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The Dimensions of Social Capital and Perceptions of the Policy Context among Asian and Latinx Immigrants living in California: Findings from the Research on Immigrant Health and State Policy Survey

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

by

Brenda Morales

2024

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Dimensions of Social Capital and Perceptions of the Policy Context among Asian and Latinx Immigrants living in California: Findings from the Research on Immigrant Health and State Policy Survey

by

Brenda Morales

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

University of California, Los Angeles, 2024

Professor Fernando Torres-Gil, Chair

In an era marked by increasing globalization, diverse migration patterns, and shifting policy environments, understanding the multifaceted dimensions of social capital and its relationship with immigrants' negative perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity, and legal status is of paramount importance. This study examined the multifaceted dimensions of social capital, including perceived mutual trust, perceived social trust, perceived neighborhood safety, community organization involvement, and political engagement. Research suggests different aspects of social capital are related to immigrants' integration in multiple ways. Active community involvement fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity among diverse community members, contributing to social cohesion. The policy context is also closely linked to immigrant integration processes. Exclusionary policies can hinder immigrant integration and erode social cohesion by creating divisions and resentment within communities. This dissertation study utilizes cross-sectional data from the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Research on Immigrant Health and

State Policy (RIGHTS) survey, using a sample of Asian and Latinx immigrants aged 18 and older. Results from the ordinal regression analysis revealed immigrants' negative perceptions of the policy context was associated with higher levels of political engagement. Immigrants' negative perceptions of the policy context was also associated with feeling less safe in their neighborhood. Latinx immigrants were less likely to agree about neighborly willingness to help, compared to their Asian counterparts. However, Latinx immigrants were more likely to feel safe in their neighborhood compared to Asian immigrants. This study contributes to the literature on immigrant integration via an examination of dimensions of social capital offering nuanced insights into the experiences and perceptions of Asian and Latinx immigrant communities in California. By elucidating the factors that underpin social capital and its association with the policy context, findings hold implications for policymakers, community organizers, and social workers.

Keywords: Social capital, political engagement, immigrant integration, policy context.

This dissertation of Brenda Morales is approved.

Todd M. Franke

Laura Wray-Lake

Maria-Elena De Trinidad Young

Fernando Torres-Gil, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2024

DEDICATION

For my *mama* and my family, *los quiero mucho*!

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I'd like to thank my whole dissertation committee for the continued support throughout this process and for your generous time. Each and every one of you have provided me with valuable feedback, which I have learned from to become a better writer, scholar and have gained a better understanding of statistics. First, I want to thank my committee chair and academic advisor Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil for always being extremely supportive and for providing academic guidance throughout my years in the doctoral journey. You have the best interests for your students and your dedicated passion for advising students is evident, you have always happily provided me with letters of recommendation. But most importantly, I have learned to think outside the box, and think of the broader implications of research. Thank you for always being so flexible and accommodating. To my committee member, Dr. Todd Franke, I appreciate your commitment to students and enthusiasm about teaching statistics to students. Even though I know you have an extremely busy schedule, you always made room to meet with me and provided me with statistical guidance. Thank you for helping me navigate STATA and sharing your wide knowledge of statistical analyses, your advising helped me understand statistics more and I'm glad to have learned so much. To my committee member, Dr. Laura Wray-Lake thank you for sharing your knowledge about this topic and for always taking the time to carefully and thoroughly read all my drafts and providing detailed feedback. Your knowledge and insight were instrumental in helping me shape the focus of this paper and improve the framing of it. Lastly, to my external committee member Dr. Maria-Elena Young, thank you for your generous time and for providing feedback and sharing your extensive knowledge about immigration policy.

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Nakphong, M., Young, M.E., **Morales, B**., Guzman, I., Chen, L.., & Kietzman, K.G. (2022). Social exclusion at the intersections of immigration, employment, and health care policy: a qualitative study of Mexican and Chinese immigrants in California. *Social Science and Medicine, 298*, 114833. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.114833

Other Publications

Rodriguez, M.A., Kietzman, K.G, Morales, B., Pourat, N. (2022). Despite Documented Status, Many California Immigrants Have Negative Perceptions or Experiences of Public Charge Policy. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

Pourat, N., Young, ME., **Morales B**., & Chen L (2021). Latinx and Asian Immigrants Have Negative Perceptions of the Immigrant Experience in California. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States has been shaped and reshaped by immigration over the centuries demographically, economically, culturally, socially, and politically (Bolter, 2022), resulting in an increasingly diverse population. Central to this demographic transformation are immigrant communities, whose presence contribute to the cultural and socioeconomic landscape of the nation (Foner, 2023; Hirschman, 2013). The changing demographics and questions regarding racial and ethnic relations raise concerns about the integration and wellbeing of immigrants in the United States, as the U.S will have to respond to the needs of a growing immigrant population. Among these communities, Asian and Latinx populations stand out as two of the largest and fastest growing demographic groups in the United States (Batalova, 2024) with California serving as a focal point of settlement and integration (Le & Pastor, 2022).

The influx of Asian and Latinx immigrants has not only reshaped the demographic composition of California but has also sparked scholarly interest in understanding the dynamics of immigrant integration and adaptation. Integrating immigrants into society is a multifaceted process that involves various aspects, social capital offers a lens through which to understand integration processes (Ager & Strang, 2008). This dissertation study was informed by the theory of social capital (Putnam, 2001) which includes the interrelated concepts of social cohesion and civic and community engagement (Council, 2014).

Social capital refers to the network's, relationships, and norms of trust and reciprocity within a community or larger society (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009; Johnson, 2016; Putnam, 2001). In this study, I examined social capital within the context of neighborhoods where immigrants reside. Social capital encompasses bonding social capital bridging social capital and a third type suggested as linking social capital. Bonding social capital includes ties between

individuals with a relatively high degree of network closure, and often is described as horizonal ties. Usually. Between individuals within the same social group. Bonding social capital often happens within local communities where people may know each other. Bridging social capital are ties between individuals which cross social divides or between social groups and described as vertical ties. This can provide access to resources outside of an individual's normal circles. Lastly, linking social capital includes networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across formal and institutionalized power and authority in society (Claridge, 2013).

When examining immigrant integration via the lens of social capital, it is important to consider the paradoxical relationships between close-knit networks and experiences of exclusion and inclusion. For example, social capital is seen as a resource that can promote social mobility and equality, however its distribution can exacerbate inequalities if high levels of social capital are concentrated within privileged or affluent groups. This can create a paradox where social capital, intended to promote equality, ends up reinforcing social stratification and exclusion. While social capital is generally associated with positive mental health outcomes and social support, there can be instances where high levels of social capital are linked to negative psychological effects. For example, intense social pressure or obligations within close-knit communities may contribute to stress, anxiety, or feelings of obligation. Similarly, strong social ties can sometimes limit individual autonomy or agency, leading to feelings of entrapment or dependence.

Furthermore, immigrants often face the challenge of being simultaneously socially included and excluded from society. For example, the literature on ethnic enclave economies suggests immigrants form strong social bonds within their own ethnic or cultural communities, which in turn fosters social capital (H. H. Kim, 2014; Korinek & Loebach, 2016; P. Li, 2004). However, some scholars argue social fragmentation can occur if communities become too insular

or if there's a lack of interaction between different groups. Moreover, if communities face marginalization, this can lead to exclusion from social networks, hindering their integration (Banulescu-Bodgan, 2020; Pennix, 2003). Some scholars say living in socially or ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods have primarily negative effects in terms of discrimination, stigmatization and crime, and hinders processes of upward mobility (D. S. Massey & Denton, 1998). Bridging social capital is important to examine in this scenario as it may help immigrants connect with the wider community and access resources and opportunities.

Trust is also a fundamental component of social capital, which facilitates cooperation and collaboration. Building trust requires investing in relationships, mutual understanding, and shared experiences. For the context of this study, I examined trust in neighbors which can be considered a form of bonding social capital (Ruef & Kwon, 2016; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Trust in neighbors usually involves close-knit networks within the local community where individuals develop relationships based on shared experience, proximity and mutual familiarity (Browning, Calder, Soller, Jackson, & Dirlam, 2017). This type of trust is a contributor to social cohesion and a component of social capital, which strengthens people's sense of belonging, facilities cooperation and strengthens bonds (Charles Collins, Neal, & Neal, 2014; Lenzi, Vieno, Pastore, & Santinello, 2013; O'Rourke, 2023). Paradoxically, while immigrants may face distrust, their integration ultimately depends on developing trust within the community.

Additional macro and structural factors like immigration policies may also impact the dynamics of social capital and immigrant integration (Guzi, Kureková, & Kahanec, 2022; J. Hagan, Leal, & Rodriguez, 2015; Laurentsyeva & Venturini, 2017). For example, the government can influence many areas of policy that encompasses immigration enforcement, employment protections, rights, and public benefit eligibility, which may increase experiences of exclusion and worry about immigrants (Chen, Young, Rodriguez, & Kietzman, 2023; Perreira &

Pedroza, 2019; Tan, Low, Howard, & Yi, 2021). Border control measures related to deportation proceedings, detention policies, and local cooperation with enforcement agencies like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which apprehend undocumented immigrants have been found to be associated with negative outcomes among immigrants such as being hesitant to report crimes (Dhingra, Kilborn, & Woldemikael, 2022; Sarabia, 2012). Immigration policy also intersects with labor policy, particularly regarding the rights and protections afforded to immigrant workers (Gomberg-Munoz & Nussbaum-Barberena, 2011; K. F. Lee, Nakphong, & Young, 2024; Nakphong et al., 2022). This includes regulations related to workplace safety, minimum wage laws, and protections against exploitation and discrimination based on immigration status. Furthermore, policies also determine which public benefits immigrants are eligible to receive (Broder, Lessard, & Moussavian, 2022; Lacarte, Gelatt, & Podplesky, 2024). Policies in this area vary based on immigration status, with undocumented immigrants typically having limited access to public benefits (Alonso-Yoder, 2019; Bernstein, Gonzalez, Karpman, & Zuckerman, 2020), education (Goździak, 2014; Quinn, Hopkins, & García Bedolla, 2017), housing assistance (Schill, Friedman, & Rosenbaum, 1998; Teixeira & Halliday, 2010), and social welfare programs (Borjas, 2002; Jacqueline Hagan, Rodriguez, Capps, & Kabiri, 2003; Koning & Banting, 2013).

Furthermore, there are integrative policies that offer legalization and pathways to citizenship and may extend opportunities for immigrants (Aptekar, 2015; Markowitz, 2015). This may involve amnesty programs, pathways for DREAMers (undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children) to obtain legal status, and reforms to the naturalization process (Bloemraad, 2006), funding for English language classes and citizenship preparation programs (Derwing, Jamieson, & Munro, 1998). These policies can facilitate the integration of immigrants into society and promote their participation in civic, economic, and cultural life.

These areas of policy often intersect and overlap, may reinforce each other, and shape the overall policy context for immigrants in a country (Czaika & De Haas, 2013; Filomeno, 2016). Stricter enforcement measures may affect immigrants' access to employment and public benefits, while policies that facilitate integration can enhance immigrants' social and economic well-being. Understanding these broader areas of policy is essential to develop comprehensive and effective strategies that promote the integration and prosperity of immigrant communities.

Defining Immigrants Perceptions of the Policy Context

The policy context in which immigrants live refers to the broader socio-political environment in which policies are formulated, implemented, and experienced by individuals. It can include factors such as the laws, regulations, and practices governing immigration mentioned above, the public discourse on immigration, and societal and public attitudes that shape attitudes and perceptions towards immigrants and the policy landscape (Morey, 2018). Immigrants' perceptions of the policy context in this study refers to their subjective understanding and interpretation of immigration policies and the broader environment in which they live. This includes how immigrants perceive their legal rights and protections, their access to services and opportunities, and their sense of belonging and inclusion in society. Immigrants' perceptions are shaped by their personal experiences, interactions with institutions and authorities, social networks, and media representations of immigration issues (Ekman, 2019; Etchegaray & Correa, 2015; Farris & Silber Mohamed, 2018; Schemer, 2012).

While policymakers make policy decisions with specific objectives and intentions in mind, immigrants' perceptions of those policies may not always align (Ybarra, Juárez Pérez, & Sanchez, 2019). For example, a policy designed to enhance border *security* may be perceived as border *control* among immigrants, and experienced as discriminatory or hostile, leading to feelings of fear, insecurity, and marginalization (Chacón, 2006; Y. Young, Loebach, & Korinek,

2018). Similarly, policies aimed at promoting integration and providing support services may not always be effectively communicated or accessible to immigrant communities, leading to perceptions of exclusion.

Although this area of research is limited, existing research suggests immigrants' perceptions of the policy context are associated with their health and well-being and interactions with institutions (Becerra, Wagaman, Androff, Messing, & Castillo, 2017; J. J. Lee & Zhou, 2020; Vargas, Sanchez, & Juárez, 2017). Positive perceptions of inclusive policies may enhance immigrants' sense of trust, belonging, leading to better mental health outcomes, higher levels of civic engagement, and greater economic integration (Jiménez, Schildkraut, Huo, & Dovidio, 2022; Soto Saavedra, Lopez, Shaw, & Gibbs, 2023).. Conversely, negative perceptions of hostile or restrictive policies may contribute to social isolation, distrust of authorities, and reluctance to access essential services or participate in public life (Chen et al., 2023; Lovato et al., 2024; Ornelas, Yamanis, & Ruiz, 2020; Weller et al., 2019). While policymakers are responsible for making policy decisions, immigrants' perceptions of the policy context play a crucial role in shaping their experiences, behaviors, and outcomes (De Graauw & Bloemraad, 2017; De Leon, DeVita, Boris, & Maronick, 2009; Vasquez Guzman et al., 2020). Understanding immigrants' perceptions is essential for policymakers to develop policies that are not only effective in achieving their intended objectives but also responsive to the needs and concerns of immigrant communities.

Despite the literature on the processes of social capital and growing literature focusing on policy perceptions among immigrant populations (J. Almeida, Biello, Pedraza, Wintner, & Viruell-Fuentes, 2016; Ayón, 2016; Becerra, Androff, Cimino, Alex Wagaman, & Blanchard, 2013; Vargas et al., 2017) significant gaps persist in the literature, particularly regarding the experiences of Asian and Latin immigrants in California**.** Existing studies often adopt a

unidimensional approach, focusing either on social capital or policy perceptions within single policies overlooking the complex interplay between the two**.** Specifically, the study focuses on five different dimensions of social capital including mutual trust in neighbors, perceived social trust in neighbors, perceived safety within the neighborhood, community organization involvement, and political engagement.

This study uses a cross-sectional research design, using data from the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Research on Immigrant Health and State Policy (RIGHTS) survey. Participants were asked a series of statement about their views of the policy context, including examining perceived risks of engaging with law enforcement, their sense of protection from immigration authorities in various settings, and their affiliation with community organizations and political engagement. This dissertation seeks to address the following objectives:

1. To examine how immigrants' individual perceptions of the policy context are associated with willingness to help others, perceived social trust, neighborhood safety and civic participation.
2. To examine how other sociodemographic factors such as ethnicity (specifically Asian and Latinx) and legal status are associated with willingness to help others, perceived social trust, neighborhood safety and civic participation.

Background

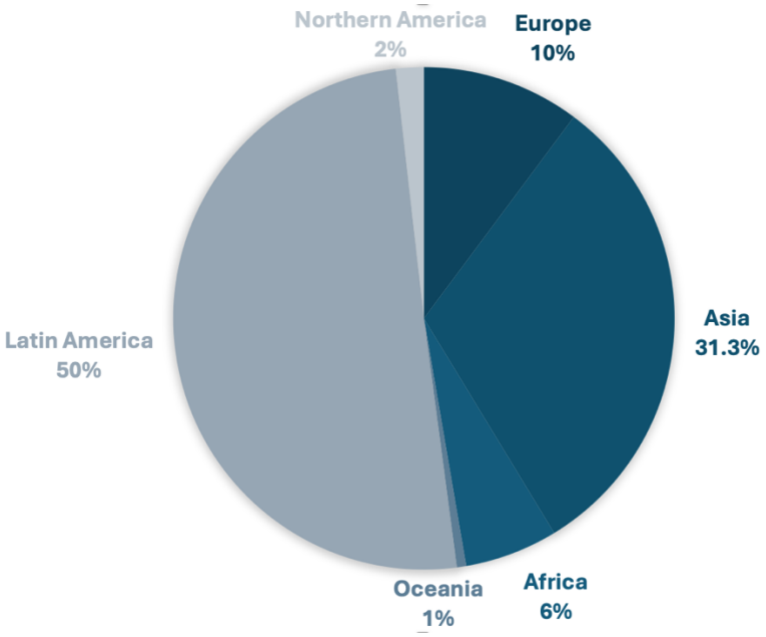
Currently, the U.S. has the largest immigrant population in the world with more than 46 million people, a historic numeric high the US census has ever recorded (Esterline & Batalova, 2022). The Immigration Act of 1965 opened the door for worldwide entries and new settlers arriving from Latin America and Asia changing America's composition of a biracial Black minority and White majority society (Ayala, Baquero, & Klinger, 2008). In the 1980s, only 12 percent of legal immigrants originated from Europe or Canada, whereas nearly 85 percent reported origins from Asia, Latin America, or the Caribbean (Center., 2015; Waldinger & Lee, 2001). Today's immigrants are mainly non-European and come from different parts of the world.

The data in Figure 1 show the immigrant population breakdown by race and ethnicity, such that a large majority of immigrants are from Latin America (50.3%) and Asia (31.1%) (US Census Bureau, 2022). According to the Migration Policy Institute, Mexicans are the largest group of immigrants compromising 24% of the total immigrant population in 2021 (Rosenbloom & Batalova, 2022). Immigrants from Asia accounted for 28% of all immigrants, nearly matching the percentage of immigrants from Mexico (Budiman, Tamir, Mora, & Noe-Bustamante, 2020).

By the year of 2060, the Latinx population is projected to increase to 111.2 million or 28% of the U.S. population (Zong, 2022). Among Asians, the numbers are projected to surpass 46 million by 2060, nearly four times their current total (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Nearly 11.2 million of the immigrant population in the U.S. was undocumented in 2021 (Batalova, 2024). About 55% are naturalized US citizens, and 28% are legal permanent residents (LPRs) and 5% have some other legal status (US Census Bureau, 2019).

Figure 1

Percentage of Foreign-Born Individuals in the United States by Region of Birth, 2022



Note. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Selected Characteristics of the Foreign-Born Population, 2022

According to the Migration Policy Institute, immigrants from Mexico and Central American accounted for two-thirds (7.4 million) of the undocumented population in 2021(Batalova, 2024). Data show Asians have become the fastest growing undocumented racial group in the United States (B. M. Kim & Yellow Horse, 2018). In 2021, approximately 1.2 million (11%) of undocumented immigrants were from Asia (Batalova, 2024). Furthermore, immigrants today are more settled, because the amount of time immigrants have spent in the US has grown. In 2018, 73% of immigrants had lived in the U.S. for over 10 years, up from 56% in 1990 (Budiman et al., 2020). Understanding the current demographic trends and settlement

patterns of immigrants is important for identifying needs and for developing programs and policies that are culturally sensitive.

Immigrants in California

This study focused on California, the state with the largest immigrant population in the nation. According to the most recent estimates from the Public Policy Institute of California, it is home to 10.4 million immigrants, about one fourth of the immigrant population nationwide (Marisol Cuellar Mejia, Perez, & Johnson, 2024). California's immigrant population is among the most diverse by several measures such as race/ethnicity, recency of arrival, and educational attainment (Le & Pastor, 2022). The majority of California's immigrants were born in either Latin America (49%) or Asia (39%) (C. A. Perez, Mejia, & Johnson, 2023). The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) provides data on the countries of origin for immigrants in California. In recent years, immigrants from Mexico, China, the Philippines, Vietnam, and India have constituted some of the largest immigrant groups in the state (Batalova, 2024).

In terms of legal status, in the year 2022 more than half (54%) of California's immigrants were naturalized citizens (Marisol Cuellar Mejia et al., 2024) or had green cards and visas, and about 22% were undocumented (C. A. Perez et al., 2023) (See Table 1 for definitions of each legal status). Many families in California also live in mixed-status families, meaning there are family members with diverse citizenship or immigration statuses within the same household (California Immigrant Data Portal, 2019). In 2021, there were more than 3.3 million people (U.S. citizens and legal permanent resident's) living in mixed-status families with at least one undocumented family member across California (California Immigrant Data Portal, 2021). Furthermore, it is estimated that about half of children in California (46%) have at least one immigrant parent (Marisol Cuellar Mejia et al., 2024). Latinx and Asian groups had the highest percentages of people who were either undocumented themselves or living with someone who

was. In 2019, that number was 13% for Asians and nearly 30% for Latinos statewide (California Immigrant Data Portal, 2019).

Table 1

Definition of Key Terms

Key Term	**Definition**
Immigrant	An individual who is living in another country other than their birth country, other commonly used terms in the literature include foreign-born, migrant, and noncitizen.
Legal Status	Refers to an individual's legal standing within a country. It indicates whether the person has the right to reside and work in the country. It can encompass a range of categories, such as citizenship, permanent residency, temporary residency, refugee or asylum status, and undocumented status.
Naturalized Citizen	A person who was born outside of the U.S. and obtained U.S. citizenship.
Lawful permanent resident (LPR)	A noncitizen who has been granted authorization to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis, also known as a green-card holder.
Undocumented	An individual residing in a country without legal documentation, this includes people who entered the U.S. without inspection and permission from the government and those who entered with a legal visa that is no longer valid.
Latinx	Refers to people of Latin America origin or descent. Hispanic refers to people of Spanish or Spanish-speaking origin. Both terms are used interchangeably, however Latinx might be considered a more accurate inclusive term when referring to anyone of Latin American ancestry. Therefore, this dissertation uses the non-binary and gender-neutral term, Latinx instead of Latino/a.
Immigration Policy	Laws and policies that regulate who can enter or not enter legally into the United States, these policies are the responsibility of the U.S. government[1].
Immigration Enforcement Policy	Laws and policies that specifically aim deport or remove noncitizens from the United States.
Immigrant Integration	The process in which immigrants and their children become socially included through the public and private realm at the individual, family, community, and national level. This includes the rights and access to different kinds of services such as healthcare, provision of government services, education systems, and the workforce.

[1] See (Wallace & Young, 2018).

Key Term	Definition
Social Exclusion	A complex and multidimensional process that involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods, and services and inability to participate fully in economic, social, political, and cultural life arenas[2].
Social Inclusion	A process which ensures those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life in the society and communities they live in. It ensures access to individuals fundamental rights[2].
Social Capital	The social networks, relationships, and connections within a community, or society that enable mutual aid, reciprocity, trust, and promote collective action.

It is important to consider legal status, immigrants' legal status directly shapes their experiences with immigration policies and enforcement policies (See Table 1). Undocumented immigrants and those living in mixed-status families may perceive policies related to immigration enforcement, access to healthcare, education, and social services differently than naturalized citizens or legal permanent residents. For instance, policies that target undocumented immigrants or restrict access to certain services can create feelings of fear, insecurity, and marginalization within immigrant communities (Martinez et al., 2015; Perreira & Pedroza, 2019).

Mixed-status households, where family members have diverse citizenship or immigration statuses, can influence social capital dynamics within immigrant communities. Fear of deportation or family separation may discourage undocumented individuals and their family members from engaging in community activities, seeking support from social networks, or participating in civic and political life (Ornelas et al., 2020). This can weaken social ties and trust

[2] See (
, 2016)

within immigrant communities, impacting their ability to mobilize and advocate for their rights and interests (J. Hagan et al., 2015).

Recognizing the complexities of legal status and mixed-status households is essential for policymakers seeking to address disparities in social capital and promote inclusive policy outcomes. Efforts to protect the rights and well-being of undocumented immigrants and mixed-status families, such as providing pathways to legal status, access to essential services, and protections against discrimination, can help strengthen social capital and foster community resilience and cohesion.

The Public Policy Institute of California provides statistics about the educational attainment of immigrants in California, which vary widely. As of 2019, approximately 34% of adult immigrants (ages 25 and older) in California had a bachelor's degree or higher and about 48% of California's immigrants had no more than a high school diploma (Marisol Cuellar Mejia et al., 2024). One-third of immigrants in California reside in coastal counties including Santa Clara (41%), San Mateo (36%), Alameda (34%), San Francisco (34%), and Los Angeles Counties (33%) (Marisol Cuellar Mejia et al., 2024). Only a very small percentage lived in northern counties such as Humboldt (6%), Shasta (5%), and Butte (8%). Metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, Riverside-San Bernardino, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and San Jose are classified as immigrant gateways (Le & Pastor, 2022; Singer, Hardwick, & Brettell, 2008).

Immigrants with higher levels of educational attainment may be more likely to navigate the policy landscape better. Conversely, immigrants with lower levels of education may face barriers to understanding and engaging with the policy process, which can impact their access to resources and opportunities. The Migration Policy Institute reports recent immigrants from Asia are highly educated (M.C. Mejia, Perez, & Johnson, 2023). For Latinx immigrants, rates vary by duration in the US. About one-in-ten Latino immigrants (12%) who were long-term residents in

2018 had a college degree (Noe-Bustamante, 2020). Latinx immigrants who are recent arrivals Among recent arrivals, about a quarter (26%) of Latinx immigrants aged 25 and older had a bachelor's degree or higher, up from just 10% in 1990 (Noe-Bustamante, 2020). Higher levels of education has been associated with increased social mobility, and access to resources (Papademetriou, Somerville, & Sumption, 2009). For example, highly educated immigrants may be more likely to secure high-skilled jobs, which can affect their perceptions of economic policies or labor market regulation (Shankar et al., 2022). Poor understanding of workplace hazards and settling for a job might induce immigrant workers to take on unsafe work (Kosny et al., 2012). Therefore, differences in educational level, legal status, and location among Asian and Latinx immigrants might lead to different outcomes for both groups.

Furthermore, the geographic distribution of immigrants, particularly in immigrant gateway metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Jose, might be an important indicator for social capital outcomes. Immigrant's livings in coastal counties, where a significant proportion of California's immigrant population is concentrated, may have different policy priorities and experiences compared to those living in rural or inland areas with smaller immigrant populations. Immigrants residing in metropolitan areas may have greater access to social networks, community organizations, and resources. In contrast, immigrants living in rural or inland areas with lower levels of educational attainment and fewer opportunities for social and political engagement.

Understanding the factors mentioned above immigrants is important to address disparities in social capital. Efforts to improve educational access and attainment among immigrant populations, particularly in underserved areas, can strengthen social capital by empowering immigrants to participate more effectively in the policy process. Similarly, policies that promote economic opportunity, affordable housing, healthcare access, and community

development in diverse geographic regions can help build social capital and enhance immigrant integration and well-being across California.

Immigrants' length of duration in the United States also varies by race/ethnicity. For example, Latino immigrants living in California have lived in the United States for more than a decade (Le & Pastor, 2022). In contrast, 28.9% of white immigrants, 29% of Asian immigrants, 35.7% of Black immigrants, and 34.3% of Mixed Race/Other immigrants arrived within the last decade. Some factors contributing to these changes are shifts in U.S. immigration policy, large-scale catastrophes (e.g., the 2010 Haiti earthquake) and changes to the economic landscape leading to an influx of highly skilled and highly educated workers from Asia (Le & Pastor, 2022).

The length of immigrants' stay in the United States is also important to consider as this may affect their ability to build social capital (Tuominen, Kilpi-Jakonen, García Velázquez, Castaneda, & Kuusio, 2023). Immigrants who have been in the country for much longer may have had more time to establish social networks, build relationships, and become involved in their communities (Poros, 2011). Longer durations in the Unites States may also provide an opportunity for accumulation of social capital over time. For example, Latino immigrants who tend to have longer durations of stay, may have stronger ties to their communities due to historical and cultural factors, as well as the presence of established immigrant networks (Abraído-Lanza, Echeverría, & Flórez, 2016). In contrast, recent arrivals may face different challenges and experiences in terms of social capital formation. Studies have also noted differences depending on the country of origin. For example, skilled immigrants who come to the US for work might have better social ties, networks, and resources. Immigrants from Southeast Asia, tend to have lower levels of education, higher rates of unemployment, and lower household

incomes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) even after permanent settlement in the U.S.

The Integration of Immigrants via Social Capital

California has a vast and diverse immigrant population and serves as an important place for immigrant integration. For this study, I am defining immigrant integration as the process in which immigrants and their children become socially included through the public and private realm at the individual, family, community, and national level (EU Council, 2004; See Table 1)

This includes the rights and access to different kinds of services such as healthcare, provision of government services, education systems, and the workforce (Ager & Strang, 2008).The legal status an immigrant holds poses significant challenges that can impede integration efforts. Undocumented immigrants may face heightened fears of deportation and legal repercussions, leading to social isolation and reluctance to engage with their communities (Dhingra et al., 2022; Hacker et al., 2011; Ornelas et al., 2020). Their limited access to formal institutions and support networks further exacerbates feelings of exclusion and marginalization, hindering their ability to develop social capital and fully participate in community life. Mixed status families are families whose family members might hold diverse citizenship or immigration statuses within the same household (Leisy Abrego, 2019), which are also prevalent in the state (California Immigrant Data Portal, 2021). These demographic realities underscore the multifaceted nature of immigrant communities in California and highlight the varied challenges they face in navigating legal, social, and economic landscapes.

Amidst these challenges, the concept of social capital emerges as a critical lens through to which understand immigrant integration processes at the neighborhood and community level. Social capital emphasizes the role of social networks and collective action in fostering trust and cooperation within diverse communities (Putman, 2001). High levels of social capital have been found to contribute to the wellbeing of communities (Eriksson, 2011; Prince, 2024). These

aspects do not only shape individuals' daily interactions but also influence broader community dynamics such as participation in community organizations and civic activities. An interrelated concept of social capital is social cohesion and civic engagement, which encompasses taking part in community through nonpolitical and political activities, through participation in the governance and public life of their communities (Torres Luna, 2019). Other measures included in the literature are level of connectedness with neighbors and organizational institutions. This can range from attending community meetings at school's labor unions and religious organizations, contacting public officials, volunteering for local initiatives to participating in protests.

Civic engagement can help shape public discourse, influence policy decisions, and advancing social change in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Tucker & Santiago, 2013). A study by Lai (2023) suggested civic engagement transmits political knowledge and networks and serves as basis for mobilization and social movements. Research has also found higher levels of civic engagement is associated with improved access to resources, greater responsiveness from local institutions, and enhanced collective efficacy (Charlie Collins & Guidry, 2018). Moreover, civic engagement can help foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among residents (Sagiv, Goldner, & Carmel, 2022), contributing to the overall vitality and resilience of communities (Hayhurst, Hunter, & Ruffman, 2019; Morrow-Howell, O'Neill, & Greenfield, 2011).

Immigrant civic engagement often includes participation in electoral processes, such as voter registration and turnout in elections (Brettell, 2020). Additionally, immigrants may engage in political activism, such as volunteering for political campaigns, joining advocacy organizations, or running for elected office themselves. Immigrant-led organizations play a vital role in amplifying the voices of immigrant communities and advocating for policy reforms that

address their needs and concerns (Quiroz Villarreal, Jozef, & Ecclesiastre, 2021). Research also support the integration of black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) immigrants is also to rates of naturalization, which can ensure their participation in American elections (Wambu & Nkabinde, 2016). Wang and Kim (n.d) found lower voter turnout among naturalized citizens may be due to discriminatory practices, issues with translating voting materials including registration forms and instructions. Other factors that may decrease immigrants' political participation include low levels of income and educational attainment as well (Barreto, Villarreal, & Woods, 2005). Overall, immigrant civic engagement is essential for promoting democracy, social inclusion, and enhancing community relations.

The Policy Context

California is a state known for its welcoming pro-immigrant policies (Le & Pastor, 2022) and racial and ethnic diversity. Policies such as the California Values Act (Senate Bill 54), protect undocumented immigrants from the threat of deportation (Arrocha, 2024). In 2022, California legislature expanded full-scope Medi-Cal coverage for undocumented adults aged 50 and over, with plans of a final expansion for undocumented adults aged 26-41 taking effect on January 1st of 2024 (Bustamante, Beltrán, Cuadros, Zeng, & González, 2023). California's state and local policies range from employment and social services to healthcare and immigration enforcement significantly impact immigrants' daily lives (De Trinidad Young & Wallace, 2019; Wallace & Young, 2018). Among immigrant communities, perceptions may play a significant role in shaping daily interactions and decisions and behaviors. Literature has heavily focused on direct effects of federal, state, local laws, and administrative practices and how they impact immigrants' access to education, employment, health insurance and medical care, cash assistance, food assistance, and other vital services (Perreira & Pedroza, 2019). Policies related to law enforcement practices and immigration enforcement can influence individuals' trust in

institutions, feelings of safety, and willingness to engage with their communities (Wong et al., 2019). Immigrants' awareness of these policies, coupled with their perceptions of safety trust and access to resources may lead to a decrease in engagement with their communities and institutions (Hacker et al., 2011; Menjívar, Simmons, Alvord, & Salerno Valdez, 2018; Wong et al., 2019).

The existing anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobic attitudes following the 2016 Trump presidential election created a precarious sociopolitical climate for immigrant communities (Chavez, Campos, Corona, Sanchez, & Ruiz, 2019; Fleming et al., 2019; Morey, 2018). Growing evidence suggests that immigrants' perceptions of policy might impact their wellbeing (Raymond-Flesch et al., 2023; Vargas et al., 2017; Vargas & Ybarra, 2017; Ybarra et al., 2019). If immigrants perceive immigration policies as fair, inclusive, and supportive of their rights and opportunities, they are more likely to experience positive feelings about sense of security, belonging, form positive and trusting bonds, and have trust in institutions (Corvino, Martinez-Damia, Belluzzi, Marzana, & D'Angelo, 2023). Conversely, if immigrants perceive policies as discriminatory, hostile, or exclusionary, it can lead to feelings of fear, anxiety, and alienation from society and negatively impacting their well-being (Tyrberg, 2024).

Perception of policy also influences the level of social capital within immigrant communities. Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and norms of reciprocity and trust that facilitate cooperation and collective action within a community. Positive perceptions of policy, such as policies that promote inclusion, equality, and social justice, can enhance social capital by fostering trust, cooperation, and solidarity among community members. In contrast, negative perceptions of policy, such as policies that perpetuate discrimination or marginalization, can erode social capital by undermining trust, dividing communities, and hindering collective efforts to address common challenges and achieve shared goals. For example, if immigrants

perceive that they are unfairly targeted or excluded by immigration policies, it may lead to a breakdown in trust and cooperation within their community, making it more difficult to mobilize resources and support each other.

This study contributes to this gap in the literature by filling a need for quantitative exploration using a measure of immigrants' perceptions of the policy context as the main independent variable. My analysis makes use of a new and innovative dataset that examined Asian and Latinx immigrants' perceptions of the policy context and the association with different dimensions of social capital. Immigrants' negative perceptions of the policy context can significantly affect the framework of social capital within their communities. When immigrants perceive policies as discriminatory, hostile, or exclusionary, it can erode trust not only in government institutions but also among community members (Perreira & Pedroza, 2019). A survey by Khashu (2009) indicated that aggressive enforcement of immigration laws had a negative impact on community relationships by decreasing trust between community residents and reporting of crime victimization and criminal activity. The latter can hinder cooperation, collaboration between communities, and ultimately weaken social capital.

Given the anti-immigration rhetoric, politics of the Trump years and the current legislative debates (e.g. Dreamers, Pathway to Citizenship, addressing the influx of new immigrants, and violence against the AAPI community---all this is occurring at a time when the USA is facing a unique demographic challenge) responding to the needs of two of the largest immigrant groups requires a deeper understanding of how the policy context affects immigrants. The United States for the first time in its history is facing a potential decline in its native population, especially non-Hispanic whites (and with a declining life expectancy) and this is seen in labor shortages in various industries (e.g., agriculture, construction, long term care; Hooper, 2021). Thus, the USA will have to accept the need for immigrants and integrating them, but if

this is to occur successfully, we must then focus on the issues faced by current immigrants who struggle to gain acceptance while the United States comes to terms with its demographic destiny.

Overview of the Dissertation

The following chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 2, reviewed relevant literature related to the concepts of this study by discussing empirical findings and methodological approaches from published literature, Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and analytical plan, Chapter 4 presents the results of the analyses and lastly Chapter 5 discusses the implications for practice and policy, the limitations of the study, and offer recommendations for future research and policy action.

Conclusion

Through this comprehensive examination, I aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on perceptions of the policy context among immigrants, which is currently understudied in the literature. Moreover, by exploring the role of demographic factors such as ethnicity and legal status in shaping community dynamics, specifically social capital, this study aims to have a greater understanding of immigrants' integration challenges and barriers. It is essential for policymakers and community leaders to understand which factors are associated with increasing or decreasing social capital to strengthen social connections and foster a sense of belonging and solidarity within immigrant communities. The findings of this dissertation aim to inform policymakers and community organizers in developing integrative policies, which can improve social capital formation in neighborhoods across California.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a literature review of existing studies that examine the dimensions of social capital, such as civic engagement. I also review the literature pertaining to immigrants' perceptions of the policy context and how its related to immigrant well-being. By synthesizing relevant literature, this paper seeks to elucidate the interconnectedness nature of these concepts and highlight their implications for immigrant well-being, integration, and participation in civic life.

A. Conceptual Framework- Social Capital Theory

Social capital as explained by political scientist Robert Putnam (2001), emphasizes the role of social networks and collective action in fostering trust and cooperation within diverse communities and social groups. Putnam (2001) posits that trust, reciprocity, and social networks are critical resources that facilitate collective action and community well-being. Within this view, trust within the neighborhood serves as a key indicator of social capital, and the likelihood of individuals to engage in prosocial behaviors such as civic and community engagement. According to this theory, high levels of social capital are associated with positive outcomes across various domains, including health, education, and economic mobility (Putnam, 2001). High degrees of social capital and civic engagement are also associated with positive outcomes in many areas of life, including health, altruism, compliance with the law, education, employment, and child welfare (National Academies of Sciences, 2014).

Social capital can be categorized into three different types: bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Abbott & Reilly, 2019; Leonard, 2004). Bonding social capital refers to connections and trust within homogenous groups, such as members of the same race/ethnicity, social class, or religious community. These ties are characterized by a high degree of trust,

shared norms, and common identities among members. Bonding social capital typically fosters solidarity and provides emotional support within close-knit groups, such as family and friends and often is tied to location, such as members living in the same neighborhood and/or attending the same social groups and schools. Interpersonal links can serve as bonding social capital through networks among friends, family, neighbors who are similar in the way they define themselves. Bridging social capital refers to the connections and trust across diverse groups within a community. Unlike bonding social capital, bridging social capital involves weaker ties but facilitates interaction and collaboration between individuals from different backgrounds or social circles. Bridging social capital facilitates the exchange of information and resources and fosters social cohesion across broader societal boundaries.

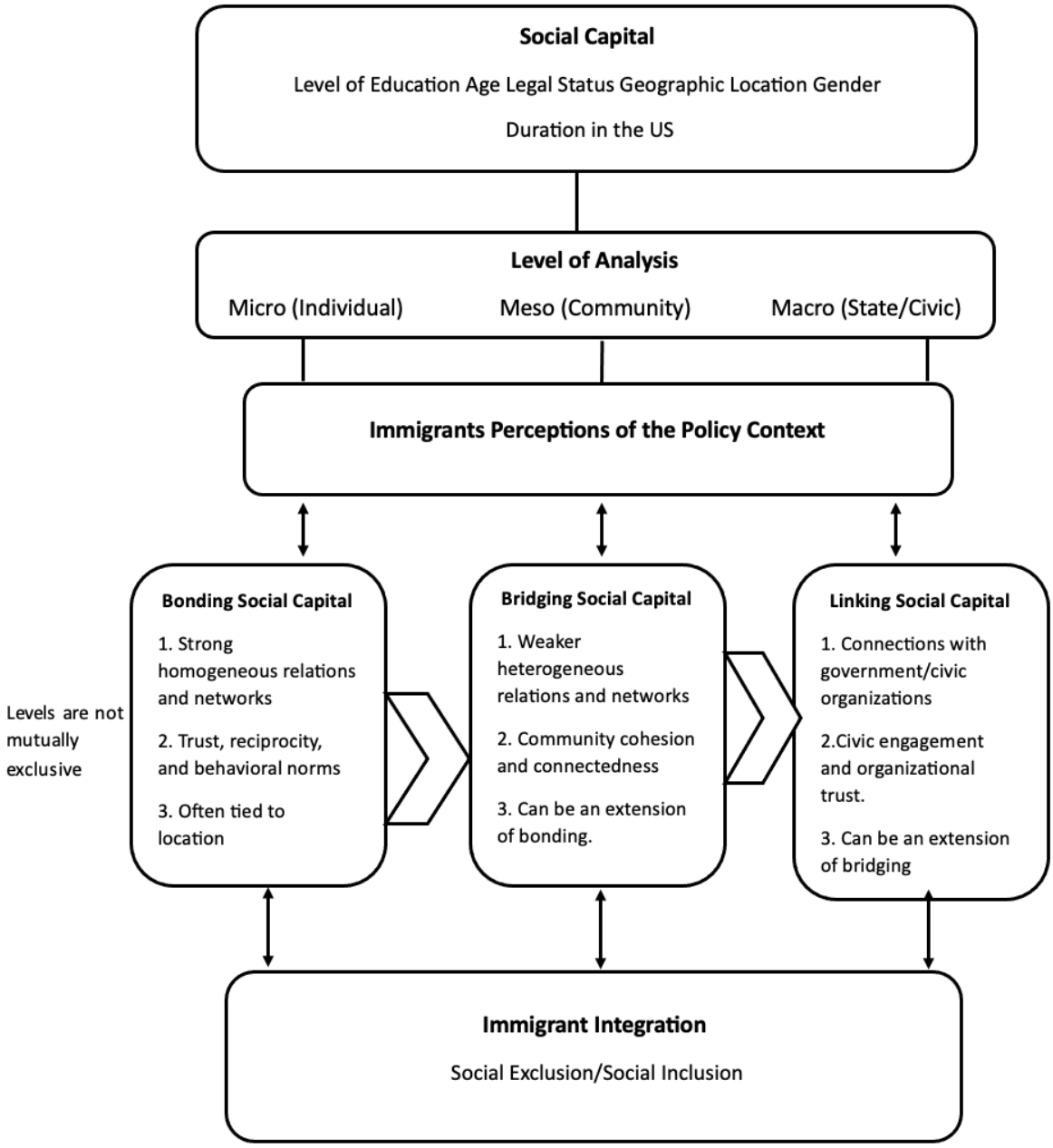
Lastly, linking social capital refers to connections and trust between individuals and formal institutions or organizations including the government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Saadi, Morales, Chen, and Sudhinaraset (2023, p. 1) describe "links to institutions are a type of linking capital, giving individuals and communities access to networks or groups with greater access to power or status". Linking social capital is important for accessing institutional resources, services, and opportunities. It involves connections that enable individuals to navigate and interact with larger social systems and institutions. The levels described are not mutually exclusive, for example bonding social capital can lead to bridging social capital via family and friends and connections made by people with an individual's interpersonal networks. Bridging social capital can be extended to linking social capital as well.

Immigrants' perceptions of the policy context may affect immigrants' outcomes for social capital, including bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, which ultimately affects the integration of immigrants in their communities. Figure 2 depicts how these concepts relate with

one another. Immigrants' perceptions of immigration policies can shape their sense of identity, belonging, and solidarity within their own ethnic or cultural communities. Positive perceptions of

Figure 2

Theoretical Framework: Social Capital and Perceptions of the Policy Context



Note: Adapted from Lewis, DiGiacomo, Luckett, Davidson, and Currow (2013)

policies that support immigrant rights and opportunities may strengthen bonding social capital by fostering trust and cooperation among community members. Conversely, negative perceptions of

discriminatory or exclusionary policies may weaken bonding social capital by eroding trust and solidarity within immigrant communities.

Immigrants' perceptions of policies can also influence their interactions with members of the host society and other immigrant groups. Positive perceptions of inclusive policies may encourage immigrants to engage with diverse social networks, participate in community activities, and seek support from individuals outside their immediate community. This can strengthen bridging social capital by facilitating cross-cultural understanding, cooperation, and collaboration. Conversely, negative perceptions of discriminatory policies may deter immigrants from engaging with broader social networks and seeking assistance from outside their community, thus limiting opportunities for bridging social capital.

Immigrants' perceptions of policies can affect their interactions with formal institutions and organizations, such as government agencies and advocacy groups. Positive perceptions of policies that protect immigrant rights and provide access to resources and services may encourage immigrants to engage with institutional actors, seek assistance, and participate in civic activities. This can strengthen linking social capital by enhancing immigrants' access to institutional resources, information, and opportunities for collective action. Conversely, negative perceptions of policies that undermine immigrant rights or restrict access to services may erode trust in institutions and deter immigrants from seeking assistance or engaging in civic activities, thus weakening linking social capital.

In summary, immigrants' perceptions of the policy context are closely intertwined with their social capital, including bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Positive perceptions of inclusive and supportive policies can strengthen social capital by fostering trust, cooperation, and engagement within immigrant communities and between immigrants and the broader society. Conversely, negative perceptions of discriminatory or exclusionary policies may weaken social

capital by eroding trust, solidarity, and opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. Therefore, understanding immigrants' perceptions of the policy context is essential for assessing the strength and dynamics of social capital within immigrant communities and its implications for immigrant integration and well-being.

Measures of Social Capital

The theory of social capital also encompasses several dimensions including social cohesion and civic engagement via the way of political participation; engagement in community organizations; connectedness with friends and family and neighbors; and attitudes toward and relationships with neighbors, government, and other groups (National Academies of Sciences, 2014). Only a few scholars have suggested civic engagement is related to negative metal health outcomes (Smith, 2022). Under certain circumstances these actions and processes may contribute to social tension and community fragmentation; in others social cooperation and integration (National Academies of Sciences, 2014). Several studies have suggested that civic and community engagement is important for building social capital within a community (Hombrados-Mendieta, Gomez-Jacinto, Dominguez-Fuentes, & Garcia-Leiva, 2013; Long & Perkins, 2007; Ramos, Suarez, Leon, & Trinidad, 2017). Civic activities form and transmit political knowledge and networks, and serve as the basis for participation, mobilization, and social movements (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Social Capital and Civic Engagement among Immigrants

Among immigrant communities, social capital serves as a crucial determinant of integration (see Table 1 for definition of key terms) and civic engagement (Ebert & Okamoto, 2013; P. S. Li, 2004; Segura, 2013). Growing research supports immigrant communities often rely on their social networks, kinship ties, and community organizations to access resources, navigate

institutional barriers, and forge connections within their environments (Alba & Nee, 2003; Bankston III, 2014; Herdağdelen, State, Adamic, & Mason, 2016; Saadi et al., 2023). Some studies suggest immigrant communities develop tight-knit social networks and economic structures to navigate the challenges of integration (Evra & Kazemipur, 2019; Poros, 2011; Reynolds & Crea, 2017).

Some studies have underscored the heterogeneity of social cohesion dynamics among Asian and Latinx immigrants. For example, Alba and Nee (2003) identified variations in social cohesion patterns across immigrant groups, with factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location affecting the strength of social ties and bonds. Moreover, research by Hall and Mikaye (2018) highlighted the role of cultural and linguistic factors in shaping social cohesion among Asian immigrants in California emphasizing the importance of heritage language maintenance and ethnic identity formation. One study by Beck and Shklyan (2021) suggested ethnicity may play a role in engaging in civic engagement, they found Hispanic and Asian participants were less likely to participate in voluntary associations compared to white participants. A study by Jensen (2008) examining immigrant parents and adolescents from El Salvador and India living in a metropolitan area found 81% were engaged at the community level and 30% at the political level. Community engagement was an almost universal activity among Asian Indian adolescents (95%). These findings highlight the complexity of social cohesion dynamics within immigrant communities and highlight factors including ethnicity and geographical location.

A study by Jang and Chiriboga (2010) examined social capital in communities with people of color, with measures of community support, community participation, and its association with depressive symptoms among Korean older immigrants in Central Texas. They found higher levels of depressive symptoms among individuals who received lower levels of community

support, had limited participation in community events and activities, and reported more frequent negative interactions with ethnic community members. Similarly B. M. Kim, Auh, Lee, and Ahn (2013) found that partnerships in communities was significantly associated with a lower level of depression for older Korean and Chinese immigrants. Political participation was only associated with a lower level of depression for older Chinese immigrants and norms and information sharing were only associated with a lower level of depression for older Korean immigrants. These findings suggest community social support is linked to reduced depression levels for both Korean and Chinese immigrants, however, political participation was more beneficial for older Chinese immigrants, and norms/information sharing were more beneficial for older Korean immigrants.

Some scholars have also pointed out disparities in community engagement and political participation among undocumented immigrants compared to their documented counterparts. A study by Lai (2021) revealed undocumented immigrants were less likely to participate in community and ethnic organizations compared to documented immigrants (Lai, 2021). Moreover, this study indicated legal status does not necessarily affect membership in religious institutions, suggesting that certain social spaces may be more inclusive regardless of immigration status. However, even within these spaces, undocumented mothers with undocumented children were less likely to volunteer or participate in parent-teacher associations compared to both documented mothers and undocumented mothers with documented children. This highlights the complex intersections of legal status, family dynamics such as being part of a mixed status family, and community engagement.

The Context of Neighborhood and Community

Some research has focused on studying neighborhood level factors and the community context and their influence on social capital formation among immigrant communities (Guo,

Wang, Liu, & Dong, 2023; Muchow & Bozick, 2022; Zhou & Lark, 2014). Findings highlight the role of neighborhood diversity, social networks, and institutional resources in shaping immigrants' social integration and participation in local affairs. For example, some studies have suggested community participation has a positive effect on social integration. A longitudinal study by Xie, McDowall, and Houlihan (2024) examined the use of local government services in high immigrant neighborhoods in Baltimore City, Maryland. They found immigrant concentration reduced requests in high immigrants' neighborhoods with Latino or Black concentration, but not in high-immigrant neighborhoods with White and Asian concentration. Furthermore, they found that in Latino high-immigrant neighborhoods requests for government services happened after 2017 when the federal government adopted hostile immigration policies. J Almeida, Kawachi, Molnar, and Subramanian (2009) examined social ties and social cohesion among Latinos living in Chicago and found a negative association between neighborhood concentration of Mexican Americans and social cohesion. Mexican Americans reported more social ties, but lower social cohesion compared to non-Latinx Whites; contrary to the assumption that Mexican immigrant enclaves beget social cohesion, that was not true in Chicago neighborhoods.

Furthermore, social capital in neighborhoods also influence health and mental health. A study by Browning and Cagney (2002) found individuals residing in neighborhoods with higher levels of collective efficacy reported better overall health. Studies show that feeling unsafe in one's neighborhood or lack of neighborhood cohesion is associated with later chronic health conditions (J. W. Robinette, Charles, & Gruenewald, 2018; J. W. Robinette, Piazza, & Stawski, 2021) and poor physical health (J.W. Robinette, Charles, & Gruenewald, 2016). Hong, Zhang, and Walton (2014) examined the mental health of Asian Americans and Latinos, findings revealed social cohesion fully mediated the association between neighborhood poverty and

mental health among Latinos. This study suggested that Latinos in impoverished neighborhoods were at greater risk for mental health disorders due to the lack of social cohesion. A similar article by Rios, Aiken, and Zautra (2012) examined neighborhood social cohesion and mental health using among Hispanic and non-Hispanic residents in a metropolitan area in Phoenix, Arizona. Neighborhood social cohesion was significantly related to better physical and mental health and findings were consistent across Hispanic and non-Hispanic residents. These findings highlight the role of social relationships and support networks in protecting against stressors and highlight the need for addressing community level barriers to social capital.

B. Overview of History of Immigration Policy in the United States

Understanding the history of public policies and U.S. immigration laws is critically important to understand the integration processes and social capital formation within immigrant communities. At different points in U.S. history, policies have been more welcoming towards immigrants. At other times, however, government authorities have attempted to limit immigration, particularly from non-Western European countries (D. S. Massey & Pren, 2012). Although Asian and Latinx immigrants have very different and distinct migration trajectories, they share similarities in the way they have been subjected to immigrant legislation (Sullivan, 1987). US immigration laws have been utilized to institutionalize practices and racialize the status of Chinese and Mexicans immigrants, labeling some immigrant groups as "illegal" resulting in social hierarchies based on race/ethnicity, country of origin, gender, and class among newly arrived immigrant groups, ultimately influencing their assimilation and integration into society (Menjívar, 2021; Nakphong et al., 2022). Menjívar (2021) explains the racialization of illegality is tied to notions of deserving and undeserving, and shapes immigrants' perceptions of themselves and how they are perceived in society.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers, was one of the first laws aimed at excluding immigrants based on their country of origin (Echeverria-Estrada & Batalova, 2020)The anti-Chinese movement fueled similar mobilizations against Japanese, Koreans, and Filipino immigrant groups, and by the 1930s, Asians were almost completely excluded from immigration to the United States (J. G. Young, 2017). Restrictions on immigration from Asia culminated with the Immigration Act of 1924, which placed national origin quotas that barred migration from Asia (Chishti & Gelatt, 2024).

Shifting to today, the racialization of legal status among Asians is based on the "model minority" stereotypes that allow them to "pass" for "legal" (Menjívar, 2021). Asians experience dual liminality, positioned between model minority and marginalization both from mainstream society and from their co-ethnic communities based on their legal status. Unlike undocumented immigrants who have either entered the United States without inspection or were brought to the United States as children, the majority of Asian immigrants lose their status either by overstaying and/or losing a valid visa, or through policy changes (B. M. Kim & Yellow Horse, 2018). As the model minority, Asians are often perceived as intelligent, a group which has been able to achieve educational and economic success (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007). On the other hand, they are seen as perpetual foreigners, never quite worthy of full American status and continually seen as outsiders and a foreign threat (Dennis, 2018; Li & Nicholson Jr, 2021; Masuoka & Junn, 2013). The portrayal of Asians as the "model minority" can affect perceptions of the policy context both within and outside the Asian community, potentially impacting their engagement with policy issues. Externally, the model minority stereotype may contribute to the perpetuation of policies that overlook the diverse needs and challenges faced by Asian immigrant communities, reinforcing the perception that they do not require assistance or support, therefore diminishing their social capital.

Likewise, Latinx immigrants have also been labeled in the “illegal” category. In 1929, government authorities in California and throughout the U.S. undertook an aggressive program to forcibly remove people of Mexican ancestry from the United States through the "Mexican Reparation Program" (Alanis Enciso, 2017). The program was coordinated by Border Patrol, the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), the Department of Labor's Bureau of Immigration, and state governments and city councils. This program included massive raids similar to the ones carried out today, massive deportations in inhumane conditions, separation of families, and included many human rights violations (Hernández, 2010). In the last century an increase in federal immigration enforcement began after 1990, which focused on the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border through interior enforcement and an unprecedented rise in deportations of noncitizens (Coleman & Kocher, 2011; Dunn, 2021).

In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) authorized formal cooperation between federal, state, and local authorities including the 287(g) Program (commonly referred to as the *287(g)* agreements) which allowed state and local police to receive training for immigration functions relating to the investigation, apprehension, and/or detention of noncitizens during a predetermined time frame and under federal oversight by the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS’s) Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (Congressional Research Service, 2021). Over the last 15 years, anti-immigrant legislation and enforcement techniques have become more prevalent (Becerra et al., 2020). Furthermore in 2017 the United States created changes in the nation’s immigration policies including restrictions targeting those from Muslim nations, plans on building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, ending Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for some immigrant groups, the expansion of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by 300%, and policies punishing sanctuary cities (Kelley-Widmer, 2021; Pierce, Bolter, & Selee, 2018).

Immigration Integration Policies

In response to federal initiatives, states respond by enacting both inclusive and exclusive policies at the state level (De Trinidad Young & Wallace, 2019; Samari, Nagle, & Coleman-Minahan, 2021; Ybarra et al., 2019). Wallace and Young (2018) highlight the distinction between *immigration* laws and policies and *immigrant* laws and policies; immigration laws and policies regulate who can legally enter and stay in the US and are the responsibility of the US government. Immigrant laws and policies grant rights and protections to immigrant groups based on legal status and are enacted at the state level. Furthermore, immigrant policies exist across different sectors such as health, welfare, education, employment, and law enforcement (Wallace & Young, 2018). This results in a range of social and political environments that immigrants are faced with, and shapes immigrants' integration in U.S. society.

Although the process of immigrant integration can be achieved through building social capital in communities, it can also be done via intersecting policies at the federal, state, and community level that reinforce one another and improve access to education, expand eligibility criteria for health benefits and social services and employment (Philbin, Flake, Hatzenbuehler, & Hirsch, 2018). For example, some states vary in their level of inclusivity of immigrants. California is more inclusive and offers driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. Some states limit the state and local law enforcement's involvement in federal immigration enforcement efforts (i.e., sanctuary policies) (Koball, Kirby, & Hartig, 2022). States like Georgia and Alabama are considered more exclusionary, prohibiting undocumented individuals from enrolling into higher education and limiting eligibility for social service and health programs (Roth, 2017). Therefore, a state's *combination* of policies shapes the experience of being an immigrant in that state (Wallace & Young, 2018).

Perceptions of the Policy Context among Immigrant Populations

Immigrants' perceptions of the policy context, encompassing immigration policies and integration programs exert profound influence on their experiences and trajectories in the receiving countries. Scholars have argued that policy perceptions are shaped not only by formal provisions of public policies but also by historical legacies, cultural norms and individual experiences (Becerra et al., 2017; Ybarra et al., 2019). Research in the sociology and public health literature has found policy perceptions are associated with mental health outcomes such as stress and anxiety, health outcomes, and distrust in law enforcement (Becerra et al., 2017; Bruzelius & Baum, 2019; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2017; J. J. Lee & Zhou, 2020; Martinez et al., 2015; Salas, Ayón, & Gurrola, 2013; Vargas et al., 2017).

For instance, Vargas et al. (2017) found views of unfavorable anti-immigration laws were associated with negative health outcomes among Latino immigrants, including poor physical health and mental health. The odds of reporting poor health were 1.7 times larger for respondents who perceived their state's immigrant policies as unfavorable. More evidence was documented in another study of Latino immigrants in New York City, which revealed perceptions about the overall sociopolitical context influenced participants' psycho-emotional health and health-related behaviors (J. J. Lee & Zhou, 2020). Similarly, Ayón (2020) demonstrated that perceived threats to family and children's vulnerability due to immigration policies heightened the stress levels among Latinx immigrant parents.

Furthermore, research has examined immigrant perceptions of law enforcement within the policy environment. Theodore and Habans (2016) examined police involvement in immigration enforcement on perceptions of law enforcement among Latinx immigrant and non-Latinx immigrants. The results revealed widespread fear of law enforcement within the Latino community, driven by concerns about immigration status investigations and deportation.

Similarly, Hacker et al. (2011) found perceptions about local police collaborating closely with federal authorities and ICE contributed to heightened mistrust and reluctance to engage with law enforcement. Moreover, participants also held misconceptions that local and state police had the authority to deport individuals.

Some studies suggest potential variations in policing experiences across different immigrant communities. A study by Theodore (2013) highlighted the detrimental impact of increased police involvement in immigration enforcement on Latinos perceptions of public safety and willingness to contact law enforcement authorities. While much of the literature focuses on Latino immigrants, studies examining the experiences of Asian immigrants in the United States are limited. Only one study by Chu and Song (2015) focused on Chinese immigrants in Toronto and New York City. Immigrants in Toronto held more positive perceptions of the police compared to immigrants in New York City. These findings suggest Asian and Latinx immigrants might have different perceptions of the policy context even though they are subjected to the same policies.

An area of research has also focused on examining perceptions of the policy context and discrimination. A study by J. Almeida et al. (2016) examining the impact of pro-immigrant policies and anti-immigrant policies on perceived discrimination among Latinos in the US revealed participants in states with more anti-immigrant policies were more likely to report discrimination compared to those living in states with few anti-immigrant policies. Specifically, the study found a positive association between anti-immigrant policies and the probability of perceived discrimination among different Latino subgroups. Mexicans, Cubans and other Latinos living in states with more anti-immigrant policies reported a higher likelihood of perceived discrimination compared to Puerto Ricans. Perhaps historical factors, such as patterns of immigration and political relations between the United States and Latin American countries, can

also influence perceptions of discrimination. For example, the history of U.S. intervention in Cuba or Mexico may shape attitudes towards Cuban or Mexican immigrants, contributing to experiences of discrimination. It is important to highlight these experiences as perceived discrimination may affect the formation and maintenance of social networks within Latino communities. Individuals who experience discrimination might withdraw from social interactions or to seek support from within their own ethnic or national group.

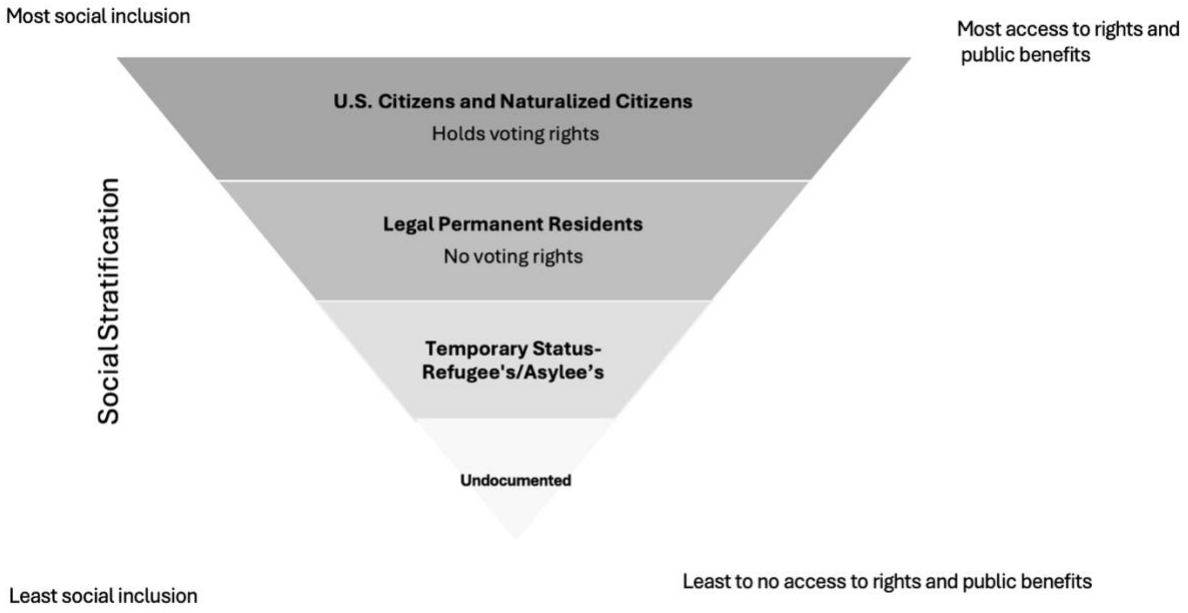
C. The Role of Legal Status

The role of legal status in shaping immigrants' experiences and outcomes in the United States is a critical aspect of immigration research. An individual's legal status is a determinant of immigrants access to rights, to government benefits and services, employment eligibility, deportation susceptibility, and ability to participate in the economy and political life of the United States (L. Abrego & Lakhani, 2015). Scholars have conceptualized legal status as a form of stratification (See Figure 3), creating hierarchies of rights and protections that structure immigrants' social positions and experiences (L. Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; M.-E. Young & D. Madrigal, 2017).

Undocumented immigrants are at the bottom of the legal status stratification, they have the most barriers to accessing rights and services, as well as heightened vulnerability to deportation and exploitation (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008; Torres & Waldinger, 2015; Torres & Young, 2016). Other statuses such as asylee, refugee, or temporary protected status, also are exposed to precarious conditions and limited rights. In contrast legal permanent residents or green card holders have access to certain benefits and employment opportunities but may still face restrictions on political participation and social entitlements (Broder et al., 2022).

Figure 3

The Social Stratification of Legal Status



Naturalized citizens occupy the highest legal status hierarchy and are entitled to the full political rights and entitlements as native-born citizens (Aptekar, 2015; D. Massey & Bartley, 2005). Between these statuses lie people with discretionary statuses such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and those with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) but still face uncertainty regarding their legal protections (L. Abrego, 2008).

The implications of legal status extend beyond material rights and services, encompassing symbolic boundaries of social inclusion and exclusion (M. E. D. Young & D. S. Madrigal, 2017). Immigrants' legal status also shape their social positioning, affecting their access to social networks, support systems, community engagement opportunities (Chinchilla & Hamilton, 2002; Lai, 2021) and experiences of non-belonging (Soto Saavedra et al., 2023). Undocumented immigrants may experience social isolation and marginalization due to fear of deportation and

discrimination, limiting their ability to build social capital and integrate into their communities (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012).

An area of research has examined civic engagement and its relationship to legal status. Research has found legal status can affect immigrants' engagement in civic and political activities, which are also essential components of social capital (L Abrego, 2011; Beck & Shklyan, 2021; Brettell, 2020). Some research has found undocumented immigrants face barriers to civic participation or political activities due to legal constraints and fears of deportation (L Abrego, 2011; J. M. Hagan, Castro, & Rodríguez, 2010). In a study by Beck and Shklyan (2021) civic participation varied by legal status, naturalized citizens and permanent residents were significantly less likely to participate in civic engagement compared to nonimmigrants. While legal status may deter civic engagement for some, other individuals might actively participate in community organizing, civil disobedience, and political advocacy to challenge exclusionary policies (Beck & Shklyan, 2021; W. Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2010; Varsanyi, 2005).

Some research has found undocumented immigrants are highly resilient in advocating for their rights and voicing their concerns (Gates, 2017; Nicholls, 2013). For example, Varsanyi (2005) showed undocumented immigrants in Los Angeles, although unable to vote, attended campaign rallies and participated in "get out the vote" drives, which were intended to persuade registered voters to support candidates and legislation that advanced the needs of the undocumented community. Similarly, in the year 2018 many undocumented children of immigrants known as Dreamers worked hard to turn out the vote in Latino communities around Los Angeles (Brettell, 2020).

Other researchers have found growing evidence that undocumented immigrants actively engage in civic affairs. For instance, L Abrego (2011) showed how 1.5-generation immigrants were motivated by the stigma surrounding illegality to voice their concerns, speak about their contributions to society, and participate in collective political activities. Undocumented students also showed up at protests for Georgia's HB 87, a bill with similarly restrictive measures as SB 1070 (Arrocha, 2012). This suggests that having an undocumented status may actually encourage civic engagement, which stands in contrast to findings that suggest being undocumented causes immigrants to withdraw from public life in order to avoid law enforcement (Beck & Shklyan, 2021).

While there are mixed findings in the literature, indicating that the type of civic engagement and specific contextual factors play crucial roles, growing evidence highlights instances of active participation among undocumented immigrants. The nature of civic engagement among undocumented immigrants may vary depending on the socio-political context and the specific issues at stake. Some findings challenge simplistic notions that being undocumented invariably leads to withdrawal from public life to avoid law enforcement, as suggested by Beck and Shklyan (2021). For example, undocumented immigrants might engage in acts of *informal* political participation such as attending public protests, this was supported by undocumented immigrants' participation in demonstrations against bills with restrictive measures, such as Georgia's HB 87, SB 1070. Research suggests factors such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and length of residency in the United States can influence the extent and nature of civic involvement and political participation. Additionally, the availability of supportive networks, advocacy organizations, and legal resources may also play pivotal roles in facilitating or constraining immigrants' engagement in civic affairs.

Some research has found that legal status can exert a complex influence on the levels of civic engagement among immigrants, with outcomes varying based on a multitude of contextual factors. For instance, Filindra and Manatschal (2020) highlight the role of the political climate in shaping immigrants' civic participation. In environments where anti-immigrant sentiments are prevalent and immigration policies are restrictive, immigrants may face heightened barriers to engaging civically due to fear of reprisal or deportation. Conversely, in more inclusive political climates that prioritize immigrant rights and integration, immigrants may feel empowered to participate actively in civic activities and advocacy efforts.

The effect of immigration enforcement policies on immigrants' civic engagement cannot be overstated. Research by (Bada, Fox, Donnelly, & Selee, 2010); García (2021); (Zani & Barrett, 2012) underscores how punitive enforcement measures, such as increased raids or deportations, can instill fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities, deterring them from engaging in public life or asserting their rights. Moreover, the lack of access to legal resources and support networks further compounds these challenges, leaving immigrants feeling isolated and vulnerable to exploitation or abuse. Furthermore, changes in immigration policy, particularly those that target immigrants or promote exclusionary narratives, can have profound effects on immigrants' willingness to engage civically. Brettell (2020) highlights how negative shifts in public attitudes towards immigrants, fueled by political rhetoric or media sensationalism, can erode trust in institutions and diminish immigrants' sense of belonging and agency. As a result, immigrants may withdraw from civic participation out of fear or disillusionment, exacerbating social divisions and marginalization.

However, it is essential to recognize the resilience and agency of immigrant communities in navigating these challenges. Despite facing significant barriers, immigrants often demonstrate

remarkable adaptability and resourcefulness in mobilizing collective action, forming grassroots organizations, and advocating for policy changes that address their needs and interests. In summary, while there are indeed conflicting findings regarding the civic engagement of undocumented immigrants, a nuanced understanding reveals a complex interplay of motivations, opportunities, and barriers. Recognizing and addressing these complexities is essential for promoting inclusive civic participation and amplifying the voices of all members of immigrant communities.

D. Research Questions, and Hypotheses

While existing scholarship has provided valuable insights in the areas of social capital and political engagement, significant gaps remain particularly regarding Asian and Latinx immigrants in California. First, much of the literature has focused on either social cohesion or policy perceptions alone, overlooking the interplay between these constructs and their effects across diverse immigrant groups**.** To address the gaps in the literature, this dissertation seeks to examine different aspects of social capital and its association with immigrants' perceptions of the policy context among Asian and Latinx immigrants in California using secondary data from the 2018-2020 RIGHTS Survey**.** Based on the literature review, this dissertation's study research questions were:

1) What is the association between immigrants' perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity, and legal status on perceived mutual help while controlling for other sociodemographic variables?

> **Hypothesis 1a**: Immigrants who perceive a more favorable policy context will have higher odds of perceived mutual help, even after controlling for sociodemographic variables.

Hypothesis 1b: Asian immigrants will have higher odds of perceived mutual help compared to Latinx immigrants, while controlling for sociodemographic variables.

Hypothesis 1c: Noncitizens with green cards and noncitizens without a green card will have higher odds of perceived mutual help compared to naturalized citizens, while controlling for sociodemographic variables.

2) What is the association between immigrants' perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity, and legal status on perceived social trust while controlling for sociodemographic variables?

Hypothesis 2a: Immigrants who perceive more favorable perceptions of the policy context will have higher odds of perceived social trust while controlling for other variables.

Hypothesis 2b: Asian immigrants will have higher odds of perceived social trust compared to Latino immigrants.

Hypothesis 2c: Noncitizens with a green card and noncitizens without a green card will have lower odds of perceived social trust compared to naturalized citizens while controlling for other variables.

3) What is the association between immigrants' perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity, and legal status on neighborhood safety while controlling for other sociodemographic variables?

Hypothesis 3a: Negative perceptions of the policy context among immigrants are associated with decreased feelings of safety in their neighborhood.

Hypothesis 3b: Perceived safety is associated with ethnicity; Asian immigrants will report higher odds of feeling of safe in their neighborhood compared to Latinx immigrants.

Hypothesis 3c: Naturalized citizens will report higher odds of feelings of safety in their neighborhood compared to noncitizens with a green card and noncitizens without a green card.

4) What is the association between immigrants' perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity, and legal status on political engagement while controlling for sociodemographic variables?

Hypothesis 4a: Negative perceptions of the policy context among immigrants are associated with increased odds of political engagement .

Hypothesis 4b: Ethnicity is associated with political engagement. Specifically, Latino immigrants will have higher odds of political engagement compared to Asian immigrants.

Hypothesis 4c: Noncitizens with a green card and noncitizens without a green card will have higher odds of political engagement compared to naturalized citizens.

5) What is the association between immigrants' perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity, and legal status on community organization involvement while controlling for other sociodemographic variables?

Hypothesis 5a: Negative perceptions of the policy context among immigrants are associated with higher odds of community organization involvement.

Hypothesis 5b: Ethnicity is associated with community organization involvement; specifically Latino immigrants will have higher odds of community organization involvement compared to Asian immigrants.

Hypothesis 5c: Legal status is associated with community organization involvement; Specifically, noncitizens with a green card and noncitizens without a green card will have higher odds of community organization involvement compared to naturalized citizens.

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter describes the methodology used to examine the association between the policy context, legal status, and ethnicity on the different dimensions of social capital using data from a unique dataset focusing on experiences of Asian and Latinx immigrants. This chapter provides an overview of the secondary data obtained from the 2018-2020 'Research on Immigrant Health and State Policy' (RIGHTS) Survey, describes the research design, sample, data collection procedures, and the variables and measures utilized. Lastly, the analytical approach is described.

Research Design

This dissertation study employed a cross-sectional, quantitative research design. This study analyzed merged data from both the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Research on Immigrant Health and State Policy Survey (RIGHTS) and the 2018, 2019, and 2020 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). The RIGHTS survey was a cross-sectional, follow-on survey to the California Health Interview Survey that collects data from immigrant Asian and Latinx adult respondents aged 18 or older on topics related to health and wellbeing. The California Health Interview Survey is a population-based survey and the largest state-level population health survey in the country (CHIS, 2021). The CHIS sample is representative of California's non-institutionalized population living in households (Langdale, Zucker, Goyle, & Sherr, 2021). Data from the RIGHTS and CHIS surveys were merged to create a combined dataset with data for years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The total sample size for the combined dataset is 2,010 respondents.

Data Source

RIGHTS Survey

The Research on Immigrant Health and State Policy is a mixed-methods study that was designed to investigate how the state's policy context affect immigrants access to health care (Langdale et al., 2021). The quantitative component consisted of a follow-on survey to the California Health Interview Survey, which took about 15 minutes to complete and consisted of approximately 65 questions. The questions focused on different topics such as participants perceptions of the policy context, community organization involvement, and perceptions of social exclusion. This dissertation presents the findings from the quantitative data of the survey.

Eligibility criteria for participation in the survey included: 1) be an adult 18 years or older, 2) be an immigrant who immigrated to the United States and was born in Asia (excluding countries in the Middle East and North Africa classification) or Latin America to parents who were not U.S. citizens and 3) completed the adult CHIS survey questionnaire and agreed to be recontacted for subsequent research projects (Langdale et al., 2021). Exclusion criteria included: US-born citizens, persons who were born outside of Asia or Latin America, and persons who had at least one U.S. citizen parent when they were born. Data for the RIGHTS survey was collected through phone interviews collected by SRSS. SSRS is an independent research firm that specializes in innovative methodologies, optimized sample designs, and reaching low-incidence populations. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, and Vietnamese.

Data Collection

Potential participants were first contacted by mail via sending out a letter of invitation to respondents who completed an adult CHIS questionnaire and agreed to be recontacted for future research projects. The invitation letter included the purpose of the study, described what their participation would entail, and included a toll-free phone number which respondents could call,

and an experienced telephone interviewer would respond. After one week of mailing out the invitation, interviewers followed up with a phone call to the potential respondents. Informed consent was obtained for all participants, and they received a $25 gift card upon completion of the survey (Langdale et al., 2021).

A total of 5,521 respondents agreed to be re-contacted for further studies out of the 10,122 CHIS respondents that met eligibility criteria and a total of 2,013 respondents completed the RIGHTS survey (Langdale et al., 2021). Most interviews were completed in English and Spanish (79%). A total of 1,036 interviews were completed in English, 563 interviews were completed in Spanish; 236 in Chinese, 104 in Korean, and 74 in Vietnamese. The higher completion rate in English was consistent across the data collection years. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of California, Los Angeles.

Measures

Sociodemographic Variables

To capture important characteristics relevant to immigrants' experiences of the policy context, the following measures were included as control variables:

*Age***.** Participants were asked to self-report their age. CHIS provided a continuous variable for age.

*Gender***.** Participants were asked to self-report their gender. Gender was a dichotomous variable coded as (1) Male and (2) Female. The reference group was coded as male.

*Marital Status***.** Participants self-reported their marital status. The response options included: (1) Married, (2) Living with a partner, (3) Widowed, (4) Divorced, (5) Separated, and (6) Never Married. The response categories were collapsed and recoded into a dichotomous

variable: (1) Married/Living with a partner (coded as the reference group) and (2) Never Married/Divorced/Widowed/Separated.

*Employment Status***.** The employment status variable was constructed using a variable provided by CHIS called "working status", which was originally categorized and coded as: (1) Full-time employment, (2) Part-time employment, (3) Employed, not at work, (4) Unemployed, looking for work, and (5) Unemployed, not looking for work. For this study, employment status was recoded to a dichotomous variable (1) Employed (i.e. full-time/part-time employment/employed, not at work) and (2) Not employed (i.e. looking for work/not looking for work). The reference group was Married/Living with a partner.

*Educational Attainment***.** Participants were asked to report the highest level of education they completed. CHIS provided collapsed categories for the various response options. The options include: (1) Grade 1-8 (2) Grade 9-11, (3) Grade 12/HS Diploma (4) College degree or above, (5) Vocational school, (6) AA or AS degree, (7) BA/BS degree, (8) Some grad school, (9) MA or MS degree, and (10) PhD or equivalent. The variable was recoded as: (1) Less than high school., (2) H.S. diploma (reference group), and (3) Some college or higher.

*Below the Federal Poverty Level***.** To measure for socioeconomic status, the CHIS variable Federal Poverty Level (FPL) was utilized. The response options included: (1) 0-99% FPL (2) 100-199 % FPL, (3) 200-299% FPL and (4) 300% FPL. The variable was recoded into a dichotomous variable: (0) No (1) Yes. Those in the yes category, were those with an FPL of 200-299% FPL and 300% FPL, and those in the no category were those with an FPL of 0-99% FPL and 100-199 % FPL. The reference group was coded as those in the yes category (200% FPL or above).

*Years in the US***.** Participants were asked how many years they have lived in the United States, the response options included: (1) Less than one year, (2) 2-4 Years, (3) 5-9 Years, (4)

10-14 Years, and (5) 15 years or more. The response options were recoded to (1) Less than 5 years, (2) 5-9 years, (3) 10-14 years (4) 15+ years. The response options "less than one year" and "2-4 years" were combined due to the 5 year cut off for immigrants who are eligible to participate in federal, local, or state benefit programs after five years of residence in the U.S (Broder et al., 2022) and this was the reference group.

*Community Type***.** The CHIS provided a dichotomous variable for community type, which is coded as (1) Urban and (2) Rural. The reference group was the urban category.

*Region***.** Participants were asked what county they lived in. Using this information, the CHIS provided a variable for the 7 largest regions in California that participants lived in. This variable was coded as (10) North/Sierra Counties (20) Greater Bay Area (30) Sacramento Area, (40) San Joaquin Valley (50) Central Coast (60) Los Angeles and (70) Other Southern CA. The response options were recoded to 3 main regions: (1) Northern CA, (2) Central CA, and (3) Southern CA, which was the reference group.

Dependent Variables

The outcome variables for this study were measured by using different dimensions of social capital, which was completed by using different items from the CHIS and RIGHT surveys. The items capture the different dimensions of social capital that were discussed earlier in this paper.

*Perceived Mutual Help***.** One question from CHIS asked the degree respondents agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *"People in my neighborhood are willing to help each other."* The item was rated on a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from: 1) Strongly Agree 2) Agree 3) Disagree and 4) Strongly Disagree. The item was reverse coded to (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree for interpretation purposes, so that higher numbers indicated higher odds of perceived mutual help.

*Perceived Social Trust***.** Another question from CHIS asked the degree respondents agreed or disagreed with the following statement *"People in this neighborhood can be trusted."* The item was rated on a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from: 1) Strongly Agree 2) Agree 3) Disagree and 4) Strongly Disagree. The items were also reverse coded, so that higher numbers indicated higher odds of perceived social trust.

Perceived Neighborhood Safety. The third item from CHIS asked, "*Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?"* This item was also rated on a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from: 1) All the time 2) Most of the time 3) Some of the time and 4) None of the time. The item was reverse coded for easier interpretation to 1) None of the time (2) Some of the time (3) Most of the time (4) All the time.

*Community Organization Involvement***.** I included an item from the RIGHTS survey, which asked "*Are you currently involved with any groups in your community, for example parent groups, school groups, or religious groups*?" This item was rated on a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from: 1) Often 2) Sometimes 3) Rarely and 4) Never. The item was reverse coded to 1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes and (4) Often.

*Political Engagement***.** The last item included an item from the RIGHTS survey which asked, "*Since arriving in the US, have you ever participated in an act of civic or political engagement, such as contacting a public official, signing a petition, or participating in a protest, a walk-out, or strike*?" This item was recoded as the item above.

Main Independent Variables

*Negative Perceptions of the Policy Context***.** The main independent variable for this study was immigrants' negative perceptions of the policy context. This study used 7 items from the RIGHTS survey. Participants were asked a series of statements that asked about their views

about whether they find it risky to call police, feel protected from immigration officials at clinics, work, and in their neighborhoods (See Table 2).

Table 2

Perceptions of the Policy Context Survey Items, RIGHTS Study 2018-2020

Immigrants' Perceptions of the Policy Context Items
1. Immigrants are discriminated against in the workplace because of their accent or skin color.
2. It is risky for immigrants in my community to call police when they need help
3. Immigration officials stop people from my background when traveling.
4. Immigrants are protected from immigration officials while they are at a health clinic.
5. Immigrants are protected from immigration officials while at work.
6. Immigrants are safe from encountering immigration officials while walking or driving around their neighbourhood.
7. Immigrants are prevented from getting citizenship or sponsoring family if they have used government benefits, such as Medi-Cal, food stamps, or housing subsidies.

Response options were on a 5 level Likert scale: (1) always, (2) usually, (3) sometimes, (4) rarely, and (5) never. Questions 1, 2, 3, and 7 were classified as unfavorable/negative perceptions, therefore, they were reverse coded as (5) always, (4) usually, (3) sometimes, (2) rarely, and (1) never. Questions 4, 5, and 6 were identified as favorable/positive perceptions and remained unchanged. The author used a sum score of all items for each respondent. Scores ranged from 7 to 35, with higher scores indicating negative or unfavorable perceptions of the policy context and lower scores indicating more favorable or positive perception of the policy context. The alpha score for the 7 items was $\alpha = 0.65$.

*Ethnicity***.** The ethnicity variable for the RIGHTS survey was constructed by the RIGHTS team using a variable from CHIS asking a participant where they were born. The response categories for the CHIS variable included (1) United States, (2) Mexico (3) Central America (4) Other Latin America (5) Asia & Pacific Islands, (6) Europe, and (7) Other. Since the RIGHTS survey only included Asian and Latinx participants, the variable for ethnicity was reconstructed

and recoded as (0) Asian and (1) Latino. The category Latino included responses for Mexico, Central America, and Other Latin America. The category Asian included responses for Asia and the Pacific Islands and was coded as the reference group.

*Legal Status***.** Participants in the CHIS study was asked to self-report their immigration status. Response options included: (1) U.S.-born citizen, (2) naturalized citizen, (3) non-citizen with green card, and (4) non-citizen without green card. The RIGHTS study only included immigrants in their sample therefore, the variable categories were: (1) naturalized citizen, 2) non-citizen with green card, and (3) non-citizen without a green card, which was coded as the reference group.

Table 3

Description of Variables in Data Analyses

Variable	Operationalization
Dependent Variables	
Perceived Mutual Help	Ordinal: (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree
Perceived Social Trust	Ordinal: (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree
Perceived Neighborhood Safety	Ordinal: (1) None of the time (2) Some of the time (3) Most of the time (4) All the time
Community Organization Involvement	Ordinal: (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Often
Political Engagement	Ordinal: (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Often
Independent Variables	
Negative Perceptions of the Policy Context	Continuous: Score between 7-35
Ethnicity	Dichotomous: 0) Asian 1) Latinx
Legal Status	Categorical: 1) Naturalized citizen, 2) Noncitizen with green card, 3) Noncitizen without green card
Control Variables	
Age	Continuous: 18 +
Gender	Dichotomous: 1) Male 2) Female
Marital Status	Dichotomous: 1) Married/Living together, 2) Not Married/Divorced/Widowed
Educational Attainment	Categorical: 1) Less than high school, 2) High school diploma or 3) Some college or above

Variable	Operationalization
Employment Status	Dichotomous: 1) Employed 2) Not Employed
Years in the US	Categorical: 1) Less than 5 years, 2) 5-9 years, 3) 10-14 years 4) 15+ years
Below the FPL	Dichotomous: 1) No 0) Yes
Community Type	Dichotomous: 1) Urban 2) Rural
Region	Categorical: 1) Northern CA 2) Central CA 3) Southern CA

Note: FPL: Federal Poverty Level

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analyses were performed via the CHIS's data access center using the statistical software Stata version 16.0. First, descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the overall sample and by ethnicity of Asian and Latinx, the frequencies and percentages were calculated. Univariate analyses were conducted to assess data completeness and to check the distribution for each variable that was included in the data analysis. Before running the ordinal regression analysis, the author ran the command *misstable patterns* for all the variables in the analysis. It is a descriptive analysis utilized to examine patterns of missing data across variables or in a dataset, which can be useful for understanding the extent of and structure of missingness in the data and can inform decisions about how to handle missing values (Medeiros, 2016). One variable, level of English proficiency had a high amount of missing data and was excluded from the analysis. The 7 items in the perceptions of the policy scale had response options which included "refused" and "don't know", all items with these response categories were recoded as missing values. After recoding, the final sample size for the analysis was 1,987 participants.

Logistic regression is very sensitive to high correlations between the independent variables. Therefore, bivariate analyses were performed, and correlations were tested to rule out issues of multicollinearity. Issues with multicollinearity occur when r is greater than 0.80.

Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis

When outcome variables are ordinal rather than continuous, ordinal logistic regression can be used (Williams, 2016). The dependent variable must be a categorical variable with at least three response categories and is ordinally scaled (i.e., the relative ordering of response values is known but the exact distance between them is not) meaning categories are coded in an ordered manner from low to high (Fagerland & Hosmer, 2017; Williams, 2016). Ordinal logistic regression was used to examine the effect of perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity, and legal status on the five different outcomes measuring the dimensions of social capital.

The rationale for using ordinal logistic regression to analyze the data in this dissertation is because this statistical method can be used to model the relationship between an ordinal response dependent variable and one or more explanatory variables (Cornell, 2020). The ordinal variable must be a categorial variable for which there is a clear ordering of category levels. Given that the dependent variables in this study were all ordinal and were four-category variables: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree; all the time, most of the time, some of the time, none of the time; and often, sometimes, rarely, and never, ordinal logistic regression was a good fit for this type of analysis. Ordinal logistic regression is interpretable in terms of the log odds of being in a higher category of the dependent variable. A major assumption is that of proportional odds, that the effect of an independent variable is constant for each increase in the level of the response (Cornell, 2020).

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter describes the results and reports the independent variables that were associated with the dependent variables among the sample of Asian and Latinx immigrants aged 18 and older, living in California. First, the descriptive statistics were presented to describe the overall sample's characteristics and by ethnicity subgroup. Next, the ordinal logistic regression analyses of the outcome variables on the independent variables were presented.

Sample Characteristics

Table 4 presents the frequencies and percentages for the demographic characteristics of Asian and Latinx immigrants who participated in the RIGHTS survey between 2018 and 2020. The total sample size included 2,010 participants; a total of 1,004 identified as Asian and 1,006 identified as Latinx. The participants breakdown by gender was 54% female and 46% male. The mean age for the entire sample was 54 years old. The mean age for Asian participants in the sample was 56 years old and the mean age for Latinx participants was 52 years old.

In terms of legal status, about 65% of the overall sample self-reported as naturalized citizens, 20% self-reported being noncitizens with green cards, and 15% self-reported being noncitizens without a green card. A larger percentage of Asian participants in the sample were naturalized citizens (72%) compared to Latinx participants (56%). In addition, a larger percentage of Latinx immigrants had green cards (23%) compared to Asian immigrants (17%). The percentage of immigrants who self-reported were non-citizens without green cards was higher for Latinx participants (20%) than Asian participants (10%).

Table 4

Sample Characteristics by Ethnicity, RIGHTS Survey (2018-2020).

Variables	Asian (%) n=1,004	Latinx (%) n=1,006	Total (%) N=2,010
Gender			
Female	52%	57%	54%
Male	48%	43%	46%
Age			
Mean	56	52	54
Legal Status			
Naturalized Citizen	72%	56%	65%
Noncitizen with green card	17%	23%	20%
Noncitizen without green card	11%	21%	15%
Marital Status			
Married/Living with a partner	67%	60%	63%
Not Married	33%	40%	37%
Educational Attainment			
Less than H.S.	9%	31%	20%
H.S. Diploma	14%	21%	18%
Some college or higher	77%	47%	62%
Employment Status			
Not Employed	48%	45%	46%
Employed	52%	55%	54%
Years in the US			
Less than 5 years	9%	6%	7%
5-9 years	10%	5%	8%
10-14 years	8%	8%	8%
15+ years	73%	81%	77%
FPL above 200%			
Yes	37%	60%	48%
No	63%	40%	52%
Community Type			
Urban	48%	44%	92%
Rural	2%	6%	8%
Region			
Northern CA	17%	7%	25%
Central CA	5%	11%	16%
Southern CA	28%	32%	59%

Note. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number; FPL= Federal Poverty Level

In terms of marital status, a high percentage (63%) of the overall sample was married or living with a partner. The educational attainment in the sample also varied. For example, about 20% of participants in the total sample self-reported having less than a high school education and approximately 62% had some college education or higher. The distribution of educational attainment between Asian and Latinx participants indicated disparities across the categories. For example, among Latinx immigrants, about 32% had less than a high school education, compared to only 9% for Asian immigrants. Most of the Asian participants in the sample were highly educated, 14% of Asian immigrants had a high school diploma, and 76% reported they had some college or higher education.

Employment status was similar across the sample and by subgroup. More than half (55%) of the overall sample was employed, which was similar when looking at employment status by ethnicity. When looking at breakdown by years of duration in the United States, about three-fourths (76%) of the overall sample were long residing immigrants and had resided in the U.S. for 15 years or more. Both Asian and Latinx immigrants in the sample were long-time residing immigrants. Poverty status was measured by FPL of 200% and above. About 48% of the sample, reported a poverty level above 200% FPL. This was different by subgroup, close to 60% of Latinx immigrants reported a 200% above FPL level compared to 37% among Asian immigrants.

Lastly, in terms of geographic region and living in rural and urban areas, the majority (92%) of the total sample resided in urban communities. Among Asian and Latinx immigrants, the distribution was similar, with 48% and 44% respectively, residing in urban areas. The majority (59%) of the total sample resided in Southern California, followed by Northern California (25%) and Central California (16%). This breakdown by ethnicity was similar among Asian and Latinx groups, with both groups residing mainly in Southern California. A larger proportion of Asian immigrants resided in Northern California (17%) compared to Latinx

immigrants (7%). In Central California, this was the opposite, there were a larger proportion of Latinx immigrants (11%) residing in this area compared to Asian immigrants (5%).

Ordinal Logistic Regression Results

Perceived Mutual Help**.** Table 5 presents the results for the ordinal logistic regression for the dependent variable mutual help regressed on the independent variables. Immigrants self-identifying as Latinx had lower odds of perceived mutual help, compared to those identifying as Asian, with an odds ratio of 0.77 (95% CI: 0.57-0.87, p <0.001), controlling for all other variables. This finding was statistically significant and suggests ethnicity is associated with perceived mutual trust; Latinx immigrants were less likely to agree with the statement about neighborly willingness to help, compared to their Asian counterparts.

Age also showed a statistically significant association with perceived mutual trust, with an odds ratio of 1.01 (95% CI: 1.00-1.01, p = 0.016), controlling for all other variables. This suggests that for each one-year increase in age, the odds of reporting willingness among neighbors to help each other increased slightly by approximately 1%. Older immigrants in the sample were slightly more likely to agree with the statement about neighborly willingness to help, compared to younger immigrants. Federal Poverty Level (FPL) above 200% refers to individuals or households whose income exceeds 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. The odds ratio for individuals with incomes below the 200% had 1.25 times higher odds of reporting neighborly willingness to help.

Table 5

Ordinal Logistic Regression for Perceived Mutual Help (n=1,987)

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Perceptions of the Policy Context	0.98	(0.97-1.00)	0.103
Ethnicity			
Asian (Reference)	1.00		

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Latinx	0.77	(0.57- 0.87)	<0.001***
Gender			
Male (Reference)	1.00		
Female	0.98	(0.82- 1.18)	0.823
Age	1.01	(1.00- 1.01)	0.016*
Legal Status			
Naturalized Citizen (Reference)	1.00		
Non-Citizen with Green Card	0.99	(0.76-1.27)	0.911
Non-Citizen without Green Card	0.74	(0.54- 1.00)	0.054
Marital Status			
Married/Living together (Reference)	1.00		
Single/Divorced	0.86	(0.71- 1.03)	0.109
Educational Attainment			
HS Diploma (Reference)	1.00		
Less than HS Diploma	1.75	(0.91- 1.64)	0.174
Some college and beyond	0.97	(0.76- 1.26)	0.845
Employed			
Yes (Reference)	1.00		
No	0.96	(0.78- 1.18)	0.700
Years in the US			
Less than 5 years (Reference)	1.00		
5-9 years	1.14	(0.71- 1.80)	0.598
10-14 years	0.90	(0.54- 1.38)	0.541
15+ years	0.93	(0.59- 1.33)	0.564
Below FPL			
No (Reference)	1.00		
Yes	1.25	(1.06- 1.60)	0.013*
Community Type			
Urban (Reference)	1.00		
Rural	1.04	(0.74-1.46)	0.805
Region			
Southern CA (Reference)	1.00		
Northern CA	1.38	(1.10-1.72)	0.005**
Central CA	1.70	(1.31-2.21)	0.000***

Note: OR= odds ratio; CI= confidence interval; *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

Results suggested economic advantage as indicated by the FPL threshold, was associated with greater likelihood of agreeing with the statement about neighborhood willingness to help, this result was significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. The variable region refers to the geographic region where participants resided. The results show different odds ratios for different regions

compared to the reference group, which was coded as Southern California. The odds ratio for Northern and Central California regions demonstrated 1.38 (95% CI: 1.10-1.72, $p = 0.005$) and 1.70 (95% CI: 1.31-2.21, $p = 0.000$) higher odds of perceived mutual help compared to those living in Southern California. Both results are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, suggesting immigrants living in Northern and Central California was associated with higher levels of neighbor willingness to help each other.

Perceived Social Trust: Table 6 presents the ordinal logistic regression results for the outcome variable perceived social trust. Age was associated with perceived social trust, with an odds ratio of 1.01 (95% CI: 1.00-1.02, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that for each one-year increase in age, the odds of perceiving higher levels of trust in neighbors increased by approximately 1%, controlling for all other variables. Older participants were slightly more likely to perceive that people in their neighborhood could be trusted compared to younger participants. In addition, the ordinal regression results also showed poverty status was statistically significant associated with social trust with an odds ratio of 1.52 (95% CI: 1.27-1.98, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that individuals with incomes below the 200% federal poverty line have 1.52 higher odds of trusting people in their neighborhood compared to those living above the 200% FPL.

Table 6

Ordinal Logistic Regression for Perceived Social Trust (n=1,987)

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Perceptions of the Policy Context	0.98	(0.96- 1.00)	0.13
Ethnicity			
Asian (Reference)	1.00		
Latinx	1.13	(0.78- 1.22)	0.36
Gender			
Male (Reference)	1.00		
Female	0.91	(0.77- 1.13)	0.39
Age	1.01	(1.00- 1.02)	0.000***
Legal Status			
Naturalized Citizen (Reference)	1.00		

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Non-Citizen with Green Card	1.24	(0.75- 1.28)	0.28
Non-Citizen without Green Card	0.94	(0.49- 0.92)	0.81
Marital Status			
Married/Living together (Reference)	1.00		
Single/Divorced	0.86	(0.69- 1.03)	0.13
Educational Attainment			
HS Diploma (Reference)	1.00		
Less than HS Diploma	0.91	(0.70- 1.30)	0.54
Some college and beyond	1.07	(0.84- 1.44)	0.62
Employed			
Yes (Reference)	1.00		
No	1.13	(0.90- 1.40)	0.28
Years in the US			
Less than 5 (Reference)	1.00		
5-9 years	0.92	(0.56- 1.49)	0.76
10-14 years	0.70	(0.39- 1.04)	0.16
15+ years	0.76	(0.44- 1.03)	0.22
Below FPL			
No (Reference)	1.00		
Yes	1.52	(1.27- 1.98)	0.000***
Community Type			
Urban (Reference)	1.00		
Rural	1.55	(1.09- 2.21)	0.015*
Region			
Southern CA (Reference)	1.00		
Northern CA	1.38	(1.09- 1.74)	0.007**
Central CA	1.29	(0.98- 1.70)	0.07

Note: OR= odds ratio; CI= confidence interval; *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

Lastly, community type and region were also statistically significant associated with perceived social trust in neighbors. The results indicate that individuals residing in rural areas have 1.55 times higher odds of reporting social trust in neighbors compared to those in living in urban areas, controlling for all other variables (95% CI: 1.09-2.21, p = 0.015). Furthermore, individuals residing in the Northern California region have 1.38 times higher odds of reporting social trust in neighbors compared to those residing in Southern California, controlling for all other variables (95% CI: 1.09-1.74, p = 0.007). In summary, while perceptions of the policy context and ethnicity do not show statistically significant associations with social trust in

neighbors, age, FPL above 200%, community type and region are significant predictors of social trust in neighborhoods. These findings highlight the importance of sociodemographic factors and contextual factors in shaping levels of trust within communities.

Neighborhood Safety**.** Table 7 below presents the ordinal regression results for the outcome variable neighborhood safety. The odds ratio for negative perceptions of the policy context was 0.96 (95% CI: 0.94-0.98, $p = 0.001$). This suggests that for each one unit increase in negative perceptions of the policy context, there was a 4% decrease in the odds of neighborhood safety. This finding was statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, indicating a strong association between negative perceptions of the policy context and neighborhood safety. In addition, Latinx immigrants had an

Table 7

Ordinal Logistic Regression for Perceived Neighborhood Safety (n=1,987)

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Perceptions of the Policy Context	0.96	(0.94- 0.98)	0.000***
Ethnicity			
Asian (Reference)	1.00		
Latinx	1.89	(1.54- 2.31)	0.000***
Gender			
Male (Reference)	1.00		
Female	0.84	(0.70-1.00)	0.05*
Age	1.02	(1.00-1.03)	0.000***
Legal Status			
Naturalized Citizen (Reference)	1.00		
Non-Citizen with Green Card	1.15	(0.90 -1.47)	0.27
Non-Citizen without Green Card	0.96	(0.71-1.29)	0.78
Marital Status			
Married/Living together (Reference)	1.00		
Single/Divorced	0.93	(0.77- 1.11)	0.42
Educational Attainment			
HS Diploma (Reference)	1.00		
Less than HS Diploma	1.57	(1.17- 2.11)	0.003**

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Some college and beyond	0.99	(0.78-1.27)	0.96
Employed			
Yes (Reference)	1.00		
No	0.93	(0.76-1.14)	0.47
Years in the US			
Less than 5 (Reference)	1.00		
5-9 years	0.93	(0.54-1.28)	0.40
10-14 years	0.69	(0.44-1.07)	0.09
15+ years	0.72	(0.49-1.05)	0.09
Below FPL			
No	1.00		
Yes	1.31	(1.07- 1.60)	0.008**
Community Type			
Urban (Reference)	1.00		
Rural	1.41	(1.01- 1.99)	0.04*
Region			
Southern CA (Reference)	1.00		
Northern CA	1.03	(0.84-1.28)	0.75
Central CA	1.16	(0.90-1.50)	0.24

Note: OR= odds ratio; CI= confidence interval; *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

odds ratio of 1.89 (95% CI: 1.54-2.31, $p < 0.001$), indicating they had 1.89 times higher odds of feeling safe in their neighborhood compared to Asian immigrants. This finding suggests being a Latinx immigrant increased feelings of neighborhood safety.

Age was also statistically significant associated with neighborhood safety, with an odds ratio of 1.02 (95% CI: 1.00-1.03, $p < 0.001$). The results suggest that for each one -year increase in age, the odds of participants feeling safe in their neighborhood increased by approximately 2%. The findings also suggested female participants had slightly lower odds of feeling safe in their neighborhood compared to males, but this difference was marginally significant ($p = 0.05$). Individuals with less than a high school diploma had 1.57 (95% CI: 1.17-2.11, $p = 0.003$), higher odds of reporting feeling safe in their neighborhood compared to those with a high school diploma, holding all other variables constant.

Furthermore, results suggested individuals with incomes below the 200% FPL guidelines had 1.31 (95% CI: 1.07-1.60, $p = 0.008$) times higher odds of feeling safe in their neighborhood

compared to those with incomes above this threshold. Lastly, individuals residing in rural areas had an odds ratio of 1.41 (95% CI: 1.01-1.99, $p = 0.04$) of feeling safe in their neighborhood compared to those residing in urban areas. In summary, perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity, age, educational attainment, income level and community type were all significantly associated with neighborhood safety among immigrants. While gender appeared to have a small association with neighborhood safety, it's important to consider other factors such as socioeconomic status, neighborhood characteristics, and personal experiences that may contribute to individuals' perception of safety on their communities.

Political Engagement**.** Table 8 presents the findings for the ordinal regression of the outcome variable political engagement. The odds ratio for perceptions of the policy context was 1.07 (95% CI: 1.05-1.09, $p < 0.001$). This indicated that for each one-unit increase in negative perceptions of the policy context, there was a 7% increase in the odds of political engagement. This finding was statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, suggesting a strong association between perceptions of the policy context and political engagement.

In addition, age was associated with political engagement, with an odds ratio of 0.98 (95% CI: 0.97-0.99, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that for each one- year increase in age, the odds of political engagement decreased slightly by approximately 2%. Legal status was also significantly associated with political engagement. Individuals with green cards had 0.63 (95% CI: 0.47-0.84, $p = 0.01$) lower odds of political engagement compared to naturalized citizens. Furthermore, educational attainment was also significantly associated with political engagement. Individuals with some college education and beyond had 1.91 (95% CI: 1.44-2.53, $p < 0.001$) higher odds of political engagement compared to those with a high school diploma education.

Length of duration in the United States was also significantly associated with political engagement. As the length of duration in the U.S. increased, the odds of political engagement

also increased. For example, individuals who had resided in the U.S. for 10-14 years and 15+ years had 1.81(95% CI: 1.04-3.16, $p = 0.03$) and 3.24 (95% CI: 2.00-5.26, $p < 0.001$) higher odds of political engagement compared to those who had resided in the US for less than 5 years. Lastly, FPL below 200% was significantly associated with political engagement. Individuals with incomes below the FPL guidelines had higher odds of political engagement compared to those with incomes above this threshold, with an odds ratio of 1.50 (95% CI: 1.20-1.87, $p < 0.001$). To summarize, perceptions of the policy context, age, legal status, educational attainment, years in the US, and having an income below the FPL were all significantly associated with political engagement. These findings underscore the importance of individual level characteristics and broader socio-political contexts in shaping individuals' participation in political activities.

Table 8

Ordinal Logistic Regression for Political Engagement (n=1,987)

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Perceptions of the Policy Context	1.07	(1.05- 1.09)	0.000***
Ethnicity			
Asian (Reference)	1.00		
Latinx	1.00	(0.80- 1.25)	0.97
Gender			
Male (Reference)	1.00		
Female	0.89	(0.74- 1.09)	0.26
Age	0.98	(0.97- 0.99)	0.000***
Legal Status			
Naturalized Citizen (Reference)	1.00		
Non-Citizen with Green Card	0.63	(0.47- 0.84)	0.01**
Non-Citizen without Green Card	0.73	(0.52 1.02)	0.07
Marital Status			
Married/Living together (Reference)	1.00		
Single/Divorced	1.09	(0.89- 1.34)	0.38
Educational Attainment			
H.S. Diploma (Reference)	1.00		
Less than H.S. Diploma	0.72	(0.51- 1.02)	0.06
Some college and beyond	1.91	(1.44- 2.53)	0.000***

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Employed			
Yes (Reference)	1.00		
No	1.09	(0.88- 1.37)	0.41
Years in the US			
Less than 5 (Reference)	1.00		
5-9 years	1.04	(0.59- 1.82)	0.89
10-14 years	1.81	(1.04- 3.16)	0.03*
15+ years	3.24	(2.00- 5.26)	0.000***
Below FPL			
No (Reference)	1.00		
Yes	1.50	(1.20- 1.87)	0.000***
Community Type			
Urban (Reference)	1.00		
Rural	0.79	(0.55- 1.14)	0.21
Region			
Southern CA (Reference)	1.00		
Northern CA	1.22	(0.97-1.54)	0.10
Central CA	0.77	(0.58-1.02)	0.07

Note: OR= odds ratio; CI= confidence interval; *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

Community Organization Involvement**.** Table 9 presents the ordinal logistic regression results for the outcome variable community organization involvement. Results revealed gender was significantly associated with community organization involvement. Female participants had an odds ratio of 1.36 (95% CI: 1.15-1.61, $p < 0.001$), indicating significantly higher odds of community organization involvement compared to males. Age was also found to be significantly associated with community organization involvement, with an odds ratio of 0.98 (95% CI: 0.98-0.99, $p < 0.001$). This suggested that for each one-year increase in age, the odds of being involved in community organizations decreased by approximately 2%.

Table 9

Ordinal Logistic Regression for Community Group Involvement (n=1,987)

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Perceptions of the Policy Context	1.00	(0.98- 1.01)	0.90
Ethnicity			
Asian (Reference)	1.00		
Latinx	1.19	(0.98-1.45)	0.07
Gender			

Variable	OR	95% CI	*p*
Male (Reference)	1.00		
Female	1.36	(1.15- 1.61)	0.000***
Age	0 .98	(0.98- 0.99)	0.000***
Legal Status			
Naturalized Citizen (Reference)	1.00		
Non-Citizen with Green Card	0.66	(0.52- 0.83)	0.000***
Non-Citizen without Green Card	0.85	(0.64-1.12)	0.25
Marital Status			
Married/Living together (Reference)	1.00		
Single/Divorced	0.94	(0.79- 1.11)	0.45
Educational Attainment			
HS Diploma (Reference)	1.00		
Less than HS Diploma	0.64	(0.49- 0.83)	0.001
Some college and beyond	1.56	(1.24- 1.97)	0.000***
Employed			
Yes (Reference)	1.00		
No	0.84	(0.70-1.02)	0.08
Years in the US			
Less than 5 (Reference)	1.00		
5-9 years	1.32	(0.87-2.00)	0.20
10-14 years	1.47	(0.97- 2.25)	0.07
15+ years	1.84	(1.29- 2.65)	0.001**
Below FPL			
No	1.00		
Yes	0.98	(0.81- 1.18)	0.83
Community Type			
Urban (Reference)	1.00		
Rural	0.98	(0.73- 1.32)	0.90
Region			
Southern CA (Reference)	1.00		
Northern CA	0.84	(0.68- 1.02)	0.08
Central CA	0.86	(0.68- 1.08)	0.19

Note: OR= odds ratio; CI= confidence interval; *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

In terms of legal status, green card holders had lower odds of being involved in community organizations compared to naturalized citizens, with an odds ratio of 0.66 (95% CI: 0.52-0.83, $p < 0.001$), and this association was statistically significant. Individuals with less than a high school diploma had significantly lower odds of being involved in community organizations compared to those with a high school diploma, with an odds ratio of 0.64 (95% CI: 0.49-0.83, $p = 0.001$). Conversely, individuals with some college education and beyond had

significantly higher odds of being involved in community organizations compared to those with a high school diploma, with an odds ratio of 1.56 (95% CI: 1.24-1.97, $p < 0.001$).

In addition, results suggested the longer participants had resided in the US, the higher the odds were of being involved in community organizations. For example, participants who had resided in the US for more than 15 years had significantly higher odds of community organization involvement compared to those who had resided in the US for less than 5 years, with an odds ratio of 1.84 (95% CI: 1.29-2.65, $p = 0.001$). Other variables such as perceptions of the policy context, marital status, employment status, FPL, community type, and region did not show significant associations with community organization involvement.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The discussion chapter of this dissertation contextualizes the findings with the existing literature by analyzing the results of the analyses. Specifically, it discusses how immigrants' negative perceptions of the policy context were associated with forms of social capital. Next, I discuss the significance of legal status and ethnicity on social capital. Lastly, I discuss socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, educational attainment, and duration of residence in the United States, shedding light on the role these factors play in determining the likelihood of social capital outcomes. Next, I offer recommendations and provide implications for the field of social welfare including practitioners, community organizers, and policymakers. Lastly, I discuss this study's limitations and identify directions for future research.

Immigrants Perceptions of the Policy Context

Immigrants who perceived the policy context more negatively demonstrated lower odds of feeling safe in their neighborhoods. Moreover, immigrants who perceived the policy context more negatively demonstrated higher odds of political engagement**.** This suggests that immigrants' negative perceptions of the policy context may play a crucial role in the linking of social capital. Perceiving the policy context more negatively may foster a sense of solidarity and shared identity among immigrants, leading to the formation of linking social capital. Immigrants who feel marginalized or disadvantaged by policies may be more inclined to connect with advocacy organizations, community leaders, or broader social movements that share their concerns and mobilize collective action. Although the findings didn't support negative perceptions of the policy context strengthen bonding social capital within immigrant communities, immigrants who perceive policies as discriminatory or harmful may seek solace and support from their immediate social networks, including family members, friends, and co-

ethnic associations. More research is needed to explore these relationships. In this study, negative perceptions of the policy context potentially hindered the development of bridging social capital. As evidenced by the findings, immigrants who perceived policies as hostile or exclusionary experienced distrust in their neighborhoods. This lack of bridging social capital can impede immigrants' access to opportunities for political engagement and limit their ability to influence policy outcomes. While linking and bonding social capital may facilitate political mobilization within immigrant communities, the absence of bridging social capital may present challenges in fostering broader coalitions and effecting systemic change.

It is important to note that this survey was conducted during the Trump administration, which had a significant impact on immigrants' perceptions of the policy context, leading to heightened anxiety, fear, and uncertainty within immigrant communities (Pierce et al., 2018). The Trump administration implemented aggressive immigration enforcement measures, including ramped-up deportations, family separations at the border, and efforts to restrict legal immigration (Kelley-Widmer, 2021). This enforcement-focused approach, coupled with anti-immigrant rhetoric from the highest levels of government, created a climate of fear and hostility among immigrant communities. Immigrants felt targeted and vulnerable, leading to heightened perceptions of insecurity and distrust towards government institutions.

The Trump administration implemented numerous policy changes aimed at restricting immigration and reducing pathways to legal status. These changes included the rescission of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), attempts to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for certain immigrant groups, and the implementation of the "public charge" rule, which made it harder for immigrants to obtain green cards if they were deemed likely to use public benefits. These policy changes not only affected immigrants directly but also contributed to perceptions of exclusion and discrimination within immigrant communities.

Despite the challenges posed by the Trump administration's policies, they also spurred increased activism and mobilization within immigrant communities. Immigrant rights organizations, advocacy groups, and community leaders worked tirelessly to educate immigrants about their rights, provide legal assistance, and organize protests and advocacy campaigns to push back against harmful policies. These efforts helped to counteract feelings of powerlessness and isolation and fostered a sense of solidarity and resilience within immigrant communities.

Ethnicity and Legal Status

Green card holders in this study showed lower odds of involvement in community organizations and political engagement compared to naturalized citizens**.** Although I did not find a statistically significant association between being a noncitizen without a green card and odds of involvement in community organizations, this finding highlights the potential barriers faced by immigrants in accessing and participating in community activities, which may include concerns about immigration status, even when holding a legal status. This underscores the importance of addressing barriers to political engagement faced by immigrant populations, including by those who are documented and have green cards. My findings did not support previous research examining immigrants' civic engagement showing undocumented Latino immigrants are significantly less likely to participate in general civic organizations, such as community and ethnic organizations, relative to documented immigrants (Lai, 2020). Aligned with the hypothesis, non-citizens without green cards reported lower levels of trust compared to naturalized citizens. These findings underscore the importance of considering individual characteristics in understanding variations in social trust within communities.

The analysis revealed that ethnicity, specifically Latinx identity, was not associated with community organization involvement. Furthermore, ethnicity predicted perceived mutual help, with Latinx individuals demonstrating lower odds of perceived mutual help compared to their

Asian counterparts. This finding was surprising, given the literature about Latino/immigrant neighborhood compositions which is positively associated with being socially integrated and having larger and more diverse social networks (Viruell- Fuentes et al., 2013). Culturally tailored programs and initiatives that celebrate diversity and encourage intergroup cooperation may help bridge divides and strengthen social bonds within neighborhoods. Contrary to the hypothesis that Asian immigrants would have higher odds of feeling safe in their neighborhood, we found Latinx ethnicity was associated with a higher odd of feeling safe in the neighborhood.

Sociodemographic Variables- Age, Gender, Educational Attainment, Length of Duration in the US

Several socio-demographic variables were associated with the outcome variables. For example, age was associated with perceived mutual help, neighborhood safety perceived social trust and community organization involvement. The findings suggest there are generational differences within immigrant populations when it comes to their social capital. This finding is consistent with studies by Choi and Kim (2019), which emphasized the role of age-related experiences and acculturation processes in shaping social networks and community engagement among immigrants. The greater likelihood of older immigrants to endorse in higher levels of neighborly assistance suggests the potential for intergenerational transmission of social norms and values within immigrant communities.

However, older immigrants showed lower odds of community organization involvement, reflecting potential generational differences in civic norms and preferences, highlighting the importance of targeted outreach and engagement efforts to address potential age-related barriers. Understanding the reasons behind this decline among older adults is crucial for developing strategies to encourage their active involvement in community activities. This aligns with the plethora of research, which focuses on the community involvement and civic activities among

immigrant youth and adolescents. Moreover, older individuals tended to express higher levels of trust in their neighbors, potentially reflecting a greater sense of community attachment. Older individuals demonstrated higher odds of feeling safe in their neighborhoods compared to younger individuals, indicating potentially lower exposure to crime and violence.

Female participants showed significantly higher odds of being involved in community organizations compared to males, suggesting gender disparities in community involvement. In addition, females demonstrated lower odds of feeling safe compared to males, highlighting the importance of addressing gender-based violence and harassment within communities and implementing gender-sensitive safety measures.

This study also uncovered that location and geographical context are important for the formation of social capital among immigrants. Living in rural communities and in the Northern and Central California regions was associated with higher neighborhood safety and social trust among immigrants. This aligns with other studies that have shown rural areas seems to be linked to higher feelings of neighborhood safety among their residents compared to urban areas (Avery et al., 2022; Ceccato & Abraham, 2022). These findings suggest regional differences may play a role in shaping patterns of community and social behavior. Further investigation is needed to examine the specific factors contributing to these regional differences and could provide valuable insights for community development efforts and social policy initiatives.

The results in this study showed that higher socioeconomic status, as indicated by being below the 200% FPL, was associated with higher odds of feeling safe in the neighborhood. This aligns with previous literature that states economic disadvantage or low SES disrupts social cohesion Pabayo, Grinshteyn, Avila, Azrael, and Molnar (2020). Weyers et al. (2008) found people with low socio-economic status people were at increased risk of being structurally

isolated, reported lower numbers of close ties, had a higher risk of not participating in any club, being socially isolated and lacked instrumental and social support. Lastly, participants who had resided in the U.S. for longer durations demonstrated higher odds of community organization involvement, aligning with the role of acculturation in fostering community participation among immigrants. Supporting initiatives that facilitate newcomer integration into local communities can promote their engagement in community organizations.

Higher levels of educational attainment were positively associated with political engagement, with individuals holding some college education and beyond demonstrating higher odds of participation. This suggests that investing in education may empower individuals to actively participate in civic and community activities. Research supports individuals with higher levels of education and stable employment may have greater access to resources and social networks that contribute to feelings of neighborhood safety and security (Center on Society and Health, 2013). Investing in education and economic opportunities in underserved communities may therefore have indirect benefits for enhancing perceptions of neighborhood safety and community well-being.

Practice and Policy Implications for the Field of Social Welfare

This study's findings has several implications that can inform practitioners, policymakers, and community organizers within the field of social welfare and other disciplines. Given the findings presented in the previous section, it is evident that fostering inclusive and resilient communities requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the complex interplay of individual-level, social and community-level, and systemic-level factors. I give actionable recommendations aimed at promoting inclusive communities where immigrants have an opportunity to build social capital. By aligning practice and policy efforts with these

recommendations, professionals and policymakers can work towards creating more equitable, supportive, and thriving communities for residents in California.

Implications for Practice

In terms of practice, social workers can use the insights gained from this study to tailor their practice and services to better meet the needs of immigrant communities, particularly those who work with Asian and Latinx immigrants in California. By understanding the factors that influence social capital among immigrant communities and neighborhoods, social workers can develop culturally sensitive interventions that foster the use of social support networks. This involves creating spaces for safe dialogue, collaboration, and collective action within communities, such as in schools, community organizations, and other local institutions. By equipping practitioners with the knowledge and skills to recognize and address the diverse needs and experiences of immigrant groups, social workers can deliver more effective and culturally responsive services.

Community organizers in the field of social work can also enhance civic education initiatives. For example, investing in civic education initiatives aimed at increasing political literacy and awareness, particularly among immigrant populations who have resided in the US for less than 5 years and who may be less knowledgeable in this area. These initiatives should focus on providing information about rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for civic participation, thereby empowering individuals to engage in the democratic process. Community organizers can also develop community involvement programs that target diverse demographic groups, including individuals of different ages, ethnicities, and educational backgrounds. These programs should be designed to be accessible and culturally relevant, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among residents in living in the same neighborhood.

Policy Implications

This study also has implications and recommendations for policy makers. In addition, policy should support immigrant integration programs that provide support for immigrants and address the unique needs and challenges faced by these populations, such as legal status concerns. Policymakers should also advocate for policy reforms that address systemic barriers to social welfare and promote equitable access to resources and opportunities for all residents. This includes advocating for policies that prioritize income and educational support, and social services for marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Policy makers can invest in educational and employment opportunities in underserved communities to empower individuals and families to thrive economically and socially. As supported by the findings, education and income are integral to the integration and social capital of immigrants. Lastly, there are implications for addressing gender-based disparities. One way to address this is to develop targeted interventions to address gender-based safety concerns within communities, including initiatives to prevent gender-based violence, increase access to safe public spaces for all genders, and promote gender-sensitive practices.

Social workers and policymakers can play a vital role in advocating for policies that promote cohesion, access to resources, and equitable opportunities for all immigrants regardless of ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Overall, the findings of this study have significant implications for social work practice, community organizers, and policy makers emphasizing the importance of culturally competent and inclusive approaches to supporting immigrant communities and promoting social justice and equity. In the next section, I discuss limitations of this study and identify areas for future research.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study presented valuable findings and insights into the determinants of social capital among immigrant communities, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional nature of this study does not allow for casual inferences. Future research could employ longitudinal research designs to examine social capital over time and explore the influence of contextual factors on trust formation. Additionally, the reliance of self-report measures may introduce response bias and social desirability effects. The use of individuals perceptions in the study is subjective, respondents might have been influenced to answer based on their individual experiences, biases or emotions which may not align with their objective reality.

Another limitation is focusing on only Latinx and Asian immigrant groups, the findings are limited to these specific ethnic groups and are not representative to other immigrant populations. . Since the study's sample was gathered exclusively in the state of California, this study cannot generalize about the experiences of immigrants residing in other states, whom may have different experiences than those in this sample. Furthermore, this study was not able to examine subgroup differences among the Asian and Latinx populations in the sample. Both Asian and Latinx groups exhibit a lot of heterogeneity based on factors such as country of origin, migration histories, and socioeconomic status. For example, recent arrivals from Central America may face distinct and unique challenges compared to long residing Mexican immigrants. Due to the small sample sizes within each subgroup in the Asian and Latinx category, this study was not able to explore these important differences. Future research should strive to address this limitation by employing larger and more diverse samples that allow for meaningful comparisons across immigrant subgroups.

However, using data from the Research on Immigrant Health and State Policy Study had important advantages. The RIGHTS survey is a new and unique study that is solely immigrant

focused and explores topics that are lacking in the literature such as exploring state policy across different sectors and how contextual factors affect immigrants. Many large health surveys do not focus on these unique immigrant experiences, and the RIGHTS survey is able to capture some of these experiences. The RIGHTS survey made it possible to reach Asians and Latinx's immigrants of multiple backgrounds by offering the survey in several Asian languages and Spanish and is a population-based survey which makes the study generalizable.

Conclusion

This dissertation examined the association between immigrant's perceptions of the policy context, ethnicity and legal status on different dimensions of social capital including perceived mutual help, perceived social trust, neighborhood safety, and civic engagement among Asian and Latinx immigrants in California. Through an analysis of cross-sectional data from the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Research on Immigrant Health and State Policy Study, the findings from this study underscore the importance of considering multifaceted dimensions of social capital. While certain factors like gender and educational attainment demonstrated significant associations with social capital, other factors such as ethnicity and legal status showed more nuanced impacts, highlighting the complexity of immigrant experiences in California.

Overall, this dissertation contributed to the broader discourse on immigrant integration through an examination of social capital offering valuable implications for policymakers, community organizers, and scholars. Moving forward, it is imperative to continue exploring these factors and develop targeted interventions that address the unique needs and experiences of Asian and Latinx immigrants in California, ultimately promoting a more equitable and cohesive society for all. The question is then, will US society allow Asian and Latinx immigrants opportunities for full assimilation and incorporation or will concerns about national security, cultural identity, the economy, and nativist attitudes continue to occupy a major part of American

society? My paper examined one facet of many factors that may help to move the public dialogue to one more receptive of immigration.

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