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UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF VISIBLE MINORITIES IN CANADA'S POLITICAL
SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN TORONTO

by

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A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role identity plays in Canadian politics, taking the Chinese community in Toronto as a case study. The study aims to answer two general questions: why is the Chinese community in Toronto statistically under-represented in Canada's municipal, provincial and federal elected positions? What is the community's perception of political representation and participation and their future role in Canadian politics? This study concludes that the patterns of racial minority political representation and participation are shaped by both their cultural tradition in their countries of origin and their experiences in Canadian society. The dual status of immigrants and visible minority has negatively affected their capacity to participation. Unfavorable political opportunity structure for visible minorities in general also constitutes systemic barriers for Chinese Canadians' political representation. The Chinese community is aware of their weak political status in Toronto and seeking ways to improve the situation.

Key Words: political representation; political participation; Toronto; identity politics; the Chinese community.

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Chapter One The Problem of Chinese Canadians' Political Representation

Introduction

This study aims at examining the role identity plays in Canadian politics. The focus of the study is on the Chinese community in Toronto. The study will explore the following questions: why is the Chinese community in Toronto statistically under-represented in Canada's municipal, provincial and federal elected positions? What are the barriers preventing people of Chinese origin from participating in politics? What is the community's reaction to the situation? What is the role of identity in political representation? What steps can be taken to increase the Chinese community and other visible minorities' political representation?

The Toronto Metropolitan Area (hereinafter, CMA), is indisputably among the most diverse urban centers in Canada. According to the 2001 Canadian census, 18.4 percent of all Canadians were born outside Canada, but the percentage is much higher in the Toronto CMA, where the foreign-born population represents 43.7 percent of total population (Statistics Canada, 2005a). In addition, just in 2005, 112,790 immigrants arrived in the Toronto CMA (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006). The Toronto CMA attracts almost half of all newcomers to Canada (Anisef & Lanphier, 2003: 3). Immigrants came from 170 different countries of origin and over one hundred languages are commonly spoken in the city (Ibid: 3). What is more, according to 2001 Canadian Census, about 36.8% of the population in Toronto CMA are members of visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2005b)¹.

Chinese is the second largest visible minority community in Toronto CMA with population of 435,685 (Statistics Canada, 2005c), which constitutes 9% of the total

¹ Percentage is calculated by the author. According to 2001 Census data, the total number of visible minority in Toronto CMA is 1,712,535 and the total population is 4,647,960.

population and 24% of total visible minority population in Toronto CMA. Only the South Asian community is larger by sharing 28% of total visible minority population (Statistics Canada, 2005b). A contrast to the Chinese Canadians' share of the population in Toronto is their low electoral representation. There are only five elected politicians of Chinese origin from the GTA (whose territory as we will see is very similar to the Toronto CMA) in all three levels of government (see Figure 1.1). This represents only 1.5% of the total seats. If we calculate the representation rate by dividing the percentage of population share into the percentage of seats held, we will see the representation rate for the Chinese Canadians in Toronto is only 0.17. If we take the representation rate of 1 as normal, the Chinese are underrepresented by a factor of five in Toronto.

Figure 1.1: Chinese Canadians' Electoral Representation in the GTA

	Total seats	No. of seats held by Chinese-Canadian politicians	Percentage %	% of GTA population	Representation Rate (1 is normal)
federal	45	1	2.2	8.6%	0.26
provincial	44	1	2.3		0.27
municipal	253	3	1.2		0.14
total	342	5	1.5		0.17

Research by other scholars shows that besides British-origin, other groups in Toronto are overrepresented including: Italian community, Jewish community and Polish community (Siemiatycki & Saloojee, 2003). Some visible minority groups have succeeded in raising their electoral representation close to their share of population, for example, the South Asian community in Brampton has a representation rate of 0.73 (Matheson, 2005:27). These studies demonstrate that electoral representation is not equally distributed among ethnoracial groups in Toronto. An article in Chinese press reported that the Indian community is more successful in getting candidates from their own community elected (*Mingpao Daily News*, January 13, 2006). These two communities are comparable because they are both visible

minority communities. Canadians of Indian origin are influenced by their religion. The Indians' four major religions are Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and Sikh. The Sikh believes that religion is inseparable because they think only by possessing power can the belief continue (ibid). Currently there are 300,000 Sikhs of Indian origin in Canada (ibid). At election time, they will strategically encourage voters to vote. This article claims that their voting rate is about 85% in 2006 federal election (ibid). The phenomenon signals the importance of community-based study in order to gain better understanding of what accounts for differences among different community in terms of their political representation? Why are some more successful than others in getting elected? How does identity representation affect a group's fair treatment from governing bodies and policy?

Research shows that identity representation does matter (Siemiatycki & Saloojee, 2003). Myer Siemiatycki and Anver Saloojee's research shows that community activists believe in principle that equitable identity representation would ensure diverse ideas and voices are heard and the impact of policies on distinct communities are appreciated (Ibid). Black and Lakhani (1997) also state that the presence of different ethnic groups in political institutions leads to a more adequate response to their political concerns. That is why many scholars are concerned with the current political system's failure to reflect Canadian diversity (Paul, 2005; Segal, 2004; Siemiatycki & Isin, 1997; Siemiatycki & Saloojee, 2002; Tanguay & Bittle, 2005).

Inequitable representation also betrays Canada's official multiculturalism policy which aims at achieving substantive citizenship for every member of the society. Canada's *Multiculturalism Act* of 1988 states that, "The government of Canada promotes the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing

evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assists them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation (Kymlicka, 1998: 185).” According to the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship, this Act, “is based on the idea that everyone, including the government, is responsible for changes in our society”, and “this includes the elimination of racism and discrimination” (Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, 1991:6). Thus, equitable political participation of immigrants and minorities should be an integral part of the aim of multiculturalism, if multiculturalism were to keep pace with the changing social, political, and economic challenges that Canadians face.

Political participation of various ethnic groups of course does not boil down to whether or not they are present in political institutions. This is nevertheless an important indicator of their level of political integration. As Siemiatycki and Isin (1997) argue, “elections are an important, if inherently ambiguous measure of political participation and belonging”. Political participation is a way to measure how well an immigrant community is integrated into the host society and how the society is willing to embrace diverse communities into the dominant culture. As the Executive Director of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society Fariborz Birjandian argues, “Civic participation should be looked as the ultimate goal of immigration (Birjandian, 2005: 23).” He argued that participation in civic affairs is the final stage of immigrants’ settlement and integration process. Positive experiences in settlement and integration process lead to willingness to participate in civic affairs, thus a sense of belonging is developed. Therefore, it is important to examine the role of ethnoracial minorities in representative bodies. In particular, it is important to examine the role of visible minorities in urban electoral politics because of the increasing number of visible minorities in urban centers like Toronto.

Existing literature on political participation has not devoted sufficient attention to specific community-based or constituency-based studies. As Carolle Simard (2002)² notes,

There are many issues we could explore to increase our understanding of ethnocultural and visible minority groups and their political participation in Canada. One of the most important is how to increase the representation of groups traditionally left out of the electoral and decision-making processes. In essence, that is also a pathway to encouraging representative democracy.

Multiple and complex factors may explain the Chinese Canadians' absence in elected positions of the governing bodies. To generalize, these involved a mix of dynamics between homeland experiences and culture, and their historical and current experiences in adopted society.

Methodology and Terminology

This study is exploratory in nature. A literature review will provide readers with a good understanding of the topic. Primary research is a major source of information. Primary research in this study includes 10 in-depth interviews with community key informants, four in-depth interviews with elected politicians, 68 surveys, and Chinese newspaper content analysis. Elaborating on their own experiences, politicians' perception of whether or not and how a "Chinese" identity affects their political career offers a better understanding of how identity can play a role in Canadian politics. Community key informants were selected from important Chinese community organization leaders. They are Chinese Canadians who have worked for the Chinese community for a long period of time and have well-grounded knowledge of the Chinese community, therefore they are familiar with the community's political attitudes, political perceptions and political behavior. Some of them are first generation Canadian-born

² Published in the website of "Government of Canada", 2002, Immigration & Social cohesion, 5 (2) Retrieved from http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=v5n2_art_05

of immigrant parents, some of them are immigrants from Hong Kong or Mainland China. Community key informants come from various organizations including the Chinese Cultural Center of Greater Toronto, Chinese Canadian National Council, Counsel for the Ontario Coalition for Chinese Head Tax, National Congress of Chinese Canadians, Toronto Chinese Community Services Association, and the Chinese Professional Association of Canada. 68 Chinese Canadians who are over 18 years old with different immigrant background and socio-economic status were surveyed. They were asked to fill in a short questionnaire designed to answer questions related to the Chinese community and political participation in Canada. Participants were selected through random sampling. Finally, newspaper content analysis on what is reported in *Mingpao Daily News* during the period of 2006 federal election of, the last provincial election of 2003 and the last municipal election of 2003 is used to find out how ethnic media inform the Chinese community about politics in Canada.

As academic study, it is necessary to define the terminology employed in this study. Several key terms recur throughout this paper.

According to Statistics Canada's definition, the term "ethnic origin" refers to the ethnic or cultural groups to which a person's ancestors belonged. The term should not be confused with place of birth, citizenship or nationality. The term itself could be problematic when a person is of mixed race, especially when the person's ancestors have been in interracial marriages generations through generations. That is why some people would simply identify themselves as "Canadians". Some people would identify themselves as having multiple ethnic origins. Canadian Census data have two sets of statistics in terms of ethnic origin, for example, in some statistics, the population of certain groups comprises only those responded as single ethnic origin, in other data, the population includes those responded with

multiple ethnic origins. For example, in 2001 Census, the Chinese population in Toronto CMA by single ethnic origin is 379,550; if included multiple ethnic origins, it would be 435,685 (Statistics Canada, 2005c). In this research paper, when I refer to the Chinese community, I include those people with multiple ethnic origins. That is to say, as long as a person identifies one of their ethnic origins as Chinese, he or she is considered to be Chinese. It makes sense because by reviewing Chinese newspapers, I see that the Chinese community itself regards those politicians with only one parent as Chinese as a member of the Chinese community. To include those politicians in my interviews also provides more comprehensive understanding of the complex issue of identity and how it plays a role in Canadian politics.

According to Statistics Canada's definition, the term "visible minorities" refers to "persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasians in race or non-white in skin color" (Statistics Canada, 2006). In Canada, visible minority groups include Chinese, South Asian, Black, Arab/West Asian, Filipino, and Latin American and so on. If we count the Chinese population in Toronto CMA by visible minority status, it would be 409,530. The number is smaller than by ethnic origin because some Chinese, probably with multiple origins, may not identify themselves as a member of visible minority. In this paper, I will use ethnic origin as a way to calculate the population, but in some cases, in order to compare Chinese population with other visible minorities, I will use the data counted by visible minority status.

As we have seen, there are different geographic definitions of "Toronto". So it is necessary to clarify different terms used to describe "Toronto". Toronto CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) refers to the municipalities assigned by Statistics Canada as comprising the Toronto city-region on the basis of labour market and commuting criteria. It comprised of

the City of Toronto plus 23 surrounding municipalities. The Toronto CMA had population of 4,647,960 in 2001. The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) refers to the City of Toronto plus most but not all of the same surrounding 24 municipalities as the CMA. The surrounding 24 municipalities have been grouped into four regional municipalities: Durham, York, Peel and Halton region. The total population of the GTA was 5,081,826 in 2001. City of Toronto refers to the former Regional Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto which consisted of the former Cities of Toronto, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, York and the Borough of East York. On January 1, 1998, these six municipal jurisdictions were amalgamated to create the new City of Toronto. Situated at the heart of the Toronto city-region, its population was 2,481,404 in 2001.

In order to understand the rate of electoral representation of the Chinese community in Toronto, I need to find out who is of Chinese origin among all elected Federal, Provincial, and Municipal level politicians. In attempting to determine the identities of the politicians whose constituency is in the GTA, I share with other researchers' emphasis on the objective dimension of ancestry and adopt Black's methodology, which are the combinations of biographic material and the analysis of surnames. There are only about one hundred characters that can be used as a person's surname. Because I am a Chinese, I am quite familiar with those characters. Even though the spelling of the same character may be slightly different in Mandarin and Cantonese, it is not unrecognizable. With the help of governmental websites, I first looked at the MPs, MPPs, and city councillors' surnames, and then looked at their photos to further confirm my judgement. Then I researched various website to find as much biographic information as possible to verify their ethnic background. What makes my judgement more convincing is the Chinese newspaper's report on politicians

of Chinese origin. Finally, in all of the interviews I conducted with politicians of Chinese origin, I asked them if they would identify themselves as being Chinese. Of course this is more subjective way of identify their origin, but they often also give me more objective information about their parents' ancestry and their birth place, so the process of identifying the ethnic origins of those politicians has greater certainty.

Literature Review

In this section, I will review relevant literature on competing theories of race and ethnicity in Canadian politics, then focus on the electoral representation of various ethnoracial groups in Canada, and finally on studies specifically devoted to immigrant and visible minority political participation.

Race and ethnicity has long been ignored by some Canadian political-science literature (Daiva Stasiulis, 1995). Canadian political scientists have preferred to view “real” politics as shaped by regional, class, or federal-provincial relations (ibid.). The discussion of race and ethnicity in political representation and participation is a quite recent phenomenon. The existing literature focuses to answer the following questions: How have race and ethnicity been represented in Canadian state institutions and policies? To what extent should Canadian public institutions accommodate ethnoracial diversity? How accessible have Canadian political institutions been to ethnic and racial minority groups and their concerns? What roles have ethnic minorities played in Canadian public institutions? Why do visible minorities continue to be under-represented in key political institutions such as cabinet and federal parliament? Theories emerged among the existing literature includes political inclusion, substantive citizenship, identity representation and group representation, political

opportunity structure for visible minority representation, and alternative political participation.

Among these theories, the most controversial one is group representation. Some scholars believe that group representation is necessary and we need to reform the current political system to secure group seats, while others believe identity-based representation will only do harm to Canada. For example, Kymlicka (1998) believes that group representation is necessary when the groups define themselves in terms of a common sense of “identity” or “community”. Kymlicka (1998) also believes that group representation rights can be justified on two contextual arguments: overcoming systemic disadvantage and securing self-government. Schouls (1991) argues that active reform to secure groups seats in the House of Commons is a healthy democratic response to historically marginalized groups. However, other scholars have been more skeptical. Redekop (1991) argues that identity-based representation would increase fragmentation in Canada and “raise insoluble problems of boundary and number” and undermine democracy by reinforcing ethnic tensions and rivalries. He also argues minority voices in parliament have little influence on legislative output. Many studies also share this concern. They point out that member of the groups may not identify themselves as attached to the group, thus may not promote the interests of that group or community. Thus the role of identity in Canada’s political system remains unclear. We need more empirical evidence to support or refute either point of view. By interviewing politicians of Chinese origin, the role of identity in Canada’s political system will be further explored.

Though scholars acknowledge the complex relationship between statistical or numerical representation and substantive representation, researchers generally accept the number of elected politicians as an indicator to measure political representation. Efforts to

study the ethnic origins of elected members at the three levels of government have been very limited. The first kind of this study was undertaken by Roman March for the Royal commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Royal Commission, 1970). He found that from Confederation until 1964, the non-British, non-French groups became increasingly under-represented in the House of Commons in comparison with their growing proportions in the Canadian population. Only a total of 97 individuals of non-British, non-French origin were MPs between 1867 and 1964. Among the minority communities, Germans, Ukrainians and Jews, had the largest number of MPs. Visible minorities, in particular, had weaker or negligible membership in the federal legislature. Since 1965, the statistical representation of ethnic and visible minorities in federal election has improved significantly and continuously, from 9.4 percent in 1965 to 16.3 percent in 1988 (Pelletier, 1991: 129). But the increase is primary due to participation of Europeans, and was much smaller for visible minorities. The latter varied in their representation from 0.8 % in 1968 to 2.0% in 1988 (ibid.). The 1993 election accelerated ethnic minorities' gains in entering Parliament. Their percentage of Parliament (24.7%) is compared fairly well to their level in the population at large (27%) (Black, 1997: 6). Visible minorities also made dramatic gains in the 1993 election, specifically going from five to thirteen MPs. These thirteen MPs increased visible minorities' representation from 2.0% in 1988 to 4.4 % in 1993. But in contrast to ethnic minorities at large, who have fairly achieved proportional representation, visible minorities continued to be starkly under-represented in comparison with their population base, only 4.4% of all MPs in comparison with 9.4% of the total population (Ibid.). Compared to the 1993 election, the most prominent feature of change in the 1997 election was the greater number of MPs who were visible minorities (Black, 2000). The number increased from 13 to

19, with percentage of all MPs from 4.4% to 6.3% (Ibid). But compared to their share of population of 11.2% on the basis of the 1996 Census, visible minorities remained underrepresented, and just moved past the half-way mark toward the achievement of proportionality (Ibid). Visible minorities continue to be underrepresented today in relation to their proportions in Canadian society even though their representation rates are constantly increasing. But we if divide the percentage of visible minority politicians in the House of Commons into the percentage of visible minorities in the general population, we see that the continual linear gains are not occurring and the half way mark to proportional representation is proving difficult to break through (Matheson, 2005: 20).

Even though there are increasing numbers of studies undertaken on the composition of the House along “ethnoracial minority” lines, there are not many studies focusing on a specific region or specific community or specific constituency to obtain a better understanding of factors contributed to the under-representation of visible minorities in Canada’s political system. Some scholars have focused their attention on Montreal and Toronto regional studies (Simard, 2000; Fernand, 2003; Siemiatycki & Saloojee, 2003,). There are also some community-based studies (Fernando 2003; Matheson, 2005). However, it is not sufficient. As Stasiulis (1997) noticed in her review of existing literature on political participation of immigrants and visible minorities, more community-based study is needed to fill in gaps in research, to further understand a community’s “political culture”, its institutions and leadership patterns, its partisan strategies, and group mobilization. The only study to focus specifically on the Chinese community’s political participation in Canada is Fernando’s doctoral thesis *Political Participation in the Multicultural City: A Case Study of Chinese Canadians and Chinese Americans in Toronto and Los Angeles*. In this paper, she

examines ethnoculturally specific community groups that serve Chinese Canadians and Chinese Americans as both forms of and facilitators of political participation. The reason that the author wanted to look at the Chinese Canadians and Chinese Americans' involvement in these groups work as a route to political participation lies in the fact that many of them are not involved in mainstream politics of their cities and countries (Fernando, 2003). But the author herself acknowledges that participating in community organizations, which are in parallel with mainstream democratic institutions, "represents a political process on the margins and therefore have both their present uses and limitations". Therefore, participation in the mainstream institutions should also be examined to address the issue of political inclusion.

My study focusing on the Chinese community is a noteworthy case study to provide further understanding of immigrants and visible minority's electoral participation by examining the barriers that prevent Chinese Canadians from participating in Canadian politics, including the influence of Chinese culture on the community's political views, political attitudes and political behavior. Chinese culture itself is a big topic, in my paper, I only discuss the elements in relation to political participation. Many western scholars simply emphasize the Chinese community's lack of homeland democratic experience (Siemiatycki & Saloojee, 2003), but additional factors are important in explaining patterns of the Chinese community political participation in Canada. The influence of the Chinese culture in home countries is a complex issue, and when the culture is transplanted to Canada, it may evolve and change in the new land depending on who comes to Canada, from where they come from and the community's historical and current relationship with the mainstream society.

As an insider of the Chinese community, I have both limitations and advantages in doing this research. The limitations are obvious. I, being a person educated in Chinese cultural system, might have my own personal bias on Chinese culture when I try to demonstrate what elements of Chinese culture may influence Chinese Canadians political participation in Canada. So, will I be taken seriously as a researcher presenting legitimate and important facts? Am I risking being seen as “having an axe to grind” as a racialized researcher talking about racism? To the first question, I believe I have tried my best to be as neutral as possible in evaluating the influence of Chinese culture on political participation of Chinese Canadians. I did not ask the question to the community key informants: do you think there are cultural factors which can explain the patterns of Chinese Canadian political participation? Instead, I ask the general question first, what do you think could be the factors causing the electoral under-representation of the Chinese community in Toronto? It is the interviewees’ freedom to decide what factors are more significant. During the interview process, I tried to be as objective as possible and consciously neutralized my values when I analyzed the interview material. Further, I believe, as an insider, that my observations about Chinese culture are less superficial and less simplified. As to the second question, I can not deny that I have experienced being racialized in this way or that way and being discriminated in this case or that case. My own settlement experience in Toronto will partly influence the way I look at Canadian society, but I believe in what Bannerji (2000) believes, “the personal is political” and “the political is personal”. My experience is just another live example of a Chinese Canadian newcomer’s experience in Toronto. Nonetheless, it is nice to include the perspective from somebody outside of the Chinese community. So a non-Chinese politician is included in my schedule of interviews.

Many scholars tend to assume the political behaviour of non-immigrants or dominant Canadian forms as the normative ideal, so they often evaluate immigrants and visible minorities' political participation based on comparison with non-immigrants or British immigrants. This kind of research orientation has caused some contradictory conclusions in terms of the general issue of immigrants and visible minorities' political participation. As Stasiulis (1997) noticed existing studies have demonstrated divergent opinions and contradictory evidences in some debates about the nature of ethnocultural minorities' political participation. The first debate was to address the question of whether immigrant participation rates match those of non-immigrants. Research in 1970s suggested that "immigrant political involvement was lower than that of non-immigrants" (Richmond & Goldlust, 1977). However study conducted in 1980s, suggested that on the contrary, immigrants participated in politics as much as people born in Canada (Black, 1987). The second debate is on the relationship between intensity of ethnic identity and political participation. Reitz' research in 1980s argues that strong ethnic identity and "loyalty to the culture of one's country of origin means that the sacrifice of participation in the larger society" (Reitz, 1980: 226). However, a fact, which demonstrates strong ties with homeland does not sacrifice political participation in larger society, is that some communities have used community work including homeland-oriented activity to build a political base for themselves (Stasiulis, 1997). Thirdly, there is a conventional view in political literature that "immigrants migrated from non-democratic regimes have difficulty bringing their past political experiences to bear in the new Canadian context" (Stasiulis, 1997). However, Black (1987) argues that, when immigrants become more established in Canada, they are able to

transfer their past political experiences to the Canadian political setting even though they are from non-democratic countries.

By focusing on the Chinese community, my study will contribute to the general debates on the nature of immigrant communities' political participation by adding more empirical evidences. Firstly, as you will see in the next chapter, most Chinese are recent immigrants. If immigrants are less active than non-immigrants, then we will expect the Chinese community to be less active in Canadian politics. That is one of the major questions I will address: does immigrant status matter much in terms of political participation? And if it does matters, how does it affect their ability to participate in Canadian politics? Secondly, historically the Chinese community was seen as a community who has strong ethnic cultural and linguistic ties with home country, and today's Chinese ethnic media market is very large, which may suggest the strong linguistic ties with home language. Linking to the second debate, we will wonder if the Chinese community's intense identity will prevent them from participation in the larger community, or the opposite is true. Finally, Chinese immigrants especially those who came from Mainland China have very little experiences with democratic political process. Does lack of democratic experience hinder their capacity to transfer their past political experiences to the Canadian political setting? Is it a significant factor, which prohibits Chinese immigrants from participation in Canadian democratic process? By adding another specific case to the general studies, better understanding around the debates of immigrants and visible minority' political participation will be gained. I believe analysis about immigrants' political participation applies to the Chinese community as well. And analysis on the Chinese community specifically will not only further our understanding of the community, but also add to our knowledge of the more general issue of

visible minority's political representation and participation. Of course, the focus of this research is on the electoral representation, I will not be able to measure other forms of political participation, for example, campaign activity, communal activity, contacting politicians, and involvement in protest movements.

Chapter Two The Chinese Presence in Toronto

The Chinese as a Racial Minority Community in Canada

Scholars today characterize Canada as a pluralist society in which different cultural groups coexist with varying degrees of unity. However, the positions of these cultural groups within the structure of society are not equal, just as the book *the Vertical Mosaic Revisited* suggested (Helmets-Hayes & Curtis, 1998). In order to understand the place of Chinese Canadians in the Canadian political system, it is necessary to examine the changes within the Chinese community itself and the changes in larger society that have shaped relations between the Chinese community and the larger society. Historically, Canada was created as a white settlers' colony for British, and later other European immigrants. A white settler society is defined by Daiva Stasiulus and Nira Yuval Davis (1995: 3) as "a society in which Europeans have settled, where their descendants have remained politically dominant over indigenous peoples, and where a heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic and racial terms." The origin of Canada as a white settlers' society has contributed to the development of systemic racism against the people of color and racialization of different ethnic minority groups. As Kay J. Anderson argues in her book *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada: 1875-1980*, in order to maintain a racially homogeneous society, the state has created the category of "European" to signify "us", while "different" to signify "them" (Anderson, 1991). The distinction between "us" and "them", "white" and "non-white", "insiders" and "outsiders" is a political process known as "racialization" (ibid). It is more accurate to say that the state constructed a racial hierarchy in Canadian society: at the top, British and French, the two founding nations, then the white Europeans, and at the bottom the other immigrants, with perhaps other hierarchies at this level too. Historically,

not all European groups were considered to be a part of Canadian dominant culture, as we can see from the book *The Making of The Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998). Other European groups, including Southern and Eastern Europeans, had been considered “others” and had received discrimination and hostility from the dominant culture groups, the British and French majority. Examples that we can take from the Kelley and Trebilcock’s book include: hostility towards Italian community (ibid: 273) and the restrictions and internments of Italians (ibid: 255), anti-Ukrainian sentiments (ibid: 218-219), and anti-Jewish sentiments (ibid: 218-221; 257; 339). The dichotomy between “us” and “them”, therefore, is negotiable and contestable in nature. As Canadian society progresses, all Europeans today have been included as part of the mainstream society, yet the inclusion does not extent to visible minority groups, illustrated by the fact that they continue to be underrepresented in Canada’ political system.

The nineteenth century witnessed the social construction of an “inferior” Chinese race, with the consequence that Chinese-Canadians were reduced to second-class citizens by the turn of the twentieth century (Li, 1998). The Chinese were not considered as a permanent feature of Canada, but were simply recruited as cheap labour to fill the shortage of white workers. As Peter Li wrote in the preface of his book *The Chinese in Canada*, “the image of Chinese-Canadians as ‘forever foreigner’ and the notion that their different cultural values and habits are incompatible with Canada’s Occidental traditions have become entrenched in Canadian society” (Li,1998). He further argues that, “such biases are part of Canada’s history and culture, and they continue to affect the way Canadians view Chinese immigrants, despite the spectacular social mobility of Chinese Canadians in recent years. (Li, 1998)” When we try to figure out whether or not an identity of “Chinese Canadians” matters in political

representation, we should keep in mind that for much of Chinese Canadians history in Canada, they were victims of prejudice and racism and suffered from hostility and discrimination. As we will see, this legacy continues to impact the political participation of the Chinese community.

The experience of the Chinese in Canadian society can be grouped into four distinct periods. Immigration policy and its implementation gave the federal level of government an enormous opportunity to shape Canada's Chinese ethnic tile.

The first period is their early arrival, from 1858- 1923. Early Chinese immigrants played a remarkable role in the construction of the British Columbia section of the Canadian Pacific Railway. An estimated fifteen hundred Chinese died during this work (Yee, 2000: 5).³ The period had witnessed the emergence of institutional racism against the Chinese. Upon completion of the railway, a head tax of \$50 was imposed on the Chinese immigrants, a tax later raised to \$100 in 1900 and then to \$500 – the equivalent of two years' wages – in 1903. Chinese people were also denied the rights to vote, to own or to work on Crown land, to work on public work, to hold a liquor license or hand-logger's license and to be excluded from nomination for municipal office, services as school trustees, jury duty and election to the provincial legislature (Li, 1998:31-37). Aside from these legislative controls, the Chinese were subjected to frequent racial hostilities and attacks, highlighted by the riots of 1887 and 1907 in Vancouver.

The second period of the Chinese in Canada is the exclusion era, from 1923 to 1947. The Chinese Immigration Act was passed by the federal government in 1923 to ban Chinese immigration. For the next 24 years, virtually no Chinese were allowed to immigrate to Canada, and those already here were denied many civil rights. When the exclusion act went

into effect on July 1, 1923- Dominion Day, as Canada's national holiday was known at the time- Chinese Canadians called it "Humiliation Day" and refused to have anything to do with Dominion Day celebrations for many years.

The development of the Chinese community in Canada before the Second World War was largely constrained by numerous factors over which the Chinese had little control. To assert a white society rooted in European values, the state saw the Chinese as a threat to cultural identity yet a dispensable group of cheap labour. Anti-Chinese sentiments in all levels of Canadian society created extremely harsh living conditions for the Chinese. Under these conditions within the host society, neither assimilation nor integration could be achieved. The only option for them to adapt to the situation was separation/segregation or marginalization. "Subjected to social, economic, and residential segregation, they responded by retreating into their own ethnic enclaves to avoid competition and hostility from white Canadians" (Li,1998:7) They created their own unique social system which enabled them to have minimum contact with the usually hostile dominant group, maintain their old world cultural traditions, unified all the Chinese in a particular locality, protected them from the outside government, and regulated internal commerce, welfare and recreation.

The third period, was a transition period, from 1947 to 1967. With the repeal of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, Chinese immigrants were put under the same rules as other Asian immigrants. The period from 1947 to 1967 represents the era of reunification of Chinese families that had long been separated by discriminatory Canadian laws. This family reunification had a great impact on the Chinese community. First, the shrinking Chinese – Canadian population began to revitalize itself. For example, Toronto's Chinese population increased about 300 percent in the years 1950-1966 (Thompson, 1989: 107). Second, it

gradually altered one feature of “Chinese community”—a bachelor workers’ community. Third, a new Canadian-born generation of Chinese Canadian emerged and assimilation towards larger society was accelerated because of a gradual opening of Canadian society to the Chinese in political, economic, and cultural spheres. In 1948, the federal Dominion Elections Act, which denied Chinese Canadians rights to vote, was repealed (Poy, 2003). The Chinese were also given rights to attend integrated public schools, and allowed to enter universities, the professions and skilled trades. “Canadian-born Chinese integrated into the dominant social system and held occupations, received earnings, and attained an educational level equal to, and sometimes superior to, other Canadians” (Thompson, 1989: 117). This integration even extended to marriage, for the Canadian-born Chinese had a lower rate of endogamy, which refers to marriage within the ethnic group, than did the British Isles, French, and Jewish origin groups (ibid).

The fourth period, is a new community development epoch, from 1967 to the present. The point system finally removed all racial and country of origin distinction in immigration policy which had discriminated against Asian Immigrants. The Chinese community grew dramatically as more and more immigrants arrived from around the world. Before 1923, the majority of Chinese immigrants came directly from China. Most were peasants who had little education and were unable to speak English. Those who arrived after 1967 came from many places, including China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Southern Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Many came from busy urban centres and had professional and technical qualifications. Together with an emergent second generation of Chinese-Canadians, they began to form a new middle class. Nonetheless, what impacts the Chinese community most is the large volume of immigrants coming from Hong

Kong beginning in the 1980s to the mid 1990s, and recent immigrants coming from Mainland China. The most visible growth was the renewal of old Chinatowns and the emergence of thriving commercial centres. International editions of several Chinese newspapers became available. At the same time, Canadian society has changed dramatically in terms of its attitude towards racial minorities. Starting in 1961, federal, provincial and territorial governments passed human rights laws to prevent discrimination. An official national policy of multiculturalism was introduced in 1971 and it became an act in 1988. As well, many cities created race relations committees and devised policies to deal with racial issues. Governments also funded settlement services and language training for immigrants. All these measures try to create an environment in which all immigrants and racial minorities can live and work together as equals. This enables many Chinese immigrants to do well in Canadian society and their full participation in Canadian social life became possible.

Despite a long history in Canada dating back to 1858, as I will show in the next chapter, Canada's Chinese community today largely made up of first-generation immigrants. One reason that immigrants were and continue to be attracted to Canada was the existence of laws that entitled them full and equal rights as citizens. However, the Chinese continue to experience racism and discrimination, which greatly affects their sense of belonging. The history of the Chinese in Canada shows how they were initially racialized and excluded. The mentality in Canadian society to view the Chinese race as foreign, corrupt and criminal, yet hardworking people who keep to themselves, has not totally disappeared. It can still be seen in popular discourse that relies upon this mixed stereotype. These include the characterization of Chinese Canadians as unwanted refugees, ruthless business people or gang members (Creese & Peterson, 1996:137). A good example of such a form of racism in

the mass media was the Canadian newsmagazine program W5 that ran a story called “Campus Giveaway” on September 30, 1979 (Fernando, 2003). This program portrayed “Chinese” students as taking places away from “Canadian” students on university campuses. Most of the students they spoke about were actually Canadians of Chinese origin, yet they were portrayed as “foreigners”.

Another example was the backlash in Scarborough when the first suburban concentration of Chinese commercial activity began to form in Agincourt in 1984. Hundreds of non-Chinese residents and business owners in the surrounding area lodged complaints and protests. Some claimed that “recent ethnic changes in Agincourt threaten the well-being of its residents” (*The Scarborough Mirror* May 30, 1984). At a residents’ meeting, when a suggestion was made that street signs in both English and Chinese be put up, the crowd of nearly all-white audience exploded with decisive shouts of “never” and “let them learn English!” (Ibid). One woman gave out a pamphlet that called the readers to lobby the federal government to change immigration policy and admit less Chinese. (Yee, 2000: 65).

Racialization of Chinese Canadians limits their level of access to opportunity to participate in the political and social system within the country. The freedom to define oneself is taken away by having others marginalize a person by stereotyping all members of a minority group. As I will demonstrate in later chapter, the status of racialized minority in Canada have greatly influence the degree of the Chinese Canadians political participation in Toronto.

Overview of the Chinese Community in Toronto

Next, I will provide a profile of the Chinese community in Toronto. We will look at various attributes of the Chinese community such as population size, place of birth, time of

immigration, language proficiency, citizenship, income and poverty rate and residential pattern.

According to the 2001 Census, a total of 1,094,700 individuals identified themselves as ethnically Chinese, up from 860,100 in 1996. This represents in an increase of almost 20% since 1996. 40% of Chinese Canadians reside in the Toronto CMA, with the population of 435,685 in 2001. Toronto's Chinese population has increased 14% from 1996, when the population was 359,450.

If we use Census of Canada public use microdata files crosstabulation program, and use Toronto CMA and Chinese ethnic origin as filter, we will be able to get some data that gives us a general picture of the Chinese population in Toronto CMA. According to the Census public use microdata files, only 21.8% Chinese in the Toronto CMA were Canadian-born. While 56.3% of Torontonians are Canadian-born, the Chinese are much less likely than other groups of people to be Canadian-born. Of the 78.2% Chinese who were foreign-born, 74.1% were born in Asia (see figure 2.1). Among those who were born in Asia, most of them have come from People's Republic of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and majority (81.9%) of them came after 1980s (see figure 2.2). Over half (57.1%) Chinese immigrants come after 1991. Despite their long history in Canada, the Chinese community is no doubt among the most recent of communities in Toronto. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, this demographic characteristic of the Chinese community has a great impact on the political involvement of the community. Hong Kong has been Toronto's top source country of immigrants from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. Those people who were attracted by Canada's Business Immigration Program came with huge financial capital and entrepreneurial skills and contributed a lot to the development of Chinese community in

Toronto. Starting in 1998 immigrants from mainland China became the top source country, constituting a great number of Mandarin speaking Chinese in Toronto.

Figure 2.1: Birth Place of Chinese Population in Toronto CMA

	Canada	U.S.A.	Europe	Asia	Other	total
Number	94,986	1,370	2,075	322,596	14,570	435,596
Percent %	21.8	0.3	0.6	74.1	3.3	100

Source: UT/DLS microdata analysis and subsetting(electronic resource), (2001 Census). Toronto: University of Toronto, Data Library Service, 2003

According to the 2001 Census, 80.7% people of Chinese origin in Toronto CMA speak English, 4.3% have knowledge of both English and French, and only 15% lack knowledge of either English or French. This compares to only 4% of Torontonians lacking any knowledge of either official language. 28% Chinese in Toronto speak only English at home, and 71% speak non-official language, mainly Chinese at home. 61.2% of Chinese in Toronto who were born in Canada, can speak Chinese.

Figure 2.2: Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration (Toronto CMA)

title	Immigrant status and Period of immigration								total
	Immigrant population	Before 1961	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2001		Non-permanent resident	
						91-95	96-01		
P.R China	136,135	3,935	6,340	14,535	25,975	30,415	54,930	3,970	140,105
Hong Kong	110,735	360	3,970	15,655	35,945	36,645	18,160	1,560	112,295
Macau	2,915	25	260	485	710	980	455	90	3,005
Taiwan	14,765	10	470	1,630	3,095	4,865	4,700	730	15,490
Total	264,550	4330	11,040	65,725	151,150	72,905	78,245	6,350	270,895
Percent %	100	1.6	4.1	12.2	24.8	57.1			

Source: Statistics Canada, Category NO. 97F0009XCB2001002, released Jan 21, 2003

The Chinese population in Toronto has very high rate of taking Canadian citizenship (see Figure 2.3). According to the 2001 Census, 79.1% of Chinese people in Toronto are

Canadian citizen. For those Chinese with Canadian citizenship under 17 years old, 80.6% are Canadian-born. For those aged over 18, most are Canadians by naturalization. Those who are eligible to vote, over 18 years of age, make up of 60.1% of the Chinese population in Toronto. Canadian-born Chinese who are over 18 only make up 6.6% of total Chinese population.

Figure 2.3: Number of the Chinese Acquired Canadian Citizenship in Toronto CMA

Canadian citizen	Canadian by birth	Canadian by naturalization	total	Total Chinese population	Percentage of Chinese population
Age 1-17	67,243	16,194	83,437	435,596	19%
	80.6%	19.4%	100%		
Over age 18	28,781	233,157	261,938		60.1%
	11.0%	89%	100%		
total	100%	100%	100%		

Source: UT/DLS microdata analysis and subsetting (electronic resource), (2001 Census Data). Toronto: University of Toronto, Data Library Service, 2003

The Chinese community share higher rates of poverty, and lower rates of affluence than the average Toronto household. In terms of household income, according to the 2001 Census public use microdata files, 26.3% of Torontonians Chinese households have an income below \$30,000; For Toronto as a whole it is 16.6%. 27.0% of Chinese households earn \$30,000-\$60,000. 25% earn more than \$100,000, compared to 29.4% of Toronto households that earn more than \$100,000.

Using 2001 Census data and GIS (Geography Information System) tool, I created four maps to show Chinese community's residential pattern. Appendix A shows the dot density of the Chinese single response in the GTA, from which we can see that the Chinese population is concentrated in Markham, Richmond Hill, the City of Toronto and Mississauga (also see figure 2.4). Appendix B, C, D and E show the Chinese population concentration level in the City of Toronto, Markham and Richmond Hill and Mississauga. In

the City of Toronto, the Chinese population's concentration level is not very high except in Scarborough (see Appendix B). In Markham, the Census tracts that have Chinese population at concentration level of more than 40% cover more than half of Markham region (see Appendix C). In Richmond Hill, there are also wide areas with high concentration of Chinese population at more than 30% of the total population in the Census Tracts (see Appendix D). In Mississauga the concentration level is not very high (see Appendix E).

Figure 2.4 Proportion of Chinese Population in Key Cities

Key cities	Total population	Chinese population	Chinese population Ratio	Visible Minority total	Percentage of Chinese/total Visible Minority
Markham	208,615	63,890	30.6	115,485	54.0
Richmond Hill	132,030	29,605	22.4	53,180	54.0
Toronto City	2,481,494	273,855	11.0	1,051,125	24.7
-Scarborough*	588,730	105,190	17.9	347,545	30.3
-North York*	615,980	69,230	11.5	262,565	26.4
Old Toronto City and East York*	647,510	64,290	9.6	211,335	30.4
Mississauga	612,925	35,959	5.9	246,330	14.6

Source: 1. Statistics Canada, Profile of Census Divisions and Subdivisions in Ontario Catalogue NO.95-220-NPB, 2. those marked "*", City of Toronto, community council profiles, retrieved in August 19, 2006 from http://www.toronto.ca/committees/community_councils.htm

Electoral Representation of the Chinese Community

As I have shown in Chapter Two, even though the Chinese have a long history in Canada, it was only after the Second World War when they started to gain their civil rights. That said, it is not surprising that they only have their first representative to the federal Parliament in 1957. Doug Jung, Canada's first MP of Chinese descent was elected serving the riding of Vancouver Centre from 1957 to 1962 (Zhang, 1993). Another MP of Chinese descent, Vancouver lawyer Art Lee, were elected to the House of Common in 1974 (ibid).

Beginning in the 1980s, the Chinese community has great development and they become more active in Canadian politics. In 1987's Ontario provincial election, there were four candidates running for office, and one got elected (Ibid). In 1988 Toronto municipal election, there were eleven candidates running for office, and four persons were elected, among which three were school trustees and one was a city councilor (Ibid). But in 1980s there were no MPs of Chinese origin elected across Canada (ibid). In 1990s, Chinese Canadians were continually active in pursuing elected position at the national level (see figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Number of Chinese Candidates and Elected Positions in Federal Election

Year of election	1993	1997	2000	2004	2006
No. of candidates	12	17	15	17	19
No. of elected position	1	3	2	4	5

Source: *Mingpao Daily News*, reports on each federal election in corresponding year

As I have shown, the Chinese have significant presence in Toronto CMA. They have great residential concentration, as shown the maps that I created and Figure 2.4. But the large demographic presence of the Chinese community has not translated into electoral gains.

The Chinese community is underrepresented at all three levels of government. Figure 2.6 shows the percentage of elected positions held by Chinese Canadians compared to their share of population in corresponding region. Their representation rate at the Ontario provincial and Toronto municipal level is only 0.2. If we take 1 as normal, they are underrepresented by a factor of five. The representation of the Chinese community is better across Canada where the rate is 0.4, which is close to break through the half way mark towards proportional representation. It means that in the 2006 federal election the Chinese across Canada have come closer to achieve the same level of electoral representation that was achieved by all visible minorities in Canada's 1997 federal election.

Figure 2.6 Chinese Canadians Electoral Representation at Different Levels of Government

	Total seats	No. of seats held by Chinese-Canadian politicians	Percent %	% of population	Representation Rate (1 is normal)
Federal	308	5	1.6	3.7	0.4
Provincial (Ontario)	103	1	1.0	4.6	0.2
Municipal (City of Toronto)	45	1	2.2	11	0.2

Even though the Chinese are generally badly underrepresented at the national level, the situation is worse across the GTA. Figure 2.7 shows the electoral representation of the Chinese community in the GTA, their representation rate at federal level is only 0.26, much lower than the Chinese community in Canada. At provincial level, the presentation for the Chinese in the GTA is slightly better than the Chinese in Ontario. At municipal level, the representation rate across the entire GTA municipal governments is only 0.14, lower than the rate for the City of Toronto alone.

Figure 2.7: Chinese Canadians Electoral Representation in the GTA

	Total seats	No. of seats held by Chinese-Canadian politicians	Percentage %	% of GTA population	Representation Rate (1 is normal)
federal	45	1	2.2	8.6%	0.26
provincial	44	1	2.3		0.27
municipal	253	3	1.2		0.14

This is surprising because many electoral districts in the suburban area of Toronto have great concentration of the Chinese community. If we take 2003 municipal election in the GTA for example, we can see that the Chinese were unable to turn their large presence in the electoral wards into electoral gains (see figure 2.8). In these ridings, there were 7 candidates, and only one person of Chinese origin was elected. In 2006 federal election, The Greater Toronto Area has ten ridings where the percentage of Chinese population is over

10%. But only four Chinese candidates were running for federal position in those ridings, and only one was elected (see figure 2.9). And it is the same person Olivia Chow, who was elected in 2003 municipal election and 2006 federal election.

Figure 2.8: Municipal 2003 Ridings in the GTA--Selected Ridings with Greatest Concentration of the Chinese Population

Ridings	Chinese Pop. %	No. of Chinese Candidates	Elected Chinese politicians (city councilors)
Richmond Hill Ward 3	47.9	2	0
Toronto Ward 39 (Scarborough-Agincourt)	45.4	0	0
Markham Ward 6	30	2	0
Toronto Ward 30 (Toronto-Danforth)	26.5	0	0
Richmond Hill Ward 1	21.9	1	0
Richmond Hill Ward 6	21.9	1	0
Willowdale	21.3	0	0
Toronto Ward 20 (Trinity-Spandina)	20.4	1	1*
Toronto Ward 33 Don Valley East	20.5	0	0

Source: combined data from *Mingpao Daily News* reported during the month of November 2003 on municipal ridings and Chinese candidates

Figure 2.9: 2006 Federal Ridings in the GTA—Selected Ridings with Greatest Concentration of the Chinese Population

Ridings	Chinese Pop. %	No. of Chinese Candidates	Elected Chinese politicians
Markham-Unionville	38.2	1	0
Scarborough-Agincourt	38.1	0	0
Scarborough-Rouge River	35.1	0	0
Willowdale	28.6	0	0
Richmond Hill	24.2	0	0
Trinity-Spadina	18.9	2	1*
Toronto Danforth	18.7	0	0
Oak Ridges- Markham	15.8	0	0
Don Valley West	15.0	1	0
Scarborough Centre	11.1	0	0
Thornhill	11.0	0	0

Source: combined data from *Mingpao Daily News* reported during the month of January 2006 on federal ridings and Chinese candidates. Note: mark with “*”, same person—Olivia Chow

Chapter Three the Chinese Community Perspective of Canadian Politics

Survey Results

In Chapter Two, I listed a set of statistics, all to show that the Chinese community is extremely underrepresented in elected positions. But this does not show us the whole picture of the degree that the community participates in Canadian politics and what are the underlying issues of those numbers. In this chapter, I attempt to give the reader a more comprehensive picture of Chinese Canadians political participation in Toronto, their political attitudes and political behavior. I also try to provide an explanation for the reasons why the Chinese community is so underrepresented in Canadian government from the perspective of the ordinary Chinese Canadians who participated in this research.

The author designed a questionnaire with questions about the Chinese community and politics in Canada. There are a total of fifteen single choice questions and four open questions. For the open questions, if the respondents answer the questions, they can give more than one answer to the questions. So the percentage for each answer will add up to more than 100%. The author went to Chinese shopping malls and Chinese group meetings at different locations to do the survey. The purpose was to make the sample as random as possible. Eleven surveys were conducted at Pacific Mall, another eleven surveys at First Markham Place, and sixteen surveys at Central Chinatown. Another thirty five surveys were conducted on Canada Day when there were hundreds of Chinese Canadians from different Chinese community organizations and the Chinese from various locations across Toronto coming to watch the demonstration and performance at Young and Dundas Square. The author would stop each person that looks like Chinese and ask them if they are Chinese and if they are over 18. The reason that we only survey people who are over 18 is because this is

the age that they can start to exercise their rights to vote and they can participate in my research without the consent of their parents. In total 71 questionnaires were handed out. Three surveys were invalid because the respondents only had temporary status in Canada, for example, a visa student or traveler. There were 44 males and 27 females involving in the survey. Figure 3.1, Figure 3.2, Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4 shows the basic characteristics of the sample. It includes three invalid respondents, but my analysis of the survey results will be based on the 68 valid surveys.

Figure 3.1: Respondents' Birth Place

	Mainland China	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Canada	Other countries	total	Missing	total
Number	43	15	3	3	1	65	6	71
Percent %	60.6	21.1	4.2	4.2	1.4	91.6	8.4	100

Figure 3.2: Respondents' Levels of Education

	High school and below	college	Bachelor degree	Master degree	Doctoral degree	Total valid
Number	6	16	39	8	2	71
Percent %	8.4	22.2	55.5	11.1	2.8	100

Figure 3.3: Respondents' Age

	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-64	Above 65	total
No. of Female	6	6	11	3	1	27
No. of male	8	13	16	5	2	44
Total	14	19	27	8	3	71
Percent %	19.7	26.7	38.0	11.3	4.2	100

Figure 3.4: Respondents' Status

	Permanent resident	Canadian citizen	neither	total
number	30	38	3	71
Percentage	42.3	53.5	4.2	100

Figure 3.5: Survey Questions

Q6	I am interested in Canadian politics
Q7	There are not enough elected Chinese politicians in City, Provincial, and federal government in Canada
Q8	It is important to have more elected Chinese politicians in Canada
Q9	If a Chinese candidate runs for office, it is important to get him/her elected
Q10	A politician of Chinese origin can better represent and serve the Chinese community's interest
Q11	If a Chinese candidate runs for office, I will vote for him or her
Q12	More and More Chinese become interested in politics in Canada
Q13	Chinese newspaper do not have enough coverage of politics in Canada
Q14	Chinese newspaper should be more active in promoting political participation in Chinese community
Q15	Did you vote in last federal election in 2006?

Figure3.6 Survey Results

	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree		total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Q6	2	2.9	12	17.6	14	20.6	34	50	6	8.8	68	100
Q7	1	1.5	1	1.5	13	19.1	28	41.2	25	36.8	68	100
Q8	0	0	0	0	9	13.2	27	39.7	32	47.1	68	100
Q9	1	1.5	5	7.4	14	20.6	30	44.1	18	26.5	68	100
Q10	2	2.9	7	10.3	8	11.8	32	47.1	19	27.9	68	100
Q12	0	0	1	1.5	19	27.9	42	61.8	6	8.8	68	100
Q13	1	1.5	13	19.1	17	25.0	35	51.5	2	2.9	68	100
Q14	0	0	1	1.5	8	11.8	33	48.5	26	38.2	68	100

	Yes		No		It depends		total	
	No.	Percent %	No.	Percent %	No.	Percent %	No.	Percent %
Q11	24	35.3	0	0	44	64.7	68	100
Q15	31	45.6	36	52.9	Missing		68	100
					1	1.5		

Figure 3.6 shows the survey results to the ten questions listed in Figure 3.5. The survey results show that 58.8% respondents agree that they are interested in Canadian politics, although 23.5 % responded they were not interested in Canadian politics. It is interesting to see that 20.6% responded that they neither agree nor disagree that they are interested in

Canadian politics. For these people, their interest in Canadian politics can be stimulated under certain circumstances, for instance, given easier access to information about Canadian politics. Most respondents feel that more and more Chinese Canadians are becoming interested in Canadian politics. 70.6% agree with the statement. 27.9% chose neither agree nor disagree with it, and only one person (1.5%) somewhat disagree with it.

When being asked whether or not they agree with the statement that “there are not enough elected Chinese politicians in City, Provincial and Federal government in Canada”, a majority (78%) of the Chinese Canadians strongly or somewhat agree with the above statement; with 36.8% strongly agreeing with the statement. Only 2.9% disagreed with the statement. Another 19.1% chose “neither disagree nor agree” with it. Most people say that the representation does not reflect the community’s share of population in Toronto. Interestingly, two persons who neither disagree nor agree with the statement say that, given large scale of Chinese immigrants coming to Canada in the past ten years, and it will take time for them to get seats more proportional to their numbers.

Accordingly, they think it is important to have more elected Chinese politicians in Canada. 86.8% agree with the statement, among which 47.1% strongly agree with it. Only 13.2% chose “neither disagree nor agree” with it. Nobody chose “disagree”. Among 23 persons who answered the open question “please express your point of view to your choice”, fourteen persons (60.9%) believe the politician’s ethnic background will help him or her to better understand the culture and values of the community and specific issues in the community, thus better represent the community’s interests. And they believe that with increasing population of the Chinese immigrants, they should be able to get high level of attention and aid from the government. Twelve persons (52.2%) cited “multiculturalism”

policy, saying that the Chinese community doesn't have equal footing in decision making process in Canada, and there should be more Chinese politicians who can fight for their equal rights, and also bring their strength to the country. They think it is a way to reinforce multiculturalism policy in Canada. They think to have more elected Chinese politicians will not only be beneficial to the Chinese community, but also to the whole Canadian society.

A majority (70.6%) of respondents agree that "if a Chinese candidate runs for office, it is important to get him/her elected". Another 26.5% neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 8.8% "disagree". Nonetheless, only 35.3% says that "if a Chinese candidate runs for office, I will vote for him or her". Majority of them (64.7%) says it depends. But nobody responded that they will not vote for a Chinese candidate. Compared to answers to these two questions, we can draw a conclusion that even though most Chinese Canadians think it is important to get Chinese candidate elected, the Chinese Canadians have thought beyond ethnic line. They will take into consideration various factors, such as the candidates' qualifications, their party affiliation, their political views and political program, their track of record, and whether or not they can truly represent the Chinese community interest and constituency interests. Among those 28 respondents who answer the open question "express your opinion to your choice", 21 chose "depends", and their reasons are different. Eight persons (28.6%) state that, "it depends on their political agenda and previous track of record and whether or not his policies are the one I support." Two persons (7%) say that "it depends on his/her party affiliation". One person (4%) says that "it depends on whether or not the politician can do what he or she promises". Two persons (7%) say "I would vote for anyone who can do something benefit equally to everybody in this country." Seven persons (25%) say that "it depends on whether or not they can truly represent the Chinese community

interest". From this answer, we can see that the Chinese Canadians do not take it for granted that "a politician of Chinese origin will represent the Chinese community's interest well."

This is confirmed by answers to the question whether or not a Chinese politician can better serve the Chinese community interests. Even though majority of them (75%) agree a Chinese politician can better serve the community interests than a non-Chinese politician, there are still 13.2% who do not think so, and 11.8% chose "neither disagree nor agree" with it. Among those eighteen person who answered the open question to this question "please express your point of view to your choice", 11 of them (61.1%) say that because they may have a better understanding of Chinese history, culture and social values, so that they can understand the situation in the Chinese community and the needs of Chinese Canadians, and also because they can communicate better with the community. Four of them (22.2%) say that it really depends on whether or nor the politicians are really willing and able to represent the community interest. Two of them (11.1%) say that some non-Chinese politicians can also serve the constituency well where the Chinese community has large presence, so it depends on their political view rather than ethnic origin. One person (5.6%) who does not agree a politician of Chinese origin can better represent and serve the community interest than non-Chinese politicians says that some politicians of Chinese origin forget the Chinese community interest after they are elected.

The last open question in the questionnaire is why there are not enough elected politicians of Chinese origin, eleven persons answered the question. Here one person may give more than one answer. All the people say that the concept of involvement in Canadian politics among the whole Chinese community is low. Two persons (18.2%) say that the Chinese are not interested in politics. Two persons (18.2%) say that the history of Chinese

Canadians' formal electoral political participation in Canada is too short. One person (9%) think Chinese Canadian are not confident enough here in Canada. Five persons (45.5%) think many Chinese do not understand the political system and process in Canada, and we do not have enough candidates who have both ability and political integrity. Two persons (11.1%) say that because the Chinese community is still not well integrated into the Canadian society and they have different priority in life. They hope the second generation can participate more. One person (9%) says that it is because average Canadians don't know enough about candidates of Chinese origin, so they usually will not vote for him or her. Three persons (27.3%) say that the Chinese care more about their personal life, and care less about the community and the society. Therefore, we should encourage people to volunteer in community work. One person (9%) says that the Chinese worry too much when they decide whether or not to run for office or participate in politics. One person (9%) thinks we should encourage more people to study politics and law so that they have the capacity to run for office. One person (9%) thinks we should unify the Chinese community, having more people conduct in-depth research about the Chinese community, mobilize the community, solve the problem of underemployment, actively promote the awareness of voting rights in the community, and cultivate political elites.

The survey results show that there are 31 people (81.6%) voted in last federal elections among those 38 Canadian citizens. Among those citizens, two of them are new citizens who are not eligible to vote in last federal election yet, but they indicate if they were citizen at that time, they will go for vote. However, we need to treat this number with great caution because there are two interesting things about the answers given to this question. Firstly, there are some respondents who say that they voted in last federal election, but they

indicate they are permanent resident instead of Canadian citizen. Second, as it is demonstrated in national election survey, many people lied when they were asked if they voted in elections because they feel guilty or they don't want other people to see them as a bad person who did not fulfill their civic duties. There is ambiguity in the term of "permanent resident". Many people may think the term refers to "someone who lives in Canada permanently". Therefore they may think they are still "permanent resident" even if they have acquired Canadian citizenship. But the government's definition of "permanent resident" actually refers to someone who has rights to live and work in Canada but not a Canadian citizen yet. In my calculation, I counted everybody who said that they have voted in last federal election as a Canadian citizen.

When being asked about their views on the role of ethnic media, over half of the respondents (54.4%) think the Chinese newspapers do not have enough coverage of politics in Canada. 20.6% disagree with the statement, while 25% chose "neither disagree nor agree". However, more people (86.8%) agree that Chinese media should be more active in promoting political participation in Chinese community, among which 38.2% strongly agree with that point of view. Only 1 person (1.5%) somewhat disagrees with it. Another 11.8% chose "neither agree nor disagree" with it.

The survey results show that Chinese Canadians are interested in Canadian politics. Therefore, community apathy in Canadian politics is not a good explanation of electoral under-representation of Chinese community. A public-opinion poll conducted by *Mingpao Daily News* demonstrates that Chinese Canadians are concerned with general issues in larger society rather than narrowly focused on Chinese community issues. In the last federal election, the Chinese Canadians in the GTA are most concerned about economy

(49.44%) and health care (45.81%) (*Mingpao Daily News*, January 14, 2006). The next issues are public security (40.5%), governmental accountability (33.8%), same-sex marriage (17.32%), and Chinese community issue (e.g. head tax) (12.85%). Despite short residence in Canada, Chinese Canadians have quickly adopted Canadian perspective and values. Just as city councilor Denzil Minnan Wong says,

“The concern of Chinese as a group generally is not different from most of the mainstream. They are interested in strong economy, jobs, safe communities, good health and education. That is what most people are concerned about.” (Interview with Denzil Minnan Wong.)

Though Chinese Canadians would like to see the governing bodies to be more reflective of the demographic feature of Canadian society, they will not vote for a candidate simply based on his or her ethnic background. Candidates' qualification has been put on the first place. From principle, Chinese Canadians think a politician of Chinese origin can better represent the community interests on the condition that this person have better understanding of their history, culture, social values and their needs. However they don't take it for granted that a politician of Chinese origin would represent the community better.

I believe so far readers will have a clearer picture of the Chinese community's perception of Canadian politics, and their role in it, yet you may question the representation of my sample. I acknowledge that the small sample can't stand for the whole community, yet it still to some degree reflects the community's beliefs, attitudes and perspective on identity politics. In the next chapter, I will present the findings from my in-depth interview with ten community informants. The survey and the interviews are supplementary to each other. Together they are valuable material when I try to provide a more in-depth analysis and more theoretical approach to explore the research questions I proposed in first chapter.

Ethnic Media's Coverage of Canadian Politics

The Chinese ethnic media, mainly Chinese newspapers, have played a positive role in informing the Chinese community in Toronto about Canadian politics. I monitored the Chinese newspaper, *Mingpao Daily News*' content during the 2006 federal election, the 2003 provincial election and the most recent municipal elections in order to examine what is covered during election time.

News about elections has always been put on the main section of the newspaper, from A1 to A8. *Mingpao Daily News* offered substantial coverage of federal election. During the month of January, there were about 50 articles related to Canadian politics published every day on the newspaper. The content of those articles basically covered important issues that were reported in the mainstream press about the election, for example, election rules, the election campaign, party competition, candidates' debates, party policies, public-opinion poll findings and so on. Detailed party policies on the economy, taxation, environment, health care, education, military and immigration and so on were well reported.

At a more local level, *Mingpao Daily News* has devoted special attention to ridings or wards that have a greater concentration of Chinese Canadians. The candidates running in those ridings or wards, being Chinese or not, were well reported. Candidates' party affiliation, their political views and political program, their track record, and their contact with the Chinese community were reported. A brief description of demographic characteristic of those ridings or wards and brief introductions of the candidates running in those ridings or wards could be found in a special election report. *Mingpao Daily News* also conducted a public-opinion poll among Chinese Canadians to see which party they supported and what issues were of greatest concern to them. The newspaper also informed the voters of

the procedure of voting. There were also articles calling for the Chinese community members to vote on the day of election. The newspaper asked Chinese Canadians to cherish voting rights that our ancestors haven't enjoyed and it also educated the Chinese Canadians that voting is a right as well as an obligation. There were also articles calling for the Chinese Canadians to vote for certain candidates whose political values and policies are considered to be beneficial to the community. For example, in the 2003 municipal election, several articles were written calling on Chinese Canadians to vote for Barbara Hall. Substantial attention was also paid to candidates of Chinese origin.

The Chinese newspaper has played a positive role in informing and educating the Chinese Canadians about Canadian politics. It plays a crucial role to make the Chinese Canadians to be informed voters.

Chapter Four Politicians' Perspective of Identity Representation

I interviewed three politicians of Chinese origin and one non-Chinese politician. The three politicians of Chinese origin include MP Michael Chong, City Councilor Denzil Minnan-Wong, and another elected politician who requested anonymity. Elaborating on their own experiences, politicians' perception of whether or not and how a "Chinese" identity affects their political career offers a better understanding of how identity can play a role in Canadian politics. The non-Chinese politician I interviewed is MPP Peter Tabuns.

All three politicians of Chinese origin identify themselves as Chinese Canadians. Michael Chong emphasized that he considers himself first and foremost as Canadian. He identifies himself as being a Canadian of Chinese descent, whose father was born in Hong Kong and who is very proud of Chinese culture heritage.

When being asked "does the identity of 'Chinese' give you a sense of responsibility for the Chinese community?", all three politicians of Chinese origin answered "yes". They think their responsibility is to play a role model.

"My responsibility is through leadership, through my ability, my profile, to show to younger Canadians in the community that if you want to make a difference to your country, you can run for politics, be elected, and you can have a seat at the Cabinet table. Not a token person, but somebody that makes real decisions." (Interview with Michael Chong)

City councilor Denzil Minnan Wong says, "Most Chinese don't get involved in politics and because people see me as Chinese, in some way, I am an example of a Chinese person in politics (Interview with Denzil Minnan Wong)." He further acknowledges the complexity of "Chinese" identity.

"Chinese context means different things to different people. My heritage is not completely Chinese. I wasn't born in China. I don't speak Chinese. I was not really in the Chinese community. I am not as much a Chinese as you are (Ibid)."

All three politicians of Chinese origin in my interview feel a certain level of expectation from the Chinese community, but the degree of expectation varies depending on the percentage of Chinese population in the constituency and the degree of contact with the Chinese community. City councilor Denzil Minnan Wong says,

“There is certain level of expectation in the Chinese community that I will do well. But it is not any type of measurable expectation that they expect me to advocate any particular position. They don’t have huge demand on what they want from the government. They have no agenda in municipal government, therefore their expectations have to be low by definition (ibid).”

A politician who requested anonymity was elected in a constituency that has a relatively large proportion of Chinese Canadians. He feels strong expectation from the Chinese Canadians of him to represent them well.

“Most Chinese Canadians have said to me, ‘we don’t want any privilege. We just want fairness. So make sure when you elected, you represent us, and make sure the governments are fair to us, and we get what other communities get.’” (Interview with the politician of Chinese origin who requested anonymity from Toronto)

As to the question “do you think a person of Chinese origin can better serve Chinese community interest”, politicians emphasize understanding of the community rather than ethnic origin.

“I don’t think origin has much to do with this than language does and shared experiences. I don’t think just because I have Chinese background I can serve someone better. But maybe in subtle way because I understand the culture a little bit. I think I have better understanding of the Chinese community than somebody who is not Chinese.” (Interview with Denzil Minnan Wong)

“It is difficult to say. I believe that you should not blindly vote for a certain ethnic candidate. I think it is always the qualification of the candidates that comes first. Having said that, I take the view that a Chinese Canadian politician or candidate can better represent the community because, by that, I assume, a Chinese Canadian can understand the culture and the language, then it would be easy for them to communicate with him or her, and for him or her to better understand their background and their

needs.” (Interview with the politician of Chinese origin who requested anonymity from Toronto)

MP Michael Chong believes that it does not necessarily have to be somebody of Chinese origin. It has to be through somebody who understands the community and has roots in the community, whether through marriage, or through birth.

“John McCallum is a good example of that. I am the opposite of that. People did not look at me and say ‘well, because you are not Caucasian, I am not going to vote for you’. They look at me and say, ‘I am going to vote for this guy because he lives in the community for a number of years and he understands it’.” (Interview with Michael Chong)

When being asked “does the identity of ‘Chinese’ affect the way other people see you and your political career in terms of what you do in the government”, politicians that I interviewed acknowledged that the identity both benefits and disadvantages them.

“I have never been discriminated against because I am Chinese. When I got first elected, to run as a Chinese name, I was a little bit marginally disadvantaged because it is in a different arrangement compared to a name like ‘Mary Jane Smith’, which people understand better and feel more comfortable with. I am not saying it is measurable and quantifiable. I am just saying it is different. But I also benefit from it. Being an ethnic background makes you more interesting in what I do. Being a Chinese in terms of how it affects what you do in government, there are costs and benefits. It averages out.” (Interview with Denzil Minnan Wong)

“Yes, they know I am Chinese by my name. They expect me to be more knowledgeable about Asian and Chinese community issue, which is good. But sometimes it is difficult to convince everybody in the electoral district that although you are of Chinese descendant, you are willing and committed to represent everyone in your constituency.” (Interview with the politician of Chinese origin who requested anonymity from Toronto)

“In the past, I have experienced discrimination because of my last name, but on balance, on the whole, I have been very fortunate in this country. I have been in a society that is very inclusive, one that is very open. My experience has been overwhelmingly very positive.” (Interview with Michael Chong)

All politicians that I interviewed think under-representation of the Chinese community is a challenge. Peter Tabuns believes that talents are equally split between genders and ethnic groups. He says, “If a group is under-represented, then you are missing out that talent. Having more visible minorities in the decision-making process, means that often their interest will be reflected (Interview with Peter Tabuns).” The politician who requested anonymity says that,

“That is important, within the government, I always said that, Chinese Canadians do not want more, and that they want the equal and fair share. Even that, sometimes, is difficult because when you do not have a political representative, often time you voices are not heard, or not heard well. Not that people want to discriminate against any particular group, it is just that they don’t understand what the needs are. And sometimes they may think this is not that important to the community, but it is. But nobody at the table is there to communicate that to them.” (Interview with the politician of Chinese origin who requested anonymity from Toronto)

The messages that he conveyed here show that the reality the Chinese Canadian community is under-represented in the decision-making process has negatively affected the governing body’s ability to meet the community’s needs and treated them fairly.

“We have a lot of work to do to make parliament more reflected of what Canadian society is. That is something that all the parties can work on. I believe that people with leadership role need to show leadership and direction on it. There have been many good examples in Canadian society how we can include visible minorities. The best example in my mind is the financial services sector. The banking sector is one of the most diverse sectors. I think that model should apply to many other sectors of Canadian society, including the public service sector, the parliament.” (Interview with Michael Chong)

As to why the Chinese community is underrepresented, politicians offer different explanations. Michael Chong thinks there are two main factors, one being the cultural background, the other being lack of opportunity in the mainstream society for the Chinese to be involved in politics in the past. He says that,

“Modesty is very important in Chinese culture. Family is very important in Chinese culture. And self-sufficiency is very important in Chinese culture. Put all those three things together, family, self-sufficiency, modesty, and you have a community that works extremely hard in the last hundred years to pave its own way to be self-sufficient through business, through involved in academic, as a result, never looks to the outside for help. I think that is one of the reasons, the cultural thing, that more people in the Chinese community have not been involved in politics. I think the other reason, there has not been a lot of opportunity for them to be involved in politics. Canadian society was not as open as today and it has not always accepted visible minorities. So I think that is part of the problem as well.” (Interview with Michael Chong)

MPP Peter Tabuns thinks that the problem comes from the fact that a lot of newcomers are very preoccupied with simple survival, and that there is still racism in Canadian society. Denzil Minnan Wong thinks it is simply because the Chinese are not interested in government. He says,

“They don’t want to do it. They would rather go to school, start a business, and raise a family than turn into politics. Why? Because those things are more important to them. Politics doesn’t matter as much to them.” (Interview with Denzil Minnan Wong)

The politician that I interviewed who requested anonymity thinks there are four main reasons underlying the under-representation of the Chinese community. First, it is more difficult for members of a visible minority, including the Chinese Canadians to convince the general public that they look at things as do other Canadians. Second, many Chinese Canadians haven’t participated in democratic political process, so they may think it is not their business. There is both historical and cultural aspect to that mentality. Third, many Chinese Canadians are recent immigrants, so they have to spend five to ten years building their career and raise the family. They don’t have energy and time to participate in political process. Fourth, a large proportion of Chinese Canadians, not all, don’t understand the obligation and responsibility of participation in the political process. He nonetheless concludes that the biggest impediments are the mindset of non-participation and the language barrier.

Chapter Five Key Informants' Perspective of Politics

In this chapter, I will examine why the Chinese community is extremely under-represented in electoral position from community key informants' perspectives.

All community key informants have realized the fact that the Chinese community in Toronto is statistically underrepresented at all three levels of government. As to what caused the situation, different people may have different opinions. I have interviewed ten community key informants who have been leaders in community organizations and who have well-grounded knowledge of the community. The ten informants include: Tam Goossen, former president of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations; Rose Lee, coordinator of the working group on immigration and refugee issues from City of Toronto's Diversity Management and Community Engagement Unit; Dawin Kong, the Executive Director of Toronto Chinese Community Service Association; Zheng Huang, a council member of Canada China professional Association and the Chair of Ontario Chinese Canadian Civic Participation Association; Susan Eng, the former Chair of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Services Board and former Director and Vice Chair of the Chinese Community Nursing Home for Greater Toronto; Victor Wong, the Executive Director of Chinese Canadian National Council; Wenyi Zhan, a member of the national congress of Chinese Canadian; Peter T. Lam, the Chair of Chinese-Canadian Civic Alliance; and two current or past leaders of significant Chinese community organizations who requested anonymity. To sum up their opinions, I have found that the factors contributing to the electoral under-representation of the Chinese community in the GTA include: the systemic barriers existing in main-stream political system, mainly the incumbency, the electoral rules, party competition, unwelcoming political culture in political parties to give racial minority important roles in the parties; the

lack of interest of many Chinese Canadians in Canadian politics and lack of engagement in political process , notably lower voter turnout and lack of enough candidates; the recent arrival of many Chinese immigrants which limits their capacity to get politically involved and their preoccupation with career building and taking care of families; the language skills and the knowledge of the whole process of seeking for office; and the distribution of Chinese population in Toronto.

Political Participation and Political Interest

Key community informants point out that the political involvement of Chinese Canadians is low, but the explanation for the low involvement may not be lack of interest in Canadian politics. Dawin Kong says, “I don’t think that Chinese are not interested in politics, but they are not well educated about the importance of political intervention. It is a matter of time (Interview with Dawin Kong).” Tam Goossen says,

“It depends on what kind of activities. Some Chinese Canadians are long term residents here. I think they have showed interest in politics, especially at election time. I don’t think they are less active than other communities. It depends on the issue and the level of government you are talking about.” (Interview with Tam Goossen)

All community informants observed that the Chinese Canadians are becoming more interested in Canadian politics, just as we have seen from the survey results in last chapter. However, there are not enough Chinese candidates running for office. In the 2004 federal election, there were 10 Chinese Canadian candidates from the GTA and only one person was elected (*Mingpao Daily News*, June 28, 2004). In the 2006 federal election, there were five candidates from the GTA running for office, among which one got reelected, and one was newly elected (*Mingpao daily news*, January 13, 2006). In the 2003 provincial election, there were a total of 517 candidates were competing for the 103 seats, but there were only 5 Chinese Canadian candidates (Gu, 2003). It is therefore a reasonable deduction

that lack of candidates is one reason why the elected positions of Chinese Canadian politicians do not match their share of population. *The Mingpao Daily News* also reported that in the last federal election, the number of candidates of South Asian community is twice that of the Chinese candidates (*Mingpao Daily News*, January 13, 2006). In the 2003 municipal election, there was a total of 25 Chinese Canadian candidates seeking city councilor or school trustee positions (see figure 4.2). Only six candidates were successfully elected.

Figure 5.1: GTA Municipal 2003 Election Chinese Canadian Candidates

City of Toronto	Markham	Richmond Hill	Vaughan	Mississauga	Oakville	Uxbridge
City councilor candidate						
Scott Yee	Chi-Lai Eric Chu	Cathy Leung-Rosnuk	Sanddra Yeung Racco♣	Jean Wong-Chong	Monique Ling	Ted Eng
Nha Le	Thomas Qu	Agnes Chan-Wong				
Olivia♣ Chow	Bernie Yeung	Shirley Chan				
Denzil Minnan Wong♣	Alex Chiu♣	Godwin Chan				
Betty Hackett						
School trustee candidate						
Shaun Chen	Kwan Ho Leung	Carol Chan♣				
Kamton Chun						
Han Dong						
Noah Ng♣						
Arnold Kwok						

Mark with “♣” indicates the person was elected

Source: *Mingpao Daily News*, November 11, 2003, A1

Collective Identity

Two important questions need to be answered when we examine the electoral under-representation of the Chinese community in Toronto and their political participation. Firstly, does the community think a politician of Chinese origin can better represent their voices and serve their interest? Secondly, does the community think it is a problem with the Chinese community being under-represented at Canada' political system? In this section, I try to answer these two questions and further explore the place of Chinese Canadians in Canadian politics.

My survey results shows that 75% respondents agree a Chinese politician can better serve the community interests than a non-Chinese politician. The community leaders seem to have more critical views about this. Only one community leaders say absolutely "yes". Three informants say "No". Two informants hold very critical view about Canadian politics in general. They think the purpose of doing things in Canadian politics is not based on value, but based on getting reelected. Susan Eng claims that, "It is an artificial system. You are not allowed to think for yourself and you have to go with the party line (Interview with Susan Eng)." She further illustrates her idea by saying,

"The community was so long separated by language and by habit, would let others speak for them, and for good or bad. Some politicians would sell out their community in order to stay with the larger community. (ibid)"

"No, he or she maybe can represent his or her friends. He or she can't represent us because we come from so different background, and we have different needs. It would be a very naïve way of thinking that a Chinese Canadian can represent all of us." (Interview with one informant who requested anonymity)

Tam Goossen says, "I don't think it is very true to me just because the person is from the Chinese community, the person's commitment to the issues I care about would be

the same. I would go for value rather than go for the person (Interview with Tam Goossen).” Most community informants, however, believe that, in principle, a politician of Chinese origin can better represent the community’s interest, but there is no guarantee. They think it is very important to have some kind of understanding of Chinese culture background. Dawin Kong said, “It helps when the politicians elaborate the voices they heard because elaboration is not from the books, but from the lived example and the interrelation of one issue to another (interview with Dawin Kong).” Victor Wong said, “The Chinese politicians should be more comfortable with their own skin color. They should not feel shy to say to the general population that they will represent the Chinese community (Interview with Victor Wong).”

“If it is only skin color, there is no guarantee. Even if he or she is a Chinese, he or she has to go out to the community to know about the community, and the gathering of information should be regularly updated. ” (Interview with one informant who requested anonymity)

Two informants say that any politician elected would represent the ward or the riding. They should have Canadian perspective and they should not only represent the Chinese community. Some community informants acknowledge that some white politicians represent the Chinese community well, for example John McCallum and Jim Karygiannis.

We can draw the conclusion from what we heard from key community informants that ethnic origin itself is not as important as wide knowledge of the community, good understanding of their history and cultural background and good communication with the community.

Nonetheless, all community informants do realize that the Chinese community, as a cultural and racial minority in the current Canadian political system, has its own special needs and collective interest despite differences within the community. That is why when I ask, “Do you think visible minorities (Chinese Canadians in particular) should be represented

more in all three levels of the Government”, all community informants say it would be a healthy development if the political system represents diversity. Accordingly, nobody in my survey sample disagree with the statement that “it is important to have more elected Chinese politicians in Canada.”

When it comes to whether it is a problem with Chinese Canadian being underrepresented, most community informants would rather say it is a fact, an issue or a challenge than a “problem”. Some community informants think to measure the political participation of the Chinese Canadians, it is important to look at how much the Chinese Canadians pay attention to and get involved in the political process and how much influence the Chinese Canadians have on the decision-making process, rather than just look at the number of elected politicians of Chinese origin.

“It is important whether or not the issue they care about is being under-represented. Diversity should be represented in our governing body, so diversity of ideas is brought forward to the public domain whether through a person being Chinese or through somebody else.” (Interview with Susan Eng)

“It is a fact. Whether or not it is a problem requires us to analyze. If the mainstream politicians are very concerned about the issues in the community, if we can put our issues onto political agenda of the government through mainstream politicians and they can help to solve the problem, then maybe it is not a problem.” (Interview with one informant who requested anonymity)

From my interview, I can draw the conclusion that community leaders are more concerned about substantive representation rather than numeric representation. But they do know the two concepts have connection between each other, yet they distinguish from each other.

Minority Status

In a white settler society like Canada, immigrants from non-traditional countries have been subject to racism and discrimination. In Canadian history, we had a series of racist

legislation against Asian immigrants in order to keep a “white” national identity. The Chinese community as a racial minority in Canada, had a sense of being excluded from generation after generation.

“The official pieces of legislation to keep people out, the latent racism on the street, the constant pressure from organizations to heavily oppose actually the survival of the Chinese, never mind the right to immigrate and the right to vote, those kind of constant messages from the larger society would make the whole community feel that they don’t belong.” (Interview with Susan Eng)

The influence of how the community was historically treated by the mainstream society is to keep the entire community psychologically down, the lack of confidence to assert that the Chinese Canadians are full members of Canadian society. As Peter Lam, the Chair of Chinese Canadian Civic Alliance, says, “Politicians have to be very confident. If you are not confident, you can’t succeed as a politician (interview with Peter Lam)”. The on-going racism today, though in a subtle way, to some extent, is internalized by Chinese Canadians.

“How many Chinese Canadians have the notion that we are, as others, are equal members of Canadian society? You probably are not aware that you have just as much rights as a white person. So when you fight for your rights, you would not be very aggressive.” (Interview with one informant who requested anonymity)

Victor Wong, the executive director of Chinese Canadian National Council says,

“Sometimes we don’t value ourselves. This is more reflection of our own personal frustration, our own personal experience of racism. That racism was internalized. A colleague of mine comments that the Chinese food has been cheap for too long, meaning that we have not valued ourselves, or we feel we are not good enough. I would apply that in some cases.” (Interview with Victor Wong)

“I was a bit surprised, but not entirely surprised, that many people who called me during the head tax campaign would be like me first generation Canadians of immigrant parents. They are all very situated in their jobs, but their attitude was very interesting: the attitude that they do not belong here. That attitude still persists. It hasn’t disappeared.” (Interview with Susan Eng)

Racialization is not an individual process but rather involves the formation of social groups organized around material interests with their roots in social structure. The book *The Making of The Mosaic: A History of Canadian immigration Policy* shows us whenever there is economic depression, racism against certain immigrant groups became extremely intense. As a racial minority group in Canada, the Chinese occupy a very weak position in the power structure. As a community informant who requested anonymity said, “To what degree is the Chinese community’s collective interest reflected in decision-making process? That is probably worse than our representation of elected positions.”

“Canadian politics is based on interest groups. If the Chinese are not organized as an interest group, our interest will be damaged. When struggling over resources, we can’t get the resources according to our share of population. For example, Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrants are complaining that they do not get enough services.” (Interview with Peter Lam)

For a racial minority, the systemic barrier to their political participation is the existing system within which the Chinese are underrepresented. As Victor Wong said, “If the existing system is under-representative, it will continue to be under-representative because the incumbent will continue to run. That is systemic situation (Interview with Victor Wong).”

“Other politicians go into the process with the entire network out there, sometimes their parents, and parents of friends, who are already in politics, who know people, who have fundraising contact, who have been involved in public domain in some way, have language skills and other kinds of skills. When someone asks somebody from the Chinese community to do that, they have to build all networks by themselves.” (Interview with Susan Eng)

Immigrant Status

As shown in Chapter Two, only 21.8% of the Chinese were Canadian-born in Toronto CMA according to the 2001 Census data, and the majority of the community’s members are foreign-born immigrants, among which 81.9% came after 1980s, and over half

came after 1990s. Since newcomers are all busy with adjusting their life to a new society, political participation may be delayed. Their first priority is to make sure their families will have jobs and security.

A. Socio-economic Status

The non-recognition or devaluation of foreign credential places a systemic barrier in immigrants' access to their profession in the job market. As Peter Li argues, immigrants' credentials carry a penalty compared to those of native-born Canadians and a foreign degree affects visible-minority immigrants more adversely than white Canadians (Li, 2001). The research also shows that the time for immigrants to catch up to the earning levels of native-born becomes increasingly long and the earning gap between immigrants (especially for those post 1980s arrivals) and the native-born has been widened (Reitz, 1997). Research shows that recent Chinese immigrants are not well integrated into the Canadian economy (Wang, 2005). In Toronto, the average total income of Chinese immigrants in 1999 was \$16,000, only three-quarters of that for the general population of Canada (ibid: 61). The inability to succeed in economic participation makes immigrants feel disadvantaged and excluded, and as if they are guests here. Therefore, they think that civic participation is not their duties. As a community informant who requested anonymity says, "If you can't even make your ends meet, you would not think about political participation." Another community key informant who requested anonymity says, "Chinese, number one, make money. To run for office, you are not making money, instead, you spend money, and you may even fail." Many Chinese Canadian immigrants are still struggling with simple survival, and that is already not an easy task for them because the systemic barriers I have discussed earlier in

Canadian labour market. Therefore, they have very little time and energy to think about politics and involved in it.

B. Language Barrier

As a recent immigrant community, language proficiency places another barrier for Chinese Canadian immigrants to become politicians.

“Use of language is very important in politics. In order to be politicians, you have to want it and have to learn smart English. You have to have a wide vocabulary. But most Chinese Canadian immigrants don’t learn English well.” (Interview with one informant who requested anonymity)

“In order to participate politically, you need to have a good mastery of English or French, because we can’t expect parliament, provincial legislation or the city council to be providing translation simultaneously for Chinese Canadians who only speak Chinese to participate politically.” (Interview with another informant who requested anonymity)

Because China is not an English-speaking country, many Chinese immigrants can’t speak English well. It takes time for them to overcome the language barrier and culture barrier. Language is culture too. As one community key informant who requested anonymity says, “You can’t learn a language well if you don’t know the culture of the language.” It also takes time for them to get familiar with English culture.

Based on this situation, one may naturally hold higher expectation for the second-generation Chinese Canadians to participate more actively in politics because they have no problem with English. But as I demonstrated in Chapter Two, Canadian-born Chinese who are over 18 only make up 6.6% of total Chinese population. What is more, second generation Chinese Canadians may not be fluent in Chinese, that may also place a barrier for them.

“The expectation of the Chinese community is too high. They expect you to be perfect in both English and Chinese. That is a barrier in both sides, for people who have been here not long time, and then who are Canadian-born and who don’t speak good Chinese. Are we asking more of some of the Chinese Canadian candidates? I

have seen situation that non-Chinese politicians speak one line of Chinese, they get a plus. As Chinese Canadian candidates, nobody will say your English is perfect. And we have different dialects of Chinese. People like me can't communicate well in Mandarin, even though I have no problem with that socially." (Interview with Tam Goossen)

Tam Goossen further says, "If a Canadian-born Chinese whose value is something I share can't speak Chinese, it is OK for me. But I don't know if that is a general perception of people (ibid)."

Influence of Chinese Cultural Background

Some scholars think that limited experience with a liberal democratic electoral system is one factor that may explain the Chinese community's inability to convert their numeric stature into political participation (Siemiatycki & Saloojee, 2002: 261). However, the community informants do not think that is a major factor.

"You can argue that Chinese from Mainland China don't have democratic experience so that they don't participate. If I give any weight to that argument, I give very little weight to that. I will give more weight to the fact that they are newcomers." (Interview with Victor Wong)

The community informants argue that there are some forms of democracy in Hong Kong and Taiwan now, and even in Mainland China people do have the opportunity to elect their representatives at local level. But the actual working of democracy is very different. They may not have enough knowledge about western kind of democratic electoral system, but once they are immersed in this, they can quickly find out what are various systems.

"That western machinery democratic process is not familiar to some recent immigrants. But for those who are born here, your explanation does not cut it. In Canada, we are blessed because we have generally healthy environment, physically, socially, and culturally, so people are complacent. They don't feel the need to get involved to change anything. That is true to many Canadians. Never mind new immigrants from immigrant communities." (Interview with Susan Eng)

However community key informants do agree that there are elements in the Chinese culture that prevent the community from actively engaged in politics. But it is a complex dynamic between what happened in home country and their experiences here in Canada. The world is changing. Canadian society was not as open as today to visible minorities. People are shaped by society, when the society changes, their beliefs will change too. Culture is not static. It is evolving. Especially when a person comes to a new country, whatever values and beliefs that he carries into the new land will be in collision with new culture. That is acculturation. There is different mode of acculturation. So let us first look at the element in Chinese culture that would prevent people from participating in politics.

Chinese immigrants share a common cultural heritage dating back to the time of Confucius. There is a Chinese proverb “cultivate all the good qualities in you; keep harmony in your family; manage the state affairs; and bring peace to the world”. This proverb is actually Confucius teaching of political order. This political order begins with the moral cultivation of individuals and their families. Central to this political order is the conception of cosmic harmony and peace. Harmony is achieved if everyone loyally performs their role as prescribed in the given hierarchy. Just as Kuan and Lau (2002) argues, in the Chinese tradition political culture, there are “moral state” dimension and “obsession with order” dimension. As they argues, “The ‘moral state’ dimension of our traditional political orientations endorses a collectivist and morally interventionist state. It implies a submissive and non-participant self. (Kuan & Lau, 2002: 315)” And “People feel they are excused from political responsibility since public affairs can prudently be left to the leaders with high education, moral integrity, and fatherly prestige (Ibid).”

“Confucius taught us to accept the status quo. The father knows the best, the king knows the best. We accept so called ‘Messiah’. Chairman Mao was one of such ‘Messiah’.

The whole point is that the Chinese love strong leaders because we have been culturally taught the king knows best. ” (Interview with one community informant who requested anonymity)

Chinese traditional culture encourages those who are well-educated to seek career in politics. There is a class called “Shi Dai Fu”, meaning scholar men, composed by well-educated people who are idea men seeking for emperors’ support to put them into important positions. The Chinese adage “if you are poor, be virtuous in yourself; if you are rich, please relieve others” is the embodiment of the philosophy that a person with high education, moral integrity, and better off should think of civic duties and managing the state. This is the ideal of Confucian culture. On the other hand, Confucius taught ordinary people not to challenge above their class, otherwise they will be punished. So it is better to be content with your current situation and accept the status quo. Chinese feudal society is an agricultural society. For most civilians who are peasants, the best thing for them to do is to work hard and be self-sufficient. Loyalty to the ruler is seen as patriotic. In Chinese feudal history, reformers often came to a sticky end, sometimes the whole family will be killed. There is Chinese saying “tyranny is fierce as tiger”, meaning involvement in palace politics is dangerous, therefore you had better be a submissive civilian. Not involved in politics became the Chinese tradition, especially those who live in the rural areas.

“Chinese traditional associations in Toronto, which are based on kinship and surname, are mutual aid organizations. In their organizational guidelines, there is an item ‘not to be involved in politics’ because their experiences in China make them think politics is dangerous.” (Interview with Wenyi Zhen)

The idioms “only shovel the snow in front of your door” and “don’t poke your nose into other’s business” describes a kind of indifferent attitude towards public affairs. The inclination of political apathy shows that homeland culture and experience does matter. Events in China have greatly affected their world view and political culture. And “political

culture affects political action because the former mediates between the actor and the situation that confronts her” (Kuan & Lau, 2002:298). For example, because many people were persecuted by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, and many friends became enemies, the trust between people was destroyed. Chinese don’t trust Chinese, which makes Chinese hard to be unified. From 1966 to 1976 the Cultural Revolution brings chaos to China as Chairman Mao ought to maintain his control over the country. The Cultural Revolution also caused riots in Hong Kong in 1967.

“I grew up in the 40s, 50s and 60s. Two sides of my family were fighting, one for communist, one for nationalist. After the nationalist left for Taiwan in 1949, we came to Hong Kong. I believe in communist, against my father. So do you think with that kind of background, I would ever go into politics? No, I just hate politics. I need some kind of peace.” . (Interview with one community informant who requested anonymity)

Both traditional culture and lived experiences in China have affected Chinese immigrants’ political orientation. Just as Kuan and Lau argue,

“ This dimension of ‘obsessed with order’ in Chinese traditional culture is especially relevant for the people in Mainland China where memory of the chaos created and the damage inflicted by the Great Cultural Revolution is surely still fresh. It is also relevant for Hong Kong people whose ‘don’t rock the boat’ mentality has not faded away. (Kuan & Lau, 2002:308).”

Since China opened its door to western world after 1979, China’s economy has been rapidly growing. But starting in the 1980s especially after 1990, the corruption in Chinese government officials makes people feel to be a civilian official is shameful. Many Chinese immigrated to Canada not only because they perceived better economic opportunity, but also because they didn’t like the political culture in China. One Chinese immigrant who responded to my questionnaire, said to me, “The day I left China, I have given up my political view and I will never be involved in politics again.”

In 1949, two million Chinese refugees fled to Hong Kong (Yee, 1996: 91). Among the newcomers are Shanghai industrialists who bring new capital and entrepreneurial skills to the colony (ibid). One community informant said, "When we escaped to Hong Kong in 1949, there was really nothing in Hong Kong. Hong Kong people were actually Shanghai people who escaped out of China to build Hong Kong." Those Shanghai industrialists were good at doing business. Under the rule of British government, Chinese in Hong Kong did not have political rights, which made Hong Kong Chinese more interested in business.

In a Chinese newspaper called "Hua Bao", the Chair of the Chinese Canadian Civic Alliance, Peter Lam (2005) wrote an article called "Chinese small farmers' culture and political participation". This article was based on the speech that Peter Lam delivered on the fourth "Chinese Canadians Political Participation Forum". He said "I can't deny that the Chinese culture will prevent the Chinese from political participation (Lam, 2005)." His concept of "small farmers' culture" is based on the fact that Chinese traditional society is an agricultural society and even today the majority population in China is peasant. He wrote, "The feature of small farmers' culture is that, the collective consciousness is very weak except among the people from the same village or the same region, from the same clan or from the same school. A culture that has weak collective consciousness will of course be cool with politics (ibid)." But the situation is not that pessimistic. In China, not everyone keeps that "small farmers' culture" (interview with Peter Lam ibid). Peter Lam believes that five categories of people can transcend the "small farmers' culture" That is: those who accept ideal Confucian ideas; those who believe in religion; those who are well-educated; those who are

influenced by western culture; and those who have escape poverty (ibid). These people can, to different extents, go beyond the limits of “small farmers’ culture”.

Capacity to Mobilize

Some Chinese community leaders in Toronto have realized that the Chinese community is weak in terms of their political influence in Toronto. Community leaders are concerned about both the under-representation of elected politicians and the low involvement of the mass in politics. There are three major organizations aimed to promote the political participation of the Chinese community in Toronto. One is the “Chinese Canadian Political Awareness Promotion”, led by the Chair Winnie Wong; another one is the “Ontario Chinese Political Participation Society”, led by the Chair Zheng Hua; and the most recent one the “Chinese Canadian Civic Alliance”, led by the Chair Peter Lam. Their common goal is to strengthen our political force as a community and exert influence on the decision-making process, to make sure that the Canadian government fairly treats a racial minority like the Chinese community. They all agree that the most important thing is to raise the voter turnout of the Chinese community because politicians will not attach importance to the community’s voice if the community doesn’t have high rate of voter turnout, no matter who is elected.

These organizations, however, have different views about how to do this. The “Ontario Chinese political participation society” is less concerned with the number of elected Chinese politicians, and more concerned about building up a mechanism that enables ordinary Chinese Canadians to have dialogue with the government. The Chair of this society thinks, starting from issues that are of most concern to new immigrants and inviting policy makers to explain policies that are beneficial to new immigrants will help Chinese immigrants realize the role of government in making policies that are most relevant to

newcomers' interest, and then they will realize the parties play an important role in government, and parties have to do with your own participation (interview with Zheng Hua). This way, starting from their own interest, they will realize the importance of political participation.

“The Chinese are not lacking of good policy proposals, but they are content to discuss only with their friends. They did not go a little further to present those proposals to the government. So we want to do build up a platform that they can have dialogue with mainstream society and a mechanism through which they can present their ideas to mainstream society. This way, more people will be engaged in civic issues at regular time and when the elections come, they will vote. We want to encourage more people to get involved in party politics and realize the impact of policies made on their daily life.” (Interview with Zheng Hua)

The Chinese Canadian Civic Alliance was founded in November 2004. The Chinese Canadian Civic Alliance has a very clear goal: first, to increase the voting rate of Chinese-Canadians in Ontario to the national average in three to five years: 40% in municipal elections, 55% in provincial and 60% in federal, and in ten years, to raise the voting rate to over 80% (Lam, 2006). “Equality, Stability, Prosperity” is the mission that the organization assume for all Chinese-Canadians (ibid). The overall purpose of the organization is to encourage and educate Chinese Canadians to participate in political activities like voting, running campaigns, running for office, seeking positions in the public service and so on. Peter Lam wrote a 15-page report titled *Unify Chinese Canadians Political Force--- A Blueprint of Ontario Chinese Political Participation*. In this report, he analyzed the current situation of Chinese Canadians' political participation, future direction and ways to mobilize the community (ibid). He thinks the first step is to set up a goal for community organizations that aims at mobilizing the community politically. He thinks the goal of political participation of the Chinese community should focus on: advocating policies that would facilitate Chinese Canadians to find employment equivalent to their qualification; creating a better business

environment for Chinese Canadian businesses; and making sure the government won't pass any legislation that would affect the community negatively. The second step is to organize Chinese Canadians from different classes to put their resources together. Peter Lam thinks we should have a group of people who are trained in social science fields to do research and advocacy work. We should also organize business people to set up a "civic fund" to provide financial support. The third step is to set up "Immigrants and Citizens Association" in electoral districts that have a great concentration of Chinese Canadians. The associations should have working groups on federal, provincial and municipal elections. The last step is to take action on community education, voting mobilization, candidate cultivation and election campaign and so on. Peter Lam thinks it is important to have an economic development committee to help Ontario Chinese become economically affluent, and it is important for Chinese Canadians to have a powerful lobby group.

All three organizations held a series of forums to discuss the political participation of Chinese Canadians in Ontario. A few examples of topics are: *How to Unify Chinese Canadians' Political Force*; *The Chinese Community's Strategy for 2007 Provincial Election*; *Will Political Participation Causes Anti-Chinese Sentiments?*; *Will Chinese Cultural Background Prevent Us From Participating in Politics?*; *Will You Be Manipulated by Participating in Politics?*; *Political Participation and 2006 Municipal Election*. The community has also taken advantage of Chinese media to disseminate ideas and information to educate the community.

Many community leaders have felt political participation is necessary, and they have strategic plans to mobilize the community, but still many worry if it will invite unnecessary attention from the mainstream society. An article written by Zhiyuan Xu criticizes

such opinion by saying, “Canada is a multicultural society, so that every ethnic community is equal. We are part of the mainstream. We are not guests here. We are just trying to defend our own rights entitled by Canadian Charter to every Canadian.”(Zhiyuan Xu, 2005).

Openness of Democratic Structure

The fact that the head tax redress takes so long shows the weakness in Canadian political system. There is democratic racism in Canada. “Democratic racism” refers to “a particular Canadian form of racism that reflects an effort to reconcile two fundamentally conflicting sets of values” (Satzewich, 1998 : 36) That is “many Canadians take pride in their commitment to democratic principles such as justice, equality and fairness, but at the same time hold negative attitudes about, and discriminate against, minority groups”. As a politician who requested anonymity said, “ it is more difficult for members of visible minority, including the Chinese Canadians to convince the general public that they look at things pretty much the Canadian way.” There is a culture in Canadian political system to deny that racism exists or to downplay the significance of racism experienced by visible minority, or to reject the material reality of racism. The neo-market value of Canadian society views one’s benefits as the natural outcome of individual endeavor and to overlook the fact that those benefits have been delivered at somebody’s expense. That is why research in the area of political participation has tended to focus on the individual characteristics and behavior of immigrants and ethnic minorities, and has not dealt well with the collective dimension of migration, settlement and community processes (Stasiulis, 1997).

“Racism is a very strong force in our society. It comes from the very nature of human beings that always fear of something different. What civilization teaches us is to learn how to overcome that. Our society has to learn not only tolerance, but to actually build the bonds across our cultures. That is why it is important to have much more diversity in all the institutions including politics.” (Interview with Susan Eng)

As to the question how open do you think the current political system is to visible minorities, there are two different points of views. Some politicians and community key informants think the system itself is open to everybody and nothing needs to be done to improve the situation. Still more people think the current system does not respond well enough to visible minorities. Tam Goossen said, "General principal would say gender equity or equity for visible minority candidates, but when it comes to actual mechanism to get people elected, it doesn't really work (interview with Tam Goossen)."

The barriers for visible minority representation in the current political system are numerous. Racism is a major barrier. As Peter Tabuns says, "I think there is still racism in Canadian society, and that is reflected in being more difficult for Chinese candidates to be elected in a riding that is predominately non-Chinese (interview with Peter Tabuns)." That also results in the fact that several Chinese candidates campaigned at the same election district where Chinese occupied 30%-40% of the population, thus disperse the votes and neither side gained (Mak, 2006). The incumbency is a barrier. The lack of welcoming by the political parties to put visible minority members in the decision-making role is a barrier. The current first past the post system does not reflect the popular vote as well as proportional model does (Gray, 2004). The reduction of seats in City of Toronto after the amalgamation is a barrier. Many community informants think all the political parties should be serious about their commitment to make sure whoever get elected, it should be more representative.

Future Prospects

When we talk about political participation, I believe participation in electoral politics is not merely individual phenomena. Collective strategies can be used to increase a community's political participation. The conditions for a new age of active participation for

Chinese Canadian community in Canadian politics are forming. Long history of exclusion from main-stream society and present actual racism against Chinese Canadians have greatly affected their sense of belonging in the country and the idea that they don't belong to the governing class. Those historical influences are fading away as Canada is making progress towards a more equitable society. China's overall strength had been very weak in the past nineteenth and twentieth century, which has affected overall confidence of overseas Chinese in their new countries. That is changing too. The elements in Chinese political culture which prevent them from being involved in politics can be erased, refurbished and repainted as more highly-educated Chinese immigrants come to Canada and embrace Canadian values and way of thinking. The systemic barriers that exist in the current Canadian political system, which disadvantage them as a racial minority, will be challenged when more and more visible minorities keep coming to Toronto. Various groups are forming to mobilize the community's political participation. Therefore I am very optimistic about the future role that the Chinese community can play in Canadian politics.

Political participation is a tide of history for Chinese community in Toronto. First, the level of Chinese immigrants' education degree is higher than before. And hopefully, with the government' more serious commitment to remove barriers in the labour market for foreign-trained professionals, the Chinese immigrants will integrate into the Canadian economy better in the future. According to socio-economic approach to immigrant political participation, individual will participate at greater rates if they have higher levels of income and education (Freedman, 2000: 33). Second, Chinese immigrants will be acculturated into the mainstream society. The longer a community has been in the host society, the more the community will be influenced by the mainstream society. As many politicians and

community informants in my interview emphasized that it is very important to have roots in your constituency where you want to represent if you want to be a successful candidate or politician. The longer you reside in Toronto, the better you are rooted. It gives you time to build relationship with various community, including your own community. Third, the self-respect and confidence that the Chinese people lost as a whole nation due to the weak national power and as a racial minority in Canada due to institutional racism has been renewed. The resumed confidence and self-esteem will also help the Chinese Canadians to strengthen collective consciousness and overcome "distrust" against each other. Fourth, Since Hong Kong and Taiwan implemented democratic politics in recent years, people from these two regions of China will improve their consciousness of political participation; and for the next two decades, China will still be one of the major source of new immigrants and because politics is a compulsory subject at school, immigrants from Mainland will form a new source of strength for Chinese Canadian political participation. Fifth, the cold war has ended. Chinese government has good relationship with western countries. The overseas Chinese will not be afraid to participate in politics. Lastly, the conflict within the community can be solved when more and more Chinese Canadians work towards a common goal. In a word, the tide of history will push the Chinese to become more active in political participation. But the process will be very slow. It will need decades by natural process. However, the community can do something to speed it up. That is community education, common goals, political participation organizations and all kinds of action on political participation.

Conclusion

This study shows the existence of an internal dynamic in the Chinese community. This dynamic is based on a series of cultural, historical, generational and personal determinants. It can also be explained as much by acculturation process, which hinges on the homeland cultural traditions and experiences and a series of conditions in the host society. Such a dynamic shows how risky it is to generalize about how the Chinese community internalizes Canadian political culture and participate in the democratic process. In this study, I have demonstrated some evidences and provided some explanations that seem to be contradictory to one another, yet they are just like a coin's two sides, which reflect the genuine outlook of the existed truth. As shown in my survey results and the newspaper news coverage, Chinese Canadians are interested in Canadian politics. However, the perception of the politicians and the community leaders that I interviewed speak volumes on the passivity and non-participation of Chinese Canadians on the democratic process, which underpin the Confucian values and cultural perception of dangerous politics, recent immigrants' typical experiences in striving for career building and raising families, sense of exclusion engendered by historical and current experiences of racism, unawareness of the importance of political participation, lack of information and knowledge of the democratic process and other barriers revealed in the study. How do we then explain this contrast? I think it is important to discern the difference between "interest in politics" and "participate in politics". The former indicates the tendency or potential to learn about the political system and possibility of participation. The latter is the actual action. If one is not interested in politics, one may not participate. But if one does not participate, it does not necessarily show his or her lack of interest in politics. Just as one community informant who requested anonymity

said, many Chinese Canadians have good policy proposals, but they are content to discuss with friends, rather than propose them to the government (interview with community informant). This is the exact example of how one shows his or her interest in Canadian politics, but he or she doesn't really participate in the representative institutions. Since "interest in Canadian politics" indicates the possibility of participation, we have reason to believe with collective efforts and strategies, we can turn the possibility into the real action, thus more and more Chinese Canadians will participate in the political process.

Participation is fundamental to a healthy, functioning democracy. The worry that group representation will increase separation and aloofness from mainstream society is not well grounded. We have reasons to believe that political integration can be engendered in the context of diversity, as does Lapp's observation that Montreal community elites tended to use vote mobilization arguments stressing membership in the larger society, rather than those promoting community-centred interests (Lapp, 1999). A positive link between ethnic media news coverage and Canadian politics also implies that political participation is not negatively associated with the intensity of ethnic identity (Black & Leithner, 1998).

The Chinese community in the Toronto does not share the political status that matches its population, and thereby remains politically weak. The mindset of many Chinese Canadians, which are shaped by both their cultural experiences in their countries of origin and their experiences in Canadian society, that politics is not their duty, is a strong impediment to their political participation. The lower voting turnout means the community cannot convert their large presence into electoral gain, and it also leads candidates and elected politicians to pay little attention to the community' voices. The Chinese community is not as mature in participating in democratic process as many other groups, which results

from their cultural background and the fact that majority of Chinese Canadians have been here for only 20 years or less. They need to have a better understanding of the entire process.

As Susan Eng says,

“The whole process is another discipline itself. It is as difficult as any of the degrees that you have taken. Yet it is going to be harder for Chinese Canadians because they don’t enjoy any advantage. They have to work through the normal process. No one is going to hand the network and support system over to them. They have to be the model politicians. They have to do everything right.”

The perception for the general public that members of visible minorities do not have adequate representation, which is often a bias or misunderstanding, makes it more difficult for candidates from visible minority background including Chinese Canadians to run for office and win because they have to spend more time to convince the general public, that they are as qualified or even more qualified than other politicians.

As a new immigrant community, many of them are preoccupied with simple survival, and it is hard for them to think beyond that to political participation. Language skills are another barrier for them to think about when running for office.

There are of course divergences in the Chinese community. For instance, the gap between the new and old immigrants, the different dialects and culture based on different origins, the conflicts induced by different political backgrounds and viewpoints, the variety of religions and values. All of these contribute the fragmented nature of the Chinese community.

The community realized the power of being united. Community leaders are exploring how to seek common ground while preserving the differences. Several community groups are striving to mobilize the political participation of the community. We may see the results in the future elections. The Chinese Canadians today are not like the old immigrants

who would let a few so called “community leaders” represent their voices. It will not work if only a few community leaders calling for voting during election times or calling for the community to vote for particular candidates. The way to mobilize the community is through education at regular time, informing the community about government policies that have great impact on their daily life, holding regular forums to discuss important issues in the community, channeling their voices to the mainstream institution, building mechanisms that the community public can have direct dialogue with and make proposals to the government, assisting the community in their immigration and settlement process, and so on. For members of Chinese Canadian community to go for politics, it may take whole life to build up the necessary networks and support system through normal process. What the community can help, maybe is to duplicate the process and create support systems to invite candidates to participate, put all the resources together for the candidates, get the fundraising done, do the training, get the media, get the campaign management and get all those needed to put the machinery together.

The Chinese community organizations need to continue active engagement in anti-racism. They also try to cooperate with other visible minority communities on this. Multiculturalism, though sometimes criticized by some as creating ethnic ghettos, has the support of many Chinese Canadians. But they want it to be more proactive than what is in practice now. Chinese Canadians do not recommend either “color-blind” or “color-focused” approach. They want a system that really embraces difference and values diversity. They don’t want to retain an identity being excluded. They want to feel that they are part of the larger society. Just as Susan Eng says, “I will tell you how my identity will fit into the larger piece. I am not coming looking for a job to tell you what my differences are, but to tell you.

what I can contribute to the common goal in additional skills I have that you don't have.”

Taking the Chinese community nursing home as an example, Susan Eng, says that it is a gold standard how culturally appropriate seniors' care affect any services delivered. She says,

“I think this is where cultural component is advantage because of the attitude of Chinese families to really look after their seniors. We have to put together the institution that institutionally guarantees that excellence.”

The role that visible minority can play in Toronto, not just to give people different kinds of foods, different kinds of songs, but to actually play a role in the decision-making process, to change the dynamics in Toronto as a real “multicultural” urban center. As a community informant says, “We need to redefine Canadian identity. Chinese become less Chinese, English become less English, and French become less French. It is not easy to do. But it is a beautiful picture. If we want to do it, we can do it.”

Under-representation of visible minorities in the political system challenges the legitimacy of the government especially in a place like Toronto where visible minority population is expanding quickly. It is inequitable because the concerns of various communities are not being heard, as is the case of the Chinese community. Just as a scholar argues that, “there is a need for the recognition and removal of systemic racism in order to provide access to full participation and substantive citizenship for racialized minorities in the multicultural city.” (Fernando, 2003: 279). Some proposals have been suggested by key community informants for reform designed to encourage immigrant and minorities' involvement in Canadian political process. Greater sensitivity to the linguistic (and other) needs of newer Canadians in the registration and voting processes has been the proposed. Extending the franchise to landed immigrants has also been suggested. A more varied series of recommendations has been offered as a way of to make our political system more

inclusive. Suggestions include incorporating a proportionality dimension into the electoral system, regulating nomination campaigns, imposing term limits on incumbents, and providing incentives for parties to be more proactive in recruiting minority candidates, particularly in more winnable ridings.

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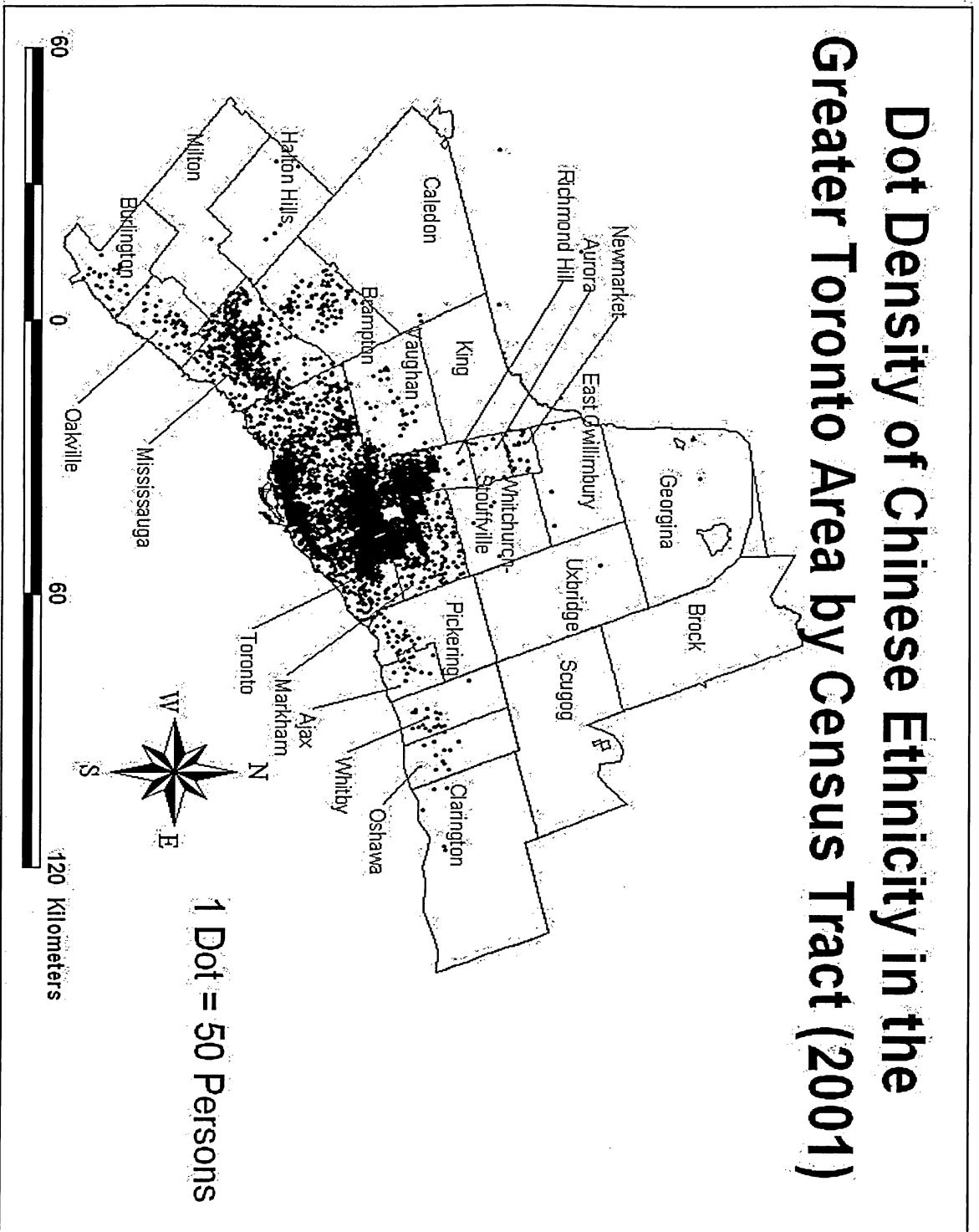
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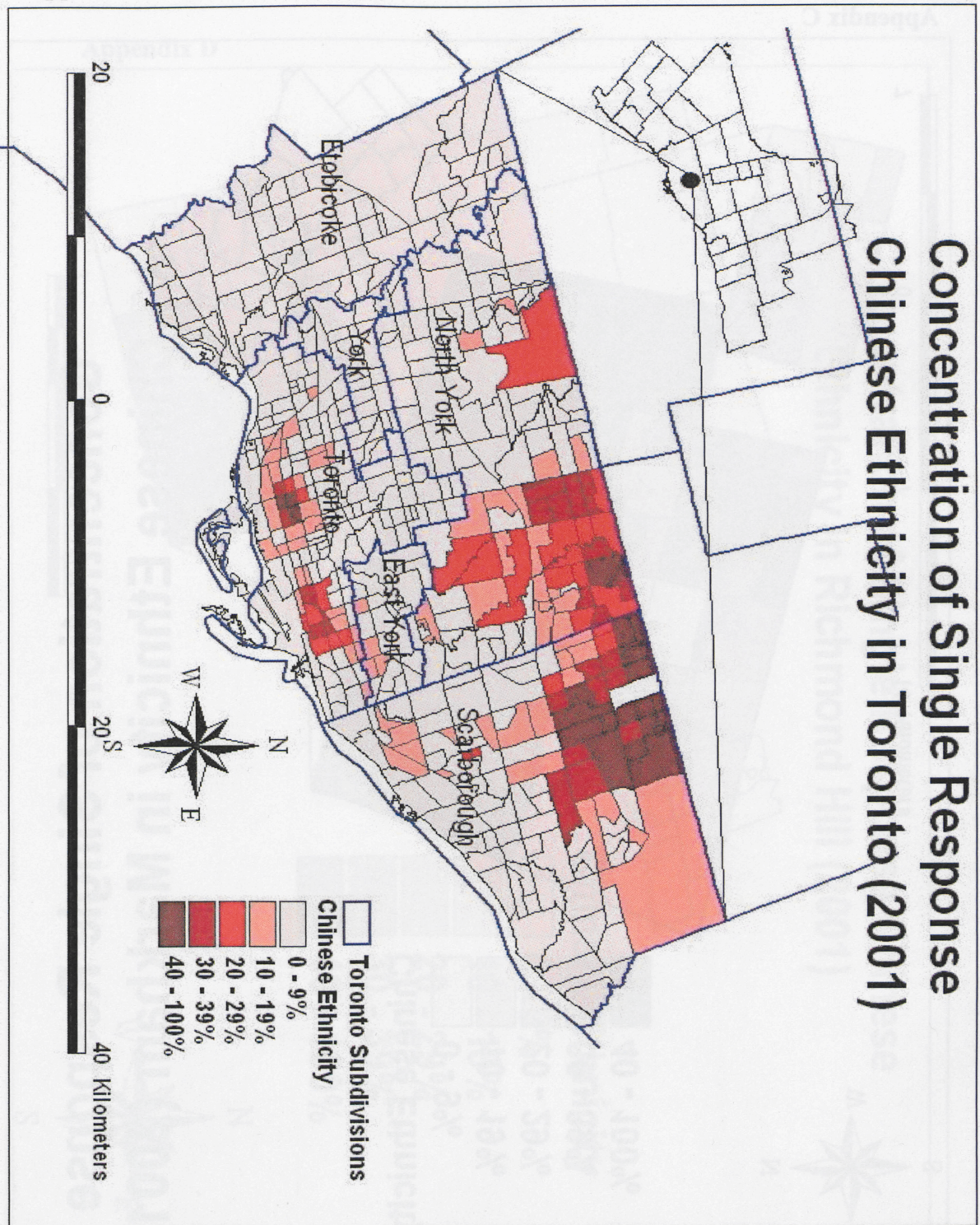
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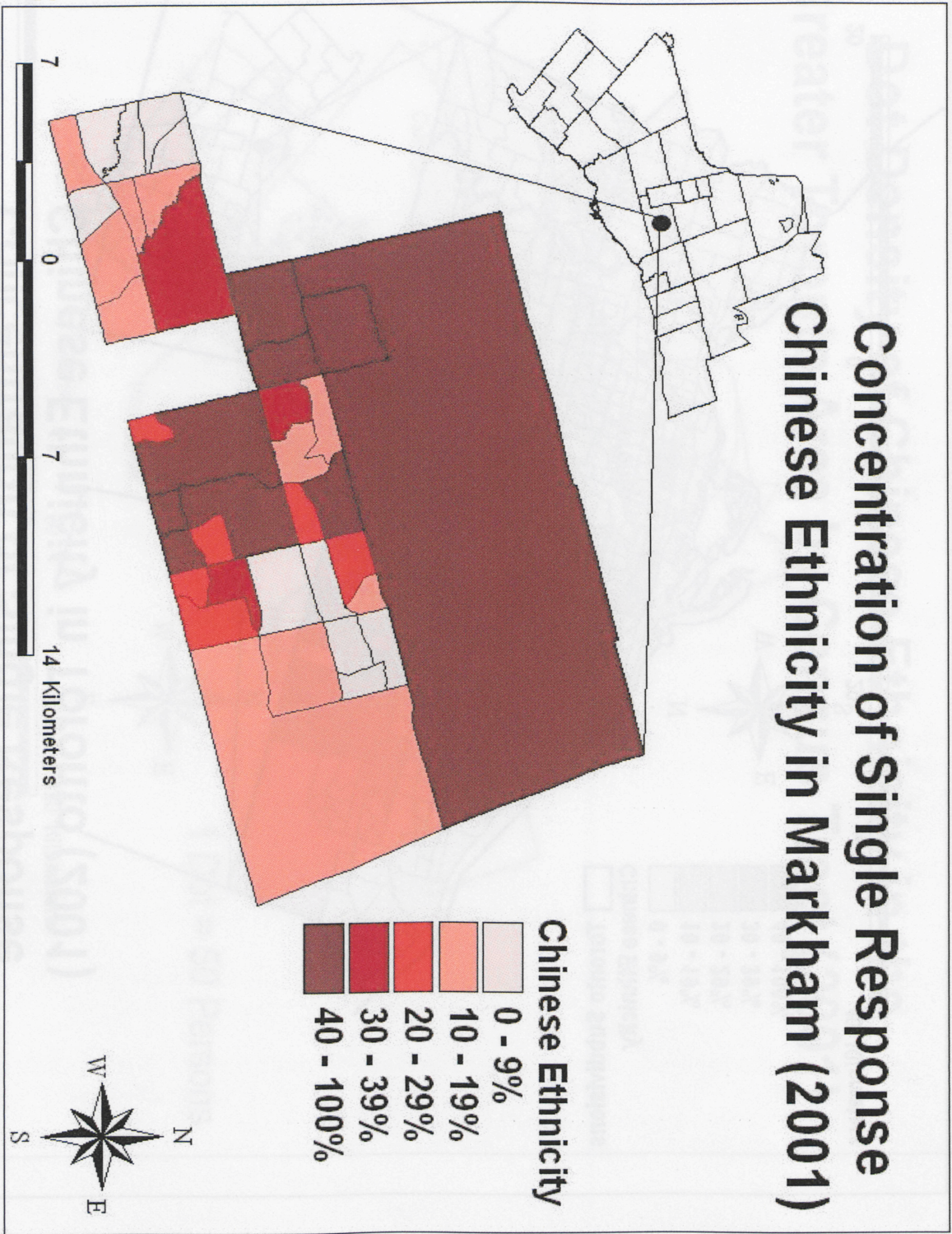
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Dot Density of Chinese Ethnicity in the Greater Toronto Area by Census Tract (2001)



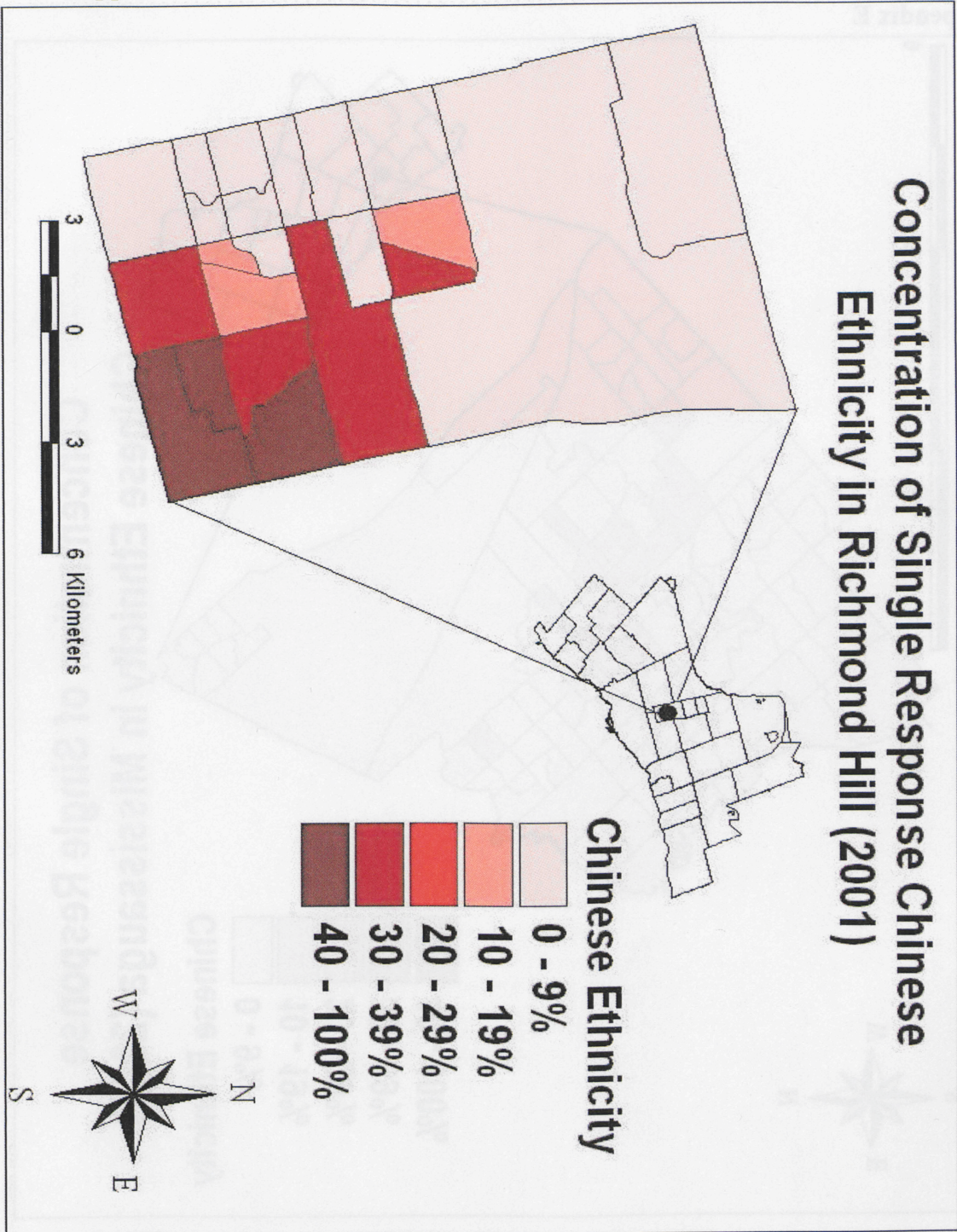


Appendix C

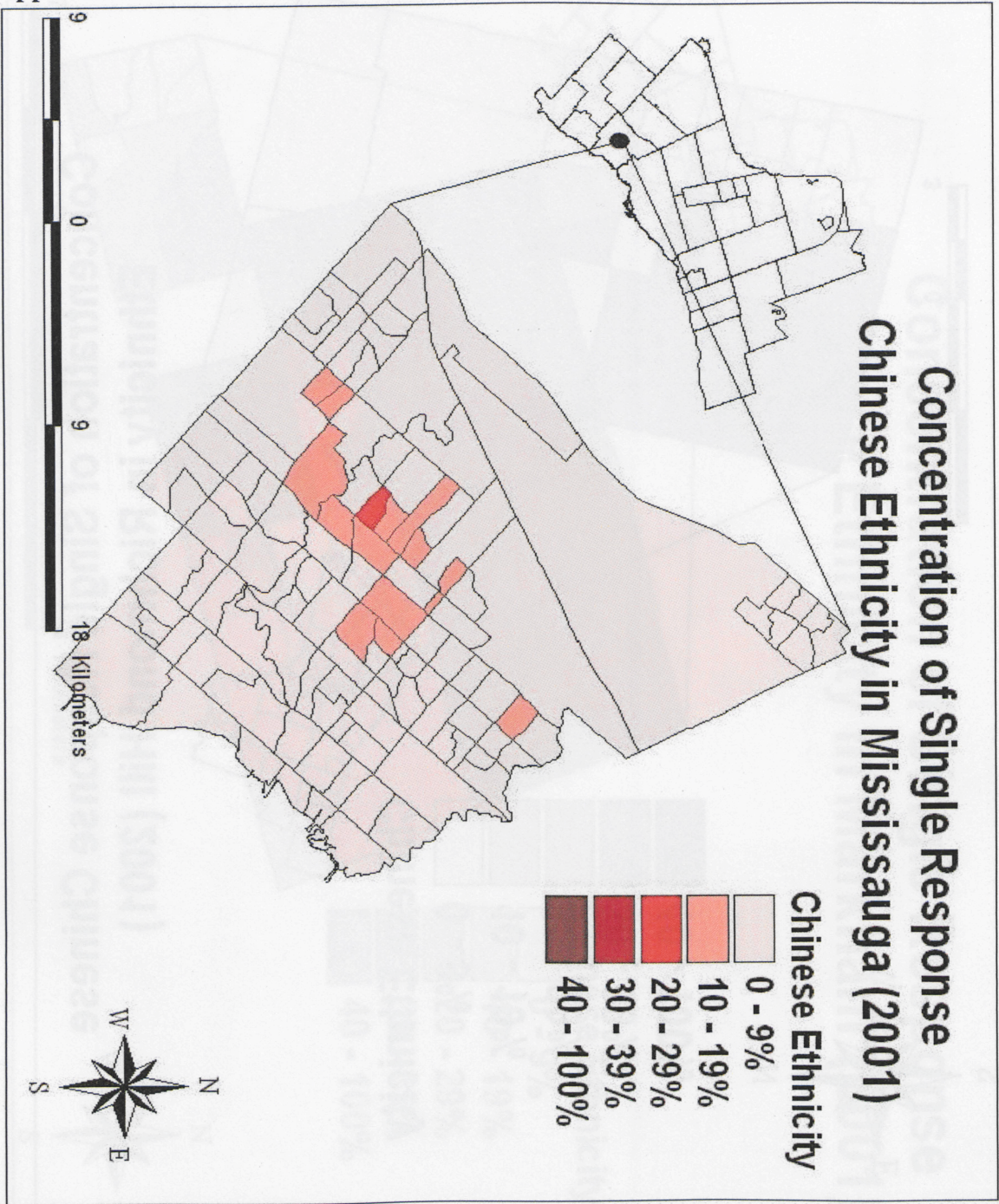


Appendix D

Concentration of Single Response Chinese Ethnicity in Richmond Hill (2001)



Appendix E



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