

# Meanings of Multiculturalism

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## **Abstract**

Views of undergraduates about the meaning of multiculturalism are examined in this paper. Following an analysis of these views, a way of organizing statements about the meanings and interpretations of multiculturalism is presented. Data come from a 1998 survey of seven hundred University of Regina undergraduate students who provided their views about multiculturalism and stated what it means to them. Responses are compared with five themes from the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* – diversity, harmony, equality, resource, and overcoming barriers. The first two of these themes were widely recognized by students but the other three themes were rarely recognized. Further qualitative analysis of responses demonstrates that students organized their views around four major aspects of multiculturalism – who is the subject of multiculturalism, how they view people and cultures other than themselves, how difference is expressed, and location or context. The paper contains a discussion of these and several less mentioned aspects of multiculturalism. Among the findings is that these undergraduates generally supported multicultural principles, with only a small number highlighting problematic aspects. They tended to identify multiculturalism as a process or way of expressing diversity rather than merely an attitude or view about others. The paper concludes with recommendations for the development of multicultural policy.

## **A. Introduction and overview**

In common discourse and contemporary written works, multiculturalism has diverse, contested, and changing meanings and implications. Because of the variety of meanings attached to the concept, participants in debates about multiculturalism often speak past each other and do not always address issues and concerns raised by others. In this paper, I hope to contribute to the clarification and classification of some of the multiple meanings of multiculturalism. I do this by presenting and analyzing the meanings of multiculturalism provided by a sample of undergraduate students at the University of Regina.

The paper begins with a brief review of various approaches to multiculturalism (section B). Following a discussion of project methodology (section C), student statements concerning the meaning of multiculturalism are compared with five themes from the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* – diversity, harmony, equality, resource, and overcoming barriers (section D). I then provide a detailed qualitative analysis of written responses of students (section E). This analysis demonstrates that students organized their views primarily around the following four aspects of multiculturalism (examples in brackets):

- Subject – who or what is the subject of multiculturalism (people, culture).
- View – how people and cultures are viewed (respect, appreciation).
- Expression – how difference is expressed (working together, harmony).
- Location – place or context (country, community).

Written and questionnaire responses demonstrate that these undergraduates generally supported multicultural principles, with relatively few highlighting problematic aspects. Many identified multiculturalism as a process, or way of expressing diversity, rather than as merely an attitude or view about others. The paper concludes with recommendations for multicultural policy and practice (section F).

## **B. Approaches to multiculturalism**

One reason for the multiple meanings of multiculturalism is that the concept can refer to population structure, cultural diversity, institutional policy or program, societal practice, ideology, value, ideal, symbol, educational approach, management style, business strategy, or sociological or political concept or theory. Multiculturalism may be praised as a practice or ideal or it may be viewed as misguided and a source of confusion and problem for society. Different nation-states, cultural or ethnic groups, academics and members of the public take different approaches to multiculturalism. Parekh distinguishes multicultural society as “the fact of cultural diversity” from multiculturalism as “a normative response to that fact” (Parekh, p. 6). In the Canadian case, where multiculturalism has an official basis, policy and program have not always been clearly identified and have been subject to change (Li, p. 148; Isajiw, pp. 247-8). In terms of current research and policy direction, the themes of social justice, civic participation, and identity (SSHRC, 2003) appear to receive greater emphasis than the five themes that emerge from the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (Appendix A).

A further difficulty relates to how multiculturalism is studied. In many studies, multiculturalism is contrasted with assimilation, and the two are presented as opposite approaches. Further, multiculturalism is often taken to mean an emphasis on retention of some original culture by certain ethnic or minority groups. Some even argue that multiculturalism encourages such retention. These approaches may overemphasize the difference between multiculturalism and other approaches to cultural diversity as well as focussing on only some aspects of multiculturalism – and not necessarily the distinguishing features of a multiculturalist approach (Taylor and Lambert, 1996; Hjem).

In attitude studies, respondents are generally provided a set of alternatives about specific aspects of multiculturalism and multicultural policy, through phrases and questions constructed by researchers (for example, Angus Reid, 1991; Berry et al., 1977). While I did this myself in the current study, such a procedure may not elicit the meaning respondents attach to concepts and issues being investigated. As a result, I also considered it important to provide respondents with an opportunity to speak for themselves – to see whether researchers had missed some of the ways that these respondents understand multiculturalism.

While multiculturalism may be “a muddled concept” (Li, p. 149), given the variety of ways it is used, the muddling may emerge because the concept is overloaded with multiple meanings and expected to serve diverse or even contradictory purposes. Researchers have found several dimensions associated with attitudes to multiculturalism (Berry et al., Ch. 7; Angus Reid, pp. 53-60) and it may be that these reflect different meanings and interpretations of the concept and practice of multiculturalism as much or more than attitudes themselves.

There are many polemics about and theoretical analyses of multiculturalism, but there are relatively few detailed explorations of attitudes to and interpretations of multiculturalism. In a short paper, reporting on a specific group of responses, the disagreements concerning multiculturalism cannot be resolved. But by exploring the meanings of multiculturalism for a group of undergraduate students, I hope to make a modest contribution to unravelling the multiple meanings and interpretations of multiculturalism. It is my hope that other researchers will continue to explore what multiculturalism involves in practice, and study how people respond to it in their experiences, rather than pontificate about it in the abstract or from a predetermined perspective.

## **C. Methodology**

### **1. Sample**

Data for this paper come from the Survey of Student Attitudes and Experiences (SSAE), conducted in the Fall 1998 semester at the University of Regina. This survey was part of a class I instructed – Social Studies 306, Applied Methods: Quantitative Approaches – in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies. The Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada, funded the research project “Understandings of Multiculturalism Among Students in a Multicultural Prairie City,” providing financial support for conducting and analyzing the survey and presenting the results.

SSAE was an omnibus survey dealing with student issues, social and political views, academic and personal background, student finances, and job activity. The questionnaire was developed jointly by students in Social Studies 306 and me, with the questions on immigration and multiculturalism designed to meet the research plan for the Canadian Heritage project. The questionnaire was administered in a cross-section of undergraduate classes at the University of Regina in October and November of 1998.

Students in these classes completed the survey in approximately fifteen minutes of class time. In total, there were seven hundred and twenty-six usable completed questionnaires. Students from the class coded the survey questionnaires and graduate students were employed to enter the data into an SPSS data set. For most of the data analysis, including the open-ended questions, I used SPSS, Release 11.

**Table 1. Ethnic representativeness of SSAE sample**

Ethnic origin	SSAE Fall 1998 Sample (n=715)		Per Cent of Regina Population in 1996 (Census of Canada)
	Number	Per Cent of Sample	
Aboriginal origin	62	8.7%	7.5%
Visible minority origin	45	6.3%	5.7%
Other (multi-European)	608	85.0%	86.8%
Total	715	100.0%	100.0%

The survey was not a random sample of students but was reasonably representative of University of Regina undergraduates. It over-represented females by 2.5 percentage points but in terms of other characteristics of undergraduates, about which there is comparative information, the sample was reasonably representative. The University of Regina does not have data concerning the ethnic background of students, but the distributions of Table 1 show the sample is representative of the ethnic distribution of the population of Regina. It is apparent that the majority of the population of Regina is of European background, with less than ten per cent of the population being of aboriginal or visible minority origin. The sample is multicultural in terms of ethnic diversity and multiple ancestry – almost two-thirds of respondents who reported ethnic origin reported more than one such ancestry, with a mean of two ethnic origins.

Being derived from a quota sample of undergraduate students obtained at a particular time and place, the results reported here should not be generalized to other populations and places. Other limitations include the short time given to respondents to complete the survey and the fact that the survey was conducted during class time.

## 2. Responses

Most of the data for this paper comes from a single open-ended question in the questionnaire. Approximately one-half way through the questionnaire, students were presented with the introductory statement and question of Table 2. This was followed by a series of attitude questions on issues related to multiculturalism and immigration.

**Table 2. Introduction to multiculturalism and immigration section of survey questionnaire and question concerning meaning of multiculturalism**

One of the aims of this year's Survey is to explore views about multiculturalism in Canada. This section asks you about issues related to immigration and multiculturalism.

25. To begin, in a few words, what does multiculturalism mean to you?

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Of the seven hundred and twenty-six survey participants, six hundred and twenty wrote responses to question 25. Only two lines were provided for responses and respondents had limited time to complete the questionnaire. Respondents were given no prior information concerning the content of the questionnaire and this question was the first of this section on immigration and multiculturalism. While responses might not have been well thought out or considered, my hope was that by putting this open-ended question first, respondents would provide an honest and off-the-cuff view.

Responses to question 25 were generally written in a thoughtful and meaningful way. Some written responses were very short and displayed no great knowledge or appreciation of multiculturalism; others were insightful and interesting. Responses varied from single word responses "mixture" or "Canada" to long descriptions such as:

- Multiculturalism means being exposed to and educated about various cultures, especially those present in our city, province and country. Having programs in place to eliminate discrimination against those cultures. (id 681)

The mean length of response was approximately ten words per respondent. Typical examples of responses are:

- Cultural diversity. (id 720)
- Everyone treated equally. (id 758)
- Many cultures among a society or community. (id 379)
- The social interaction between different races and religions. (id 795)

In analyzing and presenting the written results, I took two approaches. I first categorized responses based on whether I considered respondents to recognize one or more of the five themes in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. These results are presented in section D of the paper.

In order to analyze the content of the written responses, I read all responses and listed words and phrases used by respondents. Several common themes emerged from this exercise. For example, words such as culture, ethnicity, race, sharing, unity, mixing, and blending appeared frequently. The first three – culture, ethnicity, race – refer to who or what is the subject of multiculturalism. The next four – sharing, unity, mixing,

blending – refer to how individuals and groups live in society or express themselves. After rereading responses and listing words and phrases, it appeared to me that there were four major and several minor categories of responses. I refer to the four major categories as aspects of multiculturalism and call these the Subject aspect, View aspect, Expression aspect, and Location aspect (Table 4). Description and analysis of these four aspects form the major part of this paper in section E.

In order to organize responses to question 25, I listed words and phrases in each response that matched the four major aspects. For some respondents, there were multiple mentions of words matching a particular aspect – for example, a respondent might mention people, culture, and origins as three Subject aspects. As a result, I created four variables for each of Subject and Expression and three variables for each of View and Location. I then reread each of the six hundred and twenty responses and identified the words matching each aspect of multiculturalism. I entered these into the data set and these entries form the basis for the analysis of section E.

This classification and analysis exercise is exploratory in nature; I have been unable to find any similar type of analysis in the literature on multiculturalism. From this, and other considerations, there are a number of limitations to the analysis. First, I took the words of the respondents at face value. There is no way of knowing whether a respondent implied the Location aspect by writing “in society” or whether a respondent writing “living together” meant something different than another saying “coming together.” Second, I had no guidelines, other than my own, for the classification of words and phrases. In order to organize and analyze words and phrases used by respondents, I used my understanding of the meanings of ordinary words written in responses, along with my knowledge of the principles of multiculturalism. Third, to date my work has not been checked by a second researcher. Fourth, some inconsistencies of classification undoubtedly occurred. While I checked categorization of all responses at least twice and corrected some inconsistencies, the categorization was exploratory and ad hoc. Finally, written responses may have not been well thought out or considered by respondents.

#### **D. Themes from *Canadian Multiculturalism Act***

One standard for the meaning of multiculturalism in Canada is the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* of 1988. The *Act* contains statements of principles of multiculturalism, to guide government policy and practice and, more generally, ethno-cultural relations in Canadian society. A reading of the parts of the *Act* dealing with multiculturalism policy (primarily section 3 of the *Act*) reveals several dimensions to multiculturalism. While the *Act* refers to diversity, along with respect for and recognition of diversity, it also refers to equality and ensuring equal treatment for all. Further, statements in the *Act* refer to the value of diversity in Canadian society and its importance in building Canada’s future.

In a previous paper, Christopher J. Fries and I identified five multicultural themes that we considered to characterize the major multicultural principles stated in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (Gingrich and Fries, 1996). The themes we identified

from the *Act* were diversity, equality, overcoming barriers, harmony, and resource. These are summarized in Appendix A. These themes are similar to those noted by other authors (Berry, 1991, pp. 3-4; Isajiw, pp. 245-248) and match those from many of the discussions of the multiple meanings of multiculturalism in Canada (e.g. Fleras and Elliott, 2002).

In order to determine which themes, if any, students recognized in their written responses, I read each response and listed the themes I considered to have been identified in the response. I tallied the number of times each theme was identified – summary results, along with those from a previous study, are summarized in Table 3.

Almost all student respondents (ninety-three per cent) recognized that multiculturalism means diversity. Without harmony and respect for, understanding of, or sensitivity to others in a diverse ethno-cultural setting, multiculturalism is not well founded. Supporters of multicultural policy should be encouraged that at least forty per cent of respondents recognized the harmony theme. Perhaps more respondents intended to indicate harmony in their comments but, as indication of this theme, I accepted only responses with some indication of working or coming together, of sharing or uniting, or one of the phrases in the *Act* included in the harmony theme.

**Table 3. Number and percentage of respondents recognizing each of five multicultural themes – SSAE and Regina Refugee Research Project**

Multicultural Theme	Survey of Student Attitudes and Experiences (620 respondents)		Regina Refugee Research Project (24 respondents)	
	Number recognizing theme	Percentage recognizing theme	Number recognizing theme	Percentage recognizing theme
Diversity	578	93%	18	75%
Equality	27	4%	7	29%
Overcoming barriers	8	1%	3	12%
Harmony	250	40%	10	42%
Resource	51	8%	6	25%

**Note:** Many respondents recognized more than one multicultural theme so the total number of themes recognized exceeds the total number of respondents.

Apparently the three themes of equality, resource, and overcoming barriers were not initially in the minds of respondents. Less than ten per cent of respondents made statements suggesting these themes. While limited survey time and space might be a reason that the overcoming barriers theme was not widely recognized, such limitations should not apply to the equality and resource themes, each of which could be easily and quickly summarized. In other SSAE questions, respondents generally supported the principles of equality and resource, although they were less supportive of policy initiatives aimed at overcoming barriers. Almost all respondents who recognized

overcoming barriers did so by making statements such as no discrimination, no racism, or ending stereotyping and prejudice.

The only comparative information I have about recognition of multicultural themes is from the Regina Refugee Research Project (RRRP) (Gingrich, 1995; Gingrich and Fries, 1996). In that project, twenty-four of the fifty-five project participants indicated awareness of the meaning of multiculturalism and stated what it meant to them. The question asked of them was similar to question 25, although in the RRRP, multiculturalism was first identified as a federal policy. In addition, results came from an interview, rather than a questionnaire. RRRP respondents were newcomers to Canada, all originally arriving in Canada as refugees. Their responses, shown in right panel of Table 3, parallel those of the undergraduate students in the SSAE survey. RRRP participants more commonly recognized themes of equality, overcoming barriers, and resource than did the SSAE undergraduates. This may reflect the different experience and awareness of the RRRP participants – these themes represent aspects of their lives as they attempt to integrate into Canadian society.

## **E. Meanings of multiculturalism**

### **1. Introduction**

In their written responses about the meaning of multiculturalism, SSAE respondents identified many commonly understood aspects of multiculturalism and multicultural principles. I consider respondents to have identified four major aspects of multiculturalism – Subject, View, Expression, and Location (Table 4). These are described and analyzed in this section of the paper. Respondents also mentioned several other aspects of multiculturalism; mention of these was less common and these other aspects are not analyzed in this paper. Following two examples of how I organized and categorized responses, I describe and analyze each of the four aspects of multiculturalism.

As an example of how I conducted this exercise, I organized the response

- recognizing and accepting people differences and learning a little bit about their culture (id 19)

into “people differences” and “culture” as denoting two different Subjects. I considered “recognize,” “accept,” and “learn about” to represent three separate statements of the View aspect. As a second example, I categorized the words in the response

- Our country is made up of people from all walks of life - many cultures under one "roof" (id 33).

into three Subject aspects: “people,” “walks of life,” and “culture;” two Expression aspects: “made up of,” “under one roof;” and two Location aspects: “our country,” and “one roof.”

In this exercise, each response could have entries for up to four Subjects, three Views, four Expressions, and three Locations aspects. Each of these is discussed in turn in sections 2-5.



**Table 4. Major aspects of multiculturalism identified by respondents**

1. Subject aspect – culture, ethnicity, people.
2. View aspect – how cultures other than own are viewed or considered.
3. Expression aspect – how diversity is expressed in society.
4. Location aspect – place where multiculturalism is located.

## 2. Subject aspect

### a. Introduction

Given that “culture” is part of the word “multiculturalism” and an essential aspect of the concept, culture was mentioned frequently in written responses. But culture was not always mentioned and many respondents mentioned people, ethnicity, background, or country in a manner that indicated these were subjects of multiculturalism. That is, these words were attached to how individuals and groups should be treated or viewed, or how they were expressed in relations with other subjects. Examples of responses mentioning several subjects are the following:

- A **culture** created by many **backgrounds**. There are **individuals, traditions** and **behaviours** from many other cultures which create a new distinct culture. (id 64)
- Recognition of **languages, cultures** and **rights** of many **cultures** that make up Canadian **population**. (id 508)

**Table 5. Number of times each subject of multiculturalism was mentioned**

Subject of multiculturalism	Number of times mentioned	Subject of multiculturalism	Number of times mentioned
culture	437	everyone/body	12
people	129	customs	11
ethnicity	54	country	9
background	50	views	9
race	44	different/divisions	9
beliefs	37	individual	9
religion	21	heritage	8
traditions	17	language	8
groups	15	lifestyle	7
nations	15	gender/sex	3
values	14	colour	3

Subjects of multiculturalism mentioned by three or more respondents are listed in Table 5, along with the number of times each subject was mentioned. Since some respondents mentioned several subjects, the sum of the number of times all subjects were mentioned exceeds the sample size. Of the six hundred and twenty responses to question 25, five hundred and eighty-four responses suggested at least one subject of multiculturalism and just under one-half of these suggested more than one subject. The mean number of subjects mentioned was 1.7 per respondent. Several words and phrases were mentioned only once or twice – less common responses included norms, others, foreigners, rights, music, goals, and roots.

## b. Culture

Culture was by far the most commonly mentioned Subject of multiculturalism, often with the single word "culture" or possibly "cultural," "cultures," or "cultural origin." When respondents mentioned multiple subjects, culture was often the first subject mentioned. This is the case with the responses listed just above (ids 64 and 508).

Since multiculturalism as a word and concept includes culture and since discussion and debate around multiculturalism involves cultural retention and cultural practices, it is no surprise that more than two-thirds of respondents mentioned this. Several other subjects mentioned by respondents were connected to culture, e.g. traditions, beliefs, values, views, heritage, food, and music. As the following examples show, respondents sometimes used these words to expand on the variety of subjects of multiculturalism.

- Multiculturalism means the freedom of all **cultural groups** to practice **beliefs** and **traditions** while living and working in the same environment. (id 30)
- **Excitement, music, food, languages** - a wide array of **cultures** living together and ideally respecting and embracing each other. (id 530)
- **Jazz music**. Because it's a combination of European harmony, African and Latin rhythms, instruments from every **culture**, East Indian philosophies. (id 453)

Note the unique and interesting response of the last respondent, who identified multiculturalism with jazz music (see Gingrich, 2002 for an analysis of parallels between multiculturalism and jazz). While harmony, rhythms, instruments, and philosophies might more properly have been identified as subjects, this respondent combined these through the concepts of jazz and culture.

## c. People

Another type of subject frequently mentioned by respondents was "people," "peoples," or "population(s)." Less frequently mentioned terms such as "groups," "nations," "everybody," and "individual" are similar. Examples of how respondents mentioned this Subject aspect are as follows:

- Many **people** in different ethnic backgrounds living together in harmony. (id 572)
- A lot of different **nations** forming one nation. (id 420)

This form of subject differs from culture or beliefs, in that the latter are attached to people or ethnic groups. This latter aspect Subject was the second most commonly mentioned type of subject, so some respondents considered multiculturalism as more attached to people and others considered it as more descriptive of cultures.

#### **d. Other**

Some subjects I expected to encounter were rarely mentioned. "Origin" or "origins" was mentioned by four respondents and then only in the phrases "ethnic origin" or "culture of origin." As a result, I did not include "origin" as a separate category. Similarly, there were no mentions of "birth" or "birthplace" in any of the responses. The words "practice" and "practices," used as nouns, occurred only twice. The word "practice" was used as a verb several times, so that "practice" is one of the categories used in the Expression aspect of multiculturalism. An example of this usage was:

- Allowing all cultures [to] **practice** their culture of origin in a supportive country. (id 104).

In contrast, respondents commonly used words that might be expected – ethnicity, background, race, religion, and language. Discussions of multiculturalism have identified each of these as diverse and statements of multicultural principles include these as subjects to be respected and appreciated.

Multiculturalism has been used in some circles to refer to a broader set of differences such as sex, sexual orientation, or lifestyles. But sex, gender, and sexual orientation were mentioned only three times in responses to question 25, so these broader interpretations of multiculturalism (Alberta, 2003; Okin, 1999), were not part of the common understanding of multiculturalism for the undergraduate respondents in this study.

### **3. View aspect**

#### **a. Introduction**

The View aspect of multiculturalism describes how difference, diversity, and others are to be viewed or treated, that is, how the subject or subjects of multiculturalism are to be considered in Canadian society. One thrust of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and multicultural programs concerns attitudes toward, treatment of, and relationships with others in a diverse society. The *Act* contains the words respect, valuing, equal treatment, recognition, appreciation, and understanding (Appendix A) – essential aspects of multicultural principles, approaches, and policies. The current multiculturalism program emphasizes respect, equality, and diversity. In this study, these form part of the View aspect, referring to the way that individuals and groups are treated, or should be treated, by individuals and institutions in Canada.

From these considerations, I expected that many responses would focus on respect, tolerance, and understanding, but compared with the Subject and Expression aspects of multiculturalism, there was limited mention of terms I included in the View aspect. Of the six hundred and twenty responses, one hundred and seventy-seven

included words or phrases recognizing the View aspect. Fifty-eight responses contained multiple mentions of views and respondents mentioned it a mean number of 0.4 times.

A few examples of single and multiple responses that I considered to indicate the View aspect of multiculturalism are:

- The **celebration** of diverse cultures and heritage. (id 131)
- To some it means a greater diversity of cultures across a country therefore creating more **knowledge** and **acceptance** of other cultures. (id 150)
- **Being objective** and **fair-minded** to the traditions of different cultures. (id 286)
- Having many different cultures working together to promote a way of life. **Being open to learn** and **understand** other cultures, beliefs, values and ways of life. (id 200)
- **Recognizing** and **accepting** people differences and **learning** a little bit about their culture. (id 19)

View aspects that appeared at least twice are listed in Table 6. There are many ways of categorizing the words and phrases in the View aspect; I organized the responses into three categories – acceptance (section b), understanding (c), and equality (d). A subsection on each of these follows.

**Table 6. Number of times each View of multiculturalism was mentioned**

View aspect of multiculturalism	Number of times mentioned
accept/acceptance (b)	48
respect (b)	27
learn (c)	27
recognize (b)	21
appreciate (b)	10
equal/equality (d)	8
celebrate/rejoice (b)	8
understanding (c)	7
aware (b)	6
tolerance (b)	6
knowledge (c)	6
acknowledge (b)	4
teaching (c)	2
interest (b)	2
value (b)	2

**Note:** Letters in brackets refer to sections in the text below.

## b. Acceptance and respect

The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* employs words such as accept, respect, recognize, appreciate, celebrate, aware, acknowledge, tolerate, and value (see Appendix A). While there is a gradation in meaning from tolerate to value, celebrate, or rejoice, all of these words imply some positive, or at least neutral way, of considering others in the context of diversity. The following responses provide typical examples of how respondents mentioned these ideas.

- Society being **tolerant** and **appreciative** of varying culture. (id 283)
- Many cultures in my community - being **aware** of who they are - having **respect** for cultures and customs. (id 335)

There were one hundred and thirty-one mentions of these nine words (noted by (b) in Table 6) by one hundred and twelve respondents.

## c. Understanding

A second set of words and phrases – understand, learn, teaching, knowledge – refer to multiple cultures as resources or means of teaching, learning, developing knowledge, and understanding. Understanding might be considered part of acceptance and respect, but responses mentioning understanding usually did not appear to imply a deep or sympathetic understanding. Instead, they were connected to developing information and knowledge of other cultures, as in the following examples:

- Diverse society allowing everyone to somewhat **understand** each others culture. (id 184)
- **Understanding** different cultures. (id 197)

In total, forty-two responses mentioned words such as understand, learn, teaching, or knowledge. Only three of these involved multiple mentions, so thirty-nine respondents used these words. Among all responses, the following was perhaps the fullest expression, involving both teaching and learning.

- Multicultures living together each **teaching** the others about itself while at the same time **learning** about the other cultures. (id 940)

## d. Equality

The third subcategory of the View aspect of multiculturalism is equality. As noted in the analysis of themes from the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, twenty-seven respondents mentioned equality (Table 3). However, I considered only eight of these to use equality in the View sense. In the following examples, I considered respondent id 2 to have mentioned two words or phrases expressing the View aspect – accepting and striving for equality – whereas I did not consider respondent id 71 to have indicated the View aspect. Respondent id 71 stated an important aspect of multiculturalism in Canada, equality, but I considered this to indicate the Expression aspect of multiculturalism.

- Accepting and striving for **equality** for everyone regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc. (id 2)
- An integration of people from all walks of life who are all **equal** by law. (id 71)

An example of the use of equality in the sense of being treated as equals, not merely being respected or accepted, follows. This is included in the Expression aspect of the following section, rather than in the View aspect.

- A variety of races and cultures all treated **equally**. (id 818)

## 4. Expression aspect

### a. Introduction

The Expression aspect of multiculturalism refers to how diversity is, or could be, expressed in society. Suspicion, conflict, or violence may accompany diversity and difference, but these are not consistent with multicultural principles, so I did not expect responses of this type. Rather I expected responses indicating ways that people could live together peacefully. Examples of words and phrases indicating the Expression approach are coexistence, living together, working together, combining, and blending, plus standard sociological concepts and approaches such as mosaic, assimilation, amalgamation, and integration.

As contrasted with the View aspect of multiculturalism (how individuals consider or view others), I used the Expression aspect to refer to how individuals and groups relate to each other in society. These two aspects undoubtedly overlap, but it appeared to me that the Expression and View aspects represent distinct ways of thinking about multiculturalism. In analyzing indications of Expression, I selected words and phrases that suggested how differences are expressed in social relations. Examples are:


- Different cultures **living together**. (id 186)
- Multiple cultures that **live** and **interact together**. (id 504)
- Many different cultures **living together** and **trying to get along**. (id 473)
- Many cultures **mixing together** and **being equal**. (id 470)
- Lots of ethnicity and people from all cultures **living, working** and **functioning together** in a society. (id 328)
- Several different cultures **coming together**, each **sharing** aspects of their culture until their cultures **merge** or **unite**. (id 244)

I also consider the above examples ordered, in that they represent progressively stronger approaches to stating multicultural principles. The first response denotes merely "living together" while the second response, by mentioning interaction, means something more than just living together. The third through fifth responses indicate more than merely living alongside each other; they suggest that multiculturalism involves mixing, getting along, working together, or functioning together. The final response is even stronger, suggesting the sharing of differences with different groups coming together and merging or uniting. Other respondents used words such as blend or combine.

**Table 7. Number of times each expression of multiculturalism was mentioned**

Organized by frequency		Organized alphabetically	
Expression of multiculturalism	Number of times mentioned	Expression of multiculturalism	Number of times mentioned
together	142	allow	8
living (in/together)	127	blend	6
work (together)	35	bring/brought (together)	4
interact/mingle/twine	23	(in) Canada	5
combine/combination	18	co-exist	13
equal/equality	15	combine/combination	18
Sharing	15	come (together)	14
no/not	15	composed of	4
come (together)	14	consists of	8
Peacefully	14	consists of	2
made/make/making	14	contribute	3
mix/mixture	13	cooperation	4
co-exist	13	create	8
diverse/diversify	12	distinct	5
practice	12	diverse/diversify	12
union/unity	11	division	2
melting pot	10	equal/equality	15
mosaic	10	exist (in)	10
exist (in)	10	experience	5
integrate	9	express	7
harmony	8	form	5
create	8	free/freedom	5
consists of	8	function	3
allow	8	get along	5
express	7	harmony	8
maintain	7	incorporate	4
blend	6	integrate	9
experience	5	interact/mingle/twine	23
form	5	involved in	2
without	5	join (together)	2
free/freedom	5	living (in/together)	127
get along	5	made up of/make/making	14
distinct	5	maintain	7
retain	5	melting pot	10
(in) Canada	5	mix/mixture	13
whole	5	mosaic	10
bring/brought (together)	4	no/not	15
composed of	4	participate	2
cooperation	4	peacefully	14
incorporate	4	practice	12
put together	4	present	2
separate	4	put together	4
variety	3	retain	5
right(s)	3	right(s)	3
function	3	separate	4
contribute	3	sharing	15
present	2	together	142
consists of	2	union/unity	11
participate	2	variety	3
division	2	whole	5
involved in	2	without	5
join (together)	2	work (together)	35

**Figure 1. Schematic diagram for Expression aspect of multiculturalism**

Condition (288)	Process/Activity (50)	Cultures (57)	Relationship (67)
allow (8)	form (5) create (8) blend (6) combine (18) incorporate (4)  integrate (9)	Distinctiveness: variety (3) diverse (12) distinct (5) separate (4) division (2)   Processes: practice (12) retain (5) express (7) maintain (7)	coexist (13) get along (5)
exist (10) bring together (4) put together (4) consists of (2) present (2) composed of (4) live/live in (60) made up of (14)			peace (14) harmony (8) cooperate (4)
come together (14) function (3) live together (63) ----- mixture (13) experience (5) interact (23)			equality (15) freedom (5) rights (3) ----- no (5) without (10) racism/ discrimination
work together (35) contribute (3) participate (2) involved in (2) join (2) share (15)			whole (5) union/unity (11)
<b>Product (45)</b>	melting pot (10)	mosaic (10) Canada (5)	

**Note:** Numbers in brackets indicate the number of times each word was mentioned in Expression aspect.



Sixty-nine per cent of the six hundred and twenty responses included mention of an Expression aspect, with one-quarter of responses used multiple words or phrases suggesting this aspect. The mean number of times an Expression aspect was mentioned was 1.0. Table 7 contains a tally of words and phrases that occurred more than once – organized by descending frequency of occurrence (on the left) and alphabetically (on the right). Given the multiplicity of such words and phrases, it proved difficult to analyze Table 7. Accordingly, I sorted through these words and phrases to develop a classification system for the Expression aspect – the schematic diagram of Figure 1 is the result of this exercise.

For most of Table 7 and Figure 1, I list only a single or main word – there were often variants of words, for example, exist and existing, or mixing, mix, and mixture. Phrases such as “living,” “living in,” “living together,” “coming together,” and “working together” were the most common indication of the Expression aspect. The six responses listed above each use the word “together.” While I did not include “together” in the schematic diagram of Figure 1, it was the single most commonly used word for Expression. However, it appears to have slightly different meanings depending on how it was modified. The notion of togetherness is also implied by words such as sharing and uniting.

### **b. Forms of the Expression aspect (Figure 1)**

I developed the schematic diagram of Figure 1 to organize the diverse types of responses representing the Expression aspect of multiculturalism. I included only those words that occurred more than once in responses; although words such as amalgamate, include, permit, or fragment might be included, they were not mentioned by respondents. The major categories forming the classification of the schematic diagram are as follows:

- i. Condition – a state, form, or condition of diverse individuals and groups in society.
- ii. Process – activity or process involving individuals and groups in society.
- iii. Culture – ways that different cultures were mentioned.
- iv. Relationship – general principles governing relations among individuals and groups in society.
- v. Product – societal product of multiculturalism.

Numbers appearing after the words and phrases in Figure 1 represent the frequency of response for each Expression aspect. A quick glance at Figure 1 shows that the Condition aspect was mentioned most. Of the five hundred and eight words or phrases noted, two hundred and eighty-eight, or just over half, are in the first column. At the same time, there were sufficient mentions of each of the other expression aspects to include them.

The remainder of this section contains a discussion of the five categories into which I grouped words and phrases of the Expression aspect.

## **i. Condition**

Words and phrases listed under "Condition" denote a state, form, or condition in a society with diversity. The entries are roughly ordered into four groups, proceeding from what I consider to be the weakest indication of multicultural principles to the strongest.

The first group is no more than permissive of diversity, and provides only a weak application of multicultural principles. Allow implies that some (unspecified) majority permits others to express or practice their culture. This might be considered to parallel the "tolerance" statements of the View aspect of multiculturalism. Examples are::

- recognizing and **allowing** all cultures to practice their beliefs within Canada's laws. (id 571)
- **allowing** ethnic/racial groups to express their own cultures. (id 883)

The second grouping, beginning with "exist," indicates that society is composed, made up, or consists of people who live together. One hundred mentions of this occurred. These words and phrases represent a neutral or positive view of the way diverse individuals and groups are present and live in society, including recognition of the fact of diversity and multicultural reality. By far the most common words used to indicate the condition aspect of multiculturalism were live or living, often modified by in or together.

Words in the third grouping, mentioned one hundred and twenty-one times, represent stronger recognition of multicultural principles. With words and phrases from "come together" to "interact," there is an indication of mixing and interaction, so that people of diverse backgrounds live together, mix, and interact.

Finally, in the last grouping in the Condition column, there were fifty-nine mentions of what I consider to be the strongest condition – working together, joining, or sharing.

In summary, some interpret the multicultural condition to merely allow diversity; at the other end of the spectrum a sizable number consider it a way for diverse groups and individuals to share or work together in society. In the middle are those who consider the multicultural condition to either exist or be a means of coming together, but not so much a positive resource for building society as a means of living with diversity.

## **ii. Process/Activity**

Words in the second column denote multiculturalism as active – a process or activity involving individuals and groups – leading to something different, perhaps a new form of society. The activity aspect of multiculturalism was mentioned fifty times. Words such as combination, mixing, incorporation, or integration, indicate an active process of transformation. This contrasts with multiculturalism as condition, suggesting a pattern but not a dynamic process. There may be a gradation in meaning of these words,

with integrate giving a stronger indication of multicultural principles than form, create, or blend. Examples of multiculturalism as process include the following:

- People of different ethnic backgrounds **combining** to make a new "multiculture." (id 66)
- **Blending** cultures and learning to live together by learning from each other. (id 189)
- A web of many cultures formed to **create** a whole society. (id 199)
- Where the views, need, traditions etc. of all cultures are **incorporated** (yet indiv[dually] recognized) in one culture "Canadian." (id 839)
- Multiculturalism is a culture that has **integrated** different people and their beliefs in one common place. (id 627)

### iii. Cultures/Distinctiveness

The Cultures column includes words indicating how respondents referred to different cultures as distinctive, yet part of multiculturalism. The five words in the first grouping of the Cultures column come from respondents who made explicit reference to distinctness, separation, or fragmentation of culture. The second grouping in this column refers to processes that tend to preserve or maintain existing and continuing differences.

In constructing this column, I searched for references to cultural distinctness, since both proponents and critics of multiculturalism refer to this. Compared with the total number of respondents who mentioned cultures or people, relatively few responses suggested a distinctiveness aspect of multiculturalism. In total, twenty-six responses made explicit reference to the manner in which different cultures were separated and distinct. Examples of responses indicating distinctiveness (top grouping) are:

- Many different backgrounds, beliefs, etc. that are free to be **distinct**. (id 415)
- A **diverse** country of different races. (id 775)
- Living in an integrated society with **distinct** cultures. (id 176)
- People **fragmenting** society by their claims to be unique. I prefer unity not division. However, I am happy there are many different types of people. (id 435)

Examples of responses indicating ongoing processes that maintain cultural diversity (bottom grouping) are:

- Multiculturalism means the freedom of all cultural groups to **practice** beliefs and traditions while living and working in the same environment. (id 30)
- Multiculturalism is allowing people to **retain** membership in their own culture. (id 235)
- Everyone from every culture being able to **maintain** that culture. (id 402)
- Many cultures being able to **express** their beliefs within Canada. (id 890)

While responses in this column may not imply a negative approach to multiculturalism, they explicitly mention diversity, either as condition or process. Such responses are generally consistent with principles of multiculturalism, at least those provided in official statements of the Department of Canadian Heritage and in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*.

In contrast to the second column, where there is a notion of forming or creating something new, words in the third column imply maintenance of differences, and possibly division among cultures. In terms of relative frequencies, there were fifty-seven mentions of words in the third column and fifty mentions of the action processes in the second column, so that approximately equal numbers of respondents identified each of these two aspects.

#### iv. Relationship

The Relationship column indicates how relationships among individuals and groups are or can be expressed in a multicultural manner. I divided these into three groups. The first implies a weak statement of multicultural principles, merely coexisting or getting along. While this is preferable to being in conflict, coexistence does not imply as strong a view of multiculturalism as peace, harmony, and cooperation, the words in the second group. Examples of responses in the first two groupings are:

- When everyone's cultural heritages are respected and people of all cultures are able to respect and **get along** with one another. (id 591)
- **Coexisting** with people from all walks of life in more or less **harmony**. (id 463)
- Putting together people from different cultures so they can learn from each other and so they can live together **peacefully**. (id 588)
- Many cultures and religions living together **harmoniously**. (id 294)
- Many differences of people working, **cooperating** to achieve common goals, needs. (id 315)
- People from different ethnic backgrounds living together **cooperatively**, yet retaining their cultural identity. (id 832)

For respondent id 591, getting along is paired with the stronger multicultural principle of respect (part of the View aspect) and for respondent id 463, coexistence is paired with harmony. This demonstrates that some respondents recognized multiple dimensions of multiculturalism.

Equality, freedom, and rights, in the third grouping of Relationship, represent principles underlying multiculturalism, some enunciated in the *Charter*. In an earlier study, newcomers to Canada frequently mentioned freedom and rights in connection with multiculturalism (Gingrich and Fries, 1996), but respondents in the present study rarely mentioned these aspects. There were only five mentions of free or freedom and three of rights. These concepts are not unique to multiculturalism but more general principles of a democratic society that are to govern all individuals and many types of relationships. The infrequent mention of these words implies that respondents relatively clearly distinguished multicultural principles from other political concepts.

In contrast to freedom and rights, equality is a central principle of multiculturalism, and one that applies to other social relationships. Again, I was surprised that equal or equality were mentioned only fifteen times, especially since this is one of the central themes of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and since the *Charter* mentions these. A few examples are:

- **Equality** within races. People of all colours and races are considered Canadian citizens. (id 632)
- A land of **equal** opportunity for all minorities. This **equality** should be real and not just a lie. (id 871)
- **Equal** participation in Canadian mosaic. Contributing to Canada's diversity. (id 502)
- Many cultures mixing together and being **equal**. (id 470)
- An integration of people from all walks of life who are all **equal** by law. (id 71)

As noted at the bottom of the Relationship column, there were ten responses using "without" and five using "no" in a manner indicating that there should not be discrimination, racism, or exclusion. A few examples of these are:

- Cultures can unite together **without discrimination**. (id 94)
- People of different cultures living together peacefully **without special treatment** for some. (id 248)
- Recognising other cultures and freely accepting them. **Without social judgment**. (id 782)
- **No discrimination** in the work field. (id 503)
- **No racism** - mixed cultures. (id 14)

These responses represent recognition of multicultural principles, especially that of overcoming barriers and attempting to have more equal participation and equality in society. At the same time, they differ somewhat from other principles of multiculturalism in that "elimination of discrimination does not by itself place a positive value on diverse identities" (Isajiw, p. 253). Ending racism and discrimination are more central emphases of the renewed multiculturalism program than in earlier stated aims of multiculturalism.

## v. Product

The Product box at the bottom of Figure 1 is separated from the other groupings to emphasize that it refers to the societal product of expressions of multiculturalism. This group is divided into two sections, responses implying a whole or unity and responses stating a specific outcome. The specific outcomes include well-known concepts such as melting pot, mosaic, or assimilation, as well as "Canada" as product.

Respondents mentioned various familiar terms, and some lesser used or innovative ones, to indicate the product of multiculturalism. Fifty responses suggested some outcome or product but most respondents did not go this far, only suggesting views, conditions, processes, or relationships. Perhaps the simplest such expression was "Canada." Supporters of multiculturalism can be encouraged that some respondents considered multiculturalism to be identical with Canada. But given the short responses, it is difficult to know exactly what these respondents meant. In any case, there were only five such responses. Examples are:

- **Canada**, the country of many cultures. (id 507)
- Is what **Canada** is - a multicultural country - a country of many cultures living together as **Canadians**. (id 13)

Responses implying a product for society tended to fall into two categories – those suggesting a general product such as whole or union (sixteen responses) and those suggesting a specific product. Examples of the general product for society through multiculturalism are:

- Multiculturalism is the **union** and interaction between many cultures. (id 60)
- Cultures can **unite** together without discrimination. (id 94).
- Several different cultures living and working together as a **whole community**. (id 791)
- Many cultures working together as a **whole**. No discrimination. (id 610)

In terms of specific products of multiculturalism, the two most common words or images used were melting pot (ten responses) and mosaic (ten responses), both standard sociological interpretations of cultures coming together. While the concept of melting pot may be inconsistent with multiculturalism, perhaps there is less difference between melting pot and mosaic than commonly imagined. After all, the so-called melting pot of the United States is associated with the survival of many ethnic cultures, even from the immigration of the 1800s. Examples of these responses are:

- A **melting pot** of cultures and beliefs and the collapse of the moral society. (id 431)
- Cultural **mosaic**. Living in **unity** with individuals who possess an array of knowledge, everyone capable of teaching each other because we are all so different. Fun. (id 236)
- **Mosaic** of people and their beliefs, morals, etc. (id 356)

Four respondents clearly stated that multiculturalism does not mean assimilation; two examples follow:

- **Not assimilating** into the Canadian culture but accepting other cultures. (id 533)
- All different cultures, interacting together and sharing but **not assimilating**. (id 256)

Finally, there were several interesting and unique images of the product of multiculturalism. Some of these responses have been used as examples earlier, but I repeat them here to demonstrate the range of images. Note that the first three use images of different types of food to describe the product of multiculturalism. One respondent provides a musical image (jazz) with a sophisticated explanation. The final two examples below use images that have sometimes been associated with descriptions of multiculturalism – as web, network, or a patchwork quilt.

- Like a **tossed salad**, the more you add the better it is. (id 725)
- Like **mulligan stew**, a carrot there, a potato here a piece of meat there, some celery. (id 866)
- Diversity is the **spice of life**. (id 935)
- **Jazz music**. Because it's a combination of European harmony, African and Latin rhythms, instruments from every culture, East Indian philosophies. (id 453)
- A **web** of many cultures formed to create a whole society. (id 199)
- A **patchwork quilt** of cultures, people and activities. (id 472)

## 5. Location aspect

Many respondents identified or suggested a place or location for multiculturalism. This may have been inadvertent or part of a textbook type definition of multiculturalism. Examples with mention of place built into the respondent's understanding of multiculturalism are:

- A **society** made up of people from many different cultures. (id 152)
- Many ethnic people, religion, tradition, etc. in one **country**. (id 387)
- A symbol of how free and diverse our **country** actually is. (id 683)

In other cases, such as the examples below, mention of location appears to have had more meaning. In the first example, the respondent lists several multicultural principles (many cultures, awareness, respect) and identifies them with her community. The second defines multiculturalism as integration in a particular location – one common place. The last response uses an image of the home as a location of multiculturalism.

- Many cultures in **my community** - being aware of who they are - having respect for cultures and customs. (id 335)
- Multiculturalism is a culture that has integrated different people and their beliefs in **one common place**. (id 627)
- Our country is made up of people from all walks of life - many cultures under **one "roof."** (id 33)

**Table 8. Number of times each location for multiculturalism was mentioned**

Location aspect of multiculturalism	Number of times mentioned
society	90
Canada	35
country	27
area	21
community	10
nation	9
place	9
culture	7
environment	6
city	5
province	2
population	2
land	2
institution	2
space	2

While I did not anticipate so many mentions of location, since two hundred and forty-four respondents referred to location in some manner, it seemed worthwhile to analyze this aspect of multiculturalism. Locations were mentioned two hundred and seventy-seven times, for a mean of 0.4 times per respondent. In the following insightful response, the respondent mentions three locations – city, province, and country.

- Multiculturalism means being exposed to and educated about various cultures, especially those present in our **city, province and country**. Having programs in place to eliminate discrimination against those cultures. (id 681)

Table 8 gives a tally for locations mentioned twice or more. By far the most common mention of location was the use of the word “society.” The following examples are typical of such responses, where respondents noted that society has variety or is diverse.

- Many cultures living in a **society**, yet maintaining and celebrating ethnic backgrounds. (id 35)
- That we are a **society** of many different cultures. (id 70)
- Many cultures living together in one **society**. (id 129)

This survey was conducted among university undergraduates, and they may have been more prone to using the word “society” than would members of the population in general. While respondents who completed the survey in sociology classes were no more likely to mention society than were other respondents, the one respondent using social structure as location completed the survey in a sociology class:

- Many cultures existing within one **social structure**, i.e.: **city, country**. (id 381)

Mention of Canada, country, or area was also common. For the most part, the mentions of society, Canada, country, and area did no more than tie multiculturalism to location in a descriptive manner. The two responses below add to this idea by expressing the idea of living or developing a community in the context of diverse cultures.

- Living as a **community** with many cultures and influences. (id 778)
- Several different cultures living and working together as a **whole community**. (id 791)

Other examples of responses suggesting different aspects of location include mention of environment, culture, or institution (examples below). Here there is an implication that location is not only space or place, but a framework within which multicultural principles operate, perhaps helping to create a different culture or society. This is similar to respondent id 381 (listed above), who refers to multiculturalism operating in a social structure. The final example below refers to an institution, a more specific location than most references to city, country, community, or Canada.

- Living in a **community** with members from diverse ethnic, religious, socio-economic backgrounds in a tolerant **environment**. (id 457)
- Multiculturalism means the blending of cultures in a **common environment**. 100
- Different cultures within a **culture**. (id 659)
- Many cultures existing in a **larger culture**. (id 560)



- More than one culture put together e.g. like in a **learning institution** (university). (id 262)

## 6. Other aspects

As much as reasonable and possible, I organized responses into one of the four aspects of multiculturalism identified in this paper – Subject, View, Expression, and Location. Although other aspects are not analyzed in this paper, respondents occasionally mentioned other issues. For example, Canada was mentioned several times, but in a variety of ways that did not always fit with the categorization I developed.

While question 25 did ask for a valuation of multiculturalism, some respondents praised multiculturalism; others were very critical of it. Negative images related to multiculturalism being divisive or confusing the meaning of being Canadian. At least one aboriginal respondent considered multiculturalism to be a myth. A few other respondents, usually white males, were critical of immigration and multicultural initiatives. But such responses were rare and, in attitude survey questions, respondents generally expressed support for multicultural principles and practices, and did not consider these to be problematic. A summary of these results is available in Gingrich and Fries, 2002.

Responses could also be analyzed from a perspective different than what I adopted above. For example, after conducting the above exercise, I reread responses with a view to considering whether respondents gave any indication of their own culture as privileged or superior, or whether the responses indicated a division into an us and a them, dividing the world into insiders and outsiders. Some responses explicitly mentioned this, for example

- **Allowing** people to maintain a culture without being persecuted while not overstepping our laws. (id 63)

While this respondent would allow maintenance of other cultures, he views others as outsiders, with permission required (allow), and the laws are "our laws." Such responses are similar to those found by Mackey in some of her conversations with organizers of community festivals and celebrations in southern Ontario (Mackey, 2002, chapter 7). But I found few responses expressing such an us-them or Canada first approach, although responses to question 25 were short and respondents' full views could not be stated in such a short question. Respondents' statements about the meaning of diversity generally implied what I consider to be a more inclusive and symmetrical view of cultures and peoples. The following examples are typical illustrations:

- Multiculturalism - a wide variety of norms, values, beliefs, traditions in a society. (id 162)
- Many people from many backgrounds sharing parts of their heritage. (id 311)
- Different cultures working and living together while retaining their individual character. (id 458)

This more common approach appears consistent with survey findings from 1991 indicating that Canadians consider multiculturalism to apply to everyone. In "Multiculturalism and Canadians: Attitude Study 1991," seventy-six per cent of respondents said multiculturalism refers to "Canadians of every ancestry." This was the most commonly selected option among a set suggesting multiculturalism refers to

immigrants, racial minority groups, etc. (Angus Reid, 1991, question 4 and p. 16). While respondents were not asked a similar question in this project, there were many more responses indicating a symmetrical approach to relationships among cultures and peoples than there were indicating a selective approach.

## F. Conclusion

### 1. Summary and discussion

For the most part, this paper is an exploratory exercise in classification and explanations of meanings of multiculturalism. I have not analysed connections between these meanings and sociodemographic characteristics or attitudes of respondents – that will be for another paper. In this concluding section, I summarize findings and discuss issues emerging from the classification and analysis above.

From the summary results for the four aspects of multiculturalism in Table 9, it is apparent that most respondents identified a Subject and over three-quarters mentioned an Expression aspect. Many mentioned a Location for multiculturalism and the View aspect was the least recognized aspect. The last row of the table shows that respondents who used words and phrases associated with the Subject, View, or Expression aspects often more than one such word or phrase used. When Location was mentioned, there was usually only one place or location mentioned.

**Table 9. Summary statistics for four aspects of multiculturalism**

Characteristics of respondents	Aspect of multiculturalism			
	Subject	View	Expression	Location
Per cent mentioning aspect	94.2%	29.5%	79.0%	39.4%
Mean number of mentions of aspect, all 620 respondents	1.7	0.4	1.0	0.4
Mean number of mentions for those mentioning aspect	1.8	1.4	1.5	1.1

The summary results of Table 9, along with the detailed listing of words and phrases in Tables 5 through 8, suggest that these undergraduate respondents understand principles of multiculturalism and the ways these are interpreted and employed in Canadian society. For the most part, written responses gave good summary descriptions of multiculturalism and many of the responses were insightful, informative, and interesting. Respondents suggested a variety of images and approaches to multiculturalism – many of these were standard textbook or dictionary type statements.

By mentioning such a wide variety of aspects and issues, respondents showed their knowledge and appreciation of multiple dimensions of multiculturalism. The focus of responses was not necessarily on aspects identified in public and academic debates. For example, divisiveness and lack of unity as problems associated with multiculturalism

were rarely suggested – in the attitude questions though, about one-third of respondents agreed that multiculturalism could be divisive and just under fifteen per cent agreed that it confused identity. Some analysts argue that the main feature of a multicultural approach is to encourage, or at least maintain, difference and distinctiveness. While a few respondents indicated this might be the case, for most respondents this did not appear to be a major feature of a multicultural approach. Respondents were more likely to consider multiculturalism as a means of living and working together.

It is the latter set of approaches that surprised me, since I expected the View aspect to be the most commonly stated aspect. After all, the main thrust of multicultural policy, at least as expressed in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, is that of valuing and recognizing diversity, respecting and understanding difference, and accepting this as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society (Appendix A). But in the student responses, there was greater emphasis on the Expression aspect, that is, being together and interacting, with multiculturalism as a process that results in a product. While some may argue with details of the classification I have used, from Table 9 it is clear that many more respondents stated Expression aspects than stated View aspects. As a result, there was a great variety of words and phrases providing images of what Expression means in a multicultural Canada – the schematic diagram of Figure 1 provides a guide to these.

From Figure 1, the image of multiculturalism is one of diverse people and cultures not only being together, but working together and being involved in society in various ways that may result in a different society. The process/activity and product categories of Expression illustrate this most clearly by using words such as combine, integrate, create, whole, and union. This is not an image that commonly appears in discussions of multiculturalism. More commonly there is a static image of different cultures and people having reasonably harmonious relations with each other, but not creating something new. Many students appear to adopt a more dynamic approach to multiculturalism, where these social relations lead, in an interactive way, to a new form of society. After all, if people from diverse backgrounds live together and communicate with each other, there will undoubtedly be interaction of a form that changes each people and culture, thus producing a new set of social relationships and system of life. I think Parekh makes a similar point when he says that in a multicultural society “communities are open and interactive and cannot be frozen, and ... public institutions and policies should recognize and cherish their evolving identities and nurture a community of communities” (Parekh, 340-341).

In terms of the theme of this conference, respondents’ references to location are especially interesting, in that they refer to place or location in a variety of ways. While less than one-half of respondents mentioned a location, those who did mention it often had an view of multiculturalism that was embedded in place. That is, for them multiculturalism is not just an abstract concept that operates in a vacuum, but a practical activity and ongoing process that has a location and subjects. For some, multiculturalism is rooted in local places such as community, city, province, or institution. Others located it at a macro level such as country, nation, population, or Canada. While most mentions were descriptive, some responses indicated that location is part of an active process of

building or creating a new culture or society, thus connecting location with expression. Some responses suggest location as a framework for the activity and process of building a multicultural society.

## **2. Research and policy implications**

One implication I draw from the above analysis is that these students may be ahead of academics, researchers, and policy-makers in terms of how they think about multiculturalism, multicultural society, and a multicultural Canada. Academics and researchers have concentrated their attention on traditional debates, issues, and problems associated with multiculturalism. From reading these student responses, I conclude that many are not concerned with these traditional issues and are open to a diverse and interactive society that includes not only acceptance and respect but also building a better Canada. Such a conclusion is consistent with some of the findings in the series "The New Canada," contained in *The Globe and Mail* in June of this year. For example, referring to the survey results on which this series was based, Anderssen and Valpy state that "it was young adults who gave higher rankings to the principles and policies constructed by a previous generation: multiculturalism, the Charter, and the belief that people coming from different cultures can live here in peace" (Anderssen and Valpy, 2003). It may be that young adults take multiculturalism for granted and are open to finding ways to make a multicultural Canada work and be a better society. There is undoubtedly much discrimination and racism in Canada, and ending these is necessary to ensure greater equality in participation in Canadian society. At the same time, I take the responses of these students as indicating at least some readiness to work toward this.

Researchers and policy-makers thus face the issue of discovering what are the processes and product of multiculturalism and how these can develop. If multiculturalism is an essential aspect of Canada and Canadian identity, questions such as how ordinary Canadian experience these processes, what they consider necessary to achieve a more equal and participatory Canada, and what types of programs could deal with barriers to this, need to be addressed. For some individuals and groups there are barriers to equal participation – there needs to be an understanding of what these barriers are and how can they can be eliminated. One way to approach this is to broaden the multicultural approach to other policy areas.

When asking Canadians about the views on multiculturalism, researchers could present a wider range of options to respondents than they have in the past. Past research on attitudes and policy direction was undoubtedly necessary in order to understand how Canadians felt about multiculturalism and multicultural initiatives. But multiculturalism seems widely accepted, so the thrust of research could now be directed to ways of attempting to reduce barriers to participation and obtaining views about how to build a more inclusive society and what type of product Canadians see emerging.

This paper has not dealt with all aspects of multiculturalism. For some individuals and groups, there are barriers to equal participation in Canadian society. In addition, there are many inequalities of education, income, wealth, and power that hinder

such participation and create unequal life chances. These have not been highlighted in this paper, since they did not receive much mention in the written responses of these students. But if people are to live and work together to create a better society, ways to reduce barriers and inequalities will have to be found. Researchers could attempt to discover ways barriers can be eliminated and investigate how people would respond to various programs to reduce barriers. In other parts of this SSAE study, there was indication that some respondents, especially white males, reacted negatively to equity programs and expressed concern about their future opportunities. Policies to deal with such matters, including better job creation for all could help alleviate these concerns.

Some aboriginal and visible minority respondents, those likely to face discrimination or racism, expressed concern about the ability of multicultural policy to deal with these problems. The renewed multiculturalism policy and some Canadian Heritage programs have begun to address these issues. But researchers and policy-makers could undoubtedly do more to tackle these barriers to equal participation. In addition, the interpretation and meaning of multiculturalism could be widened to include addressing barriers to participation in all aspects of life and providing better opportunities for those currently disadvantaged. Many students identified working and living together as key to multiculturalism. This implies a broad view of culture in multiculturalism, and reducing economic and political barriers to participation in Canadian society.

In terms of the limitations of this study, it may be that responses would differ in other groups and regions, so I encourage others to expand the approach I have used, both in terms of including more and different individuals and groups, and extending the scope of questions, discussions, and analysis. By asking students about what multiculturalism means to them and taking an open-ended approach, I hope that I have provided some indication of directions for future research. While my organization and classification of comments is exploratory, I hope that other researchers will find it useful and trust it provides worthwhile suggestions of issues to address in research and policy.

In terms of policy, I see no reason to abandon the traditional aspects of multiculturalism – there appears to be broad support for multicultural principles and a multicultural approach to social relationships. While multiculturalism has been limited in terms of scope and budget, an expanded approach to multiculturalism could build on process and product aspects. The success of a multicultural policy and practice may guide policy-makers toward emphasis on equality and participation in other areas of social, economic, and political life – jobs, political participation, education, in addition to culture.

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## Appendix A. Themes in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act

### Diversity

- Cultural and racial diversity of Canada. 3: 1 (a) (h) 3:2 (c) 5:1 (c)
- Preserve, enhance and share cultural heritage. 3: 1 (a) 5:1 (e) (h)
- Recognize and enhance development of communities of common origin. 3:1 (d)
- Respecting and valuing diversity. 3: 1 (e)
- Interaction between individuals and communities of different origin. 3:1 (g)
- Promote reflection and evolving expressions of culture. 3:1 (h)
- Languages: preserve and enhance; acquire, retain, use 3:1 (i) 5:1 (f)
- Multicultural reality 3:2 (d) (f)

### Equality

- Equal treatment and equal protection under law for all individuals. 3: 1 (e)
- Full and equitable participation of individuals and communities. 3: 1 (c) 5:1 (d)
- Equal opportunity for employment and advancement in federal institutions. 3:2 (a)

### Overcoming Barriers

- Elimination of any barriers to participation. 3: 1 (c)
- Overcoming discriminatory barriers, including race, national, or ethnic origin. 5:1 (g)
- Encourage institutions to be inclusive. 3:1 (f)

### Harmony

- Respect, recognition and appreciation. 3:1 (f) (h) 3:2 (c) 5:1 (d)
- Understanding. 3:1 (a) (g) 3:2 (c)
- Harmony. 3:1 (j)
- Sensitive and responsive. 3:2 (f)
- Exchanges and cooperation, sharing. 5:1 (c) (e)

### Resource

- Fundamental characteristic of Canadian heritage and identity. 3: 1 (b)
- Resource in shaping of Canada's future. 3: 1 (b)
- Participation in and contribution to evolution and shaping of Canadian society. 3:1 (c) 3:2 (b)
- Creativity. 3:1 (g)
- Historic contribution to Canadian society. 3:1 (d)
- Make use of language skill and cultural understanding. 3:2 (e)
- Value diversity. 3:1 (e)

**Note:** The numbers and letters in the box refer to the sections or subsections of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. Adapted from Gingrich and Fries (1996).

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