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**Bull's Eye: Deconstructing the Practice of Targeting 'Ethnic Voters' During
Canadian Federal Election Campaigns**

By

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ABSTRACT

On May 2, 2011, the Conservative Party of Canada won its first majority government in decades. Throughout the last decade, the Conservatives have actively targeted 'ethnic voters' in order to achieve electoral victories over the Liberals and become the political voice of 'ethnic voters'. This research study deconstructs the practice of targeting 'ethnic voters' during Canadian federal election campaigns and analyzes the party identification of 'ethnic voters'. The research was executed using a combination of one-on-one key informant interviews and a selective constituency analysis. Some of the questions directing the research study include but are not limited to: Who are 'ethnic voters'? Through what means do Canadian federal political parties court 'ethnic voters'? Does the increased attention paid to 'ethnic voters' translate into substantive representation in the Canadian House of Commons? The findings suggest that the party identification of 'ethnic voter' constituencies has transformed over the last decade in large part due to the courting strategy employed by the Conservative Party.

Keywords: 'ethnic vote', party identification, political integration, Conservative Party of Canada

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Introduction

Immigrant political integration in Canada has received a considerable amount of attention in both Canadian political science and migration studies over the past few decades. The term refers to the expressed interest, involvement and inclusion of immigrants in the political process (Phillips, 2007). The concept has become increasingly salient in Canadian political and migration studies due to the ever-increasing number of immigrant and visible minority Canadians. According to Statistics Canada, in 2006, 19.8 % of Canadians were immigrants while 16.2% of Canadians belonged to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2006, 2010a). Importantly, between 2001 and 2006, the city of Toronto took in 40.4% of all newcomers to Canada; 81.9% of those newcomers belonged to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2010b). The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada, 2010a). Although not all immigrants are members of visible minority groups, the majority of recent immigrants after 1976 are. Over the last three to four decades, Canadian society has been transformed demographically due to its immigration policy and role in facilitating immigration. Today, nearly three-quarters of our most recent immigrants come from Asia, Africa, the Middle-East, and Central and South America and fall largely within the category of visible minorities (Frideres, 2005).

Immigrant and visible minority political integration is often measured through immigrant political behavior and attitudes. Immigrant and visible minority political behaviour may be considered to be the political attitudes and preferences that immigrants and visible minority group members have especially where the demands for government services are impacted, and there is a demand for government action (Phillips, 2007). The topic is of particular relevance

considering that “when an identifiable minority group of citizens is systematically underrepresented by the electoral process, there are potentially damaging consequences for the ability of a Parliament to govern on behalf of all citizens” (Pal & Choudry, 2011, p. 100). Generally, if Canada is to integrate newcomers effectively, it should do so on terms that are nondiscriminatory, and its democratic institutions must be perceived as serving all citizens. These institutions must represent the interests of the newest members of the political community on a basis of equality, anchored in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Pal & Choudry, 2011).

Following economic integration and social integration, academic research into the political integration of immigrants and visible minorities often takes on two distinct forms. First, many researchers – Jerome Black, Myer Siemiatycki, and Christopher G. Anderson – are concerned primarily with the political representation of immigrants and members of visible minority groups within Canadian politics at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. Specifically, Jerome Black is one Canadian researcher who has championed research in this field through his numerous studies concerning visible minority representation in Canadian federal politics over the past few decades. Secondly, ‘ethnic voter’ political participation represents the second pillar of the research within the field of immigrant political integration. At first mention, civic participation may seem unrelated to other types of integration like labour-market integration. However, immersion in community life – including political participation as well as social engagement through school councils, neighbourhood associations, voluntary organizations, and so on – has been shown to result in a variety of positive individual and social benefits (Lochhead, 2005). Comparative analyses of the participation of immigrants in Canadian politics versus Canadian-born citizens have received a great deal of attention over the past few

decades within the fields of political science and migration studies. Academically influential studies have even been conducted comparing different immigrant groups within Canada in terms of their political participation through formal activities such as casting a ballot on election day, writing their local Member of Parliament (MP), and running for political office to more informal types of political participation such as joining politically active community organizations, participating in political protests, and holding other demonstrations aimed at revealing their specific cause through community discourse. The primary focus of this research study will address the notion of the political integration of immigrants and visible minority group members from a less frequently discussed vantage point: how these individuals are courted and targeted by federal political parties and what the increased attention paid to them means in the Canadian body politic.

The purpose of this study is to address two specific aspects of immigrant political participation and representation; namely the targeting of 'ethnic voters' by Canadian federal political parties and 'ethnic voter' party identification within Canadian federal politics. Party identification refers to the idea that some voters have a psychological attachment to and support a particular political party (Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, & Nevitte, 2002). It was generally assumed that the degree of party identification was lower in Canada than in most other countries, but the work of Andre Blais and colleagues (2002) following the 2000 federal election has shown that Canadians have a stronger feeling of attachment to parties than previously thought (Blais et al., 2002). A major aspect of this political identification is the concept of federal political parties targeting and courting 'ethnic voters' during election campaigns. For the purposes of this research study, 'ethnic voters' – a socially constructed grouping – will include immigrants, visible minority Canadians who are not immigrants, and other white 'ethnic' groups with a

strong collective self-definition. At this point it is necessary to acknowledge that the meaning of the terms ethnicity and 'ethnic' in Canadian politics are unstable and have shifted dramatically over time; they once referred to differences between French and Anglo-Canadians; both at one time were considered 'ethnic'. However, the term will not be used in its traditional sense to describe that demographic of Canadian society in this study.

As problematic as the term 'ethnic' is, its usage for this study is essential given that contemporary federal political parties have regularly used it to identify a specific demographic of people. Some of the guiding questions that led to the establishment of this particular topic are as follows: Who are 'ethnic voters'? Through what means do Canadian federal political parties court 'ethnic voters'? Does the increased attention paid to 'ethnic voters' translate into substantive representation in the Canadian House of Commons? Have certain parties been more successful at courting 'ethnic voters'? If so, how has this changed over the last decade? Why did the Conservatives target 'ethnic voters' with such enthusiasm in the most recent federal election?

Immigrant and visible minority political integration at the federal level has been chosen over the provincial and municipal levels for three explicit reasons. First, as previously mentioned, immigrants and visible minority group members represent an ever-increasing percentage of the Canadian population; around 20%. Consequently, this demographic of people is becoming increasingly noteworthy in Canadian federal elections at least in terms of absolute numbers. Secondly, immigration is constitutionally a shared portfolio by the Canadian federal state and Canadian provinces. Nonetheless, immigration remains an important element within the Canadian federation and decisions made regarding immigration are primarily debated and implemented at the federal level; the Canadian federal government remains the driving force

behind Canadian citizenship, immigration, integration, settlement and multiculturalism through its Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) department. Thirdly, the Canadian federal government is also responsible for Canadian foreign affairs meaning that the decisions made by the federal government regarding Canada's relationships with immigrant sending countries remain enormously important for newcomers. In theory, this should cause immigrants – whose transnational ties are more palpable than ever before due to global technological innovations – to be more politically active federally to ensure that their desires regarding the relationship between Canada and their countries of origin remain constructive. One needs only to look at the situation in northern Africa, and Canada's military role in Libya to gain a perspective on how Canadian government choices concerning global affairs are important.

The methodological approaches to this study are twofold. First, one-on-one interviews were completed with key informants including Canadian MPs as well as representatives of ethnic media organizations. Second, a selective constituency analysis was conducted using 20 ridings with the highest concentration of immigrants in Canada. A total of 17 of the 20 ridings are in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), while three others are located in the Greater Vancouver Area (GVA). Findings from both approaches will be discussed in detail in later sections. This major research paper will contain four central arguments regarding the courting of the 'ethnic vote' at the federal level. First, the calculated and methodological approach to courting the 'ethnic vote' on the part of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) over the last decade was ultimately tremendously successful and the results represent a major alteration in the choices of 'ethnic voter' constituencies at the federal level. However, the phenomenon of courting the 'ethnic vote' is nothing new; rather, the candor with which the activity is carried out is. Secondly, the 'ethnic vote' – so comprehensively courted by the CPC in the run-up to the May 2, 2011 election –

extensively contributed to securing the CPC its first majority government in decades. Thirdly, although immigrants and visible minority Canadians are occupying an increasingly influential place in the Canadian body politic, the increased attention paid to 'ethnic voters' has not yet translated into improved policies for these groups, and there is no indication that this will change in the near future. Finally, the transformation in voting identification of 'ethnic voters' over the last decade is really a combination of Liberal Party ineptitude – the infamous sponsorship scandal and attempts at forming coalition governments while in opposition – and Conservative Party courting. It is evident that the Conservative Party became aware that the Liberal Party was losing ground overall and in these influential communities in particular, and amplified their efforts accordingly.

Theoretical Frameworks

There are two important theoretical frameworks that will be utilized for the purposes of analyzing how Canadian federal parties court the so-called 'ethnic vote'. First, Rita Dhamoon's (2009) theory concerning the construction of difference politics will be employed. Her detailed analysis brings into view the complex interactive processes of "meaning-making that produce representations of immigrants as strange and strangers", and how those representations also constitute the receiving nation as generous (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 69). This dual process of identity formation produces and reproduces differences between 'them' – the other – and 'us' – the normal, legitimate citizen (Dhamoon, 2009). As Dhamoon suggests, "because foreignness is deemed to be outside the nation (even when it is exoticized within the nation), it threatens the nation" (Dhamoon, 2009). Furthermore, "in the sense that foreignness defines 'us' as an 'us', it is also instrumental in (re)-founding the nation" (Dhamoon, 2009, p.69). In Canada, this has been especially evident in the concurrent and contradicting ideas that immigrants are invading

the borders of the nation and at the same that the country is multicultural and tolerant (Dhamoon, 2009). Such depictions of the receiving nation as benevolent are highly problematic because they disguise the tangible ways in which Canadian governments have been active in “producing conditions of poverty, economic stagnation, and civil wars in other countries, all of which contribute to migration patterns from poorer to wealthier countries” (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 69).

Immigration practices and laws also have a particular role to play in Canadian nation-building because Canada is a settler society in which British and French colonizers expropriated indigenous lands and suppressed indigenous ways of being and knowing, while also controlling immigration levels to expand the colonial project (Dhamoon 2009). Through various means, immigration policies have functioned to produce national borders of inclusion and exclusion, and also to produce representations of the ‘good immigrant’: “cosmopolitan, adventurous contributor to the economy who replicates existing norms”, and the ‘bad immigrant’: “dirty, selfish, backward, dangerous, and a financial strain on the nation” (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 70). Through her analysis, Dhamoon identifies how accounts of meaning-making can be put to work to deconstruct how variations of the ‘immigrant-as-other’ are produced in ways that consolidate particular norms. These wide-ranging meanings of difference work to “shape distinctions between citizens, potential citizens, partial citizens, and non-citizens, and are thus important to the study of identity difference politics” (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 70). As this study demonstrates, that is precisely the dynamic that plays out when the CPC utilizes the constructed category of ‘ethnic voters’, furthering the unfavorable notion that these individuals are different from other Canadians and less than ‘full citizens’.

Post-colonial theories such as Edward Said’s Orientalism are also relevant in this context. Said demonstrates that Orientalism provided the language and conceptual frameworks for the

colonizers to understand and govern the “Orient” (Lee & Lutz, 2005, p.6). However, the scholarly knowledge produced by “Orientalists” had little to do with the actual lived reality of those it pretended to represent and instead reflected the fantasies and desires of the colonizers. Said’s work has since spawned a large body of subsequent research on the ideological practices of colonialism, particularly in cultural studies of racism where his approach has helped to uncover the discursive and symbolic practices involved in constituting non-Europeans as “Others” (Lee & Lutz, 2005, p.6).

The work of Vic Satzewich (2000, 2007) and David Roediger (2002) also provides essential insights regarding groups who are now racialized as normal (white) but were not always racialized in this manner. Satzewich traces the ways in which Ukrainians in North America were considered peripheral Europeans throughout the 1800s right up until the 1920s. Also, initially the desire for inclusion in the larger white society, as Roediger notes, was not the same for Irish and Italian immigrants, who were considered the ‘not-yet-white ethnics’ but are now constructed as white (Dhamoon, 2009). The transference demonstrates that representations of racialized Otherness are far from reified and that the processes of meaning-making that constitute this variation are themselves historically generated. By taking an account of these dual processes of Othering and nation building, the analyst gains the ability to critically examine various incarnations of whiteness and racialized Otherness, and also the constancy of white privilege (Dhamoon, 2009).

This particular theoretical framework will be exploited in order to understand exactly what the Conservative Party was undertaking in the lead-up to the 2011 federal election. By vehemently targeting ‘ethnic voters’, the Conservative Party made a conscious effort to differentiate this group of people from Canadian-born citizens. The suggestion presented in the

Conservative Party conference document from 2007 titled *Ethnic Outreach: Building Bridges with Ethnic Communities and New Canadians* is that “new Canadians and minorities still don’t know/understand the Conservative Party” implying that new Canadians need further assistance because they are unable to ‘understand’ and ‘appreciate’ precisely what the Conservative Party stands for (Kenney, 2007, p.3). During the lead-up to the 2011 federal election, the Liberal Party was most vocal in their condemnation of the Conservative Party’s ‘politics of division’ approach. Since becoming leader, Michael Ignatieff avoided traditional ‘ethnic politics’, stating repeatedly that “a Canadian is a Canadian” (Friesen, Chase, & Bailey, 2011, para. 4). He also criticized the Conservatives for identifying certain target ridings as “very ethnic” in a leaked Conservative strategy document (Friesen et al., 2011, para. 4). What will be argued throughout this research study is that the ‘construction of difference’ and ‘divide and conquer’ strategies employed by the Conservative Party are destructive to the efforts by immigrant and visible minority Canadians to fully integrate into Canadian society and become ‘full-citizens’. As a result, members of these communities continue to be racialized and ethnicized as different ‘others’.

A second theoretical framework that will be used involves the utilization of social-class theory to help deconstruct the practice of courting immigrants and visible minorities during election campaigns. Class politics taps the essence of what has traditionally been described as the ‘old politics’; an economic conflict between the haves and the have-nots. The class cleavage reflects the problems industrial societies face in reaching their economic and material goals: improving standards of living, providing economic security, and ensuring a ‘fair’ distribution of economic rewards (Dalton, 2008). Issues such as unemployment, underemployment, inflation, social services, tax policies, and government management of the economy all serve to reinforce

class divisions (Dalton, 2008). Historically, one's position in the class structure has been a strong predictor of voting behavior.

Social-class theories are important for this research project for a number of reasons. First, Canadian immigration patterns historically and presently have always been directly tied to labour-market shortages and needs in this country. For many decades, immigrants were allowed into Canada to fill labour shortages in a variety of working-class employments. Historically, newcomers were considered 'aliens' who threatened the cultural and economic foundations of the newly established society. The ruling classes often protected the society from the influences of newcomers by limiting their ability to have political, economic, or social influence, while at the same time greatly benefitting from their labour (Birjandian, 2005). The situation today is fundamentally not that different than the distant past as today in Canada, systemic barriers and challenges to full integration continue to exist. The Canadian Temporary Foreign Worker program is one blatant example of this as workers are desired only for their labour and are subsequently denied access to full citizenship.

Additionally, social-class theory is essential for this study because the lack of policy and programs related to ethnic communities has resulted in the ever-increasing gap between immigrants and the larger society with regard to social and economic indicators of quality of life. Canadian society has been transformed demographically over the past four decades due to its immigration policy and role in facilitating immigration. Today, the majority of immigrants arrive from Asia and the Middle East. As these new groups form in Canadian society, the process of 'ethnogenesis' occurs and the children of immigrants become 'ethnics' in tomorrow's society (Frideres, 2005). Ethnogenesis refers to the process by which individuals come to be understood or understand themselves as ethnically distinct from the dominant 'ethnic' majority

(Frideres, 2005). Current information suggests that a process of 'segmented assimilation' is occurring in Canadian society, in which some immigrant groups are rapidly integrating while other groups are not. Some of the ethnic groups created by recent immigration are clearly in an upward mobility path; they are integrating into mainstream society and enriching it with their cultures and passion (Frideres, 2005). However, other groups are blocked in their aspirations and are headed in a downward spiral, making up a considerable portion of Canada's impoverished population. This differential trajectory of immigrants reflects the notion of 'segmented assimilation' that has been identified previously and has been for the most part ignored by policy-makers (Frideres, 2005). At present, "a rainbow underclass seems to be emerging as immigrants are occupying the lower rings of both occupational status as well as income" (Frideres, 2005, p. 59). Research suggests that constraints and opportunities created by social barriers and structures have much more impact on immigrant integration than the immigrant's ambition or skill level. In addition, class is also crucial in this study because it is necessary to determine whether all 'ethnic voters' are targeted by federal political parties, or whether certain classes of 'ethnic voters' are deemed more worthy of attention; early indicators point to the latter.

This theoretical framework will be utilized to help determine which 'ethnic voters' received the greatest amount of attention in the most recent federal election campaign. Specifically, the CPC targeted 'ethnic voters' from the middle and upper classes in suburbs surrounding major urban centers who live in low-density, suburban housing. Attention to communities such as St. James Town in downtown Toronto, known as the most densely-populated neighbourhood in Canada, was absent. For politicians, St. James Town represents a "bubbling cauldron of campaign promises" – or at least it should, since every imaginable type of

vulnerable Canadian lives there, according to the 2006 Census data (“St. James Town”, 2011, para.3). The unemployment rate in that neighbourhood alone is almost two times as high as the provincial average while the median income is only “34,679 compared with 69,321 for Ontario as a whole” (“St. James Town”, 2011, para. 4). Unfortunately, this high immigrant-density neighbourhood was all but ignored by the CPC. Instead, their attention was focused in the suburbs outside of the city proper, where non-vulnerable, well-established immigrants live. In particular, Chinese, ‘South Asian’ and Jewish-Canadians received a great deal of attention and represent the ‘ethnic voters’ that the CPC courted most vehemently. Multiple campaign visits to Brampton by Jason Kenney and at least two by Stephen Harper, along with a conspicuous absence in impoverished communities like St. James Town for example, further prove this point. Undoubtedly, CPC principles such as the promotion of low taxes, minimal social services, and a general rejection of financial redistribution contribute to their deliberate targeting of some, and disregarding of others.

The concept of political marketing during federal election campaigns is also relevant to this discussion. Collecting public opinion and feeding it into the ‘product’ is only part of the implementation strategy of Canada’s major federal political parties. The other part involves communicating the ‘product’ to the electorate; segmentation and targeting play a salient role in this process (Savigny, 2008). In order to facilitate the collection of public opinion, data markets are segmented, meaning they are divided into classifications based upon demographic data; public opinion is then identified and fed back into the marketing strategy. According to marketing literature, this means that public opinion is fed back into the product, the product is reshaped and the marketing mix is employed to ‘target’ specific sections of the public who fit the demographic profiling and are as such likely to be responsive to the ‘sale’ of the ‘product’

(Savigny, 2008). Within this context, the electorate is viewed as a 'market', and this market is assumed to contain differing groups which can be isolated and targeted. Often, the first group which is identified is that of key voters who vote in 'swing' ridings, which are strategically necessary for electoral victory (Savigny, 2008). Once the voters have been identified, they are further segmented into demographic groups, reflecting not only their socioeconomic class but also detailed lifestyle preferences. Following this secondary segmentation, strategies are further employed to specifically target those differing segmented groups. Although the normative claims made as a consequence of the use of the marketing concept applied to politics suggest a degree of responsiveness, accountability and pluralism, the reality is that the findings from public opinion are used selectively, and targeting happens in politics only towards selected groups, who are deemed essential in terms of electoral victory (Savigny, 2008).

Importantly, Canadian political parties have always exercised some degree of persuasive influence over the citizens of Canada; for better or worse. However, at the most basic level, such persuasion can be considered "propaganda action of the elites aimed at manipulating citizens" (Wojciech, Falkowski, & Newman, 2008, p. 205). It can be perceived to pose a danger to the society as a whole as well as to the stability of democracy. Therefore, learning and developing strategies to help citizens defend themselves against political party manipulation is an important challenge for all social scientists. Modern persuasion practices make the correct assumption that by using the same psychological principles that are used in propaganda, one can also neutralize the influence of political communication on voter decisions (Wojciech et al., 2008). This is directly exemplified in the ways in which the Conservative Party recently, and the Liberal Party in the past, have both attempted to appeal to 'ethnic voters'. However, the openness with which the manipulation of 'ethnic voters' by the CPC is relatively new. Identifying constituencies as

“very ethnic” is particularly problematic because it implies that in the eyes of the CPC there are degrees of ‘ethnic’ and subsequently degrees of ‘otherness’ (Friesen et al., 2011, para.4).

A Review of the Pertinent Literature

i) Ethnicity Politics and the ‘ethnic vote’

Ethnicity and ‘ethnic’ difference has a rich tradition in Canadian federal politics. At the time of Confederation, for example, ethnic political differences referred to differences between French-Canadian and Anglo-Canadian interests. During that period, the interests of the opposing groups were considered to be ‘ethnic’ differences. Following that initial stage, Irish and Southern European – Greek, Italian – immigrants were referred to according to their perceived ‘ethnic’ difference; illuminating just how fluid the term has been throughout Canadian political history. The term ‘ethnic vote’ has oscillated immensely over the years; now it is most commonly used to refer to immigrant and visible-minority group members. Presently, the majority of ethnic minority members in Western nations are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, but not all immigrants have become ethnic minority members. According to anthropologists, everyone has an ethnicity or ethnic identity and belongs to an ethnic group (Castles & Davidson, 2000). Yet for sociologists, the matter is far less straightforward: dominant or majority groups are usually not aware of their ethnicity unless it is threatened in some tangible way. It is the minority groups, in these contexts, who are labeled ‘ethnics’ while members of the majority tend to see their own values and traditions as ‘normal’ or ‘natural’, rather than as an expression of a particular ethnic belonging (Castles & Davidson, 2000).

When linked to minority status, ethnicity usually comprises two facets: self-definition and other-definition. The self-definition of a group is based on its members’ perception of

shared language, traditions, religion, history and experiences. The other-definition results from the dominant group's use of its authority to impose social definitions on subordinate groups. This includes ideological process of stereotyping, as well as discriminatory structures and practices in the legal, economic, social and – most relevant for this discussion – political arenas (Castles & Davidson, 2000). The indicators constructed by dominant groups to differentiate minority members include, but are not limited to, skin colour and other physical features believed to signify 'race'. A second set of markers comprises culture, dress, language, religion and customs. A third type of marker is national origin, which is often taken as a predictor of social characteristics; origin in an underdeveloped country can be a major factor of exclusion (Castles & Davidson, 2000).

Negative 'othering' of a minority 'ethnic' group by a dominant group leads to the "racialization or ethnicization of social relations: differences in the social, economic or political position of a group are attributed to its (constructed) racial or ethnic characteristics rather than to historical power relations (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. 63). Ethnic minority groups in nations including Canada may thus be seen as groups that have been disregarded by dominant groups on the basis of socially-constructed markers of phenotype, origins or culture and as groups that have some degree of collective consciousness based on a belief in shared language, traditions, religion, history or experience.

The reasons that political leaders have traditionally targeted certain 'ethnic communities' in their election campaigns are logical. For example, if members of a certain group tend to live in specific neighbourhoods, political parties cannot ignore their voting power. Spatial or residential concentration is often linked to a common class position which in turn reinforces the likelihood that members of a group will vote a certain way, or so it is believed (Palmer, 1991).

Conversely, immigrant groups that are widely dispersed and have varying social positions are unlikely to be seen as a significant political factor. Politicians attempt to actively mobilize individuals within 'ethnic communities', to varying degrees, as if there is an 'ethnic vote' by holding meetings in communities and by courting the support of ethnic leaders (Palmer, 1991). 'Ethnic voting' has traditionally referred to situations in which ethnic group membership is an important variable in voting behavior (Champion, 2005). For strategists, it was a form of political currency that could be dominated in terms of ballots and seats. On the whole, ethnic voting is poorly represented in the literature and is often entangled with religious voting patterns (Champion, 2005).

The study of 'ethnic' politics in Canada can be viewed in two distinct ways: as internal politics within the ethnic group, and as political involvement of ethnic groups in the larger Canadian society, while the role of ethnicity in the Canadian political process has changed over time. As economically deprived non-British and non-French immigrants evolved from their entrance status in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century's on the social and economic margins of Canadian society, their political muscle slowly increased (Palmer, 1991). Progressively, close ties developed between ethnic groups and politicians as the groups sought to protect or enhance their status and interests and politicians tried to secure and maintain the loyalty of the new groups. Ethnic groups eventually attempted to involve their own representatives in the political process and certain political parties began enlisting candidates from these groups. The case of Hugo Kranz – a German immigrant and considered 'ethnic' at the time – who was elected as the first German born MP in 1878 represents one such example. Elected in Berlin (present-day Kitchener, Ontario), Hugo Kranz along with other German-Canadian politicians were enlisted by the Liberal Party which emerged as the dominant force

among those of German background, while the Conservatives represented the British in the area (Palmer, 1991).

Once Canadian immigration regulations were liberalized in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the competition for 'ethnic votes' became increasingly fierce. Specifically, as urban politicians became aware of the strength of new 'visible minority' immigrant groups, fierce battles emerged during nomination meetings and at election time in municipal, provincial, and federal elections in large urban centers to capture the 'ethnic vote'. Newcomers often played a particularly prominent role in delegate selection meetings for national and provincial party leaderships since the Canadian system of leadership selection places a premium on signing up members and getting them out to a single delegate selection meeting (Palmer, 1991). This process means that disciplined, well-organized ethnic groups can have the ability to exercise a great deal of influence in the delegate selection process. Also, during this period it was common for politicians of different stripes to trade accusations of corrupt practices in rounding up 'ethnic voters' with free meals and transportation, and promises of future influence, grants for ethnic activities, or help in immigration cases (Palmer, 1991). Critics charge that the mass mobilization of new residents in Canada – many of whom may not be citizens and thus are ineligible to vote in general elections – is dishonest. They contest that such action eradicates the nominating decision from the party's "long-time activists and places it in the hands of folks whose commitment to the party is weak and fleeting" (Cross, 2004, p. 65).

Furthermore, previous research which examines the efforts made by political parties to increase the participation of excluded groups suggests that their efforts are motivated exclusively by "cold electoral calculations", which should come as no surprise (Bagga, 2006, p. 48). In this sense, the suburban GTA ridings of Brampton and Mississauga may allow visible minority

candidates greater access as parties recognize the importance of the 'ethnic vote', and tend to encourage minority candidates in certain areas commonly referred to as 'ethnic ridings'. More recently, Karen Bird (2005) has argued that, campaign chairs often describe Indo and Sikh-Canadians as legendary organizers, whose support "tends to be highly sought after through the nomination and campaign process in many ethnic ridings" (Bagga, 2006, p. 48). This raises the issue of whether or not different groups are targeted for different reasons and if there is a discernible difference in the ways in which different ethnic groups are courted by political parties.

Importantly, the previously described journey to relevance and clout has not been an easy one. From the mid-1970s to the present, the immigrant and visible minority population in Canada was, and continues to be, heavily active politically with the proof reflected in their extraordinary formal and informal participation rates. As Anderson and Black (2008) have argued, "after a period of adjustment, the participation rates of new citizens converge with – and in some instances even exceed – the 'standards' set by the Canadian-born (Anderson & Black, 2008, p. 56). According to the *2004 Canadian National Election Study*, "85% of the foreign-born voted in the election and 41% had contacted government officials, compared to 87% and 37% (respectively) for the Canadian-born" (Anderson & Black, 2008, p. 56). These four figures illuminate how problematic research into the voting preferences of Canadians can be for political scientists and other social researchers. Because this information was acquired through self-reporting survey research – practically the only feasible way – the results are dubious. These figures propose that roughly 86% of eligible voters in Canada voted in the 2004 federal election; the actual number is closer to 60.4% (Elections Canada, 2004a). Importantly, the predilection on the part survey respondents to over-report for a variety of reasons is well-known. Nevertheless,

these figures are important for two main reasons. First, they illuminate the point that differences between the self-reporting of foreign-born Canadians and Canadian-born citizens are marginal; the foreign-born have caught up to the Canadian-born even in terms of self-reporting. Second, they represent the best figures available to determine differences or similarities between the voting behavior of foreign-born and Canadian-born citizens. Another method used predominantly in the United States of America is the method of exit-polling directly following the casting of ballots. However, that method is expensive and has therefore been neglected in Canada over the years.

In addition, the issue of minority groups in Canadian politics is first and foremost an urban phenomenon; one reason the scope of this research study is primarily limited to constituencies in the GTA. Needless to say, the concentration of a minority presence and impact on the political scene is felt most in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario as well as some select parts of Quebec (Hyder, 2005). The spatial concentration of minority voters has made specific ethnic communities a commanding force. In fact, a new study calls into question the myth that new immigrants move 'up and out' into suburban communities after their original settlement in Canada. One enduring myth purports that immigrants start out poor, living in Canada's Little Italy's and Chinatowns (Woolley, 2011). Eventually, when they become more affluent, they move up and out to the suburbs, joining other well-established immigrants who are able to afford low-density housing. In recent years, however, the 'up and out' myth has been questioned. Recently, Statistics Canada researcher Michael Haan found that some groups followed the pattern but other groups did not. Unlike in past years, Canada has many highly educated and successful immigrants who together with struggling immigrants form neighbourhoods within the heart of major cities that have all the benefits of an 'ethnic

community' as well as strong schools and other facilities (Woolley, 2011). In addition, many economic and business-class immigrants are not forced to settle within major cities; rather they settle in the suburbs immediately upon entering Canada. This phenomenon illuminates the fact that some recent immigrants to Canada do not go through the same struggles as all immigrants did traditionally because they are more socioeconomically advantaged. This finding has serious political implications as a geographically dispersed group is often a politically impotent one, while a spatially concentrate group can be extremely influential (Woolley, 2011). Undoubtedly, it will become more and more difficult for a party to attain a majority government in Canadian federal elections without the support of minority groups, particularly in those spatially concentrated ethnic communities (Hyder, 2005).

As Karen Bird (2011) has accurately pointed out, even within a single ethnic group, there is considerable cultural, socio-economic and ideological diversity. According to Bird (2011), it is therefore quite "unrealistic to speak of any kind of distinguishable and homogenous 'ethnic vote' in Canada's ethnically diverse ridings" (Bird, 2011, p. 215). However, despite this heterogeneity, it is possible to ascertain a set of policy issues that "likely hold heightened significance" for immigrants and visible minority voters (Bird, 2011, p. 215). These include issues of racial discrimination, multiculturalism, immigration and the socio-economic integration of ethnic minority group members. Despite Bird's contention that it is unrealistic to speak of any distinguishable 'ethnic vote', the notion of whether or not a discernible 'ethnic vote' can be identified is not really the issue of main concern here. What is of primary concern is addressing how political parties court what they unashamedly identify as the 'ethnic vote'. In other words, whether or not it exists is not the primary goal of this research study; federal political parties believe that it can be the basis on which voters can be appealed to. Therefore, parties target

voters on that basis and speak to voters as if they are ‘ethnic voters’. Unquestionably, political parties actively cultivate and later harvest socially-constructed ‘ethnic votes’; that is the primary focus of this study.

Additionally, one academic has declared that the demographic being heavily targeted in this context – immigrants and visible minority Canadians – should “appreciate the attention they are receiving”, since numerous groups have gone relatively unmentioned during the election campaign: Aboriginals, the poor and people with disabilities (Hildebrandt, 2011, para. 21). As Alex Marland, assistant professor at Memorial University who studies political marketing contends, “it gives you political power when people are focusing on you” and “they should be saying ‘listen to us, we matter’ and these are the concerns we have and we’re glad you’re paying attention” (Hildebrandt, 2011, para. 22). However, this represents a very simplistic view of the situation, considering that nothing is mentioned about the actual policies that are initiated in order to benefit this demographic of Canadians. Certainly having the ear of a politician does not mean that the politician will actually fight for the needs of these individuals. It is one thing to be systematically courted, and something entirely different to have your views translate into substantive representation; representation in terms of actual policy. A thorough understanding of how federal political parties actively court the members of these minority groups is essential to this discussion.

ii) How Parties Court the ‘ethnic vote’

Canadian federal political parties use a number of transparent as well as less obvious methods in their attempt to court and persuade ‘ethnic voters’. There are numerous ways in which political parties attempt to persuade ‘ethnic voters’ but the three major tactics which

deserve the greatest amount of attention are: nominating community members as candidates, increasing party visibility within an ethnic community including attending community events as well as aggressive advertising through ethnic media, and appealing to a group's foreign policy preferences.

First, an observable technique for parties to gain ethnic community support is to choose a prominent member of that community as an election candidate. In general, the experience of migration, settlement and exclusion is likely to influence the attitudes and behavior of political representatives, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that prominent community members, who share the experiences of members of the community, would be more successful in ethnic constituencies than members who do not share those characteristics (Castles & Davidson, 2000). This is commonly referred to as symbolic or mirror representation: a legislature is said to be representative if it mirrors the ethnic, gender, and class characteristics of the public. Or, to put it a different way, a group of citizens is represented in a legislature if one or more of the assembly's members are the "same sort of people" as the citizens (Kymlicka, 1998, p. 109). This idea diverges with the more accustomed principle that defines representativeness in terms of "the procedure by which office-holders are elected, rather than their personal attributes" (Kymlicka, 1998, p. 109). Minority members are further believed to have diverse ideas about the relationship between representatives and electors, compared with majority groups. Participation in political parties may not be seen in terms of the beliefs of individual citizens, but rather as a community activity, based on social networks within a group.

As Jerome Black (2008) has articulated, parties have motivation to promote the enlistment of a more diverse candidate team if they see the value of broadening their electoral coalitions to include minority voters and if they believe that running more minority candidates

will serve that purpose (Black, 2008). In individual constituencies, likely those with large 'ethnic' populations, some party officials may be driven to encourage minority candidates as a way of appealing to specific elements of the minority electorate. At a broader level, for those directing regional or national campaigns, the relevant electoral calculations might involve the overall image of the party and the need to ensure that there are enough minority candidates to allow the party to signal its all-encompassing nature (Black, 2008). Interestingly, most of the parties have genuinely attempted to move in the direction of inclusiveness. In fact, all parties except for the Reform and later the Canadian Alliance restructured their nomination rules in the 1990s to facilitate the candidacies of traditionally under-represented groups. Specifically, the NDP has worked to promote minority diversity within its ranks; having gone the furthest in its formal adoption of proactive measures designed to recruit individuals belonging to affirmative action groups, including visible minorities, and more generally those who have historically been underrepresented in Canadian politics (Black, 2008). The Reform and later Canadian Alliance have as a matter of principle rejected intervening in the local nomination process or putting into place NDP-like measures. Any efforts that have been made have been "insufficient to alter the impression that the two parties have been indifferent, if not hostile, to the interests of minorities" in Canada (Black, 2008, p. 240).

Given their control of the nomination process and local campaigning in general, local party associations in Canadian politics are central to the inclusion of minority candidates in Canadian electoral politics. As such, the local party associations may provide immigrants access to the political process and act as a "key socialization agent for 'ethnic' politicians" (Sayers & Jetha, 2005, p. 89). For most minority politicians, long periods spent volunteering for a party preceded their foray into electoral politics. In moving from volunteer to candidate, ethnic

political insiders are well-placed to make use of their links to various ethnic networks to help them succeed in electoral politics. Moreover, the enthusiasm with which immigrants engage with politics is often crucial to the success of minority politicians (Sayers & Jetha, 2005).

Additionally, beginning in the 1990s, another obvious tactic used by federal political parties to court 'ethnic voters' was the inclusion of members of these groups at the uppermost levels of the party system including as MPs, cabinet ministers, and committee leaders. As Karen Bird (2011) has claimed, there are a few possible reasons for this noteworthy inclusion. First, the attitudinal shifts in the wake of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* that produced strong support for multiculturalism and a growing expectation that Parliament should reflect Canada's growing ethnic diversity can be pointed to (Bird, 2011). A second probable reason relates to the political motivation of the visible minority community itself. It was at this point that newcomer communities came to realize that if they could be mobilized to elect a non-minority candidate, they could be just as easily mobilized to elect one of their own; support among their own ethnic community has been crucial for many visible minority members who seek the party nomination (Bird, 2011).

Interestingly, the most significant electoral gains by 'ethnic' candidates are now occurring not in urban centers, but in suburban constituencies. The findings of Myer Siemiatycki and Ian Matheson (2005) suggest that for the GTA, the most significant electoral gains by immigrants and newcomers are occurring in federal suburban constituencies where Indo, Pakistani, and Sikh-Canadian candidates have made impressive electoral breakthroughs (Siemiatycki & Matheson, 2005). The suburb of Brampton, in fact, is by far the GTA leader in its visible minority success rate. It remains "one of the few places in Canada where a visible

minority group is overwhelmingly over-represented statistically in elected office” (Siemiatycki & Matheson, 2005, p. 71).

A second obvious way that Canadian federal political parties attempt to court ‘ethnic voters’ is by dramatically increasing their party’s visibility in specific ethnic communities. Increasing visibility often involves the participation of political leaders in cultural events such as festivals, parades and other parties. It could mean the attendance of the local MP or MP candidates from all major parties or even the attendance of high-profile politicians such as the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism or the Prime Minister himself. Undoubtedly, these gatherings make tremendous photo-opportunities for the political parties. This was the case in April 2011 when an email sent out by a Conservative campaign staffer in an Etobicoke constituency sought people in “national folklore costumes” to appear at a photo-op for the Conservative Party (Hildebrandt, 2011, para.1). Once more, the email stated that the Etobicoke Centre campaign was seeking to create a “photo-op about all the multicultural groups that support Ted Opatz...and the Prime Minister” (Hildebrandt, 2011, para. 4). The email is evidence that the Conservative Party recognized the importance of being perceived as immigrant and ethno-culturally inclusive. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney, also known as the “minister of curry in a hurry” to his fellow party members, has taken it upon himself to increase the Conservative Party’s visibility within Canadian ethnic communities almost single-handedly (Corbella, 2011, para. 1). Travelling from constituency to constituency and attending different ethnic events is a tactic that the Conservative Party and Minister Kenney specifically have embraced with intense aggression.

The incident cited above illuminates a clear example of what Rita Dhamoon (2009) refers to as the politics of difference. Her detailed analysis brings into view the complex interactive

processes of “meaning-making that produce representations of immigrants as strange and strangers”, and how those representations also constitute the receiving nation as generous (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 69). Through various means, immigration policies have functioned to produce national borders of inclusion and exclusion, and also to produce representations of the ‘good immigrant’: “cosmopolitan, adventurous contributor to the economy who replicates existing norms”, and the ‘bad immigrant’: “dirty, selfish, backward, dangerous, and a financial strain on the nation” (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 70). In this context, the CPC attempted to ‘exoticize’ immigrants and manipulate them in order to obtain a photo-op that would make the party appear immigrant-friendly and popular amongst various ‘ethnic communities’. Using the term “national folklore costumes” is another example of how the Conservatives view individuals who they deem ‘very ethnic’ (Hildebrandt, 2011, para. 1). While most immigrants wish to be considered the same as all other Canadians, this incident represents one flagrant example of how the CPC continues to view immigrants as ‘exotic others’ instead of integrated, ‘full citizens’.

However, the Conservative Party is not alone in utilizing this tactic to enhance their support within ethnic constituencies. For example, Khalsa Day celebrations at Queen’s Park turned into an election campaign on a Sunday leading up to the May 2, 2011 election. Michael Ignatieff, who had spent the day campaigning in Toronto, crossed paths at the celebration with the NDP’s Jack Layton, who exchanged a brief handshake with the Liberal leader (Whittington, 2011). During that event, Conservative candidate Jason Kenney also addressed the crowd.

Federal political parties also attempt to court ‘ethnic voters’ through the use of aggressive advertising in ethnic media which further increases their visibility within a specific ethnic community. Research findings suggest that ethnic media may clarify myths about elections, and highlight the opinion leaders of the community who provide further information

resettling the last remaining boat people from Southeast Asia and the like (Weatherbe, 2011). The Minister concedes that all of these initiatives have contributed to Conservative success among 'ethnic voters' over the past few federal elections.

iii) Traditionally a Liberal Stronghold

A distinctly recognizable theme present within the literature surrounding immigrant voting preferences involves the historical attachment between newcomers and the Liberal party at the federal level and the subsequent erosion of that affiliation over the past decade. Historically, since the "era of participatory democracy in the late 1960s and 1970s, there has been a strong desire on the part of Liberal governments to enhance 'the participation of as many citizens as possible, [by] encouraging the creation of specific groups to represent those citizens whose voice was not being heard'" (Smith, 2007, p. 104). From ethnocultural and linguistic minorities to women, people with disabilities, consumers and the elderly, efforts were made to "level the political playing field" by providing assistance to those who lacked funding or organizational capacity (Smith, 2007, p. 104). On the partisan front, the Liberal Party of Canada in particular began to welcome those of other ethnic origins into its ranks in greater numbers than the other two main political parties at the federal level. Such groups were naturally inclined toward the Liberal Party, some have argued, due to the fact that it had usually been in power when they arrived in the country, and that it was the party that initiated official policies such as Multiculturalism (Dyck, 2004). It is worth noting that although Multiculturalism policy was initiated in the 1970's under the Trudeau Liberals, 1988 saw the passage of a new Canadian *Multiculturalism Act* under the Mulroney Tories. Furthermore, it was under Mulroney in 1991 that the government created a new department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship which has subsequently been divided up (Dyck, 2004).

Additionally, for many years the Liberal Party of Canada has been associated with a progressive immigration policy. Liberals are not shy about informing anyone who will listen about their belief that Canada should continue to support a dynamic immigration policy that balances humanitarian considerations with Canada's demographic and economic needs. Moreover, Liberals have always been associated with strong 'ethnic' support because, for most of the 20th Century, it was a Liberal government which welcomed refugees or established high annual immigration levels (Liberal Party of Canada, 1993). Also, the Liberal Party has arguably been more active than others in developing candidates from within ethnic ranks and moving the successful MPs into prominent positions within the government (Doucet, 1990).

Furthermore, as of 2005, the Liberal Party of Canada had won a plurality of the vote in 15 of 19 elections held since 1945 and had formed a government in 44 of the previous 60 years (Blais, 2005). This is critical to our understanding of newcomer affinity for the Liberal Party because it can be argued that it is not only immigrants who have voted for Liberals in recent history, but all Canadians. Therefore, it may not be necessary to make the distinction between newcomer voting choices and the voting choices of Canadian-born citizens.

On the other hand, Andre Blais has argued that the results from his study regarding Liberal party electoral dominance confirm that religion and ethnicity are important determinants of voting behavior, and that Catholics and Canadians of African, Asian, or Latino origin are traditionally strong supporters of the Liberal Party. According to Blais (2005), Canadians of non-European origin constitute the second most important source of Liberal success (Blais, 2005). Although they have been less crucial than Catholics, he has argued, they are becoming more important because of their growing numbers. Blais proposed that one reason for this may have been that the Liberal Party happened to be the party of government when immigrants were

permitted to migrate to Canada. However, upon further research he found that those who arrived at a time when the Conservatives formed the government were only marginally less likely to vote Liberal than those who came at a time when the Liberal Party was in power (Blais, 2005). He also found that the duration of time in power at the time of arrival of the immigrants was also insignificant. Finally, Blais speculated that the reason had more to do with traditional Liberal stances on certain issues. As he pointed out, the more favorable a person is to immigration and the provision of aid to racial minorities and developing countries, the more prone he or she is to vote Liberal (Blais, 2005). However, as he concluded, the bottom line is that we still do not have a good understanding of why non-European Canadians so strongly support the Liberals over other parties, or at least why they did until the 2004 election.

In addition, of the *World Values Survey* sample conducted in 2000, 74.3% of respondents said they would back the Liberals in a federal election (Henderson, 2005). If we look at self-reported voting patterns in the federal election, immigrant voters were far more likely to back the Liberals, and were far less likely to back any of the other parties. This trend of Liberal support is most evident in the 1997 and 2000 federal elections but is also the case in earlier elections. What appears to be evident, at least at the beginning of the decade, is proof of clear and consistent immigrant preference for one political party within a system, rather than divided support (Henderson, 2005). Globally, the pattern seems to suggest a preference for left-wing parties that stand a chance of winning elections.

The 2004 election results exposed a distinct cleavage between urban and rural Ontario, with the Conservatives picking up most of their support and seats outside of the city of Toronto. Toronto, along with other major urban centers remained “staunchly Liberal”, and the Conservatives recognized that they had an unenviable task if they wished to appeal to urban

voters in the future (Gerber, 2006, p. 112). In fact, in the 2004 federal election, the Conservatives failed to win a single seat in Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal. Overall, Toronto has always been a Liberal bedrock and foundation of support, particularly in its most ethnically diverse ridings (Gerber, 2006). However, since that election, the Conservatives had managed to chip away and win increased support in the most diverse and most Liberal constituencies eventually translating into seats.

As mentioned briefly above, there is evidence to suggest that this affinity was altered after the 2000 election. Moreover, the 2006 Federal election saw a concerted effort by the Conservative Party to gain a greater “foothold in a traditionally strong area of Liberal Party support, namely, among immigrant communities” (White, Nevitte, Blais, Everitt, Fournier, & Gidengil, 2006, p. 10). In fact, preliminary data from the five elections from 1988 to 2004 indicates that 48% of immigrants who arrived in Canada after the age of 12 voted for the Liberal Party (White *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, a January 2006 survey conducted by Ipsos Canada found that some three-quarters of Canadians agree that “members of certain ethnic minorities in Canada tend to vote as a bloc for specific parties or candidates” which has benefitted the Liberal Party over a considerable amount of time (Jedwab, 2006, p. 4). However, recent evidence suggests that a dramatic shift in ‘ethnic voter’ support has occurred over the last decade or so, with the Conservative Party benefitting from the major swing the most.

iv) A Changing of the Guard

Although the Liberal Party traditionally counted on the immigrant and visible-minority vote for many of the reasons discussed above, over the last decade, a swing toward the Conservative Party has been noticeable, particularly within urban constituencies. However, it is

important to consider that the relationship between immigrants and the Conservative Party, along with its predecessors the Reform Party and Canadian Alliance, has not always been friendly. This was particularly true of the Reform Party during the late 1980s and early 1990s under the leadership of Preston Manning. During that period, as discussion of immigration raged just under the surface of the public dialogue, the inexperienced Reform Party, with its “ideology of self-reliance and rugged individualism, took root” (Soberman, 1999, p. 257). Immigration reform was not one of the party’s key platform initiatives, but the party did advocate for substantial cuts in immigration quotas and an outright dismissal of official multiculturalism. As a result, the Reform Party was soon synonymous with immigration restriction. Moreover, rumors that Preston Manning and his party harbored racists were visible across the pages of the country’s largest and most influential newspapers (Soberman, 1999). There were articles about Reform’s tolerance of intolerance, its embrace of anti-immigration or racist policies and questions about some of the people who had attached themselves to the party over its brief existence. When the 1993 federal election was called, it was clear that the Reform Party maintained a monopoly on the immigration issue; at first all other parties steered clear, leaving the Reform to “tap into public concern and set the immigration agenda” (Soberman, 1999, p.258).

As previously mentioned, in the late 1980s the Reform Party was perceived as being extremist and a party that associated with white supremacists and the far-right after numerous Reform Party MPs and election candidates repeatedly made remarks that were considered xenophobic, homophobic and sexist (Flecker, 2008). The appearance of intolerance continued to plague the party’s fortunes into the next decade, and was considered a major factor in its subsequent reincarnation as the Canadian Alliance. The contemporary Conservative Party under

the leadership of Stephen Harper – a former Reform Party MP – has made significant strides to shed its connections to the Reform Party. In the past, the Reform Party was hampered by the widespread perception that it knowingly harbored extreme right-wing enthusiasts and questions remain about whether some of the less overt manifestations of racism still exist within its successor (Flecker, 2008).

The methodical approach to attracting newcomer and visible minority votes away from the Liberal Party and to the Reform, Canadian Alliance and eventually Conservative Party began in the mid-1990s; “mining this field for the Tories was Jason Kenney, a 41 year old, fresh faced,” power broker from Saskatchewan, who was “one of the party’s best hustlers” (Martin, 2010, p. 227). In 1996, Kenney sat down with Stephen Harper, then a Reform MP, and told him that the future of Canadian Conservatism resided in the immigrant communities that were altering the country. At that time, the Liberal Party counted the vote of new Canadians as an integral source of support, but Kenney reasoned that the Conservatives were a more natural fit for new Canadians who were entrepreneurial, hard-working, intolerant of crime, and had a proud devotion to their families (Martin, 2010). Interestingly, when Harper first became PM and named his first cabinet, Kenney was projected to be on the list, but he did not make it. Instead, he was given the assignment of reaching out to ethnic communities. His first major obstacle was to purge the new Canadians of their impression that the Conservative Party was racist and anti-immigrant. His second major test was to convince them that their values more closely aligned with the Conservatives entrepreneurial spirit. The meticulous Kenney, who was eventually rewarded with the immigration portfolio, learned to give greetings in dozens of languages (Martin, 2010). He showed up on behalf of the government at every ethnic celebration possible. Some groups it was reasoned, like the Italians and the Greeks, had historic ties to the Liberals too

profound to breach. Additionally, given the government's blanket support for Israel, there could be few inroads into the large Muslim-Canadian community, but the headway made under Kenney was remarkable nonetheless (Martin, 2010).

It is possible to disagree with Minister Kenney's policies and beliefs – and many do – but there is no denying the impact that Kenney has made in convincing newcomers to give the Conservatives a chance. In the 2000 federal election, more than two-thirds of visible minority voters chose the Liberals (Martin, 2010). In the 2008 federal election, the Conservatives did slightly better in ridings with large concentrations of 'ethnic voters', unexpectedly winning two of the twenty most immigrant-dense constituencies. By 2010, pollsters were finding that they had virtually caught up to the Liberals in the appeal to ethnic communities while the 2011 election results provide a more spectacular example of this dramatic shift. From caucus envoy without a portfolio, Kenney became Harper's secretary of state for Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity, then, Canada's Minister for Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism. In every role, he has led the Conservative's attempts to recast themselves as a party of immigration for immigrants.

In the early days of the Conservative government, Kenney, as Harper's caucus envoy in charge of outreach to 'ethnic communities', was often confronted with accusations that his party was in fact, anti-immigration. His response usually included listing off achievements made by the Progressive Conservatives – the party that joined the Canadian Alliance to form the new Conservative Party – in the past. For example, Kenney would point out that PM Mulroney actually tripled immigration levels; PM Clark set up a special program for Vietnamese 'boat people' and PM Diefenbaker eliminated racial and country-of-origin considerations in the immigration system (Wells, 2010).

Promises of immigration reform arose out of the newly-formed party's very first official platform in 2004. In the document, the Conservative's state that immigrants must be provided the opportunity to contribute their best to Canadian society and that too often immigrants find it difficult to use the very skills that earned them admission to Canada in the first place (Conservative Party of Canada, 2004). According to the party, too many skilled workers and professionals face difficulties having their credentials recognized, even after they have been assessed and scrutinized during the immigration process. The party asserts that if elected, it would not allow special interests to prevent immigrants from contributing their best to Canadian society and that a government led by Harper would ensure speedier recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience (Conservative Party of Canada, 2004).

A Conservative Party conference document from 2007 titled *Ethnic Outreach: Building Bridges with Ethnic Communities and New Canadians* represents the party's most deliberate attempt to entice immigrant voters to date. The document begins by suggesting that new and minority Canadians still do not understand the Conservative Party, charging that the Liberal Party's 'fear-mongering' over Conservative priorities and alleged anti-immigration sentiment still exists (Kenney, 2007). It goes on to reveal that new Canadians, particularly those of non-European heritage, are one of the three pillars of Liberal support, while growing anecdotal evidence suggests that the values of new Canadians are more aligned with the values of the Conservative Party. The document outlines that the short-term goal of the party in this context is to activate a focused and direct voter campaign to build support for the Conservative Party with the long-term goal being to replace the Liberals as the primary voice of new Canadians and ethnic minorities and eventually circumvent the Liberals as the natural-governing party of Canada (Kenney, 2007). The document also urges party members to develop 'Outreach

Strategies' within their specific ridings by developing riding profiles and identifying target groups. Party members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with their constituency demographics – age, ethnicity, gender, average income – as well as the religious and community organizations within their ridings (Kenney, 2007). They are further encouraged to build a database including identifying cultural community members, renting or purchasing lists for the target communities, and attending events in the cultural communities to add information from business cards and guest lists. Outreach is described as the opposite of 'in reach', meaning outside of the confines of the immediate party, and importantly, outside of the party members' "normal comfort zone" (Kenney, 2007, p. 29). In terms of actions, party members are encouraged to identify voters from the targeted communities, approach them regarding their voting preferences, persuade them (in their language if appropriate), and produce and distribute literature in their languages (Kenney, 2007). The document is further evidence of the Conservative Party's concerted and methodical attempts to gain the votes of ethnic community members, something they explicitly prioritized.

The document provides an interesting insight into the party's strategy and identifies ten specific constituencies that are to be targeted. The GTA constituencies of Brampton-Gore-Malton, Brampton-Springdale, York Centre and Eglington-Lawrence are four that are branded in such a way (Cardozo, 2011). There remains a degree of "detailed sophistication not seen in Canadian politics before" and there is little evidence to suggest that the other parties have followed suit (Cardozo, 2011, para. 5). The Conservatives have perceptively identified that there is a strong presence of conservative-minded people in most ethnic communities; people who are economically and socially conservative. These voters have tended to avoid the Reform/Alliance/Conservative movement in large part because of the image that the Reform

Party had in the early 1990s. What the Harper Conservatives have done since their election in 2005 is more openly court this conservative segment of the 'ethnic vote', highlighting the commonalities (Cardozo, 2011).

The outreach strategy shows that the CPC have ruled out winning over all 'ethnic' groups, asserting that perhaps as much as one-fifth of them are not "accessible" to the CPC (Leblanc, 2007, para. 3). Social-class theory is helpful in understanding exactly who makes up that one-fifth of ethnic groups who the CPC boldly deemed not accessible. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that this group would be the most vulnerable immigrant and visible minority groups, who reside within major urban areas instead of in the surrounding suburban areas. It is reasonable to assume that the CPC would consider the most vulnerable members of society not susceptible to their message because of their unwavering position regarding fiscal redistribution and entitlement programs. Instead, much of the focus was given to a certain type of 'ethnic voter'. In their own words, the CPC was most concerned with immigrants who carried an entrepreneurial spirit and whose economic conservatism aligned nicely with CPC values. Well-established communities such as the Jewish-Canadian community and the Indo-Canadian community were very much the focus of the most recent federal election campaign. Members of Latin American-Canadian and African-Canadian communities seemed to be ignored; or at least were not the primary focus. Interestingly, CPC preferences regarding which type of immigrants – economic and business over family-class – should be granted immigrant status in Canada is also relevant to this discussion. After careful examination, it has become obvious just what type of 'ethnic voters' the CPC attempted to and in many cases did persuade.

In addition, with their struggles to win seats in Canada's three big cities – Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal – in 2004 and 2006, the Conservative Party once again became

convinced that the support of new Canadians was crucial in taking over a number of urban ridings that were previously held by the Liberals. The Conservatives continuously stated openly that their goal was nothing short of replacing the Liberals as the primary voice of new Canadians and ethnic minorities. Conservative officials in 2007, in the riding of Thornhill, went as far as to say that securing more votes from Jews and other specific ethnic groups was the ticket to an upset over the Liberals in the next election (Leblanc, 2007). What is new about this political strategy in Canada is that the Conservative Party has broken down the voting population any number of ways, so that they have a thorough understanding of the voters in each 'ethnic constituency' across the country (Leblanc, 2007). Specifically, Conservative MPs and volunteers were told to use all available opportunities to "build the database" of 'ethnic voters', by renting or buying lists of names from third parties and by attending events where they could "gather business cards and guest lists" (Leblanc, 2007, para. 13). That is how they are able to target the ridings they feel are most susceptible to their message.

Not surprisingly, accusations of manipulation and promoting a 'politics of division' have been made on the part of the Liberals and the NDP. However, they are not the only ones who have denounced the Conservative Party's attempts to gain favour amongst 'ethnic voters'. This was certainly evident when two dozen lawyers and academics from some of Canada's top law schools urged immigrant communities to vote against the Harper government in the last election. In an unprecedented move, the group told voters that, "the Conservative Party has been telling visible minority immigrant communities, which it calls the 'ethnic vote', that it is improving the immigration system" while "a review of their record shows the contrary" (Keung, April 20, 2011, para. 2). Among the group's claims were that the annual visa quotas for sponsored parents and grandparents "are down – not up – by 44% from 2005 to 2011" (Keung, April 20, 2011,

para. 4). They also pointed out that it now takes up to 30 months longer to process these sponsorships in some instances, depending on the visa post. Additionally, the group illuminated the fact that the backlog of skilled worker applicants waiting for a decision has increased – not decreased – “from 487,000 in 2005 to 508,000” currently (Keung, April 20, 2011, para. 5). The group also argues that instead of getting tough on smugglers, new legislation introduced by the party targets the victims of smuggling, by creating mandatory detentions, denying permanent residency and making it more difficult for refugees to reunite with their families. Furthermore, the party claims to be sympathetic to genuine refugees who do not flee their countries illegally, but just announced plans to cancel the only program allowing Canada to protect refugee’s applying from within their own country, according to the group (Keung, April 20, 2011). Under the new bill, there is mandatory detention for refugees for one year without judicial review, denial of permanent residency for five years, and increased barriers to being reunited with family members through the denial of sponsorship for five years. Many legal experts have charged that the new bill contravenes the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. As one journalist has maintained, “on immigration, the Conservatives are using a language of moderation and inclusiveness, but their actual policies tell a different story” (Arif, 2011, para. 14).

Another piece of evidence that the group identified is the \$53 million dollar cut in settlement services funding; \$43 million from Ontario alone. The decision, announced two days before Christmas in 2010, was based on Minister Kenney’s belief that fewer new immigrants were settling in Toronto; instead choosing other non-traditional destinations throughout Canada. At least ten immigrant settlement agencies in the GTA were told their federal funding would not be renewed the following year with CIC stating that the cuts were part of an annual funding review of settlement programs, which help immigrants to improve their language skills and find

employment (CBC News, 2010). The *Toronto South Asian Women's Centre* is one of the agencies which may be forced to shut down as a result of these unilateral and unanticipated cuts. More than half of the center's operating budget of \$570,000 will disappear. For 20 years, women from countries such as India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka made their way to the center to get help settling in the city; the agency served roughly 14,000 clients in 2010, and the cuts mean that nine employees are facing layoffs while hundreds of newcomers will be left out in the cold with respect to language training, employment and integration programs (Keung, June 19, 2011).

This example illuminates the notion that over the past several years and elections, the Conservative Party has been trying hard to wrestle the votes of new Canadians from the Liberal Party while at the same time doing things like cutting budgets to programs they do not believe are worthwhile. Immigrant organizations and the Liberals accuse the Conservatives of forcing agencies that help the most vulnerable newcomers to close their doors or adapt to cuts of more than 50% in some cases. The government claims that the redistribution of funding is because Ontario received more funding than it required for the number of immigrants that arrived in the province in 2010 – 63% of the money with 55% of the immigrants (McGrath, 2010). As some observers have recognized, the amount of money being cut is roughly the same amount of money that Tony Clement spent building “bridges to nowhere” in Muskoka (McGrath, 2010, para. 5). A critical analysis of the targeting of ‘ethnic voters’ on the part of federal political parties is necessary to determine what it means for newcomers, and how significant it has been in persuading voters to one party and away from another.

The recent figures illuminating a decrease in immigration numbers in the first quarter of 2011 represent more evidence of the Conservative Party's questionable position on immigration policy. Specifically, Canada let 25 per cent fewer immigrants into the country in the first quarter

of this year compared to the same period in 2010; the number of permanent “resident visas issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada between January and March fell from 84,083 in 2010 to 63,224 this year”, according to figures obtained by the *Toronto Star* (Keung, July 17, 2011, para. 2). Furthermore, the Conservative government has announced that it is intent on slashing \$4 billion in annual spending from the federal budget, raising fears of further cuts to the immigration system; as previously mentioned, more than \$50 million was slashed this year in settlement services. Immigration lawyers say fewer permanent visas could mean bigger backlogs, especially for family sponsorships where there is no cap on applications like there is for skilled workers and investors (Keung, July 17, 2011). According to the government’s consultation backgrounder, Canada would have to increase immigration to nearly 4 per cent of the population to stabilize its “old-age dependency ratio”, while currently the rate remains below 1 per cent (Keung, July 17, 2011, para. 24).

Methodology

Two complementary methodological approaches were employed in this research study with the goal of critically analyzing how Canadian federal political parties court ‘ethnic voters’ and what this means for those specific groups. Both quantitative and qualitative research was executed in order to acquire a more thorough perspective on the spectacle of targeting voters based on their ethnicity or status as immigrants. As mentioned previously, although the phenomenon is not exclusive to federal political party electoral campaigns, these campaigns remain the primary focus of this particular study. The methodological approaches utilized during the major research study were twofold.

i) Selective Constituency Analysis

The first methodological approach executed in this research study is referred to as a selective constituency analysis. This approach was selected in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how the voting patterns and behavior of immigrant voters in constituencies within two of Canada's major urban centers – with an emphasis on the GTA – have changed, if at all, over the past decade or so. Using the *Federal Electoral District (FED) Profile - 2006 Census*, available through *Statistics Canada*, 20 of the most heavily immigrant-concentrated constituencies in Canada were identified, each with an immigrant population greater than 51% as of 2006. For example, according to the 2006 Census, 130,555 individuals were permanently located in the riding of Scarborough-Rouge River at that time. Of those 130,555 individuals, 88,445 identified themselves as immigrants. The number of immigrants was then multiplied by 100 and further divided by the total number of individuals within the constituency in order to obtain the percentage of immigrants in that specific riding. For Scarborough-Rouge River, it was determined that 68% of the individuals were immigrants, and this process was further repeated until the 20 federal constituencies with highest immigrant populations were revealed. According to *Statistics Canada*, “immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities” (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Importantly, not all immigrants have become naturalized citizens in Canada either due to their recent arrival in the country and status as permanent residents, their inability to meet the requirements of obtaining Canadian citizenship including knowledge and language requirements or simply due to their desire not to become citizens of Canada. Therefore, those individuals are unable to vote in federal elections. Despite this, Canada's rate of naturalization among immigrants is considerably high – roughly 84% in 2001 – and therefore it is safe to assume that a

substantial majority of the immigrants within these constituencies have become Canadian citizens (Anderson & Black, 2008). Also, Canadian citizens, including naturalized immigrants under the age of 18 are unable to vote in elections and therefore the total number of eligible immigrant voters in each chosen constituency would be slightly lower than the number provided in the 2006 Census. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that these constituencies do represent the most densely concentrated immigrant constituencies in Canada.

Ultimately, the 20 ridings identified included 17 in the GTA and three in the GVA. Specifically, these constituencies include: Bramalea-Gore-Malton, York Centre, Richmond Hill, Scarborough Centre, Scarborough-Rouge River, Mississauga-Brampton South, Mississauga-Erindale, Mississauga East-Cooksville, Scarborough-Agincourt, York West, York South-Weston, Markham-Unionville, Don Valley East, Etobicoke North, Davenport, Vancouver Kingsway, Scarborough-Guildwood, Vancouver South, Richmond, and Willowdale. The highest residential concentration of immigrants was discovered in Scarborough Rouge-River at 68%, while the lowest was in the constituency of Mississauga-Erindale at 51.8%.

Once the 20 constituencies were identified, a subsequent step was completed. This step involved an examination of the electoral results from each of the 20 previously determined constituencies over the four most recent federal elections to discover whether discernible changes in voting patterns and behavior could be ascertained. Thus, the election results from federal elections of 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2011 were analyzed using the official results documents available through *Elections Canada*. For example, in the constituency of York-Centre, 59.4% of the constituents were immigrants according to the 2006 Census. It was then determined through the official results that the Liberal Party of Canada was victorious in the constituency in the 2004, 2006, and 2008 federal elections. However, the CPC captured that

riding in the 2011 federal election, proving that in fact a change in voting behavior at the constituency scale had occurred over the last two federal elections. The same process was then carried out for the remaining 19 previously identified constituencies with the primary goal of determining whether any trends in voting behavior could be recognized. Identifiable trends in voting patterns and behavior do not definitively show how individual voters cast their ballots, but they do show how constituencies with high immigrant concentrations voted. Therefore, the evidence provided here identifies correlations as opposed to definitive causality.

Key Informant Interviews

The second methodological approach executed in this research study was the enactment of key informant interviews. Also referred to as depth interviews, key informant interviews involve respondents who should be selected so as to maximize the wealth of the information obtained relevant to the research questions (Miller & Crabtree, 2004). As such, it is important to ensure that the sampling strategy is purposeful and not indiscriminate. The interviews were conducted between July 1st and August 1st, 2011. Two key informant groups were considered relevant for the purposes of this study. First, MPs from constituencies throughout the GTA were established as pertinent key informants for the purposes of this study for obvious reasons including their daily interaction, observations and opinions regarding the targeting of 'ethnic voters'. Secondly, ethnic media representatives were also established as appropriate key informants for the purposes of this research study. The reasons for their inclusion in the study are slightly less obvious, but important nonetheless. As previously mentioned, research findings suggest that ethnic media may clarify myths about elections, warn readers of unofficial political communication, and highlight the opinion leaders of the community who provide further information on those candidates who are sensitive to the issues affecting the community.

(Phillips, 2007). Moreover, ethnic media outlets remind their audiences of their civic responsibility, provide political information and attempt to motivate their target communities to become politically active. Furthermore, ethnic media representatives are also acutely aware of which political parties have aggressively advertised through their media outlets and therefore have a more in-depth understanding of how political parties attempt to persuade voters within their targeted communities.

In total, 11 MPs and former MPs from the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the NDP were requested by email to take part in formal, one-on-one interviews. Overall, the assistance of three NDP MPs, one Liberal MP along with two former Liberal MPs not re-elected during the 2011 election, and five Conservative MPs was requested through emails to both their parliamentary email accounts as well as local office email accounts if provided on their official websites. In many cases, initial emails were followed up by second and third emails to those individuals who did not respond to the first request. Occasionally, telephone calls were made to their local offices in order to speed up the process, but more often than not, this additional attempted contact was to no avail. The emails sent to the MPs and former MPs in the GTA specifically outlined the purposes of the study and the reasons for their selection as potential respondents. Unfortunately, it was very challenging to obtain any response from the majority of MPs and former MPs regarding the study. In the end, Minister of the Environment and Conservative Party MP Peter Kent, in the constituency of Thornhill along with newly elected MP from Scarborough-Rouge River Rathika Sitsabaiesan agreed to be interviewed regarding the courting of 'ethnic voters' on the part of federal political parties. Ideally, one MP or former MP from the Liberal Party of Canada would have also been included in the study, but none of the previously identified Liberal party members responded to the request. There is a possibility that

this lack of a response has something to do with the nature of the topic, and the overall election results which proved to be their worst in decades.

To complement the aforementioned interviews, a number of ethnic media outlets were also contacted for the purposes of inclusion in the study. In total, 12 ethnic media outlets, including print and online media sources were contacted through email to participate in the study. These media outlets represented a number of well-established as well as relatively new ethnic communities in the GTA. Among the well-established community media sources were ethnic media sources from the Italian-Canadian community, the Jewish-Canadian community, and the Chinese-Canadian community. Among the relatively new community media sources that were identified for this study were media from the Indo-Canadian community, the Pakistani-Canadian community and the Punjabi-Canadian community. As with the requests for the MPs and former MPs, requests to these ethnic media sources were almost entirely disregarded. Only around half of the newspapers and online news sources that were contacted replied to the request; among those that did, only two agreed to participate in the study. Staff reporter Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf for the Canadian Jewish News – an independent community newspaper with a circulation of over 35,000 and read by more than 200,000 people each week – participated and provided insight into how more well-established ethnic communities are courted by federal political parties in Canada. Sukhminder Singh Hansra, President of Hansra Group Incorporated – the self-described leader in media in the South Asian-Canadian community consisting of various media outlets ranging from print, social, electronic and promotional items and printing – also willingly participated in the study and provided information concerning how members of a marginally less well-established ethnic community associated with federal political parties and vice versa.

The questions addressed to all of the participants related to the major research questions that initiated the research study from the beginning. The questions did differ to some degree depending on whether the key informant was an MP or an ethnic media representative. Questions relating to the meaning of the term 'ethnic vote', whether a shift from the Liberals to the Conservatives had actually taken place in terms of voting behavior on the part of 'ethnic voters', and how members of ethnic communities feel about being courted by federal political parties were standard throughout all of the one-on-one interviews. Overall, the insight and knowledge gained from the completion of the key informant interviews reaffirmed the belief that key informant interviews were the best possible methodological approach for this particular study.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

i) Selective Constituency Analysis

Table 1 (*page 49*) illustrates the relevant demographics of the top 20 immigrant-concentrated constituencies chosen for this study. As previously mentioned, this number includes individuals under the age of 18 as well as recent newcomers who have not yet acquired citizenship; both groups are therefore ineligible to vote.

Table 2 (*page 50*) shows the election winners from each of the 20 constituencies identified as having the highest density of immigrants residing in them. Included are the election results from the four most recent federal elections; four were chosen because the Conservative Party in its current state was only formed in 2003 after the merger of the Canadian Alliance Party and the federal Progressive Conservative Party. The evidence from Table 2 indicates a dramatic shift in the voting preferences of the members of these constituencies, including their large

immigrant populations. As the table indicates, all 20 of the immigrant-dense constituencies were won by the Liberal Party in both the 2004 and 2006 elections. This is not surprising considering that the Liberal Party has traditionally garnered much of its support from citizens within urban areas and immigrant voters in general as previously mentioned in Traditionally a Liberal Stronghold (see *A Review of Pertinent Literature, section iii*). The election results from 2008

Table 1 – Selective Constituency Analysis Part 1

Constituency	Total Population (#)	Immigrants (#)	% of Immigrants
Scarborough - Rouge River	130 555	88 445	68.0
Scarborough - Agincourt	111 170	75 345	67.8
Mississauga East - Cooksville	126 120	77 095	66.1
Markham - Unionville	126 920	78 810	62.1
York - West	103 600	63 635	61.4
Don Valley East	108 810	66 735	61.3
Richmond	113 520	69 400	61.1
Vancouver South	118 905	71 740	60.3
Willowdale	128 600	77 390	60.2
Etobicoke North	107 110	63 925	59.7
York Centre	112 745	66 995	59.4
Mississauga - Brampton South	135 680	77 585	57.2
Scarborough Centre	106 470	58 525	55.0
Vancouver Kingsway	118 775	64 330	54.2
York South - Weston	113 535	61 425	54.1
Richmond Hill	122 185	65 310	53.5
Bramalea - Gore - Malton	152 310	80 845	53.1
Scarborough - Guildwood	107 745	56 915	52.8
Davenport	103 930	54 925	52.8
Mississauga-Erindale	142 895	74 065	51.8

Source: Statistics Canada. (2008). *Federal Electoral District (FED) Profile, 2006 Census*.

indicate a minor shift in voting preferences as two of the 20 ridings were wrestled away from the Liberal Party by the Conservative Party and one by the NDP; corroborating much of the pertinent literature concerning the topic. As anticipated, the election results from 2011 indicate a

Table 2 – Selective Constituency Analysis Part 2

Constituency	Election Result - 2004	Election Result - 2006	Election Result - 2008	Election Result - 2011
Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative
York Centre	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative
Scarborough - Guildwood	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Scarborough Centre	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative
Mississauga-Brampton South	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative
Mississauga-Erindale	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative	Conservative
Mississauga East-Cooksville	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative
Scarborough-Rouge River	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	NDP
Vancouver South	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative
Richmond	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative	Conservative
Davenport	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	NDP
Vancouver Kingsway	Liberal	Liberal	NDP	NDP
York South-Weston	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	NDP
Richmond Hill	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative
Scarborough-Agincourt	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
York-West	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Markham-Unionville	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Don Valley East	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative
Etobicoke North	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal
Willowdale	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Conservative

Source: *Elections Canada. (2004b), (2006), (2008), (2011)*

much more dramatic transformation of the voting preferences of the constituents within these ridings. As shown, 15 of the 20 were won by parties other than the Liberal Party in the 2011 election with 11 of them having been won by the CPC and the remaining four won by the NDP. This transformation is remarkable for two central reasons. First, it is clear that the Liberal Party has suffered a tremendous loss in terms of constituencies in urban and suburban areas which it had up until this most recent election maintained a monopoly over. Second, CPC gains made in these urban and suburban constituencies are nothing short of extraordinary and provide evidence of a movement of support from immigrant-dense constituencies toward the CPC – and to a lesser extent the NDP – and away from the Liberal Party and as much of the literature has suggested. Specifically in the GTA, the loss of 12 historically held seats represents a severe defeat for the Liberal Party, one of many indications that a major makeover may be in order. Table 3 illuminates just how drastic shifts in the voting preferences of all citizens in the GTA over the last four federal elections; ‘ethnic voters’ included.

Table 3 – Federal Seats in the GTA since 2004

Federal Seats in the GTA	2004 Election	2006 Election	2008 Election	2011 Election
Liberal Party	40	36	32	7
CPC	6	8	13	32
NDP	1	3	2	8
TOTAL	47	47	47	47

Source: *Elections Canada*. (2004b), (2006), (2008), (2011)

Undeniably, there has been a dramatic shift in the voting preferences of citizens within the GTA over the last four federal elections. This is particularly true with respect to the 17 GTA constituencies chosen for this analysis because of their high concentrations of immigrants. Although the evidence – correlative not causal – presented here does not amount to concrete

evidence of this transition, the results do indicate that a trend does exist. Unfortunately, it will be years before survey research has been conducted and analyzed to determine exactly how great the shift has been. For now, the extraordinary results from this selective constituency analysis do substantiate much of the literature concerning contemporary voting preferences of immigrants in Canadian federal elections.

ii) Key Informant Interviews

Evidence obtained through the four one-on-one key informant interviews was as remarkable as the evidence from the comprehensive constituency analysis. Each key informant provided substantial evidence regarding the ten to 15 questions they were asked. Many of the questions concerned the same topics, while a few were tailored to each informant's experiences and observations for additional insight. Overall, a significant amount of striking information was gathered from the key informant interviews, most of which validated the literature concerning this very topical subject.

First, all key informants were initially asked what they took the term 'ethnic vote' to mean, given that it had been written about incessantly in the lead-up to the 2011 federal election in various Canadian media. Minister Kent stated that to him, the term referred to a demographic of Canadians based on their countries of origin, ethnic origin, linguistic grouping, religious orientation and sometimes socio-economic grouping or association (Interview with Minister Kent). He further outlined the fact that the term, or a synonym for the term has always been there and has been part of every election, certainly since the Second World War. He agreed that there was an "awful lot of attention paid to the political outreach by all parties" to first, second, and third-generation Canadians (Interview with Minister Kent). Staff reporter for the Canadian

Jewish News Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf, agreed to some degree with the Minister, arguing that the term can be based on religion and ethnicity and is basically a “catch-all of different cultural communities across the country” (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf). MP Sitsabaiesan, parliamentary representative for the constituency of Scarborough-Rouge River, had a somewhat different take on the meaning and usage of the term ‘ethnic vote’. She contended that she did not care for the term because in her opinion, the term amounted to “typecasting” of individuals and groups and was consequently “very destructive” (Interview with MP Sitsabaiesan). She declared that everyone in Canada is ethnic, unless they identify as one of the aboriginal peoples because all others are immigrants or descendants of an immigrant and are therefore ethnic. She further referred to the term as contributing to the “siloization of the population” while at the same time promoting the “agenda of divide and conquer” on the part of certain political parties (Interview with MP Sitsabaiesan). Overall, MP Sitsabaiesan stated that she and her party disagreed with the targeting of groups based on the artificially created ‘silos’ within Canadian society; she was not the only one to disagree with the terminology. President of Hansra Media Inc., Sukhminder Singh Hansra, agreed with the MPs’ sentiments stating that he too “always had a problem being categorized in a different spreadsheet as an ‘ethnic voter’ of different community voter” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). However, he also said that he was “somewhat encouraged” by political parties attempting to attract immigrant voters, because his particular community was, after 100 years receiving the “attention that it required in order to have their issues addressed as Canadians” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). Moreover, Mr. Hansra argued that he was somewhat encouraged that political parties had opened their eyes to all voters.

When asked about their observations regarding whether or not the courting of immigrant voters contributes positively to their political integration in Canada, three of the four respondents believed that it did. Minister Kent stated that it is natural for people to want to “feel appreciated” and be recognized for their participation in society (Interview with Minister Kent). He also maintained that in his opinion, a number of groups had not been courted or pursued in the past by any political parties and that members of those communities have “been quite pleased” in the last decade or so, to see that in fact “their votes are important, their participation is important, that the representation of their ethnic religious, socioeconomic, country of origin even, is important” (Interview with Minister Kent). MP Sitsabaiesan argued that in her estimation, it amounted to a “double-edged sword” (Interview with MP Sitsabaiesan). She stated that it was beneficial in the sense that it encourages more people to become civically engaged, but it is also damaging; the process attempts to create group-voting or block-voting, and the men in many ethnic communities are the only ones actively pursued by the parties. She pointed out that in many cases, the men basically go home and tell their female relatives that they support this person or this party and it is “forced upon women in these ethnicized communities” (Interview with MP Sitsabaiesan). Mr. Hansra mentioned that he agreed that the action of persuading immigrant voters was beneficial, because members of his community did enjoy receiving the attention of a politician, but that he also hoped the increased attention his community received during the last federal election campaign would actually “translate into some good policies for the community” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). Reporter Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf did not believe the question was necessarily relevant for the Jewish-Canadian community because in his opinion, it is not a matter of helping the actual community integrate politically because the community is “very well integrated” already (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf). As he mentioned, there

are a lot of mechanisms in the Jewish community that have helped it integrate – economically, socially, and politically – over the last century. Instead, for the community which he represents, the help has “gone the other way” to the political parties which have “been able to capture the minds or the heart of the community; they are the ones who are the beneficiaries”, anecdotally speaking (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf).

With respect to possible changes in the voting behavior of immigrants and visible minority group members in Canada, all of the key informants agreed that a transformation had taken place over the last decade or so, with many attributing the change to the drastic increase in the courting practices of one particular party. Minister Kent also pointed to the “complacency on the part of the Liberals” as the biggest single explanation for the dramatic shift (Interview with Minister Kent). He argued that the Liberals took groups which had long supported them either regionally in Canada or in national representation “for granted” and although it took a few elections longer than he anticipated, those communities did “begin to see the light” in the last decade with it culminating in the last election when his party witnessed some “fairly significant swings in support” (Interview with Minister Kent). He observed a lot of former Liberal supporters voting for the Conservative candidate in their constituency and the Conservative Party overall for the first time in their lives. He also mentioned that the other big factor coinciding with that is that after five years in power, the Conservative government had built a credible reputation for managing the economy in difficult times in a minority situation and the security and continued stability that voters saw in the Conservative Party had nothing to do necessarily with ethno-cultural or religious background (Interview with Minister Kent). Reporter Andy Levy- Ajzenkopf also stated that the results of the last federal election “speak for themselves”; the Conservatives won a strong majority (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf). In his opinion,

the Jewish-Canadian community likely voted primarily Conservative, although he conceded that he did not have the numbers to verify it. Moreover, he believed that there were likely more Jewish voters supporting the Conservatives this time around than the Liberals. He argued that from his perspective, this likely had less to do with the Conservative Party targeting the ethnic community and using various issues to sway the Jewish vote, "than it was a matter of the Liberal party not having a strong enough voice or a strong enough leader or a strong enough party" with a "platform that was recognizable and relatable to the community" (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf). According to Levy-Ajzenkopf, that allowed the Conservatives to get more of the vote this time around. He believed that the Liberals "missed an opportunity to get back in the game" after the last three or four elections; "they just did not seem to have a focus to their campaign, whereas the Conservatives with the economic platform, with talking about Israel a lot, seemed to resonate more" because there was a focused message (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf). Whether the message was correct or not, it was there, whereas the Liberal party just seemed to be tuned out and did not grab that attention back, he persisted. Mr. Hansra also noticed a shift in the voting preferences of members of the Sikh-Canadian and Punjabi-Canadian communities. In his opinion, the shift was primarily initiated by stronger communication on the part of CIC Minister Kenney and the Conservative Party in general (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). Aggressive communication and being with the community at events and festivals were two reasons that Mr. Hansra believed the Conservatives had done so well. With respect to the Liberals, he mentioned that the liberalism of Pierre Trudeau was absent now and that people were seeing that the Liberals had become more and more "blue" while the Conservatives had become more "red" in their approach (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). As he stated, many immigrants who came to Canada in the 1970s fell in love with Trudeau's policies and the

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. By default, he explained, those immigrants became Liberals; “we never tried any other party, and we never did any homework trying to analyze what other parties stood for in terms of the issues”, Mr. Hansra continued (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). Moreover, over the last three or four decades, “the community has become mature enough and can afford to try other parties” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). Also, Mr. Hansra identified that there are a lot of young people who have migrated to Canada in the last decade or so, and those immigrants do not have any knowledge of Trudeau, and no other PM from the Liberal Party was able to extraordinarily convince the newcomers that it was the party for them. To Mr. Hansra, “there remains no compelling reason for new Canadians from ethnic communities to stick with the Liberals” so they are trying out the Conservatives and in some cases the NDP (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). This is the first time that Mr. Hansra acknowledged seeing a big shift away from the Liberals. MP Sitsabaiesan also admitted that a shift has occurred and she pointed to the fact that we have seen more immigrants enter Canada from certain parts of the world that are more conservative in terms of their fiscal policy. She argued that there is a big difference between social and fiscal policies and that many people are conservative in their personal lives but not as conservative with respect to their social policy preferences. She mentioned that ‘South Asian’ immigrants for example, although she objected to the term, are traditionally very conservative with money in terms of personal use but when it comes to the community as a whole they are very giving (Interview with MP Sitsabaiesan). According to her, because of the “propaganda machinery” that the Conservative Party has, along with “good targeted messaging”, they are able to tell people that the major issue is about putting more money into their bank accounts (Interview with MP Sitsabaiesan). She also pointed out that less than half a million more Canadians voted for

the Conservatives than for the NDP and that the NDP had infringed on traditional Liberal constituencies; winning eight seats in the 2011 federal election in the GTA and subsequently contributing to the Liberal Party's relative demise.

There were also indications from the key informant responses that specific ethnic communities had different types of policy initiatives that mattered most to them. For the Jewish-Canadian community for example, foreign policy with respect to the nation of Israel seemed to be paramount. As Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf pointed out during our one-on-one interview, foreign policy is not always the main issue for Jewish-Canadians, but over the last half-decade or so, it has become a huge issue for the community; at least for those who are very concerned about Israel, not because they need a government to say they "stand with Israel no matter what" – which is always nice to hear for the vast majority who are pro-Israel – but "due to the existential threat to Israel" from countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, from Hezbollah in Lebanon, or Hamas in Gaza (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf). As he identified, the "actual physical threat to Israel has increased exponentially" since the revelations that Iran is developing nuclear capabilities and so that is something that has weighed heavily on the minds of Jewish-Canadians; what's more, any ally that Israel can have is one that the community "will pick up on and will be appreciative of" (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf). Therefore, with the Conservative government very forcefully proclaiming that it will "stand with Israel on principle no matter what" because democracy is required in the Middle East, the "community has its antenna up" because of the fact that Israel seems to be "isolated on the world stage now more than ever" (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf). That type of rhetoric undoubtedly resonates with the community and that is something that the Conservative Party either picked up on intuitively or it simply represents an expression of the party's natural allegiance. That is a message that at this

time in history is very important for the Jewish Canadian community and undoubtedly Jewish communities elsewhere around the world. In Canada, they “have heard it from the Conservative government and it was a strong message”; they “did not hear it as forcefully from the Liberal camp and that was a major difference maker is swaying a lot of votes in that regard”, according to Mr. Levy-Ajzenkopf (Interview with Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf).

Foreign policy initiatives are clearly important to other immigrant communities within Canada as well. For the Sikh-Canadian and Punjabi-Canadian communities, foreign policy was always handled well by the Liberals. According to Mr. Hansra, Canada looks good on the international stage when the Liberals are in Ottawa; “we look tough when the Conservatives are, and Canada is not a tough country” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). Furthermore, Canada “does not look good throwing bombs”; Canada looks good “initiating dialogue to solve conflicts in the world” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). As stated in the interview, Canada has lost its way with respect to human rights protection and that is alarming; Canada is “losing ground on that”, because we are trying to become “more macho, rather than maintaining a professional approach to conflicts” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). Mr. Hansra further stated that Canada can play a better role keeping the peace than trying to make the peace; a sentiment shared by a number of Canadians of all ethnicities and immigration statuses.

Although foreign policy initiatives are important for the Punjabi-Canadian and Sikh-Canadian communities, other domestic policies seem to be more imperative, at least at this point in time. Chief among these domestic policies in the GTA and Peel Region specifically, where there is a concentration of Punjabi and Sikh-Canadian voters is health services. Mr. Hansra argued that in his opinion, and the opinion of many members of the community he serves, health services are deteriorating. One major concern he identified was the Brampton Civic hospital;

particularly “the state of the hospital along with the fact that it does not operate at full capacity” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). He recognized that constitutionally, health is a provincial matter but also stated that even though that may be the case constitutionally, in reality, everything is tangled and health is both a provincial and federal matter. He mentioned that every time someone from his community questions hospital management, the only reason they are given is that they are awaiting funding and therefore do not have the capabilities to operate at a higher capacity. He identified crime and immigration as two other issues that are always relevant for community members. Backlogs in immigration in Brampton particularly “are getting worse” and obviously immigration is an issue for all Canadians because if we do not receive enough immigrants, “our economy will suffer”, he indicated (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). Furthermore, he added that these experimental policies of trying to bring people from here but not from there, or this type of person from here and not that type of person is becoming increasingly problematic and is hurting families. He also mentioned that in his opinion, the government is more serious about “bringing more educated people to Canada”, even though within Canada, a lot of associations that regulate professionals, whether it is the College of Physicians or others, would not even allow professionals from elsewhere to practice in Canada unless they go through school again; “you cannot expect a 40 year old immigrant professional to go back to school before they can start working here” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra). According to Mr. Hansra, the government needs to find a balance, and it has failed to do so up to this point. Overall, Mr. Hansra identified that Sikh and Punjabi-Canadians had been very influential in Conservative victories in Mississauga and Brampton, but that it was now time for the Conservatives to actually address the policy concerns that were important to them. In his words, “hopefully the attention that we got during the election campaign from Harper and his

party will translate into some good policies for the community; if it does not, obviously that becomes rather damaging or a rather deceiving notion” (Interview with Sukhminder Singh Hansra).

Overall, after analyzing the information gathered through the one-on-one interview process, a number of important factors stood out as being particularly relevant to this topic. First and foremost, all respondents admitted that the courting of ‘ethnic voters’ on the part of federal political parties is not a new phenomenon; rather, it has been going on for decades, likely with a lesser degree of visibility. Secondly, there is no doubt that the Conservative Party has made significant and potentially decisive waves among immigrant and ethnic minority voters in Canada at the expense of the Liberal Party; undoubtedly as a result of their intense and unrelenting courting of these communities. Thirdly, the courting of immigrant and ethnic minority voters is a double-edged sword; on the one hand it contributes to the civic engagement and political integration of voters from said communities which is positive; on the other hand, it serves to divide and separate members of these communities from Canadian-born citizens. Fourthly, different ethnic communities in Canada have different – sometimes opposing – policy concerns and therefore political parties are forced to court certain communities at the expense of others. Finally, it is clear that a shift has occurred with respect to the voting preferences of immigrants and visible minority voters in Canada; the degree of that shift is yet to be determined.

Conclusion

In summary, this study was executed using a number of different research tools. First, one-on-one interviews were completed with key informants including Canadian MPs as well as representatives of ethnic media organizations. Second, a selective constituency analysis was

conducted using the 20 ridings with the highest concentrations of immigrants in Canada. A total of 17 of the 20 ridings are in the GTA, while three others are located in the GVA. Findings from both approaches were then discussed in thorough detail.

The research paper contained four central arguments regarding the courting of ‘ethnic voters’ at the federal level. First, the calculated and methodical approach to courting the ‘ethnic vote’ on the part of the CPC over the last decade was ultimately tremendously successful and the results represent a major alteration in the choices of ‘ethnic voter’ constituencies at the federal level. However, the phenomenon of courting the ‘ethnic vote’ is nothing new; rather, the candor with which the activity is carried out is. Secondly, the ‘ethnic vote’ – so comprehensively courted by the CPC in the run-up to the May 2, 2011 election – extensively contributed to securing the CPC its first majority government in decades. Thirdly, although immigrants and visible minority Canadians are occupying an increasingly influential place in the Canadian body politic, the increased attention paid to ‘ethnic voters’ has not yet translated into improved policies for these groups, and there is no indication that this will change in the near future. Finally, the transformation in voting identification of ‘ethnic voters’ over the last decade is really a combination of Liberal Party ineptitude as well as Conservative Party courting. It appears as though the Conservative Party became aware that the Liberal Party was losing ground overall and in these influential communities in particular, and amplified their efforts accordingly.

Although the evidence provided throughout this major research paper is not definitive in demonstrating how individual ‘ethnic voters’ actually cast their ballots – due to the constraints of acquiring accurate results relating to the voting behavior of all individual Canadians – patterns at the constituency scale have been identified and should contribute substantially to the discourse regarding the targeting of ‘ethnic voters’ and the political party identification of immigrants in

Canada. Although the evidence – correlative not causal – presented here does not amount to concrete proof of the aforementioned transition, a strong and volatile pattern of voting outcomes has been presented for Canada's 20 most diverse constituencies. There is no doubt that a transition has taken place to some degree, and it is reasonable to assume that the efforts of the CPC along with the complacency and general ineptitude of the Liberal Party following the sponsorship scandal and attempts at forming coalitions with other parties while in opposition are responsible for this significant transition.

Another point of contention that is evident following the key informant interviews is the question of whether or not 'ethnic voters' believe that being targeted is destructive. On the one hand, some of the key informants expressed the idea that being targeted by political parties was beneficial, not only to get their voices heard but also as a way to encourage other members of their communities to become politically involved. On the other hand, the sentiment that individuals do not like to be categorized as 'ethnic' or different and subsequently courted as such was also articulated. Undoubtedly, there remains a very fine line between the benefits of being appealed to, and the drawbacks of being heard and considered merely as different or 'ethnic'. Over time, all Canadians regardless of their ethnicity, race, immigrant-status and constituency must be appealed to the same; simply as Canadians, if comprehensive integration is the ultimate goal.

Minister Kenney identified that the key to Conservative victory was the support of newcomer groups in Canada back in the middle of the 1990s and plans were subsequently put in motion to achieve this goal. The transition was not immediate, but over time, the evidence suggests that the methodical work paid off in the ballot box. It is now in the hands of Harper's majority government to implement policies that appeal to members of these targeted

communities, or risk a reversion in terms of their party identification. Moreover, it is clear that the Liberal Party must reorganize and reconfigure its goals in order to avoid seeing a similar result in four years. Overall complacency in relating to 'ethnic voters' and to all Canadians has plagued that party over recent years and a major introspective analysis and transformation may be necessary in order for it to remain relevant. For their part, the NDP simply needs to continue to increase their visibility and expression of what their party stands for. Obvious gains have been made exemplified most obviously in their new role as Canada's Official Opposition in the House of Commons.

In closing, undoubtedly there remains something unnerving about the courting of 'ethnic voters' on the part of political parties. The manipulation of these voters and voters in general is something that has occurred since Liberal democracies were formed and is nothing new. At present, it is up to the majority government to show the voters they so heavily targeted that their votes were not cast in vain. Immigrants and visible minority group members continue to face harsh realities in Canada including: general discrimination, foreign credential recognition, poor labour-market outcomes and lackluster immigration policies. The situation facing these individuals must be improved by all governments no matter where they sit on the political spectrum. This is particularly true in the case of the new majority government which has four years to essentially implement any policies it considers appropriate. If they fail to improve the overall conditions of those they so actively pursued, it would not be shocking to see a major alteration again in four years; only time will tell.

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