



Research Article

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Re-Examining the Use of Inclusive Society as a Solution to Social Inequalities: It's Time we Address the Elephants in the House

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Abstract

Social inclusion is one of the many social constructs of contemporary governments' social integration policy. This paper critically analysed the policy goals of an inclusive society by examining the socioeconomic and politico-cultural milieus in which governments implement this policy. With references to the United States' Affirmative Action and Canada's Multiculturalism, one can infer that disadvantaged individuals, groups, or communities are neither included nor empowered through the processes of social inclusion. Consequently, this paper concluded that the process of social inclusion cannot lead to effective social integration, given the stagnant socio-economic and politico-cultural environments in which government implements this policy. Instead, most social inclusion programs have become the tools for forced social cohesion with minimal policy objectives to integrate disadvantaged individuals into mainstream society. In summary, social inclusion is a politically correct opiate that is being used to sedate socially excluded individuals or underprivileged communities until they disappear into obscurity.

Keywords: *Inclusive Society, Community Empowerment, Social Inequality, Social Cohesion, Social Exclusion, Affirmative Action, Multiculturalism*

1. Introduction

There is a growing collection of literature on inclusive society. Most of the early research on social inclusion centered on integrating individuals with intellectual disabilities into mainstream society. However, over the past two decades, most experts in the field of sociology, health policy, and political sciences have expanded this social construct to include disadvantaged individuals and communities. To most of these experts, inclusive society and community empowerment are two of the many social constructs of contemporary governments' social integration policies for disadvantaged individuals and communities. Remarkably, modern service providers, government health and social care agencies, and professional groups have adopted this rhetoric. This paradigm change is probably due to the current notion that inclusion is more effective than exclusion as a partnership seems stronger than protectionism (Gijzel, 2014).

This paper critically analyzed the policy goals of an inclusive society by examining the socioeconomic and politico-cultural milieus in which governments implement these policies. With references to the outcomes of the United States' Affirmative Action and Canada's Multicultural policies, one can suggest that disadvantaged individuals, groups, or communities are neither included nor empowered through the processes of social inclusion. Consequently, this paper posits that the procedures of social inclusion cannot lead to effective social integration given the stagnant socio-economic and politico-cultural environments in which government agencies implement these policies. Instead, social inclusion programs have become the tools for forced social cohesion with minimal policy objectives to integrate disadvantaged individuals into mainstream society.

2. Literature Review

Social inclusion is a process that encourages public and private entities to make efforts that will guarantee equal opportunities for every member of a country, state, or community regardless of that person's background so that he or she can achieve his or her full potential in life (DESA, 2009). The Council of the Federation (2013) affirms that a fair and inclusive society allows citizens to have access to public services that promote their well-being and assist them in contributing to the social and economic growth of their communities. It consists of several processes that are designed to create a conducive environment that encourages unconstrained involvement of every member of the public in all aspects of life, such as civic, social, economic, and political activities, including participation in decision-making processes (DESA, 2009).

York Institute for Health Research (2015) construes social inclusion on the concepts of "belonging, acceptance, and recognition" and it involves the recognition that individuals must participate equally in economic, social, cultural, and political institutions. Richmond and Saloojee (2006) assert that social inclusion is the key to

increasing equality and participation of those in the society who are relatively underprivileged. Proponents of social inclusion indicate “a left-of-center stance in favor of the expansion of individuals’ rights and more state involvement to guarantee those rights (Richmond and Saloojee, 2006).”

The Commonwealth of Australia (2010) sees social inclusion as a living condition in which individuals have the resources, opportunities, and capabilities that will allow them to participate in education and training; engage in both paid or voluntary work, and discharge their family and carer duties; interact with people; access local services and engage in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities. Consequently, a socially inclusive society allows every individual or group to make choices about how they want to participate in society (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). The overwhelming theme in this review is the idea that social inclusion involves several affirmative programs that are being implemented to promote unconstrained community participation by disadvantaged individuals or groups.

That most countries and cultures are daily making socially inclusive policies, and designing and implementing social inclusion programs, suggest the global trends of social stratification, stigmatism, and ostracism, which tend to chronically deny some individuals or groups the rights and freedom to achieve their innate potential fully. Kurzban and Leary (2001) lend weight to this assertion by emphasizing that stigmatization is an act that can result in some individuals or groups being methodically excluded from certain social activities because they have certain traits or belong to a given group. The issue is that this form of exclusion contributes to the ongoing process of marginalization that could lead to deprivation and prolonged socio-economic disadvantage (Chakravarty & D’Ambrosio, 2006).

Historically, the notion of social exclusion originated in France in the 1970s when people described the economically disadvantaged as the excluded (Silver, 1995). Initially, this word was used to describe different disabled and impoverished groups. The French government was among the first countries to use the term exclusion, and it is in France that this concept derived its current meaning (Silver & Miller, 2003). This French ideology was developed and popularised when large sections of the French population were excluded from the labor market, which contributed to homelessness, an unbearable rise in child poverty, and an uncontrollable increase in the number of family breakdowns (Shields et al., 2006). Galabuzi (2008) infers that social exclusion is uneven access to indispensable resources that define the quality of one’s involvement in society, which eventually will produce disparities.

Accordingly, the concept of social inclusion became a policy response to social exclusion during the latter part of the 1980s, when the European Community first used the word social exclusion (Wilson, 2006). Williams and White (2003) posit that the adoption of the concept of social inclusion by the European Community (EC) was noteworthy as it suggests that the organization refuses to accept poverty as the appropriate word to describe the predicaments of those ostracised from the

mainstream society. It seems that the adoption of this concept stems from the fact that social exclusion was not merely associated with poverty. Also, it included the innumerable barriers that prevent individuals from participating fully in community activities. For instance, the elites use social, cultural, and political tools to methodically hinder marginalized individuals or groups from exercising their rights and freedoms.

The United Kingdom's Office of the Duty Prime Minister (2004) posits that social exclusion is an intricate and multi-dimensional practice, which creates several social problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, unfair discrimination, poor housing, high crime rate, poor health, and family breakdown. Similarly, social exclusion is one of the major factors why the marginalized and poverty-ridden portions of society may not participate in political or democratic processes, or why they are unable to reap the profits of government's employment programs (United Kingdom's Office of the Duty Prime Minister, 2004).

Durkheim asserts that social exclusion threatens society as a whole with the loss of shared values and the destruction of the social fabric (Silver, 1994). To this effect, it is plausible to infer that the concept of social inclusion was introduced and promoted as a tool with which social cohesion or solidarity will be re-established as a means of giving the state and the selected few the power to handle the expression of the various beliefs and values (Xiberras, 1993, p. 196). In other words, like social deviance or anomie, social exclusion seems to threaten and reinforce social cohesion and the only practical method of reversing its negative impacts is through the adoption of social inclusion or integration policy, which involves assimilating the marginalized or socially excluded individuals into the mainstream society (Rawal, 2008). The concept of social integration or inclusion appears to be in line with the Anglo-Saxon liberal government's assertion that individuals differ (Rawal, 2008). This assumption encouraged the emergence of specialization in the market and social groups (Rawal, 2008). To this end, the social order was re-defined as networks of voluntary interactions. Rawal (2008) posits that liberal institution promotes the contractual exchange of rights and obligations and the separation of spheres in social life. In other words, social exclusion can be classified as a form of discrimination, which happens when individuals or community members do not have the rights or freedoms to voluntarily engage in contractual exchanges due to inappropriate rules, regulations, and practices or when group restrictions hinder individuals' freedom to participate in positive and fulfilling social interactions (Rawal, 2008).

One of the most challenging issues with social inclusion or integration is its link to social exclusion. According to Rawal (2008), they are irrefutably sides of the same coin. Jackson (1999) posits that one can be socially included and excluded at the same time. For example, social relations of kinship and marriage may promote social inclusion while they may equally preclude people socially, as they deny membership rights (Jackson, 1999). No matter how one wants to define or explain these two concepts, ACTCOSS (2011) believes that the idea of social inclusion and exclusion is essential because these

concepts increase our knowledge of deprivation in the community beyond the single dimension of poverty to cover other factors. Besides, these concepts reveal the process or systemic problems, which put an individual, community, or even a nation in a disadvantaged position, such as the denial of fundamental human rights, and the lack of opportunity for full participation in several areas of life (ACTCOSS, 2011).

Critics and advocates of inclusive society have debated its role and impact on social integration. For example, Ratcliffe (2004) posits that the concept of an inclusive community negates everything that exclusionary forces stand for. For instance, for society to be inclusive, lawmakers must make social policies that promote the equalization of socioeconomic and political powers (Ratcliffe, 2004). Given the complex nature of this social construct and the fact that the ideologies that support them are deeply rooted in normative value systems, it is not surprising why it is not easy for governments to effectively implement social policies that will promote social inclusion (Ratcliffe, 2004). There are no rules or regulations that can change people's thought processes towards a more emancipatory worldview without interfering with both a person or community's way of life and behavior (Ratcliffe, 2004). Ratcliffe (2004) states that any attempt to change people's way of life or thought processes can have the opposite effect of hardening their attitudes towards an inclusive society.

Further to the above criticism, Saunders (2013) asserts that most definitions of social exclusion suggest that people are excluded from society due to the lack of opportunity to participate in social, economic, and political life. Still, inclusion is something passive, which socially excluded people experience from their various governments. The very factors that excluded them from society are being harnessed by the vehicles of an inclusive community, which sees and treats these people as a collection of men and women with little or no support of their own (Saunders,). Consequently, on the one hand, the concept of an inclusive society is either active or forced by the state and, on the other hand, it is passive when it comes to those people who experience it (Saunders, 2015). Buckmaster and Thomas (2009) concur with Goodin (1996) that community participation is the solution to social exclusion because an inclusive society tends to treat people as passive in that it is limited to getting people over the line and nothing more. According to Buckmaster and Thomas (2009), community participation will promote full inclusion, in which the aim is to empower the disadvantaged (the excluded) to be integrated into the mainstream unlike the concept of an inclusive society, which tends to be a politically motivated agenda by politicians who are seeking minority votes. Conclusively, Raphael (2009) wondered how individuals and groups could be included in fixed structured relationships or mainstream societies that were responsible for excluding them.

3. Methods and Procedures

This paper critically analyzed the policy goals of inclusive society programs by examining

the socioeconomic and politico-cultural contexts in which these policies are being implemented. To accomplish this, we reviewed the governments of Canada and the United States' documents on multiculturalism and Affirmative Acts, which provided us with authoritative information on the background for the enactment of the multicultural and Affirmative Acts and the government's self-declared objectives. In addition, objective evaluations of the outcomes of the United States' Affirmative Action and Canada's Multicultural policies were conducted using consolidated literature reviews. Data from both peer-reviewed journal articles and grey literature on the strengths and weaknesses of the United States' Affirmative Action and Canada's Multicultural programs were retrieved using the following databases: ERIC, PsycINFO, Advanced Google, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Dissertations and Theses. All the articles in this study were included based on their relevance to our analysis.

We limited bias by excluding all the articles that exclusively praised or vilified the Canadian multiculturalism policies and the American policies of affirmative actions. We controlled for reviewers' bias through the use of a critical appraisal form for systematic reviews and meta-analysis for our data collection. All the reviewers jointly review the completed data collection forms and voted for the final articles that have been included in this review.

4. Results

4.1 Canada Multicultural Act

Our initial internet search generated 250 published reports on the subject of Canada Multiculturalism. However, we excluded 225 articles after reviewing their abstracts based on our predetermined criteria for this section of our analysis. We further eliminated 10 articles after reviewing their full content. Particularly, we excluded the 10 articles because they either paraphrased or quoted what the government of Canada or related authorities have documented. Upon a critical review of the remaining 15 articles, we removed three articles that either leaned highly on the positive or negative impacts of multiculturalism in Canada, which leaves us with 12 articles.

Table 1: The Summary of the results of our review on Canada’s Multiculturalism

Source of Data	Overarching Reasons for the Enactment of Canada’s Multiculturalism Act in 1971
Government of Canada (2022). Canadian Multiculturalism Act R.S.C., 1985, c. 24 (4th Supp.) Justice Laws Website Gagnon, E., (2022). Canadian Multiculturalism Policy, 1971. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. Berry, D. (2020). Canadian Multiculturalism Act. The Canadian Encyclopedia	Enacted to safeguard and enhance multiculturalism in Canada. Enacted to protect the cultural freedom of all individuals and provide recognition of the cultural contributions of diverse ethnic groups to Canadian society. Enacted to reduce the growing tensions between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. Other ethnic groups, such as the Ukrainian Canadians, had concerns with the 1963 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. established by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson because it only honored the socio-cultural contributions of the French and British Canadians.
	Socioeconomic and politico-cultural milieus Canada had two dominant ethnic groups, the French and the English There was an uneven partnership between the British and French elements within Canada There was a rising Francophone nationalism in Quebec Canadian aging population and the need for immigrants to improve the labor force.
	Benefits Multiculturalism policy has contributed to the successful integration of immigrants and ethnic and religious minorities in Canada in comparison to countries without an official multiculturalism policy (Kymlicka, 2010). It has encouraged an influx of diversely experienced professionals in an environment of labor shortages (Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (2022). It has encouraged a high level of mutual empathy and tolerance between immigrants and native-born Canadians (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010).
	Pitfalls It is mainly a symbolic acknowledgment of cultural diversity rather than a substantive change in government policy (Li, 1999). It discourages national cohesion and, promotes ghettoization (Wong, 2010) because it promotes cultural diversities at the expense of common Canadian values (PRI, 2009). It encourages discrimination and exclusion as not all individuals in culturally-different societies are treated equally (Berry, 2013). It produces different outcomes for members of diverse ethnocultural groups, such as in educational attainment (Boyd, 2002) and employment (Statistics Canada, 2011).

4.2 The United States’ Affirmative Action

Our internet search returned 300 published reports on the United States’ Affirmative Action. We excluded 180 articles after assessing their abstracts based on our predetermined criteria for this section of our study. We further eliminated 60 articles after reviewing their full content. We left out the 60 articles because they either paraphrased or quoted what the United States government or related authorities have documented. Upon a critical review of the remaining 60 articles, we removed 46 articles that either leaned heavily on the positive or negative impacts of the United States’ policy of affirmative action, which leaves us with 14 articles. Table 2 below summarizes the results of our review.

Table 2: The Summary of the results of our review on America’s Affirmative Action

Sources of Data	Overarching Reasons for the Enactment of Amerca’s Affirmative Action
American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity (2022). The Univerity of Rhode Island (2022). Lipson (2008). HG Organization Legal Resources (2022). Callahan (2017).	Enacted by the American government to safeguard that federal contract applicants are treated equally irrespective of their race, color, religion, sex, place, or country of origin. To ensure equitable hiring practices in construction jobs. To promote race-conscious inclusion practices in employment, education, and social engagements To help level the playing ground for people that are traditionally underprivileged because of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. To increase opportunities for traditionally marginalized groups in American society. To create race and gender diversity in all aspects of public engagements (Tribe, 1988).
	Socioeconomic and politico-cultural milieus
	Ongoing systemic and individual discrimination of minority groups in the United States (Tribe, 1988). Ongoing civil rights movement in the United States (Callahan, 2017). Whites ran away from southern cities to the suburbs and from public to private schools (Reform Judaism Organization, 2022). Under-representation of women and minorities in colleges, media, politics, etc. (Reform Judaism Organization, 2022).
	Benefits
	Redistribution of jobs and college admission slots towards minorities and females on a small scale (Holzer, 2007). Creates positive externalities for the minority and low-income communities such as better medical services and labor market participation. Creates a larger labor force for employers and a larger student population for universities (Holzer, 2007). Encourages diversity and guarantees that people who would have been traditionally excluded from the American postsecondary education system have an opportunity to earn a quality degree (Maxwell & Garcia, 2019). May encourage socioeconomic mobility by offering minorities and disadvantaged groups an equal opportunity to obtain education and employment (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022).
	Pitfalls
	Lack of public consensus and robust implementation (Leonard, 1990). It disparages true achievement and success by members of minority groups and other marginalized groups may be regarded as a result of affirmative action instead of their hard work, which can be belittling to their true level of effort and confidence in their capabilities (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022). It may hide management bias in the selection and promotion decisions (Moore and Hass, 1990). It promotes the labeling of people by race, encourages racially uneven financial awards and scholarships, and allows public medical schools to engage in differential treatment of out-of-state students based on race (Helms & Helms, 1998). May promote resentment, racial tension, and social discord between the minority groups and people in mainstream society (Bartlett, 2019).

5. Discussion

5.1 *Canada's Multiculturalism*

We identified three overarching objectives for the enactment and implementation of Canada's Multiculturalism Act. These include (1) building an assimilated socially cohesive society; (2) improving the ability of the appropriate institutions to meet the basic needs of a diverse population; and (3) providing the federal government of Canada with the "moral" ground to vigorously engage in debates on multiculturalism and diversity at the international level. These objectives reflected the prevailing socio-economic and politico-cultural conditions in Canada at the time the Act was enacted. For instance, there was an uneven partnership between the British and French elements in Canada, which created a fertile ground for a growing Francophone nationalism in Quebec. Likewise, the Canadian aging population created an unquenchable thirst for new immigrants to improve the labor force (Government of Canada, 2022; Gagnon, 2022).

While Hicks and Stokes (2017) describe Canada as a "mosaic" because it is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, they assert that many racialized minorities report that they experience prejudice and discrimination. Canada's racist past makes it difficult for everyone to believe that the enactment of the Multiculturalism Act was motivated by the quest to socially include non-European immigrants in Canada. Given the stagnant Canadian population and its attending socioeconomic implications, it is evident that in a country like Canada where there are more people in the 65-plus age group than there are in the 0-to-14 age cohort (Hicks & Stokes, 2017) will implement social policies that will attract younger professionals to solve her labor problems. It seems inconceivable to believe that a country that used head tax to make it nearly impossible for Chinese men to bring their families to Canada and that subjected the Black Loyalists who entered Canada as free persons to racist policies (Hicks and Stokes, 2017) will suddenly implement inclusive socio-economic policies.

Consequently, a notable benefit of Canada's Multiculturalism policy is that it has contributed to the successful integration of immigrants and ethnic and religious minorities in Canada in comparison to countries without an official multiculturalism policy (Kymlicka, 2010). However, one can conclude that several changes in Canada's racially and culturally accommodating immigration policies were strategically designed and promoted to encourage an influx of diversely experienced professionals in an environment of labor shortages (Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (2022). Similarly, the focus was to suppress the growing nationalism in Quebec. In addition, it was created to promote a high level of mutual empathy and tolerance between immigrants and native-born Canadians (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010) for effective governance, and not necessarily to promote social inclusion. This explains why some social critics view the multiculturalism policies and programs in Canada as a mainly symbolic acknowledgment of cultural diversity rather than a substantive change in

government policy (Li, 1999), which discourages the development of national socioeconomic structure and, promotes ghettoization (Wong, 2010) because it promotes cultural diversities at the expense of common Canadian values (PRI, 2009).

Conclusively, Boyd (2002) and Statistics Canada (2011) assert any social policy or program that produces different outcomes for members of diverse ethnocultural groups, such as in educational attainment (Boyd, 2002) and employment (Statistics Canada, 2011) and promote socio-economic and politico-cultural inclusion because it encourages discrimination and exclusion as not all individuals in culturally-different societies are treated equally (Berry, 2013).

5.2 The United States' Affirmative Action

Like the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, six major objectives motivated the enactment and implementation of the American Affirmative Action policy and programs. These major objectives include (1) safeguarding that federal contract applicants are treated equally irrespective of their race, color, religion, sex, place, or country of origin, (2) ensuring equitable hiring practices in construction jobs, and (3) promoting race-conscious inclusion practices in employment, education, and social engagements, (4) assisting in leveling the playing ground for people that are traditionally underprivileged because of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, (5) increasing opportunities for traditionally marginalized groups in American society, and (6) creating race and gender diversity in all aspects of public engagements (American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity, 2022; The University of Rhode Island, 2022; Lipson, 2008; HG Organization Legal Resources, 2022; and Tribe, 1988).

We discovered that these policy objectives reflected the prevailing socio-economic and politico-cultural conditions in the United States at the time the Act was enacted. For instance, Tribe (1988) noted an ongoing systemic and individual discrimination of minority groups in the United States such as the under-representation of women and minorities in colleges, media, politics, etc. (Reform Judaism Organization, 2022), which prompted an enduring civil rights movement (Callahan, 2017). At the same time, some European-Americans ran away from southern cities to the suburbs and from public to private schools (Reform Judaism Organization, 2022) as they felt marginalized due to the redistribution of jobs and college admission slots towards minorities and females on a small scale (Holzer, 2007).

Unlike Canada's Multicultural Act, which garnered the support of most Canadians, the American Affirmative Action lacks public consensus and robust implementation (Leonard, 1990) as it became a divisive factor. For instance, for some minorities, the affirmative action programs disparage true achievement and success by members of minority groups, and other marginalized groups may be regarded because of affirmative action instead of their hard work, which can be belittling to their true level of effort and confidence in their capabilities (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022). In addition, Helms

and Helms (1998) suggest that the American affirmative action policy promotes the labeling of people by race, encourages racially uneven financial awards and scholarships, and allows public medical schools to engage in differential treatment of out-of-state students based on race. Furthermore, contemporary social critics believe that this policy may promote resentment, racial tension, and social discord between minority groups and people in mainstream society (Bartlett, 2019).

However, proponents of this policy posit that it has created positive externalities for the minority and low-income communities such as better medical services and labor market participation (Lipson, 2008). Similarly, Maxwell & Garcia, (2019) state that the policy of affirmative action encourages diversity and guarantees that people who would have been traditionally excluded from the American postsecondary education system have an opportunity to earn a quality degree.

After considering all the arguments, the fact remains that the United States Affirmative Actions has created a larger labor force for employers and a larger student population for universities (Holzer, 2007), which seems to suggest that the policy was enacted and promoted to solve America's labor crisis and not necessarily to reform the socio-economic and politico-cultural structures that have denied the minority and low-income communities equal access to public services that promote their well-being and assist them in contributing to the social and economic growth of their communities. Reforming a country's social structure consists of several processes that create a conducive environment that encourages unconstrained involvement of every member of the public in all aspects of life, such as civic, social, economic, and political activities, including participation in decision-making processes (DESA, 2009) and not the adoption of social policies that promotes resentment, racial tension, and social discord between the minority groups and people in the mainstream society (Bartlett, 2019).

5.3 Is an Inclusive Society a Solution to Social Inequalities?

The focus of this paper was to review the use of inclusive society as a solution to social inequalities through an objective analysis of two notable longstanding government-sponsored programs (Canada's Multiculturalism and America's Affirmative Action). Therefore, we conducted comprehensive assessments of the two programs to determine their appropriateness as mechanisms of social justice and equity. We embraced the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s definition of an inclusive society due to a plethora of terms used to explain or describe an inclusive society.

Thus, an inclusive society is a society for all, where everyone has an active role to play. Such a society is established on basic values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of acceptance and promotion of diversity (UNESCO, 2012). In addition, the Australian Social Inclusion Board (2008-2013) asserts that for people be socially in society they must have the resources,

opportunities, and capabilities that they require to participate in education and training, engage in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities, interact with people, use local services and take part in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities and influence or participate in making decisions that affect their lives. Figure one provides a clearer picture of the meaning of social inclusion.



Sources: Supporting Inclusion: The elements of inclusion: Social inclusion, Economic inclusion, and Political inclusion. <https://supportinginclusion.weebly.com/>.

Based on the above framework, one can conclude that both Canada's Multiculturalism and America's Affirmative Action programs are not the appropriate mechanisms to address social injustice and inequity. For instance, the Government of Canada (2018) asserts that the Multiculturalism Program is one of the methods by which the Government of Canada executes the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and promotes the Government of Canada's policies in the area of multiculturalism.

Designated Canadian agencies implement the Multiculturalism Program by engaging in certain areas of activity such as Grants and Contributions (Gs&Cs) (Inter-Action). The Multiculturalism Program has a yearly budget of \$8.5 million in Gs&Cs for projects and events that advance an integrated, socially cohesive society. Both National Headquarters (projects) and the five Canadian Heritage Regions (events) (Government of Canada, 2018) manage inter-Action. In addition, the Multiculturalism Program engages in public outreach and promotional activities, which include Asian Heritage Month, Black History Month, and the Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism. It also assists federal and public institutions. Likewise, The Program assists the federal institutions to implement their responsibilities under the Canadian Multiculturalism Act

and to develop their submissions to the Annual Report on the Operation of the Multiculturalism Act (Government of Canada, 2018).

Consequently, one can also argue that the major reasons for enacting Canada's Multicultural Act such as building an integrated, socially cohesive society; improving the responsiveness of institutions to the needs of a diverse population; actively engaging in discussions on multiculturalism and diversity at the international level (Government of Canada, 2018) do not necessarily reform the social structures that have empowered some people above others or that have excluded some communities from the equitable access to social amenities and resources. In addition, we assert that the quest for the promotion of an inclusive or cohesive society could promote social exclusion as it could restrict access to opportunities and limit the capabilities required to capitalize on opportunities or resources (Hayes, Gray, & Edwards, 2008) for those who "fail to meet or comply" to societal standards.

While all-encompassing social inclusion programs are the major determinants of socio-economic and political power considering the impacts of income, housing, food, job securities, etc, we posit that such programs mainly Canada's Multicultural programs and America's Affirmative Acts do not necessarily empower the socially marginalized to participate in the decision-making (Wilkinson and Marmot, 1998). O'Hara (2006) asserts that social inclusion is a normative, values-based idea that can be used to identify what kind of society people want to live in and the reforms that must be made to build that society. These reforms constitute the required transformative agenda in society as they require fundamental changes in attitudes, public policies, and institutional practices (O'Hara, 2006). Thus, with references to incessant systemic racism, health inequity, ageism, and gender discrimination in both Canada and the United States, one can infer that both Canada's Multiculturalism and America's Affirmation Action are not the appropriate mechanisms to address the issues of social inequities rather, they are well-designed mechanisms or opiates with which the governments of these two countries are sedating minority population for easy governance or to quell social movements such as the Black Lives Matter.

According to the United Nations (2020), social justice entails fairness beyond individual

justice, it needs systemic and structural social measures to improve equality and not mere celebrations of Asian Heritage Month, Black History Month, the Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism, or the Aboriginal Day. An inclusive society is a society that practices equal rights for everyone and provides the opportunity for everyone, without discrimination, to benefit from economic and social progress (United Nations, 2020).

5.4 Does Affirmative Action Discourage Racism in America?

Some of the notable objectives of America's Affirmative policy are to promote race-conscious inclusion practices in employment, education, and social engagements and to

help level the playing ground for people that are traditionally underprivileged because of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Our research data indicate that Affirmative Action encourages diversity and guarantees that people who would have been traditionally excluded from the American postsecondary education system have an opportunity to earn a quality degree (Maxwell & Garcia, 2019). For instance, Holzer and Neumark (2000) states that it has allowed for the redistribution of jobs and college admission slots towards minorities and females on a small scale, creating positive externalities for the minority and low-income communities such as better medical services and labor market participation, but overall, it has created a larger labor force for employers and a larger student population for universities (Holzer & Neumark, 2000), and not necessarily discouraging racism in America.

According to Bartlett (2019), one of the notable issues with race-conscious affirmative action is that it can induce resentment, racial tension, and social conflict. These issues have limited various race-conscious affirmative action programs such as college and university affirmative action programs, preventing a racial justice rationale in favor of a justification based on the benefits of diversity to the institution. Sowell (2005) argues that Affirmative action can promote negative stigmas and stereotypes about the abilities of minorities, which is unfair to both white males, the employers, and to the women and minorities whom the Affirmative Action programs are designed to support.

6. Recommendations

Both Canada and the United States have made great strides in promoting inclusive societies as exemplified by both the multicultural and affirmative action policies and programs. However, our research data suggest that the process of the social inclusion programs cannot lead to effective social integration, given the stagnant socio-economic and politico-cultural environments in which the two governments implement their policies. According to PRI (2009), the most treacherous practices hindering the realization of inclusive citizenship are racism and the various forms of social exclusion that result from it. Notwithstanding these longstanding inclusive society programs, there is enough data to infer that inequities are growing in Canada and the United States and that they are progressively along racialized lines.

For instance, Canadian Institute for Health Information (2016) asserts that health inequalities in Canada are persistent, and in some cases, are rising. Similarly, Taylor (2019) states that the American health care system is overwhelmed with inequalities that have an uneven impact on people of color and other marginalized groups. Public Health Agency of Canada (2019) observed major health inequalities among those with lower socioeconomic status, Indigenous peoples, sexual and racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, and people living with functional limitations (such as physical or mental impairments).

Concisely, the Public Health Agency of Canada (2012) reports that one in five First Nations adults has diabetes, which is four times higher than the rate of the general Canadian population. In addition, the rate of suicide among First Nations youth between ages 10 to 19 was 4.3 times more than the rest of Canada in 2000 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012). Specifically, the suicide rate for Inuit regions from 1999 to 2003 was 11.6 times higher than for the rest of Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012).

Likewise, in 2010, African Americans were about 30 percent more likely to die prematurely from heart disease than their white counterparts were, and they are two times more likely to die prematurely from stroke than white people are (HHS, 2016). In addition, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 44 percent of African American men and 48 percent of African American women have some type of cardiovascular disease (CDC, 2014). Furthermore, African American and American Indian/Alaska Native females have higher rates of stroke-related death than Hispanic and white women (Blackwell et al., 2014).

What about the health of non-European immigrants to Canada and the United States? Poole, Matheson, and Cox (2015) state that the majority of non-European immigrants come to Canada, the United States, and other Western Countries in good health, but this deteriorates over time a pattern known as the healthy immigrant effect. Public Health Agency of Canada (2012) affirms that for every year certain immigrant populations stay in Canada, they have a greater risk of developing certain chronic diseases. Some of the factors for this can include a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate information and services, experiences of racism in the healthcare system (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012), and social exclusion or isolation.

Therefore, we recommend that both Canada and the United States re-examine the use of inclusive society programs such as Multiculturalism and Affirmative Action as solutions to social inequalities as research reports indicate that it is time to address the elephants in the house, which are racism and the uneven distribution of the structural determinants of social determinants of health.

We believe that both the Canadian and American political systems do not value each racial and ethnic group equally, thus, their inability to implement social policies with lasting positive socio-economic and politico-cultural implications on the health of the populace. There is no doubt that many social and health problems are related to either political action or the failure of our political elites to act. It is impossible to use Multicultural or Affirmative Action programs to effect a lasting inclusive society in a country with historic and enduring social and structural displacement, marginalization, and apartheid that persistently prevent racial and ethnic minorities from reaching their full socio-economic and health potential across their lifespan (Dawes, 2020).

Like the Indigenous peoples of Canada, African Americans have suffered generations of economic discrimination. This racial intolerance has caused low wages, low homeownership, and little-to-no savings or investments for Black people (Brooks, 2021). One wonders after many centuries of racial, socioeconomic, and health

inequities, how allowing the indigenous people of Canada or African-Americans to celebrate their cultures will restore their lost identities and empower them to participate in nation-building?

Brooks (2021) affirms that about 38% of older minority Social Security recipients rely on it for 90% or more of their income, as against 28% of Whites. Van Dam (2021) suggests that the aftermath of these economic inequities has contributed to intergenerational gap in wealth. Thus, no number of Affirmative Action or Multiculturalism programs can bridge the intergenerational wealth gap among members of the minority groups and the mainstream society in both Canada and the United States.

Addressing the uneven distribution of the structural determinants of socio-economic resources and health involves the methodical process of reshaping race and ethnic relationships, allocating resources, and establishing a system of governance that function simultaneously in ways that mutually support or influence one another to shape opportunities that promote socioeconomic and health equities (Dawes, 2020). Finally, it seems futile to advocate for multiculturalism or Affirmative action in a paternalistic political and socio-economic milieu, which created racism, slavery, and all forms of social exclusion practices. According to the Department of Justice (1985), the right to equal treatment is a fundamental human right therefore, Canada and the United States must first dismantle the paternalistic ideology on which the foundation of discrimination and racism in Canada, which initiated and promoted the Aboriginal residential school system, the Japanese internment during the Second World War, the denial of Jews to enter Canada during the Nazi persecution, the *Chinese head tax*, the *Oriental Exclusion Act*, the barring of African Canadians to services and employment, discriminatory immigration provisions against African Americans and denial of the vote to Asians and Aboriginal peoples while the United States must eradicate the philosophy which holds one race superior above other races to create an inclusive society.

7. Conclusion

This paper critically analyzed the policy goals of an inclusive society by examining the socioeconomic and politico-cultural milieus in which governments implement these policies. With references to the outcomes of the United States' Affirmative Action and Canada's Multicultural policies, one can suggest that disadvantaged individuals, groups, or communities are neither included nor empowered through the processes of social inclusion. Consequently, this paper concludes that the procedures of social inclusion cannot lead to effective social integration given the stagnant socio-economic and politico-cultural environments in which government agencies implement these policies. Therefore, we recommend that both Canada and the United States re-examine the use of inclusive society programs such as Multiculturalism and Affirmative Action as solutions to social inequalities as research reports indicate that it is time to address the

elephants in the house, which are racism and the uneven distribution of the structural determinants of social determinants of health. In addition, we suggest that an inclusive society can be achieved by addressing the uneven distribution of the structural determinants of socio-economic resources and health through the methodical process of reshaping race and ethnic relationships, allocating resources, and establishing a system of governance that function simultaneously in ways that mutually support or influence one another to shape opportunities that promote socioeconomic and health equities (Dawes, 2020). In summary, it seems futile to advocate for multiculturalism or Affirmative action in a paternalistic political and socio-economic milieu, which created racism, slavery, and all forms of social exclusion practices in the first place.

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