Feature

Ethnoracial Identities and Political Representation in Ontario and British Columbia

Political representation of minority groups is an important aspect of modern societies. Are our parliaments generally reflective of the people they serve? In this article, the authors use the results of two recent Canadian provincial elections (Ontario, 2018 and British Columbia, 2017) to explore whether majority and minority groups are proportionally represented in legislatures and to probe some explanations as to why these groups may be over-represented or under-represented. They address notions of residential concentration and the assumption of ethnic affinity to partially explain where ethnoracial minority candidates are likely to be elected. In contrast to past work which has found a general under-representation of minority groups, this analysis finds some nuance. Some racialized groups, notably Chinese Canadians, appear to be proportionally more under-represented than others. The authors explore a range of arguments to explain this finding. In conclusion, the authors highlight two key findings from this research. First, they suggest it is difficult to make the case that being part of a racialized group has a negative impact on political representation at the provincial level – at least currently in two provinces with large racialized populations – without introducing nuance that subdivides ethnoracial minority groups. The second finding is conceptual: ethnic affinity cannot solely predict voting behaviour. The authors contend that the concept must be broadened to include centripetal ethnic affinity and transversal ethnic affinity.

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Political representation for minority groups has proven to be a key aspect of the recent evolution of modern societies. This article specifically examines the political representation of ethnoracial groups in the Ontario and British Columbia legislatures. By discussing various theories about political representation and ethnoracial origin, this article seeks to address the complex notions of residential concentration and especially the assumption of ethnic affinity; the latter concept is based on the idea that members of a given ethnic group are more likely to vote for a candidate from their identity group than from another.

This article introduces a distinction between two concepts: centripetal ethnic affinity and transversal ethnic affinity. The first concept accounts for how members of a given ethnic group are more emotionally disposed to respond positively—through concrete actions—to people who share their ethnic identity than to those who do not. Electorally, these emotional dispositions result in more votes for ingroup candidates, except in cases where there is an irreconcilable opposition between the moral convictions of voters and those of their ingroup candidates. The second accounts for how members of a given ethnic group are more affectively disposed to respond positively to members of another ethnic group when perceived as objective allies who share the same socio-economic conditions and/or the same attitude toward another ethnic entity in society. The importance of transversal ethnic affinity cannot be understated, especially in the discussion of political dynamics in multi-ethnic societies. The majority/minority distinction in these societies has been obscured by the composite nature of these entities, which include a number of ethnic groups whose interests converge or diverge circumstantially. This concept is also a useful tool for determining how meaningful the dichotomy between "the white majority" and the "racialized minority" is in the political space.

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Two theoretical arguments will be challenged in this article. The first is that racialized candidates are far more likely to be elected in constituencies where whites form a significant minority; this would be indicative of an ethnoracialization of the political space. The second is that racialized individuals make rational political investments in candidates from their ingroup to improve their limited access to resources in the economic space. The implicit component of this argument is that the most vulnerable racialized groups are the most likely to seek out political representation as they are cognizant of its effectiveness in determining the rules of access to and distribution of resources (in the economic space like in any other space). This argument appears to be at odds with Bourdieu,[1] whose influential theory states that control over resources, including money, educational capital and free time, determines political participation. But the contradiction is only apparent because even the most vulnerable racialized groups include members or allies who have these resources and whom those groups can count on to defend their interests.

In terms of methodology, this article will pore over the results of the Ontario and British Columbia provincial elections, in 2018 and 2017 respectively, with a focus on two criteria: (a) the ethnoracial identification of the elected candidates; and (b) the ethnic distribution of the constituents who elected racialized candidates. Given the extremely complex and fluid nature of ethnoracial identity[2] in an era of generational multiracialism (i.e. biracial children born to biracial parents), this concept is unquestionably problematic. In light of this, we have opted for a crossover design that incorporates both self-definition (the racial identities as assigned by the candidates themselves) and exo-definition (the racial identities as assigned to candidates by the media or other agents of the political space) into the methodology. Elected candidates are considered racialized if they identify as such on their party's website or in Canadian media. Institutionally recognized official categories of racialized groups include "South Asian," "Black," "Chinese" and "other visible minorities."

In the social sciences, there is a considerable amount of literature dedicated to analyzing the relationship between ethnoracial minority groups and politics in Canada's extremely diversified society. By examining the political participation of members of different social groups, Black[3] found that immigrants have the same degree of political participation as Canadians who were born here. In their study on the political participation of Muslim Canadians, Munawar et al. reveal that context plays an interestingly significant role.[4] According to the authors, the participation rate and political representation of Muslim Canadians increased in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, during which Muslims faced a considerable amount of negative stigma. Bird argues that the high number of racialized MPs elected in the 2005 federal election is due to the generosity of Canada's citizenship regime, affirmative action in the candidates' nomination process and the residential concentration of ethnoracial minorities.[5]

Political representation in Ontario: Inequality for racialized minorities

Ontario and British Columbia are two of the most ethnoracially diverse provinces in Canada. According to the 2016 census, Ontario had a population of 13,242,160, with 3,885,885 (or 29.3 per cent) identifying as non-white.[6] There are 124 members (MPPs) in the Ontario legislature, or one for every 106,792 residents.[7] Canadians of European descent form a clear majority in Ontario (70.7 per cent). At 8.7 per cent, South-Asian Ontarians are the largest minority, but they do not considerably outweigh the other racialized groups. Chinese and Black Ontarians follow with 5.7 per cent and 4.7 per cent of the population, respectively.[8] If parliamentary membership was proportional to ethnoracial representation, the seat counts would be 11 for South-Asian Ontarians, 7 for Chinese Ontarians, 6 for Black Ontarians, 13 for the other racialized groups and 87 for European Ontarians. However, current representation differs significantly from this proportional projection. With 96 out of 124 seats, European Ontarians are overrepresented in the current legislature, while ethnoracial minorities are collectively underrepresented with 28 seats. This creates discrepancies where the representation by demographic weight favours European Ontarians by a factor of 1.1 and disadvantages ethnoracial minorities by a factor of 1.3.

This data reveals further inequality regarding the representation of various ethnoracial minorities in the Ontario legislature. In fact, this political space is far from being equally unfavourable to all racialized groups. South-Asian Ontarians would have 11 MPPs in an ethnoracially proportional legislature, and there are in fact 11 South-Asian MPPs in the current Ontario legislature. Similarly, Chinese Ontarians would have seven MPPs, yet there are only three; this group is proportionally under-represented by a factor of 2.3. As for Black Ontarians, ethnoracially proportional projections give them six MPPs; currently, there

are eight, meaning that Black Ontarians are over-represented by a factor of 1.36, making them the only ethnoracial minority group overrepresented in the Ontario legislature.

Different votes for similar folks?

Most democratic countries, including Canada, delineate electoral districts and determine political representation based on constituency and not ethnoracial group membership. That is why evaluating the political representation of racialized groups in legislatures of democratic countries may seem fundamentally illogical. However, in Canada and elsewhere, societies are historically crossed by ethnic, racial, class-based and religious lines.[9] Therefore, geographical territories are never neutral[10] in terms of class, race and religion; the study of ethnoracial political representation is not as illogical as it would appear. Territory is often an expression of race or class: immigrants will collectively settle in the same areas and eventually become totally absorbed by the demo-ethnic majority, at which point they will adamantly seek out common ground to ensure that their cultural identities are preserved. Studying the characteristics of constituencies where racialized candidates are elected is a useful exercise.

A closer analysis of election results in these constituencies shows how the success of racialized candidates is influenced by the demographic weight of minorities. Of the 28 constituencies won by Ontarians who identify as part of a racialized group, 21 have a racialized population equal or greater to 40 per cent of the constituency's total population. Additionally, in 19 of these constituencies, at least 50 per cent of the population belong to racialized minority groups. At first glance, this data confirms the theory of residential concentration, which argues that nonEuropeans' odds of political representation depend on whether they have a strong presence in electoral districts, as proven by Simard[11] in her research on the Montreal area and by other authors such as Siemiatycki and Matheson[12] in their analysis of the Ontario election results for the Toronto area and their findings regarding constituency population distribution by ethnoracial identity. Without rejecting the relevance of the theory of residential concentration, we must ask ourselves why is it that constituencies where white Canadians form a significant minority have not been able to elect racialized candidates to the legislature. Many academics agree that electoral competition is based on candidates' personalities and party reputation.[13] It would therefore be valid to hypothesize that the absence of racialized candidates in constituencies where ethnoracial groups form the demographic majority is the result of internal party politics. And, if this hypothesis is true, it is still important to identify which of the two factors (party politics and residential concentration) prevails in determining the probability of racialized-minority representation in the legislature. However, we are unable to answer this question because we were not able to gather a large amount of data on all the political parties' policies regarding the ethnoracial minorities' representation in the legislature. Ethnoracial inclusiveness is a prevalent discourse in Canadian politics, but only some Canadian parties appear to have set up specific policies and rules to strive for a slate of candidates which more proportionately reflects the number of women, ethnoracial minorities and other equity-seeking groups in society.[14]

It is certainly tempting to think of Canadian society as a demographic binary of one white entity and another racialized one, but we must not lose sight that the latter is eminently diverse owing to its subdivision into 12 racialized groups. This diversity is unique because it inspires researchers to ask whether the effects of residential concentration on political representation occur solely in a competitive framework between the white demographic entity and that of all racialized groups. Is it also a factor for competition between ethnic groups? The first observation from this methodological approach is that Black candidates are overwhelmingly elected in constituencies where Black Canadians are not the largest racialized minority. Of the eight Black candidates elected, only two won in constituencies where Black Canadians are the largest racialized group. The remaining six were elected in constituencies where SouthAsian Canadians are the largest racialized group. In comparison, the two Chinese candidates who were elected won in constituencies where the demographic weight of their group surpasses that of any other racialized community. South-Asian Canadians overwhelmingly elected candidates from their ingroup (nine times out of 11) in constituencies where they were the largest racialized group. The other two candidates were elected in Chinese- and Black-majority constituencies. These numbers preliminarily indicate that Black Ontarians' political representation, in comparison with that of the other largest racialized minorities, aligns the least with the concept of centripetal ethnic affinity and gravitates the most toward transversal ethnic affinity, or electoral indifference toward race. Chinese Canadians' political representation, on the other hand, closely aligns with centripetal ethnic

affinity, because it would appear – at least on the basis of the 2018 general election – that this group can only elects candidates in constituencies with very large Chinese populations. In fact, Markham–Unionville and Richmond, two constituencies won by candidates who identify as Chinese, are 64.2 per cent and 51.7 per cent Chinese, respectively. Furthermore, in Don Valley North, the third constituency where a Chinese-Canadian candidate was elected, 31 per cent of residents identify as Chinese. Voting data for this racialized group therefore appears to confirm the theories of centripetal ethnic affinity and residential concentration.

However, voting data on Black Canadians contradicts these theories. It is hard to provide a definitive explanation for this contrast; political representation is influenced by a myriad of overlapping structural, conjunctural, individual and collective factors, as well as political party dynamics and voter choice. The contrast does, however, raise the issue of the history of inter-racial/ethnic relations and their current impact on Canadian political representation. Without naively subscribing to an anti-historicist or psychologistic approach, it is valid to point out that Chinese and Black Canadians have been treated differently in Canadian society and politics. While Black Canadians have had the right to vote ever since Canada was founded and have relied on national leaders as eminent as John Alexander McDonald every time this right was threatened by tiny racist enclaves, Chinese Canadians had to fight legislative measures openly barring their participation in Ontario politics up until 1915. During the time they faced institutional exclusion, is it possible that part of Chinese community developed their own residential foothold and became selfreliant? Could they have lost interest in politics in all constituencies where their racialized community is not the largest? Are they doubtful as to whether other ethnoracialized groups and white Ontarians are likely to support Chinese candidates in constituencies where Chinese Ontarians are not the largest racialized minority? Incidentally, MPPs elected in three of the six constituencies where the white population, owing to its (almost) overwhelming demographic weight—a minimum of 51% of the population—had the power to determine the results of the election, identified as being part of groups that were not the largest minority in the constituency. However, none of the candidates elected were Chinese. Bhutila Karpoche, a Nepalese Canadian, was elected in Parkdale–High Park, where 72.2 per cent of constituents identified as white and where Black Ontarians were the largest racialized minority. Similarly, Goldie Ghamari, an Iranian Canadian, was elected in Carleton Place, where 94.04 per cent of constituents identified as white and where Black Ontarians were the largest racialized minority. Last, Belinda Karaholios, a multiracial candidate of African and Trinidadian descent, was elected in Cambridge where 93.5 per cent of constituents identified as white and where South-Asian Ontarians were the largest racialized minority. These figures indicate a certain Chinese exceptionalism with regard to political representation. Chinese Ontarians are, in fact, the only racialized community to be subject to what we call imperative minority prevalence; this means their political representation in Ontario is predicated on whether or not they are the largest demographic minority in their constituency. In no other group is imperative minority prevalence so systemically entrenched. Explorations of past and future elections in Ontario will be needed to affirm this finding; however, a contemporary comparison with British Columbia can also provide an opportunity to text this theory.

British Columbia and the confirmed political insignificance of Chinese Canadians

Although British Columbia's population is three times smaller than Ontario's, its population is just as ethnoracially diverse. Indeed, 30.3 per cent of British Columbia's population identify as being part of non-European ethnic groups. Chinese Canadians are the largest racialized minority with 11.2 per cent of the total population, followed by South-Asian Canadians with eight per cent and Filipino Canadians with 3.2 per cent. Unlike Ontario, British Columbia is home to very few Black Canadians, who make up only one per cent of the total population.[15] Both provinces' similar ethnoracial diversity present a clear opportunity to challenge this article's previous analyses. This similarity can not only confirm or refute the systematic effects of residential concentration on the political representation of racialized groups, but it can also measure the degree to which various racialized minorities depend on either transversal ethnic affinity or centripetal ethnic affinity to ensure that they are represented in the provincial legislature.

Ethnoracial representation in British Columbia

Given British Columbia's total population of 4,560,240 in 2016, one elected candidate represents approximately 52,416 residents. There are 508,480 Chinese Canadians in British Columbia, which would give them 10 members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) based on an ethnoracially representative

projection. There are 365,705 South-Asian Canadians in British Columbia, which would similarly give them approximately seven MLAs.[16] In contrast with Ontario, there are only 43,500 Black Canadians in British Columbia. Currently, none of these ethnoracial groups have perfect proportional representation. South-Asian Canadians have elected seven candidates in total, a few decimal points above their projected figure. The Chinese community, however, are much more under-represented since they only have four elected candidates –less than half of their projected figure.

Chinese Canadians in British Columbia therefore share the same exceptionalism and distance from politics as Chinese Ontarians. Are they distancing themselves from Canadian parliamentary politics, or are they being kept at a distance? This question could certainly be answered if there was solid data on the opinions of the Chinese community vis-à-vis active political involvement. Past research, which has traditionally examined the different levels of political representation of various ethnoracial groups, indicates that representation in the Chinese community is low and relatively high in the South-Asian and Black communities owing to a variety of sociocultural factors. For some authors, including Simard,[17] the absence of political culture within an ethnic group could explain its under-representation. In this case, Chinese Canadians, many of whom have historically endured an oppressive communist dictatorship, are not as politically invested as SouthAsian Canadians, who have experienced more than a century of democracy in their countries of origin. A comparison of the political environment in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and that of the main countries in Southern Asia (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) would indicate that this analysis is plausible. This is particularly plausible because it is recognized—although rarely discussed by the aforementioned authors—that there is an over-representation of Chinese Canadians born outside Canada; 45 per cent of whom were born in the PRC.[18] Furthermore, according to the 2016 census, 199,990 British Columbia immigrants were born in China, placing it at the top of the country of origin list. If we were to suppose—with all the racialist undertones it entails—that all these Chinese-born immigrants are ethnically Chinese, it would be legitimate to posit that the political authoritarianism in the PRC, reflected by its stateenforced deprivation of citizens' political opinions, could partially explain how the Chinese community views the value of participating in Canadian politics. A second factor often discussed in the literature—and which relates to the first one—is the condition for material survival imposed on immigrants. This idea refers to an intentional distancing of themselves from politics for their first few years in the country in order to focus exclusively on succeeding in the job market. Last, the third factor is linguistic deficit.[19] The Chinese community in Canada still renews itself largely through waves of immigrants from the PRC, where English is a second language. With a linguistic deficit, they cannot be held to master the codes, rules and symbols at play in Canadian politics. South-Asian Canadians, on the other hand, potentially have a much better understanding of these concepts because they come from countries where English is an official language and the local political system is largely modelled on that of Great Britain, their former colonial power. Furthermore, Siemiatycki argues that divisions based on "language and nationality" explain Chinese Canadians' low representation.[20]

Beyond any one factor

Each of these factors could certainly contribute to explaining the difference in political representation between Chinese and South-Asian Canadians. But does it explain it entirely? The available data indicates that a degree of caution is needed and that it is important to compare and contrast the two communities. In fact, both include a large number of members who were born abroad—keeping in mind the racialist presumptions raised earlier. In British Columbia, 39.3 per cent of Chinese Canadians were born in China and 44.5 per cent of South-Asian Canadians were born in India. The necessity for material survival would logically have a similar impact on Chinese and South-Asian Canadians, and language deficiency cannot solely explain this phenomenon, according to the information available. In studies where this factor is central to the analysis, there is an explicit presumption that ethnoracial groups are to be attributed the official language of the country with which they are identified. None of this research examines the degree of English proficiency of ethnoracialized Canadians in Canada; rather it is inferred based on their country of origin. Last, the argument of the divisions based on language and nationality in the Chinese community at large, where some speak Mandarin and others Cantonese, is also not immune from criticism. There are some objections in this regard.

The first, and perhaps the most obvious, with regard to the above figures is that not all Canadians of "Chinese" or "South-Asian" descent are born outside Canada.

The second is that language has been one of the main admission criteria of the immigrant selection process, ever since the removal of its racial—if not racist—component. Insofar as this criterion is enforced across the board, or at least for the vast majority of immigrants, regardless of nationality or ethnoracial identity, language deficiency could not possibly explain the political underrepresentation of any ethnoracial group.

The third is that attributing English-language proficiency to South-Asian Canadians based on their country of origin is ideologically biased. Assuming that the level of English-language proficiency of an immigrant community in Canada accurately reflects that of the entire nation with which it is identified, and that it must determine its degree of political representation, South Asian Canadians should have an extremely low representation in British Columbia, only slightly higher than Chinese Canadians. Furthermore, although English is an official language in India, the largest country in southern Asia, Indian census data from 2011 indicates that 10.6 per cent of Indians speak English, compared to one per cent in China, according to 2018 data.[21] If only 10.6 per cent of South-Asian Canadians (or 36,570.5) were eligible to vote in British Columbia, they would not have any representatives in the Legislature, given the previously calculated ratio of one MLA for 52,416 residents.

Last, Chinese Canadians do not have any greater linguistic or national diversity than do South-Asian Canadians, since the latter include Indians, Pakistanis and Bengalis, who speak a variety of languages such as Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil and Bengali. Furthermore, South-Asian Canadians are more religiously diverse (Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam).

Assuming that immigrants, regardless of how long they have lived in Canada, are likely display behaviour similar to that of the residents of the countries with which they are identified, the only factor that seems to pass muster is prior exposure to democracy. In light of this, South-Asian Canadians have an observable advantage over their Chinese counterparts. Not only is India the largest country in southern Asia and comparable to China in terms of population, it has also been an unprecedented proving ground for democracy. There are approximately 900 million eligible voters in India, which has a high voter participation rate, even though voting is not compulsory. In fact, a little more than 67 per cent of eligible voters cast ballots in the most recent election of April 2019.[22] In comparison, China (Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau excluded) does not hold multi-party elections; as a whole, Chinese Canadians are less likely to have experienced democracy. And this explanation would be perfectly satisfactory if not for one key fact. Chinese Canadians possess one characteristic that could explain their desire to free themselves from China's political environment; and the decision to leave China, for those born there, and move to Canada is somewhat symptomatic of that quest for emancipation. This characteristic is none other than the community's relatively high level of general education. According to the 2016 census, 21.7 per cent of Chinese Canadians in British Columbia have a degree equivalent to a bachelor's, versus 13.1 per cent of South-Asian Canadians. Moreover, 10.6 per cent of Black Canadians have a degree.[23] In addition, Chinese Canadians have slightly higher levels of graduate education than the other main racialized groups in British Columbia: 9.3 per cent of Chinese Canadians have a graduate-level degree, versus 8.1 per cent of South-Asian Canadians and 6.3 per cent of Black Canadians.[24]

Assuming that the exercise of political rights stems from the faculty of Reason,[25] which all university programs seek to impart upon graduates, Chinese Canadians should have the same degree of political representation in the legislature as South-Asian Canadians. But they do not; so we must consider other factors. One, in particular, is the hierarchy created by ethnoracial communities—and perhaps all communities—to identify how they will invest their resources. This idea includes two assumptions. The first is that communities act rationally by dividing society into various spheres of investment and unevenly allocating resources based on their requirements. The second, inferred by the first, is that they do not view all spheres of society as equally important. As a result, communities primarily invest their resources in sectors they believe will be most likely to raise their standing in society. By building businesses and religious institutions, Chinese immigrants have proven their ability to establish a foothold and thrive. Therefore, the assumption that Chinese Canadians do not master the codes and rules of Canadian society, thus explaining their low representation, does not hold water; building these institutions requires them to interact with Canadian lawmakers and officials. Perhaps they are poorly represented because they put politics second, behind social and economic development.

Conclusion

One finding from this article is how difficult it is to make the case that being part of a racialized group has a negative impact on political representation at the provincial level – at least currently in two provinces with large racialized populations. While past research on political representation at the federal, municipal and regional levels has almost unanimously found that racialized minorities are under-represented, this article presents a more nuanced portrait, suggesting that different groups within this broad category of "visible minorities" do not have the same level of political representation. While white European Canadians are over-represented in the Ontario and British Columbia legislatures, visible minorities are not; the exception is the Black community, whose number of elected candidates in Ontario is far greater than its proportional projection. Similarly, South-Asian Canadians in British Columbia elected the same number of candidates as projected. By comparison, Chinese Canadians are the main racialized minority whose representation in the Ontario and British Columbia legislatures supports the thesis of visible minorities' under-representation, since they elected fewer than half of the candidates a proportional projection would have given them.

The second finding is conceptual: ethnic affinity cannot solely predict voting behaviour. The concept must be broadened to include centripetal ethnic affinity and transversal ethnic affinity. With these two concepts, the article further clarifies racialized groups' glaring inequalities in political representation. On the one hand, transversal ethnic affinity is a positive factor for minority representation, because it encourages all ethnoracial minorities to vote for a racialized candidate. Centripetal ethnic affinity, on the other hand, is likely to thin out racialized group representation, because each individual will, in all likelihood, only vote for a candidate from their ingroup.

Notes

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7 This figure is approximative because it assumes that all Ontarians are de facto voters. It does not take into account the number of people who were ineligible to vote because of their nationality or age.

8 Statistics Canada. "Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity Highlight Tables. Visible minority (visible minority), both sexes, age (total), Canada, provinces and territories, 2016 Census – 25% Sample data. Visible minority (manually add "social group"), Ottawa, (2019b) https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/imm/Table.cfm?Lang=E&T=41&Geo=00&SP=1&vismin=2&age=1&sex=1. Accessed on August 8, 2019.

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14 See: Marieke Walsh, "Parties increase efforts to boost diversity, but NDP leads the charge." The Globe and Mail, October 19, 2019. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-parties-increase-efforts-to-boost-diversity-but-ndp-leads-the-charge/ and Alex Ballingall," NDP downplays lack of nominated candidates, says push for diversity explains delay," The Toronto Star, March 30, 2019, https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/2019/03/30/ndp-downplays-lack-of-nominated-candidates-says-push-for-diversity-explains-delay.html

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23 Percentages calculated with data from Statistics Canada (2018). Visible Minority (15), Labour Force Status (8), STEM and BHASE (non-STEM) Groupings, Major Field of Study - Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) 2016 (16), Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree (9), Immigrant Status (4), Age (10) and Sex (3) for the Population Aged 15 Years and Over in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories and Census Metropolitan Areas, 2016 Census - 25% Sample Data. Manually added "Geography" and "Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree (9)", Ottawa, and Statistics Canada, 2019c).

24 Ibid.

25 This notion was historically upheld by Enlightenment philosophers in their writings. It was later on reiterated by ore contemporary authors. Biographers of Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the United States have sufficiently highlighted the role that this American political actor and thinker has imparted to the education for the making a great democracy. Williams pointed thus to Jefferson's statement that education is a necessity to democracy's success and, as a result, a true democracy must provide education to its citizens. See John Sharp Williams, *Thomas Jefferson: His Permanent Influence on American Institutions*, New York, AMS Press, 1967, p.286. Besides, though he criticized Jefferson for excluding women and Black people in general from the benefits of education, Carpenter acknowledges that this founding father of America strongly tied the exercise of democratic rights and duties to the acquisition of education. See Carpenter, James, "Thomas Jefferson and the Ideology of Democratic Schooling," *Democracy & Education*, 21(2), 2013.