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Where are all the racialized staffers?
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Abstract

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As a Black woman working on Parliament Hill for ten months as a Parliamentary Intern, I noticed that I was often one of the only racialized staffers in the room, and sometimes the only one. This observation motivated me to study hiring policies in the Parliament Hill offices of backbench Members of Parliament (MPs). This paper examines the hiring policies, or lack thereof, that backbench MPs must follow when staffing their Ottawa offices. Using a Critical Race Feminism framework and a qualitative approach that includes participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and primary and secondary sources, I analyze Parliament Hill's organizational structure and how this relates to race, women, Canadian federal politics, and backbench MPs' staffers. My analysis demonstrates the ways in which the absence of formalized hiring practices has the potential to exclude Black and Indigenous women and other marginalized groups from working in backbench MPs' offices. This may stymie the inclusion of diverse voices and exacerbate systemic racism and sexism on Parliament Hill and in Canadian policy making.

Introduction

Political staffers play an important role in parliamentary democracies. Staffers 'are agenda-setters, gatekeepers, researchers, negotiators and policy-drivers' (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, p. 2). As a racialized woman working on the Hill, and seeing the large role staffers play and the influence they have, I often wondered whether anyone was paying attention to their racial makeup. Is it predominantly a white group of men and women who wield this power, or is there racial equity amongst staffers? After much research, it became clear that there is no publicly available data on staffers' demographics (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, p. 2). In addition to this, there are no formalized hiring policies when it comes to hiring staffers for the Ottawa offices among two out of the three official federal political parties: the Liberal and the Conservative parties. The New Democratic Party (NDP) has hiring policies that can be found online in their collective agreement (New Democratic Party [NDP], 2016). Through my research, I discovered that the absence of formalized hiring policies is due, in part, to parliamentary privilege; the nature of MPs' roles; and the organizational structure on Parliament Hill (McCluskey & Read, 2018, para 4, 5; Anonymous, 2019b; Anonymous, 2019c; Marleau & Montpetit (Eds), 2000). Parliamentary privilege provides Members with complete freedom when it comes to hiring: they can choose to interview anyone they want, require any qualifications, and hire whomever they want (McCluskey & Read, 2018, para 4, 5; Anonymous 2019d; Marleau & Montpetit (Eds), 2000). Although the NDP has policies in place to regulate some of this process, in the face of the supreme parliamentary privilege, the NDP's policies are undermined. Therefore, using Critical Race Feminism as a framework, this paper examines the hiring policies, or the lack thereof, that guide backbench MPs when hiring for their Ottawa offices. I argue that given Canada's history of systemic racism and sexism, the absence of hiring policies, or hiring policies that are easily defeated by parliamentary privilege, act as a barrier to the most marginalized groups in our society, Black and Indigenous women, from playing a key role in our parliamentary democracy, as staffers.

I begin with a brief explanation of Critical Race Feminism. The second section reviews existing research on diversity and Canada's federal Parliament, while the third section discusses the role of backbench MPs' staffers. The fourth section provides a brief explanation of the various hiring policies that govern MP offices on the Hill. The fifth section evaluates the current lack of hiring policies through a critical race feminist lens and offers my first-person insights, from the eyes of an African-Canadian woman, about what a lack of policies might mean for the most marginalized people in our country. This section also

examines two existing programs that could be adapted and applied to the parliamentary precinct.

Methodology

In order to conduct my research, I used various qualitative methods: participant observation, an analysis of news articles and primary and secondary documents, and semi-structured interviews. I engaged in participant observation during my 10 months on the Hill as a non-partisan intern in the Canadian Political Science Associations' Parliamentary Internship Programme in order to develop my topic and insights. Parliament Hill, and the surrounding offices, meeting and committee rooms, are social settings that are seldom open to the general public (Bryman, Bell & Teevan., 2012, p. 147; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). I feel lucky to have been able to work in this space and observe its inner workings. My observations stood out to me as a social problem, one which I wanted to further understand (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 3; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). I hope that my observations and this research will spark more of a discussion and interest around this subject matter.

In addition, I conducted interviews and analyzed documents. In order to understand hiring policies in backbench MP's offices, I carried out a qualitative analysis of political party websites, political party legislative job postings, the NDP collective agreement, the House of Commons' *Procedure and Practice* and other sources relating to parliamentary privilege. Some of this information was highly complex, and so in order to deepen my understanding, I had several conversations with specialists' in the inner workings of Parliament. Throughout my research, I could not find any indication that hiring policies for the Liberal and Conservative parties existed. Therefore, I conducted four semi-structured interviews with Members of Parliament from the three official political parties of the 42nd Parliament to gather this information. These interviews took place in May and June 2019. Depending on the person being interviewed, my interviews lasted between 10 and 20 minutes (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 165, 166).

In order to make sense of the information I learned and collected throughout my research, I relied on Critical Race Feminism; literature on diversity and Canada's federal Parliament; literature on Black and Indigenous peoples in Canada; news articles that reported instances of racism on the Hill; literature on Parliament Hill staffers; the Employment Equity Act and Employment Equity literature (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 3). Notably, this project took its cue from academic Isalean Harris, who, in a different institutional context, Canada's universities, asked *Where are the Black female faculty?* Harris explores Canada's employment equity program and asks similar questions about inclusion. This paper is informed by Harris's approach, research and methodology (Harris, 2018).

Critical Race Theory

This paper relies on Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework to analyze the hiring practices, or lack thereof, on Parliament Hill and what it means for Black and Indigenous women. More specifically, this paper will use Critical Race Feminism as a framework, which is the application of Critical Race Theory to understand women of color's lives and concerns (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 144; Wing, 1997).

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CRT examines the relationship between "race[1], racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). CRT takes into account the complex relationship of "economics, history, context, group- and self interest, and even feelings and unconscious bias" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3). This theory strives to understand the role that these various factors play in the continuous marginalization of society's most marginalized people.

CRT has three basic components. The first aspect of CRT is that racism is ordinary, not abnormal: racism is a daily affair, and the usual way in which "society does business" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). The second element of CRT is that racism is interwoven in all of our systems, and that "white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). Therefore, systemic racism "advances the interests of. . .white elites" both materially, and psychically (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7, 8). Thirdly, CRT scholars show that "race and races are products of social thoughts and relations" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). Thus, race is a social construct used to make some people inferior, and thus justify their treatment, socioeconomic status and life opportunities (Maynard, 2017; Monchalin, 2016).

Another strong component of Critical Race Theory, although not one of the main tenets, is its rejection of meritocracy. Critical race theorists strive to demonstrate the inequality of meritocracy and the ways in which discourses of merit can infiltrate and dominate discussions about equality and equity and "camouflage the raced, gendered, colonial and western inequalities and biases that exist towards white male and female candidates" (Harris, 2018, p. 83; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001, p. 150; Sommerlad, 2015). For critical race theorists, there is no such thing as objective credentials; these are tangibles that are often created/required by the dominant group to serve and uplift the dominant group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 92; Sommerlad, 2015).

Following Critical Race Theory, racism is ingrained and embedded within the fabric of Canada's federal Parliament. Canada has a grim history of slavery, genocide, residential schools, the *Indian Act*, racist immigration policies, segregated schooling, and the list goes on (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015; Maynard, 2017, p. 3, 12, 21, 22, 32, 33; Monchalin, 2016). Much of Canada's racist history was founded, and justified, by the social construct of race. Indigenous and Black people have been deemed inferior to white people, due to their skin color. Stereotypes and characteristics were ascribed to these groups to ensure their oppression, and white settlers' social, political and economic gain from their oppression (Maynard, 2017). Even with the abolishment of slavery, residential schools and other racist policies, this idea of Black and Indigenous people as inferior persists. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Frantz Fanon discusses the meaning attributed to skin color when he says "I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (Fanon, 2008, p. 87; Maynard, 2017, p. 8). The United Nations has documented the existence of anti-black racism and racism against Indigenous peoples in Canada and has shared its concerns about the current socioeconomic status of both these groups (Maynard, 2017, p. 5, 233; UN, 2014; UN, 2017). Due to their oppression, these groups do not have the same access to social,

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[1] Race is a social construct that was created to subjugate a group of people. There is no scientific difference between a white person and a black person. When people talk about *race*, they are really talking about *racism*. The category of *race* yields much power and can change the outcome of people's lives. I believe that it is important that we engage with this word in order to study and address the problems it creates, as well as the actual differences in experience that racialized people and white people live (Tolley, 2016, p. 6; Maynard, 2017). Therefore, I will be engaging with this term throughout my paper.

economic and political capital as white settlers (Maynard, 2017; Monchalin, 2016; Harris, 2018, p. 82, 83). Their history and continuing marginalization makes competing with whites grossly unfair (Du Bois, 1999; Sommerlad, 2015).

CRT has been adopted by feminists as a framework through which to analyze the marginalization of racialized women. Racialized women are often at the bottom of the socioeconomic spectrum; therefore, feminism, without an analysis of race, is not very useful to women of color (Wing, 1997, p. 1). Racialized women's experiences with social, political and economic institutions are different from those of white women and racialized men (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 51; Wing, 1997). For example, if a black woman does not get a job, she might wonder whether it was because of her gender and/or race. She might ask herself this same question if she were running for public office and was unsuccessful. To further understand this intersection, one could look at electoral successes in Canada. Jean Augustine, the first black woman to be elected to the House of Commons, was elected 72 years after the first white woman (Mcleod, 2016; Marshall, 2015). The first Indigenous woman MP, Ethel Blondin-Andrew, was elected 67 years after the first white woman (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2013). Racialized women's experience with oppression are different from that of their racialized male counterparts, and their white sisters, due to the fact that women, as a group, have also been, and continue to be, marginalized in Canadian society due to their sex, and racialized women continue to be marginalized because of the color of their skin (Tolley & Hunter, 2019).

Systemic discrimination in Canada is not simply about individual acts of racism, it is about "unconscious biases, embedded prejudicial attitudes and routine practices that work to maintain unequal socio-economic and racial orders"; it is also about who has access to informal networks, tangibles that count as merit and capital (Harris, 2018, p. 12). Since its inception, Parliament has been dominated by "whiteness." Harris calls places dominated by *whiteness* "cultures of whiteness" (Harris, 2018, p. 16). These are cultures that "function on the basis of white-norm culture and Eurocentrism" (Harris, 2018, p. 16). Therefore, whiteness is "embedded in the institutional structure" of Parliament, and benefits those with similar "social and cultural capital" (cited in Harris, 2018, p. 17).

Historically, Parliament has been dominated by white men; it has been the source of many racist policies; it has been built on unceded land; and to this day we read of stories reporting the racism and discrimination that some are subject to on the Hill (Canadian Press, 2019; Cruickshank, 2017; Foster, 2018; Pamar, 2019; Stone, 2018; Zimonjic, 2019; Black, 2017; Andrew, Biles, Siemiatycki & Tolley, 2008; Tolley & Hunter, 2019). We hear about security officers questioning the presence of Black People on the Hill (Zimonjic, 2019; Canadian Press, 2019). We hear about MP Caesar-Chavannes being asked not to steal a woman's purse in the bathroom (Cruickshank, 2017; Tolley & Hunter, 2019). We read about the Prime Minister announcing a racially diverse cabinet that does not have a single black person in it (Foster, 2018). These are not isolated incidents. This is white normativity in action, making "racialized and Indigenous bodies appear unsuitable and out of place" at Parliament (cited in Harris, 2018, p. 18). This is institutional racism upheld by smaller acts of racism, and vice versa. This is colonialism and patriarchy working together to create sexism and racism, producing barriers for Black and Indigenous women (Harris, 2018, p. 16).

Representation in Canadian Politics

Although Canada prides itself on being a multicultural society, and principles of diversity, equity and inclusiveness are embedded in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms,

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Canadian political scientists have been rather silent on the topic of racial diversity in Canada's federal Parliament (Thompson, 2008; Andrew et al., 2008; Tolley & Hunter, 2019; Pamar, 2019). In *Is Race Political,* academic Debra Thompson examines the absence of race in Canada's political science discipline and calls on political scientists to do better. She draws many conclusions as to why political scientists have failed to pay very much, if any, attention to race, and states that the narrative that "Canada as a country does not have a racism problem," is problematic and has guided this gap in literature (Thompson, 2008; Tolley & Hunter, 2019).

When political scientists have engaged with racial diversity and Canada's Parliament, these conversations have usually focused on numerical representation or/and substantive vs. symbolic representation (Krizus, 2017; Tolley, 2015; Bird, 2015; Black, 2017; Thompson, 2008). Some political scientists have taken the conversation of race and Canada's Parliament further by studying the various barriers that are presented for racialized people (Andrew et al., 2008; Tolley, 2016; Tolley, 2019). In *Who you know: The local party presidents and minority candidate emergence*, Tolley explores the underrepresentation of diverse candidates at the start of the political process (Tolley, 2019, p. 70). In Canada, it is often the riding association (local electoral district associations) that asks candidates to run, not the party leader. Tolley's research showed that the presence of a racialized local riding association president is key to the emergence of racialized candidates. The support of an established political party provides financial support, expertise for navigating the political system, and organizational support (Tolley, 2019, p. 70, 77; Tolley & Hunter, 2019). Therefore, gaining the support of a local party president is crucial and acts as an obstacle for visible minority candidates.

When women of color do reach Parliament, they still face harassment and barriers, many of which come from the news media. In *Framed,* Erin Tolley explores the news media and the coverage of race in Canadian politics. Tolley found that women of color frequently face a double burden: the news media often focus on the women's appearances, because we live in a sexist and misogynist society, but the news media simultaneously exoticize women of color (Tolley, 2016, p. 108-113; Tolley & Hunter, 2019). By exoticising women of color the news media are implying there is a standard of beauty, which is white, and that these women are different, foreign and *other*. In other words, they do not belong on the Hill (Tolley & Hunter, 2019; Tolley, 2016).

From underrepresentation, to the nomination processes, to negative portrayals of racialized women in the news media, racialized women are constantly reminded that they do not belong in this space. The dearth of literature in this area raises the question: do we even care about racialized women in federal politics? We know that when political scientists study race and Canadian Parliament they have found that race does matter. We also know diversity is important and essential in order for Canada's population to feel represented at the highest level. However, there is a lack of literature exploring the various barriers confronting racialized candidates before being elected, and once elected (Andrew et al., 2008; Bird, 2015; Black, 2017; Thompson, 2008; Tolley, 2015; Krizus, 2017; Tolley, 2016; Tolley, 2019).

Parliament Hill Staffers

There are many different kinds of staffers, as author and former staffer Daniel Dickin observes in *Organizing the Halls of Power: Federal Parliamentary Staffers and Members of Parliament's Offices* (Dickin, 2019). This paper focuses on the role of backbench MP

staffers, a topic that Phd candidate Will Stos emphasizes is understudied (Stos, 2019, para 1). These staffers play a significant role in MPs' offices and play a prominent role in making large political decisions. They affect "the nature of deliberation in legislatures and . . . legislative policy outputs" (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, p. 1, 3, 4).

Staffers are a relatively new phenomenon on the Hill. Prior to the 1960s, MPs had access to a secretarial pool, where one secretary would be dispatched to work with an MP for a few days. These secretaries were let go during recess and dissolution (Dickin, 2019, para 7). In the late 1960s, MPs were allowed to hire 1 full-time secretary, and in 1974, they were allowed to hire a second. It was in 1999-2000, that MPs were given a budget of $190,000 for the purpose of staffing their offices (Dickin, 2019, para 7; Stos, 2019). The evolution of staffers reflects the increase in workload and responsibility that MPs have inherited due to the power and responsibility yielded by the federal government over the years (Dickin, 2019, para 8).

Today, staffers do everything from "researching and evaluating legislation, preparing for committee, writing legislation, drafting speeches for the House and for other events, scrutinising estimates" to writing questions for Question Period, attending events alongside the MP, meeting with stakeholders (when the MP is absent), drafting recommendations for reports, synthesizing large amounts of information, mentoring or acting as the unofficial boss to other staff or interns in the office, filtering large amounts of correspondence (emails, letters and calls), handling dry-cleaning, buying lunch or/and dinner for MPs, delivering things to and from the Chamber, and running the MPs' social-media image (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, p. 3, 4; Sheehy, 2018-2019). Staff are shaping messages, acting as gatekeepers between much of the information received in their office and the MP, and essentially doing a lot of the work that the general public likely attribute to MPs (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, p. 3; Sheehy, 2018-2019). Yet MPs could not fulfill their responsibilities without staffers (Dickin, 2019).

Perhaps one of the most important roles that MPs, and by default, their staff have, is their power to introduce Private Member's Bills (PMB). PMB's can directly affect federal law, they "often plant-seeds for future government legislation" (Stos, 2019, para 31; Dickin, 2019). Staffers undertake much of the research and behind-the-scenes preparation for PMBs (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, p. 3). Furthermore, when private or public member's bills gets proposed, they are assigned to the appropriate committee for review—providing another opportunity for backbench MPs and their staff to propose amendments and shape legislation. Private and public member's bills give staffers the power to help frame legislation, even if it is MPs who give the directions and ultimately have the final say (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, p. 5; Dickin, 2019).

Therefore, one can clearly see that the under-representation of certain groups amongst staffers in such an institution may mean that some people will be forgotten, and voices will be left out (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, p. 6). The under-representation of certain groups can also mean that priorities, in various offices, will be set and based on the dominant group's needs and desires.

There is a gap in the literature when it comes to racialized staffers and there is no publicly available data on staffers that tells us anything about staffers' racial diversity (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018). We do know that staffers can shape policy and legislative work, and lawyers, academics and international studies from the business realm have talked about the benefits of increasing diversity in the workplace (Davis, Frolova & Callahan, 2016, p. 81; Pamar, 2019; Dickin, 2019; Andrew et al; Mansbridge, 1999; Bird, 2015). Diversity and strong policies that work to promote diversity can improve the performance of a business;

increase employee satisfaction and loyalty; strengthen the relationships between the businesses and multicultural communities and attract the best and brightest to the workplace (Davis et al., 2016, p. 81; Pamar, 2019). Therefore, we know that diversity amongst staff would be beneficial. We also know that staffers, working in a legislative role, and their exposure to MP's political realms and mentorship, impact their political ambitions. In simple terms, when individuals work within an MP's realm, they may be more likely to run for elected office in the future (Snagovsky & Kerby, 2018, 18). Therefore, if our goal is to create better policy and a representative Parliament, it would be worthwhile to study diversity amongst staffers.

Employment Policies on Parliament Hill

MPs have different hiring protocols for their Ottawa offices. There are also many different avenues that can bring someone to an MP's Ottawa office: volunteering, internships, being a constituent, involvement in political parties, family friends, etc. (Dickin, para 10, 11, 2019; Sheehy, 2018-2019). It is worth asking whether there are policies or guidelines that backbench MPs must follow when hiring staffers for their Ottawa offices. In order to answer this complex question, this section will explore the following: procedure and practice, parliamentary privilege, constituents and the three official political parties' hiring practices.

MP's technically have relatively full discretion over whom they hire, as laid out in the House of Commons *Procedure and Practice*:

> Each Member is the employer of all his or her employees and each Member has the prerogative to recruit, hire, promote and release employees. A Member is allowed full discretion in the direction and control of the work performed on his or her behalf by employees and is subject only to the authority of the Board of Internal Economy and the House of Commons in the exercise of that discretion. Members determine the duties to be performed, hours of work, job classifications and salaries, and are responsible for employee relations. Subject to specific terms and conditions, Members may enter into contracts for services with individuals, agencies or organizations and use a portion of the Member's Office Budget for the payment of these contractors. Members may not hire or enter into a contract for consulting and professional services with members of their immediate family (spouses and children and their spouses and children) (Marleau and Montpetit (Eds), 2000, para 5).

Procedure and Practice is a manifestation of parliamentary privilege. Parliamentary privilege lays out the jurisdiction, and then procedure and practice, which is written by the clerks, codifies the rules of the jurisdiction. Therefore, parliamentary privilege is what ultimately gives MPs full discretion over their hiring (Anonymous, 2019b). Parliamentary privilege is bestowed on MPs once they are sworn in, and it is meant to facilitate MPs' abilities to do their jobs (Anonymous, 2019c). In *Parliamentary privilege and #MeToo*, Kalin McCluskey and Michael Read describe parliamentary privilege as "an amorphous catch-all of rules, policies, conventions and procedures that allow parliamentarians to perform their duties without personal repercussions" (McCluskey & Read, 2018, p. 2). According to parliamentary privilege, nobody could create hiring policies and force members to follow them, as this would be a breach of privilege.

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The question of hiring policies in backbench MPs' offices is further complicated when one considers the *nature* and *structure* of an MP's role. MPs are elected by their constituents. Canada does not have a recall mechanism, which would allow constituents to fire their MPs during their term. MPs can be fired only if they are not re-elected in the federal election (Anonymous, 2019c). Therefore, MPs are their own bosses. This concept can be further contextualized if we think of MPs' office budgets. At the beginning of every term, members are given a certain amount of money to run their offices. The Member's Office Budget (MOB) helps MPs pay employees' salaries as well as "constituency office leases, office operating costs" and other expenses (Dickie, 2019, para 25). This money is not distributed to caucus as a whole; rather, it is distributed to individual members (Anonymous, 2019c). Therefore, members become responsible for running their office, much like a little business.

If we return to hiring policies and ask who would implement such policies, could one answer be political parties? Technically, if caucus came together and members decided that they wanted to implement hiring policies and a data collection mechanism, they could do so. However, since MPs are their own bosses, what would be the consequence for an MP who did not follow these policies? Being removed from a committee? Removing a critic role? Being expelled from caucus? Even if an MP were expelled from caucus, they could still sit as an independent and retain their parliamentary privileges (McCluskey & Read, 2018, para 5).

Given this context, I engaged in informal interviews with Members of Parliament from all official political parties in the 42nd Parliament to determine whether hiring policies exist in their parties. Such policies do not seem to exist for Liberals and Conservatives (Anonymous, 2019a; Anonymous, 2019d; Anonymous, 2019f). Backbench MPs in these two parties have complete discretion when it comes to hiring staff for their Ottawa offices. One MP mentioned that at the beginning of the session they were given contract templates for specific positions and ideas of certain job titles. Another MP mentioned that at the beginning of the session, the party stressed they should hire people whom they really trusted. When asked about how MPs approached hiring, given the absence of hiring policies, MPs had different answers. One MP mentioned that when a qualified candidate from their riding applies for the job, they will give that candidate special consideration. This MP emphasized the importance of promoting community values and the interests of young leaders in the community. On a similar wavelength, another MP ensures that the people that MP hires have an understanding of the issues faced in the riding they represent. Another MP looked for job candidates with strong leadership qualities. A few MPs mentioned the importance of *hiring diversity*. One MP stressed they are looking to ensure gender parity and diversity amongst religions, sexual orientation and age. Another MP talked about the benefits of diversity, one of which being how it brings awareness to various issues. All of the Liberal and Conservative MPs I interviewed spoke about how there was no requirement to maintain data. However, some individual MPs chose to keep their own data on staff and mentioned having collected information about staff salaries and full- and part-time positions (Anonymous, 2019a; Anonymous, 2019d; Anonymous, 2019e; Anonymous, 2019f).

The NDP has a different approach to hiring. The NDP federal caucus has a collective agreement that specify hiring policies (NDP, 2016). Some examples:

1. Where vacancies, new positions or secondments in the bargaining unit arise, former employees on the recall list shall be notified at the same time as the internal posting.

2. All vacancies, new positions or secondments in the bargaining unit of sixty (60) days or longer shall be posted internally for a minimum of seven (7) calendar days. Where there are no members in the vicinity of the vacancy, internal and external postings may go out at the same time. Where skills and abilities are equal, applicants who are members of the bargaining unit shall be hired, in order of seniority.

3. In recognition of Article 12 [another article in the collective agreement], the following procedures shall apply to the job postings in the bargaining unit:
    a. The candidate submits their application, indicating they are internal, to the HR email and they receive an automated receipt (HR bot);
    b. All qualified Union members who have applied shall be granted an interview before a decision on the appointment is made;
    c. All Union members not receiving an interview must be notified;
    d. All unsuccessful internal candidates, who have been interviewed for the position, must be notified of the hiring decision. Upon request by the member and without prejudice further feedback on the interview will be provided;
    e. Internal candidates who were not hired may use the grievance procedure in the collective agreement to appeal.

4. The Caucus shall us a standard job posting form (attached). All job postings will include the minimum salary and words: "the NDP is an employment equity employer". Caucus will implement consistent procedures through central office for matters related to hiring, evaluation and workloads.

5. The Union shall be notified in writing of all appointments, hiring's, layoffs, transfers, recalls and terminations of employment within the Bargaining Unit (NDP, 2016, p. 16, 17, 18).

The NDP's hiring policies dictate how they can advertise for positions (internal vs external); how they go about hiring someone; and provide directions for what needs to be in the job advertisement. Through the collective agreement, the NDP has established that they are an "employment equity employer" (NDP, 2016). This means that they are an employer that is committed to diversity, inclusion and equal access to opportunities in the workplace (NDP, 2016). According to the collective agreement, it seems as though the main way they have incorporated this into their union is by creating an "Employment Equity Committee." This committee is made up of the employer (MP) and the union. This committee is in charge of "develop[ing] an employment equity program in the workplace" (NDP, 2016, p. 43). Their mandate is to study the presence of minorities in the workplace (visible minorities, women, francophones, aboriginals, etc.), and ensure that they have access to equal opportunities in the workplace. They do this through addressing things such as targets, educational opportunities, job descriptions, hiring, on-the-job training, entry qualifications, promotion practices, etc. (NDP, 2016, p. 43). Two other ways in which we see their employment equity at work is through their job postings, and a survey that they invite new team members to fill out. All of their job postings have the following message printed at the bottom of them:

"The NDP is an employment equity employer. Women, persons of colour, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons are encouraged to apply for this position. If you are a member of an equity-seeking group, you may choose to identify as such in your application" (NDP, 2016, p. 53).

Furthermore, when staff begin working in their offices, they are invited to fill out a form to identify themselves as a member of a visible minority group. This information is collected for the union's local records and the person's employer. As stated in the agreement, "[a]s part of our ongoing commitment to employment equity it is important that we gather information on our workplace diversity. Please tell us if you self-identify with these or any other equity seeking groups, and if so, please specify. This information is voluntary and confidential" (NDP, 2016, p. 50). Although members cannot be fired for refusing to follow these protocols due to parliamentary privilege, the NDP has taken a step in the right direction by at least acknowledging that such policies are needed.

While some parties have created their own hiring policies, due to parliamentary privilege and the nature of an MP's job, these policies have limited applicability (McCluskey & Read, 2018, para 5). MPs cannot be fired except for criminal conviction (McCluskey & Read, 2018, para 5). The only people they are truly accountable to are their constituents (McCluskey & Read, 2018, para 5). Given all this, it seems that one of the only ways to increase and ensure diversity among staffers on the Hill would be for MPs to give up a bit of their parliamentary privilege and allow an outside body, such as the House of Commons, to enforce hiring policies on MPs' Ottawa offices. This would not be as simple as it sounds since privilege is an essential part of a functioning Parliament; however, it seems as though privilege extends to aspects that could potentially allow more oversight, while also maintaining a functioning Parliament. Until then, it seems as though increasing diversity amongst staff on the Hill is completely up to MPs' own priorities and values.

Discussion

When hiring policies on the Hill are assessed through a critical race feminist lens, it becomes clear that a lack of hiring policies, particularly for Indigenous and Black women, act as a barrier, limiting people's access to Parliament Hill, and their chance at shaping, or playing a role in Canadian democracy.

Parliament is not a place that screams inclusivity or welcomes Black and Indigenous peoples with open arms, but it has to do better (Zimonjic, 2019; Pamar, 2019; Foster, 2018; Cruickshank, 2017; Canadian Press, 2019; Leddy, 2016; Leslie, 2016; Tolley & Hunter, 2019; Henry, 2016; Maynard, 2017; Monchalin, 2016). When a key facet of our parliamentary democracy is staffers, then we have to make sure that these people are hired fairly, and *look* like Canada. We cannot assume that racialized people have equal access to the Hill given their history and current socioeconomic status in society. If we make this assumption, we are ignoring Canada's history.

According to Parliament's structural system and Parliamentary privilege, incorporating hiring practices that increase diversity on the Hill would be complex and require much cooperation and sacrifices from MPs. Parliamentary privilege is designed to serve MPs, not staff (McCluskey & Read, 2018). Until parliamentary privilege is amended, any hiring policies implemented by political parties cannot be enforced due to the nature of MPs' positions. As McCluskey and Read argue in *Parliamentary Privilege and #MeToo*, unless "the prime minister, the opposition party leaders and the Clerks of both the House of Commons and the Senate" addressed this issue and amended privilege together, there is not much hope for anything changing (McCluskey & Read, 2018, para 8).

Given the reality of Parliament's current structure, we cannot expect to immediately address the issues raised in this paper. However, I think it is important to examine solutions

that look to promote diversity in the workplace, and note their best practices. Therefore, the following paragraphs will examine the Employment Equity Act and the Parliamentary Internship's new special program.

The Employment Equity Act was created in 1986. Prior to 1986, Canada had federal and some provincial legislation that fought employment discrimination; however, this legislation was based on *individual complaints*, thus putting most of the burden on individuals. In the 1970s, there was a shift in Canada, and people began to understand "that equality in the workplace was not simply a question of individual conduct; rather, it was a question of structural barriers as well as organizational and workplace cultures that defined certain types of people and behavior as normative" (Grundy & Smith, 2011, p. 3, 4).

Canada's first few "pilot project" employment equity programs were voluntary and strove to encourage employers to maintain data on their staff so that they could identify underrepresentation and discrimination (Grundy & Smith, 2011, p. 3, 4). These initial programs had very low participation rates (Grundy & Smith, 2011, p. 4). Various stakeholders, representing marginalized groups, recognized the need for such programs, and lobbied the government to make it so that these programs were mandatory and not voluntary (Grundy & Smith, 2011, p. 4). These calls for action were supported by prominent groups such as the Canadian Bar Association. In response, the government created the *1984 Abella Commission*, led by Judge Rosalie Abella (Grundy & Smith, 2011, p. 4).

The goal of this Commission was to conduct "a national inquiry on the most efficient, effective and equitable means of promoting employment opportunities and eliminating systemic discrimination" (Harris, 2018, p.11). The report found that workplace inequality was present and common among women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities and Indigenous peoples (Harris, 2018, p. 11). Their findings demonstrated that the workplace inequalities were "linked to broader socio-economic inequalities" within society amongst "women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities and Indigenous people" (Harris, 2018, p. 11). The report's definition of systemic discrimination referenced "seemingly neutral legislation, policies, procedures, practices and organizational structures" as sources of discrimination (cited in Harris, 2018, p. 11; Grundy & Smith, 2011, p. 4). In other words, weak legislation, or legislation that does not acknowledge or address discrimination (even unintentionally) acts as a barrier to racialized groups. This point is further emphasized when the report cites "practices and attitudes that have, whether by design or impact, the effect of limiting an individual's or group's right to the opportunities generally available" as a source of discrmination (cited in Harris, 2018, p. 11; Grundy & Smith, 2011, p. 4). The report also affirmed the important role that data plays when measuring social and structural inequality. It suggested that data can render barriers visible (Grundy & Smith, 2011, p. 4, 12).

Today the Employment Equity Programme is applicable to federally regulated workplaces and Crown corporations. The program's goal is to "encourage the establishment of working conditions that are free of barriers, corrects the conditions of disadvantage in employment and promotes the principle that employment equity requires special measures and the accommodation of differences for the four designated groups in Canada" (Government of Canada, 2018, para 1). These designated groups include women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities (Government of Canada, 2018). Federally regulated employers must "report annually on the representation of the four designated groups in their workplaces" (Government of Canada, 2018, para 5). Furthermore, a separate department within the federal government, *The Labour Program*, is responsible for ensuring that the Employment Equity Act is applied (Government of Canada, 2018, para 4; Government of Canada, 2019).

Although this program is highly criticized, and is in need of significant improvements, I believe there are lessons that can be learned from the initial report that are applicable to Parliament's current status (Harris, 2018; Griffith, 2016; Miller, 2017). First, the notion that a lack of policies acts as a barrier to racialized groups. Second, the concept of data collection to measure social inequalities in access. Third, participation in such a program as mandatory and not voluntary. Lastly, having a seperate body monitor and supervise the implementation of and participation in the program.

The Parliamentary Internship Programme of the Canadian Political Science Association has adopted some of these practices into its new special program. The Parliamentary Internship Programme (PIP) hires 10 interns for 10 months to work for all sides of the House of Commons. Over the last three years, the program director, Dr. Anne Dance, has worked with alumni and legal experts to create and implement a system to ensure the programme better reflects Canada's population. This special program under the Ontario Human Rights Code is intended to increase diversity within the program. In the summer of 2018, PIP surveyed all alumni to determine who had taken part in the program in the past. The survey found that racialized people have been significantly underrepresented in this programme. Based on this data, PIP incorporated an optional self-identification section for racialized candidates, Indigenous candidates, and candidates with visible or invisible disabilities applying to the program. This addition allows the programme to consider their applications more favourably to help the programme achieve equal opportunity (Vietinghoff & Dance, 2018). According to Dr. Dance, data collection is key, and necessary under the Ontario Human Rights Code. However, there are many parts of this process that are crucial: recruitment; a selection committee briefed on the special program (a group of people instead of one individual); the existence of an effective anti-discrimination policy; raising the interns' stipend so that the program is accessible to everyone; and ensuring that this program does not "reiterate settler colonial power structures," ensuring that it is welcoming to everyone (Dance, 2019). The special program has been successful this year, and hopefully will continue to help the program better reflect the general population in the future (Dance, 2019).

Obviously there are many initiatives that should be incorporated into Parliament Hill's hiring structure to improve diversity amongst staffers—better wages; better working hours; better accessibility; unconscious bias training—to name a few, but some kind of data collection mechanism for collecting desegregated race based data would be a good start. At least we could then begin to understand what kind of situation we have on Parliament Hill, and work to fix it.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the ways in which the current lack of hiring policies on Parliament Hill have the potential to fail Black and Indigenous women. Canada's racist history means that racism is embedded in the structure of Parliament; racism is embedded in peoples' psyches; and Black and Indigenous women do not have the same access to the Hill as the white population. The literature of backbench MP staffers shows that staffers are significant to the effective functioning of Parliament. Yet given that these individuals are hired through informal networks and political and social capital, Black and Indigenous women are at a disadvantage since our federal government has historically been white and male. This paper proposes that Parliament explore solutions based on Canada's journey with Employment Equity Law and the Parliamentary Internship Programme's special

program. These two programs prioritize data collection and external oversight. Their approaches ackowledge discrimination as a social fact, and attempt to address the inequalities posed by sexism and racism. Many things *could* and *should* be done to improve Parliament Hill to make it a more inclusive space. As we approach the next federal election, we are given a window to think deeply about what kind of place we want Parliament to be, and *who* we want it to represent.

Future Research

This paper has tried to fill a literature gap when it comes to racialized staffers on Parliament Hill. Although this paper has filled a bit of that gap, it has really only scratched the surface. Many more studies should be conducted in order to grow the literature in this field and to improve people's understanding of Parliament Hill. For example, I think it would be interesting for someone to look into whether Members of Parliament are obligated to follow any kind of unconscious bias training during their orientation period at the beginning of the Parliament. If one finds that no such training exists, I think it would be worthwhile to design some kind of unconscious bias training program that would be specific to Members of Parliament. I also think that someone should examine the hiring practices when hiring ministerial staff on Parliament Hill. Lastly, I think it would be valuable to look at the US House's diversity initiative, headed by Kemba Hendrix, and evaluate which, if any aspects could be applicable to backbench MP hiring practices (Edmonson, 2019). As mentioned above, there are many things that could and should be done to make Parliament a more inclusive space. I think that studying the above topics would make an immense contribution to the bettering of Parliament Hill.

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