The Benefits of Cultural Diversity

Task 1.

Read the two articles below and answer the questions. Your responses to the questions should be uploaded to Connect.

1. **How Multiculturalism Benefits the United Kingdom by Danny Graham August 2013**

*Multiculturalism: relating to or containing several cultural or ethnic groups within a society.*

The United Kingdom has been a multicultural (or often referred to as 'cosmopolitan') society for thousands of years; whether it was the co-habitation between the Celts, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in the 1000s or in the modern day with a huge range of nationalities and religions all living in the UK. *The Evening Standard* found that 270 nationalities with 300 languages lived in London alone. However, many traditional conservatives reject the concept of multiculturalism, claiming that it damages the natural organic society and weakens social cohesion; yet this view could not be further from the truth, and a cosmopolitan UK is a strong, stable and prosperous one.

London is now the Babel of the world, with around one third of Londoners from a foreign background, and our capital couldn't survive without them. From the coffee chain Pret A Manger â€“ they employ over 105 different nationalities â€“ right the way up to neuroscientists and working in the financial centre of the world. Business leaders crave for immigrant workers, as they provide an essential cog in the London machine, and Mayor Boris Johnson has had to be highly critical of the government's plans to cap non-EU migrants, a move which has not only been condemned by Boris but also branded as "illiberal and unworkable" by industry experts.

In a report funded by the Canadian Government, it was found that there are huge benefits to having a multicultural society â€“ for example, hiring immigrant workers has many advantages, such as they can help a business tap into new local and international markets, and expand customer bases through improved cultural awareness and communications. In addition, it allows business to enhance creativity, productivity, and decision-making through diverse approaches found in varying cultures.

It has been found that in many countries, including the UK, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is greatest from countries that have a strong representation in the receiving land. This shows there are clear, significant positives to having a multicultural society, and frankly we could not be able to economically survive without one.

Furthermore, living in a multicultural society with people with different traditions and perspectives, makes people communicate with each other. When people communicate, they share ideas and perspectives, so everyone learns a new way to see the world or even a small thing or situation, to paraphrase the great James Stuart Mill, debate and discourse leads to human advancement and the emergence of the truth, also portrayed in the triad of the dialectic described by Georg Hegel. If everybody held the same values and opinions we would fall into a "dull conformism" whereby economic, social and political stagnation would take place and no progression would be made.

Thankfully, in a cosmopolitan society we have the clash of values and the incommensurability of values as Isaiah Berlin talked about, meaning that we can debate different ideas and so the true can indeed emerge, instead of having behind-the-times values and theories.

A multicultural society can also lead to a more peaceful society. In isolationist and dogmatically conservative nations such as Iran, tension towards nations of a different ilk can be considerable, however in the UK, because of our great acceptance and liberal nature regarding those of different values and ethnicities, issues such as racism and discrimination are noticeably lower than countries that enforce strict and illiberal laws vis-a-vis immigration and multiculturalism. In a cosmopolitan society, humans interact regardless of their background, religion or colour of their skin, all of which are such arbitrary factors in life. Instead, we all focus upon the key fact that we are all human beings, no matter what. As a result of isolationist countries not interacting with those of different backgrounds or values they are far more violent and prejudiced towards them, hence rendering their society to be intolerant and stagnated in the past.

With new additions to our multicultural society come new ideas, concepts and innovations that monocultural societies would have no chance of creating â€“ for example around 70% of engineering and technology post-graduates in UK universities are from overseas, all of whom bring new ideas to the forefront of British science. In the USA, there is a long list of inventions created by the Afro-American population, many of which we take for granted today such as the air-conditioning unit, Frederick M. Jones, 1949 and the elevator, Alexander Miles, 1867. If it wasn't for a multicultural society, many inventions would never have come to light and our world would be a weaker place.

Politically, multiculturalism has become an increasing feature over the past decade. We have a growing number of Members of Parliament whose roots lie away from this isle. Indeed, a few key positions in the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet are held by people who are not originally from the UK â€“ Sayeeda Warsi, Baroness Warsi was Conservative Chair for 2 years and still attends the Cabinet; Chuka Umunna, Shadow Business Secretary, and Shadow Lord Chancellor Sadiq Khan all have backgrounds abroad. This number is bound to grow in the coming years with a rising amount of ethnic minorities MPs predicted at the 2015 General Election. This is an excellent addition to the British political spectrum as it adds an extra dimension of diversity to the arena and gives the multicultural society representation where it matters most. In the UK we need ethnic minorities in politics as it, again, allows for a greater variety of ideas, concepts and policies to be brought forward and hence advancing the society of the UK.

To conclude, anyone who argues that a multicultural society weakens a nation could not be further from the truth. In fact, a cosmopolitan country provides social, economic and political benefits for all. Theodore Zeldin wrote that minorities are only tolerated when things are going well. As soon as the economy starts to slide, people look for a scapegoat and often turn to those who are not of their own ilk as an excuse; however it is often minorities that are the pillar of the economy. Particularly here in the UK where immigrants play a key role in our economy and have done for a long time.

In total, I believe groups such as Liberty GB who oppose multiculturalism are seriously forgetting the key benefits of a diverse society, instead overlooking them in favour of significantly weaker arguments that would not lead to a stronger Britain. They claim multiculturalism equates to a fragmented UK, however the reality is quite the opposite: we are **united**, in the **United** Kingdom.

*Danny Graham*

*@Inclusivity\_*

Article 2

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Britain today is a richly diverse society in which people with very different ways of life coexist. Diversity means being different, being unlike and variety. Diversity can describe differences within a society or between societies and applies to the unique contributions to the group characteristics made by the individuals such as beliefs, sexual orientation, ethnic background, cultural perspective, and so forth. Family, place and culture mean different things for different people but are usually associated with connectedness. This essay, though, will first analyse family, place and culture as causes and consequences of social diversity and, secondly, it will describe the relationship between places and life chances and how diversity can bring inequality.

During the past decades, social change in Britain has brought structural and functional diversity into family (Sherratt et al. 2004, p.30). Families today come in many shapes and sizes, there is no right or wrong structure. The main types of family, nuclear and extended, have increased with reconstituted and single-parent families. Families can be formed by married, unmarried or same sex couples with dependent, independent or no children at all. National statistics for 2001 (ONS, 2002 data set ST32217 and ST33218) show that one in five families with dependent children are headed by lone mothers, three times the number obtained in 1971. This may be explained by rising rates of divorce, cohabitation and live births outside of marriage. These figures suggest evolving family structures but also a general maintenance of conventional gender ideology. Hence, different beliefs and practices in relation to the division of labour may bring diversity to family life. In this respect, Young and Willmott (1973, cited in Sherratt et al. 2004 p.26) predicted a more egalitarian family whilst Morris (1990, cited in Sherratt et al. 2004 p.26) denied the attrition of the traditional gender roles.  Another source of diversity in family life is regional diversity. The inner London boroughs have higher concentrations of minority groups than the rest of the country (ONS, 2001). Ethnic diversity as a source of family diversity is defended by Berthoud (2001) among others. This author argues that Asian families are more traditional, have high rates of marriage and are more likely to have extended families comprising three generations. By contrast, West Indian households have a higher proportion of lone mothers and low rates of partnerships.

Similarly, geography and ethnicity bring diversity to the places where people live. Whether rural or urban location, owner-occupied or rented, house, flat or even a caravan, there are multiple places to live in Britain today. Places where people influence their experiences and social relations (Sherratt et al. 2004, p 88). In inner London boroughs, like Islington and Camden, not only there is more ethnical diversity than in the rest of Britain (ONS, 2001), but affluent professionals inhabit the same street as jobless, low-income families or live next to council estates while having no connection with them, as exemplified by Graef (2003). In other parts of East London though, Mumford and Power (2003, cited in Sherratt et al. p. 97) noticed how diverse neighbourhoods can still maintain a sense of community spirit through local social networks. The transition from dwells and neighbourhoods to homes and communities can be done via a sense of attachment and belonging that is part of the broad meaning of culture (Sherratt et al. 2004, p.96).

Culture is all shared beliefs and socially communicated demeanor, that distinguishes a group of people, whether this is a family, a neighbourhood, a community or a nation (Sherratt et al. 2004 p.38-45). People identify with others within their culture but distinguish from people in other cultures. Hence, diverse cultures lead to diverse ways of living, and these can bring people into conflict over how it is acceptable to live. On the other hand, cultural diversity brings richness and choices and shapes identities bringing connectedness. The culture in Britain, including language, food, arts, clothes, leisure activities, religion or relationships can be seen as a sum of the diverse cultures that constitute its society. Cultural mixing is not a new concept, as noted by Sherratt et al. (2004 p. 76). It started with trading in prehistoric times and was further fueled by imports and immigration.  The only thing new about cultural exchange is how easy it is now.  With modern information technology it is possible to experience other cultures on a whim. But the globalisation of culture has a downside. Scott-Clarke and Levy (2003) exemplify the devastating social effects of cultural imperialism caused by American television in Bhutan.

In the same way, the aforementioned diversity of places where people live reflects choices, variety and opportunities but there is a drawback. Utilizing the Weberian term “life chances” (Weber 1948, cited by Sherratt et al. 2004, p. 85) to describe an estimate of an individual's ability to enjoy the economic and cultural goods of a society, it is easy to see how the distribution of such goods is usually asymmetrical. People's life chances are influenced by salary, wealth, housing and education (Sherratt et al. 2004, p 87). Therefore, family, culture and where people live shape life chances. The importance of housing tenure in life chances is debated amongst sociologists. Saunders (1988, 1990, cited in Sherratt et al. 2004 p. 88) outweighs the importance of home-owning status to occupation but this argument is contradicted by Forrest and Murrie (1995, cited in Sherratt et al. 2004, p. 89) and criticised by Watt (1993, cited in Sherratt et al. p. 89). Clearly, home equity can be used as collateral or improve children with inheritance, giving control to people's lives. On the other hand, Sherratt et al. (2004 p. 94) points out how the UK shows a general pattern of geographical clustering of poverty and wealth and how this clustering affects people's ability to access housing, education and employment opportunities and directly impacts in the quality of health services. A direct consequence could be seen in the different life expectancy for different areas in Britain in 1998-2000 (ONS, 2002) accounting up to 10 years of difference for men between Westminster and Glasgow city. Personal wellbeing is then affected by the ability to afford a home in a neighbourhood that improves rather than limits life chances.

In conclusion, Britain's society is undeniably diverse. Living in Britain has implications on how people live, whom they live with and where they live and these differences shape British society. Social change has brought diversity to family, neighborhoods and culture. There are many different types of families today. Diverse neighborhoods may or not share a sense of community. Cultural diversity shapes our identity. Where people life affects their health and prosperity. Diversity brings richness but also inequality.

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**Questions**

1. **Identify the key points the writers are making about diversity?** *This should be a detailed response*
2. **Which article more clearly identifies the benefits of diversity? Give reasons for your answer.**

*Your response to these questions should be typed and uploaded by 4pm*