated attitudes and values that retained the patterns of inequality, they strongly opposed the changes introduced by the new government. Neo-conservatives feared that, the then government policy's (Neo-Liberal) failed to focus on the on-going importance of British cultural traditions (discourse of morality and family values) and instead focussed progressively on the issues of sexuality, gender inequality, ethnicity and class, in ways which predictably destabilise the traditional British way of life. They maintained that the National Curriculum increased government control of the central state (Trowler: 1998). Such attitudes (shift from Biological to Cultural Racism) according to Gillard (2003) escalated the already existing racial tensions which were increasingly obvious with the breakout of two major riots in the UK within a period of four years. The 1981 and 1985 Brixton riots was a confrontation between the Metropolitan Police and protesters in Lambeth, South London, England, between 10 and 12 April 1981. Parry, Tributt and Rose (2009) stated in their analysis that riots came at a time whereby the whole of UK was affected by recession (1981), especially the Brixton in South London.

This was an area with serious social and economic problems and was mostly comprised of African-Caribbean community, which was experiencing a predominantly higher than average crime rate, unemployment and poor housing system. The riots were triggered by the shooting of Mrs Groce, a Jamaican immigrant who was left paralysed below her waist by the police

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bullet and so the incidence was perceived by many of the local residents as additional proof of what was extensively observed as institutional racism in the Metropolitan Police (BBC News: 1985). The Scarman report published by De Freitas (1981) confirmed without doubt the existence of institutional racism by the police against the blacks through their 'stop and search powers and also concluded that 'complex political, social and economic factors created a disposition towards violent protest' (Scarman: 1981: 10-12; Anim- Ado: 1995: pp. 137; BBC News: 2004). The Thatcher regime having ignored the findings of the scarrman report discharged the concept that unemployment and racism were the causes of Brixton conflict. Figures indicated high rate of unemployment amongst the Brixton's black population with an overall unemployment figure of 13% in Brixton, of which 25.4% were ethnic minorities.

Unemployment among black youths was estimated at 55%. (Scarman: 1981) Another clear picture on the shift from Biological to Cultural Racism is depicted in the Oldham riots in May 2001, which were essentially known to be the worst racially- motivated riots in the UK since 1985. The Oldham riots were the first of a series of major riots that took place across different cities in the UK such as Bradford, Leeds and Burnley. Racism is clearly portrayed by the number of Asians, including those of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian heritage, constitute 11% of Oldham's population, but make up around only 2% of the workforce at the local council, the town's biggest employer. The rate of mixed race marriages in the town is less than 1%. Most of Oldham primary schools are single race, and many secondaries are 99% white or 99% Asian. (Social seclusion) (IORR: 2011). The riots resulted to the

turning point for Community Cohesion, policy approaches and race relations to swiftly become not only the justification for the 2001 disturbances (Cantle: 2001), but the rather the governing principle for government's methodology/policies in regards to concerns of racial tension and ethnic integration(Home Office: 2005).

Advance measures such as comprehensive guidance to Local Authorities and other public bodies have been put forward to suggest as to how they should both promote and measure 'Community Cohesion' (LGA: 2002), and also provide new guidelines for 2006 Education and Inspections Act authorising new responsibilities for the schools in order to promote cohesion. Whilst a 'highly-contested, controversial concept it is without doubt that 'Community Cohesion' has become the main focus for discussions around multiculturalism, racial equality, integration and ethnic/national identity in the UK' (Kundnani: 2001; Kalra: 2002: pp. 20-30). However, to date there has been very little empirical evidence of how 'Community Cohesion' is understood and practised by people at the bottom of social policy operation. Multiculturalism underwent a radical lash back following the events of September, 11. 2001 and the London bombings of the 7th July 2005. New political relevance of religion developed from the political organisation of specific minorities who selected their religious identity over those ethnicity and colour (i. e. the Sikh and the Muslims).

In many ways, the assertiveness of Muslim politics ascended from the frameworks of legislation of equality, Sikh organisation and the anti-racism movement, 'in short a political multiculturalism' (Modood: 2010: 9) Most popular academic criticism of multiculturalism was evident in the 1990s, to <https://assignbuster.com/is-multiculturalism-dead-essay-sample/>

both countries like Britain and Germany who had incorporated multiculturalism, but also to those countries such as France and Germany who had not; critics claimed that multiculturalism was the breeding ground of religious fanatics (Waldron: 1995). Dr Tariq Ramadan (2011), Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University argued that people should in fact accept the reality of a pluralistic society of Europe and that individuals might hold common citizenship and have different cultural, religious backgrounds. He confirms in labelling people we are changing the 'substance of what citizenship means because, we don't trust the religious, and cultural background of the people who are diversely different' (2011: 4). Multicultural theorists such as Kymlicka (1995) agree that although cultures are collaborating and coinciding, each individual belonged to a different social culture and had a right to preserve these cultures.

Kymlicka states 'the justifications for special protections for minority cultural groups discussed above still hold, even in the face of a more cosmopolitan view of cultures, for the aim of group-differentiated rights is to empower members of minority groups to continue their distinctive practices if they wish to' (1995: 103). In response to Trevor Philips, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, comments on scrapping Multiculturalism, Lord Parekh (2004) argues that cultural diversities simply enriches our lives. Simply stated multiculturalism means that 'no culture is flawless or represents the best life but rather each captures one set of capacities and so sees each culture as valuable but also incomplete hence the need to involve dialogue with other cultures' (2011: 4) Following the Prime Minister speech in Munich in which he out rightly declared "the death of multiculturalism"

initiating that the current government would instead, focus on putting concepts such as national identity and integration resolutely back on the agenda.(Taylor: 2011). Professor Amartya Sen (2006), Nobel Prize- winning economist and philosopher in his book identity and violence, he distinguishes between multiculturalism that accepts the lenience of diversity and critically allows for cultural freedom including the freedom as an individual to move away from traditional ways of life which he call ‘ plural monoculture’(2011: 4)