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School–Work Transitions among Second-Generation Immigrants

Awish Aslam, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Sociology

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Abstract

Canadian data show that second-generation immigrants generally achieve higher levels of educational attainment when compared to the children of Canadian-born parents; however, those who are racialized experience poorer labour market outcomes, such as higher rates of underemployment, lower rates of pay, and less access to jobs with opportunities for advancement. This study uses in-depth interviews to explore the experiences of both racialized and non-racialized second-generation immigrants in their school–work transitions. It focuses on examining the roles of human and social capital, and the differences that racialized and non-racialized groups experience when navigating this transition. Findings highlight the value of social capital, experiential learning opportunities, and the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in the job search process. As the labour market share of young workers with an immigrant background increases, this research will help shed light on the experiences of this population, and shape policy and practice in the Canadian economy.

Keywords

second-generation immigrants; school–work transitions; knowledge economy; post-secondary education; racialization; social class; immigrant status; human capital; social capital; discrimination; experiential learning

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

International migration has led to changes in the demographic makeup of the Canadian population over time. In 1966, 87 percent of Canada's immigrants were of European origin; by 2011 65.1 percent of immigrants were of non-European origin (Knowles 2000; Statistics Canada 2013a). With the elimination of discriminatory immigration policies that limited migration to "preferred countries" (Britain, the United States, and northwestern Europe), and the implementation of the point system in 1967, recent waves of immigrants and their descendants bring a diversity of ethnic ancestries, racial backgrounds, languages, and religious affiliations to Canada (Green and Green 1999:428; Statistics Canada 2013a).

In 2011, foreign-born Canadians made up 20.6 percent of the national population, and the children of these immigrants, referred to as second-generation immigrants, composed 17.4 percent of the population (Statistics Canada 2013a; Statistics Canada 2013b). Second-generation immigrants are relatively younger than the Canadian population at large, with a median age of 31.9 years nationally, and 29.7 years in Ontario, where they make up 22.5 percent of the population (Statistics Canada 2013b).

One of the key indicators of successful integration of newcomers into the host society is the ability of group members to gain economic independence, as this has serious ramifications for social and economic inequality (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2010). While there is a substantial literature on the

experiences of immigrants in the Canadian labour market, less is known about the outcomes of their children.

Canadian data show that second-generation immigrants generally achieve higher levels of education when compared to the children of Canadian-born parents (Abada and Lin 2011); however, for members of racialized groups, high educational attainment does not always translate into labour market success (Picot and Hou 2011). Racialized second-generation immigrants experience poorer labour market outcomes, such as higher rates of underemployment, lower rates of pay, and less access to jobs offering opportunities for advancement (Palameta 2007; Yan, Lauer, and Chan 2012). This presents a problem for the personal wellbeing of this population, as well as the Canadian economy as whole, when racialized second-generation immigrants are entering the job market in large numbers (Statistics Canada 2005).

While there is a base knowledge of the general trends and patterns of the economic outcomes of second-generation immigrants in Canada, there is a dearth of literature examining the actual experiences of this population and what happens to them as they make their school–work transitions. The present study attempts to address this gap in an effort to shed light on how second-generation immigrants navigate their school–work transitions, including the challenges they face and the strategies they use to navigate this transition successfully. Two key research questions will be addressed in this thesis. First, what are the roles of human and social capital in the school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants? Second, how are the experiences of racialized second-

generation immigrants different from their non-racialized peers? To answer these questions, I conducted interviews with 27 participants across Southwestern Ontario.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the existing literature that has inspired this thesis, and helped me identify a gap in the research. This section will provide a framework for my study, beginning with an examination of the destandardization of school–work transitions and the role of the knowledge economy. Next, I will provide an overview of human capital theory, as well as its shortcomings. In order to explain the limitations of the human capital model, I will move on to a discussion about social capital, and its value in the labour market. I end this chapter with an examination of structural inequality through three key factors: class, race, and immigration status.

In chapter 3, I present my methodology, explaining how I conducted the study and answered my research questions. The benefits and drawbacks of the methods used are discussed here. In this chapter, I also provide a profile of my participants.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data analysis, highlighting a number of key themes including: participants' belief in the importance of human capital; their realization of the shortcomings of this model through their experience of over-qualification in a precarious labour market and discrimination; their appreciation of their parents' emotional support and personal sacrifice for the well-being of their children; their frustration due to their lack of access to valuable social capital; as well as the strategies they used to navigate this transition successfully by improving their own social and human capital.

Finally, the discussion in chapter 5 connects the current literature, the results of this study, and the implications of my research for both scholarship and policy. I begin with a summary of my results discussed in chapter 4, and link my findings to the existing knowledge about human and social capital, as well as racial discrimination. Then, I consider a number of policy implications and provide suggestions to help ease the school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants. Last, I discuss the limitations of my study and suggest directions for future research based on the findings of this study.

Chapter 2

2 Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing literature and provide a framework for my study within the broader sociological context. I will begin with an examination of the increasingly complex and destandardized understanding of school–work transitions in today’s knowledge economy. Next, I will survey human capital theory and its applicability to the contemporary labour market, as well as its limitations and contradictions including over-reliance on formal schooling, overqualification in jobs, and discrimination among job seekers. Given the shortcomings of the human capital model, I will turn to a discussion of social capital theory in an effort to explain unequal outcomes among different groups with the similar human capital. Following that I explore the significance of structural inequality in this transition through the examination of class, race, and immigration status, ending with a summary of the current knowledge on the experiences of second-generation immigrants in Canada.

2.1 School–Work Transitions in a Post-Industrial Society

School–work transitions mark an important turning point in the lives of young people, and are considered to be one of the key markers of adulthood (Blustein 1999; Haase, Heckhausen, and Köller 2008; Lent and Worthington 1999; Shanahan, Mortimer, and Krüger, 2002). A seamless transition into the labour market is favourable at both the micro and macro levels. It allows greater independence for individuals, makes use of human capital, and maintains a labour market supply (Brzinsky-Fay 2014). This

transition offers individuals the opportunity for upward mobility, but also exposes them to the risk of downward mobility (Haase et al. 2008). In their seminal study, *Young Workers*, Ashton and Field (1976) identify three potential pathways of school–work transitions: 1) ‘extended careers’ are a common path for the upper-class who attended institutions of higher learning before entering professional and management-level positions; 2) being middle-class leads to occupations in banking and apprenticeships, as well as clerical positions; and 3) the ‘careerless’ path involves unskilled or low-skilled labour. Since the development of Ashton and Field’s typology, Canada and other Western countries have experienced deindustrialization, and more recently, transitioned into a ‘new economy’ (often referred to as the ‘knowledge economy’) introducing an expansion of employment in the service industry (Bradley and Devadson 2008; Livingstone 2014). Additionally, Canada and other Western nations are seeing a significant growth of their post-secondary education systems, which means that the majority of any high-school graduating cohort now undertakes further studies at university or college (OECD 2005; Walters and Zarifa 2008). This shift into the new economy and changing educational preferences has rendered Ashton and Field’s framework less applicable to the school–work transitions of today’s young people (Haase et al. 2008).

2.1.1 The Knowledge Economy Shift

Globalization and technological innovations have changed the very nature of today’s labour market, resulting in increasingly complex and destandardized school–work transitions (Chesters & Smith 2015; Lehmann and Adams 2016), which is made evident by the lengthened timeframe of these transitions into the mid to late 20s (Hango 2010).

Using data from Statistics Canada, Shaienks and Gluszynski (2009) find that among the cohort of Canadian youth between 18 and 20 years of age in 2000, nearly 70 percent completed their schooling and were employed in a full-time position seven years later by the time they were between 26 and 28 years of age in 2007. Meanwhile, 15 percent were still enrolled in some level of schooling (Shaienks and Gluszynski 2009). In 2014, 44 percent of young people aged 15 to 29 reported currently being involved in some form of schooling (Statistics Canada 2016a). Moreover, the labour force participation rate (those who are currently employed or are actively looking for work) among individuals aged 15 to 24 years saw a decline from 67.3 percent to 64.2 percent between 2008 and 2012 (Bernard 2015). Looking more closely at those aged 20 to 24 years, between 2008 and 2014, labour force participation falls 2.2 percent to 73.7 percent, and most of this decline is due to increasing school enrollments (Bernard 2015). This increase in enrollments is tied to the shift toward employment in knowledge-intensive industries (beginning in the early 1970s), which claims to prioritize the value of educational credentials in the labour market (Lavoie, Roy, and Therrien 2003; Lehmann 2009; Powell and Snellman 2004; Reitz 2001). Canada has seen a dramatic growth in professional and technical jobs requiring a specialized skill-set, as well as soft-skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and communication (Adams and Demaiter 2008; Livingstone 2014; Walters 2006). These jobs usually involve information processing, often through the use of technology. At the same time, jobs in manufacturing and materials processing have declined (Livingstone 2014). Over the period of 1980 to 2000, employment in highly-skilled fields has grown by 84 percent, compared with 52 percent in medium-skilled

fields, and 32 percent in low-skilled fields (Morissette, Picot, and Lu 2013). In order for job-seekers to appear competitive for professional and technical occupations, there is a growing demand among employers for highly-skilled and highly-educated workers, resulting in increasing enrollment at the post-secondary level (Walters and Zarifa 2008; Livingstone 2014). At the same time, some are skeptical about the requirements for increased skills and education (Adams and Demaiter 2008). Skeptics attribute these requirements to credential inflation or a preference for workers with better social skills, rather than an actual need for more training (Adams and Demaiter 2008; Brown 2001; Collins 1979; Cote and Allahar 2007).

In fact, while the new economy creates an increase in jobs that seemingly require higher skills and training while reducing semi-skilled jobs in manufacturing, it also brings a growth in low-skilled or unskilled positions in the service industry (Adams and Demaiter 2008). This raises the issue of job quality and the question of the bifurcation of the Canadian labour market between “good” and “bad” jobs (Adams and Demaiter 2008; Shuey and Jovic 2013). Good jobs are those located in the information and knowledge sector, offering full-time positions with job security, access to benefits, and opportunities for occupational mobility (Shuey and Jovic 2013). Bad jobs require little skill and are often identified as nonstandard arrangements that do not offer the same advantages that good jobs do (Shuey and Jovic 2013). As suggested by human capital theory, in order to succeed in the new economy, workers must be willing to invest in marketable skills and training in order to become flexible and adaptable, otherwise they will become disposable and find themselves competing against machines for work (Adams and Demaiter 2008).

While temporary and part-time positions can offer new labour market entrants an opportunity to get ‘a foot in the door’ and gain valuable workplace experience that they can later use as leverage when searching for full-time work (Galarneau 2010), research on part-time and temporary workers finds that most of these workers would prefer to be employed in full-time permanent positions in order to gain access to higher wages, benefits (such as health insurance and pensions), and job security (Schur 2003). The disadvantages of the new economy for workers is well documented. This economy is described as economically volatile and fiercely competitive; closures, mergers, and takeovers among corporations that lead to increased unemployment are commonplace, and a demand for more flexible and temporary workers highlights the precariousness faced by today’s worker (Bradley and Devadson 2008). Economic restructuring has resulted in a job market that is “uncertain, unpredictable, and risky” for the worker (Kalleberg 2009:2). The impacts of Canada’s new economy are numerous: deregulated labour markets, long-term unemployment, precarious work, job insecurity, underemployment, loss of occupational identity, the elimination of positions offering opportunities for occupational mobility, and an overall polarization of the labour force increasing the gap between the rich and the poor (Adams and Demaiter 2008; Bauman 1998; Beck 2000; Bradley and Devadson 2008; Caldbick et al. 2014; Haase et al. 2008; Perrella et al. 2016; Peters 2002; Shuey and Jovic 2011; Tompa et al. 2014).

Young workers are particularly affected by labour market precariousness. For instance, the youth unemployment rate in Canada tends to hover at nearly double the national average at any time. In 2016, it stood at 13 percent, compared to a national

average of 6.8 percent (Statistics Canada 2016b). While the uncertainty that these young people face is reflected in the wider global shift to a precarious labour market, young people are particularly vulnerable to job insecurity in times of economic downturn (Geobey 2013; Haase et al. 2008; Kalleberg 2009). When economic situations begin to deteriorate, hiring slows down and those with the least seniority are the first to be let go (OECD 2005). A study across 14 countries by Blossfeld et al. (2005) labels young people ‘losers in a globalizing world’ due to the uncertainty they face as they make their way into the labour market. In fact, unemployment among young people reached dramatic heights around the world during the peak of the 2008 recession, and the effects continue to be felt today (Yoonyoung and Newhouse 2013).

The economic vulnerability of young people in this context contributes to the complex nature of their school–work transitions. In the following sections, I will discuss two key mechanisms young people use to respond to this complexity and to increase their chances of successful transitions to employment: 1) increasing their human capital; and 2) developing career-relevant forms of social capital.

2.2 Human Capital in the Transition from School to Work

High youth unemployment rates and a pervasive public discourse about the human capital demands of a knowledge economy encourage young people to pursue post-secondary studies in order to improve their economic outcomes. The theory of human capital is based on the idea that individuals make the conscious decision to acquire certain marketable skills and knowledge as forms of capital (Bills 2003; Schultz 1961).

This capital is then brought to the job market as a symbol of an individual's abilities and assets as a worker (Heijke and Koeslag 1999). Upon entering the labour market, the more human capital job seekers possess, the more productive and competitive they appear to be (Schultz 1961; Becker 1962). The skills gained through schooling are considered to be general and transferable to the workplace, where more specific skills are learned (Bills 2003). For employers, the sum of potential employees' human capital allows them to determine their level of competence and capacity to perform certain tasks, which can be used to calculate their level of productivity (Schultz 1961; Becker 1962). This theory assumes that within the workplace itself, workers must compete with one another over wages by way of individual productivity (Heijke and Koeslag 1999). The more productive the worker, the more they will earn through their wages. Consequently, differences in employee efficiency and earnings are justified through human capital theory (Schultz 1961; Becker 1962).

Human capital theory also emphasizes the importance of education as an investment to increase one's human capital (Becker 1993; Hango 2010). Heijke and Koeslag (1999) explain that typically, the more education one possesses, the more productive they can be assumed to be in the workplace. Becker points to the higher incomes of those with college degrees versus the lower incomes of those with high school diplomas in the United States as an example (1993). Canadian data suggest similar findings, as those who enter the labour market with a university degree report the highest rates of return (Hango 2010).

Consequently, there has been a significant increase in post-secondary attainment in Canada and elsewhere. Global trends indicate that levels of post-secondary schooling are increasing around the world in order to meet the needs of the new economy (OECD 2015). Canada is no exception to this trend, as its population has one of the highest levels of post-secondary attainment around the world (Ferguson and Wang 2014; OECD 2015). The working-age population of adults (those aged 25 to 64) with tertiary education (college/university), saw a rise from 39 percent in 1999 to 50 percent in 2009 (Statistics Canada 2012). By 2014, this number had risen to 54 percent, while the proportion of those with less than a high school diploma sank from 15 percent to 10 percent (Statistics Canada 2016a). It is also noteworthy that 11 percent of working-age adults in Canada had attained a post-secondary non-tertiary qualification (certificates or diplomas from vocational schools or apprenticeship training) (Statistics Canada 2016a).

On the whole, human capital theory proposes that investments in one's human capital, through formal education, yield a return in the labour market in the form of lower risks of unemployment and higher income potential.

A number of studies have indeed demonstrated that educational attainment plays a key role in earnings and employment rates of workers (Bobbitt-Zeher 2007; Finnie 2015; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Statistics Canada 2016a; Statistics Canada 2009; Walters 2006). Early school leavers are more likely to face negative outcomes in the labour market and become more vulnerable in times of economic instability (Côté and Bynner 2008). Meanwhile, those with higher post-secondary credentials have better outcomes

than those with lower-level credentials (Walters 2006). That is, those who graduate with university degrees outperform those who graduate with a college diploma; even among university graduates, master's and doctorate earners have better employment prospects than those with undergraduate degrees (Christie and Shannon, 2001; Finnie, 2001; Walters 2006).

According to Statistics Canada (2016b), in 2014, 82 percent of those with a tertiary education are employed, in comparison to 66 percent of those with a high school diploma, and 56 percent of those with less than a high school education. Those with a tertiary education consistently reported higher rates of employment between 2005 and 2014, compared to those without these credentials (Statistics Canada 2016a). A report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2015) finds that unemployment was much lower among post-secondary graduates with a diploma or certificate (7.3 percent), when compared to those with only a high school diploma (12.2 percent).

At the same time, field of study also has a significant effect on labour market performance, as those graduating from applied or technical programs have better outcomes than those completing a liberal arts program (Walters 2006). This is particularly interesting given the apparent demand from employers for workers with soft-skills that are often acquired in liberal arts programs (Walters 2006). Lehmann (2012) also discusses the importance of extra-credential experiences among today's graduates. As post-secondary enrollment has increased exponentially, students use extra-credential experiences, such as volunteering, internships, employment related to their field of study

or desired career, and experiences studying or travelling abroad, to increase their human capital and set themselves apart from their peers when competing for jobs (Lehmann 2012). Involvement in forms of experiential learning appear to promise labour market benefits. Studies find that graduates who take part in co-operative (co-op) education are able to make smoother school–work transitions when compared to their counterparts who do not (Walters and Zarifa 2008). Co-op programs help students gain practical experience in the workplace, while teaching them industry-specific knowledge and enhancing their academic scholarship (Ferguson and Wang 2014; Walters and Zarifa 2008). Ferguson and Wang (2014) report that those who complete co-op programs are less likely to return to school (at both the university and college level) three years following their graduation, and more likely to report a better match between their education and their employment. In terms of earnings, bachelor’s graduates who take part in co-op programs report higher earnings than non-co-op bachelor’s graduates (Ferguson and Wang 2014). While co-op programs were traditionally limited to fields such as math, engineering, and business, by 2000 over 25 percent of graduates who completed co-op programs studied a field related to education, social sciences, or health sciences (Walters and Zarifa 2008). Similarly, while 93 percent of co-op graduates came from universities, the popularity of these programs have spread to the college level, and over half of co-op graduates were from colleges by 2000 (Walters and Zarifa 2008).

It is also important to look at the employment outcomes of college and university programs independently. University degree holders (bachelor’s master’s, or doctorate) make up 28 percent of the working-age population of adults (Statistics Canada 2016a).

With regard to employment, 82 percent of this population was employed in 2009, which was higher than the national average of 75 percent (Statistics Canada 2012). Those who completed a college program make up 25 percent of the population (Statistics Canada 2016a), and had an employment rate comparable to university graduates at 81 percent (Statistics Canada 2012). Interestingly, employment levels among Canadian university graduates are lower than the OECD average at 85 percent, while those with a college credential were on par with the OECD average (Statistics Canada 2012).

The economic vulnerability of those without any tertiary schooling became strikingly apparent in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Between 2008 and 2011, the unemployment rate among those with less than a high school diploma increased 2.6 percent to 11.7 percent (Ferguson and Wang 2014). Comparatively, the unemployment rate of those with a university degree or a college diploma rose by less than half (0.9 percent) to 5 percent during the same timeframe (Ferguson and Wang 2014).

Lastly, completing a tertiary education program is also associated with an earnings premium of approximately 74 percent more than those with a trades certificate or a high school diploma (Ferguson and Wang 2014). For men with a bachelor's degree, the premium is approximately at \$728,000 and \$442,000 for women over a lifetime of work (Frenette 2014). For college graduates, the premium averages \$248,000 and \$180,000, for men and women respectively (Frenette 2014). Additionally, those who enter the labour market after having completed university or college experience fewer layoffs and have more years of coverage as a part of an employee-sponsored pension plan

when compared to those with a high-school diploma (Frenette 2014).

2.3 The Limits of Human Capital: Extended School–Work Transitions and Overqualification

Despite the well-documented advantages associated with higher levels of formal education, over-reliance on the development of human capital has also created a number of problems for young people. For instance, the expansion of higher education has contributed to the destandardization of school–work transitions, as more and more young people are spending extended periods of time in school in order to meet the rising demands of the labour market (Brooks 2007; Macmillan 2005; Raffo and Reeves 2000). Many young people are also taking longer to settle into a career trajectory upon completing their undergraduate degree. Some temporarily accept low-skilled positions in retail, food service, or call centres out of necessity, or in order to save money to return to school or travel; others may simply desire to get a feel for the working world before settling into a specific career path (Bradley and Devadson 2008). The increased time spent in school coupled with their economically vulnerable position in the labour market often causes young people to move back and forth between school and work, and they often take on both at the same time (Bradley and Devadson 2008). Even those with high levels of educational attainment have no guarantee of a clear and stable pathway into the labour market (Finnie 2004). In fact, Finnie (2004:44) found patterns of “backtracking,” (particularly among women) wherein university graduates will return to school to obtain a college diploma, highlighting just how non-standard these transitions have become.

Moreover, parallel to the increase in educational attainment, we see higher levels

of overqualification among graduates. Overqualification or credential inflation can be understood as working in an occupation that requires less education than the worker possesses (Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté 2014). Simply put, with a growing number of people pursuing post-secondary studies, the supply of graduates has come to exceed the demand for new workers in a number of fields. As many graduates experience overqualification once they enter the labour market, this exacerbates problems with skills mismatch, wherein an individual's job does not match their education (Ferguson and Wang 2014; Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté 2014; Yuen 2010). This can be particularly problematic in a weak labour market where an increasing number of graduates are competing for a limited number of positions related to their training (Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté 2014). Furthermore, it may hinder new labour market entrants, especially young people, from gaining the experience they need in order to develop a strong career trajectory (Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté 2014). College and bachelor graduates are more likely than master's and doctorate graduates to report a skills mismatch in their employment (Ferguson and Wang 2014). Overqualification is particularly prevalent among those with a university degree in the humanities, as one third of graduates from this field aged 25 to 34 were found to be working in jobs requiring a high school education or less (Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté 2014). Additionally, graduates from teacher education programs are facing a particularly saturated market, with troubling rates of unemployment and underemployment (Ontario College of Teachers [OCT] 2014). In 2014, 30 percent of these graduates were unable to find any type of work in the teaching field (including supply teaching), while only 37

percent were able to secure full employment (OCT 2014).

It is also worth noting that not all young people have the opportunity to invest in their human capital through post-secondary education. Between 1990 and 2014, tuition fees have swollen by 155 percent nationally, and over 180 percent in Ontario (Burley and Awad 2015). These rising tuition costs have increased barriers to higher education for young people from low-income families (Council of Ministers of Education Canada 2007). Students are turning to a variety of sources to finance their education, including employment income, loans and grants from both government and private sources, scholarships, and family support (Ferguson and Wang 2014). Yet, the prospect of crippling debt levels, averaging around \$28,000 upon graduation, is enough to deter the most financially vulnerable from pursuing education at the post-secondary level (Burley and Awad 2015).

The high rates of debt that young people find themselves in upon graduation may also be impeding their ability to pursue further education or post-graduate studies. Furthermore, a recent report by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (2015) finds that post-secondary graduates in Ontario have a relatively low rate of employment related to their field of study. One potential reason for this may be that many young people may be forced to accept low wage and non-standard employment in order to support themselves upon completing their schooling.

2.4 Limits to Human Capital: Structural Inequality

Although the central dimensions of inequality examined in this thesis are class, race, and immigrant status, there is no shortage of literature discussing the intersections of these mechanisms among one another as well as with other social factors (gender, age, ability, among others) that affect structural inequality (Choo and Ferree 2010; Gillborn 2015; Kvasny, Trauth, and Morgan 2009; Rodriguez et al. 2016; Winker and Degele 2011). Structural inequality is defined by Dani and de Haan (2008:3) as “a condition arising from unequal status attributed to a category of people in relation to others, a relationship perpetuated and reinforced by unequal relations in roles, functions, decision rights, and opportunities.” Structural inequalities shape experience and produce varying circumstances and outcomes in school–work transitions across different social groups. Yet, human agency also plays a key role in navigating structural inequality (Lehmann 2004; Wyn and Dwyer 1999). A number of European social theorists (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991) claim that contemporary society is characterized by fast-paced socio-economic change, resulting in a wider diversity of options available to young people today. Although this rapid change is associated with increased risk and vulnerability, it also allows young people greater control over their life circumstances and provides greater prospects for social mobility (Lehmann 2004).

While the human capital model supports the narrative that individual agency (through investment in education and the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills) can lead to labour market success, it cannot explain the structural inequality apparent in the labour market outcomes among different groups with the same or similar levels of

human capital. Here, I focus on the significance of class, race, and immigrant status in relation to labour market outcomes, followed by a summary of the literature on the experiences of second-generation immigrants in the labour market.

2.4.1 Class

The expansion of higher education not only saw a growth in enrollment, but it also saw an increase in the diversity of students attending these post-secondary institutions (Anisef, Okihiro, and James, 1982; Guppy 1984; Walters and Zarifa 2008). Regardless of social class, immigrant-status, or race, the precarious nature of today's labour market has normalized a sense of uncertainty for the majority of young people as they navigate their way from school to work (Lehmann 2004). This uncertainty coupled with the premium placed on higher education by the knowledge economy pushes masses of young people to pursue some form of tertiary schooling. While education has traditionally been considered to be a social institution that helps to level the playing field, post-secondary education is still not equally accessible for all groups in Canada (Guppy 2009). Despite the trend towards a more equal distribution of post-secondary credentials among women as well as ethnic and racial groups, placing them on par or above the rate of educational attainment of their peers, young people from working-class families continue to be less likely to pursue post-secondary education than their counterparts from more affluent backgrounds (Davies and Maldonado 2009; Guppy 2009; Lehmann 2007a; Mueller 2008). In fact, social class continues to be one of the strongest predictive factors of educational attainment (Andres et al. 1999; Davies and Maldonado 2009; Finnie 2005; Lehmann 2007a). Factors associated with class-background, such as parents' occupation,

income, and level of educational attainment, are all highly associated with the school success and educational attainment of their children (Guppy 2009; Mueller 2008).

Working-class students who are the first in their family to attend university also report higher university dropout levels, not as a result of poor academic performance, but rather due to a lack of sense of belonging (Lehmann 2007b).

This class-based inequality in the education system is then reproduced in the labour market, as individuals from lower-status backgrounds who are less likely to access post-secondary schooling are disadvantaged when competing for jobs (Krahn 2009). A longitudinal study (between 1985 and 1999) following the school–work transitions of Canadian high-school graduates in three cities substantiates this claim, finding disparities in the outcomes of young people’s lives along different markers of social class (Krahn 2009). For example, participants in Krahn’s study were three times more likely to obtain a university degree if at least one parent in their family had done so, compared to a family in which there is no history of university completion (56 percent versus 21 percent). Even among those who completed university, 89 percent of those from more affluent backgrounds were employed in managerial/professional occupations compared to 78 percent of those from lower-class families (Krahn 2009). Overall, it is evident that class status poses a key structural barrier to accessing human capital in the form of post-secondary education.

2.4.2 Racialization

The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” This definition includes those who identify as Arab, Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and/or West Asian (Statistics Canada 2013a). While the term visible minority is useful in helping to capture important demographic data among the Canadian population, I will use this term only when referencing data from Statistics Canada. In all other instances I will use the term “racialized”. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) (2003), racialization is the process through which race is socially constructed by ascribing particular characteristics to different groups and defining them as real; these different racial constructs then have unequal economic, political, and social consequences for groups. Racialization, as a concept, is preferred over other terms such as “visible minority” because it acknowledges the social construction of race, rather than accepting the classification of individuals on the basis of a set of perceived or ascribed characteristics (Social Planning Council of Ottawa [SPCO] 2012). It also emphasizes the social and economic marginalization that racialized groups face collectively, in comparison to the wider population, as well as the differences between various racialized groups (SPCO 2012).

According to Statistics Canada (2013a), visible minorities make up 19.1 percent (6,264,800 people) of the overall population, and by 2031, it is projected that this population will reach between 29 percent and 32 percent (Statistics Canada 2010).

Currently, 30.9 percent of visible minorities were born in Canada, while 65.1 percent arrived as immigrants (the remaining 4 percent are non-permanent residents) (Statistics Canada 2013a). Canada's visible minority population is relatively young, with a median age of 33.4, compared to the national average of 40.1 (Statistics Canada 2010).

Moreover, the majority of this population is spread between Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, and Alberta, with most residing in census metropolitan areas within these provinces (Statistics Canada 2010). The growing proportion of racialized groups is no surprise given changes to Canadian immigration policy in the 1960s, including the elimination of racist policies that restricted immigration to individuals from Britain, the United States, and northwestern Europe, and the implementation of the point system in 1967 that prioritizes candidates' human capital over their country of origin (Green and Green 1999; Reitz and Banerjee 2009; Yan, Lauer, and Jhangiani 2008). Consequently, more recent waves of immigrants have largely been made up of racialized groups from Asia and the Middle East, quickly surpassing the number of immigrants from Europe (Statistics Canada 2013a; Yan et al. 2008).

Although racialized groups have historically faced disadvantage in schools, recent work has found evidence that racialized youth express higher educational aspirations, and actually outperform their non-racialized peers, achieving higher levels of educational attainment at the post-secondary level (especially university) (Anisef et al. 2000, Davies and Maldonado 2009; Krahn and Taylor 2005; Thiessen 2009; Yan et al. 2008). It is important to note that while the racialized population as a whole has achieved higher levels of educational attainment when compared to the national average, group

differences within this population do exist; for example, Chinese and South Asian youth have achieved higher levels of school attainment than Black youth (Abada and Tenkorang 2009; Krahn and Taylor 2005; Thiessen 2009). With a demand for highly-skilled workers in Canada's knowledge-economy, it would be reasonable to expect that racialized Canadians would be able to make smooth school-work transitions; yet, this has not been the case.

While Canada is internationally praised and respected for its commitment to multiculturalism, and its capacity to embrace diversity, labour market trends appear to contradict these idealistic notions (Al-Waqfi and Jain 2008; Beck, Reitz, and Weiner 2002; Berry 2013; Galabuzi 2001; OHRC 2003). According to the literature, racialized Canadians continue to find themselves struggling to navigate their way through a labour system that has demonstrated a historical practice of systemic discrimination against them (Pendakur and Pendakur 1998; Hier and Bolaria 2007; Block and Galabuzi 2001). This form of discrimination in employment practices is widely documented and evident among employers in Canada (Swidinsky and Swidinsky 2002; Block and Galabuzi 2011; Hasmath 2012). In their study on racial differences in education and employment, Kunz, Schetagne, and Milan (2001) found that while racialized Canadians generally possess higher educational qualifications than their White counterparts, those with post-secondary credentials still fare worse in comparison to Whites, as illustrated through their higher rates of unemployment. Moreover, Block and Galabuzi (2011) found that even in times of economic prosperity, a sizeable wage gap between racialized groups and the larger population exists, with racialized Canadians earning 81.4 cents per dollar paid to non-

racialized Canadians. Racialized Canadians also maintain higher levels of labour market participation, and are more willing to take on jobs in precarious and unskilled labour, including janitorial positions, security services, and call centres (Block and Galabuzi 2011; Galabuzi 2001).

The actual practice of racial discrimination in the Canadian labour market has been captured in a number of audit studies. For example, Henry and Ginzberg (1985) conducted a field study in Toronto using both in-person and over the phone interviews revealing that non-white job applicants were considerably less likely to receive offers for employment when compared to white job seekers. The most severe in-person incidents resulted in Black applicants being told that a position was either no longer available, or that it had been filled; meanwhile, White applicants who applied to the very same jobs were either provided with an application form, or given the opportunity to interview on the same day. Telephone interviews reveal that over half of employers practice some form of discrimination against applicants who had ethnic-sounding names and non-traditional Canadian accents. A similar study by Oreopoulos (2011) highlights the role of name-based discrimination. The Toronto-based field study uses thirteen thousand resumes, finding that applicants with Chinese, Greek, Indian, and Pakistani-sounding names are less likely to hear back from recruiters when compared to those with English-sounding names. This type of discrimination is explained in part by recruiters' concern for language skills; however, this justification does not fully account for differences. In order to combat name-based discrimination, many job-seekers have begun to engage in the practice of "resume whitening," which involves removing any indicators or cues that

may signal applicants' racial or ethnic background to employers (Kang et al. 2016:2). In their study on whitened resumes, Kang et al. (2016) find that racialized individuals actively engage in this practice because they are well aware of the discrimination they face in the labour market. Interestingly, participants are less likely to whiten their resume when applying for a position with an organization that claims to value diversity and equality, although employers that boast pro-diversity commitments are shown to be just as likely to engage in the same discriminatory tactics as employers who do not make such commitments. Consequently, applicants who allow their resumes to be more racially transparent when applying to organizations that claim to embrace diversity may be putting themselves at a disadvantage.

The covert nature of discrimination revealed in the above-mentioned studies highlights the pervasive and substantial role of racism in the unfavourable labour market outcomes of racialized Canadians. These studies also demonstrate the difficulty in capturing empirical evidence of the discriminatory intentions and actions of employers and recruiters in their interactions with everyday job-seekers. The concept of 'new racism,' developed in the late twentieth century, provides a helpful context to understand these experiences (Kobayashi 2009). New racism proposes that while overt racism may no longer be present in most liberal-democratic societies, subtler forms of racism permeate society; racialized people are still marginalized through everyday interactions that privilege White bodies and White culture. The shift to colourblindness often leads people to ignore these subtler micro-aggressions that shape the day-to-day experiences of racialized minorities. Essed's (1991) theory of everyday racism is helpful in interpreting

this new racism, as it places the perspective of racialized individuals at the forefront. It prioritizes the experiences of racialized people allowing them to identify and interpret certain actions as racist. Although Whites may not be able to see the discrimination that racialized groups experience, this does not mean racism does not exist. Research on micro-aggressions indicates that this seemingly innocuous form of new racism has severe and detrimental effects on racialized groups (Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002; Sue et al. 2007), and may indeed be more damaging than overtly racist experiences (Sue 2003).

The research reviewed above demonstrates that the systemic discrimination of racialized groups continues to permeate the Canadian labour market, even when racialized Canadians obtain high levels of human capital, thus creating a significant barrier to accessing good jobs. As racialized Canadians continue to make up an increasing proportion of the workforce, their persistent marginalization not only affects individuals, but also has negative economic consequences for Canadian society.

2.4.3 Immigrant Status

Differences in immigrant generational status can help to explain varying patterns of labour market integration. Accordingly, it is important to distinguish between first, one-and-a-half, and second-generation immigrant status. While the usage of these terms lacks consistency across the literature, for the purpose of this paper the following definitions will be used (Aydemir, Chen, and Corak 2008; Gans 1992; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Taylor and Krahn 2013; Zhou 1997). The category of *first-generation immigrants* includes those who immigrate to the host country after reaching adulthood

(those aged 18 years and above) (Taylor and Krahn 2013). Since those classified as first-generation immigrants are, by and large the parents of the population in question, the involvement of this group within the labour market will briefly be examined in order to provide greater understanding of the ramifications of their experiences on their children.

One-and-a-half-generation immigrants are those who arrive between the ages of six to 17 (Zhou 1997). While one-and-a-half generation immigrants face their own unique barriers to labour market integration in Canada (Anisef and Kilbride 2003), the context of this paper will focus on the experiences of second-generation immigrants.

Second-generation immigrants is often conceptualized as those who are born in the host country to first-generation parents. While some scholars define second-generation immigrants as those exclusively born to immigrant parents in the host country, many other scholars choose to include children who immigrated with their parents at an early age, due to the similarity in their experiences (Jantzen 2008; Koyabashi 2008; Taylor and Krahn 2008; Zhou 1997).

2.4.3.1 Labour Market Patterns of First-Generation Immigrants

In 2011, Canada's foreign-born population accounted for 20.6 percent of the overall population, or one in five Canadians (Statistics Canada 2013a). Canada's immigration policy allows for the arrival of newcomers within three general categories: economic, family reunification, and refugee claimants, each with their own specific objectives (Beck, Reitz, and Weiner 2003; Picot and Sweetman 2011). Immigrants in the economic class make up the majority of newcomers (63 percent in 2009) (Picot and

Sweetman 2011), and are evaluated according to their ability to become economically established once they settle in Canada (Beach, Green, and Reitz 2003; Yan et al. 2008).

Upon their arrival however, many newcomers face difficulty in the labour market, especially when compared to earlier cohorts of immigrants (Sweetman and Warman 2008; Taylor and Krahn 2013). Although more recent cohorts of immigrants possess higher levels of human capital, in the form of education, than their Canadian-born peers, this population faces higher rates of underemployment, lower earnings in income, and increased rates of poverty (Block and Galabuzi 2011; Buzdugan and Halli 2009; Taylor and Krahn 2013). These more recent waves of immigrants appear to be facing a different set of challenges than earlier cohorts. The implications of deindustrialization and the bifurcation of the labour market are significant here. With the introduction of the knowledge economy, technological advancement, coupled with the effects of globalization and foreign competition, have resulted in the elimination of middle-class jobs that allowed for the upward mobility of earlier cohorts of European immigrants and the creation of a new “hourglass” labour market (Block 2013; Fortin, Green, Lemieux, and Milligan 2012; Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller 2005:1007; Zizys 2011). This hourglass labour market leaves a high demand for low-skilled, precarious labour, and highly-skilled professional positions, with few opportunities in-between (Portes et al. 2005). Since the majority of newcomers today arrive with high levels of human capital, it could be expected that these highly educated immigrants are winners in this scenario, yet recent labour market trends indicate that this is not the case.

With an increase in the proportion of racialized immigrants arriving in Canada (especially between 1991 and 2001), a number of researchers have examined the significant challenge that discrimination poses in the labour market integration of these newcomers (Abada and Tenkorang 2009; Statistics Canada 2013a; Bucklaschuk and Wilkinson 2011). When compared to their non-racialized peers, racialized immigrants face more difficulty in their economic integration within the host country, as demonstrated through an earnings disadvantage (Baker and Benjamin 1997; Kazemipur and Halli 2001; Palameta 2004; Pendakur and Pendakur 1998; Swidinsky and Swidinsky 2002). Using longitudinal data (1993-2001) from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), Palameta (2004) found that racialized immigrants are far more likely to have lower incomes when compared to non-racialized immigrants, regardless of the length of their residence in Canada. Additionally, foreign credentials and work experience of new Canadians are devalued upon arrival pushing them even further behind (Bucklaschuk and Wilkinson 2011; OECD 2010). The recognition of foreign credentials also suggests a pattern of discrimination as degrees obtained in Eastern and Southern Europe, as well as those from Africa and Asia, are devalued more than those obtained in Western and Northern Europe, and Australia (Buzdugan and Halli 2009; Raza, Beaujot, and Woldemicael 2013).

Discrimination resulting from immigrant status or the process of racialization cannot be explained by human capital theory. Behtoui and Neergaard (2012:51) attribute some of the potential discrimination in hiring practices to homophily, which they define as “the tendency to form connections with similar others.” Despite the fact that the effect

of homophily in hiring is often unintentional, it still places immigrants at a disadvantage in their job search. Collins (1971:1008) states, “case studies show that the operation of ethnic and class standards in employment are based not merely on skin colour but on name, accent, style of dress, manners, and conversation abilities.” While racialized newcomers may possess the required skills and training to fulfill highly-skilled or professional occupations in the labour market, many employers believe that they do not possess the same natural dispositions or cultural awareness that would make them a good fit within existing work cultures.

2.4.3.2 Second-Generation Immigrants in the Labour Market

Second-generation immigrants compose a diverse and growing demographic of the Canadian population. Today’s second-generation is composed of a range of ethnicities, cultures, religions, and countries of origin (Halli and Vedanand 2008). According to Statistics Canada (2013b), the children of immigrants make up 5,702,700 people, or 17.4 percent of the population. Nearly 3 in 10 (29.8 percent) second-generation immigrants are visible minorities (Statistics Canada 2013b), and in two decades this number is projected to be almost one in two (47 percent) (Statistics Canada 2010). This population is also relatively young, with a median age of 31.9 years, in comparison to the national population with a median age of 40.1 years. The overrepresentation of second-generation immigrants in younger age groups is significant, indicating that these young people are increasingly making the transition from school to work.

On the whole, second-generation immigrants achieve high levels of educational attainment, outperforming their peers with Canadian-born parents (Abada, Hou, and Ram 2008; Aydemir and Sweetman 2007). It is important to note that group differences exist among this population: Chinese and South Asians demonstrate the highest levels of attainment, while Blacks and Latin Americans have the lowest level of attainment (Abada and Lin 2011; Boyd 2008). The school success of second-generation immigrants is generally attributed to the fact that most immigrant parents themselves have high levels of educational attainment, and hold similar expectations for their childrens' school success (Abada and Lin 2011; Sweet, Anisef, and Walters 2010). A study by Krahn and Taylor (2005) on parental expectations and the educational outcomes of their children demonstrates high aspirations among racialized second-generation immigrants in particular, with most of these youth aspiring to achieve at least one university degree. Despite facing difficulty in their own economic integration, the parents of the second-generation commit many resources (emotional, cultural, social, and financial) to ensure their children's success in the host country (Nee and Sanders 2001; Sweet et al. 2010; Yan et al. 2012). As such, this population appears to fare well in the labour market when compared to the children of the domestic-born. They are employed at similar rates, obtain higher earnings, and are more often employed in professional occupations (Picot and Hou 2011; Palameta 2007).

Yet, upon closer examination, these outcomes are not evident across all groups. When compared to the youth population at large, racialized second-generation immigrants tend to face greater occupational difficulties including employment in less

desirable positions and lower earnings (Yan et al. 2012). This is troubling, especially since racialized second-generation immigrants are found to have notably higher rates of school attainment in comparison to non-racialized second-generation immigrants, and those with Canadian-born parents (Aydemir and Sweetman 2007; Boyd 2002; Picot and Hou 2011). Additionally, unemployment rates among racialized second-generation immigrants are higher than those among racialized youth with Canadian-born parents (Picot and Hou 2011). A study examining the earnings gap among Canadian-born racialized groups and Whites in the public and private sector found racialized groups are more highly educated, and while they receive wages similar to Whites in the public sector, they continue to face an earnings disadvantage in the private sector (Hou and Coulombe 2010). Moreover, regardless of immigration status, Kunz (2003) finds that racialized populations with post-secondary education consistently face a higher unemployment rate than those who are not racialized. Accordingly, the labour market disadvantages experienced by racialized second-generation immigrants are yet another demonstration of the shortcomings of human capital theory. Indeed, it appears that racialized second-generation immigrants in Canada may face unique challenges in their school–work transitions. This presents a problem for the personal wellbeing of this population, and the Canadian economy as a whole, because racialized second-generation immigrants are entering the job market in large numbers.

Interestingly, racialized second-generation immigrants have conveyed a more pessimistic outlook regarding life in Canada, reporting a lower sense of life satisfaction, and optimism for the future when compared to the first-generation population

(Bucklaschuk and Wilkinson 2011; Reitz and Bannerji 2007). This is likely related to their high levels of perceived discrimination, including racism, which are reported at higher rates than first-generation immigrants, as well as their non-racialized peers (Bucklaschuk and Wilkinson 2011; Reitz and Bannerji 2007). While the second-generation does not face all of the same obstacles their parents faced, their greater perception of discrimination may be linked to higher expectations for social acceptance and economic opportunity in a country that boasts a national multiculturalism policy (Reitz and Bannerji 2007). As the children of immigrants continue to make up a growing share of the Canadian demographic, it is important to pay attention to the experiences of this population to ensure their economic and social integration, and well-being.

2.5 Social Capital in the Transition from School to Work

People use different approaches when searching for employment. Mark Granovetter's (1974) seminal study on how people find work categorizes these approaches into three key methods. First, he identifies *formal means*, through which individuals respond to official calls or announcements for job applications to fill a vacant position. Examples include: print or online job advertisements, employment agencies, or job placements organized by schools or professional organizations. Second, he identifies *personal contacts*. These are people who provide job seekers with information about potential employment opportunities, and are known to the job seeker through circumstances unrelated to their job search. Granovetter's final method of finding work is *direct application*. Direct application occurs when job seekers apply directly to a company or organization, and do not use formal or personal means to provide them with

information about a specific employment opportunity. While formal means and direct application rely largely on human capital theory (wherein job seekers enter the labour market and search for opportunities to discuss their accumulated skills and knowledge with employers), the use of personal contacts sheds light on the importance of social capital to access job opportunities. Although human capital does play a significant role in one's potential employability, the literature on labour market integration places a greater emphasis on the significance of social capital.

Social capital is widely discussed in the context of labour market activities, especially with regard to the experiences of migrants and racialized immigrants (Bonacich and Modell 1980; Boyd 1989; Portes 1995; Nee and Sanders 2001; Aizlewood and Pendakur 2004; Raza et al. 2013). Within this framework, social capital is understood as the total amount of actual or prospective resources that are tied to a network of familiar members (Bourdieu 2006). Despite the ongoing theoretical and methodological contestation over how to best conceptualize, operationalize, and measure social capital, the concept provides useful insights regarding how to navigate the labour market. In the following section I will provide an overview of the work of a number of foundational scholars and the most fundamental aspects of the concept of social capital as it relates to finding employment.

Pierre Bourdieu's foundational work, *The Forms of Capital* (1986), offers a useful starting point to understand the concept of social capital. Bourdieu (2006) states that this form of capital provides both individual and collective benefits. Members of a particular

network have access to certain opportunities that are not available to the public at large; however, by virtue of their membership in these groups, members are also obligated to reciprocate and contribute to the group by supporting other members. Such collective groups are often tied to one another through some sort of socially instituted commonality, such as a family name, race, ethnicity, school, or geographical location (Bourdieu 2006). Bourdieu (2006) also discusses the importance of investment strategies and the significance of fostering relationships with members of prestigious groups, as these networks function to enhance one's own social capital, and ensure their ability to draw resources from advantageous groups.

Coleman (1988) emphasizes the importance of trust and norms. He states that mutual trust is what leads to the exchange of support between individuals. The obligation to assist one another creates the formation of an insurance policy that ensures a return on the investment one makes (Coleman 1988). From there, the established norms of a society help to create and maintain functional and trustworthy relationships between group members, or between groups themselves, with sanctions in place to punish those who do not conform (1988). Putnam (2000), like Coleman, maintains that these social relationships add value to peoples' lives. For instance, someone might hear about an employment opportunity through a neighbour or friend that is not advertised through formal means. He states that trust and the mutual exchange of social capital are promoted through involvement in community organizations and social solidarity (Putnam 2000).

Putnam (2000) differentiates between bonding versus bridging forms of social capital. *Bonding* forms of social capital include strong ties, such as those with family or friends (Putnam 2000). With regard to the labour market, unless the individual is seeking employment opportunities similar to those that their family or friends hold, these ties may be of limited use since an individual's in-group typically belongs to the same social networks as themselves. *Bridging* forms of social capital on the other hand, are weak ties that involve relationships with heterogeneous others (Putnam 2000). These ties are likely to prove more useful in a job search because they provide access to a broader variety of opportunities. Bridging forms of social capital may be particularly useful if these networks are well established in their own occupational ladders. Although he never explicitly makes reference to the concept of social capital, Granovetter makes a similar argument in his work when he discusses the "strength of weak ties" (1973:1361). Similar to Putnam's notion of bridging ties, Granovetter (1974) states that weak ties, which include acquaintances or other informal relationships, are more lucrative in the job search process because they provide access to unfamiliar networks with information that an individual may not otherwise have access to.

2.6 The Limits of Social Capital

Within the labour market, the significance of social capital is largely understood through the use of personal ties to provide individuals with information on jobs, or job opportunities themselves. Importantly, Bourdieu (2006) stresses the fact that not everyone has the same access to social capital, which leads to differential access to jobs and ultimately, inequality. While Putnam's distinction between bonding and bridging ties

makes it evident that bonding ties are not as useful or effective in gaining upward mobility, many job seekers continue to use this method. For instance, Granovetter (1974) finds that family is a major source of job referrals. Although job seekers may not achieve upward mobility as a result of the use of bonding ties, there are a number of explanations for the persistence of this method. One of the main reasons for the use of bonding ties in the job search is the comparatively high rate of success when compared to informal or direct methods (Blau and Robins 1990). In his study on job search methods used by unemployed youth, Holzer (1988) reports that job seekers are more likely to accept employment offers that they received through the use of personal ties (80 percent), when compared to those generated through direct application (65 percent), and formal means (40 percent). The reliance on bonding capital to find work can also help explain unequal employment outcomes, as some individuals' bonding networks may provide valuable contacts in their own field of interest. For example, if a job seeker is interested in working in the field of law, it would help to have a family member who is a lawyer, whereas it would be less useful to have a family of lawyers if the job seeker was interested in becoming a plumber.

Another reason for the use of bonding ties to find employment is their availability and low cost. Individuals regularly interact with friends and family for reasons unrelated to their job search. Consequently, Granovetter (1974) states that those actively searching for employment are likely to rely on these networks for opportunities simply because they are so easily accessible, even when the likelihood of success is low. Moreover, Osberg (1993) finds that even in poor economic times, individuals are more likely to use

such means due to their lower cost, regardless of the reduced probabilities of finding work. Similarly, Holzer (1988) found that the likelihood of actually obtaining the job had no effect on the rate at which individuals used bonding ties. Thus, regardless of the stakes, bonding forms of social capital are used in high frequency. While those in search of work are more likely to rely on bonding sources due to their increased likelihood of success and to curb the effects of cost associated with the job search, this is more often the case when job seekers do not have access to networks with higher social capital or if the costs associated with professional services are prohibitive (Loury 2006). Loury (2006) finds that individuals who locate jobs through bonding ties are more likely to stay in those same positions for longer periods due to their lack of alternative options or means to access other networks. Furthermore, these types of workers usually earn lower wages compared to those who find work through alternative channels (Addison and Portugal 2002; Loury 2006; Pellizzari 2010).

While bridging ties may appear to offer more lucrative job opportunities and information, they vary on the basis of the networks that these contacts provide, as well as their willingness to share information. Contacts with extensive networks and higher social capital are more likely to provide access to better jobs (Montgomery 1991). However, their willingness to share their social capital depends on their own level of labour market success. Studies indicate that contacts who earn higher wages, and those who are employed themselves are more likely to help others (Calvo-Armengol and Jackson 2004; Topa 2001). Additionally, contacts are more likely to pass along information if they cannot use it to help themselves (Calvo-Armengol and Jackson 2004).

Similarly, Hasmath (2012) explains that ethnic communities vary in their ability to help newcomers find meaningful work. Although existing ethnic networks in these areas are often enticing to new immigrants, as they may appear to provide the social and cultural resources they need to help them integrate into the labour market, they do not always have a positive effect on the economic incorporation of newcomers (Hasmath 2012; Raza et al. 2013). Raza et al. (2013) examined the effects of immigrants' bonding ties to both their own ethnic communities and the wider population and found that bonding ties with both groups did not have a positive effect on the earnings of immigrants; in fact, they had the opposite effect, supporting Putnam and Granovetter's argument about the value of bridging or weak ties.

Differences in the usefulness of bridging ties also vary by gender and race. Numerous studies have established that women who use other females as their main contact find themselves stratified in lower-paying positions (Beggs and Hurlbert 1997; Mencken and Winfield 2000; Smith 2000). The benefits associated with using male contacts are supported through a study in which young men find jobs through the help of older male relatives. These young men receive higher earnings than those who apply through formal means or direct application (Loury 2006). Comparable to the studies on female contacts, Elliot (1999) reports that non-White sources generally offer information leading to lower-paying positions. Regardless of the fact that these types of contacts may not provide the most profitable opportunities, many job seekers depend on them because they do not possess the social capital that can afford them with better jobs.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on the importance of school–work transitions and their transformation and increasing complexity over time. In particular, the deindustrialization of the West and the transition into a knowledge economy has led to a bifurcated labour market, and a growth in professional and highly skilled jobs, as well as low- and non-skilled employment, with opportunities few and far between. These changes encourage the expansion of higher education to prepare people for these highly skilled occupations. Although the push for highly educated workers has prolonged school–work transitions, upon completion of their schooling, young people continue to face uncertainty in a highly unstable and precarious labour market, with a national youth unemployment rate of 13 percent.

Human capital theory helps to explain the pursuit of higher education as a mechanism to curb the effects of the precarious labour market. This theory prioritizes the importance of investments in oneself, primarily through education, in order to develop the skills and knowledge that will operate as a signal of their abilities to employers upon entering the labour pool. Despite the empirical evidence in support of human capital theory, such as lower rates of unemployment and higher incomes for those who pursue higher education, a number of critical shortcomings of this theory are evident. An increased reliance on schooling has contributed to the destandardized transition into the labour market, as even more young people move back and forth between school and work, unable to find stable, full-time employment. Once they do enter the job market, young people are also finding themselves to be overqualified for the work available to

them, leading to a skills mismatch. Additionally, the argument for this model appears facile in its ability to explain structural inequality in the labour market. Empirical studies have demonstrated different outcomes for groups with the same human capital, exposing this theory's inability to explain experiences of discrimination, which are highly prevalent among racialized and immigrant groups.

In order to gain insight into the reasons behind this structural inequality I turn to social capital theory. In the context of employment, this theory highlights the role of one's networks and the resources they are able to provide the job seeker with (Granovetter 1974). The distinction between bonding (strong ties with homogenous others) and bridging ties (weak ties with heterogeneous others) is made clear, and while the latter is found to be more valuable due to its ability to connect job seekers with a wider array of opportunities, most job seekers continue to rely on bonding ties as a result of their low cost and ease of access. The differential access to social capital among job seekers (as a result of their class, race, and immigrant status, among other social factors) helps to explain unequal labour market outcomes among various groups.

2.8 Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants in order to gain insight into the barriers they face and the strategies they use to navigate these challenges successfully, focusing on the roles of human and social capital. Differences between the experiences of racialized and non-racialized second-generation immigrants are also of interest. This thesis will answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the roles of human and social capital in the school–work transition of second-generation immigrants?
- 2) How are the experiences of racialized second-generation immigrants different from their non-racialized peers?

Earlier research on second-generation immigrants identifies high levels of educational attainment among this population (Abada et al. 2008). Yet, while non-racialized second-generation immigrants fare well in the labour market, the same cannot be said about their racialized counterparts (Yan et al. 2012). Although racialized second-generation immigrants report higher rates of educational attainment when compared to both their non-racialized peers, and those with Canadian-born parents, their investment in education does not translate in their labour market outcomes (Aydemir and Sweetman 2007; Boyd 2002; Picot and Hou 2011). Racialized second-generation immigrants report higher rates of un(der)employment, low wages, and precarious employment (Picot and Hou 2011; Yan et al. 2012). Additionally, there is a dearth of qualitative research on this growing population. While quantitative studies have been useful in identifying the patterns and outcomes of this population, less is known about the meanings second-generation immigrants give to their experiences of this complex transition and the way that they understand their outcomes. This qualitative study will contribute to the literature by helping to address this gap, while examining the intersections of immigrant status, race, and class. In the following section, I will discuss the methodology used to explore the school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants in this study.

Chapter 3

3 Methodology

In order to gain insight into the school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants, 27 young people who were employed or actively searching for work were invited to share their accounts of this transition through qualitative interviews. This chapter provides a detailed account of the methods used in this study, and the rationale behind these decisions. I will begin with the eligibility criteria, followed by the recruitment procedures. After that, I will provide an outline of the interview guide and structure, as well as a profile of the participants, explain the data analysis process leading me to my findings, and conclude with a discussion on the importance of reflexivity in the research process. All procedures were conducted in compliance with the University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board. Participants were provided with a letter of information and informed consent was requested before beginning the interview. Interviewees were also informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and that they were able to withdraw at any time without penalty.

3.1 Eligibility Criteria

As stated by Ritchie, Lewis, and Elam (2009:82), the purpose of qualitative research is to “gain an understanding of the nature and form of phenomena, to unpack meanings, to develop explanations or to generate ideas, concepts and theories,” or put more simply, it is to understand the social meaning behind the numbers (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Eligibility criteria help to ensure the selection and inclusion of participants

that have the necessary characteristics or have undergone particular experiences, processes, or events that can help to inform the subject matter under study (Ritchie et al. 2003). In order to be eligible for this study, participants had to meet four key requirements.

1. All respondents were required to have completed at least one form of post-secondary education in Canada within the last four years. There are three reasons for this requirement. Firstly, as Canada shifts to a knowledge economy, a post-secondary degree is a basic requirement for most jobs offering occupational mobility (Graham, Shier and Eisenstat 2014; Lehmann 2007a). Secondly, a four-year timeline would allow interviewees enough time to establish themselves within their field, while not too much time has passed that they are unable to recall the details of their job search. Finally, since the credentials of internationally trained individuals are not always considered at par with Canadian credentials, it was essential that all participants had completed their schooling in Canada (Guo 2007; Ikura 2007).
2. Participation was restricted to persons aged 20 to 30 years. This is because the focus of this study is on the experiences of young people in the labour market. Although definitions of youth can be quite ambiguous, the definition of this term was extended to include those aged 30 years due to the increasingly complex and destandardized nature of contemporary school–work transitions (Hango 2010; Shaienks and Gluszynski 2009). While some participants may gain direct entry into a post-secondary institution immediately after graduating from high school, subsequently complete a college diploma or an undergraduate degree, and head straight into the

workforce, the literature suggests that school–work transitions no longer follow such linear trajectories (Bradley and Devadson 2008; Finnie 2004). More and more young people continue to shift back and forth between school and work (Bradley and Devadson 2008; Finnie 2004). As well, others continue in formal schooling to pursue professional programs, graduate school, and post-graduate certificates for a number of reasons, including the need to meet the increasing educational requirements of the knowledge economy (Brooks 2007; Macmillan 2005; Raffo and Reeves 2000). In extending the age limit, I intended to capture some of these more complicated experiences of young people living in today’s late modern society.

3. All participants needed to identify as a second-generation immigrant. While the usage of this term lacks consistency across the literature, second-generation immigrants are generally understood to be the children of immigrants born in the host country; yet, some scholars also include children who migrated with their parents at an early age because they are socialized in a manner that is consistent with those born in the host country (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou 1997). For the purpose of this study, second-generation immigrants included children who were either born in Canada to immigrant parents, or children who arrived to Canada with their parents by eight years of age.
4. All respondents had to be actively searching for permanent employment or be employed in a permanent position at the time of the interview. This restriction was due to the variety of reasons that young people have to be searching for work, and the variation in these different types of job search processes. Some young people may be

looking for low-skilled or temporary work in order to save money or fill a time gap before returning to school or travelling, and others may be seeking seasonal or summer employment. While each of these different types of job seeking experiences can be explored, the impetus and process involved are distinct from the process of searching for a permanent position. Since the aim of this study is to examine school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants as they begin to navigate their early career trajectories, the focus is on long-term employment prospects and the experiences associated with this particular type of job search.

3.2 Recruitment

Recruitment for this study began in late June 2015, and was completed by the end of November 2015. Nine participants were initially recruited through convenience sampling, a method of non-probability sampling where the researcher recruits participants that are easily accessible to them—in this case, by accessing my own personal networks (Ritchie et al. 2003). Although qualitative samples are typically small in size, it is important to ensure as much diversity as possible within the boundaries of the target population for two main reasons (Ritchie et al. 2003). First, diversity enhances the likelihood of detecting a wider range of elements that contribute to the phenomenon under study (Ritchie et al. 2003). Second, it provides the researcher with the opportunity to examine the role of different factors in connection with one another, in order to determine which variables have a greater impact on the subject (Ritchie et al. 2003). For example, in the context of this study I am looking to understand the experiences between two different groups, racialized and non-racialized second-generation immigrants.

However, differences in experiences between these two groups may also vary based on other factors that are critical to the study (for example, educational attainment). Varying levels of school attainment should be present among both racialized and non-racialized interviewees in order to examine the impacts of both racial status and school attainment, and to allow for comparisons among racialized and non-racialized participants. As such, I turned to passive snowball sampling to diversify the sample.

Snowball sampling is another form of non-probability sampling that involves asking interviewees about other potential candidates in their network who meet the eligibility requirements and may be interested in taking part in the study (Ritchie et al. 2003). In some situations, study respondents may pass the contact information of these potential participants onto the researcher directly; however, when snowball sampling is done passively, the respondent passes the researcher's information on to the potential participant, and it is up to the potential participant to make contact with the researcher, so as not to pressure them into participating. At the end of each interview, respondents who expressed interest were given business cards and flyers promoting the study to pass on to other eligible participants at their discretion. Referrals from respondents were limited (two per respondent, and no family members) in order to avoid over-sampling from a homogenous group.

Snowball sampling is particularly useful in situations where the appropriate population is hidden or difficult to reach directly (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Since the participation criteria were somewhat restrictive, it was difficult to determine a central

location or clear source from which to recruit the target population. Consequently, efforts to promote the study through visual advertisements were futile and reliance on these forms of non-probability sampling was necessary. Because the nature of this study was not to produce statistically generalizable results, the use of non-probability sampling did not pose a threat to the purpose of the study. Indeed, non-probability sampling is most appropriate for this study due to the deliberate selection of certain characteristics among participants (Ritchie et al. 2003). No compensation was offered to interviewees, but all interviewees were given the option to request a copy of the results of the study upon completion. Contact information was collected separately in order to maintain confidentiality.

3.3 Interview Guide and Structure

A total of 27 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with participants. Of these, 13 were face-to-face interviews, and 14 were conducted via video chat in order to accommodate for scheduling and the cost of transportation for the interviewer. Face-to-face interviews were conducted at a location selected by the respondent, typically in their home or a local coffee shop. All participants consented to have their interviews audio-recorded, although in one instance a participant requested that I turn off the audio-recorder as she wanted to discuss sensitive experiences of discrimination. While this posed a minor challenge, I took handwritten notes of her accounts and read them back to her, in order to ensure that I had accurately captured her experiences. From a methodological and research ethics perspective, this highlights the

importance of the potentially fragile and shifting nature of consent that we need to consider as qualitative researchers.

Interviews began with biographical questions about the participant in order to provide a point of reference for further conversation. The interview guide included seven questions focused broadly on participants' school–work transitions including discussions about the following: employment status, job search strategies, barriers to employment, questions about post-secondary training and its effectiveness in job preparation, the role of networks, the role of immigrant status, and experiences of discrimination. In order to gather a clear understanding of their lived experience and to unpack the meanings participants assigned to these experiences, each of the guiding questions was followed by various prompts depending on the interviewee's responses. Throughout the interview, participants were also encouraged to elaborate and provide additional comments and feedback whenever they felt it necessary. All interviews lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, with one outlier at 30 minutes.

The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed me to prepare an interview guide with a list of broad questions related to the subject matter of the study. These guiding questions were posed to each interviewee in order to ensure that the conversation remained related to my study (Arthur and Nazroo 2003). Given the flexible nature of this type of interview, questions could be modified depending on interviewee responses (Symbaluk 2014). For example, questions were altered for participants based on their employment status at the time of their interview. One of the key benefits of semi-

structured interviews is that they allow participants with the freedom and flexibility to contribute their own thoughts and explanations of what they considered to be significant to them during their school–work transition (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Essentially, while the questions posed in the interview are closely tied to the focus of my research, the semi-structured aspect allows it to flow as an informal and natural conversation, sometimes leading in unexpected directions. The unexpected directions that participants may take can be considered an advantage, because they helped shed light on new insights or ideas that I had not considered prior to them being raised by the interviewee. Due to the flexible nature of this type of interview, I was able to investigate these ideas further by probing the interviewee with more questions about the new knowledge that had emerged (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). This aspect of semi-structured interviews was particularly valuable in helping to unpack the different meanings that respondents gave to the challenges they faced and the strategies they used to navigate their school–work transition.

The in-depth nature of the interviews also brought many benefits. In-depth interviews can also be understood as a “knowledge-producing conversation” or a meaning-making conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee, requiring both actors to speak and listen actively while reaching a balance between structure and flexibility (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011:105; Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003). In-depth interviews are particularly useful in helping to identify thick-descriptions or deep data regarding a particular phenomenon, and can help detect key narratives among participants. These aspects are overlooked in quantitative approaches to studying school–

work transitions and labour market outcomes of second-generation immigrants (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). The comprehensive nature of in-depth interviewing was valuable in extracting information about a wide array of factors that may affect this transition, as participants often related novel and unanticipated insights. Ultimately, the use of in-depth interviews was particularly informative allowing the researcher to explore the school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants by learning information, gaining understanding, and hearing the perspectives of those individuals who have a lived experience of this particular phenomenon (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011).

3.4 Profile of Participants

As stated above, the sample consisted of 27 participants (19 females and 8 males). Their ages ranged between 22 and 28 years of age. At the time of the interviews 13 participants were employed in permanent positions, 11 were employed in part-time or precarious positions, and three were unemployed. With regard to educational attainment, 26 participants completed a university degree, while one participant completed a college diploma. Of the 26 participants who completed a university degree, 19 went on to pursue an additional form of training (summarized in Table 1 below), either a professional program (3), graduate school (6), a graduate certificate at the college level (6), a college certificate (1), or a professional designation (3).

Table 1: Additional Forms of Training Taken on by Participants

Additional Form of Training	Number of Participants
Professional Program	3
Graduate School	6
Graduate Certificate	6
College Certificate	1
Professional Designation	3

In order to gain insight into the role of racial discrimination during the job search process, it was important to include a mix of racialized and non-racialized participants. Participants were categorized into two groups, with 16 individuals self-identifying as racialized. A diverse range of ethnic ancestries were also represented as most participants identified with the ethnic origins associated with their parents' native countries: Sri Lanka, Uganda, India, Pakistan, Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Italy. The range of racial and ethnic origins of participants reflects the diverse makeup of Canada's second-generation population. Additionally, considering the limitation of the sample size in producing generalizable results, participants from an assortment of academic backgrounds were sought in order to bring awareness to a range of experiences. The information discussed in this section is summarized in Table 2 (below). A footnote below the table provides a legend explaining the abbreviations listed in the column "Education/Credentials" for clarification.

Table 2: Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Self-Identified Racialized Status	Education/Credentials¹ (chronological order)	Employment Status	Occupation	Method Used to Find Work
Adam	M	23	Racialized (Chinese)	BBA – Finance OCGC – Culinary Arts	Employed (permanent)	Chef de Partie	Bridging capital
Alana	F	23	Racialized (Filipino)	BA – Sociology MA – Sociology	Unemployed	N/A	N/A
Aleksandra	F	25	Non-Racialized (Romanian)	BBA – Accounting CPA – (currently pursuing)	Employed (permanent)	Telephone Banking Specialist	Formal application
Alicia	F	25	Non-Racialized (Croatian)	BSc. – Biology BED – Intermediate Senior	Employed (multiple; contract/part-time)	Five part-time jobs: 1) Music Teacher (Church) 2) Receptionist 3) Adaptive Technology Trainer 4) Tutor 5) Teacher (After-School Program)	1) Bonding capital 2) Bonding capital 3) Bridging capital 4) Bridging capital 5) Bridging capital
Bohai	M	23	Racialized (Vietnamese)	BA – Economics OCGC – Accounting (dropped out) BBA. – Accounting (currently pursuing part-time)	Employed (contract)	Accounting Assistant	Bridging capital
Carol	F	23	Racialized (Chinese & Vietnamese)	BBA – Consumer Behaviour	Employed (permanent)	Product Analyst	Bridging capital
David	M	25	Racialized (Chinese)	BBA – Finance CPA – (currently pursuing)	Employed (contract)	Strategic Financial Analyst	Formal application

Delia	F	23	Racialized (Sri Lankan)	BSc – Psychology & Neuroscience MA – Counselling Psychology	Unemployed	N/A	N/A
Derek	M	24	Racialized (Guyanese & Bajan)	BSc – Biology & Psychology OCGC – Human Resources	Employed (contract/part- time)	Summer Camp Counsellor	Bonding capital
Hamid	M	24	Racialized (Sri Lankan & Ugandan)	BBA – Accounting CPA – (currently pursuing)	Employed (permanent)	Financial Analyst	Bridging capital
Ivana	F	23	Non-Racialized (Serbian)	BA – Political Science OCGC – Public Administration	Employed (permanent)	Administrative Coordinator	Bridging capital
Jameelah	F	23	Racialized (Pakistani)	BA – International Relations	Employed (multiple; permanent & contract/part- time)	Full-time job: 1) Marketing Associate Part-time job: 2) Screener/Security Personnel	Full-time job: 1) Bridging capital Part-time job: 2) Bridging capital
Josif	M	23	Non-Racialized (Serbian)	BA – History BEd – Intermediate Senior	Unemployed	N/A	N/A
Julia	F	24	Non-Racialized (Polish)	RPN	Employed (part-time & self- employed)	Two part-time jobs: 1) Delivery Driver 2) Online Sales Representative	Two part-time jobs: 1) Formal application 2) Formal application

Liam	M	27	Racialized (Jamaican)	BA – Psychology OCGC – Advertising & Marketing Communications	Employed (permanent & contract/part- time)	Full-time job: 1) Production Artist/Graphic Designer Part-time job: 2) Line Cook	Full-time job: 1) Formal application Part-time job: 2) Formal application
Lydia	F	23	Racialized (Ethiopian)	BA – Criminology	Employed (contract)	Telephone Customer Care Representative (Credit Card Concierge)	Bonding capital
Lucy	F	24	Non-Racialized (Italian)	BA – Psychology MA – Counselling Psychology	Employed (multiple; part- time/contract)	Three part-time jobs: 1) Summer Camp Counsellor 2) Legal Clerk 3) Counselling Psychologist	1) Bonding capital 2) Bonding capital 3) Bridging capital
Marcelina	F	26	Non-Racialized (Polish)	BSc – Environmental Studies OCGC – Environmental Applications	Employed (permanent)	Telephone Customer Care Representative (Insurance)	Bonding capital
Michalina	F	23	Non-Racialized (Croatian)	BA – French & Religion BEd. – Intermediate Senior	Employed (part-time)	Cashier	Formal application
Misha	F	28	Racialized (Indian)	BSc – Health Science & Business MPH - Sociobehavioural Sciences	Employed (contract)	Evaluation Coordinator	Formal application
Namrita	F	26	Racialized (Indian)	BA – Political Science ACS – Immigration Consultant	Employed (permanent)	Regulated Immigration Consultant	Bonding capital

Natalie	F	25	Non-Racialized (Polish)	BA – Sociology	Employed (multiple; permanent & contract/part- time)	Full-time job: 1) Administrative Assistant Part-time job: 2) Manager (Fast Food Restaurant)	Full-time job: 1) Bonding capital Part-time job: 2) Bonding capital
Ranya	F	23	Racialized (Indian)	BA – Popular Culture	Employed (part-time)	Sales Associate	Formal application
Ratomir	M	25	Non-Racialized (Serbian)	BA – Political Science MA – Southeastern European Studies (in progress)	Employed (part-time)	Bank Teller	Bonding capital
Sarah	F	25	Racialized (Guyanese)	BA – Sociology	Employed (permanent)	Project Planning Coordinator	Bonding capital
Saramathi	F	22	Racialized (Sri Lankan)	BA – Sociology & Criminology	Employed (permanent)	Legal Assistant	Bridging capital
Victoria	F	26	Non-Racialized (Polish)	BA – Sociology MA – Sociology	Employed (permanent)	Research Assistant & Office Manager	Bridging capital

¹ACS = Attestation of College Studies/College Certificate awarded in Quebec; BA = Bachelor of Arts; BBA = Bachelor of Business Administration; BEd = Bachelor of Education; BSc = Bachelor of Science; CPA = Certified Professional Accountant; MA = Master of Arts; MPH = Master of Public Health; OCGC = Ontario College Graduate Certificate; RPN = Registered Practical Nurse

3.5 Data Analysis

I transcribed each interview, without the use of any data management software, and assigned all participants and organizations mentioned with pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. I began examining the transcripts through the process of open line-by-line coding in order to familiarize myself with the data and identify broad trends regarding the challenges participants faced as well as the strategies they used to make successful transitions. This type of descriptive coding helped me classify a number of dominant themes across interviews that addressed my research questions, including the following: (1) participants' perceptions of their employment status and occupations, (2) the degree of usefulness of school in finding work, (3) a lack of knowledge about how to navigate the labour market, (4) the importance of having practical experience in the desired field of work, (5) the significance of networks in the search for employment, (6) familial sacrifice and support, (7) parental pressure to do well in school, (8) the comparing of experiences to peers with Canadian-born parents, (9) the intersection of class background and immigrant status, and (10) perceptions and experiences of discrimination. I then used the material coded in these categories to develop more theoretically-framed codes about human and social capital, to address the differences in the value of these forms of capital for the racialized and non-racialized participants.

Following the classification of these broad themes, I drafted a summary of what each participant said, including the factors and events to which they attributed the

greatest significance in navigating this transition. I looked at the different mechanisms participants used to find work, paying close attention to their use of networks and different outcomes of bonding versus bridging capital. After mapping out these processes, I shifted to the practice of interpretive coding using thematic analysis, which helped me to identify more specific patterns and sub-themes, as well as some more nuanced experiences among participants. These themes are discussed further in the results section, where my intention is not to generalize from a relatively small sample, but to produce in-depth insights into the lived experiences of the participants and to stimulate discussion and further research.

3.6 Reflexivity

In qualitative research, data interpretation includes recognizing and reflecting on the role of the researcher in the meaning-making process (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews, the researcher inevitably becomes a part of the dialogue resulting in an amount of influence over the research process. As stated by Mann and Kelley (1997:392), “all knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced; it is grounded in both the social location and the social biography of the observer and the observed.” In this respect, it is important for me to acknowledge the influence of my position in the research process.

As a young, racialized, second-generation immigrant, I quickly recognized the implications of my insider status. While conducting interviews I realized that my in-group status allowed me to uncover more honest and detailed accounts of participants’

experiences—particularly regarding the topic of discrimination. On a number of occasions participants were initially hesitant to discuss the topic of racism, often shifting the blame away from employers towards themselves, individualizing the problem as a result of their own behavior. Yet, as they continued to tell their story, participants raised accounts of covert racism that they felt non-racialized individuals may not perceive in the same way that they did. In this way, my own racialized status may have allowed respondents to feel comfortable and discuss these experiences in a way that a non-racialized interviewer may not have been able to capture. At the same time, my insider status also made it difficult to draw out certain specifics of interviewees experiences. Due to participants' assumption that we had a shared experience, they often felt that I understood particular aspects of their experiences and did not delve into the details, which I learned to resolve by posing more probing questions. My racialized status also had the potential to affect my interpretation of the data, but in an effort to limit my own biases I reflected on this fact and contextualized my work in other research. Ultimately, my insider status and shared experiences with my participants afforded me a unique position that shaped the interview process, as well as the knowledge participants shared and the way in which they expressed their stories.

3.7 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology I used and the rationale behind each decision, from the eligibility criteria and the recruitment process, to an outline of the interview guide and structure, a profile of participants, an explanation of

the process of data analysis process that led me to my results, and a discussion on reflexivity. The next chapter will discuss the findings from this study.

Chapter 4

4 Results

In their interviews, participants discussed their initial belief in the value of human capital in the labour market and how this is emphasized by their parents. However, in making their transitions from school–work, many participants became aware of the shortcomings of this model through experiences of overqualification in a precarious labour market, as well as through incidents of discrimination and racism. These stories helped to shed light on the importance of social capital and its value when looking for work. Although participants recognized the significance of social capital in this context, many of them expressed frustration with their lack of access to useful networks for finding work. Despite the fact that their parents provided invaluable emotional support, their immigrant status, coupled with their largely working class background (resulting from their own downward assimilation subsequent to their arrival in Canada), prevented them from helping their children access useful networks. In order to combat these challenges some participants sought out different methods to improve their human and social capital including networking with professionals in their desired field, returning to school, seeking out educational programs offering opportunities for experiential learning, and taking part in extra-curricular activities.

Before delving into the interview data, I would like to present some summary findings. Figure 1 provides an overview of the findings regarding the value of human and social capital, showing how many participants relied mostly on human capital for their most recent job (formal applications) and how many relied on bonding and bridging

capital (personal contacts). While participants may have used a variety of methods in their job search, and may have held other jobs prior to the one they held at the time of their interview, the category they fall under in Figure 1 reflects the job search method that specifically led to the main job they were holding at the time of their interview. Figure 1 also indicates whether or not the participants were underemployed. Underemployment is indicated by their name in italics. While Figure 1 reflects the participants who were employed, three participants were unemployed.

Figure 1: Method Used to Find Most Recent Job

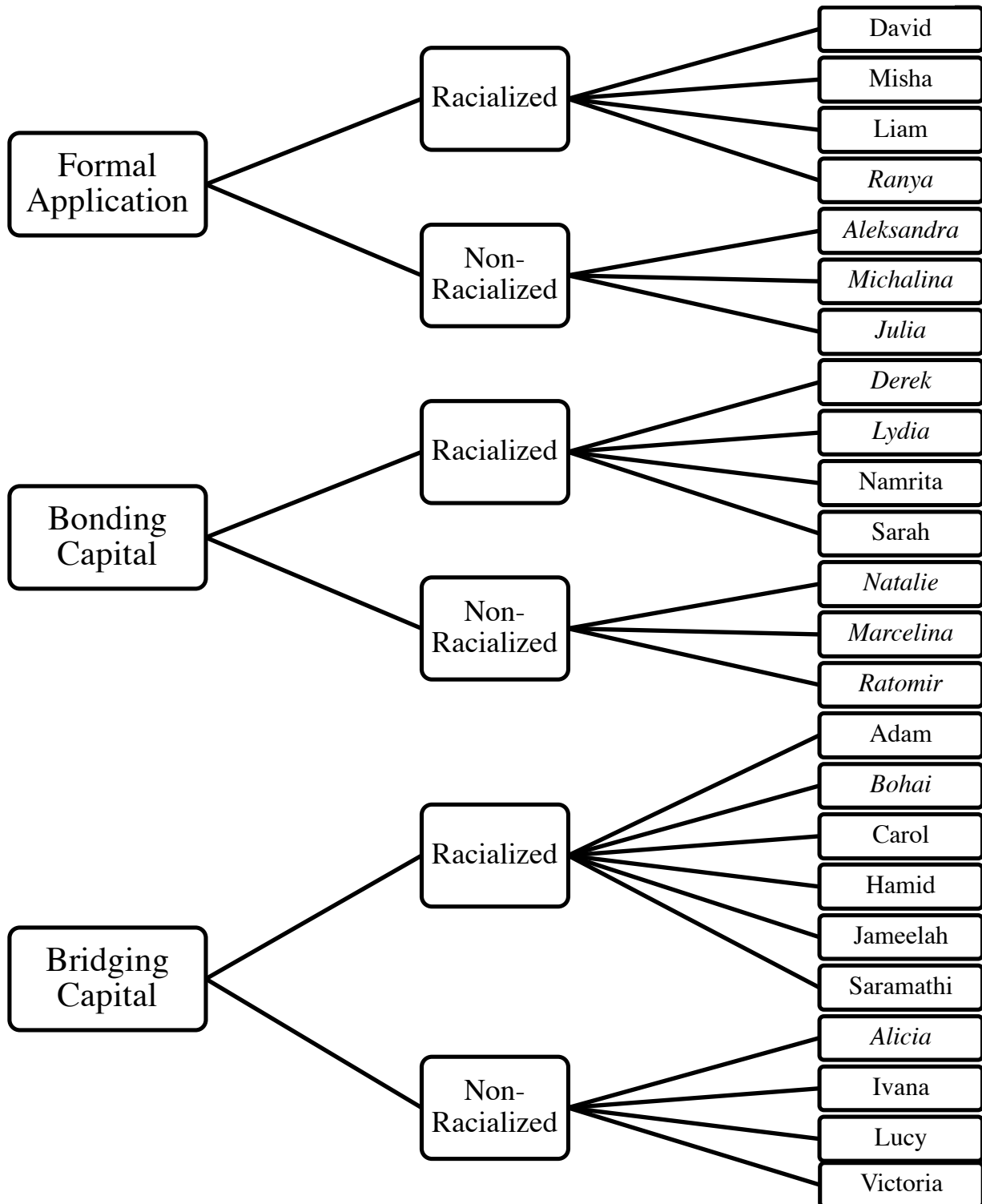


Figure 1 suggests that racialized participants actually had better employment outcomes. This is good news, but also hides the added challenges, such as racial discrimination in the hiring process, that these participants had to overcome to be successful. I will show this in greater detail when discussing the qualitative findings below. Figure 1 only captures how participants found their most recent jobs, which means it cannot account for the complexity of finding earlier jobs, or even the various strategies that may also have affected how they obtained their most recent jobs. For instance, Saramathi did eventually find her job as a Legal Assistant through forms of bridging capital, but this became possible after having made contacts while working in a different job in which she was underemployed, and that she had found through bonding capital. I will discuss the complexity of these transitions below. It is also important to point out that both formal applications and bonding capital led to relatively high levels of underemployment, whereas bridging capital connected participants to jobs for which they felt suited. Employment status at the time of the interview was also affected by length of time in the labour market and field of study. Further complicating the assessment of underemployment are possible discrepancies between an “objective” measure of underemployment (i.e., whether the successful performance of a person’s job requires less education than what they have completed), and whether a person self-identifies as underemployed. For instance, Julia is certified as a Registered Practical Nurse (RPN), but worked as a delivery driver at the time of the interview. Although this makes her objectively underemployed, she had chosen not to work as an RPN after two years of

experience in her field, and instead enjoyed working as a delivery driver and saw it as a stepping stone to becoming a trucker, which is what she really wanted to do.

4.1 Value of Human Capital

Trust in the value of human capital was very evident in the interviews, as all participants completed at least one form of post-secondary schooling, and more than half (16) went on to pursue additional credentials. David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst) stated, “For me, getting more education is number one.” These young people identified the necessity of post-secondary credentials in today’s labour market:

I mean, the whole degree part or the diploma part helps [...] A lot of those skills you get from university or college are useful. Other people might find it harder.
—Lydia (Ethiopian, telephone customer care professional)

I was going into [my masters] thinking that I would be able to—number one, I like this subject I would be learning, number two I thought it would be able to set me apart when looking for a job because it was a master’s degree.
—Ratomir (Serbian, bank teller)

[Going to post-secondary] is important. I think it just says well...it’s like graduating from university and having that piece of paper that says that you probably aren’t an idiot, right?
—Adam (Chinese, chef de partie)

For many participants, there was little debate or consideration regarding the pursuit of post-secondary education. Because their parents were consistently reinforcing the value of school, there was an unspoken assumption that higher education was the only logical next step after high school, rather than just one option among others:

In terms of my education though, my parents were very dead set on their plans for me [...] Yeah, my mom definitely pressured us to have a good education, do more, do better...
—Natalie (Polish, administrative assistant & fast food restaurant manager)

School was really important for a really long time. Nothing else mattered. There was a big [parental] emphasis on going to school, doing well in school, finding your path.
 –Namrita (Indian, regulated immigration consultant)

[My parents] just wouldn't be settled if we didn't go to university. Oh my god, they would flip! They were always on us about our marks.
 –Aleksandra (Romanian, telephone banking specialist)

This expectation to pursue higher education from parents was also linked to their decision to come to Canada for a better life, as Adam (Chinese, chef de partie) stated, “I think they just wanted a better opportunity for education and employment and stuff.” Parents prioritized education and the attainment of credentials as the gateway to upward mobility in Canada. Respondents conveyed that their parents believed Canada is a meritocratic country that rewards individual hard work and initiative. Ratomir (Serbian, bank teller) expressed this sentiment in the following quote:

My father believes Canada is the country of complete—it's in your hands and you can succeed here, it's the best country to live in. My father was born into a really poor family that lived in the village, and they didn't have any sort of wealth. [...] I think he sees that young people here can definitely progress, and I think they definitely instill that. They try to instill that in us.

Participants who were able to find work in their field identified the importance of the skills and knowledge that they gained through their schooling and their relevance to the workplace. These included both hard or technical skills that are unique to their field (e.g. performing or handling industry-specific tasks) as well as soft or transferable skills that allowed them to handle different types of workplace situations (teamwork, time management, communication). Interviewees described the applicability of these skills in the following four quotes:

Yeah. For me I'd have to have gone to university to know this stuff, otherwise I would be completely lost at work. [...] One of the things they taught us how to do

was write memos, specifically accounting memos. They tell you the format and the kind of facts they are looking for, things like that. And every class had a presentation, and presenting is a key skill at work, you know you're always in meetings and things like that. And those presentations were usually done in groups, and that group work is key.

–Hamid (Sri Lankan & Ugandan, financial analyst, BBA Accounting)

I think my education was the most useful part. In terms of psychology, it helps a lot because I am doing advertising and how ads affect people. Everything from what colour should we use, how people will read from left to right, what fonts to use, do I use Helvetica Bold, do I use a script? So that is more of the psychology side. The advertising and graphics side, it's more of just, does this look right? Is this placed right? Should I use these colours, etc.? They all kind of fold into a nice little package.

–Liam (Jamaican, production and graphic designer & cook, BA Psychology & Post-graduate Diploma Advertising)

Sociology is a very writing and research heavy program. Within my job you need to have strong writing skills, and you need to be able to find information, how to put it together, how to package it well in a way that people can understand. I would say that those two parts of my program really apply, and then you know just building on that.

–Sarah (Guyanese, project planning coordinator, BA Sociology)

The soft skills I learned from my program I think have taken me further than maybe the technical aspects of what I've studied. Like soft skills being like communication skills, critical thinking, those kinds of skills I took away. I think developing those skills were more important than the technicals because I feel like technical skills you can always—like it's never too late. I feel that in my workplace, my employer really really emphasizes the role of soft skills like attitude, how you present yourself, over your technical skills. Because if you are easy to work with, if you are easy to communicate with, then you can always be trained, but if you're hard to work with, it doesn't matter how smart you are, no one wants to work with you.

–David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst, BBA Accounting)

Despite the ability of some participants to leverage their education and credentials to gain access to good jobs, other participants (10) found that the value of their degree was somewhat questionable or unclear as they searched for work. These participants expressed frustration over their inability to find jobs that could relate to the skills they had to offer, and some were unaware, or had difficulty identifying the transferable skills

they had gained through their schooling. This was particularly the case for those who pursued studies in the social sciences or humanities, as demonstrated by the following three quotes:

You come out of uni [sic], and people are so excited to graduate, but when I graduated I was just like, what am I going to do now? I'm in like a dead end program. It's not something like nursing, where you become a nurse, or an engineer where it is very narrow. This you could do absolutely anything, which is a good thing, and it's also a problem. People ask, "What you can do?" and you say, "I don't know, I don't know." Then you start freaking out. So I asked everyone and anyone for anything just so I could at least work and think at the same time.

–Saramathi (Sri Lankan, legal assistant, BA Sociology & Criminology)

I have applied to numerous jobs, well over fifty, sixty jobs, but it's been difficult because of the criteria I have [...] There hasn't been many replies back. I have had two interviews since I have graduated in searching for jobs, but other than that it's just been rejection after rejection.

–Josif (Serbian, unemployed, BA History, BEd.)

I think it's just my field. It's economics. It's not really directly applicable to anything unless you want to be an economist, but I never wanted to be one of those people [...] and the fact that there are so many kids with degrees in so many areas. You are also competing with kids in political science, social science...

–Bohai (Vietnamese, accounting assistant, BA Economics & Post-graduate Certificate Accounting)

This skepticism toward the human capital model was also reflected in the frustration expressed by participants when discussing the low response rate for job applications.

Recalling Granovetter's three key methods for finding work, (formal means, personal contacts, and direct application), interviewees were asked to describe their use of each of these methods and their effectiveness. Nearly all participants (22) stated that they largely relied on formal means, specifically online sources, to hear about job opportunities. Yet, consistent with Granovetter's (1974) claim that personal contacts are the most common method for finding work, the majority of participants (17) actually obtained their current

positions through such means, even when they relied on formal application for the majority of their job search. Most respondents indicated that it was very rare to hear back from formal applications, and when asked to estimate a response rate, participants consistently indicated that they heard back from an average of five percent or less:

The success rate, less than probably ten percent, closer to five percent, maybe even two percent or three percent.

–Josif (Serbian, unemployed)

I've applied to a bunch of jobs online [...] but I honestly didn't hear back from any of those jobs. I feel like it's still tricky [...] As I said I'll check like the actual websites of the organizations, I'll search websites, I'll ask some people, but I still feel like there's pieces I'm missing maybe. Like I'm not reaching everything, or I'm not finding out about all opportunities. I don't know, it just kind of feels that way. I'm not sure if that just means I need to ask more people, or talk to more people about how to go about doing that.

–Lucy (Italian, 3 part-time jobs)

Although the majority of participants were ultimately able to find work within a few months of graduating, the jobs they held were not always related to their education, or full-time permanent positions. In fact, a considerable number of participants (11) indicated that they were in and out of work, or that they had to settle for low-skilled positions simply to support themselves financially. For example, after completing a Masters in sociology, Victoria (Polish, research assistant & office administrator) originally found herself toiling in a series of low-skilled positions, “I was working at different jobs before that weren't in my field. I was working at a call centre, I was working at [retail store], in [city].”

Likewise, Lydia (racialized, telephone customer care professional) completed an honours degree in criminology, but she was unable to find work in her field. After her

seasonal job at a campsite came to an end, she was pushed into accepting another unrelated position as a customer care professional at a call centre while she continued her job search. Lydia found this experience to be very frustrating, especially in comparison to her peers:

So right now I have to keep picking jobs just to keep making sure I pay off my debt and not fall into more debt, while people have the luxury to travel around the world you know? And it makes the job search harder cause you gotta settle just to make those ends meet.

Lydia expressed a desire to do more with the training she has, “with what we learned in school, and just the kind of issues we talked about, I feel like there is so much more I can contribute.” She went on to discuss the lack of relation between her job and her schooling:

I work for a company called [Company Name], which is partnered with a credit card company [...] We service—it’s like an elite card and we service card members as a concierge. So they call in and they’ll be like, I want dinner reservations, ticket information, almost anything under the sun. So it’s a call centre, inbound call centre, and then we just search up what they want, and give them information, buy them tickets, book them reservations. [...] Honestly, it’s not at all [related], besides doing some research—well on superficial topics, like where to buy the best Chanel shoes, or what’s the best place to dine in Paris, or Czech Republic. Besides doing minimal research on non-important topics, nothing. It doesn’t relate back to my program at all.

Ratomir (Serbian, bank teller) had completed a BA in political science, but was unable to find work for five months, until his brother connected him with a position as a part-time bank teller. While Ratomir was grateful for this opportunity, he was determined to find work in his own field, “I would say that this is definitely a temporary position.” He described his day-to-day tasks to include, “[helping people] deposit or withdraw money, they come to make appointments with financial advisors at the bank, so I set up

appointments, I do day-to-day banking services.” Like Lydia, he felt that that his position was unrelated to his schooling.

Marcelina’s (Polish, telephone customer care representative) experience also resembled those discussed above. She completed a degree in environmental studies and hopes to find work as an environmental coordinator or an environmental educator. However, after graduating she worked at a string of unrelated jobs, from looking after dogs at a kennel, to a retail position at a drugstore. Even after returning to school to complete a post-graduate certificate in environmental engineering, Marcelina had to rely on her mother to help her obtain a position at a local grocery store. At the time of the interview she was employed as a customer care representative at a call-centre for an insurance company. Marcelina was understandably discouraged by the job search process, but like others employed in precarious and unrelated positions, she was still optimistic:

So right now, I’m not looking for other work because I’m in a rut. I’m just kind of going with it, but once I decide if I’m going to stay with [the insurance company] or not then basically if you’re doing well there, they offer you new—what they call skills. So new things that you learn so that you can take different calls. I started there in January, and I have a new skill currently that I just got recently so that is sort of a step forward. Basically, my plan is to continue getting as many of those skills as I can. When you get hired there, you are locked into the call centre for 2 years. You can’t apply for jobs outside of the call centre. So as soon as my 2 years are up I plan on applying for something if I’m still there.

Derek (Guyanese & Bajan, camp counsellor) also found himself precariously employed at the time of his interview, working contract position after contract position. Upon completion of his schooling, he was initially employed in his field (human resources). During his co-op placement for his post-graduate certificate in college, one of

his co-workers referred Derek to an opportunity in an accounting firm. Derek was then employed in two consecutive separate short-term contract positions at this firm, first as a talent administrator (2-month contract), and next as a human resources administrator (7-month contract). Although Derek hoped that his second contract would be extended, the company did not have the resources to keep him in the position, so he took on a casual position as event staff representative at a local university. At the time of his interview, Derek had just accepted a position as a camp counsellor at an overnight children's camp. Yet, even the length of his employment at the camp was uncertain because the camp downsized toward the end of the summer and only the "best" employees were to be kept on at that point.

A few participants (5) held multiple jobs at once, balancing part-time opportunities in their field with unrelated jobs in order to sustain themselves financially. Lucy (Italian, three part-time jobs) had recently completed her Master's in counselling psychology and was managing three part-time positions as a camp counsellor, an occasional clerical worker at the law-firm her mother works at, and a part-time counsellor at the Psychological Services Department of her local university where she completed an internship for her Master's. With regard to the former two jobs, Lucy stated, "I mean with those jobs I can't say the education I have is really even needed because they are kind of—they are minimum wage type jobs, right? It has just kind of been to make money throughout to just kind of support myself."

Alicia (Croatian, five part-time jobs), a recent graduate from a teacher education

program, was in a position comparable to Lucy. She held a position at her Church teaching music classes to young children, worked as a part-time receptionist at an automotive company, and held three positions with an educational non-profit organization. Her work with the non-profit organization, which was most relevant to her long-term career goals, required considerable flexibility on her part, including travel with short notice, and inconsistent hours. When asked about potential barriers she faced in her school–work transition, Alicia was quick to recognize the role of the local economy, “Probably the main one is the job market. In [my city] the job market is, well, there are barely any openings on the [teaching] supply list.”

As a graduate from a teacher education program, Alicia faced a particularly difficult situation. The labour market for teachers in Ontario is extremely saturated, with long wait times to even be considered for supply teaching lists. These circumstances did not help to ease her school–work transitions. While she waited to hear back from the supply lists, Alicia sought out positions that were related to the field of education, while also balancing a number of other jobs to sustain herself financially. Two other participants (Michalina and Josif) were also waiting to hear back from the supply lists they had applied to. In the meantime, Michalina (Croatian) works as a cashier at a grocery store, and Josif (Serbian) was unemployed at the time of his interview, as he had been in and out of a number of precarious jobs.

While each of these participants expressed their disillusionment with the job market and their current employment status, their experiences reflect the wider nature of

the labour market in Canada. A study conducted by Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario [PEPSO] (2015), which covers the region in which participants for this study were recruited from, found that 44 percent of adults were working in jobs with some element of precarity. According to Statistics Canada data, in 2012 youth unemployment was 2.4 times higher than that of those in their 'prime' working years (aged 25 to 54), reaching a new high that has not been seen since 1974 (Bernard 2013). With a provincial unemployment rate of 6.8 percent (Statistics Canada 2016c), Ontario's youth face a particularly bleak outlook with an unemployment rate peaking at 17.1 percent (Geobey 2013). The precarious labour market young people face in their school-work transition contributes to poor outcomes for second-generation immigrants because many are pushed into accepting survival jobs, as expressed by interviewees. In fact, a recent report submitted to the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities (2014) found that a third of post-secondary graduates (aged 25 to 29) are forced into precarious, non-standard, low-skilled employment. As discussed above, although all participants in this study had at minimum one form of post-secondary education, a number of them were employed in call centres, retail positions, and other low-skilled positions in order to support themselves. While participants were frustrated that they had to accept jobs unrelated to their field of study in order to sustain themselves, this also led them to question the actual value of their educational qualifications, especially when the only opportunities available to them were precarious jobs, positions they were overqualified for, or work unrelated to their field of study:

I don't know if it was essential. Maybe it helped me get the job, but you basically don't need a university degree for what I do.

–Aleksandra (Romanian, telephone banking specialist, BBA Accounting)

Yeah, because the work that I do, you don't need an undergrad degree for. I mean, they might want you to have one, but realistically speaking, no one needs four years of research and report writing, and analyzing to do the work that I do. A high school student, they could do it.

–Jameelah (Pakistani, marketing associate & security personnel, BA International Relations)

Those participants who were unable to identify a connection between their schooling and their work felt that they had been let down by the human capital model.

Lucy (Italian, three part-time jobs) explains how growing up her parents deeply believed that education and hard work were the key to success. However, once she entered the labour market she realized there were limits to this view:

[My parents] would say that if you work really hard, it will pay off. Where, you know, where you have lots of education, and I do think to a degree that's still true, but it is a lot about other things as well. Like about who you know, where you are at the right time, all these sorts of things. Because just working hard in school and getting the grades, I think it's hard for me to kind of explain to them that that's not enough. Or like when I don't get things, they don't really understand because they are like, "Oh well you're working so hard," or "You should have gotten that," they are very naïve with those kind of things.

The longer participants searched for work, the more evident it became to them that an investment in human capital through education was not enough to guarantee full employment in their field.

4.2 Human Capital and Racial Discrimination

The shortcomings of the human capital model are also apparent in participants' experiences of discrimination. Consistent with the existing literature, a number of

participants recalled experiences of racialized discrimination in their job search. While participants acknowledged that racism existed in the labour market, most were hesitant to say that they had personally experienced *overt* forms of racism in their job search. Some participants even placed the onus on themselves to make interviewers or employers feel comfortable and assure them that they did not fit the mold of negative stereotypes associated with their racial group. Liam (Jamaican, production and graphic designer & cook), for example, discussed how he attempts to mitigate the discomfort or tension when meeting face-to-face with employers who were evidently surprised that he is black:

If I go to an interview and someone is extremely uncomfortable, [I try] to make a joke that puts them at ease. Not to be like oh, they're one of those black people, it's like "Okay, he's cool, I don't need to be on edge anymore." Because the last thing you want to do is go to an interview and have someone feel uncomfortable. Or if you go in and you know you're black, they know they're black, so if you go in and make a joke, or make ease of the situation, or be like, "Look, I don't need you to be on edge because I'm black. I'm not gonna yell at you or scream that you are a racist or anything, like whatever." And I've been in situations where we make jokes and all of a sudden they feel at ease. I think that making someone feel comfortable if they are interviewing you is key. Why would you want someone to be nervous?

In this way, most participants were hesitant to discuss experiences of racial or name-based discrimination initially, and were quite adamant that their experiences were not rooted in racism, expressing an inclination to individualize what is a structural problem. However, as they began to describe interactions with recruiters and employers, they drew out more nuanced examples of discrimination. A number of respondents (9) described situations they considered to be forms of covert racism, as the following quote by David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst) shows:

I feel like maybe being a visible minority has indirectly hindered my ability to find relevant work sometimes [...] Nothing I've ever experienced first-hand, but have I had a feeling like it might have been the case? Yeah. But never in my face, you know.

Lydia (Ethiopian, telephone customer care professional), discussed how her parents raised her to have a Canadian identity so that they had a better chance of assimilating, stating that her family does not have strong ties her ethnic community in her city. Although she identifies very closely with Canadian culture, she still expressed feeling concerned that her racialized status could have a negative impact with regard to her job prospects:

You know, race is still always an issue. People don't feel comfortable, sometimes people just don't feel comfortable working with people that are different, that's why, I don't know if that's why maybe my parents felt the need to assimilate, cause they didn't even try to teach me their language. [...] But there's nothing for me to really measure or to really confirm that it's gotten in the way. But, at the same time, I'm not gonna say that there is no way that that could be true. It's hard to tell you know? Like maybe they were searching me up on Facebook and it was like this black girl. You know what I mean? I don't know. It's kind of annoying too, cause it's like is it cause of this? Is it cause of that? So as a minority with a different ethnic background, a different sounding name, you'll always have that—and also as a visible minority, in face-to-face interactions, you will always have that question. Is it because of this, or because of that?

Jameelah (Pakistani, marketing associate & security personnel), a Muslim woman who wears a hijab, expressed similar concerns about the perceptions employers may have of her:

The fact that I wear a headscarf...I think people definitely have certain perceptions about you if you are a dark skinned girl who wears a headscarf. I do think that during interviews that plays into it. Because during an interview you are only there for 20–30 minutes and a lot of what impacts people's decisions is their perception about you. So yes you're qualified, you have merit because you got to the interview, but at the interview I think a lot of it is just subjective to the person who is hiring you. [...] If you look a certain way, or if they have certain perceptions of you that are false, not necessarily negative, but false, I think that plays into them being like, "You're too different, we don't really hire people like you. No one really works here that is like you." That kind of thing.

When asked about experiences of discrimination, Hamid (financial analyst), who has

familial ties to both Sri Lanka and Uganda, also acknowledged that employer perceptions were subjective, linked to their own internalized biases and stereotypes.

I think it would have [an impact]. Because people generalize, right? And people have biases, and I would think it would play a part [...] and you know what, it's the way the world works. Optics is pretty important. [...] Especially when I'm in accounting right? They get so many Mohammed's, so many Mr. Lee's, that when they come across a John Smith, it's like, "Oh a pleasant surprise," and yeah the funny thing is, my program was mainly different ethnicities, but I feel like the White people honestly had jobs sooner. Looking at it, they actually did. [...] I would say like names are big too. I think the name can really impact who's resume they are going to look at a little more intently. And it's just the way it is, right? And I never thought that was an issue, I never gave it a second thought. But looking back, I think, you know what? I'm pretty sure that plays a part of it.

Hamid's concern over name-based discrimination was echoed by a number of participants who considered it to pose a significant barrier in their job search. Take for example, the following quotes by three different participants:

So the name thing. At one point I decided that if I did want to start applying to some positions, especially outside of the GTA, I did consider at one point changing my name or shortening it. Just because I didn't want someone to look me over because they perceive me to be a certain way. I didn't do it, but I did consider it. I did think it would get me more attention, especially when I was applying to these bigger law firms. That was when I really considered shortening it because I would seem more Westernized, I guess. That was one of the things I really thought about.
—Namrita (Indian, regulated immigration consultant)

Yeah I mean of course I think that it definitely could give away your background. I mean like looking at your name that's probably—like people could probably tell that you're a visible minority. Obviously I think that Canada's hiring practices are pretty good. I have a LinkedIn and I don't have a picture on it. It's for the same reason I don't have a picture on my resume. Someone might judge you consciously or subconsciously and is like, "Oh this guy looks like this," or "Judging by the way he looks he probably is this, this and this." I don't want that.
—Adam (Chinese, chef de partie)

I think with ethnic names, like my last name, I wonder how it affects employers. I think that certain organizations may look for people that fit a certain background. [...] I do wonder how certain employers look at me when I go in for an interview, you know, when I present my resume and they see my last name, I wonder how they'd review it.

–Delia (Sri Lankan, unemployed)

This concern was more wide-spread among racialized participants, which was probably due to their increased likelihood of having “non-traditional” names. At the same time, two non-racialized participants acknowledged the fact that they were likely able to avoid this type of name-discrimination due to their more “traditional” names:

I think people are intimidated when you see a name that—there are names that even when I get calls at work right now, I am like I have no idea how to say your name right now, not even one bit. I think when you are applying to jobs it does have an effect, it does matter. So if you have for example, people from Asia, like I know a guy at my work who started using his middle name because his first name is just like—he wasn't getting any calls back. They were probably just like, “Oh look at this super Asian person. Does he speak English?” It could be stereotyping right. I don't think my name is that difficult for people, but I definitely think that people who have more ethnic names probably have a hard time.

–Marcelina (Polish, telephone customer care representative)

I think that people don't even think that I am anything else. Because I'm not a visible minority, people are surprised when they find out I know a different language. My last name doesn't even sound Polish. People are prejudice to all sorts of backgrounds. Some people don't like Polish people. Maybe if I had the “ski” on my last name that would impede my job search. It's hard to tell because you don't know what people's thoughts are, but I don't think it's affected me.

–Natalie (Polish, administrative assistant & fast food restaurant manager)

In the capacity of Natalie's position as a manager at a fast food restaurant, she was also given the responsibility of hiring workers. During her interview she reflected on the discomfort she felt when trying to pronounce unfamiliar names, and how this discomfort could lead employers to overlook resumes from individuals with ‘non-traditional’ names:

If you came in and handed me a resume and shook my hand and introduced yourself, chances are you would have an interview on the spot. So say you were a visible minority, that wouldn't have affected you as much if you came in and said hi or something. But if I couldn't pronounce your name or something, I would be afraid to call. Before I've called kids houses and their parents are like, "Do you mean X?" and I'm just like, "Oh my god yes, I'm so sorry!" But you could even look like I do and not be a visible minority and have an exclamation point in your name. I'm sure it happens at a lot of places, but that's just the experience I've had with it.

While some participants solely discussed their concern over how their name would influence their job search, others went as far as to change their name to avoid facing discrimination. When asked if she thought her name had an impact on her ability to find work, Jameelah (Pakistani, marketing associate & security personnel), responded:

I think it does. When I went to [an employment agency], the lady asked me what my Canadian name was. That was the first question she asked me when she looked at my resume. I asked her, "What's a Canadian name?" She was like, "Oh I'm Italian, and I have a not-Italian name" So I have, I have changed my name. the most recent interview I had, I didn't use my name at all, I just used a White name.

Jameelah went on to discuss another experience in which using her "White name" led to an interview. Once she arrived for her interview, she described the employer as looking confused and upset. He had an annoyed tone in his voice during her interview, which lasted a mere 5-10 minutes. She perceived his behavior as discriminatory, "It was obvious he was expecting someone else and wanted to get me out of there as soon as possible."

Another participant changed her legal name from a traditional Guyanese name to a more "Westernized" name before entering the job market. She expected that she would have faced difficulty finding work with her original name:

Well my legal name now is Sarah. [...] I definitely think that if I had used my

original name, that wouldn't have worked so well for me. I definitely think that it is just human nature, whether subconscious or not, you tend to gravitate towards what you feel comfortable around and what you are familiar with. I'm assuming here that the person hiring is White, but if your name is unfamiliar, hard to pronounce, but people might not realize that and they might feel uncomfortable so that might not make you as attractive of a prospect.

–Sarah (Guyanese, project planning coordinator)

A number of participants continued to individualize this structural problem, stating that employers were not actively seeking to discriminate against them; rather, they attributed name-based discrimination to employers' concern regarding a candidate's ability to meet the occupational requirements for the position. For example, David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst) suggested that employers may be concerned about a potential employee's language skills and their ability to function in the workplace:

Yeah I mean definitely, my last name is a very common Chinese last name, so when they see this name they know this guy is Asian, but my first name is David and that is more of a normal common Western name. Maybe I would think my friends who carryover their Chinese name, like they just translate it to English, they might have a harder time. I know personally for me if I meet someone, or if I see someone's resume that may have a really, really Asian name, I might think oh no, is this person fresh off the boat? Can they speak English properly? Are they proficient in English? I know that's bad, but even I have that kind of perception. So yeah in that sense I think it would probably indirectly hinder the ability to find a job.

The only participant who was willing to immediately identify an encounter of overt discrimination was Josif (Serbian, unemployed), a non-racialized participant with a traditionally Serbian name. While he was already conscious of the potential discrimination he might face due to the difficult pronunciation of his name, he was appalled when an employer confessed her discriminatory perceptions to him:

One of the barriers that I would describe as facing is my name. Definitely the spelling of my name because many people don't know how to pronounce it and it never specifies if I'm a male or a female. People are wondering what it is, and people are afraid of pronouncing it wrong. I know it's psychological that you may not get a call back because people think you have a weird sounding name, or weird spelled name. I had this experience in working for the international school that I worked at. When I went in for the interview, the woman said that when she called me she wasn't sure about my name [...] and I thought oh that's incredibly racist, and incredibly bigoted [...]. And that's had a pretty big impact with me lately, as I've started to change my name to the American spelling.

Interestingly, a small minority of participants (3) felt that their status as a racialized minority may potentially provide them with an advantage as a result of organizational initiatives surrounding diversity or employment equity policies; yet, this view was not shared by the majority of participants. While a few participants did perceive their racialized status as an advantage in the labour pool, none of these individuals were reflecting on actual experiences in which this was the case.

On the whole, participants were reluctant to label these experiences as overtly racist; however, as they delved into detailed accounts of these types of situations, participants identified different ways in which employers were able to exercise discriminatory practices in the hiring process. This sort of active discrimination on the part of employers demonstrates a lack of rationality in hiring decisions, which would be expected under the human capital model, thereby highlighting the facileness of this theory in practice.

Although they recognized the importance of human capital in the labour market, participants also demonstrated an increasing awareness of the shortcomings of this theory, and the worth and the value of social capital in their school–work transitions.

4.3 Value of Social Capital as Emotional Support

Among participants, a common narrative surrounding emotional support and sacrifice from parents was evident across interviews. Important in this context was parents' strong support for and pressure to engage in higher education. Parents' belief in the value of higher education needs to be understood in relation to their experiences of downward mobility in Canada. Nearly all participants (26) agreed that their parents faced downward mobility due to the devaluation of their credentials and experience, as well as various forms of discrimination, and/or as a result of their refugee status, upon arriving in Canada. While some parents were able to return to school in Canada in order to retrain in a field similar to that of their original occupation, others had to lower or entirely abandon their own career goals to accept lower-skilled jobs (factory workers and janitorial staff were common occupations among parents) in order to support their families. Regardless of what route they chose, all of these families faced downward mobility. In this first quote, Victoria explains how her mother's credentials from her home country were not considered to be equivalent to Canadian standards:

My mom went to school to be a physiotherapist in Poland, which she did for a while. Then she came to Canada and couldn't get any job with those qualifications. She worked for a while, she worked at a rehab hospital for children in [City]. Then they were laying people off and she ended up having to go back to school and took some courses. Now she's a renal technician at the hospital. She helps with the machines that clean everyone's kidneys, so that's what she does now.

—Victoria (Polish, research assistant & office administrator)

Bohai discusses how his mother's teaching qualifications from Vietnam did not transfer over to Canada, so she took up work in a factory instead:

My mom is a factory worker, and she actually has a degree, but from Vietnam. She used to be a teacher, so she has two degrees from Vietnam, but nothing here.

–Bohai (Vietnamese, accounting assistant)

Similar to Bohai, Ivana's parents were well educated in their home country, but had to accept survival jobs in Canada in order to support their children:

I mean, my parents obviously felt pressured to get something. To get a job immediately so they can help provide for my brother and I. And even though they had schooling, they went to university in Serbia, but none of that applied here, and they just took like the quickest job they could find so that they could get money, right?

– Ivana (Serbian, administrative coordinator)

As a result of the decline in their socio-economic status and the hardship they faced, interviewees indicated that their parents pressured them to do well in school in order to ensure that they were able to gain upward mobility. Respondents also found that watching their parents sacrifice their own happiness and dreams over the years became a key motivator in their own pursuit for success, as Delia (Sri Lankan, unemployed) explains:

I think they did put pressure on me. I think the hope of any parent, especially immigrant parents is to see their child succeed, and to complete a few things that they didn't have the opportunity to do. So my parents didn't have strong education back home, and they came to Canada as refugees and had low income jobs for a very long time, and I think when they started to have children they made a promise to themselves that they wanted to see their kids succeed very well and be educated. So yeah it is pressure, but it's pressure that I understand. Pressure that I appreciate. I think it all has to do with succeeding well and functioning in society and doing well for yourself. [...] I mean I think it is a motivator, you know, I am studying and working not only for myself but for my family. I think that motivates me.

Interestingly, the majority (16) of these participants articulated that the pressure from their parents weighed more heavily on them early on, but toward the end of high school it was greatly reduced. Participants indicated that this was in part because their

parents had little knowledge of how the post-secondary system functioned in Canada, coupled with the fact that participants themselves wanted to do well, especially after watching their own parents struggle in the labour market for years. This first quote by Delia (Sri Lankan, unemployed) demonstrates the lack of understanding regarding the post-secondary system that was common among participants' parents:

When I went to university, my parents were proud, but they didn't really understand the system, they didn't really understand that university was eight months, and that you had exams during one period, you know? And things like doing a thesis, and applying to post-graduate programs. They didn't understand that. They understood high school and I think that they would have supported me more if they knew the educational system in university.

By the time these young people were transitioning into their post-secondary studies, a shared understanding of parental sacrifice and the pursuit of success through educational attainment was ingrained in the minds of participants. The following two quotes explain how the early pressure placed on these young people by their parents ultimately motivated them to work hard and take advantage of the opportunities their parents were not afforded:

Yeah, my mom definitely cared about marks. But she never had to pressure me or my brother to do well, we sort of had that drive on our own. So she never had to give that spiel, right? But yeah she definitely wanted us to do well and get good marks. [...] I think my dad worked a job he didn't really love, because he had to. So for me, that was the drive to do something that I like. And yeah, again they never said, "You should do well because we never had these opportunities," but for me, it was partly because of that.

—Hamid (Sri Lankan & Ugandan, financial analyst)

It was definitely a motivator. I'm not going to say there wasn't any pressure, especially in my high school days. I thought that even just getting into university was a huge milestone. Once I was in university it didn't matter anymore. It was like, you're an adult and you'll figure it out, you'll figure life out. Because my parents knew the type of personality I was and the sense of, 'she won't let herself fail, we don't need to worry about her.' It was kind of a mix of both, challenging, but you didn't want to fail, so pressure and motivating all at the same time.

–Carol (Chinese & Vietnamese, product analyst)

Although a large literature surrounding the educational and occupational outcomes of the children of immigrants indicates that they face parental pressure to pursue professional degrees, including careers in medicine, law, and engineering (Areepattamannil and Lee 2013; Feliciano 2006; Picot and Hou 2011; Taylor and Krahn 2013), a surprising finding in my data was the absence of this pressure. While parents do have high ambitions for their children, they are not as specific as the existing literature on this topic suggests. Nearly all (25) participants stressed the fact that while their parents placed an emphasis on getting a good education, there was not an intensive push to pursue studies in the STEM fields as may stereotypically be expected. Most parents wanted their children to have a good education and a respectable career that would make them happy, as suggested in the following three quotes:

I think I'm really lucky in that my mom was never one of those parents who was like, "You need to get a job as a doctor, or a lawyer," it was just like you need to do something with your life. Do something that you like, something that you can survive off of and support yourself with, and make sure you have the education that you need for that job.

–Sarah (Guyanese, project planning coordinator)

They put pressure in the sense that school is important, make sure you have a job, you need to be able to support yourself and your kids. But it's not so much like make sure you are a doctor because a doctor is a high paying job.

–Alicia (Croatian, five part-time jobs).

[...] and like you know typical brown parents like, “I want my daughter to be a lawyer, I want her to be a doctor, I want her to be an engineer.” You know the stereotype. My parents were like you guys could do whatever you want. I hate math, so they were never like you have to take academic math, they were like, “If you want to take applied math, take applied math, why are you busting your head over this, you are still in school, math isn’t something you have to pursue.” [...] They are very understanding; they are not like—they don’t force me to go into something.
 –Saramathi (Sri Lankan, legal assistant)

One possible explanation for the absence of parental pressure to pursue professional occupations among participants may be linked to their class background. The literature on social class shows that working class parents often have different types of aspirations for their children when compared to parents from middle or upper class backgrounds (Lehmann 2007a). Using parental education and occupation as proxy measures for social class, and taking into consideration that some highly-educated parents experienced downward social mobility in Canada, 19 of the participants can be considered to be working class in Canada. This relatively high number of participants from working-class backgrounds may help explain the lack of concrete parental pressure to study professional programs at a university. At the same time, it may simply be an effect of sampling. Considering that the majority of participants in this study pursued fields such as arts, humanities, and social sciences at the post-secondary level, this result may also be a reflection of differences in parental attitudes. If the sample included participants who had pursued engineering, law, or medical school, the results may have reflected the attitudes of parents who enforced stricter rules about their children’s field of study.

While participants’ parents supported their choices regarding their field of study, almost all participants (26) stated that their parents also provided them with emotional

support during their transition into the labour market. Whether it was listening to their children rant about their frustrations regarding their job prospects, or their anxieties over interviews, parents provided an emotional outlet and unwavering support in their children's career pursuits. Misha (Indian, evaluation coordinator) stated, "Yeah, during the job search they would be like, 'don't worry you'll find something.'" Similarly, David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst) would often discuss his frustrations with his parents, "I guess three to four months into the job search I thought I would never find something, and yeah I would go to my parents and rant. So yeah, they were good for that. For sure, for sure."

Furthermore, while participants' parents had little knowledge of job search strategies for the specific labour market areas in which respondents were looking for work, their positive attitudes and encouragement were a source of unwavering support for their children:

Um, okay, so like, there is emotional support, definitely my mom has been really great, she is like, "I know you can do it Lydia." She is just that emotionally supportive person that never doubts your ability. She thinks that I'm the smartest person on the planet—I'm not—but she thinks I am, and it's kind of a good feeling to have a parent to think that way.

—Lydia (Ethiopian, telephone customer care professional)

They are positive. They are always saying like something will come up and having immigrant parents obviously they are always like—they don't know much about, it—they can't really help me that much, but they've been positive.

—Marcelina (Polish, telephone customer care representative)

Since the investment in human capital via education appears to be part of a shared value or a collective ambition between parents and their children in order to gain upward mobility in the host society, the parents of these young people are willing to continue

supporting them as they search for work. Interviewees indicated that even after graduating, their parents wanted to ensure that they had the best possible chance to succeed in the labour market, and as such provided them with all of the potential resources they had. The following two participants described the familial support that they received from their parents, and how it differed from the support that they witnessed their peers with Canadian-born parents receiving:

Yeah, definitely a lot of emotional support. There is so much emotional support, and there isn't that pressure to go out in the world and do something for yourself because we aren't going to help you anymore. It was never like that. It was kind of like, "We will continue to help you until you can help yourself." But I know a lot of [Canadian] people who don't have the same culture and it's like, "That's it we aren't going to help you anymore. You can fend for yourself now." In a lot of ways, it was an advantage. You know your parents are immigrants, they have struggled really hard to give you everything that they can, but they are okay with continuing that.

—Namrita (Indian, regulated immigration consultant)

They literally sacrificed everything for us. With immigrant parents, I think that is a very common trend. I find that with Canadian parents, it's like, "Okay you are 18, get out of the house." It's a very bad stereotype, but my parents would support me forever, but at the same time, when they grow old and get sick, I'm going to be right there for them. They are my parents, and we are very close.

—Aleksandra (Romanian, telephone banking specialist)

Delia and Saramathi described how their parents would support them by trying to reduce the burdens of their day-to-day tasks in order to allow them to focus on their job search:

They would always try to drive me back home and drive me to the bus station and things like that, and I think that those little things matter. And even now like I'm two months into my job search and I'm getting frustrated with myself because I haven't found anything yet and I've always been busy and active, and they're not stressed at all. They keep telling me, "Oh don't worry about work, you'll find it, you just relax," and they do all the cooking and cleaning and all this. So I think it's great that I live in a very supportive home, but I don't know if everyone has that from their own parents.

—Delia (Sri Lankan, unemployed)

Even when I worked at [my first job out of school], I worked like a regular like eight to four like shift, right? When I came home, I was so tired, I don't know from what. I sat on a chair all day. My parents did hard labour every day. They came home, they cooked food for us, make sure we eat, run errands, and then go to sleep. But every day I come home from work, my dad still puts food on the table for me, and prepares everything [...] They wait up until I come home, they always make me tea in the mornings, they make me lunch, but they're doing things much harder. Like I am just sitting on my ass all day, they're standing up, you know actually doing labour, they are just as tired [...] Or they will always be like, "We'll go run errands you sleep," and I'm just like you slept at four the other night, how are you functioning?

–Saramathi (Sri Lankan, legal assistant)

The support and motivation that parents provided their children with helped to ease their school–work transition. Having someone to encourage them and calm their anxieties was considered to be important by participants. Knowing that their parents simply wanted them to pursue a career that was realistic and would allow them to support themselves, but would also make them happy was significant.

4.4 Limits to Social Capital

As discussed in the literature review, personal contacts, an important form of social capital, are one of the most common methods used to find out about job opportunities. According to Granovetter (1974), the family is a pivotal form of personal contacts, as family members are typically the primary source of job referrals. While accounts of hardship experienced by their parents in the Canadian labour market coupled with the early pressures placed on them to do well in school helped to shape participants' own desire for success, neither the young people nor their parents had access to the type of social capital that would be valuable in connecting them with the sort of jobs they desired, or provide them with tactical advice on how to navigate the labour market.

Bearing in mind that personal contacts are the primary method used to find work, interviewees expressed frustration with the lack of value in their social capital for the purposes of finding work. When participants were asked if they approached personal contacts during their job search, most (19) stated that they did not have access to networks that would be able to help them in this regard. This sentiment is echoed by the following three interviewees:

I think that not knowing the right people is a huge one for sure, because I think a lot of people get their jobs through knowing someone. Internally someone refers you, right? When I was in university I didn't really make any friends, I was too busy. I didn't do residence, or anything, so I feel like I didn't make any contacts that could help me get a job in my field or anything like that. Yeah I think the biggest barriers are lack of experience and lack of contacts within the field.
 –Natalie (Polish, administrative assistant & fast food restaurant manager)

I don't have many contacts I would say. I've found that networking, and LinkedIn, and networking with employers and stuff is the hardest part for me [...] I honestly think though that getting a job is 90 percent who you know these days, so I think that is a big part of it, but I just don't have any contacts that really worked out for me too well.
 –Marcelina (Polish, telephone customer care representative)

I mean obviously my parents weren't in fields that I was interested in so I was really on my own in terms of the job hunt. If there is a negative it would be that, but that isn't their fault, I just don't want to do nails and I also don't want to be a contractor.
 –Carol (Chinese & Vietnamese, product analyst)

The downward mobility faced by parents and their relegation into survival jobs, not only inhibited their own economic prospects, but the effects also trickled down to the opportunities available to their children. Since many participants' parents were employed in low-skilled positions, their own networks were limited to others employed in these types of jobs. Consequently, they did not have any useful guidance or information for their children to help them navigate the labour market for the higher-status positions they

sought. This narrative was dominant across racialized boundaries, and was identified as having a serious impact in the school–work transition of participants, as demonstrated in the following two quotes:

Having immigrant parents obviously they are always like—they don't know much about, it, they can't really help me that much.

—Michelina (Polish, cashier)

I think immigrant families get hit hard with that because if you're new you aren't established yet. You might have a great career in your home country but then you come here and those opportunities don't exist for you for a number of different reasons. So yeah, I think immigrant families do experience that hardship more because you don't have those connections and you don't have that stability. I mean, not to say that is everyone's experience across the board.

—Sarah (Guyanese, project planning coordinator)

Some participants found that their family members, particularly parents, were not as useful as the family members of peers with Canadian-born parents in helping them find work in their field, or even providing suggestions to improve their prospects. For second-generation immigrants, their parents' immigration status was linked to their lack of knowledge of the Canadian labour market, and a lack of useful social capital with respect to their job search:

I never used family only because none of my family works in an area that I wanted to work in. It didn't help that my parents were immigrants [...] none of them have been here for years where they have that rapport and then I can use their contacts.

—Ivana (Serbian, administrative coordinator)

Yeah, for me personally I don't have—like a lot of my peers in school were born in Canada, they have a lot of connections, and I didn't, and my parents didn't. I don't come from a wealthy family or anything. My parents literally gave up everything to move here, so we had no connections, nothing.

—David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst)

Yeah, I would say so because my parents don't really have a good network, my parents are immigrants. They have no idea what to do in today's job market. [...] I didn't know that many adults in [City], or people in that area to ask for advice
 –Victoria (Polish, research assistant & office administrator)

Especially though that lack of social capital and constructive criticism and advice that you would get from someone who has been through it all in this country, cause it's different for them back home. [...] [My parents] did not have the same experience, so they did not have the same understanding and guidance in terms of what to do and where to look. While I know some of my friends' parents are emailing their children jobs, check out this job, check out this job, try this, try this job, check out this job. Even my friend's mom would sometimes email me a job. Randomly. Like one job. I think it happened once or twice, which was nice, but if that is the kind of thing that they get—those people who aren't in the same situation as me—if that's the support they get, and even though it doesn't seem like a big deal it still cuts a lot of your time. It still cuts out the fact that you have to go to certain places for the job when your mom is basically sending it to you [...] Even that little bit helps. You don't get that from, I don't know about you, but I don't get that from my parents. At the same time, even if you talk about your program or something, like it's not the same, you can't really talk about what you learn with your parents because it's not the same, because they are in a completely different mindset. They are still open-minded and objective which is good, but it's a different time and a different location, and a whole different country and experience so they can't really relate.

–Lydia (Ethiopian, telephone customer care professional)

A few participants (3) recalled that their parents had such little knowledge of the labour market that they actually had to help them with their resumes:

For my mom, even when I was 12, I remember writing her resume for her. I had to type it all out and put it in the right categories. I remember when she was doing one of her first resumes [...] We had learned about it in grade six, making our own resumes, and we would put hobbies. So I didn't know that you didn't do that on professional ones. When she was applying to factory jobs, I remember asking her what her hobbies are and writing like, gardening. So I mean, I was writing her resume and updating it for her.

–Alicia (Croatian, five part-time jobs)

While immigrant parents were unable to connect their children with job opportunities in their field, they did attempt to use the social capital they had to help their children find jobs in unrelated fields. Saramathi (Sri Lankan, legal assistant) explains:

I was gonna actually work at the store my mom works at. She works at a sari store, but that was my last resort, and I was like I'll just do it, I need the money [...] When I think about my family, my uncles and my aunts, they're not at a job where I would wanna be. Like, they are either working at a restaurant or working at a factory.

Similarly, when Josif (Serbian, unemployed) completed his schooling and was unable to find work, his father helped him find a job in an unrelated position:

Anything in the factory, in east-[City], my father can get me the job. [...] Yeah. That's how I got it, my dad knew the owner of the company and he told him I needed a job so he told me to bring my resume down.

Lydia, Hamid, and Aleksandra echoed these concerns, and found themselves frustrated by the opportunities that their peers were handed by their parents.

There are a lot of people who are like, "My dad got me this job," or like, "My mom got me this job," and I'm just like wow, okay, nice for you, good for you. Then sometimes people look at you and they are like, "Oh, why aren't you doing what you wanted?" Or maybe...I don't know I think people must assume that, I don't know, I think that other people that are doing really well might think that I'm slacking or being lazy when I'm not. It's just that I didn't have a parent to, you know, find a way in at a really good company or something, you know?
 –Lydia (Ethiopian, telephone customer care professional)

I feel like a lot, especially in accounting, a lot of people had family members who were CPAs. For them it was like, second year summer, they would have an internship because their dad is a partner. And you know you're a much better student, you'd be much better at the job than them, but they have that connection, right? It is what it is.
 –Hamid (Sri Lankan & Ugandan, financial analyst)

I just feel like it's all who you know. There was this guy I was talking to who is a couple of years younger than me, and he got an amazing job right out of school, but he is also loaded! His parents are loaded and his parents got him an amazing internship, and if you get an internship in the business program, you're solid. You're set. So his parents got him a great internship, they got him all these interviews, so yeah it's who you know really. So he is definitely getting the jobs that I am just applying online for. I'm hoping that with contacts at [current employer] I'll eventually get somewhere, but there is a lot of nepotism I would say. It's nice if you know people, but if you don't, I mean my parents don't know anybody. They are just trying for themselves.
 –Aleksandra (Romanian, telephone banking specialist)

Interestingly, when asked about the impact of being a second-generation immigrant in the labour market, a number of other participants conflated their parents' status as immigrants with their social class, as demonstrated in the following three quotes:

So the people who studied international relations with me, I went to [University], these people who have parents who have networks who can really help them out. For people who went to public school and have immigrant parents, and don't have ruling class parents, I think their experiences are similar to mine.

–Jameelah (Pakistani, marketing associate & security personnel)

I think if someone comes from a very, very, stable financial background, I've noticed that their children have a lot more freedom, and kind of like to experiment, go abroad and teach for a year, not work on their career, take a year off. Whereas immigrant children that come from a less stable background have a lot more pressure on them to find a job.

–Ratomir (Serbian, bank teller)

I think that we were almost naturally at a disadvantage...how do I say this? Coming to [University] actually made me realize—I never really realized I was at a disadvantage until I came to [University]. Where I grew up it was in the hood, it was all immigrant families, we all went to public school, we couldn't afford prep classes, the only way I could afford to go to school was because of [student loans]. Coming to [University] is like seeing these kids whose parents-parents-parents were from here. They have been established. They just have so many more resources...and maybe it has more to do with socio-economic status. When you come from a background that is already fairly wealthy and has a lot of resources, or if you have someone whose parents can afford to pay for school, that's great because this student has more time to study, for volunteer opportunities, and just concentrate on having a good student experience. A kid whose parents can't afford to, it's like those things are still available to you but then you also have to balance having a part-time job to pay for school.

–Sarah (Guyanese, project planning coordinator)

The intersection of class was also evident among the experiences of participants who had a middle-class background (7). Namrita (Indian, regulated immigration consultant) for example, did not face the same pressures to find work immediately upon graduation in order to be financially independent. She had the opportunity to work for her father's company once she finished her schooling:

Anything else that I might have started out would have been from the bottom up, and he never wanted that for me because that was what he had to do for himself. It was like, “I built this for you, so you don’t have to go somewhere else and start from the bottom.”

Having the comfort of knowing that she had a job set at her father’s company was a privilege that no other participant had available to them. Worrying about having to take on a survival job, as many other participants mentioned, was not something that had crossed Namrita’s mind.

Similarly, while most participants with a working class background were focused on how to find work after graduation, Carol highlighted how important it was to her, and her parents, that she take time off and travel:

My parents were like, “Take this time to really enjoy. You’ve just graduated. You’re travelling, go enjoy yourself and when you get back you’ll figure it out.” [...] At that time they were pretty much paying for my life.

While Hamid (Sri Lankan & Ugandan, financial analyst) himself was not from a middle-class family, he became aware of the importance of social class while at a networking/recruitment event at his school one day as he witnessed a conversation between a classmate and a recruiter. The two were bonding over similar interests and shared life experiences that took place outside of the classroom, such as vacations and recreational activities. Coming from a working class background, Hamid realized that while these experiences did not resonate with his own, they were an important part of the networking process:

It was nothing with the classroom, right? It was outside. So this was talking about sports, talking about vacations, talking about this cool thing that they've done, like scuba diving, things like that right? And I think that when you're talking to a recruiter about stuff like that, they actually listen to your story and they share their own, as opposed to not having anything like that to talk about.

The support and motivation that parents offered their children helped ease their school–work transitions. While parents were not able to provide their children with tactical advice, having someone to encourage them and calm their anxieties was considered important by participants. Knowing that their parents simply wanted them to pursue a career that was realistic and would allow them to support themselves, but would also make them happy, was significant. Ultimately the early pressures parents placed on children helped to shape their own internal desires for success in the labour market.

Participants also found that their parents' shorter residence in the host country inhibited their ability to develop valuable social capital that would be useful in their capacity to help their children find work. Although many participants came from families with highly educated parents, the international training and education their parents received was often devalued upon their arrival to Canada. Consequently, many immigrants faced downward mobility and were forced to accept jobs unrelated to their training. While participants' parents were able to provide their children with motivation and emotional support during the job search process, the occupational networks of these immigrants were largely concentrated in fields that their children did not want to pursue. Participants who identified with a working class background stated that while their parents were able to help them find work in low skilled jobs, their lack of access to valuable networks in highly-skilled fields posed a serious challenge in their school–work

transitions. The sentiments expressed by respondents are a reflection of how immigrant status and social class intersect to create a unique experience for these young people.

4.5 Developing Strategies to Improve Human & Social Capital

Despite facing a number of challenges in their school–work transitions, interviewees also identified a number of strategies they used to improve their human and social capital, which helped to bolster their employment prospects and their ability to navigate this transition successfully. Here, I will discuss the use of networking (to improve social capital), returning to school to pursue higher credentials (to improve human capital), experiential learning (to improve human and social capital), and extra-curricular involvement (to improve human and social capital).

Although many participants identified a lack of valuable social capital for the purpose of finding work as a key barrier in their job search, some participants took it upon themselves to construct networks in their occupational field as a means to improve the value of their social capital in this regard. A number of participants (8) stated that early on in their post-secondary studies they realized they would have difficulty finding work upon graduation due to their lack of professional contacts. In order to ease their school–work transitions they attempted to build a network of contacts through a variety of strategies. For example, Carol (Chinese & Vietnamese, product analyst), who grew up in a middle-class family, was able to secure a summer student position at a financial institution during her undergraduate degree through the help of a neighbour. During her first summer at the company, she realized the importance of networking and used it as a

strategy to ensure she would be re-hired the following summer:

When I was leaving I would have conversations and they would bring up this whole idea of a network or connections, and to me I had no idea what this lingo kind of was really. They never teach you this in high school to prep you, and I also never thought that I would be in a professional job in the summer so soon in my years. When I left that summer I kind of just wrote down all of the people's emails that maybe I didn't work with, but I had conversations with them, or I thought that what they were doing was cool. I would make it a point for myself to email them maybe every quarter [...] Then, maybe around the February-March time I would make an effort during reading week to make coffee appointments or lunch appointments with people in the office. Definitely my old team I started with. They would say it's great you should meet with so and so to really see if there were any summer student positions opening.

Ultimately, Carol's networking helped her secure another summer internship at the company, and eventually led to her full-time job offer shortly after she graduated.

So the first job I did when I finished school was I was a business analyst at [financial institution] for their credit card division [...] I was very fortunate to do summer rotations in and out of my undergrad at [financial institution], which really kind of helped and propelled my full-time signing in September.

It is noteworthy that there was a culture of networking among participants who pursued studies in the field of business in particular. Hamid (Sri Lankan & Ugandan, financial analyst), who completed an undergraduate degree in accounting, expressed that there was a big focus on networking and gaining work experience early on in his program:

Since there was no mandatory co-op or anything, they really force people to do internships or apply to certain summer positions. [...] From year one you start going to conferences and networking and the mock interviews were available at any time. People would screen your resumes anytime, and they actually force you to get your resume looked at in first year. [...] Some networking events are only for third years and fourth years because these are the people who are more serious about looking for work. So yeah, but third year, everyone is in that mode.

Hamid quickly learned the importance of these events and began taking part in them.

Ultimately he was able to secure a position as a result of a networking event, and signed

an offer early on in the last year of his undergraduate degree:

I got the job through a networking event at university. I just went and talked to some people, and then I applied and I got the call about a week or so later, with a phone interview, and then a few in-person interviews, and then yeah I had the job.

Participants also built their own networks through the process of conducting information interviews with individuals employed in their field. Victoria (Polish, research assistant & office administrator), who completed a Master's in sociology, found herself employed in precarious positions, struggling to find a job in her field. Eventually she began to use information interviews to make new contacts, until this led to a job offer:

I couldn't find anything. I was submitting a bunch of applications and it was really hard. I wasn't getting that much feedback. I wasn't getting many bites or anything, so I just started cold-calling people. I had a discussion with my boyfriend about what I really wanted to do and it was program evaluation. So I found a database of evaluators in [City] and so I just started emailing them to meet up and just to like do an information interview, they call them. So you just ask questions about how they got to where they did, what do they do, what do they like, what do they not like about their job, blah, blah, blah, where they work. That kind of stuff. So I asked them that, and I kind of told them about myself and what kind of stuff I do, and how I'm new to [City] and how I would love to start building a network and start meeting people and whatever. So I started doing that, and one thing led to another, and I ended up getting this position on a one-week basis with this company. Then they were like okay we'll put you on a three-month contract and then that turned into permanent. So yeah, that is how it went.

Similar to Victoria, David (Chinese), who completed an undergraduate degree in finance, used information interviews to network with professionals in his field:

[...] recently there was a job posting that I was really interested in and I emailed the hiring manager and was like, "Hi, I'm really interested in applying. Do you have a moment to talk on the phone, or can I take you out for coffee to learn more about what you do?" [...] It really puts your name out there. [...] I think expanding your network is so important.

A handful of participants who held positions within companies that offered internal postings (6) acknowledged the advantage of having exclusive access to this network of

opportunities:

There is only a small fraction that they post externally to everyone else that don't work in the job, but yeah. And a lot of jobs are posted internally. But I mean, I think it was very hard because if I didn't get the internship, I would have no idea where to go from there.

–Ivana (Serbian, administrative coordinator)

That's what I'm doing right now. There is a [Professional Association] portal where I get access to a lot of jobs that people don't. Then there is also the [Company] internal job network that I can apply for, so that is pretty much what I am using right now.

–Aleksandra (Romanian, telephone banking specialist)

The external job postings, even though it may seem like a lot, once you get into a corporation, the internal job postings will really blow you away. I find that it's so much easier to find a job once you have that initial job you know what I mean?

–David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst)

Ultimately, when asked to name the barriers or challenges she faced when looking for work, Victoria (Polish, research assistant & office administrator) summed up the importance of having useful networks in order to access the hidden job market:

The hidden market of jobs that is there. Not knowing how to get into them. Cause a lot of jobs that are posted already have somebody filling that position, but human resources by law has to post that position. So a little bit of trying to break that and getting to those jobs. The tip of the iceberg is what is posted online, there is so much more beneath that. There are so many other job opportunities that aren't visible. I found that was the hardest part. Once I tried to network and getting to know people in [City], that's when those positions started becoming more visible.

Participants who were able to construct a useful network of contacts in their field used this strategy to their advantage. While not all contacts were able to connect participants with a job immediately, they also provided them with key information about their industry. The experiences of these participants highlights the important role that personal contacts can provide in order to access the hidden job market. Likewise, participants conveyed that they were able to develop more useful networks once they gained access to

a position in their field, which made it easier to find opportunities to help them continue building their career. Significantly, school programs played an important role in priming these young people for their entrance into the labour market. Participants who studied business stated that they were constantly reminded of the importance of networking, and those who were enrolled in experiential learning programs (as discussed below), were also taught about the value of these different techniques to broaden their professional networks.

Just over half of participants (15) went on to pursue additional credentials after completing their bachelor's degree in order to improve their human capital and make themselves more competitive in the job market. Toward the completion of their undergraduate degrees, participants were motivated to pursue higher credentials once they realized that their bachelor's degree would not place them in a competitive position as they searched for work, as indicated by the following two quotes:

When I was finishing I thought what am I going to do with this? So I went right into the post-grad right after [completing my undergrad] [...] It's like you're already past the undergrad, so now you're there to develop the skills to get a job after.
 –Ivana (Serbian, administrative coordinator)

[My BA in] English was nothing but a stepping stone. Learn as much as you can, get the best marks you can, and then move onto teacher's college because that's the money.
 –Josif (Serbian, unemployed)

When selecting their post-graduate programs, a number of participants stated that they specifically looked for programs that offered a practical component because they knew that in addition to helping them build their human capital by virtue of having an

additional qualification, the experiential learning opportunity would help them build their social capital. Bohai, for example, articulated that the entire reason he returned to school after completing his university degree in economics was to find work through a co-op placement, “Co-op was always, like it was the whole reason I went back. If there wasn’t co-op, then I wouldn’t have gone.” Other respondents who took part in post-graduate programs with a practical component also indicated that while that aspect was not necessarily the reason they chose to pursue a specific program; in hindsight the experiential learning component of the program was extremely valuable.

Consistent with the literature, most interviewees (15 out of 16) who completed a form of experiential learning (field courses, co-operative placements, internships, practicums, etc.) expressed the importance of these opportunities in their ability to help them make smooth school–work transitions, as these opportunities helped to build both their human and social capital. David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst) explained that he was able to develop practical skills from a field course he took in university which provided him with relevant experience that he was able to list on his resume, and use as a talking point in job interviews:

We worked very closely with the start-up company, and they would tell us one of their main concerns and we would go back and do research, and then come back with recommendations, and write a report. That was the entire course. In that sense, I did have opportunities to work in the field. I think my program was structured really well to provide students with opportunities if they wanted to do it.

Other interviewees indicated that experiential learning opportunities, especially those that lasted a full term, could often lead to full-time job opportunities with the organization. Ivana (Serbian, administrative coordinator), who had to complete a co-op

placement as a requirement of her post-graduate diploma in public administration, was able to have her placement extended into a contract position, and ultimately into a permanent job. Once she had secured her co-op placement in the public sector, she was able to access job postings that were internal to the organization, which were instrumental in helping her secure a permanent position. She found that her post-graduate program helped to reduce some of the challenges she might have otherwise faced.

Similar to Ivana, Adam (Chinese, chef de partie), who completed a co-op placement as a part of his post-graduate diploma in culinary arts, found that the network he built during his co-op led to his current employment, “I got [the job] right out of school. I was a co-op student at the same unit, and I just went back to say hi, and he told me that somebody was leaving a position there and I could fill it right away.”

Many post-secondary programs (at both university and college) that offered these opportunities also required students to take a mandatory career development course to prepare them for the labour force. Derek (Guyanese & Bajan, camp counselor) explains, “There is a co-op class you have to take and through the class you are receiving training on learning how to write resumes, job search techniques, and all of that.” These types of opportunities were instrumental in providing participants with the skills they needed to understand how to navigate the job search process:

When I was doing my co-op class [in college] I learned how to properly do a resume, like tips on how to make it better. It actually was pretty helpful. They talked about how to make your resume more skills-based. Like you would say how you efficiently did this, you know what I mean? It’s not just stating what you do, but also explain how you do it, and how you can do it better than someone else.

–Bohai (Vietnamese, accounting assistant)

Additionally, experiential learning opportunities also enabled participants to make connections and form a network in their field. Misha (Indian, evaluation coordinator) stated, “My practicum, I would say, was useful for personal goals as well as professional. Professionally because I was able to meet a variety of people [...], and build more skills. It really helped me get my next job.” Delia (Sri Lankan, unemployed) expressed a similar view of her internship:

I think that’s definitely very helpful. I’ve kept in contact with people from there. They haven’t specifically given me work, but in terms of developing skills to talk to professionals, knowing how to network, and even just learning basic counseling stuff, I think I’ve benefited.

Students who were aware of the value of these opportunities, especially in their ability to help them gain valuable human and social capital, but did not have these experiences provided through their schooling would often take part in extra-curricular or volunteer opportunities in order to fill this gap. For example, Hamid (Sri Lankan & Ugandan, financial analyst) spoke about the importance of taking part in case competitions to gain practical experience in his field. Essentially, students would work individually or in teams to tackle a business case and present their solutions to industry experts. He explained that a lot of these experiences often led to job opportunities:

You’re not just having a conversation, you’re actually showcasing what you know, what your ideas are, things like that. I know a lot of people that got interviews and jobs through these things. Where you know, their ideas were really good or they really liked what you’re capable of, and then boom, you know, a job offer.

Hamid was therefore able to build his human capital by gaining experience in his desired field, while also building access to valuable social capital, through networking. Similarly,

David (Chinese, strategic financial analyst) sought out a number of unpaid internships, both over the school year and in the summertime:

I did a ton of unpaid internships too. Because my school doesn't have co-op, which is one of the drawbacks. I had to seek out employment during the summer or during the school year to kind of fill my resume because I knew that it would be extremely difficult to find a job if I didn't have some sort of experience right. So I did three unpaid jobs, two in the financial services industry, and one in the kind of marketing consumer-packaged goods industry. [...] It was a lot of researching, giving presentations to management, things like that. The marketing one was kind of looking at a problem, doing some research on it, and then coming up with some recommendations for management. Again, it was a lot of presenting findings, doing a lot of communication with stakeholders, things like that.

Derek (Guyanese & Bajan, camp counselor) credited much of his practical experience and useful network to his extra-curricular involvement:

Yeah, so in my undergrad there were various sort of leadership things I went to which helped me network, or exposed me to people, and gave me experience too. Student council for example was a good opportunity to interact with the administration at my college, which is pretty cool. You get to sit in meetings, you get budgets to work with. It's fun. You get to spend money and write checks [laughter]. It was primarily through my interaction with student council that I met a lot of my friends and made a lot of the connections and networks that I have today. It was one of those friends that I made through student council that got me involved in this part-time job that I have now.

Participants who did not take part in experiential learning opportunities (either by choice, or because a lack of knowledge) expressed regret over this. Others expressed their frustration at their school, as opportunities for co-ops and internships were either exclusive to certain programs, or because these types of experiences were competitive with a limited number of spots available only to the top students:

No there wasn't [any opportunities for experiential learning]. I know from every faculty between science and engineering there is an internship you can do with research assistantships or co-ops. There's no co-op options for any of the social sciences or humanities. You couldn't even get a research position here.

—Josif (Serbian, unemployed)

Yeah, definitely very competitive. I wasn't in it, but I knew a lot of my friends were. There was a co-op program for specific programs so you would apply to that stream. I applied, but I didn't get in.

–Misha (Indian, evaluation coordinator)

For those participants who were struggling in the labour market and did not take part in experiential learning opportunities (either because most universities do not offer these types of practical learning experiences in the majority of their programs, or because they were not aware of the value of these experiences until it was too late) many were debating returning to school in search of a program that specifically offered this type of practical component at the time of their interview. Jameelah (Pakistani, marketing associate & security personnel), for example, indicated that she was interested in returning to school to pursue a specific program that would help her gain access to the field she was interested in working in, “They do co-op in the federal government, so I thought that might be useful. That’s the whole thing about going to [that school]. You do it because you get bridged in, so I thought that might be useful.”

While Alana’s (Filipino, unemployed) schooling did not offer her the chance to take part in experiential learning opportunities, she makes the case that these types of programs should be offered across disciplines.

Okay, so obviously historically universities have nothing to do with the labour market. But then again in Canada we have a very educated population. Technically, at this point, universities should adapt to help bridge school–work, and help with that transition. So I guess, I mean, there’s issues there, right? Now that I am done with school for now, I think that, and as a social science student, I think that there is so much value in co-ops, and internships, and practicums. Especially in the social sciences, if I were to do it over again, I would not have done the program I did. Where it was just course work and just a project and that’s all. Yeah. And it’s funny because my undergrad, a year after I graduated, they put in co-ops. [...] I don’t

know if it's a career resource department at universities, or if universities themselves that need to adapt and make that link to academia and real life, because the population is changing, people are becoming more educated, but at the same time unemployment rates are rising.

Although some participants were successful in their ability to gain experience in their field and create professional networks, others were not able to get this far. Increased access to these types of bridging programs may create a more level playing field for students across disciplines, helping to facilitate a smooth transition from school–work. The conversation surrounding experiential learning opportunities emphasized their usefulness in learning how to prepare for the job search, gaining practical work experience, and networking with professionals in their field.

4.6 Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth look into the school–work transitions of young second-generation immigrants. The unspoken assumption of the importance of investing in human capital via higher education encouraged participants to pursue some form of post-secondary education; however, participants were well aware of the shortcomings of this model through their own experiences of overqualification in their occupations and racial discrimination. The recognition of this limitation led many participants to recognize the significance of having access to valuable social capital, namely through the role of personal contacts, in the labour market. While participants' parents provided emotional support to their children, their access to useful networks in high-status occupations was limited (as a result of their immigrant status and the downward mobility they faced upon arriving in Canada), and their own networks in low-skilled or blue collar

work were not of value to their children. To improve their job prospects, participants engaged in a number of strategies to improve their own human and social capital including: networking with professionals in their field, pursuing additional credential qualifications, seeking out programs that offered opportunities for experiential learning, and taking part in extra-curricular activities or volunteer positions related to their occupational field of interest.

In the next chapter, I will discuss both the sociological and policy implications of these findings, as well as the limitations to this study, and directions for future research.

Chapter 5

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants while illuminating the challenges they face, as well as the strategies they used to navigate this transition successfully. The interviews conducted with participants sought to answer the following questions: What are the roles of human and social capital in the school–work transitions of second-generation immigrants? And how are the experiences of racialized second-generation immigrants different from their non-racialized peers? While the results of this study are not generalizable to all second-generation immigrants, they offer a deeper insight into some of the broader experiences of this population. I begin this chapter with an overview of the results discussed in the last chapter. I then discuss the implications of these findings in the context of the existing sociological literature, followed by the impact they may have on policy decisions. I conclude this section with an examination of the limitations of this study, and directions for future research.

5.1 Overview of Findings

Overall, participants' stories revealed common narratives surrounding the value and shortcomings of human and social capital in their job searches. In the context of respondents' experiences, human capital is largely understood in the form of educational credentials and work experience in participants' desired field, whereas social capital is

largely understood in the form of personal contacts and networks that participants had access to.

Respondents discussed a common belief among themselves, and especially their parents, regarding the value and necessity of investing in human capital (primarily through education) to establish themselves in the labour market and to gain upward mobility in Canada, which they considered a country in which meritocratic principles were upheld. As their parents impressed the importance of education from a young age, respondents acknowledged the existence of an unspoken agreement between parents and their children, in which the pursuit of post-secondary studies was a requirement rather than an option. Respondents indicated that the parental expectations to pursue higher education were also tied to their decision to uproot their lives and immigrate to Canada. Better (educational and occupational) opportunities for their children were among the most common reasons for their parents' immigration. Those participants who were employed, particularly those employed in good jobs in their field, at the time of their interview also acknowledged the importance of their education and the applicability of both the hard and soft skills they gained through their schooling.

At the same time, participants who were overqualified for their position at the time of their interview questioned the value of their degree as they continued to search for work. Respondents expressed difficulty in identifying the practical value of their schooling. They were often working in jobs that would require a high school diploma at most. This was particularly the case for those with degrees in the social sciences or

humanities. The inadequacies of the human capital assumption of an open and accessible labour market also became evident as most participants who applied for work through formal (mostly online) job postings rarely heard back from these applications. This was the case even for those who were employed in good jobs at the time of the interview (most of these respondents ultimately found work through personal contacts).

Despite the fact that the majority of participants were employed at the time of their interview and were able to find work within a few months of graduating, a considerable proportion were employed in low-skilled, non-standard, precarious positions that were not related to their field of study. The current precarious nature of the economy had a significant impact on participants' ability to find stable work. Respondents stated that they accepted these positions in order to support themselves financially, and often got caught in a trap of working precarious job after job; some actually held multiple jobs at once. This led to individual frustration, as participants expressed a desire for full employment as well as wanting to find work in their field. Graduates from teacher education programs faced a particularly challenging experience, as the labour market has been saturated with an oversupply of recent graduates, but a decline in demand for new teachers. Ultimately, participants who were stuck in these types of jobs felt let down by the promise of the human capital model that had been instilled in them early on. Once participants made the transition from school to employment, it became clear that education on its own was simply not enough to guarantee them a good job.

Discrimination faced by racialized participants also demonstrated the shortcomings of human capital theory. When first asked about racism, participants were hesitant to state that they encountered any *overt* instances of racial discrimination, and they tended to individualize this issue. An example of overt discrimination was a job interview that was cut short by the employer who was clearly surprised and annoyed by the appearance of the participant, a Pakistani-Muslim woman who wore a hijab. More often, however, participants described encounters with recruiters and employers they considered to be experiences of *covert* discrimination. This often took the form of underhanded comments or feelings of hostility or discomfort during these exchanges.

Racialized respondents also discussed experiences of name-based discrimination, as they were concerned about how employers would perceive their “non-traditional” names. Interviewees talked about (actual and potential) employers’ internal biases and subjective perceptions of different ethnic and racial groups, and how these beliefs may have an impact in the hiring process. Some feared that employer assumptions may hinder their likelihood to receive a call for an interview, even if they were equally as qualified as their peers with more “Western” or “Canadian” names. Some participants reacted to name discrimination by “whitening” their resume and altering their names. Such strategies were consistent with their focus on individualized solutions. Despite acknowledging the injustice of these discriminatory practices, participants removed the onus from employers, stating that they were likely concerned about potential candidates’ ability to meet the occupational requirements for a job.

While the interviews identified the limitations of human capital theory, they also highlighted the important role of social capital in their school–work transitions. As mentioned earlier, although social capital can take a number of forms, in the context of this study, participants generally focused on the role of personal contacts and networks. In this regard, the value of emotional support and sacrifice made by parents emerged as an important theme. Nearly all families faced downward mobility upon arriving to Canada as a result of a devaluation of parents' schooling and work experience, systemic discrimination, and/or their refugee status. As a result of the downward mobility these families experienced, respondents indicated that their parents pushed them to reach their full potential in school from an early age in order to ensure their own success in Canada. Interviewees also indicated that watching their parents face hardship encouraged them to internalize this determination for success. Witnessing their parents struggle and sacrifice was identified as a motivator for respondents.

Moreover, participants spoke of their parents (a) encouraging them during their job search anxiety and frustration; and (b) supporting them through whatever resources they had available as they continued to search for work. This was often explained through examples in which parents helped to reduce the stresses of everyday life in order to allow their children more time to focus on the job search. These parents allowed their children to live at home, would drive them to job interviews, and take on their share of household responsibilities and chores. Respondents felt that their peers with Canadian-born parents did not receive the same type of support. This support can be interpreted as reflecting the shared ambition between participants and their parents, as they try to increase the

likelihood of occupational success and thus, the potential for upward mobility. While the motivation and emotional support provided by parents was a valuable form of social capital for their children, it was limited in its ability to help them find work. Considering that personal contacts, particularly family, are one of the most important forms of social capital used in the job search, participants considered themselves to be at a disadvantage due to the limited value of both their own, and their parents' networks. Since all interviewees had completed at least one form of post-secondary education, they were looking for employment in their respective areas of education. However, because their parents were concentrated in low-skilled jobs, they did not have access to networks of highly-skilled individuals that could provide job referrals to their children. Similarly, respondents' parents could not provide them with strategic advice or guidance on how to navigate the labour market for these types of occupations. Usually, as a last resort, immigrant parents did provide their children with job referrals within their networks, including positions in factories and ethnic stores. Lack of access to the "right" form of social capital for their job search was exacerbated by the combination of their immigrant status and their parents' employment in working-class jobs.

Although participants identified a number of barriers they faced in their school-work transition, they also identified a number of strategies that allowed them to improve both their human and social capital. In order to gain access to contacts in their field, some participants actively sought out networking opportunities. Interviewees who had studied business, in particular, learned about the importance of this strategy through their schooling. These participants spoke about networking events arranged by the business

faculty; such events provided students with the opportunity to impress recruiters, exchange contact information, and arrange job interviews. Conducting information interviews with people working in participants' desired fields emerged as another strategy used to improve their social capital. These information interviews provided opportunities to meet individuals working in their industry, learn about employment practices in their field, and gain access to the hidden job market.

In addition to advancing their access to valuable social capital, respondents also sought to improve their human capital. Just over half of participants obtained an additional credential following their undergraduate degree in the hope that this would make them more competitive in the labour market. Importantly, most participants were searching for post-graduate programs that offered an experiential learning component because of the work experience (human capital), as well as the opportunity to build their networks in their field (social capital).

5.2 Relation to Existing Literature and Implications

The findings from the study highlight a number of important themes in the school–work transitions of young people from immigrant families. Much like other young people, the data show that participants continued to rely heavily on the promise of human capital. All interviewees attained high levels of formal education and all believed, at least initially, that this education was a requirement for occupational success. As has been documented in other research (Abada and Lin 2011; Krahn and Taylor, 2005; Looker and Thiessen, 2004; Sweet et al. 2010), this belief is strongly supported and

encouraged by their immigrant parents, who came to Canada precisely for the mobility promise contained within the human capital model. Much like most other young people in the transition from education to employment (Ferguson and Wang 2014; Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté 2014; Yuen 2010), the participants in this study quickly realized the limits of human capital, as most struggled to find employment commensurate with their formal education. Importantly, the data show that these problems are exacerbated by the intersection of their immigrant status and the fact that their parents found themselves in positions of lower socio-economic status in Canada. This limited participants' access to the types of social capital that have been shown to be essential for successful school–work transitions. Moreover, their job search was affected not only by the precariousness generally associated with the youth labour market in Canada, but also the effects of economic restructuring and the aftershocks of the 2008 recession.

While education is often considered to level the playing field for different groups, the realities of wider structural inequality prevent this from materializing. Without a doubt, human capital does provide individuals with much of the skills and knowledge needed for the workplace. Yet, this study adds to the literature on the economic outcomes of different groups with the same human capital by showing that social factors such as class, race, and immigrant status affect the exchange value of human capital in the labour market. Race was an especially salient factor in how employers viewed participants' human capital, as evidenced in the examples of both overt and covert racism participants encountered. That many respondents openly discussed “whitening” their resumes and changing their names to be competitive illustrates the illusion of the human capital

model. Moreover, by managing their racial identity, and whitening their names, respondents are being forced to adopt individualized approaches to manage barriers that are rooted in systemic racism. As the number of racialized immigrants in Canada continues to grow, these findings raise important questions about the well-being of this population, as well as the Canadian economy as a whole.

Shifting to the role of social capital, regardless of how well people do in school, Granovetter (1974) explains that personal contacts, specifically family, are the main source of job referrals. Yet, as stated by Bourdieu (2006), various groups have differential access to social capital. Putnam's (2000) distinction between bonding and bridging forms of social capital also helps to explain the range of value among different forms of social capital. Putnam states that bonding forms of social capital (close ties with homogenous others; e.g. those with similar sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics) are often of limited use unless the job seeker is looking for work in the same field as these contacts. In this way, participants' and their parents' contacts had little value in their job search, as most participants' own contacts are in positions similar to theirs, and their parents' contacts are largely concentrated in low-skilled work. Although for the majority of participants (with the exception of two individuals) bonding capital was not effective in connecting them with a job in the field they wanted to be employed in, their social capital through parental sacrifice and emotional support was important in providing them with the stability they needed to deal with the frustrations of their job search.

Bridging forms of social capital (loose ties with heterogeneous others), on the other hand, are considered to be more useful in the job search because they are more likely to expose the job seeker to a variety of networks. Since the majority of interviewees are pursuing work in specialized white collar fields that are very distinct from the types of low-skilled blue collar jobs their parents held, bridging forms of social capital are understood to be particularly useful to respondents. In order to gain access to the valuable occupational networks in their fields, participants took matters into their own hands. Interviewees employed a number of personal strategies to develop bridging forms of social capital including attending networking events, setting up information interviews with people working in their industry, taking part in experiential learning opportunities, and engaging in extra-credential involvement related to their field of interest. While these methods did not always lead to a direct job opportunity, they helped provide participants with contacts in their occupational field, as well as valuable information about their industry. Despite the fact that these strategies often proved useful in respondents' experiences, individuals are yet again left to navigate the structural problems of the labour market on their own.

5.3 Policy Implications

Most policies aimed at addressing youth labour market problems continue to be rooted in the human capital model. Stay-at-school programs for at-risk youth, or the expansion of higher education are prime examples of such human-capital-driven policies. Yet, as this and other research suggest, raising individuals' human capital is a rather limited approach to solving what are mostly structural problems. In fact, all participants

in the study have successfully participated in the game of improving their human capital, and still encountered significant challenges in their transitions to employment. No human capital strategy can be successful if labour markets are not expanding to accommodate highly-educated workers. This has been a persistent problem with Canada's post-recession labour market, which continues to be characterized by slow job growth and high levels of precarious employment (CCPA 2016; OECD 2016; Yoonyoung and Newhouse 2013). Discussing the role of creating employment opportunities as an important aspect of school-work transitions, unfortunately, is outside the realm of this thesis. I will instead focus my attention on the role of social capital.

As I have shown throughout, a key problem participants faced was related to the development of social capital or weak ties in their desired occupational field. Second-generation immigrants do not have access to social networks that can help them get work experience or job referrals, yet access to many employment opportunities in the so-called hidden job market depend on such forms of social capital (McGill University Career & Placement Services 2004). As the findings in this thesis suggest, participants who had participated in experiential learning or who had access to or engaged in networking activities fared better in their job search. Programs targeting this population should therefore consider implementing different mechanisms to help bridge the gap between employers and job seekers to create more accessibility around improving their networks. Expanding experiential learning and networking opportunities in a greater range of academic disciplines may be a very successful policy option to help develop the social capital of young people who, due to their class position, race, or immigrant status, do not

have ready access to such networks. Furthermore, exposing young people to experiential learning opportunities as early as high school may also open up new career options that they may not have considered.

My results also help to corroborate the findings of earlier literature suggesting that second-generation youth, particularly those who are racialized, face multiple barriers to employment (Aydemir and Sweetman 2007; Picot and Hou 2011; Yan et al. 2012). These additional barriers, namely, the intersections of race, class, and immigrant status, should be taken into consideration in youth employment policies. This study suggests that racialized participants continue to encounter racial discrimination, name-based discrimination, and language perceptions from employers and recruiters. Although anti-discriminatory legislation and multicultural policies are in place to avoid these types of occurrences, experiences of discrimination continue to permeate the school–work transitions of racialized participants. Policy makers need to re-assess the existing legislation and policies, and implement stronger enforcement in order to help level the playing field for racialized Canadians. Increased accountability on the part of employers to justify hiring decisions, or anonymous job application procedures may be worth considering. An examination of best practices adopted by other jurisdictions may help to provide a starting point.

The role of class is also prominent in this study. Due to the downward assimilation faced by the parents of these interviewees, the majority of participants had a working class background. Finding themselves in low-wage blue collar jobs,

respondents' parents had only limited resources and contacts to ease their children's school-work transitions. As such, young second-generation immigrants from less economically well-off families face an additional disadvantage. Class also appears to be a limiting factor when it comes to the development of social capital. Racialized participants were still able to take part in practices to build and improve their social capital in the same way as their non-racialized counterparts. What we do not know is the extent to which their social capital is racialized, and if this leads to different outcomes. In order to improve the labour market outcomes of the children of immigrants, policy makers must introduce a better method of assessing the credentials earned by their parents in their country of origin. While Canada's immigration policy is heavily reliant on the human capital model, and the Government does offer an Educational Credential Assessment [ECA] for applicants, there is no guarantee that immigrants' education or work experience will be recognized in the labour market, or that their licensing for regulated professions will transfer over in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC] 2016). Although the ECA does appear to provide immigrants with pertinent information, in order to improve their labour market outcomes, it would make sense for the assessment to add a component that does guarantee transferability of their human capital or implement bridging programs to help connect them with employment that matches their skills and experience (CIC 2016). This might be facilitated through open discussion with employers and regulatory bodies to address their concerns, and by providing them with easy access to the information used in the ECA process to help reduce the stigma against the uncertainty of foreign credentials. In this regard, it is also necessary to stop the

discriminatory practice of devaluing credentials obtained from non-Western countries as evidenced in the literature (Buzdugan and Halli 2009; Raza et al. 2013). A more streamlined process that helps to ensure immigrants' credentials and work experience are valued on par with their Canadian counterparts can help enhance their socio-economic position in Canada. If the parents of these children are less likely to experience downward mobility upon arrival in the host country, they might in turn be able to offer better social networks to their children.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

The goal of this thesis was to provide an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of the school–work transitions of a group of racialized and non-racialized second-generation immigrants. It was therefore important to have a small but carefully selected purposive (or judgment) sample that was driven by my research questions regarding the different experiences of racialized and non-racialized second-generation immigrants. Although this methodological decision allowed me to focus data collection and analysis and make it manageable within the confines of a MA thesis study, it obviously creates limitations in other ways. At the most basic level, the small, purposive sample limits the study's generalizability. It also limits my ability to investigate the role of gender and the role of ethnicity. Clearly, not all racialized second-generation immigrants will experience similar forms of discrimination; their actual ethnic identity will affect their school–work transitions in ways that I could not capture in this thesis. There is also no shortage of evidence that women encounter unique forms of discrimination in their job search (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler 1998; Boudarbat and

Connolly 2013; Christie and Shannon 2001; Drolet 2011) an important issue which, unfortunately, had to remain outside the scope of this study. To address these limitations, future studies could use larger and more diverse samples, for instance through surveys, to create generalizable data that allows for a greater range of comparisons while looking at employment outcomes and the process of navigating the school–work transitions.

Future studies could also compare the outcomes of individuals from different fields of study, as my sample was limited in its representation of individuals from STEM fields. Likewise, while my study was open to participants with any level of post-secondary schooling, my sample included only one respondent with a college diploma; a more in-depth examination of the outcomes of college graduates might also provide insight into the value of vocational training. Similarly, a larger sample may shed light onto the different experiences of young people across ethnic groups.

An expanded study could also examine the role of family. Participants identified parents as playing a significant role in terms of motivation, emotional support, and self-sacrifice. As a result of the pressure placed on children early on, and the investment of resources committed to their children, the parents of these young people can be said to have a heavy influence on the outcomes of their children. In-depth interviews with parents may help to provide deeper insight into some of the unique findings of this study.

Other important factors to consider for future research include the role of gender and geography. A handful of female participants stated they felt their gender limited their job prospects in specific fields. Likewise, the importance of location was raised in two

respects. First, it was identified as a limitation to accessing certain jobs. Some respondents from smaller cities indicated that while they were able to find advertisements for jobs they were qualified for, the positions were located in larger metropolitan cities where the cost of living would barely allow them to break even, and the cost of transportation was too high for commuting. Additionally, a number of participants indicated that culturally, their parents disapproved of them relocating too far from their home. Second, geography was also considered as a mitigating factor when discussing experiences of racial discrimination. Interviewees indicated that by living in larger diverse cities, they felt more protected against racist micro-aggression by employers. While these two factors may also help to provide insight into this transition, they were beyond the scope of this study.

5.5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore how second-generation immigrants navigate their school–work transitions. By conducting in-depth interviews with participants, I was able to shed light on their unique experiences, and identify a number of challenges they faced and the strategies they used to navigate this transition successfully. As all participants were highly educated, their stories demonstrate the limits to the human capital model, and highlight the importance of having access to valuable social capital in this transition. The intersections of class, race, and immigrant status further complicated the issues they faced. While participants’ parents provided an important source of emotional support throughout the transition, respondents’ limited access to valuable social capital, via personal contacts in their field, presented a significant barrier. This

limited access to professional contacts was also tied to their largely working-class background, as most participants' families faced downward mobility upon arriving in Canada. Respondents' narratives also revealed the pervasive, and often covert, nature of racial discrimination that continues to permeate today's job market as described in their experiences with employers. These results indicate that school–work transitions and the labour market outcomes of young second-generation immigrants is a complicated issue that requires more attention and research. Interviewees' stories illuminate a number of policy implications. At present, the lack of resources and programs targeting these young people as they make this transition has led respondents to take an individualized approach to navigating these structural problems. The findings drawn from this study can help connect policy makers with the lived experiences of this growing population in an effort to ease their school–work transitions and improve their ability to effectively participate in the labour market.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Form



**Western
Research**

Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann
Department & Institution: Social Science/Sociology, Western University

NMREB File Number: 106667
Study Title: School-Work Transitions and Employment Among Second-Generation Immigrants
Sponsor:

NMREB Initial Approval Date: June 02, 2015
NMREB Expiry Date: June 02, 2016

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Recruitment Items	Email script to be sent out to personal contacts.	2015/04/21
Instruments	Interview Guide	2015/04/21
Western University Protocol		2015/04/23
Recruitment Items	Club Announcement	2015/05/21
Recruitment Items	Business Cards	2015/05/21
Other	Flyer	2015/05/21
Revised Letter of Information & Consent		2015/05/21

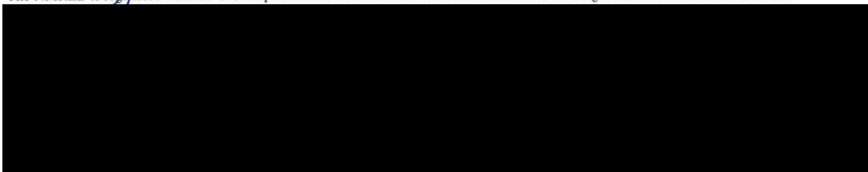
The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.



This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Research Project: School–Work Transitions and Employment Among Second-Generation Immigrants

Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann (PhD) & Awish Aslam (BA)

Part 1: Employment

*Note: If participant is not currently employed, ask about past employment. If participant has not been able to secure employment since completing post-secondary program skip to Part 2.

1. Are you working right now?
 - What do you do?
 - How did you get your job?
 - How long did it take to find work?
2. How does the job that you hold currently relate to your educational training?
 - What skills did you gain through your educational training?
 - Did you find that what you learned in school was useful?
 - Did you take part in any volunteer or extracurricular activities that provided you with relevant experience?
 - What parts of your work are unrelated to your field of study?
3. Are you satisfied with your current position?
 - Do you feel like you could do something more with the training you have?
 - Do you feel undervalued or overqualified?
 - In terms of your career, what are your plans for the future?

Part 2: Job Search

1. What strategies have you used to find work?
 - How effective were they?
 - Did you use any personal contacts? Why or why not?
 - Did you apply directly to jobs online or through print advertisements? Why or why not?
 - Did your school program provide opportunities for internships or practicums? Why or why not?
 - Did you apply directly to a company without a specific job opening? Why or why not?

2. What are some of the barriers or challenges you faced when looking for work?
 - Did you find it difficult to navigate the job search process? Was it challenging to find job openings in fields that you were interested in?
 - Did you know how to make a proper resume and cover letter? Did you seek help?
 - Did you know people in the field that you were searching for work in?
3. Do you think that being a second-generation immigrant affected your job search?
 - Did your ethnic background play a role in your job search or the methods that you used to find work?
 - If this posed a challenge in your job search, is it still a challenge at work?
 - Did your racial background play a role in your job search or the methods that you used to find work? [Note: this question will only be posed to those who identify as racialized minorities.]
 - If this posed a challenge in your job search, is it still a challenge at work?
4. Is there anything else I haven't asked you about that you think I should know?

The interview has now reached its conclusion. Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

Curriculum Vitae

Awish Aslam

EDUCATION

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 2014-Present | Master of Arts, Sociology
Specialization in Migration & Ethnic Relations
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario
Thesis: <i>School–Work Transitions among Second-Generation Immigrants</i> |
| 2013-2014 | Honours Bachelor of Arts (with distinction), Sociology
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario |
| 2009-2013 | Honours Bachelor of Arts, Political Science and Criminology
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario |

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| June 2016 – August 2016 | Research Assistant – Dr. Tracey Adams
Department of Sociology
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario
Project: <i>Changing Workplaces in a Knowledge Economy: Occupational Class Structure, Skill Use and the Place of Professions in Canada</i> |
| March 2016 – June 2016 | Research Assistant – Dr. Dale Ballucci
Department of Sociology
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario |
| June 2015 – August 2016 | Research Assistant – Dr. Debbie Laliberte Rudman
School of Occupational Therapy and Health and Rehabilitation
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario
Project: <i>Possibilities and Boundaries in the Socio-Political Shaping of Unemployment</i> |
| May 2015 – August 2015 | Research Assistant – Dr. Tracey Adams
Department of Sociology
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario |

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Sept 2015- April 2016 **Teaching Assistant – Sociology 1020 Introduction to Sociology**
Department of Sociology
King's University College, London, Ontario
- Sept 2014- April 2016 **Teaching Assistant – Sociology 1020 Introduction to Sociology**
Department of Sociology
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Aslam, A.** (2016, June). *School–Work Transitions among Second-Generation Immigrants*. Canadian Sociological Association. Calgary, Alberta.
- Aslam, A.** (2016, June). *School–Work Transitions among Second-Generation Racialized Immigrants*. Canadian Population Society. Calgary, Alberta.
- Rudman, D. L., Aldrich, R. M., Huot, S., Grundy, J. Whiting, K., & **Aslam, A.** (2016, May). *Deconstructing Activity Expectations in Neoliberal Unemployment Policy Discourses: Implications for Participation and Inclusion in Everyday Life*. International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry. Champaign, Illinois.
- Aslam, A.** (2015, November). *School–Work Transitions and Employment Among Second-Generation Immigrants*. Pathways to Prosperity. Toronto, Ontario.
- Kalssen, J. A., **Aslam, A.**, Jones-Chick, R., Wheatley, M., Paller, C., & Stewart, S. L. (2015, November). *Foster Care Placement and Complex Trauma: What is the Relationship to Risk of Harm to Others Amongst a Clinically Referred Sample of Children and Youth in the Province of Ontario?* Western University's Third Annual Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Research Half Day. London, Ontario.
- Aslam, A.**, MacDonald, K., Theall, L., Arbeau, K., & Stewart, S. L. (2015, August). *Assessing Risk and Providing Evidence-Informed Care for Suicidality and Purposeful Self-harm in Children and Youth*. American Psychological Association. Toronto, Ontario.
- Aslam, A.** (2015, April). *Good Luck Hunting: An Examination of the Experiences of Labour Market Integration of Second-Generation Immigrants*. Migration and Ethnic Relations Graduate Student Conference: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Migration and Settlement. London, Ontario.