

The ethnic inequalities faced in canada sociology essay



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Immigration into Canada totally changed the racial diversity of the Canadian population. In their study Gee et al. (2007) noted that since the beginning of European immigration and settlements, the Canadian society has been ordered based on racial and ethnic dimensions. Ethnicity has occupied a central position in Canadian's rising inequality (2007: 3). John Porter first studied this subject in 1965 and found that entry into the Canadian elite class was racially-ranked and determined by income, "ethnic prestige" and occupations. His findings found that, British-Canadians topped the group, French-Canadians took second position, and other European-Canadians were third while Blacks and Aboriginals-"visible minorities" occupied the bottom strata.

Economic Inequalities

Empirical examples shows that, substantial and convincing studies have been done on ethnically or racially-based economic inequalities in Canada. Well studied areas on this subject include income disparities and inequality in occupations. Gee et al. (2007) summarized the various studies done on this subject. (Reitz and Banerjee 2007) concluded that visible minorities in Canada have higher poverty rates and lower comparable incomes than ethnic Canadians of European origin.

Gee et al. (2007) noted that recent studies on ethnic/racial orientations of income inequalities show that, household incomes of Aboriginals and visible minorities are usually low than those of Canadians with a European Origin. This is despite the fact that such studies have been conducted by different researchers at different times and applying different racial classifications and control variables. They further noted that racial disparities in the household

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incomes of European-Canadians have nearly minimized. Additionally, they also found indications showing that Canadians of southern European origin earn lower incomes than Canadians of British origin, while Canadians of French Origin earned much far better (2007: 14).

On occupations, (Nakhaie 1997 as cited in Gee et al. 2007: 16) found that British-Canadians continue leading the class of Canadian elites, despite the fact that Canadians of other origins have made efforts to join the elite class over the years. Gee et al. (2007) also noted that the correlation between ethnicity/racism and occupation can be studied in two different ways. One way is by establishing whether certain ethnic groups are concentrated in specific occupations (based on division of labor). The other alternative is evaluating the position of “ racial groups” in the Hierarchy or strata of “ prestigious occupations” (2007: 17). Applying the first dimension, and using the male gender, studies showed that Aboriginals dominate the construction and building industries representing more than double of the Canadian male populations. They are extremely underrepresented in administrative and management occupations. Their women counterparts are represented in service jobs. They therefore concluded that, the Canadian labor force is more gendered than ethnically-based. In terms of prestige of occupations, Jewish, British and Chinese Canadians top the hierarchy. Blacks, Greeks, Aboriginals and Portuguese Canadians occupy the lower strata in that order. In the case of the female gender, the picture doesn't change. In this case ethnicity and racism outweighs gender.

Employment and Home Ownership

Despite the fact that Canada among the first countries to assume multiculturalism as a policy, cases of social discrimination against visible minorities have existed in history. Racial minorities were supposed to perform duties deemed undesirable for the whites. During the construction of the Canadian National Railway, Chinese males were desirable source of cheap labor. After its completion, the Chinese were no longer valuable. A head tax was indeed imposed on Chinese immigrants to Canada (Kendall, Murray, and Linden, 1997).

(Li 2000 as cited in Reitz and Banerjee 2007: 6) noted that the main economic problem that ethnic minority immigrants face in Canada is securing sufficient employment. This is associated with amicable reasons like, the “ entry effect”-related to immigration problems and adjusting to the new environment (urban settlement), academic qualifications and racism. Ethnic minority immigrants experience more impediments than immigrants of European-origin (Reitz and Banerjee 2007: 6)

Gee et al. (2007) asserted that findings show that in terms of home ownership, the picture is no different. It reflects the same strata as it is observed in household income levels and occupations. Osberg (2008: 33) noted that, despite the fact that much literature has ignored the role of interest rates, wealth distribution, and household incomes of the wealthy and focused on earning trends, Canada now has much information on economic and other social inequalities and broad conclusions are apparent. He concludes that data shows an increase in economic inequality in Canada today.

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Health Inequalities

Better health care is one of the basic needs that all human beings aspire to get any where in the world. Low household incomes are frequently linked with poor health. Despite intensified research and studies on health inequality in Canada, little attention has been directed at ethno-cultural disparities on health.

Gee et al. (2007) looked at both “ health care access” and “ health status”. However much of the literature that they examined didn’t show a direct correlation between ethnicity and health status. In some instances data showed that, some recent immigrants, irregardless of race or ethnic group had better health than their Canadian-born counterparts. This “ healthy immigrant effect” was however associated with the health requirements in the Canadian immigration act that locked out immigrants with chronic health conditions. Their studies concluded that Canadians whose mother tongue is non-English or non-French are economically disadvantaged. Recent “ visible immigrants are typically disadvantaged. Their analysis also found significant disparities in “ health status” and “ utilization” depending on country of immigrant and language. The health status of recent Immigrants declines as their years of stay in Canada increase. This is because they hardly report for medical checkups, due to the fear discrimination, prejudice and low household incomes.

Perceptions of Discrimination and Prejudice: A Barrier to Social Cohesion

Ethnic and racial inequality might be less decisive if it is as a result of circumstances amicable to the “ visible minority”, such as status of new

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immigrants, language differences, or academic and technical training not compliant with Canadian requirements. In other words inequality would not be a threat to social cohesion if it is viewed as legitimate. The feeling of discrimination, prejudice and racism is another issue all together (Reitz and Banerjee 2007: 8). A 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, which sought to get views of individual experiences of ethnic and racial discrimination, showed that 35.9% of all the respondents “consisting visible minorities” reported cases of discrimination and prejudice compared with 10.6% of all Whites who responded to the Survey, of the visible minorities, blacks recorded the highest rate at 49.6%. (2007: 8: 9). The Visible minorities also reported incidences of perceived discrimination of their ethnic group.

Despite improving economic status of immigrants as they cope up with Canadian environment and society an ethnic divide in perceptions of racial discrimination is eminent among immigrants with longer stay and experience in Canada (2007: 9), this is even more persistence among children. Cases of non-recognition of immigrant qualifications also abound, despite in some cases being equivalent to those of native Canadians. Failure to recognize foreign qualifications and experience are some of the barriers that “visible minorities” come across as they seek employment.

Racial discrimination is viewed with skepticism in Canada, but the mutual covenant is that it exists and cannot be ignored. It is true that one of the effects of racial discrimination of minorities is its impact on the social cohesion of the Canadian society. Social cohesion generally means the capacity of a society to formulate, implement and adhere to policies that guide it. Lack of it may lead to conflicts and civil disorders as it happened in <https://assignbuster.com/the-ethnic-inequalities-faced-in-canada-sociology-essay/>

France and the United Kingdom. Other effects may be failure of a group to participate in making decisions and sometimes withdrawing its support for certain decisions or societal policies.

Integrating “ ethnic minorities” is an important issue in Canada. Social integration and social cohesion are mutually exclusive and cannot be separated. Proper social integration of minority ethnic groups in Canada is a sine qua non for a peaceful and prosperous society that is viewed by its occupants as a means to the achievement of their needs. This will strengthen the Canadian society; raise the spirit of inclusiveness, civic and voluntary participation in activities concerning human life.

Conclusion

Inequality is a social evil; no society is a friend to it. The above revelations reveal that forms of inequality based on ethnic considerations exist in Canada irregardless of how minute they are. This is a big concern to racial minorities. It is not only a challenge to the racial group that experience it, but also to the whole Canadian society in terms of forging a peaceful and an all inclusive society acceptable to all.

The process of socially integrating ethnic minorities into Canadian society is often slower than that of European immigrants. This is often associated with their feeling of exclusion and perceived discrimination. Of emphasis is that economic integration should match social integration, none should supersede the other.

Existing Canadian policies and legal structures are laudable against racial discrimination and economic inequality. This is possibly due to international <https://assignbuster.com/the-ethnic-inequalities-faced-in-canada-sociology-essay/>

conventions and pressure to eliminate global racism and ethnicity, but it is not clear whether they are sufficient in addressing the issues that affect minority ethnic groups in Canada. However, what may be consented is that ethnic prejudice and discrimination is a social construction that can only be changed by the subconscious minds of individuals—the way we think and see others. We should all join hands and fight ethnic inequality. We should judge others by their competence and content of their minds rather than the pigmentation of their skin.

“ There shall be no solution to this race problem until, you yourselves, strike the blow for liberty”-Marcus Garvey