

12-10-2014

Who Do You Trust?: An Analysis of Public Perception Towards Government

Pilar Fabregas

Chapman University, fabre103@mail.chapman.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts

 Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology and Interaction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fabregas, Pilar, "Who Do You Trust?: An Analysis of Public Perception Towards Government" (2014). *Student Research Day Abstracts and Posters*. Paper 12.

http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts/12

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research Day Abstracts and Posters by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.



Who Do You Trust?: An Analysis of Public Perception Towards Government

Pilar Fabregas

Department of Political Science, Chapman University; Orange, California

Introduction to Research

- This study explores variables commonly associated with how trustworthy the government is perceived are actually reflected.
- Research typically points to three influential factors:
 - Level of education
 - Ethnicity/race
 - Age range
- A lower level of education is thought to increase distrust in the government because such individuals are not usually exposed to the complexity of legislative processes.
- It is believed that the numerous displays of political oppression towards minorities throughout U.S. history would lead them to be less trusting of their government.
- Given a spiked increase in student loans from what was seen a decade ago, the recent economic downturn limiting job growth and stability for those not yet of retirement age, younger generations are less likely to trust their government.

Trust in Government

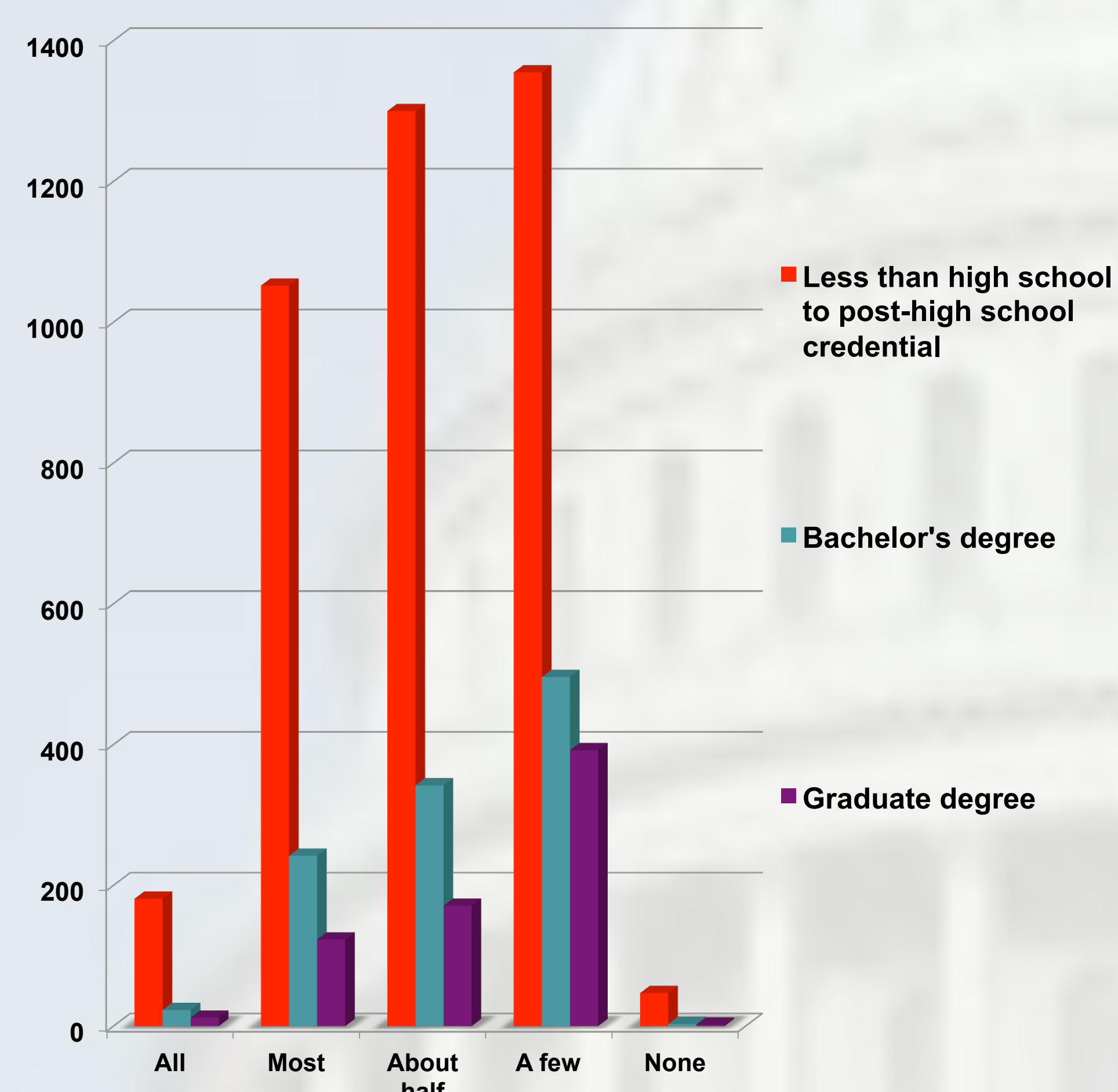
- Analyzing these factors and how they truly affect an individual's trust in their government to serve and protect the people will provide insight to:
 - Whether the reasoning behind the variables can continue to be supported by theories such as those above, or require further research to develop a comprehensive understanding.
 - How recognizing the significance behind these factors can be potentially used to increase trust in the government.
- Thus, all three variables are tested with the same dependent variable, which asks respondents how many individuals in government they believe to be corrupt.
- Therefore, showing how many in government are thought to be corrupt in relation to each factor can be translated into how much the government is trusted by the people.

Hypotheses:

- H 1: Those with lower levels of education are more likely to believe their government is corrupt.
- H 2: Minorities (African Americans, Latinos, etc.) are more likely to believe in government corruption than Caucasians.
- H 3: As age increases, the tendency to think that the government is corrupt decreases.

Data

H 1: Education



H 2: Ethnicity

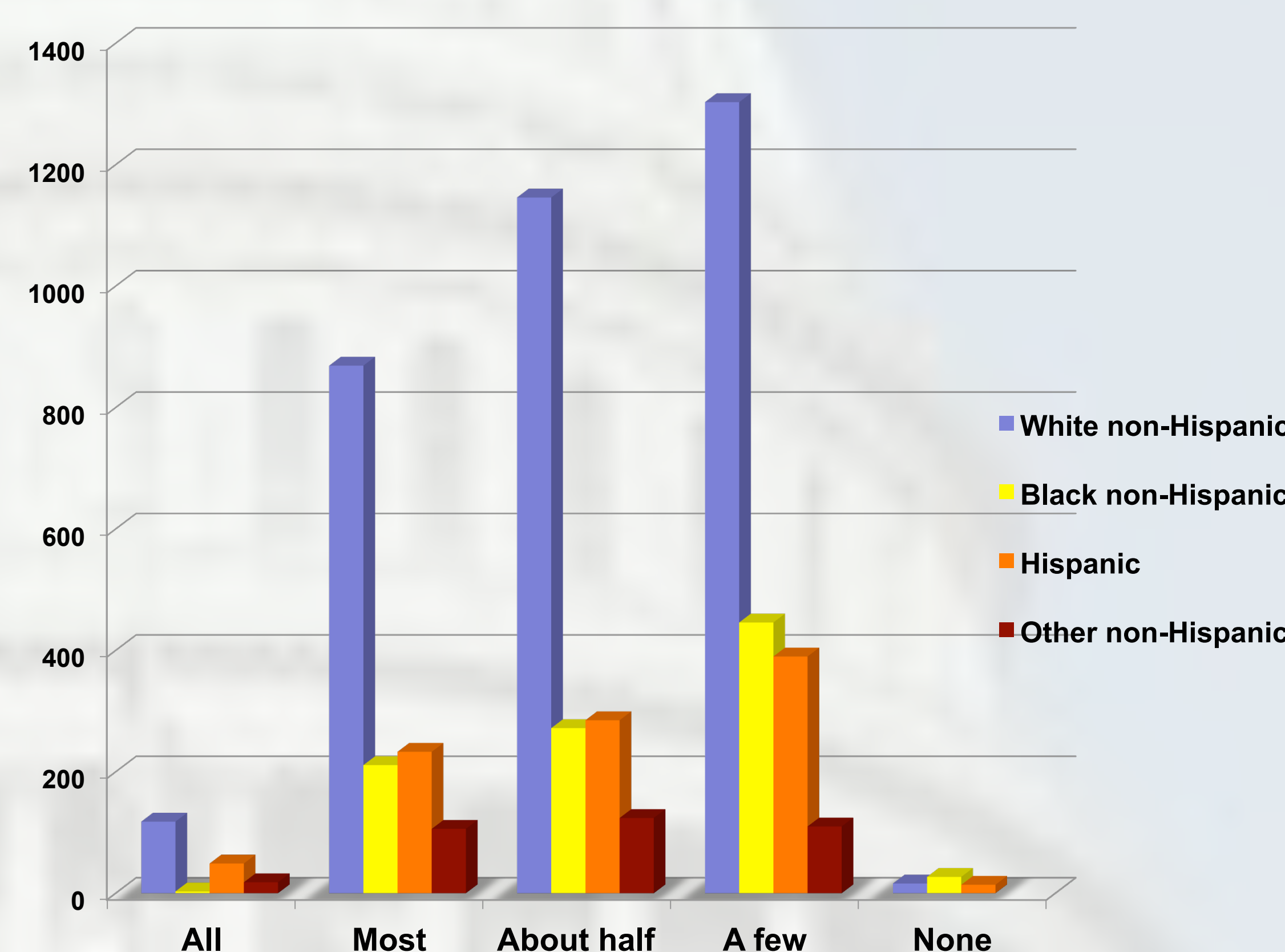
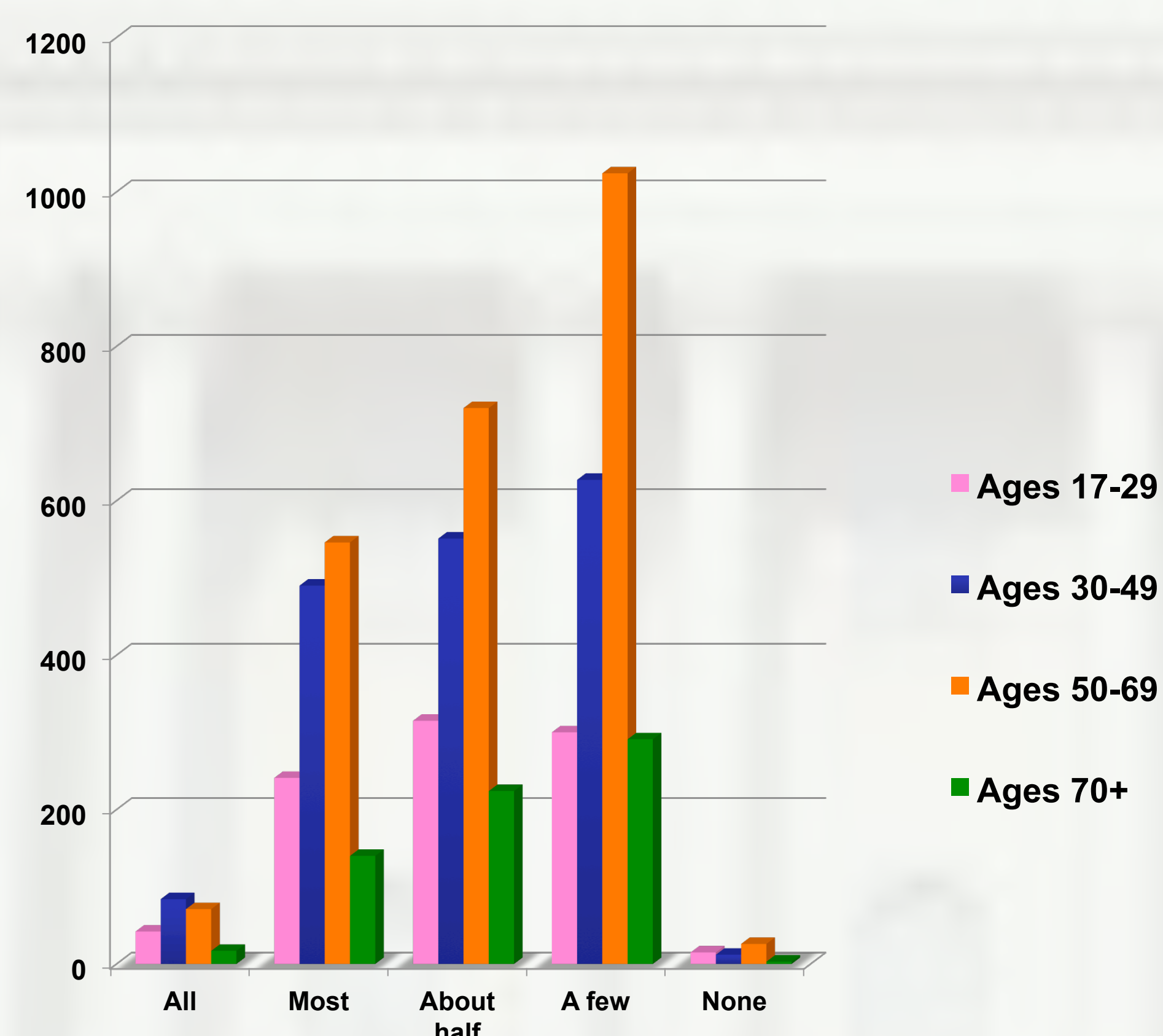


Table Interpretations

- Independent variables: level of education, ethnicity, and age range
- Dependent variable: how many in government are thought to be corrupt

H 3: Age



PRE: How many in government are corrupt *		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PRE: SUMMARY-R race and ethnicity group	Between Groups (Combined)	28.272	3	9.424	11.539	.000
	Within Groups	4713.265	5771	.817		
	Total	4741.537	5774			

- Sig. value for ethnicity (in addition to all other independent variables) were .000
- This shows that each independent variable holds a strong relationship with public opinion on governmental corruption

Findings

H 1: Education

The graph illustrates an inverse relationship between levels of education and range of beliefs in the corruption of government. The greater an individual is to believe in such corruption, the less education they have completed. Still, the majority who believed in high amounts of corruption held the lowest levels of education, so this hypothesis is proved correct.

H 2: Ethnicity

The graph shows a similar inverse effect as in H1. However, it shows that minority ethnicities are less likely to believe in government corruption than Whites, and in fact hold more trust in their government. This contradicts what is stated in the hypothesis, so it cannot be proven.

H 3: Age

This graph also reveals an inverse relationship between the variables. It is important to note that as age increases, the less likely one is to believe in government corruption. Thus, the hypothesis is proved.

Conclusions

- Although commonly perceived otherwise, higher education, younger age, and association with a minority ethnicity do not show increased levels of mistrust in the government.
- Every graph shows that the majority believes only a small number of individuals in government are corrupt.
- This means that although there is a strong correlation between these factors and how much corruption is in the government, there is not actually a large distrust of government as a whole.
- Even so, the data proves to be a useful resource in understanding the roots of distrust in government and an even better tool in learning how to alleviate it.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Ludie and David C. Henley Research Laboratory, Wilkinson College of Letters and Sciences, Chapman's Department of Political Science, and especially Dr. Ann Gordon for their guidance and assistance in this research project.

References

- Avery, James M. "Race, Partisanship, and Political Trust Following Bush versus Gore (2000)." *Political Behavior* 29.3 (2007): 327-42. JSTOR. Web. 25 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/4500249?ref=no-x-route.84670ac66b71b3a8b328015f1a164ce5>>
- Chanley, Virginia A., Thomas J. Rudolph, and Wendy M. Rahm. "The Origins and Consequences of Public Trust in Government: A Time Series Analysis." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 64.3 (2000): 239-56. JSTOR. Web. 28 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/3078718?ref=no-x-route.5926e475b9f6abee9c3357e43bb394>>