


Spring 5-14-2015

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Recommended Citation

Cardoza, Manuel, "Perceptions of Immigration in America" (2015). *Student Research Day Abstracts and Posters*. Paper 129.
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Perceptions of Immigration in America

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Introduction to Research

How likely is immigration to take away jobs?

This research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the true impact of attitudes on immigration and how they have a bearing on immigration policy. This study investigates the affects of immigration on the social and economic facets of American life. It looks into the question and belief that political attitudes and racial views are affecting how people view the affects of immigration in the country and if this ultimately leads to negative opportunities and lack of policy changes for the immigrant community.

Attitudes on Immigration

There are distinctive patterns of contemporary immigration attitudes among Americans classified by race. Although traditional public opinion theories often explain political attitudes on immigration as a function of party identification, the most apparent differences in opinion are across racial groups.

Racial-group identity measured through a sense of “linked fate” (the sense that an individual’s fortunes are linked to others in his or her racial group) is one of the most important aspects of identity that we define as the racial prism through which Americans view the politics of immigration.

Group threat theory hypothesizes the idea that prejudices along with inter-group opposition are largely reactions to perceived threats by subordinate groups. Dominant groups seem to always seek the preservation of their advantaged social position and view infringements on their privileges by minority groups as disrupting to the existing social order.

Self-interest theory contends that intergroup hostility originates at the individual level from an underlying clash over material interests. Individuals of an in-group who compete with members of an out-group are likely to develop hostilities toward out-groups followed by attempts to remove the competitive out-group; e.g. through supporting restrictionist immigration legislation

Immigration in the Labor Market

Self-interest is defined in terms of economic competition. Classical economics show that immigration benefits the host country because it subsidizes the labor supply, but in the case of the U.S many people believe it impacts it in a negative way because according to economic theorist they believe immigrants displace native citizens from the labor market and cause the lowering of wages because many times immigrants are willing to work for less money.

The U.S market is divided into two different sectors, a primary sector and a secondary sector. Some researchers believe that immigrants tend to occupy the secondary sector, which has little impact in regards to the economy or loss of jobs.

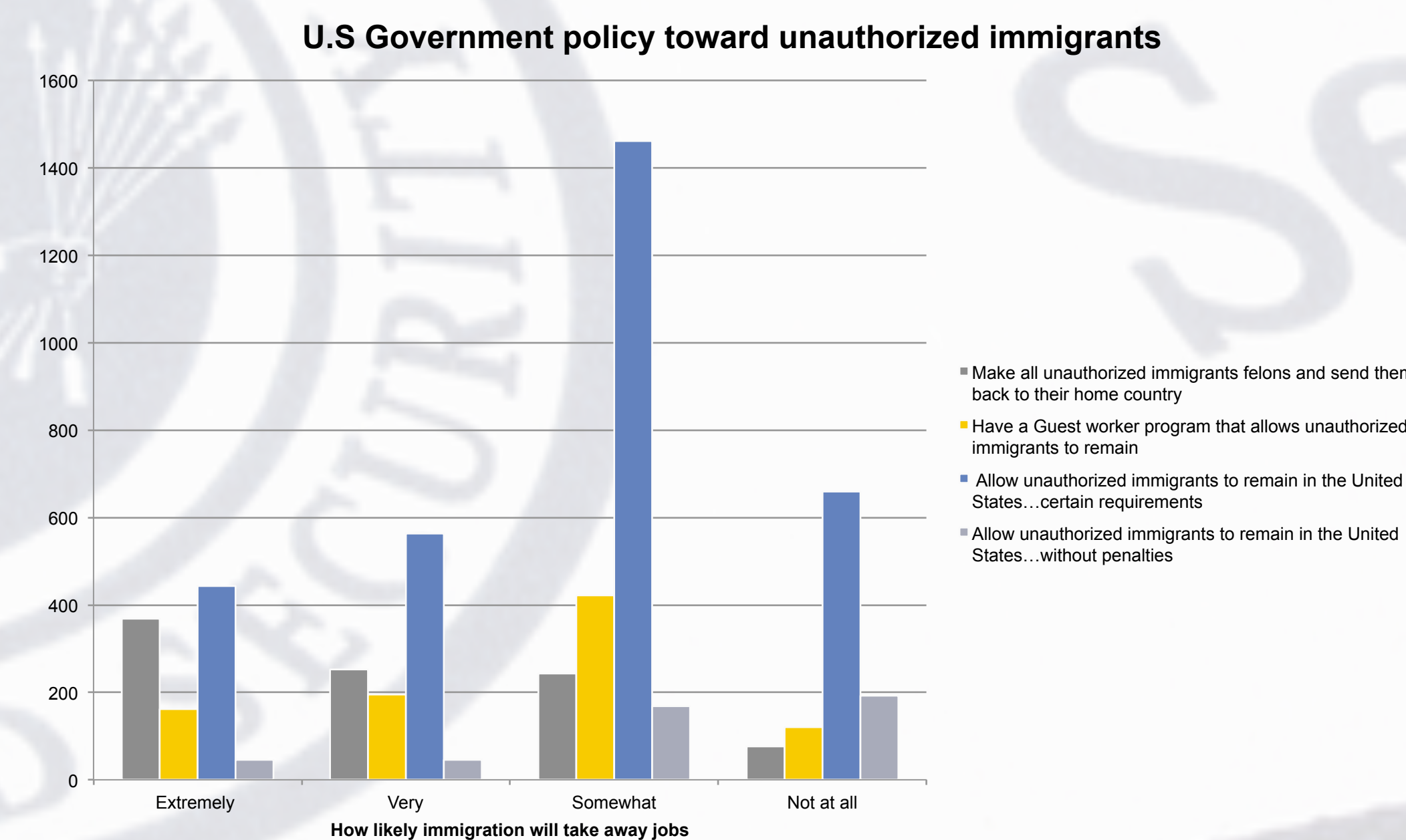
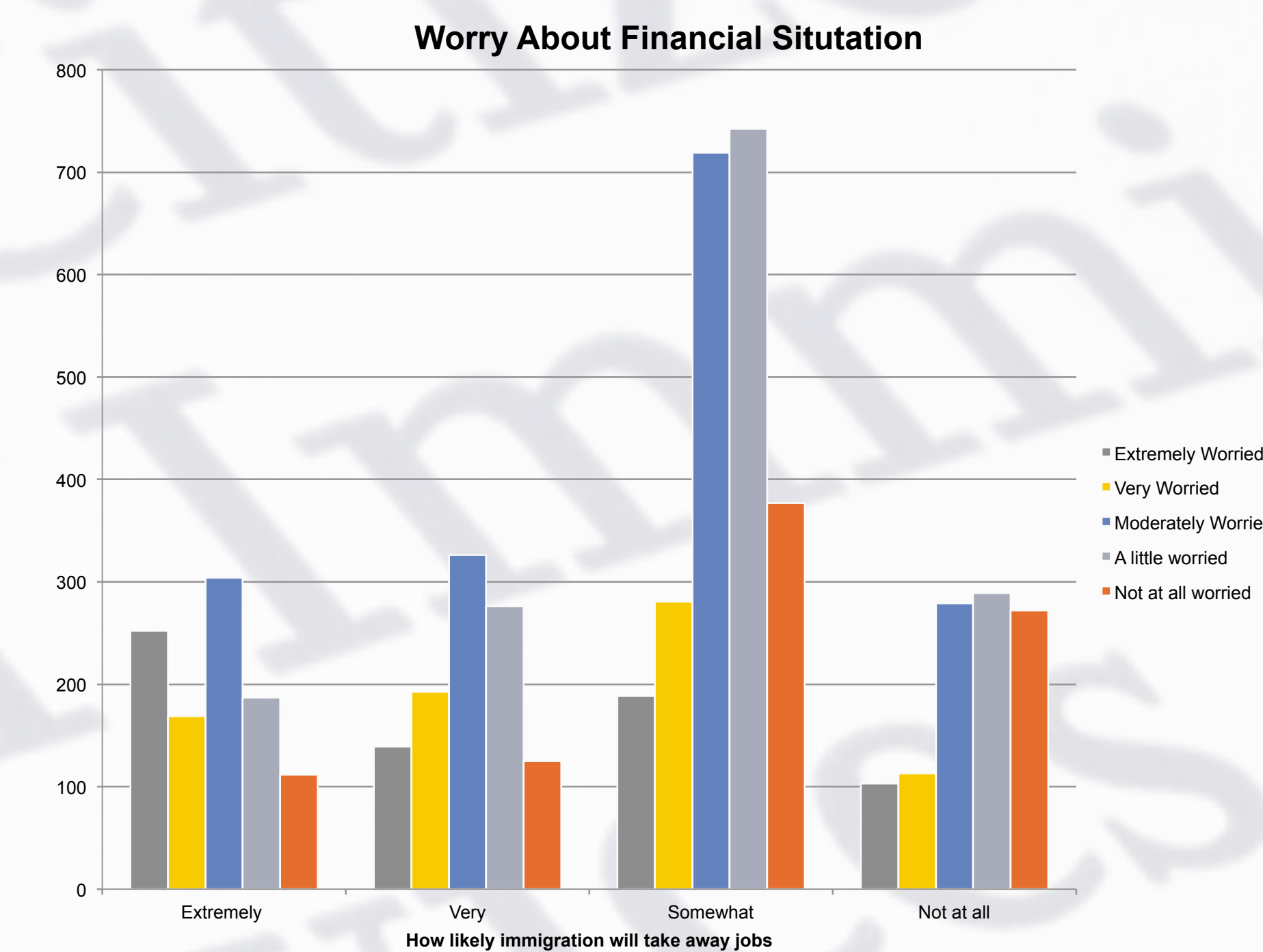
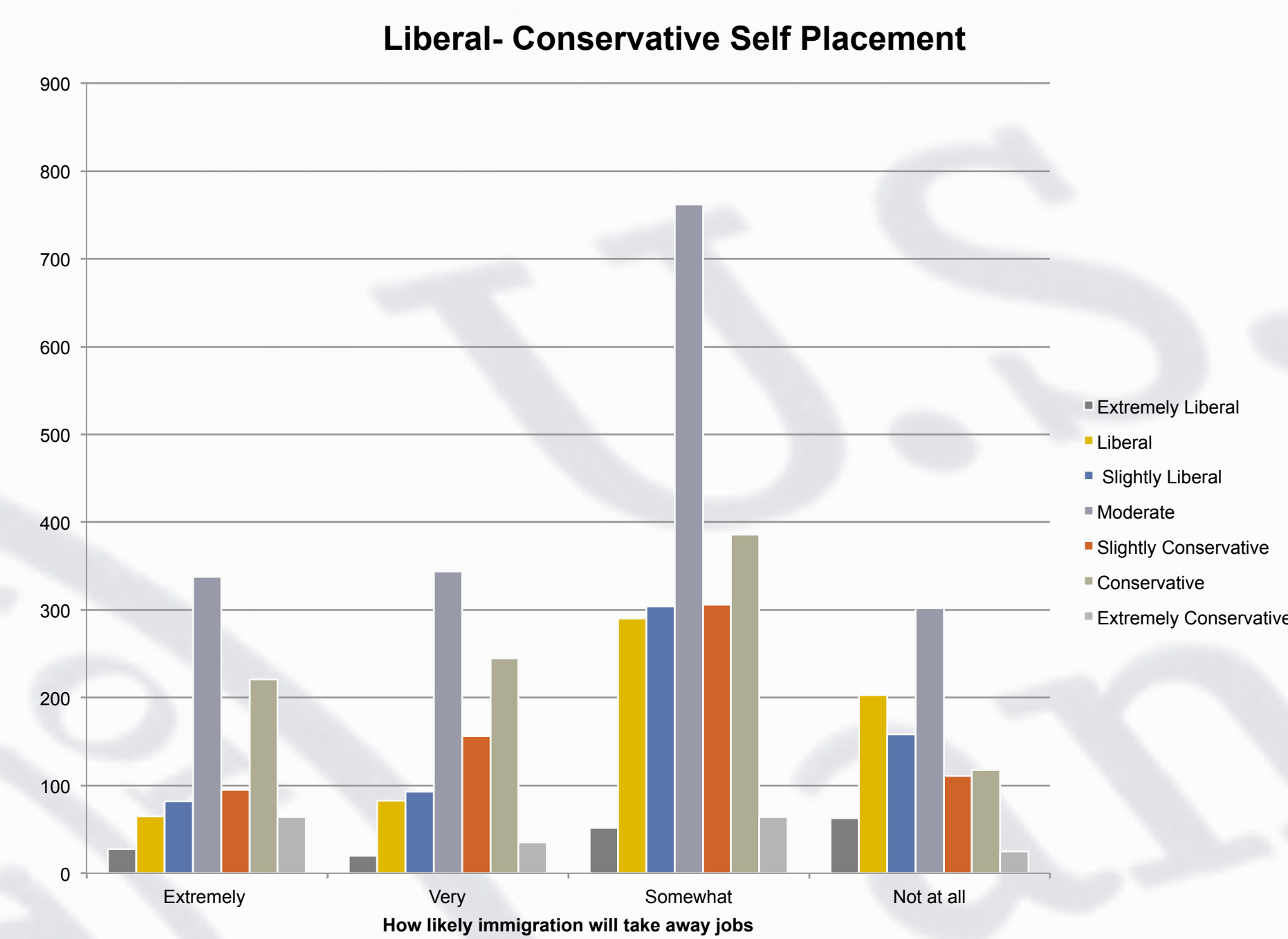
A labor market competition hypothesis suggests that persons having the lowest levels of socioeconomic status attainment are likely to have the most concern over job competition with new immigrants, and that they therefore will exhibit the most negative attitudes toward illegal migration and undocumented migrants.

Hypotheses:

H 1: A person’s concern about their financial situation is likely to affect the perception of immigration taking away jobs.

H 2: An individuals identification as liberal or conservative is likely to affect their perception of immigration taking away jobs

H 3: The U.S Governments policy towards unauthorized immigrants strongly effects the perception of immigrants taking away jobs



Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.686	.081		20.696	.000
	PRE: U.S. government policy toward unauthorized immigrants	.298	.016	.262	19.236	.000
	POST: Worry about financial situation	.142	.011	.181	13.412	.000
	POST: Anyone lost jobs	.062	.027	.031	2.311	.021
	POST: 7pt scale liberal-Conservative self placement	-.083	.009	-.123	-9.071	.000
	PRE: SUMMARY- R age on interview date (age group)	-.002	.004	-.008	-.602	.547

Conservative vs. Liberal

Conservatives are concerned about the number of illegal immigrants who have entered our country and continue to do so every year

Liberals believe that we should allow illegal immigrants to become citizens. Many Liberals actually believe that immigrants should be given the same rights as citizens right now, including the right to vote, the right to Government funded health care, the right to go to public schools and colleges, the right to be on welfare, the right to get social security, etc.

Policies

- Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)
- Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA)
- Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA)
- SB 1070
- Dream Act

Table Interpretation

The tables measure variables such as financial insecurity, self placement of ideological views and U.S policy in reference to the inquiry of whether immigration is likely to take away jobs.

Liberal/Conservative self placement has a significance level of .000. Those who identified themselves as being more liberal, view immigration as not having a significant impact on immigration taking away jobs.

Worry about Financial situation has a significance level of .000. Although not obviously prevalent the chart show that people who are extremely or somewhat worried about their financial situation tend to also think that immigration takes away jobs.

U.S Policy toward unauthorized immigrants has a significance level of .000. The table shows that individuals who agree with strict immigration policies also believe immigration is a cause for job loss

Findings

H1: According to my research and findings, data and theories such as the group threat theory support the hypothesis that people with financial worries tend to think immigration is to blame for the loss of jobs.

H 2: An individuals identification as liberal or conservative seems to contribute to the formation of a persons opinion on whether immigration is bad and causes a loss of jobs.

H 3: Although not extremely evident, there is enough to suggest that based on the governments policies on immigration, people who support strict policies also view immigration having a negative affect on the economy and the labor market

Conclusions

There are multiple factors that influence public opinion towards illegal immigration. Public attitudes on the issue have been predominantly difficult to correlate due to the fact there are multiple variables that may or may not cause the negative views on immigration. The fact of the matter is immigration attitudes are affecting minority groups in the level opportunities they have as well as the way in which they are treated.

Media, propaganda, political actors and other key forces influence public opinion through what they say and how they portray things. Today immigration is portrayed as a negative thing. When one talks about immigration the word “illegal” usually comes before it, attaching a negative connotation to it.

The way in which immigrant groups are portrayed in media is also negative along with the belittling of their social contributions. All these things form stereotypes that put minority groups at an inferior level, excluding them from what truly characterizes an American.

Stereotyping is something that researchers use to look at prejudice, ethnocentrism and possible inter group conflicts. There is a belief that when people rely too much on negative stereotypes to make decisions, then they are more likely to form negative attitudes.

The reality is, America’s face has changed, the characteristics of an American should be comprised of the best traits and qualities from all groups living in the country, no matter if they’re immigrants or not.

Data shows immigration does not have a significant affect on the labor market as many times they occupy jobs normal citizens don’t want

As long as Liberal and Conservatives are at odds with immigration, not comprehensive measures or policies will be able to solve the problem

No matter how much data is presented immigration will continue to affect the country and split public opinion.