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‘Feodor Snagovsky, Who Cares About Representation? Race, Ethnicity, and Legitimacy in Westminster Democracies’

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Feodor Snagovsky, *Who Cares About Representation? Race, Ethnicity, and Legitimacy in Westminster Democracies* (UBC Press, 2026), 312pp. Hardback. £82. ISBN: 978-0-7748-7296-6.

I was keen to review this book by Feodor Snagovsky as it explores a subject: political representation of ethnic minorities that I have been interested in for a very long time and its geographical focus is on Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom (UK) – three countries that I have lived and worked in during my lifetime. Anyway, my long-standing interest originates from when I wrote an essay on to what extent Australia was a multicultural society during my MA in Australian Studies at King's College London many years ago now. In the essay I argued that Australia was not a multicultural society as the increasing multiethnic nature of its population was not reflected proportionally or adequately in its political system, media, and other major societal institutions. I recall when I was doing my Ph.D. at the University of Sydney in Australia a few years later and being struck by the lack of representation of ethnic minorities in Australian media especially. The impression I got was that having someone of Greek or Italian descent was seen as great progress in terms of representing diversity, which from the perspective of a person of colour was quite astounding. I also remember thinking at the time (having visited Canada several times by this point) that Canada seemed to do a better job, especially in terms of political representation and the media. Although there was definitely room for improvement.

Many of these themes are explored in *Who Cares About Representation?* I should point out before proceeding any further with this review that I am not a quantitative academic and so I will unfortunately not be able to comment much on the impressive quantitative evidence on which the book is based, as I am not qualified to do so. I will instead focus on its main themes. One of these and in many ways, it is the premise of the book, Snagovsky highlights on numerous occasions that a prevailing belief in political science is that those who feel represented in their political system are much more likely to engage with it. However, this book argues that this widespread belief is not backed by much empirical evidence at all. *Who Cares About Representation?* actually explores this in Australia, Canada, and the UK and finds surprisingly that the opposite is true in regard to ethnic minorities. The latter in all three countries are not represented proportionally in their political systems (even Canada, where former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau talked much about his government being the most diverse ever) but yet ethnic minorities are amongst the most active when it comes to engagement with their respective political systems.

And perhaps even more interestingly the majority white electorate in all three countries whilst overrepresented in their political systems in terms of their proportion of the population are actually less engaged. Snagovsky illustrates this with the examples of Brexit in the UK, the defeat of the Voice Referendum in Australia, and the Freedom Convoy in Canada. Although these examples might show, and the book alludes to this, that the parts of the population that supported all of these felt that their representatives did not reflect their concerns and were out of touch. So, perhaps the class dimension might come into play more here.

Being an historian by training I could not help but comment on the book very helpfully illustrating change over time in terms of immigration patterns in Australia, Canada, and the UK. This provides a very useful historical context to immigration in the three countries.

I did want to make a quick note about the production of the book. The font was not easy to read and there seemed to be issues with the binding as a page fell out when I was reading the book. I was quite surprised at these issues as from my past experience the publisher usually has a very high quality of production. However, these minor physical issues do not take anything away from the substantive content of the book. I enjoyed reading this book. It certainly makes an important contribution to the field. I would recommend it to readers. Although it would probably appeal more to specialist readers rather than general, as some of the language in the book is quite dense.

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