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Seeking political inclusion : the case of South Asian political representation in Peel Region

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Seeking Political Inclusion:
The Case of South Asian Political Representation in Peel Region

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The Major Research Paper is submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts degree
in
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Ryerson University
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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Seeking Political Inclusion:
The Case of South Asian Political Representation in Peel Region

A major research paper presented to Ryerson University in partial fulfillment of the Requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Immigration and Settlement Studies

By Ian Andrew Matheson

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the patterns of racial minority political representation in the Greater Toronto Area and sets out to answer three general questions: Why are the rates of racial minority political representation higher in the suburban centres of Mississauga and Brampton than in the City of Toronto? Why have South Asian politicians succeeded in achieving political office at greater rates than other racial minority politicians? And why are the city councils of Toronto's surrounding suburbs still suffering from greater rates of racial minority underrepresentation? This study concludes that a variety of variables have led to a more favourable suburban political opportunity structure: the faster growth rates and higher residential concentration of South Asian communities, higher rates of affluence among South Asian communities, lower incumbency rates, the 'colour coding' of Peel's federal electoral districts, high concentrations of ethnic civil organizations, and the fear of being labeled terrorists.

Key Words: political representation; Peel Region; Toronto; political inclusion; racial minority politics; South Asian Canadians.

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1. Introduction

On 28 June 2004, the day of the 38th Canadian General Elections, Punjabi became the fourth most commonly spoken language in the House of Commons, behind only English, French, and Italian, when eight Punjabi-speaking Members of Parliament were voted into the 308-member House (Rana, 2004). A total of ten South Asian MPs¹, the aforementioned eight plus two Ismaili Muslim² Canadians, ran successful campaigns and entered the ranks of the Federal Lower House; a twofold gain on the five South Asian MPs who sat as members of the 37th Parliament. Holding 3.3 percent of the seats in the House of Commons, and comprising 3.1 percent of Canada's total population (according to Statistic Canada's 2001 Census³), South Asians have become the only racial minority communities⁴ in Canada to achieve proportional representation at the federal level. This creates a stark contrast to Canada's Chinese communities who, at 3.7 percent of the general population, account for less than one percent of the seats in the House of Commons. South Asians have become recognized Liberal and Conservative representatives in areas of Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and most notably Toronto. Half of the ten Federal South Asian Canadian MPs have their ridings located in the Greater Toronto Area, with four of the five seats located within the cities of Mississauga

¹ The ten South Asian MPs are: Mr. Navdeep Bains, Ms. Ruby Dhalla, Mr. Ujjal Dosanjh, Mr. Gurmant Grewal, Ms. Nina Grewal, Mr. Rahim Jaffer, Mr. Wajid Khan, Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi, Mr. Deepak Obhrai, and Ms. Yasmin Ratansi.

² Ismaili Muslims are the second largest sect of Shi'a Islam, behind the Twelvers.

³ Unless otherwise stated, all data used in this paper are taken from Statistic Canada's 2001 Census.

⁴ In reference to South Asians, I have chosen to use the grammatically incorrect plural "racial minority communities" to highlight the problematic nature of grouping South Asians into one cohesive group. Please refer to "Definition" section below for further clarification on the terms "racial minority" and "South Asian".

and Brampton in the Region of Peel, which shares its eastern border with the City of Toronto.

The recent success of South Asian MPs in Peel Region was preceded by the success of three South Asian Members of Provincial Parliament in the Ontario Provincial General Elections of 2003⁵. A total of seven, three MPPs and four MPs, of Peel's 15 provincially and federally elected officials are of South Asian descent, making this region one of the few in Canada in which a racial minority community has achieved statistical *overrepresentation*. Although comprising 15.7 percent of Peel's total population, South Asians demographically represent 42.9 percent of Peel's provincial and federal members of parliament.

These noteworthy patterns of representation, however, do not transcend to the level of government that is often considered to be the closest to the people – the municipal level. In the 2003 Brampton and Mississauga Municipal Elections, South Asian candidates were unable to secure even one of the 21 municipal seats that were up for grabs⁶, creating a noticeable representation lag at the local level of government that does not exist provincially or federally.

If all three levels of government are combined, South Asian politicians account for approximately 19.5 percent of all elected officials in Mississauga and Brampton,

⁵ The three South Asian MPPs are: Mr. Vic Dhillon, Mr. Kuldip Kular, and Mr. Harinder Takhar. A fourth South Asian MPP, Mr. Shafiq Qadri, was also elected to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. His riding, Etobicoke North, lies within the boundaries of the City of Toronto and shares its western border with the Region of Peel.

⁶ It is important to note here that due to a lack of demographic relevance Caledon, although an integral part of Peel's geography, has been excluded from this study. Perhaps even more noteworthy, is that the only South Asian municipal councillor in all of Peel Region is Caledon Ward 5 Regional Councillor Annette Groves, a Jamaican-born Canadian of South Asian descent.

while comprising 16.5 percent of the two cities' combined population of 938,353⁷. The result is a rare case of proportional representation, one may even argue slight *overrepresentation*, of a racial minority community in the Canadian political system.

2. The Research Questions

The unique attributes associated with these communities' patterns of political representation at all three levels of government makes a noteworthy case study for further analysis of racial minority political representation in Canada. This paper will set out to answer the following questions: Why have the political opportunity structures in the suburban centres of Mississauga and Brampton proven to be more favourable for racial minorities than in the City of Toronto? Why have South Asian politicians succeeded in achieving proportional representation while so many other racial minority communities have not? Finally, why do the municipal councils of Toronto's surrounding suburbs continue to be the sites of severe racial minority underrepresentation in spite of recent gains at other levels of government?

3. Research Significance

Racial minority communities residing in the suburban areas surrounding the City of Toronto have been continuously passed over unnoticed by academics. In their study of ethnoracial political representation in Toronto, Siemiatycki and Saloojee (2002)

⁷ Here one must keep in mind that at four years old, the 2001 Census data is now somewhat out of date. Due to the rapid increase of Peel Region's population, these numbers are most likely currently considerably higher.

conclude, “although visible minorities are statistically underrepresented at all levels of government, their electoral presence is relatively stronger at the municipal level than at the provincial and federal levels” (p. 250). The fact that the exact inverse of this statement is true for Peel’s South Asian communities, who have achieved statistical *over*-representation at the federal and provincial levels, while experiencing dramatic *under*-representation at the municipal level, highlights the unique attributes of these suburban communities that distinguish them from their big city neighbours. It is therefore crucial to expand the body of academic knowledge on racial minority political representation beyond the ‘416’ and into the ‘905’⁸.

A second significance of this study is questioning the relevance of the municipal level of governance. City government is often seen by academics as “the one most directly relevant to a person’s pursuit of a satisfactory life” (as cited in Siemiatycki and Saloojee, 2002, p. 246), as seems to be the case in the City of Toronto with its higher rate of ethnoracial minority representation at the municipal level. In Peel Region, the municipal government has become the most unrepresentative political body, with none of Mississauga and Brampton’s 21 elected councillors being of South Asian origin, and only one being a racial minority, Jamaican-born Brampton city councillor Garnett Manning. This discrepancy between the provincial/federal levels and the municipal level is a stain on the municipal body that claims to be the closest to the people and is truly worrisome if Black and Lakhani (1997) are correct in arguing that the socioeconomic makeup of political representatives “may index the equality of access the system provides into the corridors of power” (p.2).

⁸ ‘416’ is the three-digit area code for the City of Toronto, while ‘905’ is used for the surrounding suburbs, including both Brampton and Mississauga.

4. Definitions

As with every academic study, it is crucial to define the set of employed terminology in order to create as transparent a study as possible and to avoid the conflation of meanings.

As previously mentioned, due to Caledon's demographic irrelevance, the town has been excluded from this study. Although geographically it encompasses approximately half of the Region of Peel, Caledon's population accounts for 5.1 percent of Peel Region's approximately one million residents, 0.7 percent of Peel's racial minority population, and 0.5 percent of the region's South Asian populations. The removal of Caledon from the study will therefore have negligible effects. For the sake of simplicity, however, I have chosen to sometimes refer to the two cities of Brampton and Mississauga as Peel Region.

The term "South Asian" in this study does not refer to any legal status or country of origin, but rather to the more general South Asian racial minority communities within Canada. According to Statistics Canada's definition, the term "South Asian" applies to any person, Canadian-born or foreign-born, who has ancestry in South Asia, which includes India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, etc. Although I am aware of the arbitrariness of this categorization, due to the amount of data used from Statistics Canada in this study, I have chosen to adhere to this definition for purposes of consistency and fluidity in terminology. Therefore, unless otherwise specified, the term "South Asian" may apply to Indian-born Hindus, Pakistani-born Muslims, Canadian-born Sikhs, etc. The term should not be understood as implying any legal status or country of origin.

Throughout the course of this study, I will refer to numerous groups of minorities and it is imperative that these terms are interpreted properly. Numerous scholars have employed the term ‘ethnoracial’ (Black, 1997; Black, 2000; Croucher, 2002; Siemiatycki and Saloojee, 2002), while others refer to their respective groups of study as ‘ethnic minorities’ (Heesum, 2002; Saggar, 2001). Both of these terms knowingly and purposely categorize all members of non-Charter communities together, as well as those born abroad and those born in Canada. Focusing specifically on those members of communities born abroad, other scholars have chosen to use terms such as ‘new immigrants’ (Mesch, 2002), ‘immigrant-origin citizens’ (Jacobs, Martinello and Rea, 2002), or ‘foreign-born’ (Lien, 2004). When the distinction between these two groupings is understood (the former group raising issues based on ethnicity and race, the latter based on arrival in a new country) then no harm is done. However, not all academics have been able to avoid the traps of this often confusing terminology, and many have unknowingly slipped into an inaccurate usage of terms. I have done my best to avoid such slippages and my terminology should be understood as follows. The term ‘ethnoracial minority’ includes all foreign- and native-born members of Canada’s non-Charter communities. The term ‘racial minority’ is used to refer to those non-Caucasian and non-Aboriginal communities in Canada typically referred to as ‘visible minorities’. The researcher has however opted to use the term ‘racial minority’ due to his lack of comfort with the connotations of the term ‘visible minority’ that seem to imply an abnormal difference from the blanket ‘norm’ of white skin.

Finally, the term ‘representation’ will be employed in a variety of contexts that need to be clarified. Three types of representation will be explored in the literature

review: statistical representation (the numerical value of racial minority representation in political bodies), substantive representation (the policy value of racial minority representation in political bodies), and symbolic representation (the effect of racial minority representation on the population). When I speak to the ‘rate of representation’, I am referring to the percentage of racial minority members in political bodies in relation to the percentage of racial minority members of a more general geographic population. When the rate of representation is balanced at approximately 100 percent, that is for example, when the percentage of racial minorities in the House of Commons is equal to the percentage of racial minorities in the Canadian population, then ‘proportional representation’ has been achieved.

5. Methodology

In order to understand the rate of representation of South Asians in Peel Region, the demographic characteristics of all eight Federal level politicians, seven Provincial level politicians, and 21 Municipal level politicians must be understood. In attempting to determine the identities of these 36 politicians, three questions need to be addressed: To what race does the politician belong? What are the ethnic origins (family ancestry) of the politician? and In what country was the politician born? The purpose of the first question is to establish the racial characteristics of each elected official. The results of the ethnic origins question helps to locate more specific identity characteristics and breaks the swath of broad racial categories, such as ‘Caucasian’, into smaller subcategories, such as ‘British’, ‘Italian’, or ‘Portuguese’. It is important to note here, that although religion is not an ethnicity, it was sometimes used as an additional identity marker in this category.

For example, Mississauga-Streetsville MP Wajid Khan's ethnic origins are defined as Pakistani-Muslim, a national origin as well as a religion. Finally, the third question, that relating to the country of origin, is asked to determine whether or not the politician was born in Canada or immigrated here at some point in his or her life. To these three questions a fourth was added which may help address the discrepancy between racial minority representation at the federal/provincial levels and at the municipal level – the incumbency factor: "How many times has the politician been elected to office?" With these four questions in mind, I attempted to address the demographic breakdown of Peel politicians through a two-step process of data collection.

Firstly, through biographical analysis, largely performed through internet searches, I was able to retrieve a great amount of information regarding Peel's politicians. In most cases, especially at the federal level, the country of origin was clearly stated in the biographical information, and in every case a photograph was available to identify, although somewhat problematically, the politician's race. Furthermore, more often than not, the year in which the politician was first elected was listed, as well as all subsequent electoral victories. Of the four questions, ethnic origins proved to be the hardest to answer. It is important to note that I did my best to avoid assuming any identity characteristics. If the answer to any of these four questions was not clearly stated in a biographical document, then the answer was left blank to be answered in the second phase of the information gathering process.

Once the biographical and photographic analyses were completed, approximately two-thirds of the identity characteristics had been successfully answered. In order to determine the answers to the final third, I telephoned the constituency offices of the

politicians and, approximately two thirds of the time, spoke with an assistant who either answered the questions immediately due to his or her working relationship with the politician, or returned my call at a later time with the answers after having consulted with the politician for clarity. On other occasions I was able to speak directly to the politician, most common at the municipal level, which resulted in the less problematic method of self-identification. If I was unable to obtain an ethnic identity, other identity markers were used, such as name analysis. Please see Appendix A for the results and organization of the aforementioned identity-related information. For purposes of comparison, I also collected the identity characteristics of politicians in the City of Toronto. I used the data collected in Siemiatycki and Saloojee's (2002) study as the baseline for this, and updated this information to be in line with the last round of elections where necessary.

One of the key limitations in the establishment of demographic characteristics in this study is the limited space for self-identification, as well as the complicated nature of identity. As previously stated, through biographical analysis, photographic analysis, and inquiries with constituency offices, I identified the four necessary characteristics of Peel's politicians (race, ethnic origins, country of origin, year first elected) and in only a handful of cases was the politician him-or herself able to self-identify. Although I admit that self-identification is always a preferable method over attributing an identity to someone, due to logistical and practical reasons, such as the feasibility of contacting all the politicians directly, I rely on identity attribution. However, in order to better navigate this problematic situation of ethnic identity, I chose to ask about the politicians' ethnic *origins* as opposed to his or her ethnicity. Following the logic of Siemiatycki and Saloojee

(2002), this question prompts the politicians “to reflect not on how they themselves self-identify, but to name the ethnic group(s) to which their maternal and paternal ancestors belonged” (p. 258).

Once all demographic characteristics had been gathered, I then sent out interview requests per email to numerous racial minority politicians as well as riding association presidents, in hopes of speaking one-on-one with those racial minority politicians who have been successful in their ascension into political office and those familiar with the political process. The purpose of these interviews in this study is the incorporation of first-hand perspectives on the topic of study. The researcher was successful in securing seven interviews – Brampton South – Mississauga MP Navdeep Bains, Mississauga-Streetsville MP Wajid Khan, Mississauga-Streetsville Federal Liberal Riding Association President Khalid Sagheer, Brampton West – Mississauga MPP Vic Dhillon, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale MPP Kuldip Kular, Mississauga Centre MPP Harinder Takhar and Brampton Wards 9 and 10 City Councillor Garnett Manning. Each interviewee was presented with a set of approximately ten to twelve questions related to the topic of racial minority political representation in Canada, but were encouraged to speak to related issues not addressed in the questions if they so chose. In addition to these seven interviews, an eighth was conducted with Rose Lee, Coordinator of Diversity Management for the City of Toronto, whose insights into the relationship between identity and political representation were of great value to this study. I have no intention of conflating the opinions stated in the interviews beyond the boundaries of individual perspectives. I have chosen, where beneficial and perhaps insightful to the study, to

integrate some of the interview results into the greater analysis of this study so as to provide multiple perspectives to the areas of analysis.

6. Measuring Political Representation

It is the interest of this study to analyze the political representation, the demographic characteristics, of elected federal, provincial, and municipal politicians in Peel Region. Finding the proper theoretical framework for such an analysis, however, proves to be slightly more complicated.

The relationship between statistical representation and substantive representation has shown itself to be relatively ambiguous and unpredictable. In their 2002 study, Siemiatycki and Saloojee argue that the presence of minorities on political bodies does not necessarily lead to diversity friendly policy measures. No better example of this could be found than the recent suggestion of Toronto City Counillor Michael Thompson, the only Black member of Council, to endorse the racial profiling of young Black men in areas of Toronto that have been plagued by recent waves of gun crime (Gonda & Teotonio, 2005). His suggestion was met with sharp criticism from Toronto's Black communities who were outraged by the suggestion of a policy that would unfairly target all young Black men. Adding insult to injury was the fact that this policy suggestion came from a Black councillor. Rose Lee points to the fact that it is Toronto Councillor Joe Mihevc, a Caucasian⁹, who is regarded as the champion of minority rights on Toronto

⁹ As a politician of Slovenian ancestry, Mihevc's status as an ethnoracial minority in Canada should not be overlooked. Mihevc may have well come to his championing of racial minority rights through his own experiences and struggles as an ethnoracial minority in a Charter-group dominated political system.

City Council, and not any of the five racial minorities, including Michael Thompson, who sit on Council with him. Lee goes on to point out that:

[w]e also have to be very careful not to see visible minorities as a homogenous population with a consistent uniform stand on all issues. That's why visible minority politicians elected to City Council might not reflect the views of some groups of visible minorities, or might reflect the view of some visible minority populations who are more conservative or more progressive. I don't think there is a correlation between the number of visible minority councillors and diversity friendly policies.

(interview with Rose Lee)

It would be unfair to bind minority politicians to ethnic alliances that they themselves do not feel a part of. The nature of identity politics is quite simply too complicated to run solely along ethnic lines, with different sets of variables influencing the political stance of each individual politician: education, class, upbringing, age, place of residence, religion, and countless other variables are all crucial ingredients in deciding one's political values. In his study of ethnoracial minority political representation in London, UK, Anwar (2001) mirrors Lee's comments by reminding that "the lion's share of minority political and policy advancement has been the result of the activities and influence of benevolent white liberals, especially, but not restricted to, those on the left of British politics" (p. 209). In spite of these examples, most of the politicians interviewed believed their ethnicity has played a role in their political careers, whether resulting in increased political responsibilities, increased participation from racial minority communities, or beneficial policy measures for racial minorities.

Although every politician questioned self-identified as a Canadian first and cited his or her constituency as the most important responsibility as a political representative, there was nonetheless a general recognition that a racialized identity, rightly or wrongly, added an additional layer of responsibility to the job. Liberal MPP Harinder Takhar recognizes the complexity of his relationship with minority communities:

I have never seen myself as a representative of the Indian community, but I see my role as two roles. One is that I need to represent the community that elected me, the constituency. They elected me, so I need to represent them. But whether we like it or not, there comes another responsibility for us to represent ethnic communities and people expect us to represent their interests. So there is some sort of unelected position that more or less falls on your shoulders to represent the interests [of ethnic communities] – fair or unfair . . . the ethnic politicians have a real challenge, from my point of view, of more responsibilities than any other MPP or MP in their role. We go from attending weddings, to attending funerals, attending social functions, which maybe other politicians don't do. So our work starts on the weekend, which is almost or equally as tedious or demanding as during the week.

(interview with Harinder Takhar)

Most of those interviewed also believed that their presence on political bodies positively affected the participation rates of minorities in the political system. In a complex political system traditionally dominated by white faces and where official language knowledge is a prerequisite for accessing the political structure, minority communities, especially those with large numbers of newcomers, may see politicians who 'belong' to their ethnicity and can speak their language as more approachable. Although there is no evidence to support his opinion, Brampton Wards 9 and 10 City Councillor Garnett Manning believes that the colour of his skin contributed to an increase in voting participation from Brampton's Black community in his ward:

I have to say that I benefit from being Black somehow. I had more Black people vote when I was running in Brampton than ever before in the City of Brampton. And they simply said to me . . . well you know Garnett, we found a reason to go vote. So that is pure racial motivation.

(interview with Garnett Manning)

Manning's belief that the increased participation of racial minority candidates leads to increased participation by racial minority communities was echoed by Liberal MP Navdeep Bains, who believes his status as a racial minority in Canada contributes to an

increased likelihood that minority communities will access the political system through him:

many of the ethnic communities, ‘minority’ communities, that associate themselves with being visible minorities, feel that they can come to me a bit more. I think I get the impression when talking to them that they feel very at ease and comfortable, and they feel that the difficulties or hardships or issues that they face are issues that I face and so they can champion their causes through me.

(interview with Navdeep Bains)

Beyond increased participation, many of the interviewed politicians believed that they were able to substantively benefit racial minority communities in ways mainstream politicians could not. MPP Takhar argues that mainstream politicians may often overlook issues that concern certain segments of racial minority and newcomer communities and the responsibility therefore falls upon racial minority politicians to bring those issues to the table. He cites as an example Bill-169, legislation that he put forth to put an end to taxi ‘scooping’¹⁰:

Go anywhere in Ontario and most of the taxi drivers are of ethnic backgrounds . . . if you go to the Toronto airport or downtown Toronto they are Sikhs. If you go to Ottawa, might be Muslims, and they have their own issues and scooping was one of those issues – it’s been long outstanding for 25 years. I introduced Bill-169 to address those issues and those issues will get addressed.

(interview with Harinder Takhar)

Furthermore, Liberal MPP Vic Dhillon believes that the inability of Brampton City Council to substantively represent Brampton’s South Asian community is partially due to the lack of South Asian representatives on Council:

¹⁰ Taxi scooping is when a licensed taxi from one municipality picks up a passenger in another municipality outside of the one in which he or she is licensed. Bill 169 would make this action illegal. Interestingly enough, the only other Ontario MPP to ever introduce legislation on taxi scooping was Conservative Raminder Gill, the first Sikh to enter the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

Dhillon: City Hall is not doing a very good job at serving our community.

Interviewer: And that's in part because of the lack of South Asians on Council?

Dhillon: Absolutely. Only the interest groups that are able to communicate their concerns to City Hall get the resources – there's all kinds of little groups and clubs here getting thousands of dollars, whereas you'll see South Asian seniors sitting on electrical boxes [rather than in appropriate facilities], sitting on people's benches. Even you go downstairs you'll see seniors sitting down on the bench provided by this building because of lack of facilities provided by the city.

(interview with Vic Dhillon)

Councillor Manning agrees with Dhillon's sentiments and believes the lack of representation on Brampton City Council has negatively impacted Council's ability to serve its diverse community. As an example, he argues that although Punjabi seniors were able to approach Council to address their concerns, such as requesting benches and toilet facilities in the parks, the turn around rate on such issues are much slower than they should be.

Bains is quick to point out, however, that this does not mean his policy decisions are necessarily always in line with many of the minorities that come to him. He cites as an example his decision to support Bill C-38, which amended the Civil Marriage Act and legalized same-sex marriage, a decision that ran counter to the ideologies of many minority groups in his riding:

Bill C-38, for example. For me, I thought of it through the lens of the Charter and I thought of it through the lens of a Canadian politician. I did not see it through the lens of a religious minority viewpoint, nor through the majority viewpoint as well saying the status quo is okay. For me it was a no-brainer. What happened was, the logic I used to explain to a lot of the various "minority" groups in the community is that we're a country of minorities now and first and foremost our loyalty is to this country and to the rule of law of this country and we have to be very cognizant of that.

(interview with Navdeep Bains)

There was a general perception among those interviewed that diverse political bodies are important in order to encourage the participation of racial minority communities and bring a wider array of perspectives to the policy-making table, although, according to research, diverse bodies cannot be interpreted as a predictor of diversity friendly policy decisions.

In spite of such contingency, Simard (2000) argues that political representation is still “an issue of the utmost importance for the future of democracy,” (p.26) especially a democracy in which the racial minority are expected to become the statistical majority, if they are not already, in most of Canada’s major urban centres. Beyond the creation of policy measures and the drafting of legislation, political representation also carries with it symbolic importance, especially in a nation of immigrants. With wave after wave of immigrants arriving in Canada and the resulting demographic changes that have occurred, it is crucial that all communities, regardless of race, ethnicity, or country of origin feel they are able to access the political system, as well as any other aspect of Canadian society, if they so choose; such is the mandate set out in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. The impression that unrepresentative political bodies gives off is that of a political opportunity structure reserved for the two solitudes and off limits to all others. Such symbols of exclusion undermine the notion of a multicultural Canada and may have detrimental effects on the social inclusion of racial minority and newcomer communities.

Numerous academics have studied the effects of inclusive and exclusive political opportunity structures on minority and newcomer political participation. Koopmans (2004) discovers that in the more inclusive, liberal German *Bundesländer* (he uses the

term ‘liberal’ to define a *Bundesland* with a high naturalization rate and low conservative party support) immigrants are more likely to participate in public debates on issues concerning them, while immigrants in the more exclusive, conservative *Bundesländer* are more likely to maintain a political orientation that is directed towards their homeland. Diehl and Blohm (2001) compliment Koopmans’ findings by arguing that immigrant political attitudes are a direct reflection of their legal status. In their study of the Turkish community in Mannheim, Germany, they conclude that the low rates of identification with German political processes and institutions are a direct reflection of their alienated social identity. In spite of the ambiguous relationship between statistical and substantive representation, the presence of politicians who do not belong to Canada’s bicultural image, as suggested by many of those interviewed, may in fact serve as an indicator to newcomers and racial minority communities that they too can access Canada’s political opportunity structure. Such is the recent media hype surrounding the appointment of Haitian-born Québécois Michaëlle Jean to the position of Governor General of Canada. The symbolism involved in her appointment to this office cannot be ignored and led Cecil Foster, professor of Sociology and Anthropology at University of Guelph, to note that “the appointment of Michaëlle Jean is a message to young black youth that maybe, one of them could become prime minister, too” (p.A13). The appointment of a Black woman to the position of Governor General is a partial marker to attest that Canada’s political opportunity structure is not off limits to Blacks. Such symbolism, however, is somewhat shallow if it is not mirrored at the elected level of government. The effects that such symbols of exclusion can have may be detrimental to a community’s inclusion into the political structure. Drastically unrepresentative political bodies, therefore, need to be

viewed as partial indicators of social exclusion and disenfranchisement, as well as a “serious threat to our shared notion of participatory democracy” (Paul, 2005, p.19).

7. Racial Minority Political Representation: A Historical Perspective

In order to better understand the current climate of racial minority political representation in Canada, and specifically that of South Asian politicians in suburban Toronto, a historical context must be provided to present current figures within a greater understanding of changing trends and patterns.

A visit to the existing literature on racial minority representation in Canada shows that minority exclusion from positions of political power is deeply imbedded in the political institutions of this country. In spite of this, the body of knowledge surrounding racial minority representation in our governmental structures is somewhat incoherent at times and relatively minimal, although there has been a renewed interest in this topic in the last few years. The existing literature can be broadly broken into two categories, one devoted to a national level analysis that examines the demographic makeup of the Federal House of Commons, and one analyzing all three levels of government within a given urban area. This section revisits this literature and provides a more systematic approach to the first method of analysis, while encouraging the expansion of the latter.

According to Pelletier (1991), there were a total of ten racial minority politicians who held a seat somewhere in the Federal House of Commons between 1965 and 1988, although they occupied a total of 23 seats if you count the presence of incumbent re-

elections.¹¹ These ten racial minority politicians represented ridings from across Canada, although somewhat more heavily concentrated in Ontario and Quebec, and had political affiliations across all three major political parties. Prior to this period, a racial minority Federal politician was an anomaly, not an expectation, the most notable being Vancouver Centre's Doug Jung, a Canadian-born Conservative member who became Canada's first MP of Chinese descent in 1957.

The 1980s was a decade of slow and laborious gains for racial minorities in the House of Commons. In spite of the general increase in numbers, Stasiulis and Abu-Laban (1991) point out that "the House of Commons remains a "very white" institution, with only six visible minority MPs (or 2 percent of the total number) elected in 1988, an increase from three in 1984" (p.13).

In a similar fashion as the 1980s, the nineties saw an increase in the number of racial minority politicians entering the House of Commons that failed to keep pace with the rapid growth of racial minorities as a percentage of the general population. In their analysis of the 35th Parliament elected in 1993, Black and Lakhani (1997) soberly remind us that although the numbers of racial minority politicians increased from 6 in 1988 to 13 in 1993, the halfway mark to achieving proportional representation had not yet been achieved. After the 36th General Election four years later, Black (2000) once again points out that although six more racial minority politicians entered the House of Commons, bringing the total to 19, the rate of representation barely inched past fifty percent and racial minorities were still obviously underrepresented.

¹¹ It is important to note that, for whatever reason, Pelletier does not include Latin Americans in his definition of "visible minority", although the contemporary definition of the term does.

Combining the statistics researched by Pelletier with current figures, we see that the situation of racial minority politicians in the House of Commons has dramatically increased from zero in 1965 to 21 in 2005. This seems like a natural increase given that it was only after 1967 that Canada's immigration policies were dramatically overhauled and its borders were more readily open to non-European immigrants. The demographic effects of these policy changes on the Canadian population can be seen in Census data which places the racial minority population of Canada in 2001 (the most recent Census year) at 13.4%, its highest ever rate.

Although most academics speak to the issue of underrepresentation, there is no clear and consistent use of the rate of representation, the division of the percentage of racial minority politicians in the House of Commons into the percentage of racial minorities in the general population. When this more integrated method of statistical analysis is employed, two unwelcome trends are highlighted for racial minority politicians: continual linear gains are not occurring and the halfway mark to proportional representation is proving difficult to break through¹².

After the Federal election of 1993 and the ushering in of the 35th Parliament, Jerome Black noted that demographically speaking, racial minorities had not yet broken the halfway mark of proportional representation. Today, although the number of racial minority politicians has increased substantially, the halfway mark has still not been achieved. The absolute number of racial minority political representatives has been

¹² Although I endorse such a method of analysis, he also realizes that it may be somewhat problematic. Complications may arise when determining what the baseline of representation should be for a democratic society: demographics or citizenship? Should the actual number of racial minorities in Canada be used or should only the number of racial minority *citizens* be taken into account? If the latter, how does one calculate this figure? I have chosen to use actual numbers, which includes citizens and non-citizens, due to the fact that such figures are accessible.

increasing over the last two decades. Black has been tracing the growth of racial minority politicians at the Federal level from 3 in the 33rd Parliament, to 5 in the 34th Parliament, 13 in the 35th Parliament, 19 in the 36th Parliament, and 17 in the 37th Parliament. Currently there are 21 in the 38th Parliament, a sign of what seems to be the continued progress of racial minority politicians at the national level. However, when the growth rate of the racial minority population is taken into account, it is obvious that no linear gains are actually being made. According to Census data, in 1986, 6.3 percent of the Canadian population was racial minorities. This rate rose to 9.1 percent in 1991, 11.2 percent in 1996, and 13.4 percent in 2001, an average increase of 2.4 percent. If this rate is extended to the next Census year of 2006, then it can be predicted, albeit cautiously, that the share of racial minorities in the Canadian population will stand at 15.8 percent - although this is most likely a conservative estimate. If these Census figures are applied to the closest corresponding election year, then the following chart can be produced which measures the rate of racial minority representation over the last twenty years (see Table 1).

Table 1: Rates of Racial Minority Representation in the House of Commons, 1984-2004

Year	% of Racial Minorities in House of Commons (absolute #)	% of Racial Minorities in Canada (Census year)	Rate of Representation
1984	1.0% (3)	6.3% (1986)	15.9%
1988	1.7% (5)	6.3% (1986)	27%
1993	4.3% (13)	9.1% (1991)	47.3%
1997	6.1% (19)	11.2% (1996)	54.5%
2000	5.4% (17)	13.4% (2001)	40.3%
2004	6.8% (21)	15.8% (2006)*	43%*

When Census data is properly integrated into the statistical analysis of political bodies, new trends are exposed. Although the number of racial minority politicians is higher

* numbers should be viewed with caution.

now than ever before, we can see that the rate of representation after the last two General Elections is in fact *lower* than in the nineties, as the increase of racial minority politicians does not keep pace with the increase of racial minorities in the general population. The halfway mark to proportional representation was broken in 1997, but the rate of representation has subsequently fallen back below 50 percent.

Although minority underrepresentation has occurred and continues to occur in Canada at the national level, it is nonetheless important to point out that Canada serves as a model for racial minority political inclusion worldwide. In her 2005 article *Guess Who's Running For Office?*, Karen Bird analyzes the demographic makeup of the Canadian House of Commons after the 38th General Election of 2004 and concludes that “[v]isible minority representation in Canadian national politics is particularly strong when compared to other countries” (p.83). In my own calculations of Bird’s listed statistics, racial minorities account for 6.5 percent of Canada’s House of Commons, well below their share of the general population, which stands at 13.4 percent. Yet this is still well ahead of most other liberal democracies in which racial minority representation at the national level is negligible or non-existent. The next closest country was Britain, in which just 12 of 659 national seats, or 1.8 percent, were held by racial minorities. Other countries analyzed by Bird are Germany (0.8%), New Zealand (0.7%), Australia (0.6%) and most notably France, which in spite of its large racial minority population did not have a single minority member in its national parliament.

In his study of racial minority political representation in Great Britain, Anwar (2001) seems to support Bird’s findings when he concludes that “all the three major

political parties in Britain are failing to fully integrate ethnic¹³ minorities into the political process” (p.548), which would partially account for the dismal representation of racial minority politicians at the British national level. Yet matters become slightly more complicated when Anwar takes his analysis deeper. In the same aforementioned study, Anwar discovers that 11 percent of local councillors in the City of London are racial minorities, while they comprise 25 percent of the general population. Although statistically underrepresentative (a 44 percent rate of representation according to my calculations), this is still much higher than the rate of proportional representation discovered by Siemiatycki and Saloojee (2002) on Toronto’s City Council. Furthermore, when Anwar takes his study outside of London to Birmingham, he finds that 18.8 percent of local councillors are racial minorities, while they comprise 27 percent of the general population, a representation rate of 69.6 percent. These findings are also backed by Saggar (2001) who estimates that in 1996 many “local Asian communities were close to, or sometimes beyond, achieving parity in local council elections in most of the UK’s largest cities including much of inner London and several boroughs in outer London” (p.216). This demonstrates that although Canada may be ahead of the pack when it comes to national level representation, there are international centres outpacing Canadian cities in their rates of minority political representation.

As Canada’s population continues to diversify, so too must its political bodies, otherwise they run the risk of losing legitimacy and becoming sites of exclusive power elites that do not reflect the Canadian population. The diversification of Canada’s population has not, however, been occurring at an equal pace throughout the nation, but

¹³ Anwar’s use of the term “ethnic minority” mirrors this study’s use of the term “ethnoracial minority”. Refer above to “Definition” section for further clarification.

has rather been concentrated in its urban centres, namely Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, which absorb approximately three quarters of all newcomers to Canada. The effect this has on political representation are extraordinary and begs the question whether the national level is the most effective level of analysis for racial minority political representation.

Stasilius (1997) argues that perhaps it is not the national level that provides the most adequate picture of minority political inclusion into its formal bodies, since marginalized groups have had greater success at the municipal level. This shift in focus from the pan-national level to the more focused municipal arena brings us to the second method of analysis: the focus on specific urban centres.

In her 2000 study titled *Ethnic Minority Political Representation in Montreal*, Simard discovers that racial minorities are statistically underrepresented at all three levels of government in the Montreal Census Metropolitan Area, yet her findings support those of Stasilius who argues that the municipal level of government provides the greatest avenue for formally accessing the political structure. She finds that 7.8 percent of Montreal's 51 city councilors are racial minorities, while only 6.1 percent at the federal level and 2.3 percent of the members of the Quebec National Assembly were racial minorities. If these numbers are compared to the 13 percent of the population in the Montreal CMA who are racial minorities, then the rates of representation stand at 60 percent municipally, 46.6 percent federally, and 17.5 percent provincially.

In their 2002 study, Siemiatycki and Saloojee also discover that racial minority representation was the highest on Toronto City Council. Their discovery of a 'dual representation gap' for racial minorities led them to conclude that minority communities

are not only “statistically badly underrepresented in elected office,” but that “the evidence suggests that minority politicians typically do a poor job of reflecting their own community’s interests” (p. 242).

It was not until 2005 that researchers finally noticed the discrepancies in representation patterns between the City of Toronto and its surrounding suburbs. In their study titled *Suburban Success: Immigrant and Minority Electoral Gains in Suburban Toronto*, Siemiatycki and Matheson discover four unique patterns forming in the Greater Toronto Area: the increase of visible minority politicians after the 2003 Ontario Provincial Elections and the 2004 Federal General Elections, the concentration of these gains in the suburban cities of Brampton and Mississauga, the concentration of these gains within the South Asian community, and the lack of minority gains at the municipal level. They hold that these suburban gains were in stark contrast to the City of Toronto where racial minorities comprise a larger percentage of the overall population, yet occupy a lower percentage of seats in all three levels of government. These findings demonstrate a need for this body of knowledge to expand to other cities and countries so that a more systematic, comparative lens, both nationally and internationally, may, when necessary, be used in this type of analysis.

8. Contemporary Political Representation in the Greater Toronto Area

The Greater Toronto Area is the largest urban expanse in all of Canada and is home to approximately one sixth of all Canadians. At the centre of this swath of urban-dominated landscape is the City of Toronto, the result of a 1998 amalgamation of the old city of

Toronto with its surrounding postwar suburbs of North York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke. Surrounding the City are four two-tier Regional Municipalities – Durham Region to the east, York Region to the north, Peel Region to the northwest, and Halton Region to the west. The five million residents of the GTA are spread evenly between the City of Toronto and the surrounding suburbs, although the most rapid rates of growth have recently been occurring in the ‘905’ cities of Markham, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan in York Region, and Brampton and Mississauga in Peel.

Mississauga and Brampton are the Greater Toronto Area’s two largest suburban centres outside the City of Toronto, standing at populations of 612,925 and 325,430 respectively in 2001¹⁴. The two cities account for approximately 95 percent of the population of the Region of Peel and are home to one fifth of all GTA residents. Proportionally speaking, Mississauga and Brampton rank fourth and fifth in racial minority communities in the GTA. Markham, with a racial minority population of 55.5 percent, is one of only two cities in Canada where the racial minority population in fact constitutes the racial majority (the other city is Richmond, British Columbia). Behind Markham is the City of Toronto with 42.8 percent, Richmond Hill (40.4 percent), Mississauga (40.3 percent), and Brampton (40.2 percent). Although Mississauga and Brampton are home to only the fourth and fifth largest proportional racial minority populations, they nonetheless are leaders in the GTA when it comes to electing racial minorities into positions of political power.

¹⁴ It is likely that since the release of the 2001 Census data, the populations of each of these cities have increased by more than 100,000.

8.a. Favourable Political Opportunity Structures in Suburban Centres

Mississauga and Brampton are the jurisdiction of eight Federal electoral districts, seven Provincial electoral districts and 21 municipal councillors. In the two-tiered system of Peel Region, Brampton elects one mayor, one local councillor and one regional councillor, for a total of eleven councillors that represent Brampton. Mississauga voters, on the other hand, elect one mayor and one councillor, the latter serving as both local and regional councillor, for a total of 10 municipal councillors who represent Mississauga.¹⁵ Mississauga and Brampton combined thus vote in a total of 36 elected officials. In contrast, the amalgamated single-tier system in the City of Toronto sees voters cast their ballots for one at-large mayor and one ward-based councillor, for a total of 45 elected municipal officials. The City of Toronto is also the jurisdiction of 23 Federal ridings and 22 Provincial ridings, which brings the City's total to 90 elected officials. If we compare the results of the last wave of elections at all three levels of government, the suburban nature of electoral gains for racial minority politicians becomes evident (see Table 2).

Table 2: Rates of Racial Minority Representation in Brampton, Mississauga, and Toronto

	Brampton	Mississauga	Toronto
Municipal	1/11	0/10	5/45
Provincial	2/3	1 /4	3/22
Federal	2 /3	2 /5	2/23
All Levels (%)	5/17 (29.4%)	3/19 (15.8%)	10/90 (11.1%)
Racial Minorities as % of pop.	40.2%	40.3%	42.8%
Rate of Representation	73.1%	39.2%	25.9%

¹⁵ amendments to the governmental structure of Peel Regional Council were made by the Provincial Liberal government in 2005. Currently, there are a total of 22 members: the non-elected Regional Chair, three mayors, 9 Mississauga councillors, 5 Brampton councillors, and 4 Caledon councillors. Following the structural amendments, two additional Mississauga councillors will be added as well as one additional Brampton councillor.

The City of Toronto, whose motto is “Diversity Our Strength”, is being outperformed by its suburban neighbours. The City noticeably ranks lower than the suburban-edge cities of Brampton and Mississauga in its rate of representation of racial minorities in political office, which brings a new understanding to the perception that minority political representation is first and foremost an urban phenomenon. Although urban centres may have provided the sites for the beginning of minority political access, today, due to demographic changes and immigrant settlement patterns, it may be more accurate to say minority political representation is largely a *sub*-urban phenomenon¹⁶.

As the above table shows, it is the suburban city of Brampton that has by far the highest rate of representation and is in fact the only city in the Greater Toronto Area to have a rate higher than 50 percent. A distant second to Brampton is its bigger suburban neighbour Mississauga, with a rate of representation of 39.2 percent. What this table does not show is the suburban nature of racial minority political representation within the boundaries of the City of Toronto. Of the ten racial minority candidates elected across all three levels of government, only one, Trinity-Spadina municipal councilor Olivia Chow, represents a riding in the urban core of Toronto. The other nine represent ridings in the inner-ring of postwar suburbs that lay between the Old City of Toronto and the newer edge-suburbs in Peel and York Regions: five are in Scarborough, two in North York, and two in Etobicoke. This first pattern leads one to question why the suburbs have proven to have a more favourable political opportunity structure for racial minority ascension into political office.

¹⁶ An interesting comparison to Peel Region is the suburban/rural York Region. One municipality, Markham, has similar patterns of representation, while conversely, the municipality of Richmond Hill is surprisingly lagging in its rate of minority representation. York’s patterns highlight that the suburban phenomenon explored in this study is not limited to Peel Region, although it also shows that this pattern has not yet appeared in all of Toronto’s suburban areas.

Of the six political representatives interviewed, most felt that they did not encounter any form of discrimination in their attempts to reach political office. Furthermore, most believed that no racial barriers existed in the Canadian political system whatsoever. Only Brampton South – Mississauga MP Navdeep Bains said he was discriminated against during his election campaign:

Yes, there were comments made and there still are comments made. There was a comment made when I initially ran in my pamphlets towards putting in my picture. So therefore people would see the name and possibly, you know, you don't want to sell your image too much. Therefore I made a point of putting my picture in every pamphlet [laugh].

(interview Navdeep Bains)

In order to understand more accurately instances of discrimination, a wider net needs to be thrown that incorporates the perspectives of all racial minority politicians, as well as those who were unsuccessful in reaching political office. However, this is beyond the logistical feasibility of this study. Our attention thus turns to systemic issues within the political structure that may hinder or aid minority access. Four variables have been discovered that may account for the higher rates of minority representation in Mississauga and Brampton: the faster growth rate of racial minority communities, the higher socio-economic status of racial minority communities, the diminished capacity of the incumbency factor at both the federal and provincial levels, and the division of Peel's Federal electoral districts into 'ethnic' and 'non-ethnic' ridings.

8.a.i. Faster Spatial Growth Rates of Minority Communities

It comes as no surprise to Rose Lee that the suburbs have surpassed the City of Toronto in their rates of representation:

I think the past Census in 2001 shows clearly the remarkable increase in visible minority populations in the suburban area – in Vancouver its

in the Richmond area. Here it's in Markham and Brampton....really, comparing the City of Toronto to the suburban cities and their visible minority politicians doesn't take me by surprise

(interview with Rose Lee)

While the City of Toronto had a 1996-2001 growth rate of 4 percent, Richmond Hill grew by 29.8 percent, Brampton by 21.3 percent, Markham by 20.3 percent and Mississauga by 12.6 percent. What is even more remarkable is the nature of this growth.

Increasingly, more and more immigrants are choosing to settle in the Region of Peel instead of in the City of Toronto. In 1998, for example, 82.4 percent of new immigrants to the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton (GTAH) settled in the City of Toronto, while 9.7 percent chose to settle in Peel. By 2003, however, 20.9 percent, or one fifth, of all new immigrants to the area were deciding to make Peel Region their home, a more than twofold increase, while 63.7 percent chose Toronto, a decrease of almost one quarter.¹⁷ According to the Social Planning Council of Peel, 62.6 percent of Peel Region's 1996-2001 population growth can be attributed to immigration, which has led to an increase in both the foreign-born and racial minority populations of Mississauga and Brampton. The largest immigrant source country for both Mississauga and Brampton is India. As of 2001, more than one-tenth of Mississauga's immigrant population (11.7%) and almost one in every four immigrants in Brampton (23.8%) were from India¹⁸. These influxes, combined with the Canadian-born birth rates of these communities, have led to a 60.3 percent increase in the size of Peel's South Asian populations between 1996 and 2001, by far the fastest growth rate of any of Peel's large racial minority populations. The increased size of Peel's racial minority and newcomer

¹⁷ These statistics provided by Peel Planning Policy and Research Division

¹⁸ It is important to note that these figures do not include those immigrants of Indian-origin who arrived as citizens of other countries, such as the United Kingdom (the second largest immigrant source country for Brampton), as well as numerous East African and Caribbean nations.

communities, and especially the fast-paced growth of Peel's South Asian communities, is one variable in Peel's higher rates of minority representation.

8.a.ii. Higher Rates of Racial Minority Affluence

In strong contrast to the City of Toronto, is the relative affluence of Mississauga's and Brampton's racial minority communities. In his 2000 report, Michael Ornstein served the City of Toronto a rude awakening when he exposed deep economic divisions within the city along ethno-racial lines using data from the 1996 Census: "In education, employment and income, the Census data reveal pervasive inequality among ethno-racial groups in Metropolitan Toronto" (p.122). Although Ornstein acknowledges that there are exceptions to ethnoracial disadvantage (Toronto's Japanese population, for example, are one of the most affluent populations in the city), his data is evidence to a disturbing trend of poverty drawn along racial lines in Toronto. For example, family rates of poverty for British-, Jewish-, and Italian-origin families¹⁹ stood at 11.4 percent, 12.1 percent, and 16.1 percent respectively. These rates are more than 50 percent less than the incidences of family poverty within the Indian community (28.7 percent) and the Chinese community (29.4 percent), two of Toronto's largest racial minority populations, and are embarrassingly polarized in comparison to the Ghanaian, Afghan, Ethiopian, and Somali communities who have the highest rates of family poverty in Toronto at 87.3 percent, 78.4 percent, 69.7 percent, and 62.7 percent respectively. Likewise, the British-, Jewish-, and Italian-origin communities experience lower rates of unemployment (6.9 percent, 7.1 percent, and 8.7 percent) and higher levels of average income (\$32,500, \$32,500, and \$26,400) than the Indian community (15.1 percent unemployment, \$22,000 average

¹⁹ according to Siemiatycki and Saloojee (2003) these three ethno-racial groups experienced overrepresentation on Toronto's political bodies.

income) and the Chinese community (11.7 percent unemployment, \$22,300 average income). These levels of economic disadvantage cannot be ignored as a factor in the underrepresentation of communities in political office.

In a participatory democracy such as Canada, socioeconomic status is often considered to be one of the key variables to political participation (Croucher, 2002; Junn, 1999; Mesch, 2002; Saloojee, 2004; Siemiatycki and Saloojee, 2002). With high campaign costs, it is next to impossible for those with lower income status to mobilize the necessary funds to run for political office. Furthermore, with voting participation closely linked to home ownership, higher rates of poverty will inevitably negatively affect a community's mobilization and hinder their numbers at the polls.

Although there is no data available for Peel Region that is as extensive as the Ornstein Report, there is nonetheless evidence to attest to the higher socioeconomic status of Mississauga's and Brampton's minority communities. Peel Region's demographics have shifted dramatically as increasingly more immigrants choose to settle in this region instead of elsewhere in the GTA – one in five immigrants to the GTA now choose to settle in Peel Region. This has led to the establishment of numerous 'ethnic neighbourhoods' like those that are abundant in the City of Toronto. The major difference, according to the Peel Planning Policy and Research Division (2004) is that "[m]ost new ethnic neighbourhoods in Peel encompass owner occupied houses of middle class origin," (p.3) and that "the employment income distribution between immigrants and non-immigrants in Peel is similar" (p.4). Although Peel's Planning Policy and Research Division is concerned with growing income gaps between recent immigrants and non-immigrants, generally speaking, the socioeconomic disadvantage that burdens so many

ethno-racial groups in the City of Toronto does not exist in Peel Region, which provides for socially mobile communities more readily able to access a political system that so often associates political success with the accumulation of wealth.

8.a.iii. Lower Incumbency Factor – Federally and Provincially

One of the most daunting variables for ‘new faces’ in the political system is the incumbency factor. In their study of the 1988 Federal Elections, Stasiulis and Abu-Laban (1991) discover that “there is a strong belief that it is better to field an incumbent who has a proven electoral appeal than to field an unknown and unproven candidate” (p.64).

Thus, when parties, such as the federal Liberals, enjoy a period of longstanding success in a given region, ‘new faces’ are blocked from entering the political arena as incumbents are repeatedly returned to office. Khalid Sagheer, the Federal Liberal Riding Association President for Mississauga-Streetsville spoke to the effects of the incumbency factor during the last Federal election:

This “shunning” [of running] against incumbents is a normal phenomenon. If somebody is there, a Member of Parliament, or an MPP, or a Councillor, and they have done a half decent job, people generally don’t want change. There is a complacency . . . So yes, it is an obstacle, but it’s sort of a natural obstacle. Even if the party opens the nomination process and if the MP is a popular MP, I don’t think, unless something drastic happens, that [the challenger] will have all kinds of votes. It would be very difficult to remove, or get rid of, the incumbent. The incumbent factor is a very important factor.

(interview with Khalid Sagheer)

At the federal and provincial levels where political parties are involved, rarely are incumbents challenged in the nomination races for the subsequent election, leaving ‘new faces’ hopeful for party sweeps or the retirement of an incumbent. However, the rapid growth of Peel Region over the last few decades has led not only to a constant reshuffling of federal electoral districts, but also to the addition of brand new ridings, making incumbent footholds far less rooted than they are in the City of Toronto. In Peel Region,

the incumbency rate (the number of times a politician is elected to office) at the federal level is on average three. In the City of Toronto, the federal incumbency rate is slightly higher at 3.35 terms. However, in the City's most demographically diverse area, the former city of Scarborough, the incumbency factor across its six federal ridings stands at 4.3 terms²⁰. With a racial minority population of 59.99 percent, Scarborough's six MPs are all Caucasian.

According to Elections Canada:

[r]epresentation in the House of Commons is readjusted after each decennial (10-year) census to reflect changes and movements in Canada's population, in accordance with the *Constitution Act, 1867*, and the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*.

(Elections Canada)

As previously mentioned, Peel Region held eight Federal ridings during the last General Election of 2004²¹ – a far cry from the three Federal ridings that existed in Peel Region in 1980 – Brampton-Georgetown, Mississauga North, and Mississauga South. In 1988 two additional ridings were added to Peel Region for a total of five, which were then redistributed in 1993. It was then, during the 35th General Election, that Brian Mulroney's Conservative government was officially swept out of office and five Liberals came into power in Brampton and Mississauga (although Liberal Albina Guarnieri was a returning incumbent in Mississauga East from her 1988 victory). All five Liberal candidates who were victorious in 1993 still hold their seats today: Carolyn Parrish, Paul Szabo, Albina Guarnieri, Colleen Beaumier, and the first Sikh to enter the House of Commons, Gurbax Malhi.

²⁰ the six Federal Ridings are: Pickering-Scarborough East, Scarborough-Agincourt, Scarborough Centre, Scarborough-Guildwood, Scarborough-Rouge River, and Scarborough Southwest

²¹ these Federal Ridings are: Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Brampton-Springdale, Brampton West, Mississauga-Brampton South, Mississauga East-Cooksville, Mississauga-Erindale, Mississauga South, and Mississauga-Streetsville.

In 1997, two additional districts were contested for the first time – Brampton Centre and Mississauga Centre – which brought Peel’s riding total to seven. While Mississauga West incumbent Carolyn Parrish shifted to Mississauga Centre and Brampton incumbent Colleen Beaumier shifted to Brampton West, two new Liberal candidates were able to enter into office: Syrian-born Brampton Centre MP Sarkis Assadourian and Mississauga West MP Steve Mahoney.

The 37th General Elections in 2000 brought with it no change, as Chretien’s Liberals maintained their stronghold in Peel region and no ridings were added or readjusted. As expected, no nominations were contested against the incumbents and no new faces entered the 37th Parliament from Peel Region.

Four years later, under the leadership of Paul Martin, eight ridings were contested in Peel Region – only two of which remained the same from 2000. Five other ridings were readjusted and one additional riding was added following the release of the 2001 Census data. While MP Paul Szabo and MP Colleen Beaumier ran and were reelected to their respective ridings, Mississauga Centre MP Carolyn Parrish ran and won in the newly-formed Mississauga-Erindale, MP Albina Guarnieri shifted to Mississauga East-Cooksville and won, and MP Gurbax Malhi maintained his seat in the readjusted riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton²². Three ridings, Brampton-Springdale, Mississauga-Brampton South, and Mississauga-Streetsville were not contested by incumbents and were open to new candidates. It was in these three ridings that three of Peel’s four racial minority MPs entered into the House of Commons – MP Ruby Dhalla, MP Navdeep

²² The other two Liberal MP incumbents, Mississauga West MP Steve Mahoney and Brampton Centre MP Sarkis Assadourian, did not reenter office. Mahoney unsuccessfully ran against Carolyn Parrish for the candidacy of Mississauga-Erindale, while Assadourian, considered by many to be a Chretien loyalist, did not run under Paul Martin’s Liberals.

Bains, and MP Wajid Khan. The shifting nature of Peel's Federal riding structure that has continually seen boundaries readjusted and incumbents shifted, has allowed numerous racial minority politicians to bypass the incumbency factor that so often obstructs minority access to political office.

While Peel Region's exponential growth over the last few decades has resulted in shifting and expanding federal ridings, the same cannot be said for the City of Toronto, where in the last 25 years only one new Federal riding has been added. In the 1980 General Elections, 22 ridings were contested in the cities of Toronto, York, East York, Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke. 24 years later in the 38th General Elections, 23 were contested in the amalgamated City of Toronto – an increase of one riding. Although riding boundaries were often readjusted, this did not occur simultaneously with riding expansion, therefore making new candidates more reliant upon party sweeps and incumbent retirement. In the last General Election, the City of Toronto only elected four new candidates: Toronto-Danforth MP Jack Layton, Etobicoke Centre MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj, York Centre MP Ken Dryden, and Don Valley East MP Yasmin Ratansi. Interestingly enough, Ms. Ratansi, one of only two racial minority MPs in Toronto, did not have to run against an incumbent, once again highlighting how racial minorities can succeed when not hindered by the incumbency factor. The variables at the provincial level are similar, although somewhat unique.

Stasiulis and Abu-Laban (1991) concluded that there seems to be a “greater degree of acceptance to minority liaison structures and/or affirmative action at the provincial (Ontario) level of party organization in comparison with the national level of party organization” (p.41). This level of acceptance at the provincial level may be a

partial cause of a higher rate of representation at the provincial level. If we combine the total seats from the three cities in Table 1, Brampton, Mississauga, and Toronto, the following table can be produced (see Table 3):

Table 3: Rates of Racial Minority Representation on Three Levels of Government

	Provincial	Federal	Municipal
# of racial minorities	6/29 (20.7%)	6/31 (19.4%)	6/66 (11.1%)
% of racial minorities in population	42.1%	42.1%	42.1%
Rate of representation	49.2%	46.1%	26.4%

With a combined total of 29 seats, the provincial level of government is the only level that has almost reached the halfway mark to proportional representation. It seems that the higher level of acceptance mentioned by Stasiulis and Abu-Laban may have created a political opportunity structure which has allowed minority candidates to benefit from the party sweeps so often associated with the provincial level of government. This historical pattern has typically favoured South Asian politicians. The first South Asian Canadian to enter the Ontario Legislative Assembly was an Ismaili, Murad Velshi, who won his riding during the 1987 sweep in of David Peterson's Liberals. Twelve years later, during the re-election wave of Mike Harris' Conservatives in 1999, the first Sikh entered the OLA, Raminder Gill, in the Peel riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Four years later, when McGuinty's Liberals swept Harris' Tories out of office, most notably in Peel where Liberal candidates defeated all seven Conservative incumbents, three new South Asian faces entered office (along with Etobicoke North's Shafiq Qaadri).

The shifting of electoral districts during the last wave of elections dramatically affected rates of racial minority political representation at the federal level. It will be of great interest to observe how electoral district redistribution will affect the next round of

provincial elections when provincial ridings are brought in line with federal boundaries in 2007. It is worth mentioning that the first Sikh to enter the Ontario Legislative Assembly, Conservative Raminder Gill, did so in 1999 in the newly created riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale where no incumbent was fielded. If this trend continues, then there is a strong chance that an additional racial minority politician, most likely a South Asian, could enter the OLA in the newly-created riding of Brampton-Springdale, which boasts a large South Asian constituency.

8.a.iv. 'Colour Coding' of Federal Electoral Districts

Another interesting pattern that has developed at the federal level in Peel Region is what seems to be the 'colour coding' of electoral districts – the division of ridings into 'ethnic ridings' and 'non-ethnic ridings.' In the federal ridings of Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Brampton-Mississauga South, Brampton-Springdale, and Mississauga-Streetsville, four racial minority Liberal candidates defeated four racial minority Conservative candidates,²³ while in the ridings of Brampton West, Mississauga East-Cooksville, Mississauga-Erindale, Mississauga South, and Mississauga-Streetsville four Caucasian Liberal candidates defeated four Caucasian Conservative candidates²⁴. Although this division may simply be an anomaly (it is the first time such a pattern has emerged in Peel), it is nonetheless worth mentioning. The running of South Asian candidates in Peel Region seems to be largely connected to the location of Peel's South Asian populations. In the three federal ridings with the highest percentage of South Asians, the two major

²³ Liberal MP Gurbax Singh Malhi defeated Conservative candidate Raminder Gill, Liberal MP Navdeep Bains defeated Conservative candidate Parvinder Sandhu, Liberal MP Ruby Dhalla defeated Conservative candidate Sam Hundal, and Liberal MP Wajid Khan defeated Conservative candidate Nina Tangri.

²⁴ Liberal MP Colleen Beaumier defeated Conservative candidate Tony Clement, Liberal MP Albina Guarnieri defeated Conservative candidate Riina DeFaria, Liberal MP Carolyn Parrish defeated Conservative candidate Bob Dechert, and Liberal MP Paul Szabo defeated Conservative Phil Green.

parties both fielded South Asian candidates, perhaps with the intention of neutralizing the ‘ethnic vote’ that could favour a sole racial minority candidate. Even in the riding of Mississauga-Streetsville, which has the second lowest ratio of South Asians in Peel, two candidates of South Asian descent were fielded against each other. Although this strategy guarantees the inclusion of racial minority representatives in half of Peel’s federal electoral districts regardless of which political party emerges victorious, the concern is that this technique may result in the ‘ghettoization’ of ridings through ‘colour coding,’ which would ultimately diminish the capacity of racial minority representation in a multicultural society. It is important that minority candidates are not only run in ridings dominated by one racial or ethnic community for it “would provide evidence to an increased openness of political parties to the participation and involvement of all groups, regardless of race and ethnicity”(Stasiulis and Abu-Laban, 1991, p.72). The Canadian system has already proven that white faces can represent and speak for a diverse range of communities – such is the case of Liberal MP Derek Lee who defeated four racial minority candidates in his 1988 bid to represent Scarborough-Rouge River, Toronto’s most multicultural federal district. Lee’s riding has the highest proportional racial minority population in Toronto, 84.6 percent, and boasts large South Asian, Chinese, and Black populations. In fact, Toronto’s five most diverse Federal ridings²⁵ all have Caucasian MPs as their representatives. This trend of representation that transcends race led Conservative MP Michael Chong to comment in his monthly column:

Too often we talk about that which makes us different from each other, and not about what we have in common . . . I represent the riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, a riding over 97% Caucasian, and it elected an M.P. with the last name of Chong. Markham-Unionville, a riding over

²⁵ Scarborough-Rouge River, Scarborough-Agincourt, Etobicoke North, York West, and Scarborough-Guildwood.

60% Asian, elected an M.P. with the last name of McCallum. That's my idea of Canada.

(Michael Chong November 2004)

This is perhaps the multicultural vision that many have of Canada, but it is unfortunately not yet a reality. If we examine the five least diverse federal ridings in Toronto, we discover that it is the Anglo-politician, with the sole exception of Etobicoke-Lakeshore MP Jean Augustine, a Black woman, who is seen as a 'universal' representative. It seems that Caucasians have earned the right to represent all types of ridings, while racial minorities, with rare exception, are still faced with 'ghettoization' as representatives of ridings dominated by a single minority community, as is the case with three of Peel's four South Asian MPs. This ghettoizing, combined with "a political culture that places great status on venerable constituencies in the heart of the city," (Siemiatycki and Matheson, 2005, p.71) has led to a more favourable federal level political opportunity structure in Peel as opposed to the City of Toronto.

It has been explained that the spatial concentration of Peel's minority communities, the relative affluence of these same populations, the weaker incumbency factor and the possible division of electoral districts into 'ethnic' and 'non-ethnic' ridings helped contribute to the relative success of racial minority politicians in Peel Region during the last federal election.

8.b. South Asian Successes

Aside from the noticeable concentration of racial minority political gains in the suburbs is the concentration of these gains within South Asian communities. A statistical

breakdown of the racial characteristics of the 18 racial minority politicians in the three cities of study reveals that more than half are of South Asian origin (see Table 4).

Table 4: Racial Characteristics of Racial Minority Politicians in the GTA

	South Asian	Black	East Asian	Total
Brampton	4	1	0	5
Mississauga	3	0	0	3
Toronto	3	4	3	10
Total	10	5	3	18

Why have politicians of South Asian origin succeeded in accessing the political opportunity structure to the point of proportional representation while so many other racial minority communities have failed? Factors such as residential patterns, socioeconomic status, language ability, ethnic social capital, and community mobilization in the face of societal discrimination have all heavily influenced the representation rates of South Asians.

8.b.i. Spatial Concentration

Most of those interviewed believe the size of the South Asian community in Peel Region played a large role in the electoral gains of South Asian politicians. Liberal MPP

Harinder Takhar speaks about the effects of a large community on the electoral process:

Peel Region has afforded opportunities to ethnic minorities, there's no question about that. And I think the reason for that is that more ethnic communities have moved to Peel Region and they have moved to certain areas. Because they have moved into certain areas, it definitely gives you more power and more clout in the nomination process. That's what the community has been able to do. If you go to Brampton, you must have talked to Kuldip Kular, and in certain areas of Malton it's all South Asian community. It gives you clout.

(interview with Harinder Takhar)

The spatial concentration of specific ethnic minority groups in certain geographical areas increases the likelihood that an ‘ethnic’ politician will emerge victorious due to increased support from the community, and also a more likely chance that a political party will run a minority candidate. Such is the case with the Italian community in the Vaughan area, where Italian representatives can be found at all three levels of government. The concentration of South Asian communities in Peel Region has drastically increased over the course of the last few decades, which MPP Vic Dhillon believes, partially explains the increase in the representation of South Asian politicians: “there’s a huge influx of South Asian people in Peel. So these are the people that vote you and get [you] nominated and eventually you get elected” (interview with Vic Dhillon).

Unlike in the City of Toronto where numerous ethnic and racial minority groups live in similar concentrations, South Asians are by far the largest racial minority group in Peel Region. For example, the three largest racial minority communities in the City of Toronto comprise relatively similar percentages of the total population: the Chinese stand at 10.6 percent, South Asians at 10.3 percent, and Blacks at 8.3 percent. In Mississauga, on the other hand, South Asians are a considerably larger portion of the overall population, 14.9 percent, and are significantly larger than the Black communities and Chinese communities, who stand at 6.2 percent and 5.9 percent respectively. In Brampton, these patterns are even more noticeable, with South Asians accounting for almost one in every five residents (19.5 percent). Blacks and Filipinos, Brampton’s second and third largest racial minority communities, comprise only 9.9 percent and 2.1 percent respectively. The presence of one large community, rather than a number of diverse communities of similar size, increases the likelihood that a party will run a

minority candidate and also increases the likelihood that someone will be able to vote in a member of their own community.

Whereas South Asians comprise approximately 28 percent of the Greater Toronto Area's racial minority population, they account for 41 percent of the racial minority population in Peel Region. Even more concentrated is Brampton's Punjabi-Sikh population, which has earned the city the labels of "Singhdale" (a play on the northern Brampton community of Springdale) and "Browntown" (Yelaja and Keung, 2005). Of the seven South Asian politicians elected to federal and provincial office in Peel Region, four are from India, one is from Pakistan, and two are Canadian-born. Six identify themselves as Sikh, while one identifies himself as Muslim. All seven speak Punjabi. It is the residential concentration of the Sikh community, not necessarily the South Asian community as a whole, which seems to have affected the higher rate of representation in Brampton. Punjabi is the second most widely spoken mother tongue in the City of Brampton and Sikh is the second most common religion. In certain areas of Brampton, such as Gore, Sikh is in fact the most commonly practiced religion, outpacing even Catholicism – Canada's largest religion. With the release of the 2006 Census, it can be expected that this trend will appear in even more areas of Brampton, such as the communities of Springdale and Castlemore. According to the 2001 Census there are 90,590 Sikhs living in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 64 percent of whom live in Peel, and 38 percent who reside in Brampton specifically. The intersections of the residential concentration of Peel's Sikh community, combined with additional socio-economic attributes, seem to favour the Sikh community in Canada's political opportunity structure.

8.b.ii. Acculturation/Socioeconomic Variables

Traditional socioeconomic factors help explain the increased rates of South Asian political representation in Peel Region. Peel's South Asian communities, and specifically Canadian-Sikhs, are one of the most affluent racial minority communities in Canada, which, as previously mentioned, allows for a greater likelihood that candidates will be able to afford higher campaign costs. The Sikh community have displayed their social mobility within most segments of Canadian society. In addition, knowledge of the English language and familiarity with democratic processes also tend to be higher among newcomers from India than from other countries without British Colonial pasts,²⁶ making any necessary transitions into the Canadian political system easier. This familiarity also helps explain why, according to Livianna Tossutti's (2005) analysis of the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, foreign-born South Asians are more likely to vote than their Chinese counterparts.

8.b.iii. Ethnic Social Capital

Another factor may be increased community mobilization as a result of two factors: ethnic social capital and mainstream discrimination. Sergio Marchi, a former organizer for Jean Chrétien and former MP from 1984-1988, suggests that Sikhs have a strong organizational culture because of their dense community networks centred around temples and religious and political groups (in Stasiulis and Abu-Laban, 1991).

Many academics have pointed to the importance of ethnic organizations as a means by which individuals can increase their social capital and social trust and convert this social capital into political capital (Fennema and Tillie, 1999; van Heesum, 2002;

²⁶ Familiarity with the English language and knowledge of democratic processes also most likely plays a role in the higher presence of Black politicians with Caribbean origins than those of African origin.

Tillie, 2004; Berger *et al*, 2004). The ethnic social capital theory arose from the findings that there was a rank correlation between the density of ethnic civic communities and the levels of political participation and political trust in local, non-ethnic political institutions. Turkish immigrants in Amsterdam, who have the most extensively networked civic community in the city, also display the highest rates of formal and informal political participation, political trust, and political interest in the host society. At the opposite end of the spectrum stand the Antilleans, whose loosely structured civic community results in low levels of participation, trust, and interest. Fennema and Tillie's theory has served as the point of comparison for numerous studies that have followed. In their respective studies of immigrant communities in Amsterdam, van Heesum (2002) and Tillie (2004) also support the ethnic social capital theory, while Odmalm (2004) also found truth in this theory when applied to the Swedish context. Although a more in depth analysis of Sikh civil society would be necessary to discover if this does in fact apply to Peel's Sikh community, there is no doubt that Sikh civil society in Brampton, and also Mississauga, is highly developed with a plethora of Gurdwaras (there are more than half a dozen in the two cities), thriving Sikh community, political, and business organizations, multiple Sikh cultural centres (the Can-Sikh Cultural Centre in Brampton for example), as well as health centres, seniors associations, and outlet malls all serving the Punjabi community specifically. This dense network of community-specific organizations, services, and temples, provides great opportunities for community networking and mobilization. The ethnic social capital theory, however, is not met with as much success when applied to other international centres.

Two different Belgian studies, Jacobs *et al* (2002) and Jacobs *et al* (2004), both conclude that the social capital found in ethnic organizations is not the main variable in determining political participation among Moroccans and Turks in Brussels. Although the Turkish community has a much more densely networked civic community, it is the Moroccans who have higher rates of political participation. In the latter study, Jacobs *et al* (2004), point to language as the decisive factor. The fact that Moroccans have a stronger command of French, one of Belgium's political languages, allows them to access the political system easier than the Turks. This is also, as previously mentioned, a factor in the higher rates of political participation of Indian-origin Canadians who have much higher rates of English language proficiency than, say, Chinese-Canadians as well as a greater familiarity with democratic processes from their country of origin.

8.b.iv. 'Terrorists'

Finally, political events outside of Canada may have had an effect on the social identity of South Asians, which resulted in a greater incentive to involve themselves in the political process. When asked about the increased representation of South Asians, Khalid Sagheer spoke to the case of the Muslims:

There have been political reasons for that. 9/11 for example. That got a lot of people saying, hey, we have to get involved or else. Those events have caused many people to think politically.

(interview with Khalid Sagheer)

Faced with the label of 'terrorists,' many Muslims found themselves at the centre of Canadian politics against their will. During the 2004 elections, less than three years after the attacks in New York, ten Muslim candidates ran for political office and three were elected. This dramatic increase in political participation, including increased rates of voter turnout according to the authors, led Hamdani *et al* (2005) to conclude that "[t]he

single greatest motivation for increased Muslim political activism seems to be September 11th, the ensuing anti-terrorism legislation and the “war on terrorism” (p.28). Canada’s Sikh community found themselves in a similar situation some twenty years earlier.

In 1984, the Golden Temple of Amristsar was stormed under the orders of Indira Gandhi, who was later assassinated, and led to later retaliatory measures against Sikhs. The Khalistan movement, a militant movement pushing for the independence of the state of Punjab, gained momentum and coupled with the Air India bombing in 1985, led to the stereotyping of Sikhs as ‘terrorists’ and an onslaught of racial profiling by Canadian authorities of Sikh refugee claimants. Realizing that their civil rights needed to be protected in Canada:

Canada’s Sikh community went into crisis management mode, and began working in earnest to show the Canadian public that they were not only law-abiding citizens, but model Canadians as well. Renowned Sikh lawyer, T. Sher Singh from Ontario, attributes the political successes of today’s Canadian Sikhs to this struggle to shed the stereotype

(Ali Khan, 1999)

It is perhaps then fitting that the history of South Asian Canadians in legislatures and parliament began shortly thereafter with Manmohan Sihota becoming the first Indo-Canadian elected to the British Columbia Legislative Assembly in 1986. His victory was followed by Ismaili Murad Velshi in 1987 and Gulzar Cheema in 1988, who became the first South Asians to enter the Ontario and Manitoba Legislative Assemblies respectively. Interestingly enough, although other racial minority groups began to enter political office earlier, such as Chinese-Canadian MP Doug Jung in 1957 and Canada’s first Black MP Lincoln Alexander in 1968, it has been Canada’s South Asian populations who, although not entering the House of Commons for the first time until 1993, have been most

successful in building on earlier successes and reaching proportional representation. It is perhaps then fitting that three South Asians entered the House of Commons together and their numbers have steadily increased from three in 1993, to five in 1997 and 2000, and to ten in the most recent round of elections in 2004. Community mobilization in the face of pending societal exclusion may have led to the increased political participation of Canada's Sikh community.

8.c. Municipal Lag

The third and final pattern of racial minority political representation in the GTA is municipal lag. Local government is often considered to be the closest level of government to the people and this proximity is traditionally seen as an advantage to racial minority and newcomer communities. With no political party structure to interfere with nomination processes, considerably lower campaign costs, and smaller municipal wards that tend to favour a community's voting clout, it should then follow that newcomers and racial minorities so often disadvantaged at the federal and provincial levels have an easier time ascending into municipal office. If municipal government is generally more accessible and representative than other levels of government (Stasiulis, 1997; Simard, 2000; Siemiatycki and Saloojee, 2002), then why are the municipal councils of Toronto's surrounding suburbs still sites of severe Anglo overrepresentation and racial minority exclusion?

8.c.i. Reputation Crisis

First and foremost seems to be municipal government's inability to inspire. Of those interviewed, most dismissed local governance as a career decision and admitted that they never even considered running for municipal office. Graham, Phillips, and Maslove (1998) blame urban governance's "property manager" reputation as its undoing:

urban governance is seen to be property manager. There is seen to be little scope for other kinds of issues, no need for fundamental debates about quality of life, and minimal interest by citizens, as long as things work reasonably well.

(p. 93)

In spite of the impact that municipal policies may have on the urban landscape, provincial and federal levels of government may be more in line with the political aspirations of politicians, such as MP Navdeep Bains, who have "always viewed politics at a very macro level in terms of going forward" (interview with Navdeep Bains). The narrowly-focused mandate of local government to serve a specific urban centre, may deter racial minorities and newcomers, as well as society as a whole, from participating. However, if we compare the rates of representation of those in elected office with those who ran for elected office, a new pattern emerges (see Table 5):

Table 5: South Asian Elected Officials and Candidates in Peel Region

	Elected Officials	Candidates*	% of successful candidates
Municipal	0/21	34/107	0%
Provincial	3/7	7/38	42.9%
Federal	4/8	12/42	33.3%

In spite of the fact that no South Asians currently sit on Brampton or Mississauga City Council, proportionally more ran for municipal office than any other level of government.

* totals include elected official totals.

With 34 candidates, South Asians comprised 31.8 percent of all municipal candidates, higher than both the federal level (28.6 percent) and provincial level (18.4 percent). This new pattern brings into question some previous assumptions and shows that municipal government has in fact garnered the attention of Peel's South Asian community. The question here then becomes not an issue of 'image', but an issue of access. Why have South Asians been unable to convert their candidacy numbers into elected seats at the municipal level?

8.c.ii. Incumbency Factor

The most daunting variable facing minority candidates at the municipal level is the incumbency factor. Unlike the federal level where constantly shifting electoral districts have weakened the incumbency factor, or the provincial level where party sweeps have repeatedly removed incumbents from office, municipal councillors are comfortably insulated by the incumbency factor. Garnett Manning, the only racial minority on Brampton or Mississauga City Council, speaks to how not facing an incumbent helped his bid for municipal office:

The average councillor in Brampton right now is about five terms . . . and it's very hard to get these guys out . . . So when they changed the wards, John Sprovieri [the incumbent] moved up to run as a Regional Councillor and left the local area void . . . So that was really one of the fortunate things.

(interview with Garnett Manning)

The incumbency factor on Brampton City Council stands at 5.09 terms – marginally lower than Mississauga's 5.1 terms. These figures are in strong contrast to the federal and provincial levels, which have incumbency factors of three terms and one term respectively. It becomes even more difficult to oust an incumbent when voting turn out is taken into consideration.

While many lament the plummeting voter turnout rates at the federal level, which hit an all time low of 60.9 percent in 2004, municipal elections are struggling to reach the 25 percent mark. After the last round of elections, the voting rates in Brampton stood at 54.8 percent federally, 50.4 percent provincially, and 24.2 percent municipally. The lower voter turnout rate and society's general lack of interest in the municipal structure, tends to distance local government from the people and secures the place of incumbents in office. The high return rate of municipal councillors delays the ascension of 'new faces', including racial minorities and newcomers, into political office in Brampton and Mississauga.

8.c.iii. Community Division

A further issue at the municipal level seems to be community division. Of the 34 South Asian candidates who ran for municipal office in 2003, 18 campaigned in Brampton, while 16 campaigned in Mississauga. Of the 16 candidates in Mississauga, ten ran against each other in the battle for Ward 5 office (in which Pearson International Airport is situated), all losing to eventual winner Eve Adams. MPP Vic Dhillon argued that there "was a lot of infighting, vote division – so many candidates from the South Asian community run and they divide the vote, where one person on the other side sweeps" (interview with Vic Dhillon). A second example of this was the race for Brampton City Councillor Wards 9 and 10, eventually won by Garnett Manning. Of the seven candidates who ran for office, five were South Asian. Vicky Dhillon, who finished in second to Manning, lost by a total of 47 votes and, according to MPP Vic Dhillon, could have won had other South Asians not run against him and divided community clout.

Peel Region's municipal government could dramatically change in the years to come. With higher rates of South Asian candidates, it may be only a matter of time before their numbers begin to convert into electoral victories. The expansion of Peel Regional Council by the provincial Liberal government in 2005, which will create an additional three seats on Regional Council, may aid the cause of racial minority candidates. In addition, the aging demographics of numerous Brampton and Mississauga councillors will most likely result in a number of retirements in the near future add an additional opportunity for racial minority candidates to bypass the incumbency factor. Although Peel's municipal government is currently the site of extreme racial minority underrepresentation, many constellations are aligning that may finally eradicate the issue of municipal lag within the next round or two of elections.

9. Conclusion

This study has focused on the success of Canada's South Asian communities accessing political office in the suburban cities of Brampton and Mississauga. The more favourable suburban political opportunity structures, a result of minority residential patterns and affluence, lower incumbency factors, and colour-coded federal electoral districts, have enabled Peel's South Asian communities to become one of the few minority communities in Canada to achieve proportional representation.

In spite of these recent successes, and all the variables that led to their increased rates of representation in the Canadian political system, it cannot be forgotten that the general picture of racial minority political representation in Canada is bleak. Across the nation,

and in the House of Commons, the most prevalent trend is that of minority underrepresentation. As our country continues to diversify, it becomes more and more crucial to ensure that our elected political bodies diversify alongside them. The governance of one of the most diverse countries in the world by predominantly homogenous political bodies runs counter to the Multiculturalism Act of Canada, which calls for the equality of all Canadians in all aspects of society, whether it be economic, social, cultural or *political*. Canada still has a long way to go before the vision set out in the Act is realized, although the suburbs, at least in the case of the Greater Toronto Area, seem to be the trailblazers in promoting greater levels of inclusion into the Canadian political system. Far from demanding Anglo-conformity, Brampton and Mississauga have emerged from the suburban stereotype and have become rare sites of racial minority proportional representation in Canada.

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Appendix A

Brampton & Mississauga – Federal (8)

Riding	Member	Race	Country of Origin	Add'tl. Identity Markers	Elected
Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Gurbax Malhi (Lib)	South Asian	India	Sikh-Punjabi	4x. (1993)
Brampton-Springdale	Ruby Dhallal (Lib)	South Asian	Canada	Sikh-Punjabi	1x. (2004)
Brampton West	Colleen Beaumier (Lib)	Caucasian	Canada	French Name	4x. (1993)
Mississauga-Brampton South	Navdeep Bains (Lib)	South Asian	Canada	Sikh-Punjabi	1x. (2004)
Mississauga East-Cooksville	Albina Guarnieri (Lib)	Caucasian	Italy	Italian	4x. (1993)
Mississauga-Erindale	Carolyn Parrish (Lib)	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	4x. (1993)
Mississauga South	Paul Szabo (Lib)	Caucasian	Canada	Hungarian Name	4x. (1993)
Mississauga-Streetsville	Wajid Khan (Lib)	South Asian	Pakistan	Muslim	1x. (2004)

Brampton & Mississauga – Provincial (7)

Riding	Member	Race	Country of Origin	Add'tl. Identity Markers	Elected
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Kuldip Kular (Lib)	South Asian	India	Sikh-Punjabi	1x. (2003)
Brampton Centre	Linda Jeffrey (Lib)	Caucasian	Ireland	Irish	1x. (2003)
Brampton West-Mississauga	Vic Dhillon (Lib)	South Asian	India	Sikh-Punjabi	1x. (2003)
Mississauga Centre	Harinder Takhar (Lib)	South Asian	India	Sikh-Punjabi	1x. (2003)
Mississauga East	Peter Fonseca (Lib)	Caucasian	Portugal	Portuguese	1x. (2003)
Mississauga South	Tim Peterson (Lib)	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	1x. (2003)
Mississauga West	Bob Delaney (Lib)	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	1x. (2003)

Brampton – Municipal (11)

Riding	Member	Race	Country of Origin	Add'tl. Identity Markers	Elected
Mayor	Susan Fennell	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	2x. (2000)
Wards 1 & 5 (LC)	Grant Gibson	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	5x. (1991)
Wards 1 & 5 (RC)	Elaine Moore	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	2x. (2000)
Wards 2 & 6 (LC)	John Hutton	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	7x. (1985)
Wards 2 & 6 (RC)	Paul Palleschi	Caucasian	Canada	Italian	7x. (1985)
Wards 3 & 4 (LC)	Bob Callahan	Caucasian	United States	British Name	10x. (1969)
Wards 3 & 4 (RC)	Susan DiMarco	Caucasian	Canada	British	2x. (2000)
Wards 7 & 8 (LC)	Sandra Hames	Caucasian	UK	British	5x. (1991)

Wards 7 & 8 (RC)	Gael Miles	Caucasian	Canada	British	6x. (1988)
Wards 9 & 10 (LC)	Garnett Manning	Black	Jamaica	Jamaican	1x. (2003)
Wards 9 & 10 (RC)	John Sprovieri	Caucasian	Italy	Italian	6x. (1988)

Mississauga – Municipal (10)

Riding	Member	Race	Country of Origin	Add'tl Identity Markers	Elected
Mayor	Hazel McCallion	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	10x. (1978)
Ward 1	Carmen Corbasson	Caucasian	Canada	British	4x. (1994)
Ward 2	Patricia Mullin	Caucasian	Canada	British	6x. (1988)
Ward 3	Maja Prentice	Caucasian	United States	Swedish/British	7x. (1985)
Ward 4	Frank Dale	Caucasian	Canada	British	1x. (2003)
Ward 5	Eve Adams	Caucasian	Canada	British Name	1x. (2003)
Ward 6	George Carlson	Caucasian	Canada	British	1x. (2000)
Ward 7	Nando Iannicca	Caucasian	Canada	Italian	6x. (1988)
Ward 8	Katie Mahoney	Caucasian	UK	British	5x. (1992)
Ward 9	Pat Saito	Caucasian	Northern Ireland	Irish	5x. (1991)