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Title: **Managing cultural diversity through multiculturalism in NGOs for social change: an Israeli case study**

Abstract:

The concept of multiculturalism has become the focus of an extensive and influential body of knowledge since the 1990s. However, this scholarship has largely concentrated on either the consequences of official 'state multiculturalism' or the conceptualization and utilization of ideas such as cultural difference and multiculturalism by subaltern groups as part of identity politics in order to claim rights and achieve political goals.

This article, by contrast, explores the processes by which multicultural discourses and practices are adopted, implemented, and adapted to social settings that cannot be classified as either state or subaltern uses of multiculturalism. Further, the motivations for, and the ramifications of, this implementation of multicultural discourses and practices are examined.

Based on five years of ethnographic fieldwork in an Israeli non-governmental organization that promotes economic and social rights, this work analyzes the micro-politics of multiculturalism and the complex uses of this concept by various Jewish and Palestinian actors in the organization. The research shows how multicultural notions concerning Arab culture were introduced by the Jewish actors in order to depoliticize Jewish-Arab relations and preserve the balance and stability within the organization. By adopting characteristics of state multiculturalism—in a country where multiculturalism is not an aspect of official government policy—the Jewish actors attempted to produce social change while preserving central elements in the hegemonic Zionist-nationalistic worldview.

This case demonstrates the need to reconsider and problematize accepted underlying assumptions and dichotomous distinctions in this area of study. It calls for further analysis of the complexity of the use—and misuse—of the concepts of cultural diversity and multiculturalism by a variety of actors in diverse social and political settings.

Keywords: Cultural difference, Multiculturalism, Minority Group, Non-governmental Organizations