

BONDING VS BRIDGING: THE ROLE OF RELATIVE HUMAN CAPITAL

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INTRODUCTION

Social capital is an important resource for information, labour market opportunities, and access to different services (Bourdieu 1896). The quality of these resources depends on the quality of the social network (Bourdieu 1896). Two types of social ties, ties that are constrained within one's own ethnic group, bonding, and ties that extend outside of one's own ethnic group, bridging (Enns, Kirova, & Connolly 2013), are determined by several individual and social factors.

My project assesses how an individual's human capital relative to that of their ethnic or population group can lead to either bonding social ties or bridging social ties. I hypothesize that those with higher education levels relative to their ethnic or population group will likely form more diverse social networks, while those who have similar or lower education levels relative to their group will likely form ties within their own ethnic or cultural group.

BACKGROUND

Akkaymak (2016) found that the heterogeneity that exists within an ethnic group shapes their social network. Religion, geography, class, and occupation influence the types of social connections people form. She also used the concept, 'habitus', to explain how immigrants form networks.

Habitus is the 'society written into the body', wherein socialization in a given social group result to 'unconscious dispositions' (Bourdieu 1990). In other words, people act and react to their social world based on what they have learned (Bourdieu 2005) Class is embedded into people's ways of understanding and conducting oneself in the world.

Turkish immigrants interviewed in Akkaymak's study expressed their preference towards those who belong in a similar part of the labour market as themselves and who came from the same class background. Those in non-professional jobs were unaware that there were highly educated and professional Turkish immigrants as they were constrained within their own ethnic enclaves

Professional immigrants were more likely to make connections with the broader society as a consequence of their cultural capital (Akkaymak, 2016). On the other hand, non-professional immigrants were less likely to form connections outside of their ethnic group due to long work hours and language barriers (Akkaymak, 2016).

Thus, immigrants make social connections based on how they have been shaped by larger social structures. Thus, both individual and social factors determine the diversity of immigrants' social networks.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Many immigrants entering Canada are from the elite class and possess high human capital. In 2001, more than 40% of newly arrived immigrants had at least a bachelor's degree, which made up 6% of Canada's population who held a university degree (Galarneau & Morissette 2004).

Given this, I ask:

Will more immigrants with high human capital relative to their group be bridging?

Will more immigrants with similar or low human capital relative to their groups be bonding?

METHODS

I used the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC), which investigates the social and economic integration of immigrants from 2001 to 2005. The LSIC was administered in three waves: 6 months, two years, and four years after arrival in Canada. I then used the 2001 census to calculate the group human capital of each ethnic group, which was merged with the LSIC.

Sample: 17 ethnic and population groups who are between 25 to 64 years old and who live in either Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver.

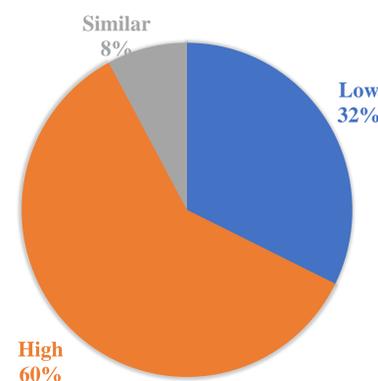
Measures of main variables:

- Bonding: more than half of the new friends made in Canada are of the same ethnic or cultural group, or they did not make any new friends at all
- Bridging: only at least half of the new friends made in Canada are of the same ethnic or cultural group, which marks a more diverse network.
- Relative human capital (mean years of schooling calculated from the 2001 census by ethnicity and CMA)
 - High human capital- individual years of schooling is at least one standard deviation above the mean years of schooling of their ethnic or population group
 - Similar human capital – individual years of schooling is within one standard deviation of the mean years of schooling of their ethnic or population group
 - Low human capital- individual years of schooling is at least one standard deviation below the mean years of schooling of their ethnic or population group

RESULTS

Sample distribution: The average age of the sample is 36 years old and there are more males than females. Most of the sample live in Toronto and are married. Almost all the individuals in the sample received all of their education outside of Canada and only about 28% pursued further education in Canada after arrival. Also, a majority of the sample do not consider themselves proficient in either of the two official languages in Canada. The top three largest groups in the sample are the South Asian group at 21.99%, the White group at 16.79%, and the Mandarin-speaking Chinese group at 15.75%. Approximately 60% of the sample are engaging in bonding social ties and about 59% have higher human capital relative to their ethnic or population group.

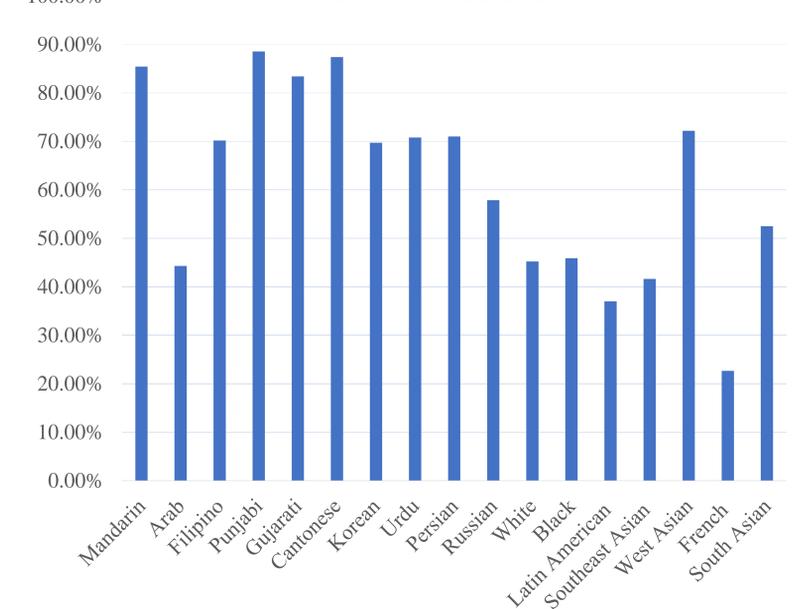
PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WITH LOW, HIGH, AND SIMILAR RELATIVE HUMAN CAPITAL



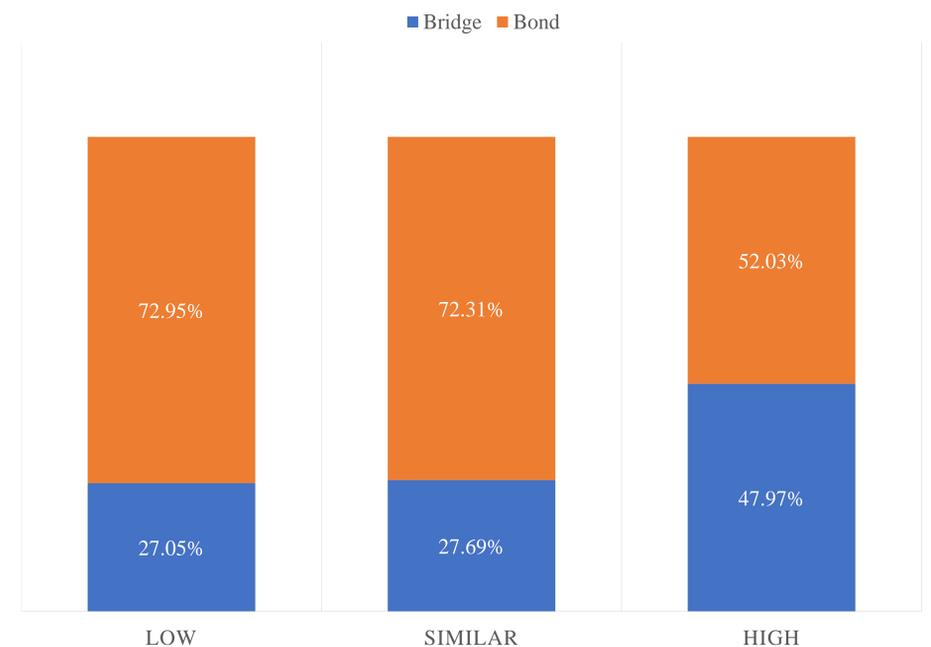
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PROPORTION OF BONDERS



PROPORTION OF THOSE WITH LOW, SIMILAR, AND HIGH, RELATIVE HUMAN CAPITAL WHO BOND VS BRIDGE



Higher proportions of bonders are found to have similar or lower human capital relative to their group. Also, more bridgers are found to have higher human capital relative to their group.

DISCUSSION

Social networks are indeed influenced by an individual's habitus, wherein a highly educated individual relative to their group will likely have more ethnically diverse social networks. While those who have similar or lower levels of education than their group, they are likely to make social ties within their own ethnic or cultural group.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both bonding social ties and bridging ties. Social networks within one's own ethnic group can offer support and feelings of belongingness. However, bonding social ties can also hinder and constrain an individual's freedom through demanding obligations, downward-leveiling norms, and limited information (Portes 1998). On the other hand, bridging social ties can offer more resources and opportunities (Putnam 2000). Also, bridging ties have previously been found to help facilitate job acquisition (Granovetter 1973).

Next steps: test whether bonding or bridging facilitates employment in the Canadian labour market among recent immigrants over the short and long term.