

**Double Jeopardy:  
An Exploratory Study of Youth from Immigrant Families Entering the Job Market**

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## Abstract:

This paper reports findings of an online survey and 16 in-depth interviews that show family and friends are neither the predominant nor most useful social resource for young jobseekers from immigrant families. Instead, they tend to use more formal job search strategies. In our sample, the employment outcomes of ethno-racial minority immigrant youth were less desirable than those of their counterparts from the dominant group. Based on the study's findings this paper argues that being an ethno-racial minority and being from an immigrant family become a double jeopardy for this group of new generation youth when they enter the competitive job market.

For many countries over the last few decades, global migration has generated a large group of new generation youth from immigrant families who either immigrated to the host country when they were very young or were born there. The post-9/11 concern of homegrown terrorism, fueled by the youth riots in France, has led to many questions concerning the barriers to socioeconomic integration faced by the new generation youth in many developed countries. These questions have sparked avid concerns in both policy discussions and empirical studies of this neglected group of youth who face multifaceted challenges. The high unemployment rate among this youth is considered a critical factor in the ethnic minority youth unrest in France (Silberman, Alba, & Fournier, 2007). While youth unemployment is not a new social phenomenon (International Labour Office, 2006), in Canada, as in many other developed countries, the youth unemployment issue has long been seen as a "hidden deficit" (Canadian Youth Foundation, 1995), overshadowed by the adult unemployment problem.

Meanwhile, in the limited youth (un)employment studies undertaken, this group of new generation youth has largely been treated as the "average" youth. Their immigrant family background is seldom detected or taken into account. This is due not only to a conceptual insensitivity towards their family's immigrant status but also to a tendency in youth (un)employment studies to focus on either structural factors, such as economic cycles, or human capital issues, such as dropping out from school, lack of skills, and inappropriate work habits

(Casson, 1979; M. White & Smith, 1994). In his canonical study, Granovetter (1974) provides an alternative perspective with which we can view youth employment. He argues that the lack of functional social networks is at least equally, if not more, important in determining youth's access to the labor market (Granovetter, 1974). Recently, the idea of social networks has been conceptualized as social capital, which, as sociologists (e.g., Erickson, 2001; Fernandez & Castilla, 2001) have concurred, is critical to job-seeking and employee recruitment. Indeed, the concept of social capital has also received much attention in immigrant studies (e.g., Aizelwood & Pendakur, 2004; Portes, 1995; M. J. White & Glick, 2000; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). For immigrants new to their host society, their social capital is always limited to a handful of family, relatives, and friends. Their limited social capital may restrict the social resources that they can mobilize not only in their own job search but also in their attempts to help their children gain access to the labor market. However, not much has been done to understand how children from immigrant families mobilize their own social capital in their job search.

To fill this research gap, we conducted a mixed-method study to explore what kind of social and cultural capital new generation youth from ethno-racial minority immigrant families use to enter the job market. We investigated what kinds of social capital a sample group of new generation university graduates from immigrant families have had; how they perceived and used this capital to search for a job; and how different their access to and usage of social capital are from those of youth from non-immigrant families. In this paper, instead of reporting on the two sets of data, i.e., survey and in-depth interview, separately, we illustrate our findings by integrating the statistics gathered from the survey with the personal stories of the 16 ethno-racial minority youth from immigrant families whom we interviewed. The purpose of this paper is to draw attention from and to initiate future discussion in the field of immigration and youth studies

of the employment conditions of this new group of youth. Findings of this exploratory study shed light on the challenges that hamper the socio-economic integration of youth from immigrant families.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Canada is an immigrant country. In 1967, the introduction of the point system into immigration policy permanently changed the source of immigrants to Canada. Asia and the Middle East replaced Europe as the primary source of new immigrants (Fleras & Elliott, 2003). Given the inequality and instability of earnings among immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2007), Canadian researchers have already observed that in comparison to their White counterparts, ethno-racial minority immigrants may have more disadvantages in the Canadian labor market (e.g., Hum & Simpson, 1999; Kazemipur & Halli, 2000; Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2006). As Ravanera, Rajulton, & Turcotte (2003) find, under the new immigration policy, recent immigrants to Canada tend to have higher levels of education than both earlier immigrants and Canadian-born individuals, on average. Nonetheless, as reported in the recent reports on immigrants in Canadian urban centres from Statistics Canada (Monitor, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2004; Zietsma, 2007), immigrants tend to have a lower economic performance, including higher unemployment rates and lower income, than Canadian-born individuals, even among those holding the same Canadian credential (Anisef, Sweet, & Frempong, 2003). In fact, many ethno-racial minority immigrants are trapped in low-end and low-pay jobs.

After four decades, the ethno-racial minority immigrant community has also produced a new generation of young people who were born in Canada or arrived when they were very young. These new generation youth are now a major component of the Canadian labor market (Statistics

Canada, 2005). Despite economic disadvantages, immigrant families tend to put resources into nurturing their children's human capital, which may shape the trajectories of these children's job search process (Nee & Sanders, 2001). Human capital refers to investments in education and job experience that can generate returns on the job market (Becker, 1964). Youth from ethno-racial minority immigrant families tend to have a higher enrolment rate in higher education along with higher educational aspirations (Krahn & Taylor, 2005) and educational attainment (Davies & Guppy, 1998). Studies have found that as individuals who emigrated at a young age or were born in the English-speaking host society, the new generation youth tend to be more proficient in English (Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman-Anisef, & Khattar, 2004) and have more years in the host countries (Kunz, 2003; Maani, 1994) than earlier generations of immigrants. Together, these two traits contribute positively to their employment outcome.

Nonetheless, despite their higher level of education, ethno-racial minority youth, who are mostly new generation youth, tend to have lower income and less desirable jobs when compared to the general youth population (Cheung, 2005; Kunz, 2003; Palameta, 2007). The Canadian job market has been notorious in its treatment of not only the foreign born in particular but also ethno-racial minorities in general (Krishna Pendakur, 2005; Krishna Pendakur & Pendakur, 1998; Tran, 2004). Discrimination against ethno-racial minorities is not necessarily based on skin colour, however. Recent studies also find that merely showing signs of membership in an ethno-racial minority community—in particular, through one's last name—are determining stigmas (Oreopoulos, 2009; Silberman, et al., 2007). While recognizing that ethno-racial factors are crucial in understanding the labor market experience of the new generation youth in Canada, we also question how coming from an immigrant family may have limited their cultural and social resources in accessing the labor market and thus hampered their social mobility. Cultural

resources, which Nee and Sander (2001) articulated as cultural capital transmitted largely through family socialization—in this case, labor market information, knowledge, and experience obtained from family—is important to the new generation youth. Yet when most ethno-racial minority immigrants are trapped in the low level and low paid employment of a labor market that is not friendly to them, it is doubtful how much cultural capital they can pass down to their children. In the literature, however, this issue has not received much attention.

Social resources are generally attributed to the resources embedded in people's social ties, which are currently conceptualized as social capital. As a concept, social capital is still contested and expanding (Field, 2003). Contextualized within immigration studies, Portes (1995a) defines social capital as “the capacity of individuals to command scarce resources by virtue of their membership in networks or broader social structures” (p.12). In its most basic form, social capital is the resource accessed by individuals through their social ties in order to reach goals such as employment (Lin, 2001). Borrowing Putnam's (2000) conceptualization, these ties can roughly be categorized into bridging and bonding forms of social capital. Bonding social capital reinforces specific reciprocity by mobilizing internal solidarity within groups, while bridging social capital links one social group to external assets and information through social network ties. In this context, the ethnic community can be seen as an important resource for immigrant families, providing an economic niche for newcomers and their children. As Portes (1995b) has suggested, however, these bonding ties may have downsides when the community lacks non-social resources or when a lack of bridging social capital makes it difficult or even impossible to access the pool of social resources available in the larger society.

Bourdieu (1986) has critically pointed out that the distribution of and access to social capital are structurally unequal. This is perhaps particularly true for immigrant families. As

reflected in the youth employment literature, family is perhaps seen as the most accessible social resource for youth to access the labor market, as they can take advantage of the social ties available through parents, siblings, other relatives, and friends (Granovetter, 1974; Holzer, 1987; Yan, 2000). In general, family has an important role to play in the experience of new immigrants, as Nee and Sanders (2001) observe. For them, immigration is no longer an individual experience but a family experience. It is possible that new generation youth have greater access to the social capital within their families and immigrant communities but lack the bridging ties that can link them to social resources in the larger society. Portes (1995b) even suggests that the strong ties within the immigrant community may run against the interests of the new generation immigrant youth by limiting their opportunities for upward mobility. If this is true and if the economic performance of immigrants tends to be less satisfactory than that of the dominant group, the lack of bridging social capital may imply that new generation immigrant youth do not have the linking social capital needed for social mobility, even if they have better education, command of English, and integration into the dominant culture than their parents. However, there is a lack of empirical information regarding the kinds of social resources available to and used by the new generation youth when entering the job market.

## **METHODS**

The study reported in this paper used mixed methods to study a group of recent graduates from a university in western Canada. The data reported in this paper were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, and were collected at three different points. The first point of data collection was a survey conducted from March to September 2006. The sample of this first-wave survey (Wave 1) was undergraduate students of a

Canadian university who expected to graduate in May or November 2006. With the help of the Registrar's office, emails were sent five times at one-week intervals to a sample of 1500 students who were randomly selected from the master list of students registered to graduate in May or November 2006.

A total of 516 respondents completed the survey, a 34.4% response rate. We believe this estimate could be low due to our inability to correct for ineligible contacts using the email based contact approach. While lower than preferred, this response rate is approaching those of telephone surveys which have been declining in recent years (Curtin, Preston, and Singer 2005). The University does not provide demographic details for the graduating class, and restricts many demographic details describing the total student population for privacy reasons, so it is difficult to compare the sample with known population parameters. Compared to the overall student population, our sample includes a similar distribution across faculties. Like many surveys, there are more women in our sample compared to the total student population.

The second point of data collection was in late April 2007. Between these two periods, we tried to maintain regular contact with this group of respondents through emails, regular mail, and even telephone when a contact number was available. We also employed incentives, such as birthday and Christmas lucky draws, to encourage respondents to answer our survey request. As a result, we maintained good contact with 466 respondents through email and with another 37, whose email addresses had expired, through regular mail. Out of these 503 respondents, 204 (40.6%) completed our second-wave survey (Wave 2) after we sent out three emails and a postcard to those who had a valid mailing address requesting their participation.

A selection bias in the non-response between waves cannot be ruled out empirically. There may be some situations of interest to this research that may contribute to non-response.

For example, we did find that Canadian born respondents were more likely to participate in Wave 2. Sixty-one percent of Wave 1 respondents were Canadian born, but seventy-two percent of the Wave 2 respondents were Canadian born. Other relevant factors that cannot be measured might influence participation. For instance, those with demanding work schedules at new jobs may be less interested in participation with a survey. There is also reason to believe bias is not a problem in this sample. We find that our respondents at Waves 1 and 2 were similar on characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, and area of study. The percentage differences between waves on each of these variables were small and not statistically different. This gives us confidence that our wave 2 respondents are not biased compared to wave 1.

In the summer of 2007, we got in touch with respondents who had given permission to be contacted for a follow-up interview, and selected and interviewed 16 ethno-racial minority respondents, the majority of whom were either born in Canada or had come to Canada when they were younger than 12 years old. Informed by our survey results, we picked our interviewees based on a few characteristics, including ethnicity, gender, generation in Canada, and areas of study. Among them, 11 are Chinese, 3 South Asian, and 2, other Asian. At the time they were interviewed, 11 worked full time, 6 part time, 2 were unemployed, and 1 was back to school full time. The interview focused on their job search process and their perception of their perception of how useful their own social capital was in their search. All interviewed were audio-taped and transcribed in verbatim. Using the computer software NVivo, the analysis of interview data was based on a constant comparison method informed by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

## MEASUREMENT

### *Immigrant Generation*

Following the practice of Statistics Canada (Palameta, 2007) , we measure immigrant generation based on the place of birth for the respondent and their parents. First generation youth are those that were born outside of Canada and have at least one parent born outside of Canada. Second generation youth are those born in Canada with at least one parent born outside of Canada<sup>1</sup>. Third generation youth are those with both parents born in Canada. Although we describe this group as third generation, it can include those who have lived in Canada for multiple generations. Our measurement is not precise enough to capture distinctions between fourth generation Canadians and higher. There is a strong correlation between immigrant status and ethno-racial minority status, and as such, immigration and ethno-racial minority status are closely related in our sample. Over 95 percent of the third generation youth in our sample are non-ethno-racial minorities. First and second generation immigrants, on the other hand, tend to be ethno-racial minorities, 84 and 61 percent, respectively. For these reasons, we are careful about using these variables together in analyses.

### *Bridging Social Capital*

Social capital is typically measured when used. Therefore, it is not known if people may have social capital, but for some reason, don't use it. In this study, we attempt to capture a snapshot of the stored social capital these respondents may possess and potentially use in their

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<sup>1</sup> In the report published by Statistics Canada (Palameta, 2007), while recognizing those with one of their parents born in Canada as 2.5 generation, they tend to be lumped into the second generation group. Furthermore, in this study, due to the small sample size, we decided to keep them as one single group.

job search. Each of the bridging social capital indicators described below were collected in Wave 1 in order to estimate the potential capital available to students before they left school and entered the labor market.

We measure bridging social capital along two dimensions. The first follows Putnam (2000) and measures the organizational involvement of students. Respondents were asked to list up to five organizations they belonged to. This allows us to measure two dimensions of organizational involvement. First, we measure the incidence of organizational membership with a dummy variable indicating membership in at least one organization. Second, we measure the variety of organizational memberships through the number of different organizations a respondent indicated membership in. Scores range from zero to five, with higher scores indicating a greater variety of organizational involvement. For each organization, we also asked if the membership was mostly from the same ethnicity or if it was ethnically diverse. Using this, we measure diverse organizational membership with a dummy variable indicating membership in at least one ethnically diverse organization. Finally, we asked respondents to describe their level of involvement in each organization on a five-point scale from not very involved to very involved. This allows us to measure the intensity of organizational involvement by combining these two indicators in order to create an involvement score that ranges from 0 for a student with no organizational memberships to 25 for a student who is very involved in five different organizations.

We also measure bridging social capital according to the ethnic heterogeneity (diversity) of personal networks with data collected using a name generator strategy (Burt, 1987). Respondents were asked to list from one to five close personal friends. For each of these friends, additional information about the person and their relationship were asked, including if that friend

was from the same ethnic group. Using this information, we create three measures of personal network diversity. First, we create a simple measure of personal network size that ranges from zero to five. Second, we create a dummy variable that indicates the presence of at least one cross-ethnic tie. Finally, we calculate the proportion of personal ties that were cross-ethnic ties.

### ***Search Strategies and Job Outcomes***

Our Wave 2 survey items focus on the job search and job quality outcomes after graduation. The labor market outcome may be an important indicator for a better understanding of the relationship between social capital and access to labor market. However, the burgeoning labor market of the city in which this study was conducted has obscured the labor market outcome of this group of young jobseekers. Of the 205 respondents we surveyed in Wave 2, 182 (88%) reported currently being employed. Those not employed had either returned to school for further education or were looking for work. Our analysis here therefore focuses on those employed at the time of the survey and the quality of their jobs after graduation.

To examine the role of social ties in their job search, we consider whom the respondents asked for help when looking for employment and how exactly they found their job. To examine requests for help, we asked students whom they turned to for help in their post-graduation job search. We distinguished between asking for help from family (including extended family members), friends (including acquaintances and friends of friends), and arms-length sources such as want ads, cold calls, and employment agencies. The question allowed for multiple strategies being used by respondents in their search for employment. We also included a measure of social ties used in finding a post-graduation job. To measure this, we asked each respondent exactly

how they found their current job, again distinguishing between family, friends, and other arms-length sources.

To measure job quality, we consider the relevance of a job to career goals and fair compensation for work. We first measure the relevance of a respondent's job to their field of study while in university. Job relevance provides a glimpse of job quality, as having the opportunity to work in a chosen field provides more interesting experience and can prove important for future career advancement. To measure job relevance, we asked students how relevant their current or last job was to their field of study. The response set included "not at all relevant, somewhat relevant, and very relevant." We dummy-coded these responses to indicate a job that is very relevant.

Being fairly compensated for work is commonly considered an indicator of a good job. We measure this by asking respondents to indicate whether they "strongly agree" (1), "agree" (2), "neither agree nor disagree" (3), "disagree" (4), or "strongly disagree" (5) with the statement, "My primary job pays reasonably well." We dummy-coded responses to indicate either "strongly agree" or "agree."

## **RESULTS**

Before we look at how our respondents use their social capital and what their economic outcomes are, we first report on the social capital that our respondents had prior to university graduation. Apparently, as we present below, not all social capital is equally important to these respondents in their job search. Also, having social capital is one thing and mobilizing it quite another. The stories of the 16 interviewees may explain why, in the context of a job search, an

immigrant family's cultural and social capital may hamper these young people from accessing more relevant and better paid jobs.

### *Social Capital Reserves*

In the first wave of data collection, our primary aim was to measure the reserves of social capital a student held and to see if these differed across immigrant generations and ethno-racial minority status. Putnam (2000) suggests that participating in social organizations is an important source to generate social capital. We asked our respondents if they participated in any organizations or social clubs. Table 1 shows that new immigrants are slightly more likely to be involved in at least one club or organization and tend to be members of more organizations on average than second and third generation immigrants. It appears that these organizations tend to be with peers from similar backgrounds, as new immigrants are less likely to be members of clubs with a diverse membership. The same pattern is found when comparing ethno-racial to non-ethno-racial minority students, with ethno-racial minority students more likely to be involved in clubs and organizations and more likely to be involved with clubs made up of members with similar backgrounds to themselves.

#### **Insert Table 1: Immigrant Status and Organizational Membership, Wave 1**

We also explored the students' close ties, which include family, friends, and relatives, with particular emphasis on the ethnic diversity of the ties, a dimension of network range. The differences in these networks may provide access to diverse resources, but they have not necessarily been mobilized for a particular purpose. We found that there is no particularly large difference in the size of close networks among the respondents (See Table 2). The average is above four close ties without much variation across immigrant generations.

**Insert Table 2: Immigrant Status and Close Ties, Wave 1**

If we take a closer look at the measure of network diversity, however, a pattern of difference does emerge. In general, cross-ethnic (diverse) ties are much less common among all the respondents than ties with their own ethnic group. Yet while ethno-racial minority respondents tend to have a lower number of cross-ethnic ties, the proportion is higher than those of their non-ethno-racial counterparts. In terms of immigrant status, relatively speaking, the second generation students appear to have more diverse networks. They are more likely to have at least one diverse tie than their first and third generation peers. When looking at the proportion of a student's close ties that are cross-ethnic, the second generation students have a network that is 35% diverse on average. Perhaps reflecting new immigrants' tendency to join clubs whose members have similar ethnic backgrounds to themselves, first generation students are less likely to have at least one diverse close tie and have a low proportion of cross-ethnic ties in their networks. Interestingly, although many third generation students have at least one cross-ethnic tie, they have the lowest overall proportion of cross-ethnic ties in their networks. These differences in tie diversity are all significant at the  $\alpha = .05$  level.

***Job Search Strategies***

In Wave 1, we examined the reserves of students' social capital that they may or may not have already mobilized. In Wave 2, we asked respondents about the social capital they mobilized to secure employment. We reached 204 recent graduates for Wave 2 data collection, 182 of whom were employed and are the focus of our Wave 2 analysis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The small sample size at Wave 2 makes statistical significance less common.

Table 3 examines the search strategies students used to secure their post-graduation jobs. Two major observations are made in the table. First, formal search strategies such as want ads, cold calls, or employment agencies are the most common strategies students use. Second, although statistically not significant, interestingly, the third generation students are less likely to use this approach, along with their non-ethno-racial minority counterparts. Although not statistically significant, they used family more often in their job search than firstgeneration students did.

**Insert Table 3: Immigrant Status and Job Search Request for Help, Wave 2**

These results likely reflect the kind of work our respondents were searching for. University graduates are looking to start new careers in their chosen fields, and family and friends are not as likely to have ties in those sectors that can be useful to them. As one graduate from the education program observed,

*I think, um, I don't know anyone. My family members aren't teachers, so they don't have contact in that way. So, I mean they're no help there. Um ... other friends, they, they are, like, not in education, so there's no contacts there. And in terms of contacts within my friends who are also teachers, that's a bit strange, they are also competing for a job....*

Looking to start post-graduation careers, and coming from universities where these arms-length strategies are easily accessible, interviewees commonly tried different formal approaches. Indeed, 9 of the 16 respondents interviewed reported using the internet to search for a job. As one of them explains,

*I prefer the internet the most. I think it's, it's really easy to use the search engine to find out what you want to find and especially narrowing down your options. And not to mention that you can contact a person directly with the phone number or even through e-*

*mail right now, probably most employers prefer that way so he could just filter out the applicants a lot easier. So, the internet would be an easier process.*

Informal contacts will likely become important for these students as they become more enmeshed in their fields and develop contacts, but at this stage, their networks are less likely to stretch into these niches.

### ***Use of Social Capital***

Regarding the use of social capital, two things stand out in our findings. First, family ties are not often used to secure a job. Compared to family, friends are used relatively more often, but it is still not a common practice. Indeed, many jobs were landed without using family or friends. Here, the securing of a job reflects the search strategies noted in Table 3. As indicated there, the use of family and friends, the resource most commonly utilized in youth job searches across all immigrant generations as suggested in the literature, is low among our respondents.

Table 4 further confirms this finding, albeit statistically insignificant, regarding their use of family and friendship ties to find their post-graduation jobs. It seems more common for our respondents to ask friends than family for help finding work. New immigrants are the least likely to secure a job through family and the most likely to secure a job through a friendship tie. This difference is reflected in the ratio of family to friendship ties used, which shows new immigrants are five time more likely to secure a job from a friendship tie than a family tie. Although the second generation students tend to have a slightly lower ratio (2.3) than their third generation counterparts (2.8), there is an observable difference between non-ethno-racial and ethno-racial minority students. The latter seems to be the least likely to ask family but the most likely to ask friends for help in their job search.

**Insert Table 4: Immigrant Status and Job Source, Wave 2**

To understand why family is not used and how useful friends are to their job search, we turn to our qualitative data generated from the experience of 16 youths. Many of them did have help from their parents. However, like one graduate from the Fine Arts program told us,

*My mother's side, I think she tried to, uh, give me some advice about, you know, if you consider a career, you have to make a living or... are you sure you want to have this job? So, she was, uh, sort of like, uh, sort of, not the devil, but, my mom is not the devil but she tries to give me, like, the second thought. It's like, are you sure it's what you want to do? So, I think she helps in that sense.*

Thus, it is understandable that the help from their family, parents in particular, is limited mostly to providing support and advice. A second generation student whose family came from East Asia sums up the difficulties many immigrant parents face when it comes to offering assistance in their children's job search.

*I think there was a disadvantage in that they don't know what a Canadian work environment is like, like uh, my parents immigrated before I was born. And they really had a lot of difficulty adapting to Canadian culture. And not to mention, you know, learning English and try to understand what it's like maybe Canada. So, they have a job to go but at the same time they really work really foreign in Canada, so they didn't really gave me a lot of guidance on, on, uh, job search, but they only knew what it's like to work in [the country where they are from].*

Being immigrants themselves, parents of this new generation youth are limited in the Canadian labor market-related knowledge and social networks that they can offer to their children.

Therefore, turning to friend seems inevitable.

But who are these friends and how useful are they in the new generation's job search? In the following conversation with an Asian studies graduate, we may find some answers to these two questions.

*Youth: Just talking to people and seeing what types of jobs are available.*

*Interviewer: Ok, and who would you talk to for advice?)*

*Youth: Uh, mostly friends.*

*Interviewer: who had done a similar degree or who...?*

*Youth: No, who was just graduated in, was working a while, and uh, yeah.*

*Interviewer: what kind of advice did you get from them?*

*Youth: Uh, I guess, try different types of things, try different types of jobs because my friends who graduated, they are working in different, uh, very different field.*

Only a couple of our interviewees reported that they had found jobs directly through their friends. Many of our 16 interviewees reported that their friends give them advice instead of concrete and direct links to job. Mostly they seek advice from close friends and classmates who work or will be working in a similar field. As one graduate from the History program told us,

*I would usually ask a few of my friends that have already established a career and have already, uh, pursued a job that they are passionate about, which I think they are, I*

*consider they are the very lucky ones. And I usually ask them more, “how do you find this job?” “what should they do?” uh, and many other questions that are associated with job search again, yeah, I think it’s very helpful.*

Being new to the job market themselves, however, their friends can only offer limited support.

### ***Employment Outcomes***

Our final interest in the analysis of our Wave 2 data is the employment outcomes of the students whose social capital we measured in Wave 1. Table 5 demonstrates two important outcomes of the jobs these students obtain after graduation. Here again we see some interesting differences across immigrant generations and the ethno-racial/non-ethno-racial minority divide. Third generation students are more likely to find work that is relevant to their training and career interests. They also are more likely to find work for which they consider themselves fairly compensated. Concurring with the literature, the largest differences appear between the first (i.e., recently immigrated) and third generation (i.e., Canadian-born) students on these two dimensions. The second generation respondents are better off than their first generation counterparts. However, most of the second generation respondents are themselves ethno-racial minorities who, as reflected in the findings, are less likely to find work that is relevant and for which they feel fairly compensated compared to the non-ethno-racial minority students.

### **Insert Table 5: Immigrant Status and Job Quality, Wave 2**

Though testing is beyond the scope of the data collected here, our qualitative data lead us to question whether, in addition to lack of access to social resources, there may be other structural factors affecting employment outcomes. For example, some of our interviewees

reported that because they were an ethno-racial minority, they experienced some unfair treatment, although reports of racism were not explicit in the interviews. As one education program graduate shares with us:

*The school board is very, very picky. And I heard some really outrageous questions that they asked. They're like, how well this person speaks English, and whether or not they have an accent. It's really, kind of, not very polite, but, like based on who was the name of the applicant...*

A South Asian graduate from the Psychology program also reports that

*I experienced it in the past job where someone I was working beside really didn't like me. Yeah, and I thought it was because of my race. Because you know, I mean, sure it might be 'cos I'm a little bit overpowering, maybe, maybe I just can't cross, make other people feel like a certain way. I always think that that could be it. But it just turned around being that I think I got less respect just because I was brown. And I really seriously felt that way. I was really upset for a long time.*

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This exploratory study was limited in three ways. First, although the intensive follow-up between the two waves of the survey enabled us to retain more than 30% of the first wave respondents, the size of the sample in the second wave poses limitations to the statistical analysis, particularly in comparing the cross-tabulations of immigrant generation and ethno-racial

minority statuses. Second, when compared with youth in general, as university graduates, the respondents of this study are relatively rich in a few different forms of capital such as monetary, human and symbolic capital. However, the focus of this study is on social capital which, as reflected in the literature, is distributed unevenly particularly due to one's immigrant status. Given other forms may be equal, the lack of social capital, as found in this study, may hamper university-graduate youth from immigrant families from accessing the job market. It implies that the employment condition of other new generation youth from immigrant families may face more challenges. Third, since 2002, British Columbia—and specifically, Vancouver, where this study was conducted—has experienced a decline in its jobless rate (Akyeampong, 2007; P. White, Michalowski, & Cross, 2006). In 2007, the period during which we conducted most of the second-wave survey, BC had nearly full employment. These unique circumstances raise questions about the influence of easy access to work, better economic outcomes, and the diversity of labor market experiences on new generation youth. Meanwhile, having graduated from school for only a short period of time, the majority of respondents were still in entry level positions, the salary and benefits of which may be relatively low.

Despite these limitations, findings of this study have confirmed some of the observations reported in the literature. Given the similar educational backgrounds of students in the study, the employment outcomes, in terms of job relevance and fairness of pay, of ethno-racial minority youth seem to be less desirable than those of their non-ethno-racial counterparts. Taken into consideration the fact that most of our ethno-racial minority respondents are either immigrants or second generation youth from immigrant families, it appears that coming from an immigrant family may limit their access to the social capital that can help them attain desirable employment outcomes.

In contrast to many observations regarding youth employment in the literature, findings of this study indicate that the usefulness of family in youth's job search process is questionable, at least among ethno-racial minority immigrant families. Due to the nature of the job that university graduates seek, the use of family may always be limited, regardless of immigration and racial-ethnic status. However, in this case, apparently, parents who are first generation immigrants trapped in low-level jobs lack both the cultural and social capital to help their children find jobs—or at least the job they are looking for, i.e., one that is related to their field of study and/or their career ambitions and offers the potential for social and economic upward mobility. In other words, many immigrant parents may not even be able to offer useful advice to their children in respect to finding desired work in Canada, not to mention connecting them with potential employers.

This study also finds that friends can be an important social resource for jobseekers. As a form of social capital, peers are a significant resource for young people to deal with adversity and disadvantages (Bottrell, 2008). However, judging from the relatively low number of cross-ethnic close and associational ties that the ethno-racial minority respondents had, the resource embedded in their “peer-capital” (Bottrell, 2008) may not be rich enough to help them to tap into mainstream society. Moreover, most of the friends of our respondents are also beginners in the job market. The usefulness of this resource is therefore questionable. Rather than offering ethno-racial minority youth a way to connect to employment resources and potential employers within mainstream society, they may instead reinforce the boundaries and limits of the marginalized status of their ethnic group (Bourdieu, 1986).

Therefore being an ethno-racial minority and coming from immigrant family may be a double jeopardy challenging many youth from immigrant families, youth who will someday

constitute a major component of the Canadian labor force. Recent studies indicate that this double jeopardy—although manifesting itself in different forms, such as lack of recognition of foreign credentials and limited proficiency in the English language—is not new to and still haunting the economic outcomes of many adult immigrants. Findings of this study, although inconclusive, suggest an intergenerational transmission of this double jeopardy which hampers the social and economic mobility of the youth from immigrant families. In the long run, it prevents the socioeconomic integration of immigrants and their children into Canadian society.

To conclude, this is one of only a very few studies on the job search experience of youth from immigrant families in Canada, the conditions of which are still yet to be further investigated and require additional study. Nonetheless, if what we found in this study is accurate, then proper social measures and policies should be put in place to, if not eliminate, at least minimize the undesirable effects of this double jeopardy by providing proper supports to immigrant family youth and their parents when they enter the job markets. Similar to what Ravanera et al. (2003) suggest, a well-rounded integration of immigrants and their families requires not only the accumulation of human capital but also social capital at different levels.

**Table 1: Immigrant Status and Organizational Membership, Wave 1**

	At least One Org	Number of Orgs	Diverse Org	Involvement Intensity	<i>N</i>
New Immigrants	.78	1.95	.65	4.12	148
Second Generation	.76	1.69	.69	3.86	196
Third Generation	.76	1.82	.71	4.18	172
Ethno-racial Minorities	.74	1.75	<b>.61<sup>b</sup></b>	3.76	293
Non-Ethno-racial Minorities	.78	1.85	<b>.74<sup>b</sup></b>	4.25	223

<sup>b</sup> Differences are significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

**Table 2: Immigrant Status and Close Ties, Wave 1**

	Number of Ties	Diverse Tie	Proportion Diverse	<i>N</i>
New Immigrants	4.34	.49 <sup>b</sup>	.27 <sup>b</sup>	148
Second Generation	4.64	.74 <sup>b</sup>	.35 <sup>b</sup>	196
Third Generation	4.54	.61 <sup>b</sup>	.23 <sup>b</sup>	172
Ethno-racial Minorities	4.38	.60 <sup>a</sup>	.31 <sup>a</sup>	293
Non-Ethno-racial Minorities	4.51	.65 <sup>a</sup>	.27 <sup>a</sup>	223

<sup>a</sup> Differences are significant at the  $p < .1$  level.

<sup>b</sup> Differences are significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

**Table 3: Immigrant Status and Job Search Request for Help, Wave 2\***

	Asked Family	Asked Friends	Used Formal Search	<i>N</i>
New Immigrants	.31	.64	.86	51
Second Generation	.40	.60	.85	87
Third Generation	.39	.52	.77	44
Ethno-racial Minorities	.34	.62	.85	97
Non-Ethno-racial Minorities	.41	.57	.75	85

\* Respondents may use more than one search strategy.

**Table 4: Immigrant Status and Job Source, Wave 2**

	Found Job Family Tie	Found Job Friend Tie	Ratio of Tie Use	<i>N</i>
New Immigrants	.04	.20	5.0	51
Second Generation	.07	.16	2.3	87
Third Generation	.05	.14	2.8	44
Ethno-racial Minorities	.04	.17	4.3	97
Non-Ethno-racial Minorities	.07	.17	2.4	85

**Table 5: Immigrant Status and Job Quality, Wave 2**

	Relevant work	Fair Pay	<i>N</i>
New Immigrants	.41	.42 <sup>a</sup>	51
Second Generation	.44	.62 <sup>a</sup>	87
Third Generation	.48	.65 <sup>a</sup>	44
Ethno-racial Minorities	.40	.49 <sup>b</sup>	97
Non-ethno-racial Minorities	.48	.67 <sup>b</sup>	85

<sup>a</sup> Differences are significant at the  $p < .1$  level.

<sup>b</sup> Differences are significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

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