

Immigration, Race, and Labor: Unionization and Wages in the Canadian Labor Market

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In Canada, most racial minorities have lower rates of unionization than do members of the majority workforce. Data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics ($N = 32,634$) show that racial minority immigrants assimilate into unionization over time. However, unionization reduces net minority wage disadvantages only slightly. Union race relations policies should place more emphasis on collective bargaining as well as on unionization.

IMMIGRATION IN RECENT DECADES HAS INCREASED THE RACIAL DIVERSITY OF THE WORKFORCE across urban centers in both the United States and Canada. In the United States, where racial issues have long been prominent in discussions of labor markets, recent immigration has added new dimensions to such discussions (Waters and Eschbach 1995; see also Borjas 1985; Chiswick 1986; Lieberman and Waters 1988; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Schlesinger 1992; Waldinger 1996; Milkman 2000; and Briggs 2001). In Canada, recent immigration has been similar in its diversity and, in proportion to population, has been even greater in volume (Halli et al. 1990; Reitz 1998:8–13). This immigration since 1970 has propelled race to prominence as an issue in urban Canada for the first time (Satzewich 1992; Henry et al. 1998; Reitz and Lum, forthcoming). Research on the labor market experience of immigrants, therefore, has been of much interest to scholars and policymakers. This concern about the integration of immigrant and ethnic minority workers naturally raises the issue of another labor market institution, namely, labor unions, whose role and impacts have been studied

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extensively in both Canada and the United States. Since labor unions were founded on the principles of social justice and workplace fairness, it is only natural to ask what impact they may have on immigrant and racial minority workers. Equally, has the increase in the proportion of such workers had any impact on unions and their policies?

More specifically, one would like to know if unions have an impact on the integration of new immigrants, particularly for those coming from a non-European background, into the labor market. Even though both Canada and the United States have received large inflows of immigrants since their founding, it is only in the last 20 years that significant numbers have come from countries outside Europe. There is considerable evidence indicating that nonwhite immigrant minorities experience significantly lower success in the labor market compared with immigrants from Europe and compared with the native-born workforce. Every labor force analysis of the earnings of immigrants in Canada (e.g., Li 1988; Reitz and Breton 1994, Baker and Benjamin 1997) has shown that, as in the United States, after account is taken of measured qualifications such as education, language knowledge, and work experience, those of non-European origin earn substantially less than immigrants of European origin and less than the native-born members of the workforce. There is also substantial evidence, both systematic and anecdotal, suggesting that at least some of this disparity is due to direct racial discrimination (Henry and Ginzberg 1985). It would be useful to know what role, if any, unions play in affecting (i.e., improving or otherwise) the labor market experiences of such people.

In this article we use recently available data from a large-scale national survey to address two questions. First, is there a difference between union coverage of racial minorities, both immigrant and native-born, and that of the white majority? If yes, what factors account for this difference? Second, to what extent does union coverage account for the differences in earnings of racial minorities compared with the rest of the workforce? We estimate the gross difference in union coverage and earnings and then try to decompose it by controlling for factors such as gender, recency of immigration, education, and occupation.

Theoretical Concepts and Previous Research

Previous studies of the integration of immigrants in the labor movement, based on experiences in the United States (Rosenblum 1973; Parnet 1981; Collomp 1988; Mink 1986; Delgado 1993; Milkman 2000) as well as other countries (e.g., DeJongh 1985; Quinlan and Lever-Tracy 1990), have

recognized that such integration is far from automatic. Rather, it is a social process that evolves over time and depends on how immigrants enter or leave unionized occupations and workplaces and how they are affected by ongoing processes both of union certification and of union job loss and decertification. One study in Canada (Christofides and Swidinsky 1994) introduced union membership as a variable; it showed that visible minority men are only two-thirds as likely to be union members as majority-group males. Here we want to examine this relationship further.

The entry of immigrants into already-unionized occupations and workplaces may be examined as part of a broader process of immigrant assimilation within economic institutions (e.g., Reitz and Sklar 1997). This process may be affected by a number of factors. On the one hand, immigrants may have little knowledge of their potential choices in the labor market. They may come from countries where unions are either not prevalent or less effective (less power, more corruption, more violent, etc.) compared with Canadian unions. They also may face more barriers to entering jobs with high unionization rates (usually the better-paid jobs) because of lack of Canadian education and experience. In many immigrant communities, social networks may direct new workers to specific occupations and industries that are often not unionized (DeFreitas 1988) and also toward positions within a local ethnic economy that also may be less unionized (Portes 1995). However, as immigrants gain more experience in and knowledge of the Canadian labor market, they may become more adept at gaining entry to more jobs and occupations, as well as become more informed about the labor movement and the benefits of union membership.

Employment discrimination against immigrants or minorities may take the form of lack of access to certain jobs and occupations and discriminatory pay, promotions, or dismissals. Such discrimination also may affect access to union jobs. If discrimination against visible minorities exists, it is reasonable to assume that when they first enter the labor market, minorities would not be able to obtain entry into certain jobs, occupations, and industries. They would then be overrepresented in some jobs and underrepresented in others. If unions happen to cover more of the jobs where minorities are underrepresented, then we may expect the unionization rate for racial minorities to be lower. This difference would be attributed correctly to labor market discrimination rather than to a lower preference for unionization among racial minorities. Similarly, if unions were strong in jobs where racial minorities were overrepresented, then the unionization rate for racial minorities would be higher.

Efforts to organize new workplaces also may affect immigrants and racial minorities differentially. While existing union members may perceive that

immigrants pose a threat to their employment and earnings position, they also may recognize immigrant workers as potential recruits who may strengthen the overall labor position. However, some of the same factors that affect the entry of immigrants into already-unionized jobs, and perhaps others as well, may affect the success that unions have in efforts to organize workplaces in which immigrants may be disproportionately represented. Lack of knowledge of the union movement and available options for collective bargaining and isolation from supportive social networks may reduce the potential effectiveness of certification efforts.

Where there is a loss of unionized jobs, whether through layoffs, downsizing, plant closings, or decertification, specific population groups may be affected differently. Clearly, if at one point in time immigrants are less represented among union members, then a subsequent loss of union jobs may reduce that disparity by lowering unionization rates in the mainstream population.

These various processes may operate quite differently for men and women. In Canada, a gender gap in unionization has been closed in recent years (White 1993), signaling a gender difference in the processes determining overall unionization rates. These gender-specific processes affecting union representation also may affect newly arriving immigrants, including racial minority immigrants.

Two studies done in the United States show racial minorities to have higher union coverage than the majority white population. Defreitas (1993), using a sample of 23- to 30-year-olds from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, reported higher unadjusted coverage rates for blacks (29.4 percent) and Hispanics (20.5 percent) compared with the rate for Anglos (16.7 percent). Only Asians (12.5 percent) had a rate lower than the rate for Anglos. However, once the rates were adjusted for demand factors such as occupation and industry, the differences become insignificant. This study also found immigrants to have a higher rate of unionization.

Another study by Kim and Kim (1997) also reported higher levels of unionization among nonwhites using the March 1996 Current Population Survey. They found unadjusted rates for Asians (16.3 percent) and blacks (21.6 percent) to be higher compared with whites (13.9 percent). These differences remained significant even after controlling for a host of factors such as education, gender, age, and industry. Further, these authors reported that for Asian-Americans, the length of stay in the United States had a positive effect on unionization, suggesting that over time union membership is either sought more or is more available (through jobs). The study did not try to separate the effects of more demand for unionization from greater supply of unionized jobs. These authors also reported that native-born

Asian-Americans were more likely to be unionized than naturalized Asian-Americans. Lastly, Asian-Americans with U.S. citizenship were more likely to be unionized compared with noncitizens.

The integration of immigrants and minorities in the workforce is affected by their participation in the labor movement because of the impact that such participation has on their earnings relative to the mainstream workforce. The general effect of unions in raising income standards also benefits immigrants and racial minorities by boosting the wages of all workers with wages at the low end of the distribution, because these workers tend to be minorities more often (Reitz 1998:149–204). Here the focus is on the relative earnings of minorities within a given wage distribution. Racial barriers in access to union jobs also may be one component of the earnings discrimination experienced by minorities, but access to union jobs may offset such discrimination. Freeman and Medoff (1984) showed that in the United States the most vulnerable groups, such as young workers and those with less education or jobs skills, and including blacks, experienced greater earnings benefits from union membership than did older or better-educated workers or whites. Such data suggest that union membership for such groups may offset disadvantages owing to lack of other occupational resources and may offset discriminatory labor market processes such as racial discrimination. Whether such processes apply to racial minority immigrant groups specifically in the Canadian context is a key question to be examined below.

Our study adds to the literature in several ways. First, we describe union membership and coverage among immigrants and racial minorities using a national data set that is designed to be representative of the Canadian workforce. Second, we examine how union coverage is affected by minority status and other social and demographic variables. And third, we examine how union involvement affects previously observed earnings disadvantages among racial minorities and immigrants.

This research addresses issues of practical interest to unions and management (see Odencrantz et al. 1986), as well as of general public-policy relevance. Public policy addresses the integration of immigrants and minorities into economic institutions, and unions are a critical element in those institutions. Strategies to address obstacles to the successful integration of minorities can be made more effectively if there is an understanding and appreciation of the part played by unions in that process. A neglect of the position of unions, and of the distinctive features of the union environment, can undermine the success of these strategies.

The analysis also speaks to issues of concern to unions themselves (see Zimny and Waelder 1987). Unions want to add members and are finding difficulties in many expanding sectors, such as financial, business, and

personal services, computers, and other high-tech sectors. Immigrants often are represented in these sectors, and unions need to understand barriers posed by diversity. Employers negotiating with unions in collective bargaining should understand the changing ethnic composition of the workforce and its impact on collective bargaining.

Union Policies and Practices

As background for our analysis, we examined the structures and practices that Canadian unions have put in place to deal with the issue of union membership and representation of persons of ethnic minority backgrounds (see also Hunt and Rayside 2000). Such an investigation yields some insights into trade unions' internal policies and policies in this area. We gathered information through interviews and Web sites on eight large national and international unions representing workers in the public sector, manufacturing, and the service sector and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The average membership in these eight unions in 1999 was 195,000, with a range of 55,000 to 486,000.

The person interviewed in each union generally was a staff person responsible for the human rights department. Their position within the union was described most frequently as coordinator or director of human rights. In some cases where there was not a full-time person responsible for diversity issues, the interview was conducted with a staff person responsible for diversity along with other issues. All interviews were supplemented with information from union Web sites.

The precise fraction of visible ethnic minorities was unknown in all the unions. Two unions estimated it in the range of 15 to 25 percent. For the most part, all the unions in our sample appear to recognize the importance of ethnic minority participation and equal access to representation within unions. However, some unions are more progressive than others in putting those beliefs into practice. Unions that have yet to implement policies and programs to increase minority participation and to improve the status of visible minorities within their unions have all generated action plans to achieve this goal.

Many of the representatives expressed that although they have made significant gains in improving minority representations and status, they still have a long way to go before they reach an optimal level of equality. This is evident in the number of visible minorities in leadership position within the unions. At the local and plant levels, a greater number of minorities hold leadership positions than at more senior levels, and very few exist at

the nation level. Only one union (in the public sector) and the CLC reported a visible minority in a high-level executive position.

All the unions, with the exception of one representing manufacturing employees, had in place a human rights department with officers who were responsible for ensuring that minorities receive fair and equal representation and for increasing participation of visible minority members in union activities. Visible minorities and persons from first nations largely staff these departments and participate in CLC-sponsored diversity awareness and management conferences and ensure that they abide by the human rights guidelines and standards set by the CLC. Many of the unions also held activities in the community and within their unions to encourage involvement in union initiatives and to recognize the achievements of their racial and ethnic minorities membership.

Some unions are more actively involved than others in strategically increasing participation of racial minorities in their unions. Overall, unions representing workers in the public sector were more progressive than others in their pursuit of equality and minority representation. This is perhaps because they are more heavily influenced by government human rights legislation and have greater accountability to abide by these laws than other unions. Unions representing public-sector employees were the only ones aware of the fraction of their membership consisting of visible minorities in each industry and had set targets for increasing minority membership in those industries where minority participation is deficient.

Data and Methods

Our sample is drawn from the Survey of Labour Income Dynamics (SLID), the 1997 wave combining panels 1 (surveyed over the period 1993–1998) and 2 (surveyed over the period 1996–2001). Although this is a longitudinal survey, meaningful longitudinal analysis is not yet possible, and we use the data in this study for its cross-sectional content. From this sample we drew a subsample consisting of adults in the workforce but excluding self-employed persons and farmers. SLID documents both individuals as cases and jobs. Thus any individual who may have held more than one job in the reference year will have multiple records in the job file. For this study we selected individuals who either held a job or had it terminated in December 1997. Thus we exclude persons whose job terminated earlier in the year. The resulting sample includes 32,634 persons.

The SLID sample is drawn from the Canadian Labour Force Survey sample, which is a stratified multistage cluster sample. The complex sample

strata include provinces, urban centers and rural regions within provinces, and economic areas within these units. From the standpoint of analysis of immigrants and racial minorities, the sample-design emphasis on equal representation of provinces carries the disadvantage of reducing the representation of immigrant groups that are concentrated in the larger provinces. The total sample of immigrants is 2840, and the sample of racial minorities is 1394. Detailed analysis by nativity, specific origins, and gender forces serious attention to issues of statistical reliability and significance. In the analysis here, the recommended bootstrap statistical procedure is employed, using bootstrap weights supplied by Statistics Canada. This article presents only weighted results, but except where indicated, the sample N 's are based on actual interviews conducted.

The analysis of unionization, defined as union membership and/or coverage by a collective agreement, includes logistic regression results in which controls for human capital endowments are included and with attention to two time-related variables: recency of immigration for immigrants and work experience for the native-born. The analysis of the log of hourly wages is based on ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, also with controls for human capital endowments.

Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the study, by gender, are shown in Table 1. Visible minorities¹ constituted 9.1 percent of the sample, with a slightly higher proportion among women compared with men (9.5 percent versus 8.9 percent). Within this category, the data distinguish blacks (1.5 percent), South Asians (1.6 percent), Chinese (2.2 percent), East and Southeast Asians (2.1 percent), and other groups (1.5 percent). Significantly, 4.7 percent of the sample refused to answer the question about ethnicity.

Results: Unionization

Union members and those covered by a collective agreement constituted 32.1 percent of the sample, in roughly the same proportion as one finds unionized workers in the workforce as a whole. Canadian-born individuals made up 79.2 percent of the sample, with immigrants accounting for 15.7 percent (5.1 percent of the sample refused to respond to the question about their place of birth). We further distinguished immigrants by their period of arrival in Canada. Immigrants who entered Canada before 1970 accounted

¹ Visible minority status is identified based on questions on ethnic background, mother tongue, and country of birth, in that order. The specific procedures were developed by the Interdepartmental Working Group on Employment Equity Data for the 1991 Census of Population. See Canada (1993).

TABLE 1
WEIGHTED DISTRIBUTIONS OF VARIABLES, OVERALL AND BY GENDER

	Men	Women	Total
Visible minority, total	8.9	9.5	9.1
Black	1.4	1.6	1.5
South Asian	1.7	1.6	1.6
Chinese	2.1	2.3	2.2
East/Southeast Asian	2.1	1.9	2.1
Other	1.6	1.5	1.5
Nonvisible minority	86.5	85.9	86.2
Refuse to answer	4.9	4.6	4.7
Unionized (union member and/or covered by a collective agreement)	33.7	30.4	32.1
Born in Canada	78.9	79.5	79.2
Immigrants, total	15.8	16.6	15.7
Immigrated before 1970	4.7	4.6	4.6
Immigrated 1970–1979	4.4	3.9	4.2
Immigrated 1980–1994	6.8	7.1	6.9
Refuse to answer	5.2	4.9	5.1
Official language mother tongue (English or French)	82.8	83.7	83.2
Educational level, highest			
Less than high school	17.8	13.2	15.6
High school graduate	15.1	16.6	15.9
Some postsecondary, no degr., cert.	15.9	15.7	15.8
Postsec. degree, cert. (not bachelor's)	30.3	33.8	32
Bachelor's degree or higher	15.4	15.7	15.5
Refuse to answer/don't know	5.5	5	5.2
Experience (years since completing education)			
7.9 years or less	21.8	23.5	22.6
8.0–15.6 years	19.2	18.1	18.7
15.7–21.9 years	15.4	15.4	15.4
22.0–29.9 years	18.1	18.7	18.4
30.0 and more years	19.1	18.6	18.9
Refuse to answer/don't know	6.4	5.7	6
Province			
Ontario	38.1	38.4	38.2
British Columbia	13.2	13.7	13.5
Alberta	9.9	9.9	9.9
Quebec	24.6	23.2	23.9
Other	14.2	14.6	14.4
Marital status (ever married)	69.3	72.1	70.7
Hourly wages (mean)	17.52	9.50	13.59
Total <i>N</i> (observations)	16,627	16,007	32,634
Weighted <i>N</i>	6,384,346	5,943,174	12,327,520

SOURCE: Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1997 wave, combined panels 1 and 2; persons with jobs at the end of December (excluding self-employed persons and farmers).

TABLE 2
PERCENT UNIONIZED, BY RACE AND GENDER*

	Men		Women	
	Percent	SE	Percent	SE
Whites	35.1	0.01	31.4	0.01
(<i>N</i>)	(15,374)		(14,842)	
Visible minorities, total	22.2	0.02	23.4	0.02
(<i>N</i>)	(703)		(691)	
Blacks	22.2	0.05	39.0	0.06
(<i>N</i>)	(132)		(122)	
South Asian	26.7	0.06	23.1	0.05
(<i>N</i>)	(136)		(117)	
Chinese	18.6	0.04	14.3	0.03
(<i>N</i>)	(152)		(171)	
East and Southeast Asian	24.5	0.04	21.1	0.04
(<i>N</i>)	(147)		(178)	
Other racial minorities	19.9	0.05	24.8	0.05
(<i>N</i>)	(136)		(103)	
Total	33.9	0.01	30.1	0.01
(<i>N</i>)	(16,627)		(16,007)	

*Percentages and standard errors were estimated using bootstrap weights. *N* (in parenthesis) is unweighted observations. For minorities, standard errors reflecting 0.05-level significant differences from whites are underlined. SOURCE: Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1997 wave, combined panels 1 and 2; persons with jobs at the end of December (excluding self-employed persons and farmers).

for 4.6 percent of the sample, with immigrants entering during 1970–1979 and 1980–1994 accounting for 4.2 and 6.9 percent of the sample, respectively.

Unionization rate among the white majority was found to be considerably higher compared with the same rate among visible minorities. Table 2 provides a breakdown of unionization rates by race and gender. The racial unionization gap is somewhat greater for men, although it is statistically significant for both genders. Among men, unionization rates are nearly 13 percent higher for whites compared with racial minorities (35.1 versus 22.2 percent); among women, the racial gap is 8 percent (31.4 percent unionization rate for whites compared with 23.4 percent for minorities). There are notable variations in unionization rates for specific-origins groups. For example, unionization rates are low for Chinese men and women and relatively high for black women. Unionization differences with whites are not statistically significant for South Asians, although their union representation in the sample is comparable with what is observed for other groups.

To obtain a better understanding of unionization among racial minorities, we provide a breakdown of unionization rate by period of immigration in Table 3. Among immigrants, the racial gap in unionization is particularly marked for men (12.5 percent) but is small (and not statistically significant)

TABLE 3
PERCENT UNIONIZED, BY RACE, IMMIGRANT STATUS, AND GENDER*

	Men						Women					
	Total		Whites		Racial Minorities		Total		Whites		Racial Minorities	
	Percent	SE	Percent	SE	Percent	SE	Percent	SE	Percent	SE	Percent	SE
Native-born (<i>N</i>)	34.9 (14,505)	0.01	35.2 (14,331)	0.010	19.9 (170)	<u>0.04</u>	31.5 (14,076)	0.01	31.8 (14,873)	0.01	18.4 (201)	<u>0.04</u>
Immigrants, total (<i>N</i>)	29.3 (1471)	0.02	34.7 (943)	0.020	22.2 (526)	<u>0.02</u>	26.5 (1369)	0.02	28.1 (884)	0.02	24.8 (485)	0.03
Period of Arrival												
Before 1970 (<i>N</i>)	41.2 (531)	0.03	42.5 (486)	0.030	31.3 (45)	0.09	33.1 (493)	0.03	31.0 (448)	0.03	46.1 (48)	0.10
1970–1979 (<i>N</i>)	32.1 (406)	0.03	36.2 (247)	0.040	27.4 (158)	0.05	34.4 (366)	0.04	31.8 (227)	0.04	36.9 (139)	0.06
1980–1997 (<i>N</i>)	19.3 (534)	0.02	19.4 (210)	0.030	18.7 (323)	0.03	17.9 (510)	0.02	20.1 (209)	0.03	16.8 (301)	0.03
Total (<i>N</i>)	33.9 (16,627)	0.01	35.1 (15,374)	0.010	22.2 (703)	<u>0.02</u>	30.1 (16,007)	0.01	31.4 (14,842)	0.01	23.4 (691)	<u>0.02</u>

*Percentages and standard errors were estimated using bootstrap weights. *N* (in parenthesis) is unweighted observations. For minorities, standard errors reflecting 0.05-level significant differences from whites are underlined.

SOURCE: Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1997 wave, combined panels 1 and 2; persons with jobs at the end of December (excluding self-employed persons and farmers).

for women. Racial minorities are more numerous among recently arrived immigrants, and for both whites and minorities, there is a fairly rapid increase in unionization rates with time in Canada. Among men, the rate of unionization among immigrants arriving in the 1980s and 1990s was 18.7 percent, rising to 27.4 percent for immigrants arriving in the 1970s and to 31.3 percent for earlier arrivals. The same trend holds for visible minority women, for whom the increase in unionization rate with time spent in Canada is even more pronounced (16.8, 36.9, and 46.1 percent). When unionization rates are examined for immigrants with comparable periods of time in Canada, the racial gap is reduced very substantially. Among recent immigrants, unionization rates are fairly low for whites and racial minorities alike. Among immigrants in Canada for longer periods of time, unionization rates are higher, again both for whites and for racial minorities. Among minority men, the increase is somewhat less than for whites, whereas among minority women, the increase is somewhat greater for minorities compared with whites. Hence, for immigrants, racial differences in unionization rates appear to be due at least in part to the recency of arrival of many racial minorities, and both whites and racial minorities tend to assimilate into unionization over time.

Note that among native-born Canadian workers, there is a significant racial gap in unionization. As for immigrants, the reasons for this difference must be examined in the context of the recency of arrival of immigrant groups. This is so because native-born racial minorities in Canada tend to be younger than persons of European origins, and younger workers tend to have lower rates of unionization.

The next step in our analysis was to examine unionization rates for visible minorities after controlling for age and several other factors that influence unionization. Table 4 shows various results of logistic regressions on union status. Three sets of regressions are presented, separately for immigrants and native-born men and women. In the first set of regressions (left-hand columns), union status is regressed on racial status only. The second set (center columns) adds time-related controls—recency of immigration for immigrants and work experience for the native-born—and the third set (right-hand columns) adds several other human capital variables, including education, occupation, marital status, province, public/private sector, and (for immigrants) mother tongue. To elaborate the analysis of race, the results are presented with visible minority status first as a bivariate dummy and then as a five-way classification of ethnic origin.

The time-related variables help explain the overall racial gap in unionization rates for immigrants and native-born alike. The racial gap, which was statically significant for immigrant men and for native-born men and

TABLE 4

UNIONIZATION: LOGISTIC REGRESSION WITH TIME-RELATED AND HUMAN CAPITAL VARIABLES, BY GENDER AND NATIVITY*

	Origins Only (A)		Time-Related Controls (B) [†]		All Human Capital Controls (C) [‡]		Origins Only (A)		Time-related Controls (B) [†]		All Human Capital Controls (C) [‡]	
	Beta	SE	Beta	SE	Beta	SE	Beta	SE	Beta	SE	Beta	SE
	Native-born						Immigrants					
	Men (N = 14,501)						Men (N = 1399)					
Intercept	-1.39	0.28	-2.25	0.31	-2.73	0.33	-1.24	0.14	-0.04	0.29	-0.37	0.53
Visible minorities	-0.78	0.28	-0.38	0.30	-0.32	0.32	-0.61	0.17	-0.24	0.20	-0.23	0.24
Intercept	-0.61	0.03	-1.89	0.07	-2.44	0.19	-0.63	0.09	0.23	0.20	-0.14	0.48
Black	-1.21	1.23	-0.81	1.29	-0.56	1.35	-0.48	0.39	-0.28	0.41	-0.35	0.41
South Asian	0.33	0.70	1.07	0.71	0.96	0.56	-0.46	0.33	-0.04	0.34	0.03	0.40
Chinese	-1.33	0.81	-1.12	0.80	-1.07	0.90	-0.85	0.39	-0.53	0.40	-0.48	0.45
East/Southeast Asian	-0.48	0.55	0.17	0.54	0.28	0.56	-0.48	0.29	0.01	0.32	-0.05	0.37
Other	-1.25	0.74	-1.16	0.77	-1.27	0.79	-0.75	0.44	-0.27	0.42	-0.33	0.48
	Women (N = 14,074)						Women (N = 1311)					
Intercept	-1.49	0.28	-2.16	0.29	-2.89	0.38	-1.11	0.14	0.09	0.33	0.99	0.62
Visible minorities	-0.72	0.28	-0.34	0.28	-0.22	0.32	-0.17	0.16	0.22	0.21	0.20	0.25
Intercept	-0.76	0.03	-1.81	0.08	-2.61	0.27	-0.93	0.10	-0.18	0.21	0.68	0.57
Black	-0.02	0.60	0.24	0.71	0.54	0.81	0.71	0.34	0.98	0.34	0.75	0.43
South Asian	-0.49	0.76	0.04	0.72	-0.07	0.75	-0.31	0.37	0.01	0.37	-0.07	0.46
Chinese	-1.77	0.60	-1.35	0.58	-1.27	0.66	-0.70	0.33	-0.31	0.36	-0.46	0.44
East/Southeast Asian	-0.81	1.26	-0.53	1.23	-0.42	1.14	-0.29	0.29	0.13	0.32	0.35	0.37
Other	-0.79	0.69	-0.42	0.71	-0.14	0.89	-0.27	0.41	0.14	0.45	0.12	0.55

*Regression results estimated using bootstrap weights. Bolded coefficients have p values of <0.05 .[†](B) For native-born, control for work experience (including experience squared); for immigrants, control for period of immigration.[‡](C) Additional controls for mother tongue, education, province, occupation, sector (public versus private), marital status.

women, is reduced to less than half its size—and falls below significance—when the regression includes the time-related control variable. The other controls have little further impact on the racial gap.

Lower unionization rates apply to many of the specific minority groups. Some of these lower rates are statistically significant—Chinese immigrant men and women and native-born Chinese women in particular—but many are not. Black immigrant women are significantly *more* likely to be unionized than white immigrant women. Native-born South Asian men are more likely to be unionized, although the trend is not statistically significant. In virtually *all* cases, however, the effect of minority status becomes more positive when time-related controls are added. This indicates a pervasive trend whereby the recency of arrival of all racial minorities reduces their unionization rates. Again, the additional human capital controls have relatively little impact on these trends.

Results: Impact on Wages

We now examine the impact that union status has on wages for racial minorities. These results for men and women are shown in Table 5. Four sets of regressions are reported in columns from left to right. The left-hand columns show regression of wages on visible minority status without any other controls. The second group of columns adds union status and an interaction term of union and racial status but still without any human capital controls. The third and the fourth columns repeat these regressions with controls added for immigration status, mother tongue, work experience, education, marital status, and province. Regressions were estimated for visible minority status coded as a bivariate variable first and then with a five-way racial classification.

The overall racial disadvantage is little affected by unionization. For men, racial disparities in earnings ($\beta = -0.17$ and -0.12 after human capital controls) have a similar order of magnitude after the impact of unionization is considered. Union membership has a very substantial positive impact on wages, and there is a significant union-race interaction—indicating that racial minorities benefit more from unionization than do members of the European-origin workforce. However, the impact on the relative wages of minorities is small. For women, racial disparities in earnings ($\beta = -0.10$) is largely explained by the human capital variables. While unionization also boosts earnings for women, the union-race interaction is not significant (and the negative coefficient suggests greater benefits for workers of European origin).

TABLE 5

LOG WAGES: OLS REGRESSION WITH RACIAL MINORITY STATUS, UNION MEMBERSHIP, AND INTERACTIONS, BY GENDER*

	Equations*								Equations†							
	1		2		3		4		1		2		3		4	
	Beta	SE	Beta	SE	Beta	SE	Beta	SE								
	Men								Women							
Intercept	2.59	0.03	2.50	0.03	1.79	0.04	1.75	0.04	2.41	0.03	2.33	0.03	1.72	0.03	1.72	0.04
Minority	-0.17	0.03	-0.15	0.03	-0.12	0.03	-0.13	0.03	-0.10	0.03	-0.05	0.03	-0.03	0.03	-0.01	0.03
Union members			0.39	0.05			0.29	0.04			0.34	0.06			0.22	0.05
Minority*union			0.09	0.05			0.10	0.04			-0.08	0.06			-0.08	0.05
Intercept	2.76	0.01	2.65	0.01	1.91	0.03	1.88	0.03	2.52	0.01	2.38	0.01	1.75	0.03	1.72	0.03
Black	-0.14	0.06	-0.12	0.07	-0.09	0.06	-0.09	0.06	-0.06	0.06	-0.01	0.07	-0.01	0.05	0.03	0.06
South Asian	-0.22	0.06	-0.27	0.06	-0.21	0.06	-0.31	0.06	-0.11	0.05	-0.08	0.05	-0.06	0.04	-0.05	0.04
Chinese	-0.07	0.05	-0.04	0.06	-0.09	0.05	-0.11	0.06	-0.09	0.05	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.05	0.04	0.05
East/Southeast Asian	-0.22	0.05	-0.16	0.07	-0.12	0.05	-0.08	0.06	-0.12	0.04	-0.08	0.05	-0.07	0.05	-0.06	0.06
Other	-0.20	0.06	-0.20	0.06	-0.10	0.04	-0.10	0.05	-0.16	0.07	-0.11	0.09	-0.03	0.05	-0.03	0.07
Union member			0.30	0.01			0.19	0.01			0.42	0.01			0.30	0.01
Black*union			0.07	0.10			0.06	0.08			-0.22	0.13			-0.21	0.11
South Asian*union			0.28	0.10			0.36	0.10			0.04	0.08			-0.03	0.07
Chinese*union			0.10	0.14			0.21	0.08			-0.13	0.11			-0.10	0.10
E/SE as*union			-0.11	0.12			-0.16	0.09			0.03	0.09			0.00	0.10
Other min.*union			0.20	0.11			0.05	0.08			-0.09	0.18			-0.01	0.10

*Regression results estimated using bootstrap weights. Bolded coefficients have p values of <0.05 .

†Equations (3) and (4) include controls for immigration status, mother tongue, work experience, education, marital status, and province.

Racial disadvantage varies among minority groups, as is known from many previous studies based on other samples, such as Census data. Among men, the impact of unionization on minority wages appears to be slightly positive. The union-race interactions are mostly positive (except for East and Southeast Asian men). For South Asian men (who had somewhat greater union representation), the positive impact is statistically significant both before and after the human capital controls. The positive impact of unions for South Asian men is also indicated by the fact that the direct impact of South Asian status is greater when examined after the impact of unionization is taken into account. For other groups such as black and Chinese men, the impact of unionization appears to be smaller.

Among women, disadvantages also vary by specific origin groups, but less so. The union-race interactions vary in sign, with some positive and others negative; none is statistically significant. Despite higher levels of unionization among minority women, unionization has even less impact on their earnings than is the case for minority men.

Conclusions, Discussion, and Policy Implication

Our results show that racial minority groups generally are less likely to be found in unionized jobs compared with the white majority. This pattern is more pronounced for men than for women and varies somewhat among minority groups. However, with the exception of black women—particularly black immigrant women—most groups are less represented in unions than are the white majority and in some cases significantly so.

The gap in unionization appears to diminish over time for new immigrants, many of whom belong to racial minority groups. The analysis for immigrants shows that any racial effects are related to recency of immigration of racial minorities. For immigrant men, much of the racial difference in unionization is explained by the time spent in Canada since immigration. For immigrant women, the racial difference in unionization is small in any case. However, the racial gap does not completely disappear, although this result falls short of statistical significance, and therefore may be modified in analyses based on more complete data.

In terms of wages, visible minorities appear to earn significantly less than other people with similar attributes. This disadvantage is compensated, but only partially, by union status that improved wages, but not by enough to offset it substantially.

Our analysis suggests that further investigations are needed to try to understand the differential experiences of men and women belonging to a

visible minority group. We have some indication that part of this difference is accounted for by minority women's relatively greater success in accessing unionized jobs. Why this should be so is less clear.

It is also important to investigate the precise reasons for increasing unionization rates for immigrants with the length of stay. Since visible minority immigrants do much better over time than nonminority immigrants, it is important to ask if this is so because of greater need for voice. Equally, it could be due to greater supply of unionization services (outreach by unions) targeted at this group. In any unionization drives aimed at immigrants, visible minority women appear to be most receptive to the union message.

Unions appear to play only a minor role in the earnings assimilation of immigrants to Canada, including the slower earnings assimilation of racial minority immigrants. What this means is that while unions are not in themselves an obstacle to job opportunity for racial minorities, neither do they provide any major assist in overcoming those obstacles. By implication, unions have little impact on racial discrimination in Canada, either positive or negative.

Our results show an aggregate picture across large industrial categories. It is likely that racial minorities are concentrated in a small number of industries within those categories, and there, unions may have some mitigating impact on wages or other types of discrimination. The problem in investigating these possibilities is that as yet we do not have large enough numbers of racial minorities in all industries to permit a rigorous test of these differences. However, as more data become available from subsequent SLID surveys, we would be able to investigate this possibility further in the future.

As background for this study, we examined policies and practices in specific unions, and the unions included in our sample appear to be on the right track in that they have at least recognized the gap in minority representation and participation in their unions. It is encouraging that these unions have identified the need to rectify underrepresentation and unequal treatment of visible minorities in Canadian unions. However, the pace of change has been slow, and the presence of racial minorities in leadership positions at all levels of these unions is still weak. Few of them have any significant program to target racial minorities for membership and for better representation in prized union jobs. For the unions, some of the next steps could be to target minority membership and to tackle the systemic bias that appears to work against minorities in access to good jobs.

While unions in Canada are not as secure and strong as in some parts of western and northern Europe, they have fared considerably better in the last 25 years than their counterparts in the United States, France, and many parts of Asia, central and eastern Europe, and Latin America. If Canadian

unions have had limited impact on the equity issues addressed in this article, it is likely that weaker union movements would be even less effective in addressing equity and diversity issues. Some studies show that Canadians generally are more positive toward immigration than Americans (Simon and Lynch 1999). Thus Canadian unions have had a relatively more supportive public opinion context within which to push for racial and ethnic equity goals. In other jurisdictions where public support for immigration may be lower, the task for unions in pushing for racial and ethnic equity can be expected to be that much harder. While we hesitate to argue that the Canadian evidence can be extrapolated to other countries, these results are informative about the challenges that unions in other jurisdictions face in pushing for goals of equity and equality that have always been at the core of any labor movement historically.

Lastly, it is worth asking if unions should indeed put the elimination of racial differences in wages on their priority list. There are several risks and challenges in doing so. First, the increasing ranks of racial minorities, coupled with the need to recruit new members to the labor movement, would argue strongly in favor of a set of policies aimed at reducing or eliminating the disadvantage faced by racial minorities. Second, if the unions were to do so, they would have to sell this idea to their majority members, who may not always agree with this thrust, especially when a fixed-size pie (e.g., a wage increase) may have to be divided between themselves and minorities whose lower wages may have to be brought up to close the gap. Further, on the employment front, some majority group members may resent losing jobs and promotions to minorities in a time of slow employment growth.

These risks notwithstanding, many unions already have begun to place a higher priority on racial equality. Some unions have outreach programs in new organizing. Others have internal cells that provide services directed at minority members. Most collective agreements have clauses that prohibit any discrimination based on race. Yet racial differences in wages are nearly the same within the unionized sector as they are within the nonunion sector. This suggests that whatever unions may be doing to reduce racial discrimination, the impact of their efforts is yet to show up in aggregate studies such as this one. One message that can be taken away from this analysis is that unions may have to redouble their efforts if they want to help racial minorities close the disadvantage gap.

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