

International Affairs

Analyzing the Effectiveness of Multiculturalism with Social Inequality

15 August 2023

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This paper will address the influence of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, of 1988 on deep-rooted social issues. The question that this paper will seek to answer is, how has multiculturalism affected immigration, and how has it been inadequate in promoting social equality? This will be explored by analyzing Canada's historic relationship to multiculturalism and immigration and the influence it has had on the ongoing disparities faced by first-generation and second-generation immigrants. The purpose of this paper is to determine why reform that focuses on a radical anti-racist bottom-up approach is needed for multiculturalism to dismantle the current oppressive systems for vulnerable immigrants. More specifically, intersectionality between class and race must be prioritized with macro-level policy and micro-level community support.

Analyzing the Influence of Multiculturalism on Social Inequality

Immigration has been a fundamental component of Canada since the early roots of colonial settlers. The concept of multiculturalism was introduced to assert a unique component of Canada's national identity, where immigrants are welcomed and encouraged to maintain their culture. Despite being bolstered as an integral part of Canada, many Canadians question whether this policy is truly impactful or whether it creates more division. The long-term inequalities experienced by immigrants are greatly manifested in second-generation Canadians. I argue that, although Canada's multicultural ideology has allowed for great amounts of immigration from the Caribbean diaspora, its welcoming attitude towards immigrants needs radical reform of a bottom-up approach to address the societal issues of racism and socio-economic inequality. This paper will begin by giving background to multiculturalism and economic

connections, after a case study of Afro-Caribbean immigration in Canada and the issues of socio-economic inequality will be used, following this pseudo equality of multiculturalism will be evaluated, finally, the effect of Canadian attitudes towards multiculturalism will be assessed. The methodology of this paper will consist of a case study of Caribbean immigration with some documentary analysis of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988).

Multiculturalism, Immigration, and Economics

Multiculturalism strengthens immigration and is concerned with the economic advantages of diversity. Immigration is seen as beneficial for Canada. Multiculturalism was first adopted in 1971 to encourage cultural diversity, cultural sharing, and complete participation, it was solidified with the entrenchment of the 1988 Multiculturalism Act (Berry, 2013, p. 663). Kymlicka (2021) stated that Canadian national identity has a favourable view of immigration, which is attributed to multiculturalism (p. 124). Canada has a points-based system that prioritizes education, bilingualism, and economic standards that contribute to Canada's economic prosperity (Anwar, 2021). Multiculturalism was first developed as a neoliberal policy and concentrated on the economic advantages of diversity, rather than

social movement multiculturalism, which addresses social inequality through anti-racism and anti-colonialism (McElhinny, 2016). The foundation of multiculturalism helped bring first-generation Caribbeans into Canada due to the national interest of economic prosperity. There was a lack of emphasis on ensuring true acceptance in society by addressing social disparities. This foundational legacy of multiculturalism exists today where there is a gap between the policy and its application within society to bring long-term social change for various racial and cultural groups. Likewise, the value of immigrants to native-born Canadians can be reduced to the economic benefits that they bring, which disregards social issues faced by minority immigrants. Therefore, the idealized nature of multiculturalism does not bring true inclusion due to the prioritization of economic benefits rather than social change. This will be elaborated further in a case study.

Case study

History of Caribbean Immigration

This case study will explore the immigration experiences of the Afro-Caribbean community and how the Multiculturalism Act is insufficient in addressing inequality. There is a high population of Afro-Caribbeans, but they still face inequality. From 1965 to 2001, approximately 500 000 Caribbeans

came into Canada, with the majority residing in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (Gooden & Hackett, 2020, p. 54). Many Afro-Caribbeans found Canada had colonial and racist foundations and enduring over-policing, unemployment, underemployment, incarceration, and food insecurity (Gooden & Hackett, 2020, p. 54). First-generation Afro-Caribbeans have received the benefits of multiculturalism in terms of the high population that has been successful in entering Canada but still faces racism and discrimination due to the identities they hold. The policy of multiculturalism cannot bring true inclusion and respect for diversity and race due to systemic inequalities. Therefore, the constraint of multiculturalism is seen in the historic relationship between multiculturalism policy and Afro-Caribbean immigration. As a result, the Multicultural Act continues to be insufficient in addressing social-economic disparities for second-generational Afro-Caribbeans.

Socio-Economic Disparity of Second-Generation Afro-Caribbeans

The claims of the Multiculturalism Act inadequately address the socio-economic disparity. As members of visible minorities, Afro-Caribbeans face educational, housing, and employment barriers. The Multiculturalism Act proclaims the need to eradicate any unfair obstacles to allow all Canadians equal opportunity for socio-economic

prosperity (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988, p. 3). It is usually up to municipalities to accommodate immigrants (Agyekum et al. 2021, p. 225). A study conducted in Toronto found that socio-economic inequality persists among young Afro-Caribbean males, despite the promotion of multiculturalism (Briggs, 2018, p. 536). Briggs (2018) stated that immigrants and racialized people are included as the most unemployed and underemployed people, which bars them from achieving income to live comfortably (p. 536). Many at-risk youths experienced intergenerational poverty and educational abandonment within the school system (Briggs, 2018). Many Afro-Caribbean male youths face socio-economic disparity due to the institutional and structural barriers that prevent educational and employment opportunities. Although multiculturalism accepts inclusion on a policy level, it does not create true acceptance when a disproportionate amount of Afro-Caribbeans have obstacles in obtaining prosperity due to discrimination. The progress created by multiculturalist policies does not satisfy the deep-rooted inequality faced by second-generation immigrants. It must be noted that multicultural policies are at a federal level, but its entrenchment does influence policies at a provincial and municipal level and is not radically robust enough to bring needed influence. As

seen through these studies, multiculturalism does not address socio-economic disparities faced by Afro-Caribbean young men, thus, equity must be prioritized.

Pseudo-Equality of Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism can prioritize pseudo equality over equity, contributing to racism. Multiculturalism policy can be used for performative efforts. Sara Ahmed (2012) asserted that prioritizing diversity can overlook equity, anti-racism, and affirmative action, creating a superficial approach that calls for unity without racial and social justice (as cited in McElhinny, 2016, pp. 50-51). James (2012) said that “CRT [Critical Race Theory] allows ... a critical look at liberal notions of colour-blindness, equal opportunity, and merit, ... to reveal how these supposedly neutral ideals serve to justify racial exclusion” (as cited in Briggs, 2018, p. 537). Liberal multiculturalism can overlook social issues to create the illusion of togetherness. Uniting society is not negative, but it is idealistic when it avoids addressing institutional and structural disparities. Likewise, liberal multiculturalism rooted in white centrism undermines true equality of cultural identities. There must be an equity-based intersectional analysis of the long-term and short-term impact of liberal notions to create conducive social change. Therefore, liberal

multiculturalism can seek surface-level equality, rather than radical equity which can often be further perpetuated by the cultural mindset of Canadian society.

Canadian Attitudes and Multiculturalism

Canadians' attitude towards multiculturalism creates a society lacking radical reform. Canadian exceptionalism hinders change. The USA has a melting pot ideology for immigrants with assimilation (Ghorbani et al., 2011). Canada has a cultural mosaic ideology where immigrants maintain and share their culture (Perry, 2015). Assimilation is often seen as inferior by Canadians who deem multiculturalism as more welcoming (Ghorbani et al., 2011). This comparison and prideful attitude can blind Canada to its own shortcomings of shallow inclusion that inhibits an equitable society. Canada has a culture of politeness and surface-level inclusion, where multiculturalism allows for a normalized level of racism and xenophobia for racialized immigrants. Only when discrimination exceeds a certain point, is where the action is taken. This encapsulates the daily struggles and micro-aggressions that racialized minorities endure in silence. Thus, Canada's attitude toward multiculturalism is coupled with exceptionalism and hypocrisy, which undermines true inclusion.

Conclusion

In closing, Canada's multiculturalism policy has facilitated the immigration of the Caribbean diaspora due to its welcoming attitude but falls short in having the capability to address deep-rooted societal issues of racism and socio-economic inequality. Multiculturalism does provide economic benefits, basic cultural exchange, and acceptance for Canadian society. However, it needs a more radical bottom-up approach that proactively acknowledges intersections of economic and cultural needs with a critical anti-racist foundation. Building relations at a macro-level with multicultural policy and a micro-level with community support systems is what will help immigrant communities such as the case study of Afro-Caribbeans. This often takes more effort than the pseudo-inclusion seen in current multicultural policy, but it is the one that will genuinely transform society. Multiculturalism policy that is explicit in deconstructing bias and bringing radical change will trickle down to provincial and municipal levels. There must be critical analysis and representation, tokenism is not enough. Equity that targets groups who are disproportionately negatively affected will bring real equality in the end.

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