



Do Multicultural Communities Affect People Positively?

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POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that multicultural communities have a positive effect on people. I support my position on multicultural communities with the following arguments. First, I argue that multicultural communities have low rates of racism. Second, living in multicultural communities increases people's knowledge about different cultures and tradition without having to travel. Third, multicultural communities allow us to have a unique identity. I also consider alternative positions towards multicultural communities. These positions include arguments such as newer generations are less committed to their hometown traditions and cultures, multicultural communities affect social trust, and communication between people of different nationalities is difficult. Multicultural communities are becoming an important topic and they are expanding as globalization and worldwide business increases. As such, having knowledge about the positive effects of multicultural communities will ease the exchange of behaviors, ideas, traditions, and cultures.

Keywords: Traditional communities, multicultural communities, diversity, social coherence

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Positive Effects of Multicultural Communities

In this paper, I argue that multicultural communities have a positive effect on people. A community is a group of people in a common location. As such, multicultural communities are groups of people with different backgrounds (e.g., race, nationality, religion) that interact with each other while living in the same community (Longley, 2019).

I support my position on the positive effects of multicultural communities with the following four arguments. First, I argue that multicultural communities have low rates of racism. Indeed, an increase in social coherence between people with different backgrounds increases the knowledge about other communities, thus decreasing rates of racism (Triggs, 2014). Second, living in multicultural communities increases people's knowledge about different cultures and tradition without having to travel. This knowledge is a result of being surrounded by people of different backgrounds (Elizabeth, 2015). Third, multicultural communities allow us to have a unique identity. Unique identity is formed by the exposure to the different experiences, cultures, and traditions found in multicultural communities (Suleiman, 2003). Finally, diversity in culture inspires creativity and increases productivity (Calonge & Safiullin, 2015). With people from different backgrounds, ideas that can be inspiring emerge and productivity increases.

I also consider alternative positions towards multicultural communities. For instance, multicultural communities affect social trust and communication between people of different nationalities is more difficult. While these issues have some merit, they can be shown to be inaccurate. For example, young generations can still be committed to their traditions and cultures. This preservation can be shaped in the practice of their traditions and cultures with people of the same background.

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

This topic is becoming important as multicultural communities expand with increases in globalization and international business. As such, having knowledge about the positive effects of multicultural communities will facilitate the exchange of behaviors, ideas, traditions, and cultures.

Benefits of Multicultural Communities

Multicultural communities can have positive effects on people living within it. Some of these benefits include the increase of creativity and productivity. A different effect of multicultural communities is the increase of social coherence among people. Multicultural communities also have a positive effect on creating a new identity, as a result of different cultures and traditions in the surroundings.

Effect of Multicultural Communities on Creativity and Productivity

Diverse cultural perspectives inspire creativity. According to Robinson (2009), creative teams are diverse. This diversity can either be informational or social (i.e., sexes, ethnicity, or cultural backgrounds). Diverse teams have people with different yet complementary traits and talents that results in an increase of creativity. With globalization and the increase in global competition, creativity and innovation are the secrets of success. For example, companies such as Nike, Apple, and Samsung have teams that work all the time to update their existing products, revolutionizing the market (Calonge & Safiullin, 2015). As such, without a creative and innovative team, these companies might have been obsolete.

In support of the argument that creative teams are diverse, Calonge and Safiullin (2015) discuss how diversity affects creativity. Calonge and Safiullin conducted a study involving 89 students from 19 different nationalities to see how diversity affects creativity. Their study assessed creativity based on discussion, accomplishments, and feedback provided on assigned

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

projects. The study verified that multicultural communities are more creative than intranational teams. The different perspectives and points of view that were generated within the team were the main reason behind their creativity. Additionally, participants of the study stated that the course (i.e., the study) was an eye opener and taught them new methods of thinking.

In addition to the effect of diversity on creativity, Calonge and Safiullin (2015) show that diversity increases productivity. Productivity is usually mistaken to be getting more things completed. However, productivity is the measure of efficiency and consistency of in getting important things achieved (Clear, n.d.). Diverse environments provides a positive experiences, and positive experiences result in productive teams. In other words, diversity results in an increased number of efficient and consistent outcomes.

Social Coherence in Multicultural Communities

Multicultural communities lead to an increase in social coherence (Holck, 2018). Social coherence is the stability and alignment of relationships within a community, it allows for the efficient flow of energy and communication between people of the same community to achieve cohesion (McCraty, 2017). As such, more tolerance is expected because of the efficient flow of communication among the people in the community. As a result, racism decreases within the community.

To elaborate on the issue of social coherence, we can see that diversity fosters mutual understanding. That is, differences are not the reason people separate. Instead, it is the reason we understand each other. In multicultural communities, a person struggles but finally achieves social coherence in the community. Achieving social coherence in multicultural communities is not an easy task. Still, people in multicultural communities aim for social coherence in an attempt to decrease racism.

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

In support of the relation between multiculturalism and social coherence, Triggs (2014) discusses diversity in modern Australia. Triggs discusses how multiculturalism is an important element of social cohesion in modern Australia. The author also claims that while some other nations still face racial tensions, Australia, with citizens from over 200 cultural backgrounds, has experienced stability. In short, Australia experiences a strong social cohesion as a result of its diverse population.

In sum, living in a multicultural community increases a person's knowledge about other nationalities and their understanding of how to interact with other people. Furthermore, interacting and working in coherence because of the knowledge about other communities' cultures and traditions is a benefit. For an individual to be coherent in life is a reflection of stability and alignment of relationships, thus allowing efficient flow of information. This characteristic is an added advantage to anyone's personality.

Cultures and Traditions in Multicultural Communities

Travelling increases an individual's knowledge about culture and tradition. The exploration of countries while travelling allows travelers to learn more about traditions and cultures. As such, travelers benefit from the knowledge of traditions and cultures.

Beside travelling, the knowledge of traditions and cultures can also be acquired from multicultural communities. In multicultural communities, a person does not need to travel to learn about cultures and to accept others. Simply looking around in multicultural communities results in learning about other cultures.

Learning about a new culture increases a person's tolerance and acceptance (Elizabeth, 2015). Knowledge about a culture helps a person understand differences between social groups. As a result, this awareness leads to less conflict and more acceptance among people. Cultural

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

knowledge does not just boost personality traits and knowledge, it help us learn about ourselves, making us appreciate the small things taken for granted. For example, eating a bagel while walking to the metro in New York might seem like an everyday norm. On the other hand, this action is uncommon in Japan where they either walk or eat, but not both (“The Importance,” 2020).

A second benefit of learning other cultures is that we celebrate one another. For instance, the UAE national holiday is not only celebrated by Emiratis, it is actually celebrated by anyone who lives in the UAE. Another example of celebrating others’ cultures includes the celebration of Ramadan in Egypt. Ramadan is a sacred month in the Islamic culture where Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. During Ramadan, Copts (Egyptian Christians) celebrate Ramadan and break their fasts along with Muslims. Examples of two cultures celebrating one another can be found in great numbers. Overall, celebrating such festivals shows how tolerance can be found and how different cultures can be accepted.

A different benefit from learning others’ cultures and tradition is related to globalization. Global trade has increased in the past decade by almost \$8.5 trillion (“Key Statistics,” 2018). Therefore, as international trade and globalization increase and expand, cultural differences will be evident to everyone. Consequently, living in a multicultural community and accepting other cultures will help in accepting differences and tolerating other cultures (Marquit, n.d.).

In conclusion, learning about other cultures has several benefits. First, tolerance and acceptance among people is increasing. Second, more people are celebrating festivals observed by those from different cultures and religious groups. Third, learning about the different cultures and traditions, with the increased global trade, will allow a person to adapt faster to different cultures.

Unique Identity

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Identity is the quality of a person/group that makes them different from others. According to Suleiman (2003), identity qualities include age, gender, class, occupation, nationality, religion, etc. As such, each person can be considered to be a combination of these traits.

A person is born belonging to multiple groups of people. For example, a Muslim Arab person will belong to the Muslim and Arabic groups. As such, it is expected from this person to follow the Arab and Muslim traits. Some of these traits include generosity and hospitality. Therefore, if at any point this person is not generous or hospitable it would be a major issue.

An additional aspect of unique identity is the effect of geographical location and nationality in characterizing someone's identity. Geographical location and nationality play a big role in shaping someone's identity. As each country is characterized by its own culture and tradition, a person from Jordan and another from Morocco will not have the same culture or traditions. Likewise, an Egyptian living in Egypt and an Egyptian living in the States each have different characteristics that define them.

To take a closer look at the example detailed above, each person is characterized by different combinations of qualities. These combinations are affected by their surroundings (Suleiman, 2003). That is, the Egyptian living in Egypt is mainly surrounded by Arabs and Muslims that live by certain cultural beliefs. These people follow a modest dress code, speak Arabic, celebrate traditional holidays, and sing the Egyptian anthem in the morning (Suleiman, 2003). On the other hand, the Egyptian living in the States is surrounded by a more diverse community. That is, no hijab in dress code, they speak English, celebrate 4th of July, and sing the US anthem in the morning. Although these two people belong to the same groups, each is characterized by their unique characteristics. As such, each person has their own different identity.

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

The effect of multicultural communities on identity can be inferred from the above example. In multicultural communities, one is not surrounded by just one cultural group. Instead, in a multicultural community there are many cultures and traditions that surround a person. As a result, one can learn and acquire various qualities from each culture. That is, as a person lives in a multicultural community, they build their own unique identity.

Each person in a multicultural community interacts with different people. Additionally, each person comes from different group and background. As a result, each person creates a combination of qualities that make them different and unique in their own way. This unique identity makes a person special and different in their own way.

Potential Arguments Against Multicultural Communities

Some people argue that multicultural communities have a negative effect on people, especially adolescents. However, many of these arguments are stereotypes and can lose their merit. Some opposing argument will be discussed.

Newer Generation Commitment to Traditions and Cultures

When someone starts to think of the possible disadvantages of multicultural communities the first argument is related to the young generation. Many people argue that the newer generation of children are less committed to their native traditions and cultures. This belief is generated because of the low attachment of children to their own country's traditions and cultures. Some examples include Muslim girls who choose not to wear a hijab or young Indian women who choose not to wear a sari (traditional dress for Indian women).

Some people argue that a person's culture and tradition are what defines them. More specifically, cultures and traditions are guidelines are seen by many as rules everyone from a given community must follow. However, cultures and traditions are in fact guidelines that

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

individuals choose to follow or not. For example, while traditional holidays and festivals are celebrated anywhere, traditional clothes are not necessarily worn at all times.

Multicultural communities are not sole reason traditional clothes are worn less. A main reason for a decrease in attachment to traditions is globalization. For example, an Indian woman may sometimes not wear the sari even while living in India. On a larger scale, several traditions and many cultures have been altered. This alteration is because of the progress and Westernization happening in life. Nonetheless, through the Westernization storm, traditions and cultures can still be conserved.

The conservation of cultures and traditions is a difficult task, but not an impossible task. In support of the argument that cultures and traditions can be preserved, Hien (2016) conducts a study of how Vietnamese diaspora preserved their cultures and tradition while living in the USA. Hein's research examines culture, identity, adaptation, and the Vietnamese preservation to their cultures and traditions. Hein also mentions that her study is based on years of her personal experience in Silicon Valley where the study was conducted.

The above-mentioned study found that when Vietnamese immigrants decide to leave their communities, they never totally abandon the culture. Instead, they preserve their traditions and pass it on to the next generations so as not to abandon their origins. That is, each Vietnamese household practices their traditions and cultures by speaking, greeting, and participating in Vietnamese. The Vietnamese immigrants also eat their traditional Vietnamese dishes, and address each other according to traditional kinship roles. In an attempt to keep their tradition and culture alive, they have also built their own restaurants, stores, and temples.

Finally, people agree that the Vietnamese have adapted to the American culture while still maintaining their traditions and cultural identity. Hein (2016) concludes her article by stating

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

that Vietnamese preserved their traditional culture while integrating into the culture of the Silicon Valley. In short, the case study shows that preservation of cultures and traditions in multicultural communities is possible, yet it can be a tough task.

The Use of Lingua Franca in Multicultural Communities

Communication among people in multicultural communities can be a problem. Multicultural communities contain several cultures and as a result have several nationalities living with each other. People of each nationality has their different language. Some countries even have several languages. As a result, multicultural communities need to find a common ground to communicate.

With regards to communication problems, multicultural communities ought to use a common language. Such a common language is known as a lingua franca, of which English is an example. However, some people believe that the use of a lingua franca is considered abandonment of the native language and therefore culture and tradition (MacKenzie, 2009).

Despite this perception, people can still speak their native language at home while using English outside their households. The Vietnamese diaspora in California that spoke Vietnamese at home is one such example (Hein,2016). This article shows that just like the culture and tradition, language can be preserved.

Despite the fact that preserving a native language is difficult with the use of lingua franca, lingua francas have their positives too. English as a lingua franca has served in several situations including international law, international sport, and business for trade. In addition, English is now the language of science and scholarship. Melitz (2018) notes other areas in which English can be found, such as the Internet. Statistics show that the English language is used on the internet by 565 million users. Similarly, when entering a bookstore, someone would find

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

books with the native local language and also definitely find a section for English books. When it comes to globalization and global trade there can be no negotiation with regards to the use of the English language. According to Melitz (2018) world trade is dominated by native English speakers (almost 23%). Essentially, English is used for a variety of purposes.

Some people argue that when English is implemented as the second language during conferences or international meetings the native English speakers receive the attention. However, giving attention to only native English speakers should not be the norm. The English language surrounds us everywhere whether it is our studies, Internet, friends, or trade. As a result, English needs to be more commonly used and people need to be more comfortable speaking the language.

English is now spoken by many people. That is, the English language is spoken by a great number of people around the world. As such, the use of lingua franca appears not to be a feature of just multicultural communities. Instead, it is a challenge faced by the whole world. Therefore, just like culture and tradition can be preserved but needs hard work, language can be conserved too.

Social Trust in Multicultural Communities

Multiculturalism affects social trust. As the community becomes more diverse, people tend not to trust anyone or anything around them. When someone is put in any situation, they act according to what they believe is correct (i.e. according to their culture). Therefore, when someone is surrounded by several cultures, each person in a multicultural community is expected to solve the same situation in a different way.

Being surrounded by several cultures is one of the challenges someone can face because of the increased diversity (Putman, 2006). Diversity is increasing in all modern communities,

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

whether virtually over the Internet or in real life. Indeed, multiculturalism is becoming part of every individual's life experience. Accordingly, social trust is a problem of diversity, which is a challenge faced by everyone.

In defense of multicultural communities, some scholars have argued that social trust depends on the extent of interaction of people within the community. According to data from Sweden, it was found that trust among adolescents is not directly related to diversity (Loxbo, 2017). As such, arguing that multicultural communities affect adolescents social trust does not become a valid argument.

In an effort to address the argument regarding social trust in multicultural communities, Putman (2006) conducted a study to measure interracial trust. In Putman's study respondents of various backgrounds were asked how they feel about social trust. Results of the study showed that ethnically diverse people do not withdraw from people because of the difference in communities. Indeed, the results showed that people withdraw even from people of their own community. Moreover, Putman concludes his study by showing that all the factors related to social cohesion and trust were not related to diversity. In other words, the diversity is not the reason of the social trust challenge.

In short, multicultural communities are not the reason for decreased social trust. As demonstrated by Putman (2006) it may not be the trust we are familiar with, but it is a new modern type of trust. This modern trust is keeping social trust and cohesion alive between people.

Conclusion

Discussions as to whether multicultural communities are positive or negative are controversial. This paper outlines the positive effect of multicultural communities. This paper

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

also considers some opposing arguments, showing how these arguments are based on stereotypes and not necessarily true.

We can argue that multicultural communities have a positive effect on people. In support of this position, the paper discusses four arguments. First, multicultural communities increase social coherence within its community. Second, individuals living in multicultural communities learn about cultures and traditions, increasing general knowledge. Third, diverse cultures create diverse teams that are known to be more creative and productive. Finally, multicultural communities help individuals create their own unique identity.

Some people may argue against the benefits of multicultural communities. First, someone can argue that newer generations are less committed to their cultures and traditions. In opposition, a case study about Vietnamese people has shown that although it is not an easy task, cultures and traditions can be preserved. Second, those opposed to multiculturalism argue that there is difficulty in communication between people in multicultural communities. This point can be refuted by referring to the use of the English language. English is used in studies, science, trade, and many other places; therefore, it is only reasonable for someone to constantly use the English language. The third argument is the decreased social trust among people in multicultural communities. However, this argument is just a stereotype as diversity has nothing to do with social trust.

Multicultural communities are becoming a very common experience. The Internet, globalization, and international business are all factors that help in increasing diversity. In an attempt to ease the exchange of behaviors, ideas, traditions, and cultures, it is important for people to understand and learn about multicultural communities.

POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

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POSITIVE EFFECT OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

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