

The Party of Diversity and Multiculturalism? Why Visible Minorities Support the Liberals

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Visible minorities (VMs) made up over 22 percent of Canadian society in 2016 (Statistics Canada 2018), yet we know little about their political attitudes. Previous works note that VMs and Canadians of non-European descent tend to prefer the Liberal Party of Canada (Blais 2005; Bilodeau and Kanji 2010; Gidengil et al. 2013), yet we do not know why this is the case. This study therefore examines the factors behind VMs' propensity to support the Liberal party as the supposed party of multiculturalism and minorities.

My findings show that stronger emotional attachment to one's ethnic community was the key predictor among VMs for preferring the Liberal party whereas opinions on multiculturalism had little to no effect. On the other hand, weaker community attachment was linked with a stronger preference for the Conservatives.

Research Question

To what extent does opinion of multiculturalism and diversity drive VMs to support the Liberals?

Data and Methodology

- 2014 Provincial Diversity Project
- 5,539 respondents with 2,041 members of a visible minority living in Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta
- Logistic Regressions assessing Liberal party preference (as a dummy variable)

The Liberal Gap Between Visible Minorities and Other Canadians

Liberal Preference among Visible Minorities 45%
Other Canadians 30%

Even when controlling for social and economic values as well as other socio-demographic traits, there is still a significant 15 percentage point gap in favour of the Liberals among VMs when compared to other Canadians.

Going Beyond the Visible Minority Category

Ethnic/racial origins of VM respondents	Liberal Support	n
Chinese	36%	541
South Asian	50%	235
Black	53%	119
Arab	62%	175
Other VMs	46%	294

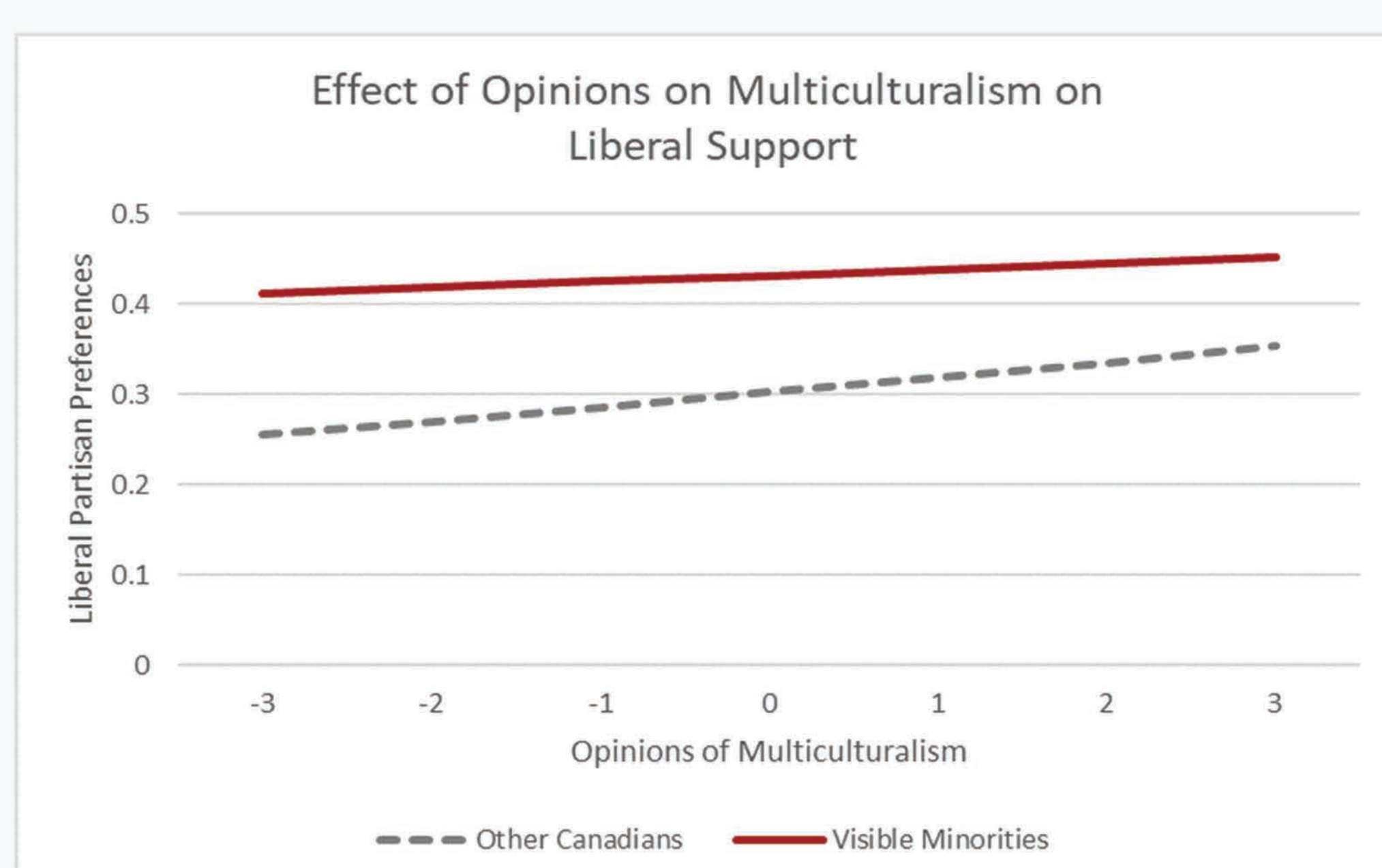
What Explains Visible Minorities' Liberal Preference?

If more traditional socio-demographic and ideological factors cannot explain VMs' preference for the Liberals then perhaps we should consider the hypothesis that VM support is dependent on the Liberals being viewed as the party of multiculturalism and diversity among minorities (Bilodeau and Kanji 2010).

Opinions on Multiculturalism, Any Signs of Liberal Issue Ownership?

	VMs	Other Canadians
Opinion on Multiculturalism (-3 to 3)	1,67	0,13

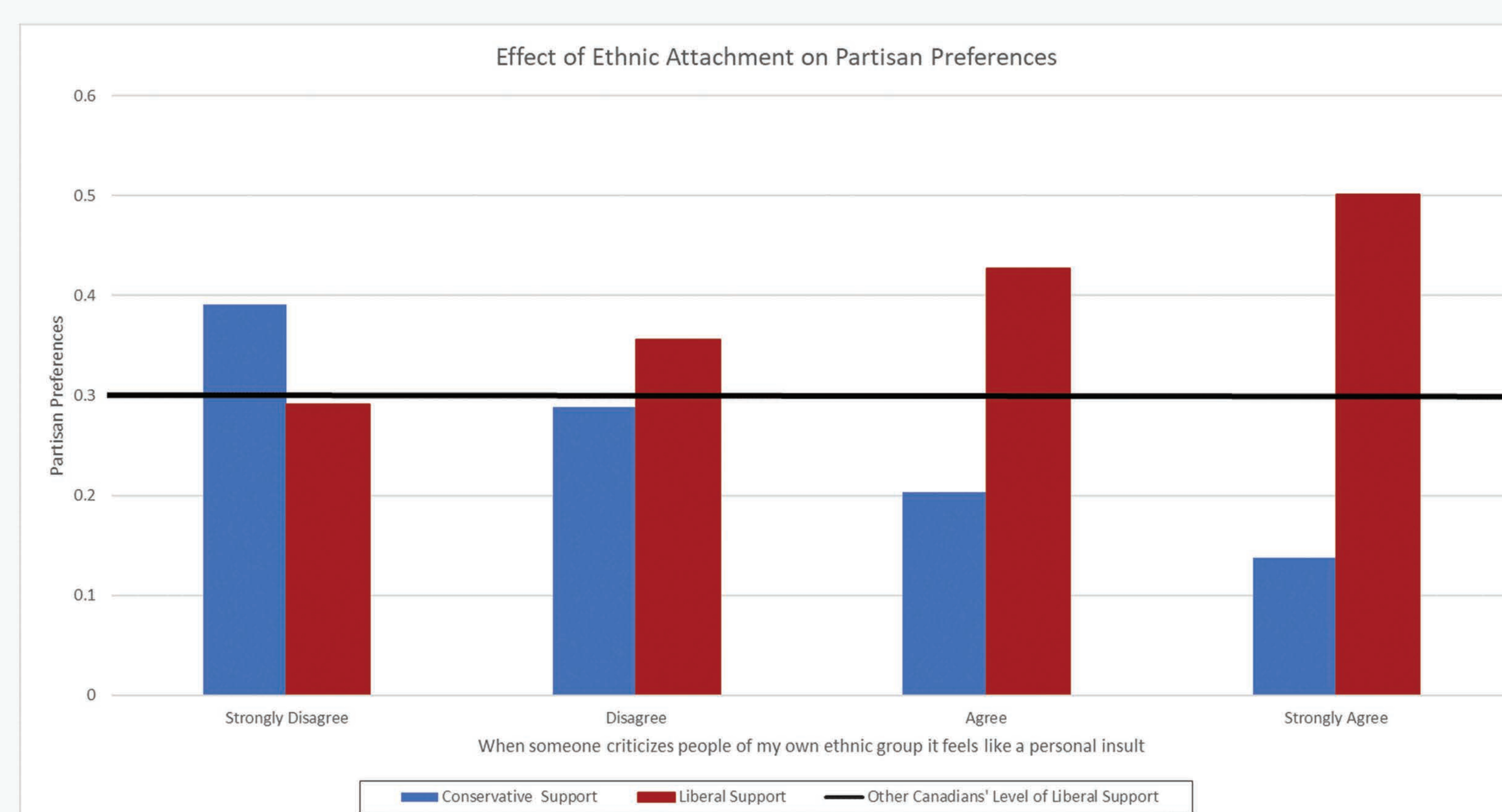
Multiculturalism and diversity-related topics are particularly important for VMs (White and Bilodeau 2014) which might have traditionally encouraged VMs to support the Liberal party.



However, results show that compared to other Canadians, VMs' opinions on multiculturalism did not predict their level of Liberal support at a statistically significant level.

Ethnic Attachment and Liberal Support

VMs with a stronger emotional attachment to their community will feel closer to the Liberals than other parties while VMs with a weaker sense of attachment will tend to support the Conservatives.



This suggests that VMs with a stronger community attachment will view the Liberals as the best choice for their communities' interests whereas those with a weaker sense of attachment might instead have political preferences more in line with other Canadians.

Conclusion and Key Findings

Even when accounting for variables related to social-demographic characteristics, socio-economic ideology, and opinions on multiculturalism, ethnic attachment was the key predictor of Liberal support among VMs.

Conversely, there seems to be divide between VMs who are more attached to their ethnic community and those who feel more detached. Whereas the former's choice of political party might prioritize their community's well-being, the latter might instead emphasize individual factors such as social and economic values.

Bibliography

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Moreover, unlike other Canadians, the fact that multiculturalism did not have an effect in predicting Liberal support suggests that VMs, as a group, do not view a single party as being intrinsically linked with the idea of Canadian multiculturalism.