Unity in Diversity: Orientations and Strategies for Building a Harmonious, Multicultural Society

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Abstract

This essay addresses the question of how knowledge from social science can be used to guide the design of a harmonious, multicultural society. First, the broad characteristics of a viable multicultural society are presented. Such a society depends in part upon the orientations, both positive and negative, of its constituent members towards members of different cultural groups within that society. Discriminatory behavior at both the interpersonal and inter-group level is, however, potentiated or inhibited by group, organizational and societal norms, policies and laws concerning inter-group relations. Integrative individual and social factors thus combine to create inter-group social capital that promotes unity within diversity. Such a unity may be nurtured through careful attention to structuring inter-group contact, language policies, resource allocation, procedural justice, educational curriculum and methodologies. It is argued that these policies at the national level are applicable at the inter-national level and promote a global harmony that will reinforce harmonious multiculturalism within nations.