

Native-immigrant occupational segregation and worker health in the United States

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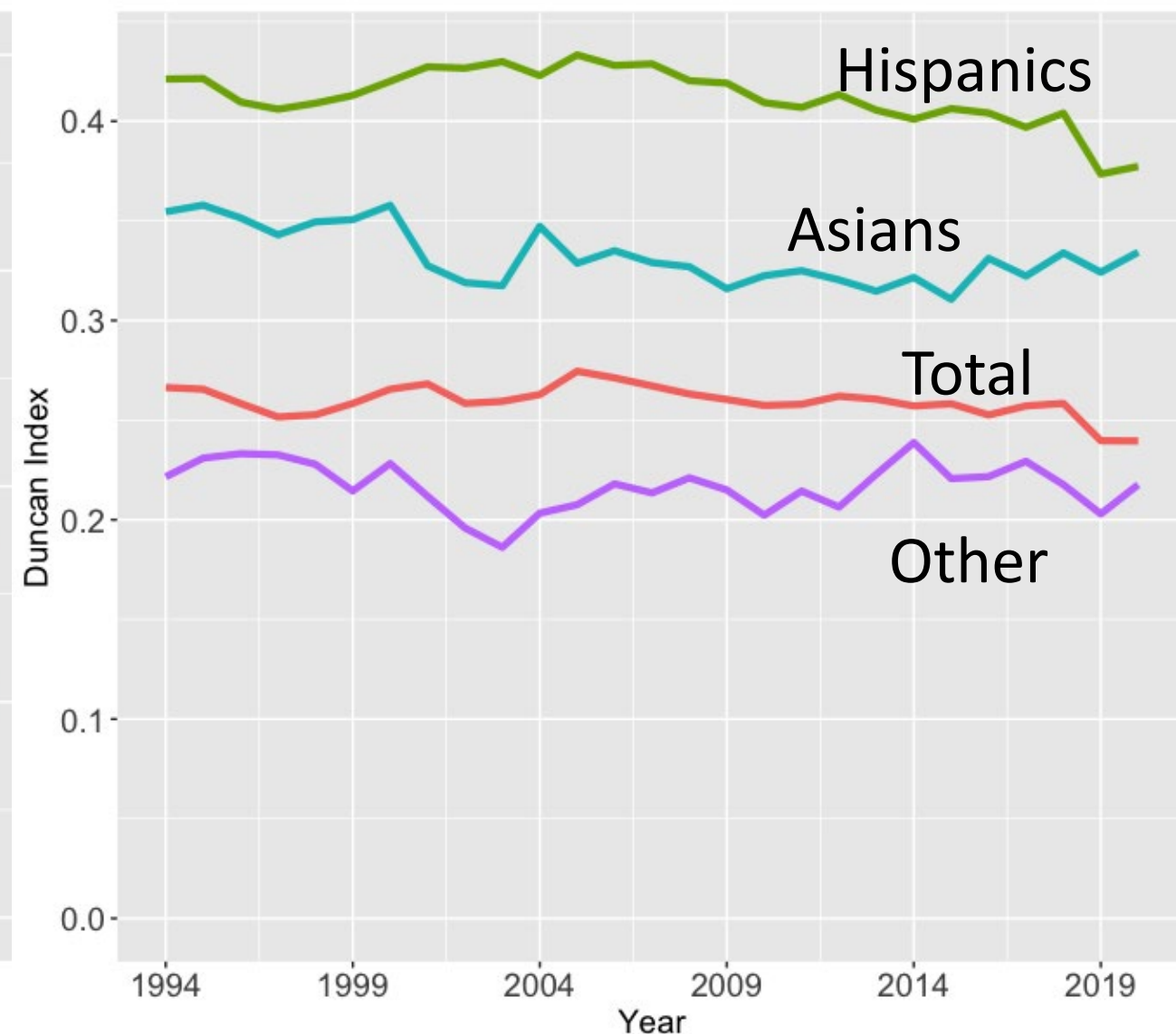
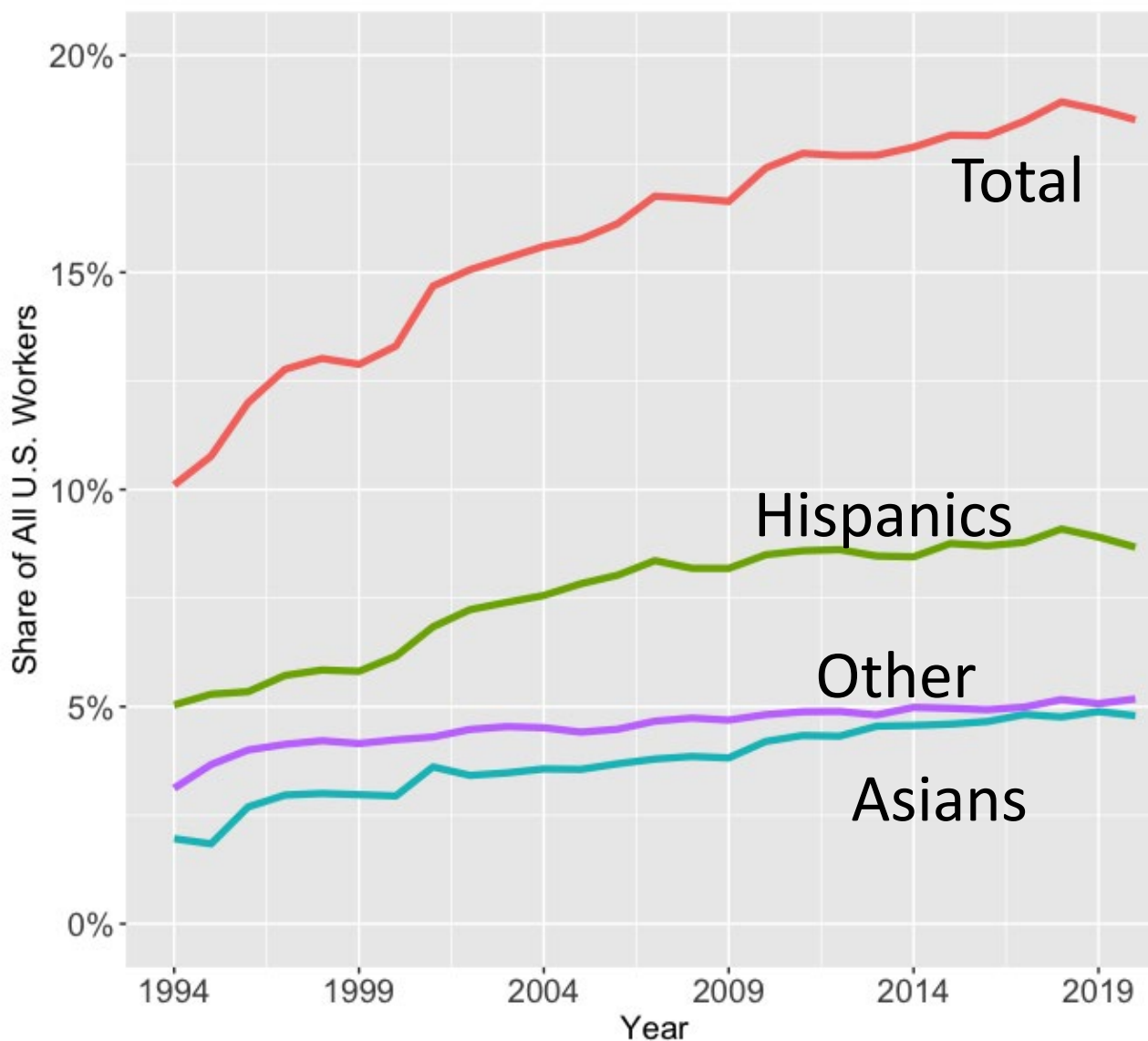
NIMHD Role of Work in Health Disparities Workshop

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Outline

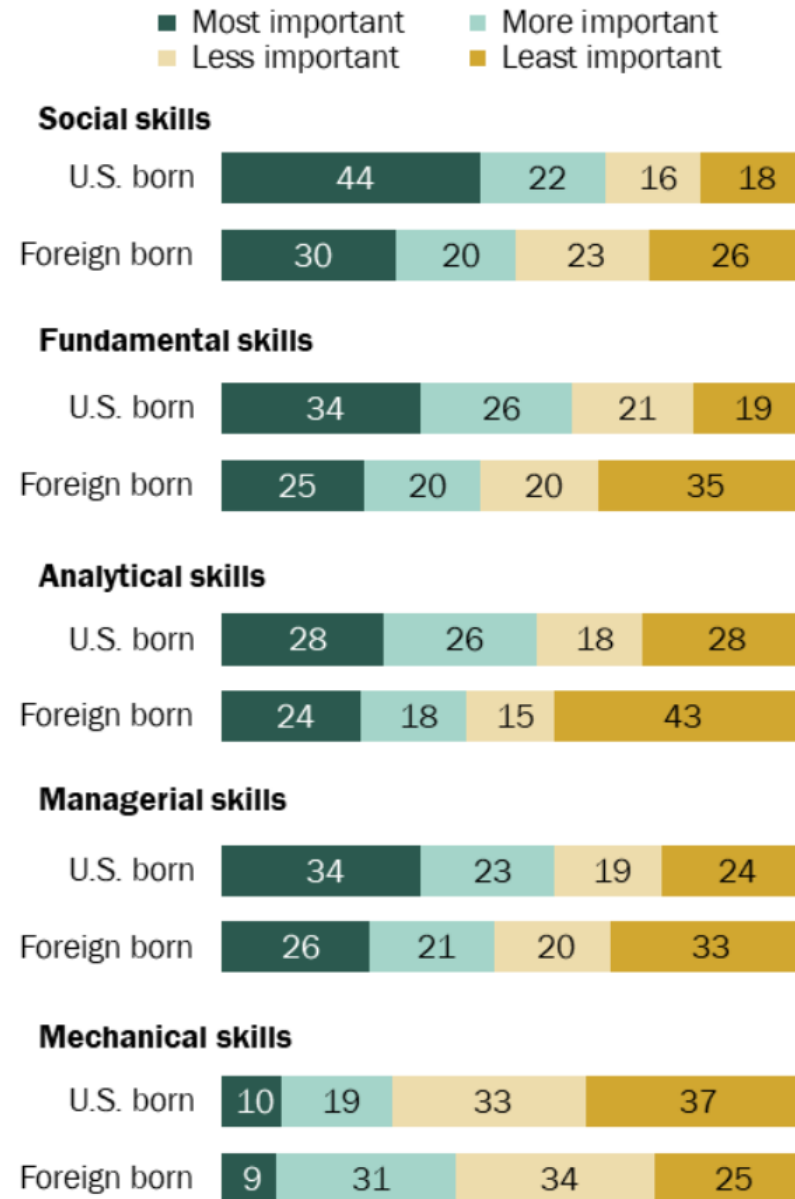
- ▶ Background
- ▶ Conceptual framework
- ▶ An empirical investigation
- ▶ Future directions

Rising Immigrant Workers, Stable Segregation



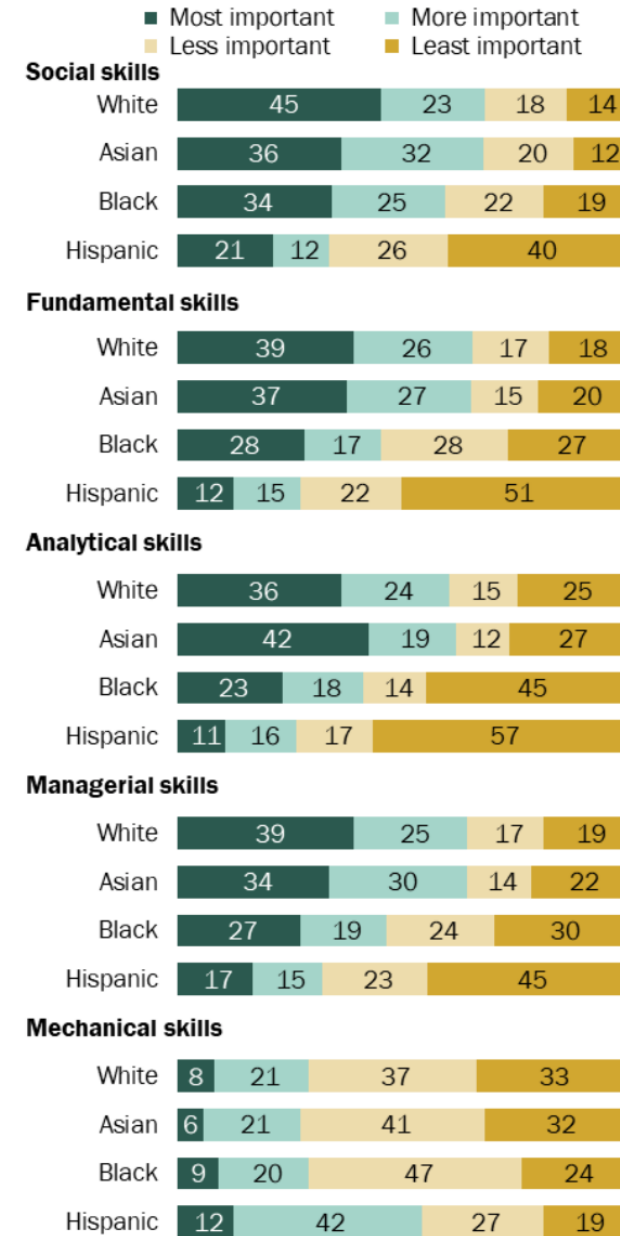
Immigrants less likely to be employed in high-skill occupations than U.S. born

% of employed workers, by importance of a skill, 2018



White, Asian immigrant workers are most likely to work in high-skill jobs

% of employed foreign-born workers, by importance of a skill, 2018



Hispanic: Historical Origins

- ▶ Largest group of immigrant workers
- ▶ California Gold Rush, Emergency Farm Labor Agreement (1942): low-skilled workers seeking economic opportunity
- ▶ Political migration: Central America
- ▶ Immigration and National Act
 - 1965: granted Cubans special status as refugees, but made it difficult for other Hispanics to obtain immigration visas

Hispanic: Most Concentrated Occupations

- ▶ Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products
- ▶ Agricultural Workers
- ▶ Drywall Installers, Ceiling Tile Installers, and Tapers
- ▶ Plasterers and Stucco Masons
- ▶ Pressers, Textile, Garment, and Related Materials
- ▶ Sewing Machine Operators
- ▶ Packaging and Filling Machine Operators

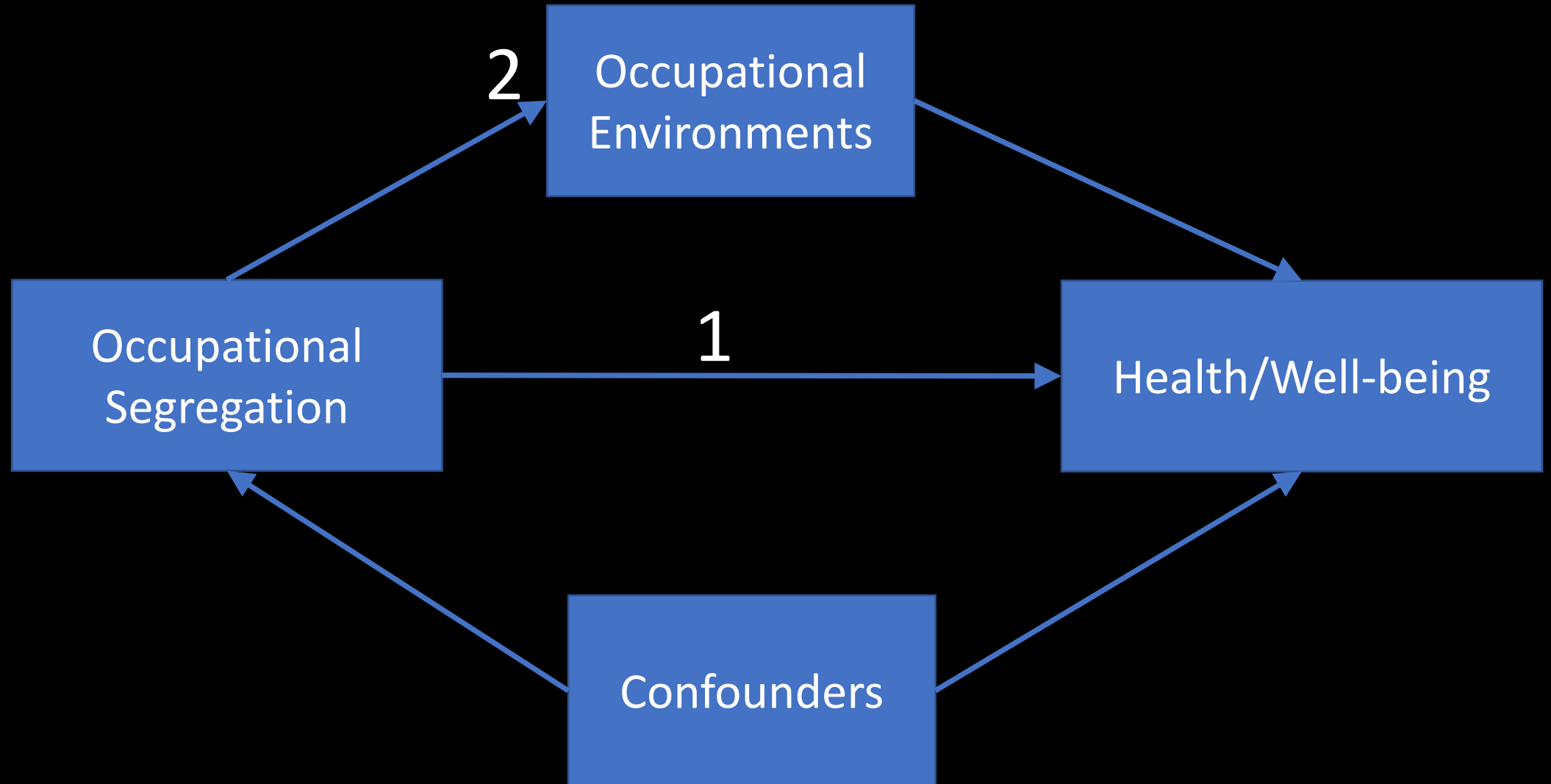
Asian: Historical Origins

- ▶ Largest group of new immigrants
- ▶ First as low-skilled, low-wage laborers --> high-skilled occupations
- ▶ Immigration and National Act
 - 1965: removed national-origin quotas
 - 1990: H1-B visa program

Asian: Most Concentrated Occupations

- ▶ Software Developers, Applications and and Systems Software
- ▶ Computer Hardware Engineers
- ▶ Medical Scientists, and Life Scientists
- ▶ Physical Scientists
- ▶ Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioner Support Technicians
- ▶ Gaming Services Workers
- ▶ Personal Appearance Workers

Conceptual Framework



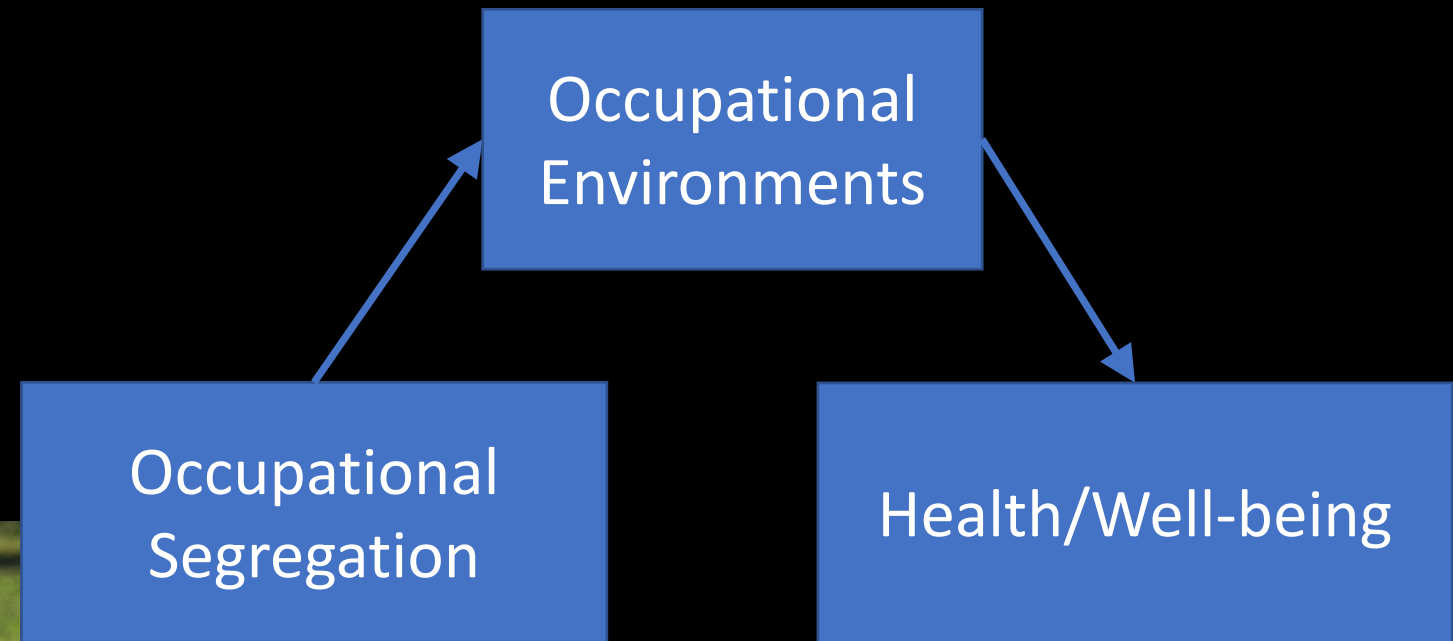
1. Cultural Devaluation

- ▶ The social status of incumbents influences occupations' status
- ▶ "... work done by low-status immigrants is likely to be culturally devalued, consonant with the argument that immigrants' low status can transfer to their work itself." (Catanzarite 2002:306)



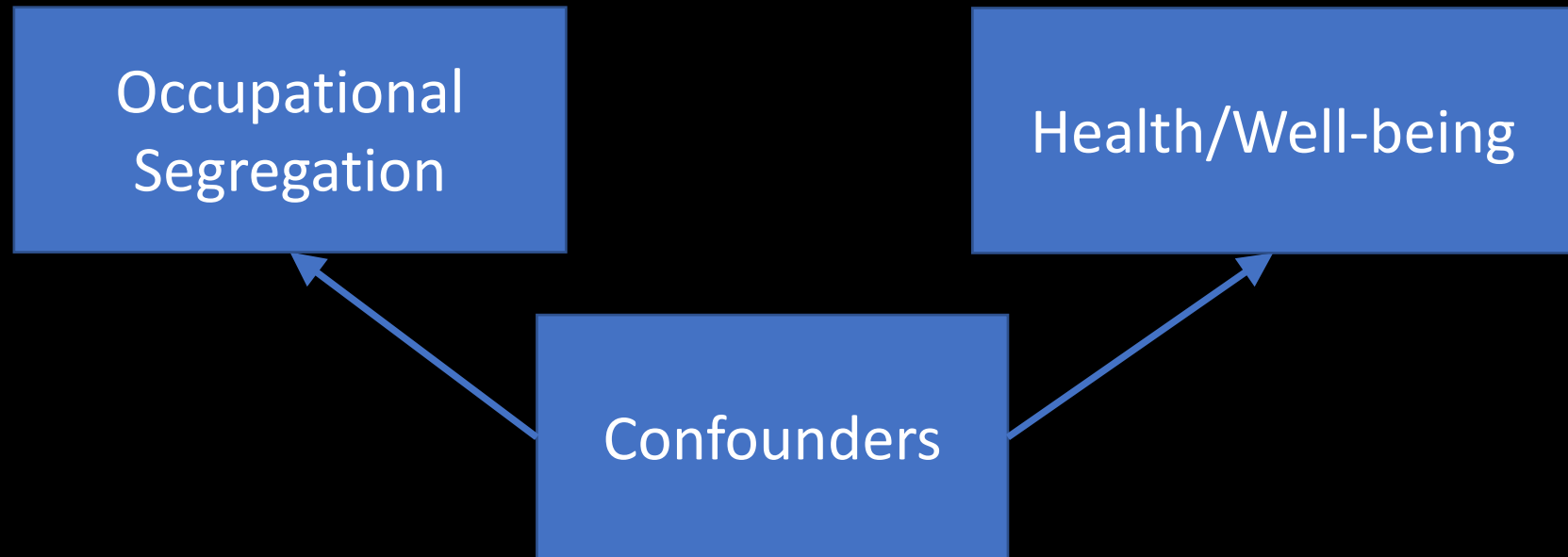
2. Work Environmental Exposure

- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Psychological
- ▶ Social



3. Confounding

- ▶ Selection, sorting
- ▶ How people come to do the work they do



Who will be Mostly Affected?

- ▶ Native-born or foreign-born workers?

An Empirical Investigation

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Native-immigrant occupational segregation and worker health in the United States, 2004–2014



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ABSTRACT

Immigrant workers are a growing share of the U.S. labor force and are overrepresented in certain occupations. This much is well documented, yet few studies have examined the consequences of this division of labor between foreign-born and native-born workers. This research focuses on one of the consequences of occupational segregation—worker health. We merge data from the 2004–2014 National Health Interview Surveys with occupational-level data from the Occupational Information Network 20.1 database and the American Community Surveys to examine the relationship between occupational segregation and health. First, logistic regression models show that working in an occupation with a higher share of immigrants is associated with higher odds of poor physical and psychological health. This relationship is more pronounced among native-born workers than among foreign-born workers. Second, we propose two explanations for the association between occupational segregation and health: (1) workers with less human capital are typically sorted into culturally devalued occupations with a higher concentration of immigrants, and (2) occupations with a higher percentage of immigrants generally have relatively poor work environments. We find sorting variables play a major role, whereas the smaller contribution of occupational environments to the segregation–health link is partly because of the heterogeneous (i.e., both positive and negative) indirect effects of different exposure measures. With the sustained high levels of immigration to the United States, the implications of integrated or segregated experiences in the labor market and their impact on workers are important avenues for health policies and future research.

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Empirical Findings: Data and Sample

► Data

- 2004–2014 National Health Interview Surveys (NHIS)
- O*NET
- 2004–2014 American Community Surveys (ACS)

► Sample

- Ages 22–64
- Reported to be working during the week before the survey

Empirical Findings: Measures

▶ Health outcomes

- Self-reported health
- Psychological distress (K6)

▶ Occupational segregation

- ACS: %workers who are immigrants for each occupation (by region)

▶ Occupational-level sorting and exposure variables

- O*NET

Empirical Findings: Descriptive Statistics

	Native-born Workers				Foreign-born Workers			
	Highly Immigrant- Segregated Jobs (N = 42,355)		Less Immigrant- Segregated Jobs (N = 136,712)		Highly Immigrant- Segregated Jobs (N = 22,492)		Less Immigrant- Segregated Jobs (N = 20,540)	
	Mean/%	SD	Mean/%	SD	Mean/%	SD	Mean/%	SD
Dependent Variables								
Poor Self-Reported Health	15%		11%		12%		8%	
Severe Psychological Distress	5%		3%		3%		2%	
Sorting Variables								
Educational Attainment								
Less than high school	12%		5%		37%		12%	
High school	35%		26%		26%		20%	
Some college	31%		34%		16%		25%	
College or more	23%		35%		22%		43%	
Required College Degree or Higher	22%		38%		18%		38%	
Required Years of Related Experience	1.74	1.19	2.56	1.36	1.62	1.37	2.55	1.56
Importance of English-language Knowledge	3.33	0.44	3.69	0.43	3.26	0.49	3.66	0.49
Importance of Speaking Skills	3.30	0.39	3.65	0.35	3.23	0.43	3.63	0.40
Exposure Variables								
Physical Hazard Exposure	2.38	0.69	2.07	0.58	2.47	0.82	2.08	0.64
Physical Activity on the Job	1.43	0.83	0.71	0.68	1.52	0.94	0.72	0.78
Job Control	2.90	0.45	3.22	0.42	2.84	0.50	3.21	0.49
Interpersonal Stressors	2.45	0.31	2.63	0.32	2.41	0.35	2.60	0.36

Empirical Findings: Native-born Workers

	Poor Self-reported Health				Severe Psychological Distress			
Occupation % Immigrants	0.237*** (0.008)	0.020* (0.010)	0.041*** (0.010)	0.015 (0.010)	0.232*** (0.013)	0.026 (0.017)	0.033* (0.017)	0.020 (0.017)
Sorting Variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Exposure Variables	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Empirical Findings: Foreign-born Workers

	Poor Self-reported Health				Severe Psychological Distress			
Occupation % Immigrants	0.139*** (0.011)	0.001 (0.014)	0.042** (0.014)	0.003 (0.015)	0.093*** (0.021)	0.022 (0.029)	0.009 (0.027)	0.013 (0.028)
Sorting Variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Exposure Variables	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Empirical Findings: Sorting or Exposure?

Table 5

Estimates of indirect effects in the relationship between occupational segregation and health, native-born workers.

	Poor Self-Reported Health				Severe Psychological Distress			
	Size		Std. Err.	% Reduced	Size		Std. Err.	% Reduced
Occupational Sorting								
High school	−0.046	***	0.002	−21.030	−0.042	***	0.002	−20.300
Some college	0.012	***	0.001	5.650	0.011	***	0.001	5.090
College or more	0.147	***	0.004	66.800	0.138	***	0.005	66.080
Required College Degree or Higher	−0.015	**	0.006	−6.810	0.000		0.009	−0.100
Required Years of Related Experience	0.023	***	0.005	10.550	0.019	*	0.008	9.080
Importance of English-language Knowledge	0.035	***	0.009	15.960	0.000		0.015	−0.080
Importance of Speaking Skills	0.021		0.013	9.370	0.005		0.020	2.330
Total	0.177			80.490	0.130			62.100
Occupational Environmental Exposure								
Physical Hazard Exposure	0.004		0.003	1.800	0.011	*	0.005	5.210
Physical Activity on the Job	0.019	**	0.006	8.500	0.021	*	0.009	9.980
Job Control	0.045	***	0.009	20.580	0.067	***	0.015	32.060
Interpersonal Stressors	−0.025	***	0.004	−11.370	−0.020	**	0.006	−9.350
Total	0.043			19.510	0.079			37.900

Note: This set of analysis was calculated based on the full model (i.e., Model 4 in [Table 2](#)), using the procedures described by [Breen et al. \(2013\)](#). “Size” denotes the size of the indirect effect; “% Reduced” denotes to what extent the indirect relationship between occupational segregation and health can be explained by each of the variables listed; the numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding. See text for more details.

Empirical Findings

► Driven by occupations overrepresented by Hispanic immigrant workers

- Working in occupations with higher numbers of Asian immigrants tend to be associated with lower odds of poor self-reported health and psychological distress

Discussion and Future Directions

▶ Broadening the lens

- Households, organizations, societies
- Across generations

▶ Joint segregation along multiple dimensions

▶ Learning from good and “resilient” occupations

▶ Comparisons across societies and time

Immigrant workers have borne the brunt of covid-19 outbreaks at meatpacking plants

How You Get Your Berries: Migrant Workers Who Fear Virus, but Toil On



La Colmena honors immigrant workers with Labor Day display; calls for aid for those left out of relief

Thanks!

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