

Multiculturalism

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Multiculturalism relates to communities containing multiple cultures. The term is used in two broad ways, either descriptively or normatively. As a descriptive term, it usually refers to the simple fact of cultural diversity: it is generally applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place, sometime at the organizational level, e. g. schools, businesses, neighbourhoods, cities, or nations. As a normative term, it refers to ideologies or policies that promote this diversity or its institutionalisation; in this sense, multiculturalism is a society “ at ease with the rich tapestry of human life and the desire amongst people to express their own identity in the manner they see fit. ” Such ideologies or policies vary widely, including country to country, ranging from the advocacy of equal respect to the various cultures in a society, to a policy of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity, to policies in which people of various ethnic and religious groups are addressed by the authorities as defined by the group they belong to. However, two main different and seemingly inconsistent strategies have developed through different Government policies and strategies: The first focuses on interaction and communication between different cultures. Interactions of cultures provide opportunities for the cultural differences to communicate and interact to create multiculturalism. (Such approaches are also often known as interculturalism.) The second centers on diversity and cultural uniqueness. Cultural isolation can protect the uniqueness of the local culture of a nation or area and also contribute to global cultural diversity. A common aspect of many policies following the second approach is that they avoid presenting any specific ethnic, religious, or cultural community values as central. Multiculturalism is often contrasted with the concepts of

assimilationism and has been described as a "salad bowl" or "cultural mosaic" rather than a "melting pot".