

DOES SOCIAL CAPITAL ALWAYS AFFECT IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT?  
ANALYZING THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF UNITED STATES' CULTURAL CONTEXT  
ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL CAPITAL AND IMMIGRANT  
EMPLOYMENT

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**Title**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The paper investigates if culture mediates the relation between immigrants' social capital and the likelihood of employment in a host country. It applies Social Capital Theory to predict potential effects of culture and then, conducts statistical tests on data for two distinct periods in United States history. Results are consistent with prior findings that social capital enhances the likelihood of employment for immigrants. In general, culture did not affect the efficacy of social capital on increasing the likelihood of immigrant employment, though there was an effect of culture on the quantity of bridging capital and immigrants' trust in members of the host country. In particular, non-white immigrants had fewer bridging ties and lower levels of Trust in 2018, when the culture was significantly less hospitable to new immigrants on a number of factors.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANES .....	American National Election Studies
CHIPRA .....	Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act
DACA .....	Deferred Action Childhood Arrival
DAPA .....	Deferred Action for Parents and Americans
GSS .....	General Social Survey
IICA .....	Illegal Immigration Control Act
IRCA .....	Immigration Reform and Control Act
USCIS .....	US Citizen and Immigration Service



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Previous research suggests that having a resource-rich network provides relevant job information and positive recommendations, thereby helping immigrants find employment in their host country. Indeed, prior studies examining these resource-rich networks find that immigrants who leverage their social capital increase their likelihood of employment significantly (Van Tubergen and Van der Lippe 2009; Nakhaie and Kazemipur 2012; Kanas, Piracha, Tani and Vaira-Lucero 2016). Social capital refers to human capacity developed through social ties (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1990; Massey and Espinosa 1997; Portes 1998; Putnam 2000). To leverage that capacity, actors use the credit and trust extended to members of their social groups to secure information and employment. However, studies do not examine the effect of a host country's culture on the facilitating properties of social capital. In host countries where the culture is hostile to immigrants it is possible that the impact of social capital on rates of immigrant employment is altered. The oversight is unfortunate as there is reason to suspect that social capital might become more or less impactful depending on the level of a host community's hostility towards immigrants.

In recent years, the United States' culture has become more hostile to new and potential immigrants. For example, recent changes to immigration policy have created new barriers for immigrants, and immigrants express heightened levels of fear (Gomez 2017; Gelatt 2017; Pew Research Survey Report 2017). When a host country's culture is hostile to new and existing immigrants, that could reduce employment opportunities, lending more significance to the use of personal connections for finding a job. Alternatively, the same situation might indicate that all doors are closed to immigrants, eliminating social capital's significance for employment rates. Either way, the effect of a host country's culture on immigrant employment remains largely unknown.

The study proposed here does not look at the exact mechanism that might alter social capital's effect on employment, but instead asks questions that are more fundamental. Does the quality and quantity of social capital decrease as the culture's hostility towards immigration increases? Does the level of hospitality toward immigrants in the United States mediate the effect of social capital on immigrant employment? Do immigrants in the United States of America feel secure and satisfied with their jobs when they have fewer opportunities to connect with people? The proposed study will apply Social Capital Theory to understand how an increasing level of U.S. hostility toward immigrants might affect immigrant employment rates.

Following, the paper describes Social Capital Theory. In particular, it explores several conceptions of social capital, then focuses on research that investigates the effects of social capital on immigrants' employment. Next, the paper compares United States' culture for two contemporary time periods. Aspects of culture discussed include immigration policy, media depictions of immigrants, and attitudes of natural-born U.S. citizens toward various immigrant groups. That comparison shows that the time periods differ in the level of cultural hostility toward immigrants. Lastly, the paper presents several hypotheses regarding the potential mediating effects of year on the relationship between social capital and rates of immigrant employment within the United States.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research presented here applies a social capital framework. It seeks to investigate if a host country's culture could mediate the already established relationship between immigrants' social networks and their likelihood of employment. (Aguilera 2002,2003,2005;Akkaymak 2017; George and Chaze 2009;Nakhaie and Kazemipur 2013;Chua 2014 ). Evidence supports the contention that strong interpersonal networks provide the type of social capital which facilitates immigrant employment and job security in host countries (Espinosa and Massey 1997; Aguilera 2003.) For example, Massey (1987) showed that, despite a lack of significant monetary resources, Mexican Farmers who use their social capital substantially improve their financial situation in the United States.

Social capital refers to human capacity developed through social ties (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1990; Massey and Espinosa 1997; Portes 1998; Putnam 2000). Though social capital was introduced by Glenn Loury (1977), according to Aguilera (2003) and Paxton (1999), it was not fully developed or popularized until Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988, 1990). Following Bourdieu (1986: 248), social capital is an, "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to...membership in a group". Group membership or social connections are seen to provide "each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu 1986: 249). In one example, Livingston (2006) found that Mexican immigrants find full time employment quickly in the United States because they can access shared resources found in strong friendship groups current living in the U.S.

Beyond the credit extended to those with the correct social credentials, Bourdieu (1986: 249-250) asserted that social capital imposed a relation-based, emotionally empowered obligation.

In his own words, social capital involves “transforming contingent relations, such as those of neighborhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.)” . Nor is Bourdieu alone in tying sentiment to social capital. For Paxton (1999), social capital exists in a social network only insofar as the embedded, social ties are endowed with positive sentiment (Paxton 1999).

Coleman (1988) elaborated on Bourdieu’s conception by focusing on social capital’s function. In doing so he established that while it is indeed a form of capital, its contributions are unique from forms previously theorized. Coleman stated (1988:302),

“Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of entities with two elements in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in the absence would not be possible....”

Stated differently, group structure acts as a resource for its members. Both Coleman’s and Bourdieu’s definitions imply that the benefits stemming from social capital are wholly unique in that they are not accessible through alternative means. They are intrinsic to social networks. Drawing on Coleman's work, Deepa Narayan explains that "Social Capital is the rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity, and trust embedded in social relations, social structures, and society's institutional arrangements which enables its members to achieve their individual and community objectives" (Coleman1988; Narayan1997:50). The benefits of trust, obligation and reciprocity are

inextricable from the networks in which they are embedded. Social capital disappears when the relationship among people fades away (Rostila 2011).

Robert Putnam (1993) doubled down on Coleman's assertion that trust and norms are core elements of social capital. His definition of social capital as including "features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve society's efficiency by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994:167) highlighted the benefits of social capital for collective action. Furthermore, Putnam's definition expanded the investigation social capital benefits to include social connections, moral values (especially trust), and norms (King and Cronin 2016).

Following Ledermann et al. (2002), the variability in definitions of social capital suggests that its qualities are not homogenous; social capital has various indicators or aspects depending on the network generating it. However, consistent with Paxton's (1999) conceptualization of social capital two main aspects lend themselves to investigation and measurement: actors' objective social connections and the subjective emotional quality of those connections. Objective social connections represent an individual's actual ties to others in a given network while the subjective emotional qualities of each relation reveal the level of trust, friendly behavior and other positive types of affects invested in each relation.

Each individual's social capital profile can be unique because the configuration of emotion endowed social connections tend to be distinct. Furthermore, even if two individuals had networks that were altogether identical, there is no guarantee that both would leverage their capital in the same way thereby experiencing similar benefits. Still, those with social capital have the opportunity to transform it into privilege (Coleman 1990; Massey and Espinosa 1997; Portes 1998; Putnam 2000; Aguilera, 2002).

Putnam (2000) categorized social capital into two types: strong ties/bonding and weak ties/bridging social capital. Bonding social capital can be acquired from close, strong ties with families, friends, and neighbors. These strong ties provide security and support to the group members. In contrast, bridging social capital stems from weak ties that connect friends from different backgrounds or emerge through involvement in various secondary organizations. Bridges formed of weak ties help people to 'get ahead' by acting as a source of unique information or opportunity (Granovetter 1973). While both types of social capital provide significant benefit, immigrants seeking employment are best served by high levels of bridging capital. (Bankston III, 2014). As stated by Granovetter (1973), because the opportunities and information flowing through weak ties is novel when compared to information gained through an individual's more intimate connections, weak ties can maximize that person's economic opportunities. Supporting Granovetter's core argument, Montgomery (1992) found that individuals with a higher number of weak ties often acquire more powerful job offers than people with a higher number of strong ties.

Immigrants acquire social capital advantageous to securing employment by accessing the bridging, weak ties in their social networks. Unfortunately, several studies have shown that many immigrant networks include a preponderance of strong ties. While this does leave them with an abundance of bonding social capital, it frequently does so at the expense of their bridging social capital (Behtoui and Neergaard 2016; Majerski 2019). One would suspect that, under those conditions, immigrant employment would be concentrated in a small number of immigrant heavy industries. Indeed, Bankston III (2014) concluded that, immigrants' inability to build ties with the people outside their ethnic group constrained their ability to become employed outside of 'ethnic jobs'. For example, despite high educational achievement, Cederberg (2012) found that immigrants could not find a job in Sweden as they lacked resourceful personal contacts and social

networks. Akkyamak (2017) demonstrated that hiring practices give high importance to employees' social networks, a feature that prospective immigrant employees lack. On the other hand, Lancee (2012) showed that immigrants in Germany could use their bridging social ties to their advantage in employment. The advantage of bridging social capital to immigrants seeking employment is clear (Nakhaie 2006), however attempts to accumulate bridging social capital in a host community hostile to immigrants is complicated.

Social processes including the availability of information regarding the employee, the employer's level of trust for the potential employee, and any existing relational obligations strongly affects the likelihood of being hired and the level of job security experienced once employed (Aguilera 2003). Where present, social capital facilitates trust between employer and potential employee, heightening the likelihood of employment. Furthermore, social capital provides resources necessary to overcome challenges related to jobs, which directly affects job security and retention (Akkaymak 2017). Fernandez-Kelly (1995) asserted that, in most cases, employers hire successful job candidates because they trust the information the candidates provide, and that trust is justified by the candidate having a social network containing individuals perceived as trust-worthy. In contrast, an employer is less likely to trust the job applicant's qualifications if they are not referred by the people in the employer's social network (Fernandez and Weinberg 1997; Aguilera and Massey 2002).

The likelihood of employment in the formal sector is higher if a candidate has existing friendly ties to others working in the sector. 'Formal sector' jobs are characterized by specific work hours and regular wages. Formal sector employers include government or private enterprises. In many ways, these jobs are seen as preferable to their counterparts where job security is lower and work hours are irregular. Unfortunately, not everyone has the same opportunities to form

beneficial, well-placed friendships. As noted by Cederberg (2012), people's sociability is not the only factor granting access to social capital. Rather, the quality of social networks also matters. Those already endowed with social capital are more able to create relations that, in turn, produce more social capital. Consequently, though job information is clearly valuable and sought after by natural and foreign-born citizens, it is not equally available to all (Augilera 2002).



### **3. COMPARING UNITED STATES CULTURAL CONTEXT FOR TWO TIME PERIODS**

Previous research has demonstrated that social capital enhances immigrants' likelihood of employment by enhancing their prospects. However, prior studies failed to examine the effects of culture on the immigrant's ability to create, and then effectively use, social relations. Culture might affect both by creating or enhancing negative attitudes regarding immigrants among native-born citizens in the host country. As a consequence, the native-born might reject overtures by immigrants to enter social relations. The same elements of culture might limit immigrant's willingness to attempt relations with native-born citizens by shaping their perceptions of native-born citizen's willingness to connect regardless of native-born's actual receptiveness. Furthermore, ties that do form might be less effective at securing employment as the negative attitudes diminish the quality of the tie. Quality is diminished when trust, affection and other positive attributes of the relation decline due to existing negative attitudes.

An overview of the argument proposed here is depicted in the model of Figure 1. As shown, a host country's culture and native-born people's attitude directly affect each other. Host country's beliefs, norms, policies and media coverage shape the attitudes of native-born people. In turn, native born citizens' attitudes influence the formation and implementation of immigration policies and behaviors of the native-born toward other citizens. A host country's culture is also assumed to directly impact attitudes and perceptions of immigrants. As immigrants and native-born act in accordance with their attitudes and perceptions, the effects of culture are reinforced. For example, if the host country depicts Mexican immigrants in a negative light, native-born citizens might perceive Mexican immigrants as undesirable, while the same immigrants might perceive native-born citizens as inhospitable. Their interactions would reflect and reinforce those perceptions.

The number of immigrants’ social relations and the efficacy of social ties for immigrants’ ability to gain employment increase or decrease corresponding to existing attitudes and perceptions. As a consequence, culture through its effects on attitudes and perceptions, could mediate the effect of social capital on the likelihood of immigrants’ employment.

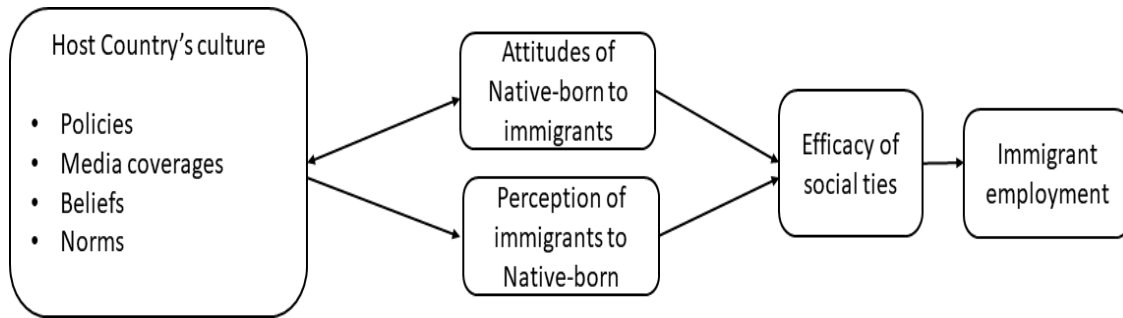


Figure 1: Association of cultural aspects, social capital, and immigrants’ employment

Following Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum and Carr (2018), culture “consists of the values the members of a group hold, the norms they follow, the material goods they create, and the languages and symbols they use to construct their understanding of the world” (48). Aspects of culture that might affect the number and efficacy of social ties include, but are not limited to, immigrant relevant policy, media depictions of immigrants, media depictions of immigrant policy and stereotypes of various immigrant groups existing within the host country. Immigrant relevant policy includes laws regarding entry and settlement, worker laws, welfare and assistance programs, and the more general legislation that includes benefits to immigrants with benefits to native-born citizens. The culture is hostile for immigrants when policies are restrictive or punitive, welfare programs are limited or underfunded, and immigrants are excluded from more general legislative efforts meant to help the population.

The paper’s objective is not to investigate the mechanism through which culture might mediate social capital’s impact on employment. Rather, it seeks to discover if such a mediation

exists. That is to say, does culture limit or enhance the effects of social capital on the likelihood of immigrants' employment. To conduct that investigation, the following section will establish two periods in US history with distinct levels of cultural hostility towards immigrants.

In particular, the paper will demonstrate that culture was less hostile to immigrants under the Obama administration than under the Trump administration. To develop that argument, various aspects of culture within each time period are examined and compared. Furthermore, prior studies show a clear link between cultural artifacts and the attitudes and perceptions of a society's members (Lee 2021). Therefore, to establish the distinct levels of hostility toward immigrants that characterized each time period, the paper also examines native-born and immigrant attitudes and perceptions. In particular, immigrants' attitudes regarding the host countries native-born people and the native-born attitudes towards immigrants will be explored for both time periods. To set the context of the following discussion, the section leads off with a brief description of the history of immigration in the United States.

### **3.1. History of immigration in the United States**

Immigration plays a significant role in U.S. history ( Schlesinger 1921;Ragsdale 2013). Unfortunately, the history of immigration into the United States is rife with bias and discrimination. Even as early as the Naturalization Act of 1790, a distinct bias in favor of white, European immigrants was evident. Until immigration into the United States was centralized in 1891, states managed most issues of immigration and naturalization. As a consequence, immigrants' experiences varied widely across the states. Although the creation of the country's first immigration office brought issues of naturalization and immigration under federal jurisdiction (Lee 1999), that favoritism for white immigrants continued to manifest in policy for the next several hundred years. For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century discrimination against Asian

immigrants was manifest in the Page Act and the Chinese Exclusion Act. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the introduction of quota systems in 1921 and 1924 heavily restricted immigration from non-Western European countries.

However, the basis for discrimination against immigrant groups changed dramatically when Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1965. This act replaced the nationality-based quota system with an assessment of immigrants' professional qualifications, trainings and other intellectual or skilled credentials. Nevertheless, bias continued in that many immigrants from previously banned countries lacked these credentials. In many ways, it was a similar system under a different mask. Still, by the 1980s there were visible increases in the quantity of immigrants overall, and the quantity of immigrants from Asia and Latin America in particular (Chishti, Hipsman and Ball 2015). For example, in the 1960's, prior to the passing of the Immigration Act of 1965, only 5% of total US Residents were foreign-born. Of that 5%, most were from European countries (Hirschman 2014). By the 1980s, the number of immigrants into the United States had increased by approximately 10 million. Whereas immigration numbers from Western Europe declined over that period, the number of immigrants from Asia and Latin America increased by a factor of 5 (Gibson and Lennon 1999).

Starting in the 1980s, and in tandem with the general increase in immigration from non-European countries, there was an increase in the rate of illegal immigration from Latin America in particular. Seemingly in response to the 'crises' of illegal immigration, United States lawmakers passed a series of increasingly restrictive immigration reform laws. Acts including the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, the Immigration Act of 1990, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 sought to increase border protections, establish penalties on employers for hiring undocumented immigrants, and expand deportations (Abrego,

Coleman, Martínez, Menjívar and Slack 2017). The intensity of regulation increased after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. For example, by 2005 the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Unlawful Immigrant Control Act passed (anti2005).

Whereas most of the increased regulation produced barriers for new immigrants, there were exceptions. Perhaps the most striking exception was the creation of Temporary Protected Status through the Immigration Act of 1990. Therein, Congress granted temporary legal status to foreign-born individuals from designated countries affected by natural disasters and Armed conflicts (American Immigration Council; Wilson, j 2017; D'Vera Cohn & Jeffery S. Passel 2017). TPS granted access to many people from Haiti, El Salvador, Syria, Nepal, Honduras, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Nicaragua, and South Sudan. The temporary legal status allowed them to stay and work in the United States for a specified period of time. In 2017 alone, TPS granted legal work status to approximately 320,000 people. (Wilson 2018; D'Vera & Passel 2017).

Nevertheless, the overall trend in regulation starting in the early 1900s and spanning into the modern era was to create barriers to entry and citizenship, and to increase punitive responses to immigration violations. Following Esses (2021), these restrictive policies represent a form of discrimination. It is this legacy that sets the foundation for modern attitudes towards immigration, and it acts as a backdrop against which it is possible to understand the variable degree of hostility toward immigrants displayed in American culture. Despite being defined as a nation of immigrants, the United States of America's relations with its immigrant population has always been contentious. Yet, it is equally true that the level of hostility has ebbed and flowed. That is to say, some eras have been more hospitable than others. Furthermore, some immigrant groups have faced more challenges than others.

The following section examines two cultural periods in the United States. These periods are defined by the executive branch. The Obama administration ran from 2009 to 2016, while the Trump administration ran from 2017 to 2020. The section establishes the differing levels of hostility perceived by immigrants in each period. In particular, the section shows that immigrants experienced higher levels of fear, policies erected more barriers to entry and citizenship, and attitudes of native-born citizens were more negative toward immigrants during the years Trump served as president.

### **3.2. Comparing the United States culture under Obama and Trump administrations**

The following section uses previously published data to argue that cultural hostility to immigrants in the United States was lower under the Obama administration than under the Trump administration. To make that case, several aspects of culture within each period are examined. Immigration policies, media depictions of immigrants and immigration policies, attitudes of native-born citizens regarding immigrants and perceptions of immigrants regarding native born citizens and political environment are discussed for each period.

#### **3.2.1. Immigration policy and associated programs**

Immigration policy and associated programs contribute to the level of cultural hostility experienced by immigrants in numerous ways. For example, policies might affect the ease by which immigrants can enter the United States, can become naturalized citizens or can gain the right to employment. Restrictive immigration policies could be interpreted as hostile. In contrast, permissive policies which impose few restrictions on immigrants seeking to live or work in the United States could be seen as more hospitable. Likewise, programs that result from policy could either offer aid in the form of health care or other benefits or could block opportunity in the form of strict limitations on visas or other restrictions. The following argues that United States policy

and associated programs became more hostile toward immigrants under the Trump administration wherein the administration eliminated many pro-immigrant policies and programs and implemented a series of anti-immigrant policies.

The context is set first by discussing general orientations toward immigrants that have been characteristic of each of the major political parties in the United States over the last couple decades. Then, pro-immigrant policies and programs created under the Obama administration are discussed in general. Importantly, during Obama's early term both the executive and legislative branches were controlled by the Democrats. Finally, policy decisions under the Trump administration are reviewed considering the prior decisions made by the Obama administration and the control of both executive and legislative branches by the Republicans.

By the Obama era, a polarization of the political parties in regards to official stances on immigration and immigrants had become evident. Whereas Democrats seemly identify as ideologically more liberal, Republicans identify as ideologically conservative (Twenge, Honeycutt, Prislín, & Sherman 2016). When translated into reported attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy, that often means that Democrats in general are more favorable towards pro-immigrant policy. Prior to Obama in 1996, little difference was seen between positions on immigrant policy between the two parties. Pew research found that only 30% of Republicans and 32% of Democrats reported being pro-immigrant. In contrast, by 2020 90% of Democrats reported being pro-immigrant whereas only 40% of Republicans reported being pro-immigrant. The Pew study suggests there is good reason to take into consideration which party controls Congress in addition to which party controls the executive branch. Where both branches are under the same political party, the effect of political polarization on immigration policy, and associated cultural hostility, should be most evident.

In November 2006, Democrats won control of the United States House of Representatives and the Senate. Two years later, voters elected Barak Obama as United States President. For the next two years, Democrats controlled both legislative and executive branches. While no major pro-immigrant acts passed in these two years at a federal level, one major act advantaging immigrant children did pass. During President Obama's first year, \$33 billion in federal funds were allocated to the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. Otherwise known as CHIPRA, the act grants health care coverage to immigrant children and pregnant women (Levey 2009).

Perhaps one of the most impactful advances in pro-immigrant policy happened after the Democrats lost the House but kept control of the Senate and Presidency. By executive order, President Obama enacted the Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals Act (DACA). Under DACA, if an immigrant under the age of 16 entered the United States of America prior to 2007 and they were younger than 31, they could receive a permit to work and study in the United States legally. From 2012 to 2017, 886,000 immigrants benefitted from DACA (USCIS 2017). Furthermore, states also seemed more actively pro-immigrant in the early Obama era. Over 6000 pro-immigration bills were initiated across the U.S. between 2007 to 2012 for the betterment of legal immigrants' healthcare and educational services (Theodore 2012; Pryce 2018).

Momentum on pro-immigrant sentiment seemed to be slowing around 2014. At that time, the Deferred Action for Parents and Americans and Legal Permanent Resident Program (DAPA) sought to extend DACA, but 26 states challenged DAPA and it was not implemented (USCIS, 2017; Haeyoun and Parlapiano 2016). Nevertheless, the prior five years could potentially have offered reassurance to immigrants who viewed the United States as steadily making progress on immigrant related issues. 2014 would have been the peak, because thereafter the tides on immigrant legislation began to turn. Though President Obama's immigration strategies were not



completely successful, there was a clear absence of policy detrimental toward immigrants, and a number of policies and programs that included benefits to immigrants throughout the Obama era.

Anti-immigrant policies increased in number and scope and pro immigrant policies came under attack shortly after the election of Trump to the presidency in 2016. At the same time, Republicans gained full control of congress. Within his first few months as president, Trump successfully banned by executive order travel from Libya, Iran, Somalia, Yemen, North Korea, and Venezuela. Furthermore, he emphasized the need for greater border security and immigration enforcement, focusing largely on his plan to build a physical wall on the U.S.-Mexico border (Guild 2018; Khan, Sands and Turner 2018). He created a program to accelerate immigration raids by the US Citizen and Immigration Service (USCIS), which resulted in increased arrest and convictions of unauthorized immigrants for minor offenses. According to Gomez (2017), arrests of immigrants with no criminal records increased by 156% during the Trump administration's first few months. Furthermore, his actions were such that they increased hostilities nation-wide, even among states that were typically more accepting of immigrants. For example, according to Reich (2018), he ordered that any state or local jurisdiction failing to obey federal immigration laws would be excluded from federal funds.

Trump's reforms did not only target actual or perceived illegal immigration. Legal immigrants were also subject to a more tenuous legal standing. For example, Trump supported the Referring to American Immigration for a Strong Economy program (hereafter RAISE), which would potentially remove up to 50% of legal immigrants by cutting down the green card holders' family-sponsored immigration initiatives (Gelatt 2017). Furthermore, many immigrants lost their legal work status as he ended DACA and TPS. He created obstacles for immigrant workers' families by slowing down green cards and citizenship applications, causing many people to face

or experience deportation. Thus, the United States immigration policies once again changed drastically, becoming much more hostile throughout the Trump era. In summary, the level of immigration enforcement and the number of obstacles to legal immigration increased, while the quality and number of humanitarian programs decreased (Pierce, Bolter and Selee 2018).

### **3.2.2. Media depictions of immigrants and immigrant policies**

Media depictions of immigrants and immigrant relevant policy act as significant indicators of the level of hostility in a host country. Although media culture need not be in all cases a perfect representation of general attitudes and perceptions of native-born citizens, as will be discussed later, it has been shown to impact immigrants' perceptions on how hostile the host country is to immigrants. That is to say, media can reflect the attitude of some, but need not reflect the attitude of all citizens. Nevertheless, it does affect immigrants' experience of the host country, and can shift native-born sentiment and reinforce existing sentiment. Immigrant depictions include portrayals of specific ethnic or national groups such as Western Europeans, Muslims or Latinx immigrants. Depictions of policy can encompass policy discussions in a range of forums including but not limited to chat rooms, Facebook pages, official news casts and political talk shows. The following section shows a distinct increase in the negative media portrayals of immigrants and immigrant-relevant policy when comparing the Obama and Trump eras.

Whereas it is perhaps easier to examine the blatant sensationalist media that characterized the Trump era, it is important to see that sensationalism in contrast to what existed previous. The Obama administration did address issues of immigration, but those discussions took a very different form than those that followed. For example, in a comparison conducted for the study on Obama's November 2014 "Remarks to the Nation on Immigration" to Trump's May 2019 Remarks on "Modernizing Our Immigration System," the tone is clearly more ethnocentric in

Trump's address. Trump's speech focuses on processes of "assimilation" and "integration," and phrases that highlight the difference between 'Americans' and Others are scattered regularly throughout. In contrast, Obama frequently depicts immigrants as beneficial and deserving; "These people – our neighbors, our classmates, our friends – they did not come here in search of a free ride or an easy life." Obama does not ignore unlawful entry or residency of immigrants, but he refers to those immigrants most often using the designation 'undocumented.' When he makes those references, they are often in a sympathetic context. On the surface, in contrast, Trump spoke of accepting immigration if reformed, however his focus was frequently to question the virtue and motives of immigrants. For example, he desecrated the 'frivolous claims' of asylum seekers, associated immigrants with 'some of the worst people in the world' and focused on the building of a physical barrier between Mexico (not Canada) and the United States (The Whitehouse 2014; The Whitehouse 2019).

Given that contrast, we can now take into consideration the ubiquitous, and often negative, portrayals of immigrants. Adverse media depictions of various immigrant groups including Mexican, Muslim and Asian immigrants drastically increased during the Trump Presidential Era. Having reviewed newspaper articles from Associate Press (AP), the New York Times (NYT) and Reuters, Vasquez (2020) found that, "language highlighted by the news media and used by Trump fails to be inclusive, diverse, respectful and mindful to Mexican Immigrants" (78). Analyzing a wider range of newspapers, Flores (2018: 1656) showed that reports of immigrant-related crime doubled after Trump's 2015 campaign speech from 26 to 63. An analysis conducted by Papakyriakopoulos and Zukerman (2021), which included more than 54 million online articles, showed an increase in biased speech; that increase echoed Trump's negative sentiments towards immigrants.

Furthermore, the consequences of the increase in negative depictions of immigrants has documented negative impacts on society and immigrant well-being. Bell (2018) links Trump's speech to the heightened rise of White supremacy in the United States. Perhaps the overall positions of these and other theorists can be captured most eloquently in the following quote.

“Yet, Trump demonizes foreigners and non-white citizens with a torrent of invective too extensive to itemize. His vitriol linking terrorism to Islam has incited a moral panic that the White House used to justify discriminatory travel bans in 2017...this toxic environment, which seeps outward to touch all people of color and gender minorities... valorizes the power of whiteness in journalism and raises the for-media reliance on official sources that maintain racialized policies and language.” (Bell 2018: 131)

There is significant evidence that supports the contention that these, and other negative portrayals of particular ethnic, racial and national groups increase hostility towards members of these groups. Lajevardi (2021) found that the negative media depiction of Muslims increased hostility towards Muslim Americans. In another stark example, Bell (2018) links the Trumpian narrative to acts of ‘violent extremism’ toward immigrants and other minority groups. In conclusion, while we cannot show a distinct and equally bombastic positive depiction of the United States Immigrant during the Obama era, we can make a case for a clear spread of negative depictions of immigrants during the Trump era.

### **3.2.3. Attitudes and discrimination towards immigrants**

As shown in Figure 1, a reciprocal relationship exists between a host country's culture, and the attitudes of native-born citizens. Previous studies have demonstrated the influence that

political elites exercise over the public's attitudes (Druckman 2001; Mendelberg 2001). In turn, the public's attitudes affect culture directly and indirectly. Attitudes directly affect culture when native-born citizens elect officials that represent their views or behave towards others in a manner consistent with their attitudes. The effect is indirect when media seeks to attract viewers by creating content that appeals to attitudes that exist within the populace. Taken together, individual attitudes and culture form a positive feedback loop, each enhancing the effects of the other. Norms, values, policy and media depictions included in the culture perpetuate and enhance attitudes through a range of processes which include positive reinforcement, the creation of echo chambers and policy enforcement.

Discrimination consistent with an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment developed throughout Trump's presidential era. Citizens with negative attitudes towards immigrants can discriminate against them. According to Esses (2002, 2021) attitudes towards immigrants identify who is considered part of the country's ingroup and who is not. Numerous studies show that in-group/out-group dynamics frequently result in discrimination disadvantaging the minority group (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

When Republicans gained control of the House in 2014, the ostensibly new-born acceptance of immigrants seemed to die an early death. It's certainly questionable whether it's possible to ascertain if Trump's rise to power reflected or stoked anti-immigrant attitudes in the United States. Nevertheless, as previously discussed, his campaign was saturated with anti-immigrant sentiment. According to Corasaniti (2016), Trump's victory came out of a campaign that stressed immigration reform. His reform continually manufactured immigration as an imminent crisis threatening the core of American values and virtues. In one oft cited Campaign speech, he touted the following:

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people. But I speak to border guards and they tell us what we’re getting. And it only makes common sense. It only makes common sense. They’re sending us not the right people. It’s coming from more than Mexico. It’s coming from all over South and Latin America, and it’s coming probably— probably—from the Middle East. But we don’t know. Because we have no protection and we have no competence, we don’t know what’s happening. And it’s got to stop, and it’s got to stop fast.” (Time 2015)

Verea (2018) and others have argued that Trump’s xenophobic attitude could be clearly seen in his actions and speech. Several scholars have highlighted one example in which Trump planned to rename the program, “Countering Violent Extremism” to the much more pointed and racist “Countering Islamic Extremism” (Gutsche 2018; Ainsley, Volz, & Cooke, 2017). Gutsche (2018) points out how Trump describes Mexican immigrants as rapist and drug dealers. Despite Trump’s emphasis on countries ‘not sending their best’ from ‘South and Latin America,’ his xenophobia seems quite broad. According to Kwong (2018) and Phoenix and Arora (2018) highly skilled Asian H1B Visa Holders were threatened by Trumps “Buy American and Hire American” initiatives.

While correlation is not conclusive support for a causal link between Trump and the public’s attitudes, many journalists and observers stated that his anti-immigrant speeches were

highly influential, they strengthened white supremacy, and increased anti-immigrant attitudes (Burke 2016; Carroll 2016; Haberman 2016). Certainly, outward expressions of anti-immigrant sentiment were on the rise. According to Gallup's 2015 Survey on Minority Rights and Relations, many non-college, non-Hispanic, White and Republican supporters started to wish for reduction in immigration flow. The American National Election Study (2016), hereafter ANES, found a significant increase in levels of anti-immigrant bias when comparing 2012 to 2016. Smith and Hanley (2020) found a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment in 2016 for all four regions of the United States (South, Midwest, West and Northeast)

The "Trump effect," on natural-born citizens' attitudes did not seem to hinge on the immigrant's skill or education level. The blanket attitude to immigrants seemed to be linked in part to economic insecurity. According to Budiman (2020), 44% of Republican supporters agreed with the statement, "immigrants are stealing citizen's job," despite the reality that prior research finds many immigrants employed in jobs American citizens do not want (Krogstad, Lopez and Passel 2020).

Anti- Immigrant sentiment in the United States did seem strongest in certain regions and among particular demographic groups. Smith and Hanley (2020) found that Mid-westerners, citizens with less education, and white citizens were most strongly influenced by Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric. ANES (2016) showed white voters much more likely to hold strong racial prejudice. That relation held regardless of the voters' educational level or region.

Rising levels of discrimination during the Trump presidential years was also indicative of increasing or enabled negative attitudes towards immigrants and other minority groups. For example, the occurrence of reported hate crimes increased across the nation. According to the Hate Crime Statistics Report, hate crimes against Hispanics in the United States increased from

9.4% in 2015 to 13% in 2018. Latino youths, especially DACAmented college students, faced high level racism during the Trump's presidency (Herrera and Obregón 2018; Wray-Lake et. al. 2018; Gomez and Huber 2019;). Along a similar vein, assaults against United States Muslims also increased to a record high in 2016. Most strikingly, assault on Muslims post the 9/11 terrorist attacks were still lower in number when compared to the rate reported in 2016. Whereas 2001 saw 93 Muslim victims of reported hate crimes, 2016 saw 127 (Kishi 2017).

According to Vereza (2018), the United States became xenophobic and less welcoming to the foreigners and immigrants throughout the Trump administration. Certainly, numerous studies are, at the very least, consistent with this claim. The Pew Research Survey (2018) found that half of American's surveyed believed that if minority groups in aggregate surpassed white Americans as a numerical majority, that would create a rise in racial and ethnic conflict. These attitudes taken together with their skewing of actual immigrant employment trends suggests a real effect of hostile cultural environment on immigrants' experiences.

#### **3.2.4. Immigrant perceptions regarding the host country's culture and mental health consequences for immigrants**

Cultural climate in the United States seems to have affected immigrant perceptions of the United States and its native-born citizens. Factors reviewed above seemed to indicate to US immigrants that a strong anti-immigrant sentiment characterized attitudes and behaviors within the country. It is perhaps not surprising that during the Trump Presidential Era multiple studies showed that immigrants saw native-born citizens as being unfriendly to themselves and those like them. For example, Hispanic youth reported experiencing discrimination and marginalization as a consequence of Trumps' anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric (Wray-Lake et al. 2018). More generally, a Pew research survey demonstrated a drastic change in Latino immigrants' estimation



of their prospects and the security of their place in the United States. When executive and legislative branches of the government were under the control of the Democratic party, 25% of Latino residents in the United States reported that their situation in the country was better compared to the prior year. Only 15% of the respondents reported that they felt their situation worsened. When the Democratic party lost partial control in 2014, fewer thought themselves in a better situation, only 21%; and more reported that they were worse off (23%). Latino's perceptions had changed drastically by 2018. Only 15% reported that their situation became better, and a distressingly large 47% saw their situation as worse. Concerns seemed concentrated among foreign-born Latino respondents with 57% responding that they had 'serious concerns' about their security in the United States when Trump became president.

Hispanic immigrants were not alone in having concerns during Trump's presidency. For example, Muslim immigrants reported that they felt Trump and the Republican Party were unfriendly to immigrants. In particular, 67% of foreign-born Muslim respondents reported seeing Trump as unfriendly toward them and 50% perceived that same hostility from supporters of the Republican party (Cooperman 2017).

If immigrants' saw their environment as hostile to them, it could be to the detriment of their mental health. For example, immigrants might experience high level of stress, anxiety, fear, and depression. Indeed, many studies showed that the 2016 elections, and resultant policy discussions increased fear, anxiety, depression and stress among foreign-born Americans (Wray-Lake et. al 2018; Becerra, Hernandez, Porchas, Castillo, Nguyen, & Perez González 2020; Jones, Victor & Vanetta 2019; Fleming, Lopez, Mesa, Rion, Rabinowitz, Bryce & Doshi 2019). According to USA TODAY (2019) Campos, a Latino women said, "Our fear response is activated every day for years". Becerra et. al. (2020) found that levels of stress and depression among

Arizonan Latinos corresponded to the more draconian immigration policies that proliferated under the 2016 Republican-controlled state government. More generally, research finds a strong positive correlation between immigrants' reported level of suffering, unfavorable or restrictive immigration law, and poor mental health among immigrants. For example, Fleming et. al. (2019) showed that immigrants' fear of deportation and family separation increased after 2016's presidential election and this fear fractured community cohesion. A Pew Research survey (2018) showed that 66% of foreign-born Latinos worried about their own family members or friends' deportation.

The web of hostile immigration acts, programs and regulations that crisscrossed the country, differing state to state and locality-to-locality, restricted immigrant movements within the country. That limitation made an already precarious situation for many immigrants even more tenuous.

### **3.3. Hypotheses**

'Trump's America' seems appreciably more hostile toward immigrants when compared to 'Obama's America.' Drawing on Figure 1, the effect of social capital on rates of immigrant employment should be different for the two periods. To explore that possibility, the following hypotheses compare two years, one taken from each administration. The years selected were, in part, a function of convenience. The data for the two selected years already existed. However, there are a number of advantages to the chosen years. First, Obama's first term was strongly impacted by the Great Recession. Overall unemployment and income inequality increased from 2005 to 2012 (Chokshi 2014). Such a major economic event could be expected to strongly impact overall employment numbers and that could easily hide an effect on immigrant employment. Those years are best avoided for the purposes of this study. Second, because the penultimate year of each president's tenure is selected, both presidents had ample opportunity to implement their planned

vision for the country through the proposal and implementation of executive orders, policies and programs. The following proposes and explains three hypotheses meant to explore that possibility.

If a host country's culture is hostile to immigrants, trust between host and immigrant communities could be low. In turn, low levels of trust could impede or even preclude the creation of bridging social ties. According Abrego et al. (2017), while Trump was President, immigrants were increasingly seen as threatening to America. Many immigrants reported experiencing fear of deportation, anxiety, and depression (Wray-Lake et. al 2018; Fleming et al. 2019; Jones et al. 2019; Becerra et. al. 2020.). Those feelings could make them stay away from members of the host community. As a consequence, immigrants could fail to create weak ties with natural-born American citizens. Furthermore, the expectation of negative responses from members of the host community might spur immigrants to seek the insulating benefits of strong bonding social capital to the detriment of their bridging social capital.

*Hypothesis 1: The quality and quantity of immigrants' social capital was lower in 2018 compared to 2014.*

Coleman (1990) has suggested that immigrants should possess numerous information-rich social ties if they seek to obtain stable employment in a host country. Unfortunately, generalized distrust in a host country can limit immigrants' access to information-rich social ties (Putnam 2000). Two reasons to suspect social capital has a larger effect in communities with harsh cultural climates are proposed here. One, the scarcity of beneficial ties actually enhances the utility of such ties for the immigrants that succeed in forming them. Second, under these harsh conditions distrust for immigrants has a greater potential for being the default condition of employers, meaning that social networks become a vital tool for establishing trustworthiness of potential immigrant employees.

*Hypothesis 2: Social capital's impact on the likelihood of immigrants' employment is greater in 2018 than in 2014.*

When a host country's culture is hostile to immigrants, they frequently lack strong bridging social capital. Unfortunately, research has shown that under those circumstances, immigrants use their co-ethnic bonding networks to find employment. Frequently, these ethnically circumscribed jobs are low quality and have low-income. Low-income employment could easily produce low levels of job satisfaction among immigrants (Diaz-Serrano and Cabral Vieira 2005). Indeed, several studies have found that job satisfaction decreases with the decrease of social capital (Requena 2003; Lange 2015). It follows that immigrants' job satisfaction should be correspondingly lower when the host country's culture is hostile toward immigrants.

*Hypothesis 3: Social capital's impact on immigrants' job satisfaction is greater in 2018 than 2014.*

The direct effect of social capital on immigrants' job security is not known. However, Akkaymak's (2017) assertion that social capital assists in overcoming work challenges suggests that failure to succeed in employment is inversely related to the level of social capital. It follows that, job security should decline in tandem with declining levels of social capital. It is unclear if hostile environment would mediate job security since evidence suggests high levels of employment in ethnically circumscribed jobs. However, job satisfaction is positively related to job security (Yousef 1998; Artz and Kaya 2014). It is possible that the lower levels of job satisfaction could reduce tenure in employment.

*Hypothesis 4: Social capital's impact on immigrants' job security is greater in 2018 than 2014.*

## 4. DATA AND METHODS

The following section discusses the study's methodological approach focusing on describing the data set and the processes used to collect and analyze the data. The study's objective is to determine if a host country's culture mediates the effect of social capital on immigrants' employment in the United States of America. In particular, the study focuses on data from 2014 and 2018. Each year represents American culture under the Obama and Trump presidency respectively. The study examines two avenues through which year could affect immigrant employment. 1) Year could decrease the quantity of bridging social capital, the type of capital known to increase the likelihood of immigrant employment, and 2) as community hostility levels increase, social capital's positive impact on rates of immigrant employment could decline. Finally, the study seeks to reaffirm previous findings linking social capital to immigrant employment by examining if job satisfaction and job security decline in tandem with declines in impactful social capital.

The study proceeds under the assumption that immigrants' situation in the United States became noticeably more hostile to them under Trump. Since the study focuses on establishing the mediating effects of a hostile cultural environment on the relationship between social capital and immigrant employment rates, a quantitative comparative analysis of data from the two distinct political eras is most appropriate. According to several scholars (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, Williams 2007), quantitative analysis remains the best methodology for establishing relations between variables.

The study's focus is on rates of immigrant employment within the United States. An existing national data set, the "General Social Survey (hereafter the GSS)," is administered regularly within the United States, and it provides sufficient data for an initial investigation.

Limitations of the data set are discussed below. However, overall, the GSS provides high quality and reliable data for researching a range of sociological behaviors and social changes. Since, several social scientists, including Burt (1997), Putnam (2000), Cigler and Joslyn (2002), Brehm and Rahn (1997), have previously conducted social capital research using GSS data, the current study fits neatly in with other existing studies. Therefore, conclusions reached here should directly contribute to and enrich what is known regarding the relation of social capital to employment. The GSS contains multiple indicators for social capital and employment. The analysis provided here draws only on that small subset of relevant survey questions. The study draws on the "General Social Survey 2014" and the "General Social Survey, 2018."

#### **4.1. Survey instrument and variables**

The National Opinion Research Center (NORC), operating out of the University of Chicago, has administered the GSS to American Adults (18 or above) at regular intervals since 1972. In 2004, NORC began using a new list-assisted sampling frame for 72% of the American population. GSS 2014 and GSS 2018 surveys collected data using in-person interviews of approximately 90 minutes (Smith 2020).

Both GSS 2014 and GSS 2018 asked approximately 1000 questions regarding different social behaviors; however, this study uses only 14 indicators aside from demographic information. The analysis uses seven indicators to measure social capital, two to measure immigrants' work status, and two to measure job satisfaction and job security. The models will control for sex, gender, education and marital status. Variables are discussed in detail below.

##### **4.1.1. Variables**

Since the analysis focuses on immigrant employment rates, it considers only data on the work status of non-white, foreign-born respondents. As shown in previous sections, much of the

discrimination toward immigrants since the 1980s has been directed at immigrants of non-white races including Hispanic, Muslim, Black and Asian immigrants. While white immigrants have experienced discrimination throughout the history of the United States, their status is not as hotly debated in modern America. Of the 2538 GSS 2014 respondents, 179 (7.05%) were non-white and foreign-born. Of the 2348 GSS 2018 respondents, 163 (6.94%) were non-white and foreign-born. The average age of the total non-white, foreign-born respondents are 43.5 for 2014 and 44.4 for 2018. Congruent with theoretical models, the study employs two indicators measuring social capital: immigrants' social connections/ties and interpersonal trust levels.

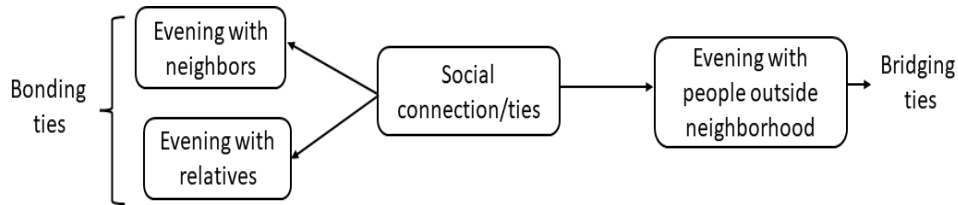


Figure 2: Indicators of bonding and bridging social ties

As shown in Figure 2, the analysis measures immigrants' social connections in the United States using the following three indicators: the occurrence of social evenings spent with neighbors, with relatives, with people outside the neighborhood. Figure 2 indicates which factors measure bridging and which measure bonding social capital. Notably, only bridging social capital is known to impact employment rates strongly. Indeed, excessive bonding capital could reflect insufficient connection into a larger community. Consequently, that analysis treats bridging and bonding capital as distinct factors, each having a possible distinct effect on employment rates. The quality of social capital should increase as the ratio of bridging to bonding capital increases.

Paxton (1999) used some of the indicators mentioned above to assess social capital levels. This study differs from Paxton (1999) in that the indicator "evening with relatives" will be added to account for Bourdieu's (1983) assertion that kinship relations build relevant social ties.

Responses to GSS 2014 and 2018 questions regarding "the occurrence of social evenings" used the following 7 point scale: 1-Almost every day, 2- once or twice a week, 3-several times a month, 4- about once a month, 5- several times a year, 6- About once a year, and 7- Never.

Many theorists emphasize that trust is part of social capital, and several argue that it accounts for the positive emotions binding people together (Easterlin and Crimmins 1991; Putnam 1995). For example, Putnam (1995) asserts that trust facilitates coordination and cooperation. Since trust is integral to social capital's efficacy, the analysis provided here will measure the effects of year on perceptions of immigrants' trust.<sup>1</sup> Trust as measured here capture's immigrants' trust of native-born citizens. High trust could facilitate the creation of bridging ties to members of the host community. Figure 3 shows the indicators the study used to measure trust.

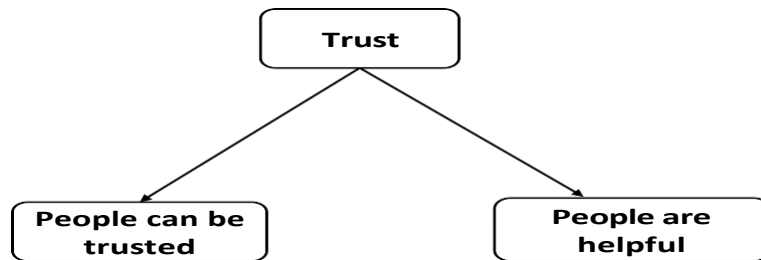


Figure 3: Indicators for immigrants' trust level

Following Brehm & Rahn (1997), the study uses two indicators to measure distinct dimensions of trusts: trustworthiness and helpfulness. The following questions were used for each, respectively. 1) "Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?" And 2) "Would you say that most of the time, people try to be helpful or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?" If respondents answered all three questions

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<sup>1</sup>I limited our analysis for measuring trust at subjective interpersonal level. We have not included the community level trust by measuring different indicators such as "Trust on religion", "trust on management", "trust on government," etc. as we are focused on learning about the individual level of experience.



in the affirmative, they coded as 1. A universal negative response to all questions is coded as 4 and 3 respectively. All other answer combinations are coded as 2.

The dependent variables for hypotheses 3 and 4 include job satisfaction and job security. GSS 2014 and 2018 questions used to measure each are as follows: "How satisfied are you with the work you do?" and "Is your job security good?" Affirmative responses were coded as 1 and included the answers very true, /very satisfied. Disconfirming responses were coded as 4 and included the answers not true at all/very dissatisfied. All other disconfirming responses were coded as either 2 or 3 corresponding to their level.

Respondents' age, gender, education level and marital status are controlled in the analysis.

#### **4.2. Methods of analysis**

The goal of the analysis presented here is threefold: 1) It seeks to determine if the year affects the amount and type of immigrants' social capital. 2) It examines if the year mediates the effect of social capital on rates of immigrant employment, and 3) it investigates if year affects the relationship between social capital and immigrants' job satisfaction and job security. The analysis compares GSS 2014 and GSS 2018 data to examine the effects of differing levels of community hostility on immigrants' employment outcomes. Comparing the United States cultural context in each year suggests lower levels of community hostility in 2014. R studio software was used to complete the analysis. Mean substitution accounted for missing values. Some statistical tests, such as logistic regression, cannot show unbiased results when the sample size is too small (Nemes. et al. 2009). Mean substitution helps to keep the whole data set without deleting them. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the GSS 2014 and 2018 data sets respectively.

Before starting analysis, I filtered the foreign-born population from "Were you born in this country?" question and non-white population from "What race do you consider yourself?"

question. Then I recoded the variables for both 2014 and 2018 data sets. Non-white immigrants' full time work status was coded as 2. All other employment was coded as 1. Questions regarding "the occurrence of social evenings" was coded as follows: 1-never, 2-about once a year, 3-several times a year, 4- about once a month, 5- several times a month, 6- once or twice a week, and 7- almost every day. If a respondents' answers to the two trust indicators were all affirmative, the respondents trust-level was coded as 3 or 4. If all three answers were disconfirming, the respondents' trust level was coded as 1. All other answer combinations for trust-level were coded as 2. Affirmative responses for the job satisfaction and job security questions were coded as 4 and included answers very true /very satisfied. Disconfirming responses were coded as 1 and included not true at all/very dissatisfied. All other responses were coded as 2 and 3 depending on their level.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Variable	GSS 2014				GSS 2018			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
	n = 179				n = 163			
<b>Work Status</b>	1.53	0.50	1	2	1.55	0.50	1	2
<b>Bonding Social Capital</b>								
Community	4.06	1.38	1	7	4.45	1.52	1	7
Relatives	3.24	1.55	1	7	3.00	1.64	1	7
<b>Bridging Social Capital</b>								
(Friends)	4.00	1.31	1	7	3.48	1.32	1	6
<b>Trust Level</b>								
Trust	2.38	0.57	1	4	2.23	0.61	1	4
Helpful	2.02	0.77	1	3	1.82	0.75	1	3
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	3.22	0.76	1	4	3.24	0.76	1	4
<b>Job Security</b>	3.22	0.76	1	4	3.38	0.64	1	4
<b>Controls</b>								
Age	43.5	14.5	19	78	44.4	15.2	19	89
Education	12.7	4.71	0	20	12.5	4.56	0	20
Sex	1.53	1.53	1	2	1.54	0.50	1	2
Marital Status	2.39	2.39	1	5	2.29	1.64	1	5

*Note: SD= Standard Deviation; Min= Minimum; Max= Maximum*

T-tests reported below compare total social capital in 2014 to total social capital in 2018. The tests determine if a significant difference between the two means exists (Stockemer, Stockemer, and Glaeser 2019). Theory suggests that different types of social capital have different effects on immigrant outcomes. Therefore, follow-up t-tests compare 2014 to 2018 bridging capital and 2014 to 2018 bonding capital, respectively. Finally, t-tests compare 2014 non-white immigrants' trust levels to 2018 non-white immigrants' trust levels.

Binary logistic regression is applied to look for significant association between levels of social capital and immigrants' odds of employment<sup>2</sup>. Model 1 examines the effect of total social capital on the odds of immigrant employment. Models 2, 3, and 4 examine the effects of bridging social capital, bonding social capital, and trust level on odds of immigrant employment, respectively. Logistic regression requires a large sample size, and GSS is a large social survey. However, the analysis provided here uses only responses from non-white immigrant respondents. Therefore, GSS 2014 n = 179 and GSS 2018 n = 163, combined n=342.

Ordinary least square regression is applied to examine if immigrants' levels of social capital significantly affect immigrants' job satisfaction and job security. Ordinary least square regression is appropriate for this analysis, as our dependent variables are continuous (Treiman 2000; Winship and Radbill 1994). Model 5 and 6 will test the effect of social capital on immigrants' job satisfaction and job security. All models control for demographic characteristics known to affect rates of employment including age, gender, education, and marital status.

GSS data provides the opportunity to examine how year might mediate the effect of social capital on rates of immigrant employment. Furthermore, this study should make clear the relationship between social capital and immigrants' employment (including their job satisfaction and security) in recent years. Still, with cultural hostility in flux, further investigations should be conducted with 2020 data. Although secondary data provides less flexibility regarding questions asked, GSS is adequate for an initial investigation on the mediating effects of culture on social capital's impact on employment.

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<sup>2</sup>The odds ratios will determine effect of immigrants' social capital (independent variable) on binary dependent variable, immigrants' work status and independent variable, immigrants' social capital. We can analyze the weighted logit regression estimate by computing the odds ratio (Morgan 2013)

## 5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 2 presents all tests of Hypothesis 1. A two-sample t-test shows no significant difference by year in immigrants' mean total social capital ( $t = 1.91$ , NS). Results do not support the hypothesis that an immigrants' total social capital would lower in 2018. However, only bridging social capital includes relationships to the broader community. Therefore, it is plausible that culture affects' only immigrants' bridging social capital. Follow-up tests separated the analyses of bridging and bonding capital and trust level. Year showed no significant impact on levels of non-white immigrant bonding capital ( $t=-0.594$ , NS). In contrast, non-white immigrants' bridging capital was significantly higher in 2014 than in 2018 ( $t=3.645$ ,  $<0.001$ ). As noted earlier, researchers use trust-level to assess the efficacy of social capital. If the quality of social capital were to decrease, a corresponding decrease in trust level should be observed. Table 2 shows significantly less trust on others expressed by non-white immigrants' 2018 than in 2014 ( $t=3.103$ ,  $<0.01$  ). Hypothesis 1 is partially supported.

Table 2: T-test for social capital indexes

Measure	2014		2018		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Total Social Capital	15.69	5.58	14.98	5.84	1.912
Bonding social capital	7.29	2.93	7.45	3.16	-0.594
Bridging social capital	4.00	1.31	3.48	1.32	3.645***
Trust levels	4.40	1.34	4.05	1.36	3.103**

*Note: M=mean, SD=Standard deviation, t= t-value, p=: p= '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*\*' 0.01 '\*\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1*

Results shown in Table 3 test the hypothesis that year mediates the impact of social capital on immigrants' likelihood of employment. Social Capital is predicted to have a greater impact in

2018. The table includes results from four binary logistic regression models<sup>3</sup>. Overall, the results do not support Hypothesis 2. Model 1 analyzed the relationship between total social capital and the total social capital\*year interaction on the probability of immigrants' full-time work status. It found that a unit increase in total social capital did not significantly increase the odds of immigrants' full-time employment. Interestingly, this finding runs counter to prior research. Likewise, the year and social capital interaction did not significantly impact the likelihood of immigrants' full-time employment (OR = 0.955, p = NS).

Figure 4A displays the relationships between social capital and immigrant work status by year. Social capital seems to have little to no effect on immigrant work status in 2018. In contrast, there is a clear upward slope measuring the impact of social capital on employment for 2014. Though the results were not significant, the slopes do suggest a potential impact of year on the relation between social capital and immigrant work status that might be hidden by the number of missing values in the data set. In contrast to predictions, social capital might impact the likelihood of immigrant employment only in times of *low* hostility toward immigrants. It might be possible to tease out this relationship using a data set that is more pointed in its questions regarding social capital and employment.

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<sup>3</sup> We used different models of social capital to show effect of only bonding/bridging/ trust levels on immigrants' employment separately. Some social capital variables are more influential to the immigrants' employment than other. Therefore, we wanted to see the effect of a particular type of social capital without the effect of other variables.

Table 3: Logistic regression between immigrants’ social capital indexes and their work status

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	OR	OR	OR	OR
<b>Independent variables</b>				
Total Social Capital	1.061			
Bonding Social Capital		1.064		
Bridging Social Capital			1.000	
Trust Level				1.302
<b>Controls</b>				
Age	0.979*	0.980*	0.980*	0.979**
Sex	0.353***	0.352***	0.349***	0.352***
Marital	0.928	0.931	0.931	0.929
Educ	0.991	0.996.	0.997	1.000
<b>Interactions</b>				
Year	2.230			
Year		1.536		
Year			0.982	
Year				3.665
Total Social Capital*Year	0.955			
Bonding Social Capital*Year		0.956		
Bridging Social Capital *Year			1.035	
Trust Level*Year				0.761

Note: p= ‘\*\*\*’ 0.001 ‘\*\*’ 0.01 ‘\*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1 ; , OR=Odds Ratio

Model 2 analyzed the relationship between bonding social capital and the year\*bonding social capital interaction on the probability of immigrants' full-time work status. Neither predictor significantly affected the odds of immigrants' full-time employment. However, Figure 4B also suggests that if an effect could be found in a more complete data set, that effect would be opposite of the one predicted. The tests do not support hypothesis 2.

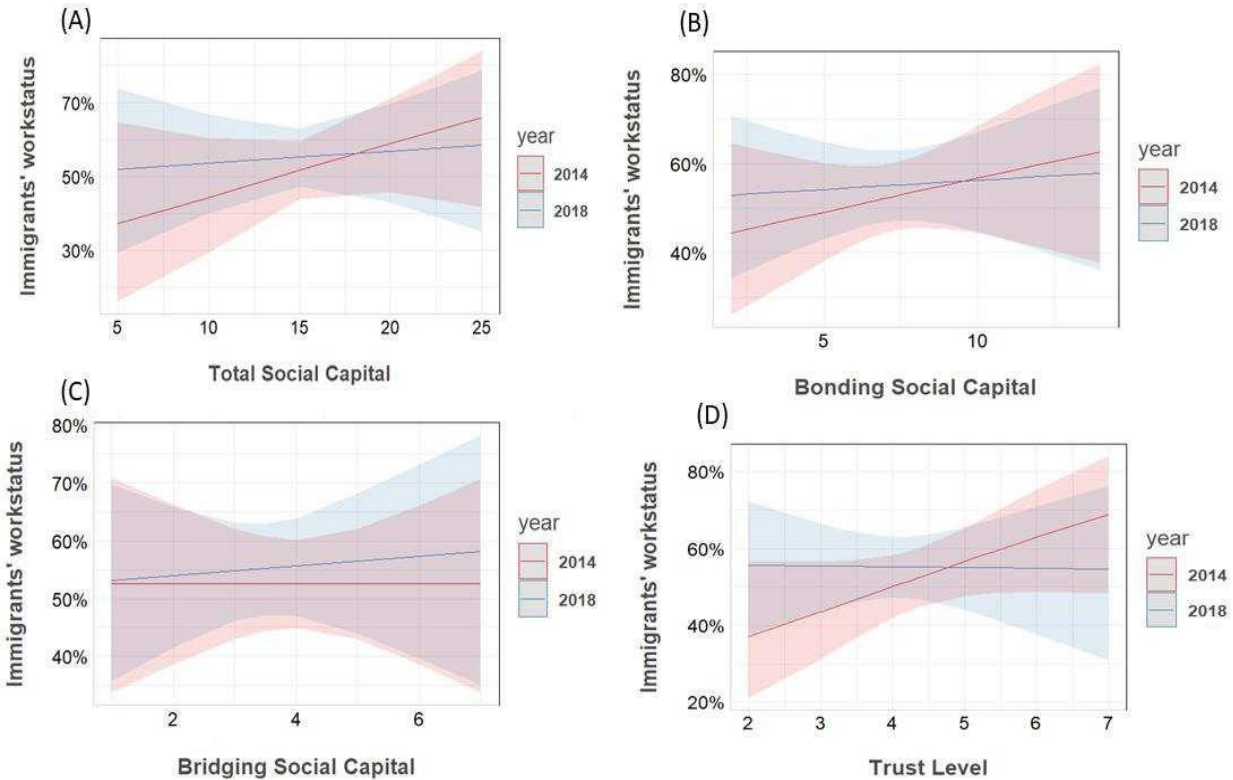


Figure 4: (A) Effect of total social capital on immigrants' employment with the interaction of year; (B) Effect of bonding social capital on immigrants' employment with the interaction of year (C) Effect of bridging social capital on immigrants' employment with the interaction of year (D) Effect of trust levels on immigrants' employment with the interaction of year

Model 3 replicated Model 2's tests replacing bonding capital with bridging capital. Similarly, the results did not support hypothesis 2. The relationship between bridging social capital and immigrants' full-time work status was not significant (OR=1.065, p=NS). Nor did the year\*bridging capital interaction significantly affect the odds of immigrants' full-time employment (OR=1.035, P=NS). Figure 4C does suggest that it might be possible to find a larger effect of bridging social capital on the likelihood of full-time immigrant work status in 2018. Though immigrants had fewer bridging ties in 2018, it is possible that the ties they did have could have been used more often to secure employment. Interestingly, it is only for bridging social capital that we see the possibility of the predicted effect of year being found using a more complete data set.



Model 4 shows that a unit increase in immigrants' trust level non-significantly increased the odds of full-time employment (OR=0.067, P=NS). Figure 4D suggests a potential impact of the trust\*year interaction on odds of employment, but the finding is not statistically significant (OR=0.761, P=NS). Nevertheless, the findings suggest that trust *might* factor on an immigrants' odds of employment under non-hostile cultural conditions, but any conclusive analysis would require better data. It is theoretically plausible that the lack of trust in others may hinder individuals' odds of employment in years that lack community-level barriers to employment so the visualization suggests that a follow-up study using more complete data would yield useful information.

Overall, the results presented in Table 3 do not support Hypothesis 2. However, despite non-significance, the visualized positive relationship between social capital and employment odds suggested at in the data echoes findings in prior studies. It seems possible that social capital is still impacting immigrants' odds of employment positively.

Results shown in Table 4 tests Hypothesis 3: Social capital's impact on immigrants' job satisfaction is greater in 2018 than 2014.

Table 4: Multivariate regression between immigrants' social capital and their job satisfaction

Model 5		
	Coef	SE
<b>Independent variables</b>		
Total Social Capital	0.023	0.018
<b>Controls</b>		
Age	0.001	0.002
Sex	-0.051	0.083
Marital	-0.024	0.026
Educ	-0.001	0.009
<b>Interactions</b>		
Year	-0.160	0.386
Total Social Capital*Year	0.012	0.024

Note: p= '\*\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*\*' 0.01 '\*\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1 ; ,SE=Standard Error

Model 5 shows that a unit increase in immigrants' social capital did not significantly affect immigrants' job satisfaction (Coef=0.023, NS). The year and social capital interaction did not significantly impact the likelihood of immigrants' job satisfaction (Coef=0.012, NS). Figure 6's diagram reveals a potential minor effect of year on social capital's impact on immigrants' job satisfaction, but given its lack of significance, the finding cannot be construed as supportive.

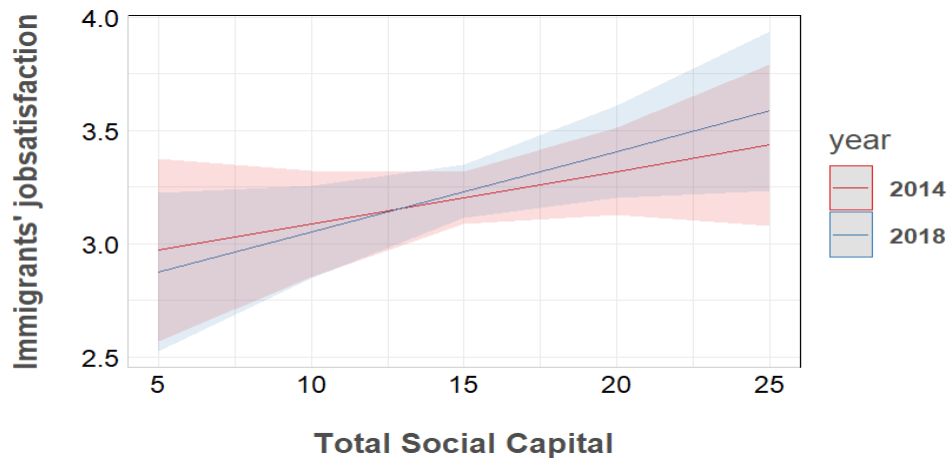


Figure 5: Effect of social capital on immigrants' job satisfaction with the interaction of year

Overall, the results presented in Table 4 do not support Hypothesis 3. Nevertheless, the tests presented here do seem replicate previous studies wherein a positive relationship between

social capital and levels of job satisfaction were found. Evidence does not support the claim that in 2018 the hostile cultural environment mediates the effect of social capital on immigrants' job satisfaction.

Table 5 tests hypothesis 4: Social capital's impact on immigrants' job satisfaction is greater in 2018 than 2014.

Table 5: Multivariate regression between immigrants' social capital and their job security

Model 6		
	Coef	SE
<b>Independent variables</b>		
Total Social Capital	0.001	0.299
<b>Controls</b>		
Age	-0.001	0.002
Sex	-0.028	0.067
Marital	-0.017	0.021
Educ	-0.0007	0.007
<b>Interactions</b>		
Year	-0.196	0.312
Total Social Capital*Year	0.022	0.019

Note: p= '\*\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1 ; ,SE=Standard Error

Model 6 replicated Model 5's tests replacing job satisfaction with job security. Model 6 shows that a unit increase in immigrants' social capital did not significantly affect immigrants' job security (Coef=0.001, NS). The year and social capital interaction did not significantly impact the likelihood of immigrants' job security (Coef=0.022, NS). Figure 7 suggests a possible small positive effect of year 2018 on social capital's impact on immigrants' job security and almost no impact of year 2014, but given its lack of significance, again the finding cannot be construed as supportive.

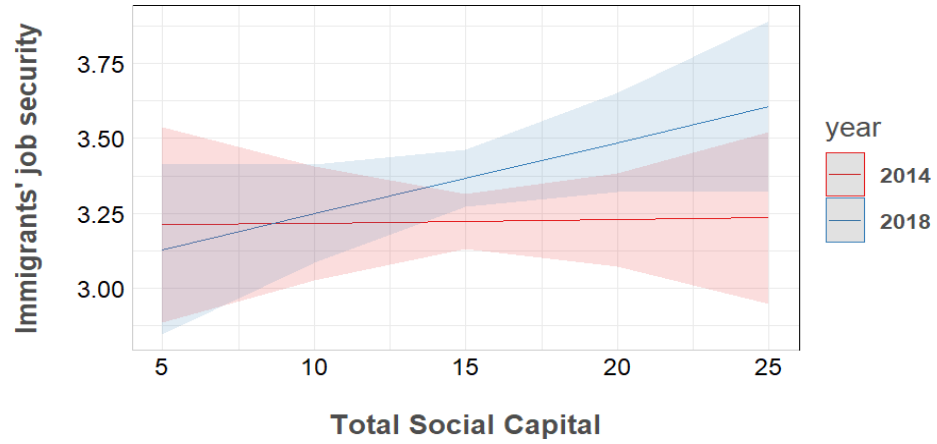


Figure 6: Effect of social capital on immigrants' job security with the interaction of year

Disaggregating bonding and bridging social capital did not produce significant effects on job satisfaction or job security.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATION

The arguments presented here sought to expand our understanding of how social capital effects non-white immigrants' employment status. Researchers have long known that social capital enhances the prospect of employment for immigrants. However, research had not examined if that positive impact remained unchanged regardless of the host country's acceptance of immigrants. Research presented here investigated the role anti-immigrant culture plays in mediating the impact of social capital on non-white immigrants' employment status.

Applying Social Capital Theory and an understanding of United States' culture under two different presidents, I developed four hypotheses. Each hypothesis speculates on the potential of culture to mediate the impact of social capital on immigrants' employment status. U.S. culture in 2018 is considered more hostile to immigrants than 2014.

1. The paper predicted that the quantity and quality of an immigrant's social capital would be lower in 2018. Because prior theory suggested that bridging capital has a stronger impact on immigrants' likelihood of employment, a decline in the amount of bridging capital represented a decline in the overall quality of social capital (Granovetter 1973; Coleman 1990; Bankston III 2014).
2. The impact of immigrants' social capital on immigrants' employment is higher in 2018 than 2014.
3. The impact of immigrants' social capital on immigrants' job satisfaction is greater in 2018 than 2014.
4. The impact of immigrants' social capital on immigrants' job security is greater in 2018 than 2014.

Analyses presented here did not support the second, third and fourth hypotheses. However, Hypothesis 1 did find partial support. The quantity of immigrants' bridging social capital and their reported trust in other Americans was significantly lower in 2018. This study's findings were consistent with previous investigations measuring immigrant trust in other Americans, and natural-born citizens' perceptions of immigrants. Abrego et al. (2017) noted that a substantial number of Americans saw immigrants as threatening during Trump's presidency. They argued that, as a consequence it became difficult for immigrants to create ties with native-born American citizens or trust native-born Americans. There are alternative explanations for the study's findings. It is possible that fear of deportation, anxiety and depression made non-white immigrants avoid American society. Certainly, Bankston III (2014) showed that immigrants find it hard to connect with people outside their community. It is reasonable to expect that the level of difficulty for immigrants seeking connection to members of the host country to be higher when the culture is saturated with anti-immigrant attitudes. As that difficulty increases, the average number of bridging ties would naturally decline.

The study found a relationship between immigrants' social capital and immigrants' likelihood of employment that is consistent with the results of previous studies; high levels of social capital produce high rates of employment (Van Tubergen and Van der Lippe 2009; Nakhaie and Kazemipur 2012; Kanas, Piracha, Tani and Vaira-Lucero 2016). However, a closer examination of the effects of bonding and bridging social capital suggest the need for further investigation. Interestingly, bonding social capital seemed to have more impact in 2014, a year where the culture was not as hostile to immigrants. Why might that be the case? Bankston III (2014) might provide some insight into a possible reason. He proposed that immigrants frequently find employment in 'ethnic jobs.' If these jobs exist within ethnic enclaves, bonding capital might

be more useful. Furthermore, if ‘ethnic jobs’ declined in number in 2018 because of the hostility toward immigrant populations, any effects of bonding capital would disappear for 2018. Stated differently, bonding capital can only be used when ‘ethnic jobs’ exists, and such jobs only exist when the culture is more accepting of immigrants. That hypothesis is beyond the scope of investigation proposed here, but is certainly worthy of future investigation. While not significant, the analysis suggests that bonding capital might be more significant when the culture is not hostile.

The study measures immigrants’ trust in members of the host community. In particular, it looked at whether host community members were seen by immigrants as being helpful or trustworthy. Results indicate that immigrant trust levels might impact the likelihood that an immigrant will find employment in 2014. However, when the host culture is hostile to immigrants, their trust-level seems to matter less. The results were not significant. However, they do suggest that immigrant beliefs *might* affect immigrant employment when their environment is not hostile. It should have no effect when it is hostile. That is to say, whether they trust others or not, they remained shut out of available jobs in 2018.

Coleman (1990) suggested that information-rich social ties advantage immigrants when they seek stable employment, and a stable employment provides job satisfaction and security. Though the amount of social capital held by immigrants was lower in 2018, non-white immigrants reported higher levels of job satisfaction and job security that year. Results were not significant, but the direction of the relationship was consistent with prior research. That is to say, social capital had a positive effect on job satisfaction (Requena 2003; Lange 2015) and job security. There are two possible reasons proposed here. First, it’s possible that the concentration of immigrants employed in ‘ethnic jobs’ was higher in 2018. Surrounded by a culture that vilified immigrants, these jobs could be perceived as safe havens. It is possible that immigrants perceived ethnic

employment as safer. Another possibility is that immigrants were less comfortable reporting low levels of satisfaction and security under perceived harsh conditions. As argued earlier in the paper, many immigrants were afraid in 2018. That fear could have introduced a response bias.

The amount of bridging capital and the level of immigrants' trust in members of the host community was lower in 2018. However, I could find no other effect of year on social capital. Though immigrants into the United States faced many challenges during the Trump presidential era (Pierce, Bolter and Selee 2018; Vereza 2018; Gelatt 2017; Gomez 2017), the efficacy of social capital on rates of immigration employment seemed largely unchanged. Nevertheless, the result showed an overall positive effect of social capital on immigrant employment. This finding is consistent with prior research.

Theory offered here suggested two paths by which culture could affect employment. The first proposed a direct effect on the amount of social capital. That path was partially supported. 2018 saw lower levels of bridging social capital and trust, which is known to increase the likelihood of employment. The second path, shown in Figure 1, proposed an effect on the efficacy of social capital. It was suggested that hostile culture reduces the efficacy of social ties by altering the attitudes and perceptions of immigrants and native-born Americans. Results did not support this path. There was no significant effect of year on the impact of social capital on likelihood of employment.

There were limitations to the data set used in the analysis. These could have potentially obscured effects that might exist.

1. Most importantly, a large number of data points were missing. Of the original seven indicators used for social capital, two had to be excluded because of high rates of non-response among the sample's respondents. Mean substitution was used to account for



missing data for the remaining indicators. Unfortunately, mean substitution can bias the parameter estimation, reduce statistical power and decrease the samples' representativeness (Kang 2013). Tests using mean substitution were compared to tests run without using mean substitution, and no significant differences were found. The results reported used mean substitution because the method increased the number of represented individuals in the sample.

2. All non-white immigrants were included in the analysis. However, the test might be stronger if the sample was restricted to new immigrants. New immigrants provide the strongest test for the hypotheses because they face the most barriers when seeking employment. By focusing more narrowly on new immigrants, the effects of social capital could be uncovered.
3. Year was used as a proxy for culture. Without a clear measure for culture, it was not possible to ascertain directly if culture accounted for differences seen in the amount and efficacy of social capital in facilitating immigrant employment.
4. Additional study could examine isolated dimensions of culture. For example, a new survey could look at the direct effects of media vs. policy and so on.

I recommend replicating the study provided here using a dataset with fewer missing values, and direct measures of the elements of culture included in Figure 1. The new research should administer a survey or conduct a series of interviews that target a sample of recent immigrants to the United States. Questions addressing immigration policy might ask about the respondents' awareness of current policies, experiences with agencies enforcing such policies, native-born's attitude towards immigrants, and immigrants' perception regarding the host country and host country people. Questions regarding employment should ask about immigrants' social

engagement, and experience for getting hired in the United States. Future research could consider specific groups who are the frequent targets of harsh immigration policies including Muslim immigrants or Mexican immigrants.

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