An Examination of the Attitudes towards Immigration across U.S. Demographic Groups

Siyuan Yu
Skidmore College, syu@skidmore.edu

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ABSTRACT

What demographic backgrounds are associated with a person's attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies? Applying group threat theory and contact theory, I propose that race, age, education, political views, and religiosity all affect how people view immigration. To test the hypotheses, I analyze data from the 2014 General Social Survey, in which adults living in households in the United States are randomly selected and interviewed. A subset containing 1,022 respondents who answered every question relevant to this study is selected from the 2014 GSS. The univariate analysis shows that most Americans do not agree with the statement that immigrants undermine American culture, and that Americans are divided on whether the number of immigrants should be increased nowadays. The multivariate result indicates that education and political views are the most significant predictors of how one views immigrants and immigration policies, correspondingly, while race, age, and religiosity have no statistically significant relationships with either dependent variable. Statistical findings support the hypothesis that the more liberal a person is, the more likely the person is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture and to say that the number of immigrants nowadays should be increased. Contact theory is consistent with the result of this study. However, the findings also demonstrate that immigration is a complicated issue. This study is valuable in understanding the acceptance of immigrants across demographic groups. It also invites additional research on this important topic that will affect the future of the United States.

As a country of immigrants, the United States has a longstanding history of having one of the largest numbers of foreign-born citizens in the world (Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker 2012). Historically, increased immigration has been strongly correlated with the growth of the economy and social development(Fussell 2014). However, Americans' stances on immigrants and immigration policies have not always been positive (Fussell 2014; Berg 2014; Berg 2015). Notably, in recent years, there has been growing anti-immigrant sentiments along with the social and political change in this nation (Flores 2018).

Scholars of many disciplines have been studying the intricate relationship between the benefits of immigration to the nation and anti-immigration views (Bikmen 2015; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Czaika 2015; Esses, Brochu, and Dickson 2012; Esses 2002). Sociologists, specifically, have been theorizing such correlation (Berg 2015; Fussell 2014). Of the sociological theories proposed for the attitudes towards immigration, group threat theory is cited frequently to describe the issue at hand. Group threat theory describes the perceived fear of the presence and size of the out-group among in-group members (Berg 2014; Blumer 1958; Brown 2013). On the immigration issue in the United States, the in-group usually includes native-born Americans, while the out-group covers foreigners as well as naturalized citizens residing in the United States. Based on the group threat theory, native-born Americans may feel that the size of immigrants threatens job and welfare prospective for the natives (Czaika 2015). Especially, for many White Americans, the vast number of immigrants from Hispanic and Asian nations may soon change the racial makeup of the nation, as there will likely be less than half of Americans who identify as White in the next decade or so (Berg 2014; Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan, and Lahav 2015). The "threat" of immigration is perceived differently across demographic groups in the United States (Cabaniss and Cameron 2018; Bohman and Hjerm 2014; Nagel and Ehrkamp

2017; Chandler and Tsai 2001). Moreover, there are approximately 50 million legal and unauthorized immigrants, which is around a sixth of the entire country's population (Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker 2012). Therefore, it is vital and reasonable to examine how various demographic identities correlate the stances on immigration.

In this research, I propose that demographic classifications such as race, age, education, political leanings, and religiosity have impacts on the in-group individuals' attitudes towards immigrants. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

1. Compared to White people, people of color are more likely to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture and to say that the number of immigrants nowadays should be increased.

2. The older a person is, the less likely the person is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture and to say that the number of immigrants nowadays should be increased.

3. The more years of education one completes, the more likely the person is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture and to say that the number of immigrants nowadays should be increased.

4. The more liberal a person is, the more likely he or she agrees that immigrants do not undermine American culture and says that the number of immigrants nowadays should be increased

5. The more frequently one attends religious services, the less likely the person is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture and to say that the number of immigrants nowadays should be increased.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Group Threat Theory

Proposed by Blumer (1958:3), group threat theory describes how race prejudice originates from group positions rather than individual feelings. Before Blumer, social scientists mainly thought that racial bias is expressed in the form of individual feeling. However, Blumer (1958:3) shows that the precedent views lack the understanding of racial relations in terms of racial groups. Race, in the United States, is institutionalized. It means that individuals who are racially prejudiced discriminate on the basis of the social identification of self and others. Therefore, as Blumer (1958:7) claims, it is inadequate to evaluate individual feelings alone to grasp prejudice. Instead, group positioning is crucial to the comprehension of the prerogative feelings of the "others." Threat, the feeling that the inferior group may jeopardize the superior group's social position, is then established on the ground of collective negative feelings.

Going beyond race, the study by Ben-Nun Bloom's team examines two areas of threats native-born people feel about incoming migrants (Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2015). The first is cultural threat. Cultural threat describes the fear of losing cultural capitals such as ethnic history, norms, values and symbolic establishments to diversity due to immigration (Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2015:1762). Cultural threat makes in-group members cohere closely to their group values, and a critical part of such group values is often the negative attitudes toward immigrants, since immigrants threaten symbolic social and political power of the natives. In the Western countries, immigrants of color face the most scrutiny while integrating into the communities they are moving into, as race is a distinct indicator of a social and cultural identity. The second form of threat is material threat (Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2015:1762). The sense of material threat comes from the identification of the loss of resources such as jobs, welfares, and housing because of newcomers. The negative feelings toward immigrants increase when a native-born person sees

that there are out-group members holding jobs that were used to be held by in-group members, or when a native finds out that the price of owning a house rises as there is a lack of supply of available housing more so than ever. Cultural and material threats may be targeted at different groups of people. For instance, natives who feel culturally threatened dislike immigrants that are vastly different from them. On the other hand, individuals who are materially threatened may only support unintegrated immigrants because unintegrated immigrants will have a harder time taking jobs from the natives. Ben-Nun Bloom et al. (2015:1763) argue that while the two forms of threat appeal to different psychological motivations, they complement each other in constructing the opposition to immigration. By taking race and religion into account, the study shows that many immigrants are presented as threatening in both ways (Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2015). Moreover, since each of the two types of threat can also trigger the rationalization of xenophobia, the overall hostile attitudes toward immigrants will likely to increase when either cultural or material threat exists among the in-group members.

Contact Theory

Contact theory, often referred to as contact hypothesis, helps explain the reasons behind a person's pro- or anti-immigration sentiments in a different way. Initially proposed by Allport (1954), contact theory states that the lack of interpersonal and intergroup contact may be closely related to widespread prejudices and stereotyping on minorities. Contrary to the group threat theory that conceptualizes xenophobia as the result of conflict and fear, contact theory considers prejudice as the result of a form of socialization that fails to expose the individual to the diverse society he or she lives in (Allport 1954; Fussell 2014). Contact theory also proposes that with future positive encounters, individuals' belief system and attitudes towards a diverse population can be reshaped. In this study, contact theory can also explain how race, age, education, political

leaning, and religiosity may affect one's position on immigration. Education level, for instance, positively correlates one's contact with out-group members, as the school is a place to gather people of varied background and personal values. Specifically, colleges provide a platform for students to learn in a community that is often different in demographic composition from where students are from. In compliance with the contact theory, the hypothesis that people with more years of education hold more positive attitudes toward immigration is logical. Similarly, people of particular racial background, age, political affiliation, and religion also have more contacts with their corresponding out-groups than others. Consequently, the contact theory provides valuable insights and sociological background for this study, especially on the causes and effects of prejudices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociological literature on the issue of immigration has focused extensively on immigrants' assimilation and social inequalities that exist in the current immigration system (Cabaniss and Cameron 2018; Berg 2014; Bohman and Hjerm 2014). Studies emphasizing the relationship between demographic factors and immigration attitudes primarily concentrate on one specific social identity, such as race, political affiliation, or religion (Browne, Reingold, and Kronberg 2018; Knoll 2009; Bohman and Hjerm 2016; Flores 2018; Hawley 2011). While there is currently a lack of comprehensive analyses of various demographic aspects on the attitudes toward immigrants, previous literature provides invaluable resources concerning the rationales behind the support for immigration among Americans.

Racial Effect

This research seeks to establish what demographic factors affect one's opinions on immigrants and immigration policies. Previous literature recognizes that one's race has a

significant effect on how the person views immigration (Berg 2014; Bloom et al. 2015; Fussell 2014; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). Focusing on the experience of White people in this country, Berg (2014) shows that White Americans who are exposed to mixed-race or mixed-ethnicity individuals are more likely to hold immigrant-friendly positions than Whites who live in homogeneous communities. The researcher explains this phenomenon by applying the contact theory. Contact theory maintains that the lack of exposure between groups of people can lead to stereotyping and bias against certain out-group individuals. In this case, White Americans who live in multi-racial neighborhoods are better able to understand the struggles of immigrants and people of color because they are forced to interact with those who are not White Americans in the neighborhood. Thus, it is more likely for those White people to hold sympathetic views on immigrants and immigration policy.

Looking at the experience of people of color, Browne, Reingold, and Kronberg (2018) further hypothesize that African Americans are more open to immigration reforms than White Americans. Their research concludes that while the majority of African American legislators voted for restrictive immigration legislation between 2005 and 2012, it was at a consistently lower rate than their counterparts. The researchers controlled political party as a variable and found out that while Black Democrats were similar to White Democrats on many political issues, on race relations and civil rights, African American politicians are consistently more liberal. As immigration issues are an extension of race relations, the study shows that one's race may affect how one sees immigrants nowadays.

Furthermore, Bobo and Hutchings (1996) synthesize previous research and theorize that the perception of competition can be driven by one's racial identification and racial alienation.

By conducting interviews, Bobo and Hutchings extend Blumer's group threat framework and imply that there is an underlying correlation between race and immigration attitudes.

Religious Effect

In addition to race, various studies also suggest that a person's religion may influence his or her attitudes towards immigration. Many scholars hypothesize that higher religiosity may mean low immigration tolerance (Bohman and Hjerm 2014; Knoll 2009). Through a cross-country analysis, Bohman and Hjerm (2014) look into the implications of religious belief and practices. The authors theorize that religious in-group attachment stimulates greater aversion to people who do not practice the same religion. Although immigrants come from various religious backgrounds, the difference in national origins often results in differences in denominations and religions. Drawing on group threat theory and social identity theory, sociologists point out that religious fundamentalists, who practice more often than non-fundamentalists, may be particularly against mass immigration, since they have the strongest attachment to each other, resulting in considerable aversion to those of other religious identities (Bohman and Hjerm 2014; Knoll 2009).

Moreover, Nagel and Ehrkamp's (2017) analysis of the relationship between Christian faith and multiculturalism reaches a similar conclusion about religiosity's effect on immigration attitudes. The two scholars visited a few dozen church sites in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, and interviewed pastors and church-goers. They find that while some congregations of the Christian faith have very welcoming attitudes toward immigrants, the result is racially and culturally based. In other words, congregations with high immigrant church-goers are likely to be the ones with liberal views on immigration. However, there is also clear segregation between immigrant/non-White majority churches and White/non-immigrant majority churches. Within

the Christian faith, and among those who regularly practice, there is still a lack of understanding and tolerance towards people outside the religion. Consistent with contact theory, Nagel and Ehrkamp's findings show that homogeneity in religion also leads to racialized bias against immigrants, particularly immigrants of color.

Political Effect

Furthermore, sociological studies imply that politics and political leanings affect the attitude toward immigrants (Bohman and Hjerm 2016; Flores 2018; Hawley 2011; Wilkes et al. 2007). Flores' research on the 2016 U.S. presidential election suggests that Trump's campaign speeches mobilized a new wave of anti-immigration sentiments (Flores 2018). By conducting a survey experiment in which respondents are asked about immigration issues after being exposed to pro- and anti-immigration messages, Flores (2018) demonstrates that politicians' messages have attitudinal effects on their audience.

Comparatively, research by Wilkes et al. (2007) reveals that support for right-wing parties correlates anti-foreigner sentiments in Europe. Since people of different political leanings adhere to messages from politicians of their specific political affiliation, it is reasonable to hypothesize that political leaning correlates immigration attitudes. By examining the relationship between the existence of radical political parties and anti-immigration attitudes, Bohman and Hjerm (2016) further confirm the result from previous literature that political leaning is a crucial part of people's positions on immigration. Their finding demonstrates that the presence and representational strength of radical right parties in national parliaments in Europe moderately correlate anti-immigration views with statistic significance (Bohman and Hjerm 2016). This correlation is also explainable by group threat theory and contact theory. The platform of many conservative parties is based on the fear and lack of understanding of a certain out-group.

Research studies on the effects of political affiliations in regard to immigration attitudes offer crucial rationalization of the hypothesis that liberal-leaning individuals hold relatively more positive views on immigration than conservative-leaning people (Bohman and Hjerm 2016; Hawley 2011; Wilkes et al. 2007).

Educational Effect

Just as importantly, social scientists also point out the influence of educational attainment as a factor on the attitudes towards immigration (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Lancee and Sarrasin 2015). In theory, Lancee and Sarrasin (2015:490) illustrate that Western educational system promotes the egalitarian values and the liberalization of the mind. Under this educational system, students learn to think critically and analyze issues through logical reasoning. On the issue of immigration, specifically, studies indicate that people with higher education tend to evaluate economic prospect when formulating their support or opposition to specific immigration policies (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Lancee and Sarrasin 2015). Furthermore, Lancee and Sarrasin's multivariate analysis confirms that higher level of education correlates more positive attitudes toward immigrants, though the effect might not have been as large as what preceding studies suggested (Lancee and Sarrasin 2015:497; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2004). Studies on the effect of educational attainment on people's immigration standpoints support the hypothesis that the more years of education, the more likely one is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture and to say that immigrant number to the United States should be increased.

Given a lack of a comprehensive analysis of demographic effects on attitudes toward immigrants, established literature invites further research into how social identities correlate with each other in individual's support for immigration. Additionally, literature provides a theoretical and rational foundation for the hypotheses in this study.

METHODS

This research uses data from the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) (Smith et al. 2018). The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago carries out the GSS annually and in recent years biennially. The population of the survey is English or Spanish-speaking, age 18 or older, non-institutionalized or living in group quarters residents of the United States. The GSS sample is drawn through an area probability system that randomly chooses respondents in U.S. households, and the response rate for 2014 was about 70 percent. The unit of analysis in this study is individuals. In the 2014 survey, there are in total 3,842 respondents. For this study, 1,022 people were included because they were in the appropriate ballots and answered all the relevant survey questions. The missing data from the survey were removed because they only represent a minimal portion of the entire dataset. For further information on how the data were collected, visit http://gss.norc.org/.

This study uses two dependent variables to test the hypotheses. They are "immigrants do not undermine American culture" and "increase immigration." The concept these variables are measuring is the attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies. In the General Social Survey, the first question is "how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: American culture is generally undermined by immigrants." Respondents are asked to give answers as 1 "agree strongly," 2 "agree," 3 "neither agree nor disagree," 4 "disagree," 5 "disagree strongly." The second variable is measured by the GSS question "do you think the number of immigrants to America nowadays should be?" Respondents are asked to respond with 1 as "increased a lot," 2 as "increased a little," 3 as "remain the same as it is," 4 as "reduced a little," and 5 as "reduced a lot." I recoded the second variable so that higher numbers represent

positive attitudes towards immigration. The new values are 1 "decreased a lot," 2 "decreased a little," 3 "remain the same as it is," 4 "increased a little," and 5 "increased a lot."

The independent variables in this study are race, age, education, political views and religious services. The independent variable "race" measures the respondent's racial background with the survey question phrased as "What race do you consider yourself" in the GSS, and it includes three valid answers: 1 for "White," 2 for "Black," and 3 for "Others." This research combines the two categories "Black" and "Others" to "People of Color" to compare the responses on immigration from White and non-White people. The category "White People" is assigned value 0 in the statistical analysis, and "People of Color" category is given numerical value 1. The variable "age" measures the respondent's age. The survey question is "respondent's age." It is a scale variable with responses from 18 to 88, and respondents of 89 years old and older are collapsed into one category "89." For this study and the convenience of having an interval-ratio level variable, the category "89" is interpreted as 89 years old. The variable "education" is measured by the survey question "What is the highest grade of elementary or high school the respondent finished? Did the respondent complete one or more years of college?" It is a scale variable with possible responses from 0 to 20. Political views in this study are measured by the variable "liberalism." The survey question is "where would you place yourself on the 1-7 political view scale?" The possible answers are 1 as "extremely liberal," 2 as "liberal," 3 as "slightly liberal," 4 as "moderate," 5 as "slightly conservative," 6 as "conservative," and 7 as "extremely conservative." I reverse-coded this variable to reflect how liberal a respondent is. In the new variable, 1 represents "extremely conservative"; 2 is "conservative"; 3 is "slightly conservative"; 4 is "moderate"; 5 is "slightly liberal"; 6 is "liberal"; 7 is "extremely liberal." Last but not least, the independent variable "religious services" in this study is determined by the GSS

variable that measures yearly religious services attendance. The survey question is "how often do you attend religious services?" This variable has an ordinal-level answers from 0 to 8, the variable separates religious events attendance to 0 "never," 1 "less than once a year," 2 "once a year," 3 " several times a year," 4 "once a month," 5 "2-3x a month," 6 "nearly every week," 7 "every week," and 8 "more than once a week." To calculate the number of times one attends religious services in a year, I recoded this variable. The new values are: 0 for "never," 0.5 for "less than once a year," 1 for "once a year," 3 for " several times a year," 12 for "once a month," 30 for "2-3x a month," 40 for "nearly every week," 52 for "every week," and 100 "more than once a week."

The control variable in this study is "sex," and it is measured by the GSS variable sex. The corresponding survey question asks the respondent's sex. Sex is a nominal variable, and it is measured by value 1 for "men" and value 2 for "women." The variable is recoded into a dummy variable which has the men category as 0 and women as 1.

FINDINGS

Univariate Findings

Table 1 illustrates the means, medians, and standard deviations of the dependent, independent, and control variables. The mean for the dependent variable "immigrants do not undermine American Culture" is roughly in the middle of 3 and 4, and the median of the variable is 4. It means that the average response to the corresponding survey question "immigrants undermine American culture" is somewhere between "neither agree nor disagree" and "disagree" and the middle point of all responses is "disagree." Figure 1 demonstrates that nearly half of all respondents have "disagree" as their answer to the question of whether immigrants undermine American culture. Furthermore, only approximately 19 percent of the respondents have "agree

strongly" or "agree" as their answers. It indicates that a vast majority of the population of the survey do not adhere to the negative view on immigrants.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Table 1 also shows that the mean for the second dependent variable "increase immigration" lies between 2 and 3. It tells us that the average response to the corresponding survey question is between "reduced a little" and "remain the same as it is." It indicates that many Americans do not want the number of immigrants to their country to be increased, which also reflects a somewhat negative view on immigration policies. Figure 2 shows that the most common answer to the question on the number of immigrants is "remain the same as it is," with around 42 percent of respondents choosing this answer. The result implies that many respondents want to maintain the current flow of immigrants coming into the United States. However, Figure 2 also shows that more than 43 percent of respondents chose "reduced a lot" and "reduced a little." It shows that many respondents are dissatisfied with the number of immigrants coming into the United States and would like the number to be decreased.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Figure 3 shows that White people constitute around three-quarters of the respondents, and Black people are roughly 14 percent of the respondents.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

Figure 4 illustrates that the most common age group is between 45 and 59 years old, with nearly 30 percent of respondents. The average age of the dataset is approximately 49 years old. There are also more respondents under 44 years old (around 42 percent) than over 60 years old (around 28 percent).

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

For the education variable, table 1 shows that the mean is around 14, and the standard deviation is around 3. It shows that the average American completes some college education or associate degree. Figure 5 tells us that it is relatively common for respondents to finish high school education (12 years, approximately a quarter respondents) or bachelor degree (16 years, around 18 percent of respondents). Moreover, a great majority of the population completes between 11 and 18 years of education.

[Insert Figure 5 about here]

Figure 6 demonstrates that the most common political view is "moderate," with almost two-fifths of the respondents. It is significantly higher than any other category of this variable. The mean and median of respondent's political views are both approximately 4, which represents the moderate view. There are slightly more respondents who identify as conservative-leaning (extremely conservative, conservative, or slightly conservative; around 34 percent) than those who identify as liberal-leaning (extremely liberal, liberal, or slightly liberal; around 27 percent).

[Insert Figure 6 about here]

Table 1 states that the mean, median, and standard deviation for the variable religious services are roughly 22, 3, and 29. The difference between the mean and the median, and the value of the standard deviation illustrate that respondents of the survey vary a lot among themselves in terms of the number of religious services they attend in a year. Figure 7 points out that the most common response for the variable religious service is "never" (0 times a year), and the second most common response is "every week" (52 times a year). It further confirms that the distribution of religious service attendance is bimodal and people either go regularly or rarely.

[Insert Figure 7 about here]

Figure 8 shows that around half of the respondents are women.

[Insert Figure 8 about here]

Bivariate Findings

Table 2 is the correlation matrix among all the dependent, independent, and control variables. It demonstrates that the two dependent variables that measure support for immigrants (immigrants do not undermine American culture) and immigration policies (increase immigration) are positively correlated. Their correlation Pearson index r is .28, which means that there is a weak relationship between the dependent variables, and it is statistically significant at $p < .01$ level. It means that the more a person agrees that immigrants do not undermine American culture, the more he or she supports increased immigration. Additionally, statistically significant, weak, positive correlations ($r = .15$ and .19) exist between the independent variable "liberalism" and both the dependent variables. They indicate that the more liberal an individual identifies, the more he or she is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture and to say that the number of immigrants should be increased. There is also a weak, statistically significant, and positive correlation ($r = .19$) between "education" and "immigrants do not undermine American culture." It means that the more years of education one completes, the more the person is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture. However, there is no correlation between "education" and "increase immigration." There is a very weak, statistically significant, positive correlation between "race" and "increase immigration," with Pearson $r = .092$. It implies that people of color are more likely to say that the number of immigrants to the United States should be increased. However, there is not a correlation between "race" and "immigrants do not undermine American culture." There is no correlation between any of the dependent variables and any other independent variables (age and religious services).

[Insert Table 2 about here]

For the relationship between dependent variables and the control variable "sex," there is a very weak, statistically significant, negative correlation ($r = -.09$) between "sex" and "increase immigration." It means that women are less likely to say that the number of immigrants to the United States should be increased. There is, however, no correlation between "sex" and "immigrants do not undermine American culture."

Among independent variables, "race" has a weak but statistically significant correlation with all the rest of independent variables, including "age" ($r = -.17$), "education" ($r = -.14$), "liberalism" ($r = .10$), and "religious services" ($r = .08$). It reflects that people of color, on average, tend to be younger, have fewer years of education, are more liberal, and attend more religious services than White people. Additionally, "age" is weak and negatively correlated "$r = -.099$" to "liberalism," but positively correlated ($r = .16$) to "religious services." It means that older people, in general, are less liberal and that they attend more religious services in a year than younger people. The independent variable "liberalism" and "religious services" are also correlated with statistic significance at $p < .01$ level. Their correlation index r is -.25, which means that they have a weak, negative correlation. It says that people who attend more religious services tend to be less liberal. There is not any correlation among the rest of independent variables.

The control variable "sex" is not correlated with any independent variable except for "religious services." Between "sex" and "religious services," there is a very weak, statistically significant, positive correlation, with Pearson $r = .14$. It means that women, on average, attend more religious services yearly than men.

Multivariate Findings

Table 3 is a ordinary least square regression of attitudes about immigration on all variables, including race, age, education, political views, religiosity, and gender.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

The R^2 for dependent variable "immigrants do not undermine American culture" is .063. It means that 6.3 percent of the variation in "immigrants do not undermine American culture" can be explained by the independent variables together. The F value of this regression equation is around 11, and it shows statistical significance at the .01 level. Among the predictors, only education and political views are statistically significant for "immigrants do not undermine American culture." Controlling for all other variables, education ($\beta = .175$) has the greatest effect on the dependent variable, meaning on average, the more years of education one completes, the more the person agrees that immigrants do not undermine American culture. All else being equal, political views ($\beta = .139$) have the second greatest effect on "immigrants do not undermine American culture." It indicates that in general, the more liberal a person is, the more the person would say that immigrants do not undermine American culture.

The R^2 for "increase immigration" is .057, demonstrating that independent variables combined explains 5.7 percent of the variation in "increase immigration." The F value of this regression equation is around 10, and it is statistically significant at the .01 level. Among the predictors, political views and gender are statistically significant for "increase immigration." Controlling for all other factors, political views ($\beta = .182$) have the greatest effect on the dependent variable, showing that the on average, the more liberal a person is, the more the person would say that immigration should be increased in the United States. Controlling for all other variables, gender ($\beta = -090$) has the second greatest effect on "increase immigration," and this standardized coefficient is the only one with a statistically significant negative value. It

means that women more so than men reject the notion that immigration to this country should be increased.

Comparing across the table and controlling for all other variables, education is a statistically significant predictor for "immigrants do not undermine American culture." However, it does not affect whether one supports increased immigration. Gender, on the other hand, is not a statistically significant factor for the variation in "immigrants do not undermine American culture," but it is statistically significant for "increase immigration" with all else being equal. Political view is significant for both "immigrants do not undermine American culture" and "increase immigration."

In relation to the bivariate result, in which race has a statistically significant correlation with "increase immigration." However, the effect is no longer shown in the regression when controlling all other variables. It indicates that there is a spurious relationship in the equation for "increase immigration."

The multivariate result supports the fourth hypothesis that the more liberal a person is, the more likely he or she agrees that immigrants do not undermine American culture and says that the number of immigrants nowadays should be increased. The regression equation also confirms the first half of the third hypothesis that the more years of education a person receives, the more likely the person is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture. The regression analysis finds no effect between the dependent variables and other predictors excluding gender, thus rejecting all other hypotheses in this study.

DISCUSSION

This study seeks to answer what demographic aspects are related to one's perception of immigrants and immigration. Controlling for all other variables, education is the strongest and a

statistically significant predictor for the variable "immigrants do not undermine American culture." Education can expose people to diverse groups of people and intercultural dialogue, and fewer years of education may imply a lack of adequate socialization for a diverse society. This finding implies that contact theory is applicable to explain the effect of education on attitudes toward immigrants, since contact theory explains that prejudices and stereotypes come from the absence of intergroup contact. Such result is also consistent with past literature on the influence of educational attainment on the attitudes toward immigrants (Lancee and Sarrasin 2015). Lancee and Sarrasin's (2015) longitudinal study in Switzerland suggests that education can positively change people's attitudes toward immigrants. Comparatively, this study supports that education may in fact have some impact on how people view immigrants in the United States.

While education has the strongest effect among all independent variable on "immigrants do not undermine American culture," it does not affect an individual's support for increased immigration. This finding rejects the second part of the third hypothesis that the more years of education one completes, the more likely the person is to say that the immigrant number to this country should be increased. This result is also inconsistent with Chandler and Tsai's (2001) research. Chandler and Tsai analyzed the 1994 General Social Survey and found that higher education level indicates more support for open legal immigration policies. However, from the 2014 GSS, it is not true that education has such an effect. The inconsistency may come from the two decades of time difference of the dataset. During the twenty years between 1994 and 2014, the United States saw a surge in undocumented immigrants from predominantly Latin American and Asian countries (Hoefer et al. 2012). At the same time, modern international terrorism and corresponding xenophobia were also on the rise. Given the complexity and uncertainty of the world, Americans might switch to more conservative immigration policies with stricter and

lengthier vetting process for non-citizens to enter the country. Consequently, Americans would potentially desire a non-increasing flow of immigrants. The change in time might have shrunk the effect of education on the acceptance of more open immigration policies, thus possibly explaining a non-significant relationship between education and "increase immigration."

On the other hand, the findings in this study suggest that political view has a fairly strong effect on both dependent variables. In other words, being liberal positively correlates the agreement to the statement that immigrants do not undermine American culture and the support for increased immigration. While this research is unable to confirm the outcome of anti-immigration sentiments from Trump's presidential campaign in Flores' (2018) analysis, the multivariate result on political views is firmly consistent with many previous studies (Bohman and Hjerm 2016; Hawley 2011; Wilkes et al. 2007). Particularly, Bohman and Hjerm's evaluation on the correlation between the support for right-wing parties and anti-immigrant attitudes matches the hypothesis that the more liberal a person is, the more he or she is to agree that immigrants do not undermine American culture and to say that the number of immigrants should be increased. This finding extends the previous research that is primarily conducted in a European context to the United States on the effect of political leaning on immigration attitudes.

Race, age, and religious services, on the other hand, show no effect on both "immigrants do not undermine American culture" and "increase immigration" variables. This result rejects the first, second and fifth hypotheses of this study. It also displays inconsistency with Blumer's group threat theory (1958) and many previous literatures (Berg 2014; Bloom et al. 2015; Fussell 2014; Browne et al. 2018; Bohman and Hjerm 2014; Nagel and Ehrkamp 2017). An explantion for the inconsistency is that previous literature focuses on one partcular area of demographic identity. With extensive analysis and careful subgroup examination, scholars in the past were

able to discover slight differences among subgroups in race, age, and religiosity (Bloom et al. 2015; Bohman and Hjerm 2014; Browne et al. 2018). With more interest in how the demographic factors intersect with each other in forming the attitudes, this research concentrates on testing potential predictors rather than a thorough separation of subgroups in each demographic identity. As a result, the effects of race, age, and religious services may be somewhat weakened by combining subgroups that produce dissimilar effects into the same category.

The finding that group threat theory may not hold well in this study indicates that immigration issue may be different from the original concern of group threat theory- racial prejudice, since immigration, unlike domestic matters, encompasses great uncertainty and involves global movements. Therefore, it is not surprising that the support and opposition for immigration across demographic groups are more unclear and requires much future scrutiny. Moreover, group threat theory does not necessarily intend to describe the threat formed based on salient social identities such as race and religiosity. The fact that group threat theory fails to explain three hypotheses in this study does not mean that it is inapplicable to the issue of immigration. Since people whose jobs are threatened by the incoming flow of immigrants may logically have more negative feelings toward immigrant than Americans without similar concerns, group threat theory can help rationalize in some demographic factors on people's attitudes towards immigration.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to examine what demographic factors are connected to people's views on immigrants and immigration policies. Assessing data from the 2014 General Social Survey, the research includes 1,022 respondents who answered all the relevant questions

in this study. The statistical result shows that education has the strongest effect on whether

people think immigrants undermine American culture, controlling for all variables. Furthermore,

political views are significant predictor of both "immigrants do not undermine American culture"

and "increase immigration," and it is the strongest predictor of "increase immigration." All other

independent variables do not affect either dependent variables. The findings support the fourth

hypothesis in the study that the more liberal a person is, the more likely he or she agrees that

immigrants do not undermine American culture and says that the number of immigrants

nowadays should be increased. The result also supports the first half of the third hypothesis that

the more years of education one completes, the more likely the individual is to agree that

immigrants do not undermine American culture. All the rest of hypotheses are rejected by the

statistical findings. The outcome of the statistical analysis suggests that contact theory is

consistent with the issue of immigration. It also demonstrates that previous research conducted in

Europe on the relationship between the strength of right-wing political parties and immigration

attitudes is also applicable to the United States. However, group threat theory and works on the

correlation between race and immigration attitudes do not hold true to the result of this study,

possibly due to the fact that this study does not separate subgroup of demographic predictors in

great detail. Rather, the study concentrates on examining many potential factors on a person's

attitudes towards immigration.

     This study reveals valuable information for a crucial social issue in the United States.

Previous works on immigration primarily focus on one specific area of the demographics and its

effect on immigration. This research, on the other hand, provides a broad examination of many

potential predictors on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies. The result suggests

that to increase the acceptance of immigrants among American, an adequate education on the

matter is foremost. Contact theory also proposes that if a person grows up in a homogeneous

community and does not have the experience of intergroup contact, future contact can help

diminish the possible prejudice and stereotyping of immigrants. Moreover, the findings

demonstrate that it is not true to claim that religious people are less open to immigration and to

say that older people are less accepting on the subject. Furthermore, there is no relationship

between race and immigration attitudes, establishing that no racial group, in a larger sense, can

be said to be more opposed to increased immigration, in contrast to some previous studies. This

research extends the sociological inquiry into the issue of immigration by identifying various

predictors of how an individual views immigration and immigrants. It contributes to the subject

and lays some groundwork for future research on this critical issue.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that the support for immigrants and immigration

policies has a narrow definition. The variable "immigrants do not undermine American culture"

can reflect one's attitudes toward immigrants. However, it is hard to conclude that the person is

supportive of immigrants based on the answer that the individual agrees or strongly agrees with

one aspect of immigrants. Moreover, the variable "increase immigration" also does not fully

reveal the person's position on immigration policies, since it only measures one component of

immigration policies. A proper variable to test support for immigration should be a composite

one that includes one's positions on multiculturalism, anti-discrimination, and access to jobs and

housing, in addition to how the number of immigrants should change.

Furthermore, this study examines race too broadly. The 2014 General Social Survey

provides three categories for race: White, Black, and other race. However, only White people

constitute more than one-fifth of the sample. By creating the people of color category, there is a

loss of variation that may explain the lack of effect of race on immigration attitudes, which is inconsistent with past literature with detailed subgroups of ethnicities.

Last but not least, the R^2 in this study is only .063 and .057 for the two dependent variables, respectively. It means that only approximately six percent of the variation in "immigrants do not undermine American culture" and "increase immigration" can be explained by all the independent variables combined. The small value of R^2 signals that some key factors influencing people's stances towards immigration are yet to be identified. For instance, geography may play a role in the dependent variables. Since people who reside on the coasts tend to be more likely to have multi-cultural and intergroup relations, contact theory predicts that one's residence location could be a predictor for immigration attitudes. Although both regression equations are statistically significant, there is such limitation that more possible factors should be examined in this study.

Future Research

Previous research concentrates primarily on the correlation between one demographic background and immigration attitudes. This study extends previous literature by examining multiple demographic aspects of a person in relation to his or her stances on immigrants and immigration policies. It lays foundational work for future research that digs deeper into potential predictors relevant to immigration. For instance, future research can test the relevance of group threat theory on non-salient identity classifications. Race itself may not affect immigration support. However, individuals whose jobs in the agricultural, industrial, and service sector are taken by immigrants can have a strong opposition to inclusive immigration policies. Studying non-salient identities can help determine crucial predictors on this issue.

Additionally, Future research can take a more qualitative approach to study individuals' attitudes towards immigration. In-depth interview, for example, is a great way to understand people's reasoning behind a specific viewpoint. Conducting qualitative studies can, therefore, guide the researcher to identify themes and rationales in the topic of immigration that affects the future of the United States and beyond.

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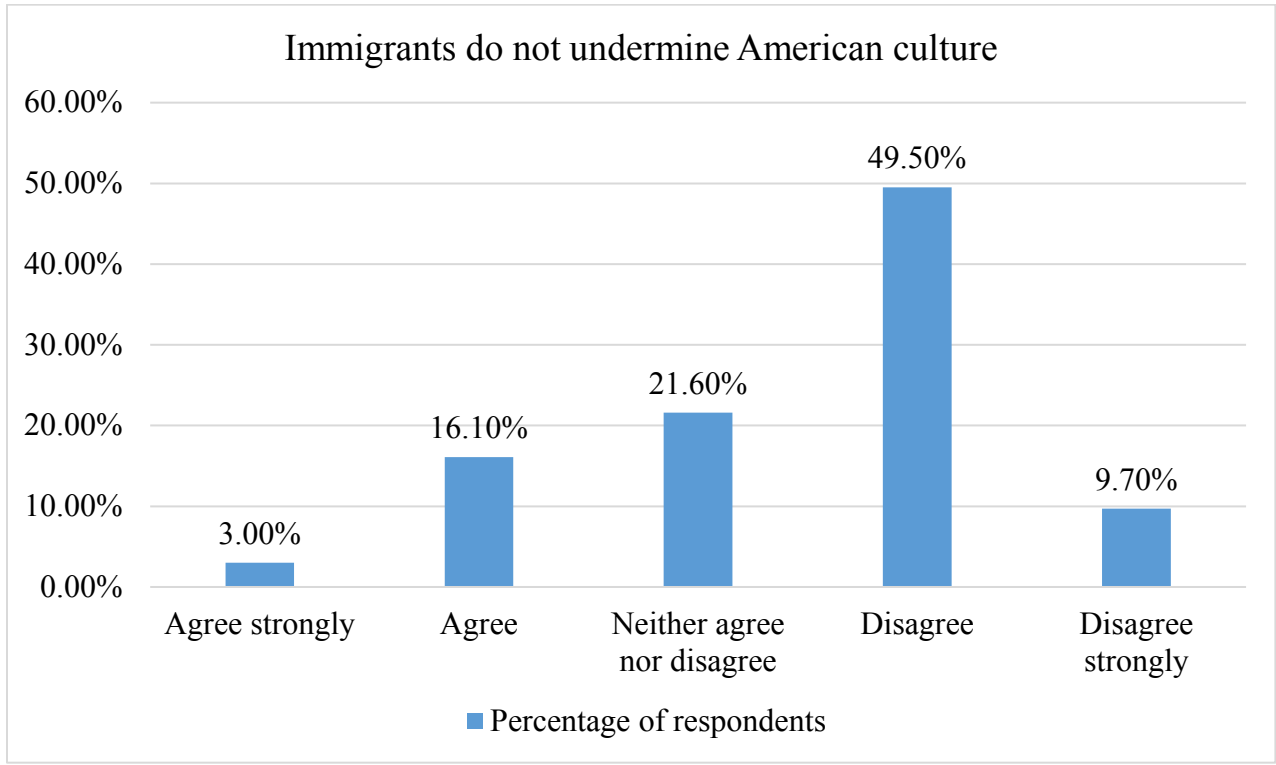
Figure 1. Bar graph of respondent's agreement with whether immigrants undermine American culture
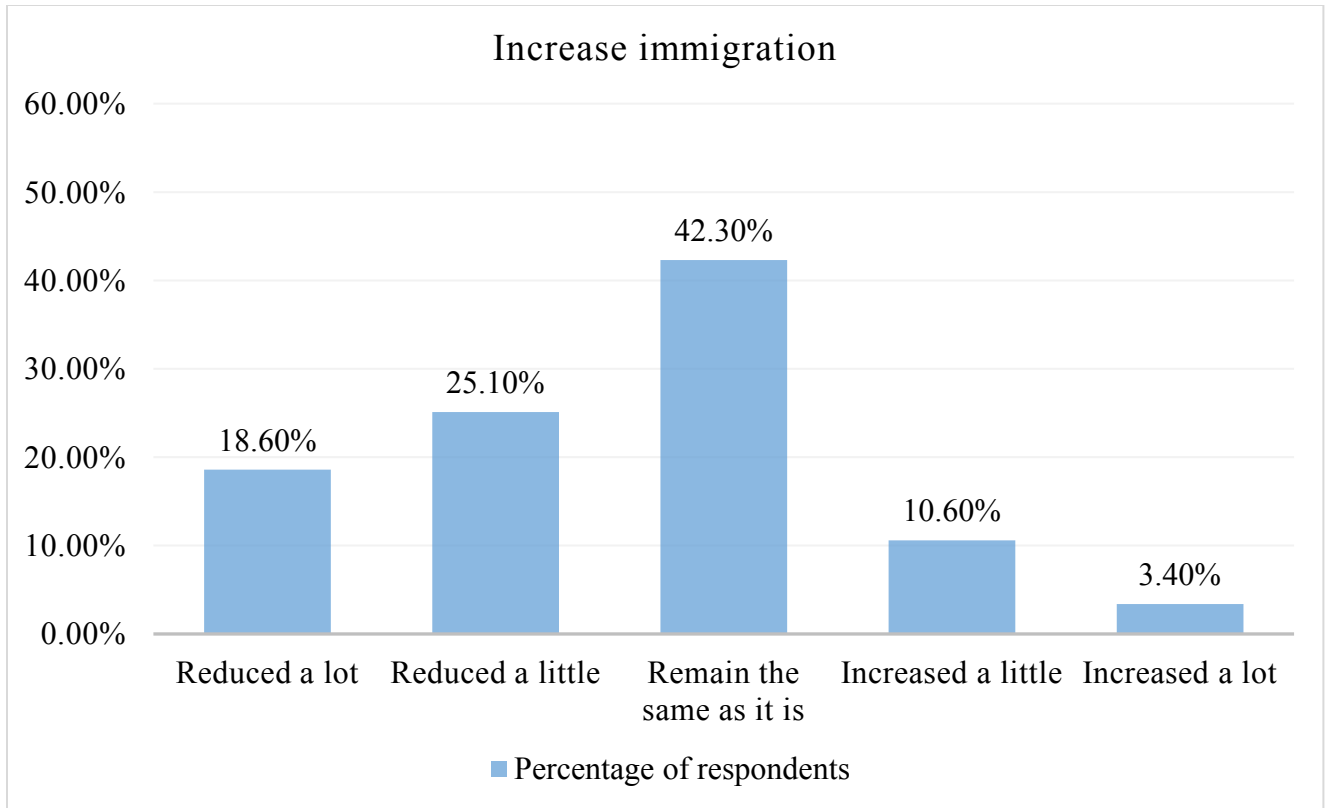
Figure 2. Bar graph of respondent's position on whether the number of immigrants nowadays
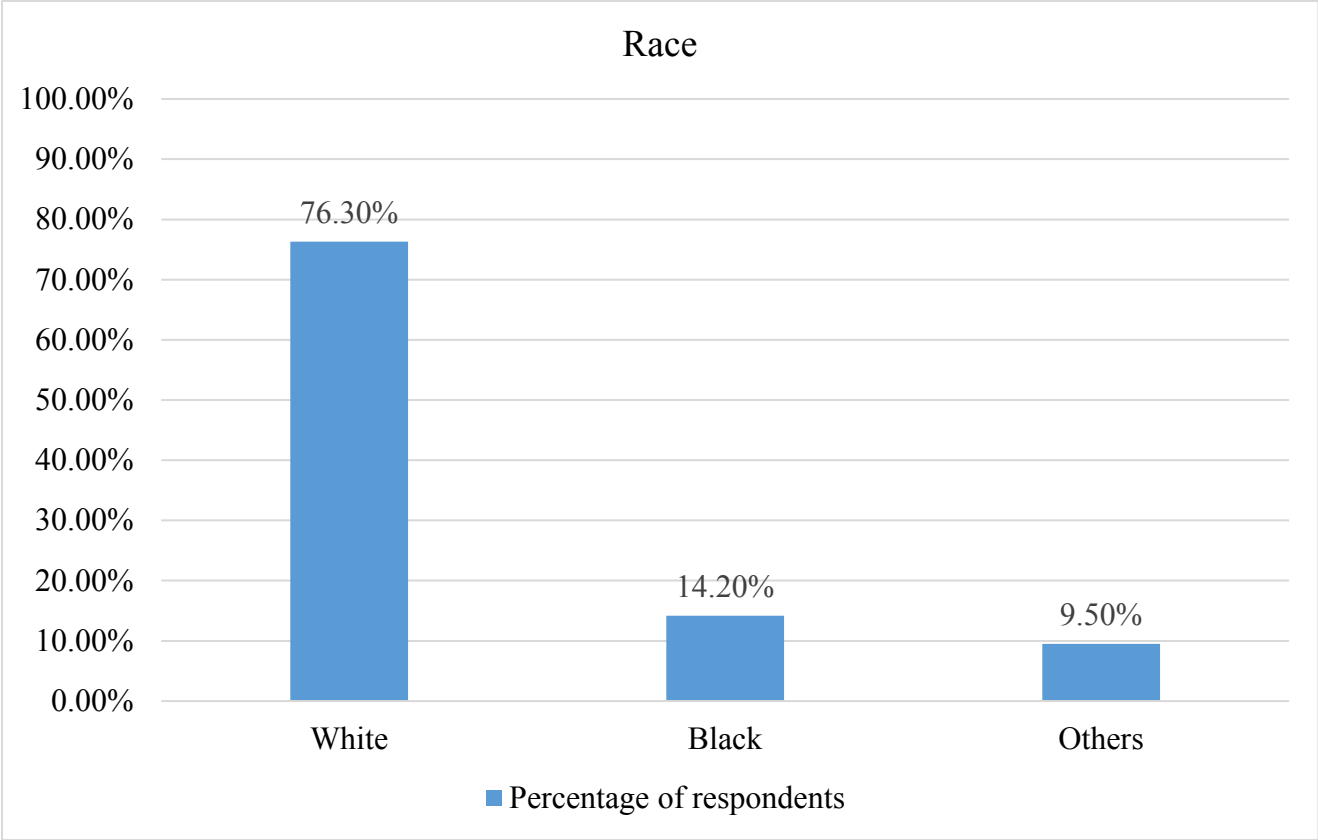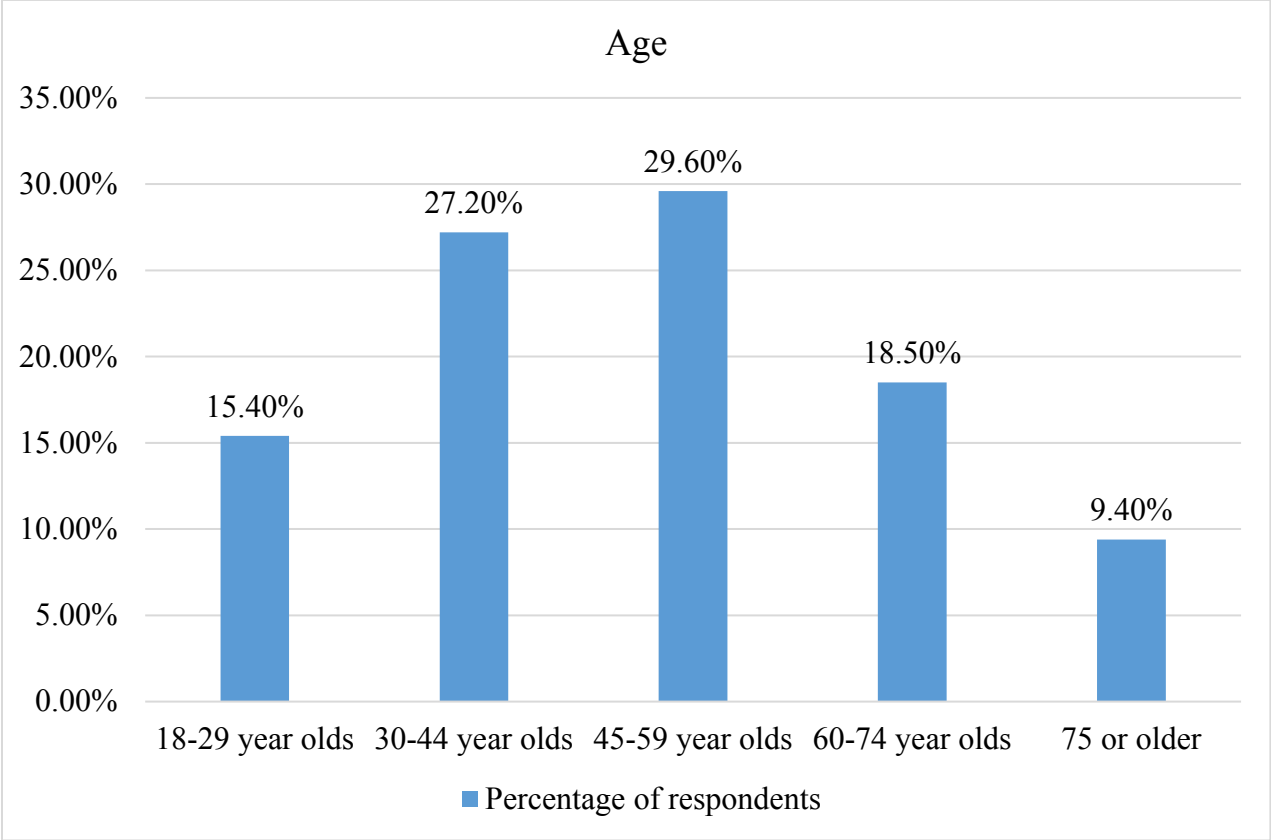
should be reduced or increased

Figure 3. Bar graph of race of the respondents

Figure 4. Bar graph of age of the respondents
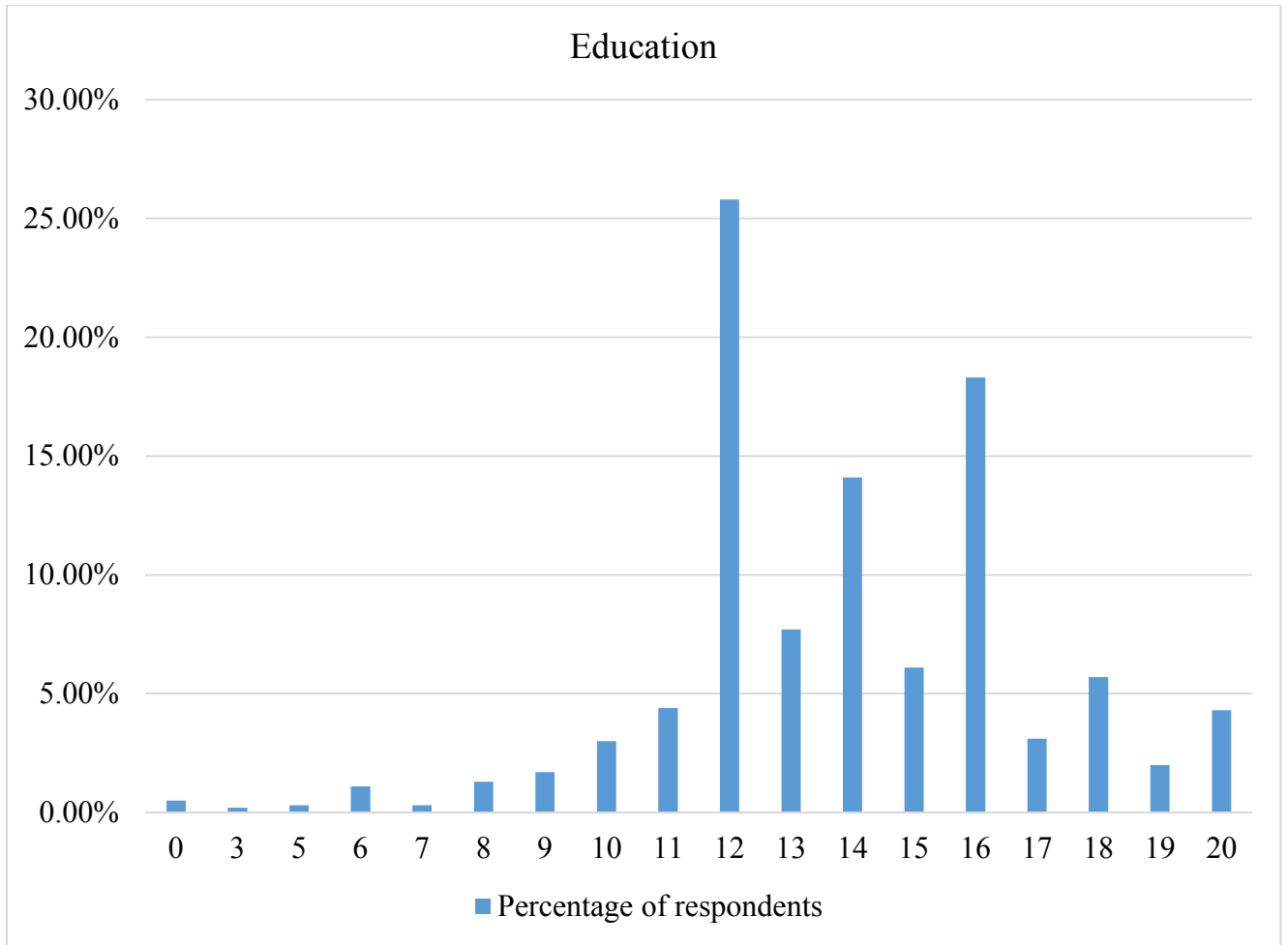
Figure 5. Bar graph of years of education of respondents have completed

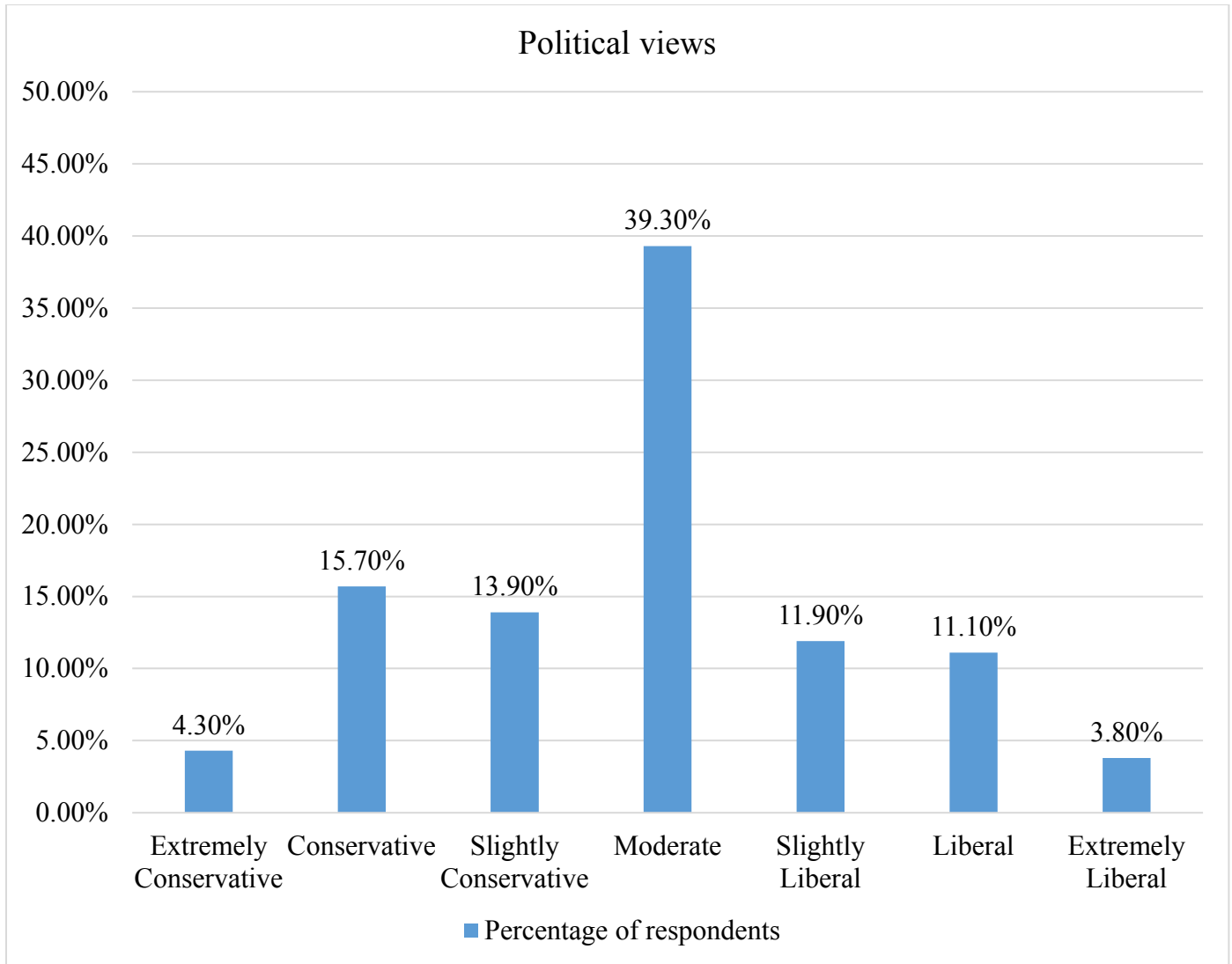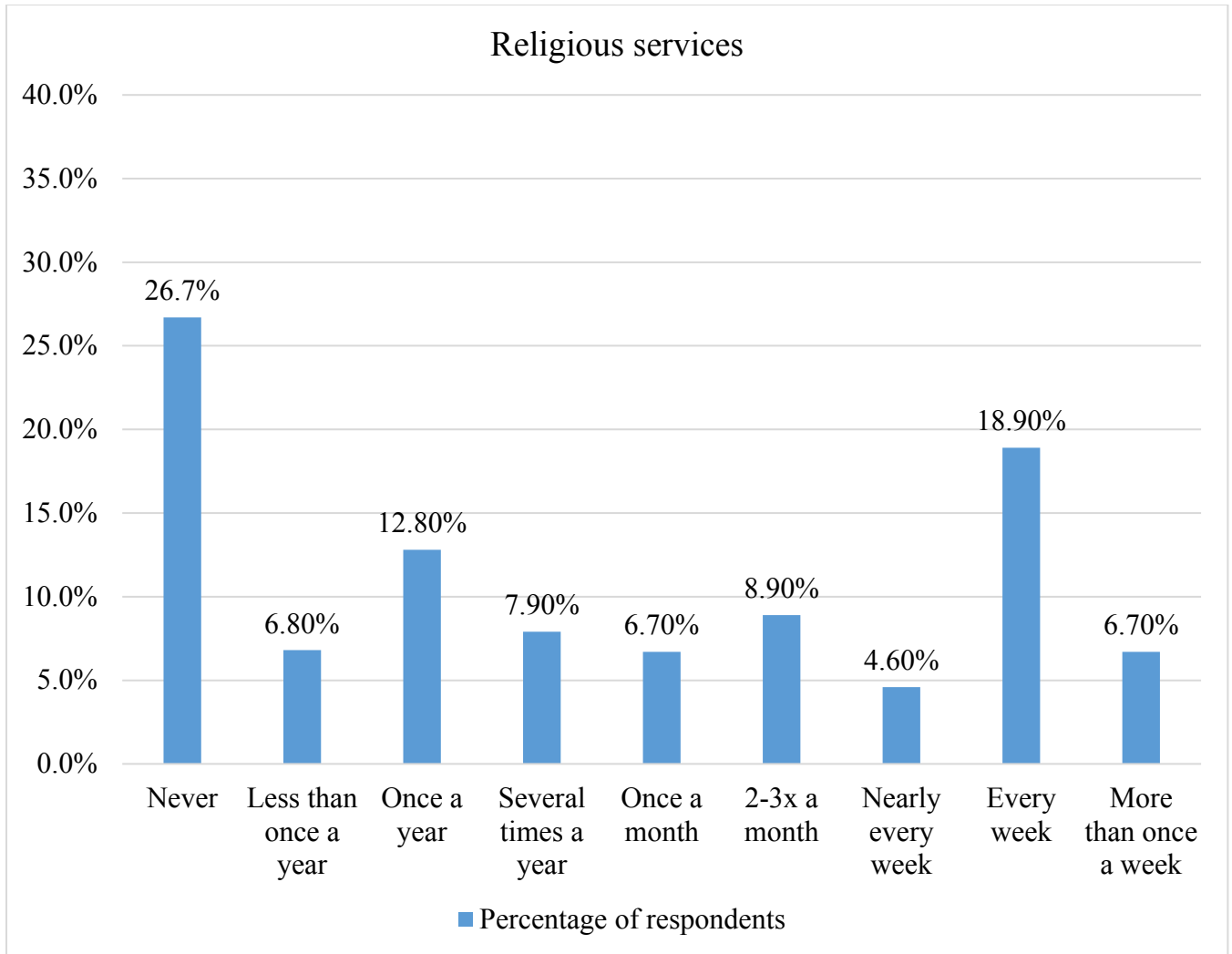Figure 6. Bar graph of political views of the respondents

Figure 7. Bar graph of how often respondents attend religious service
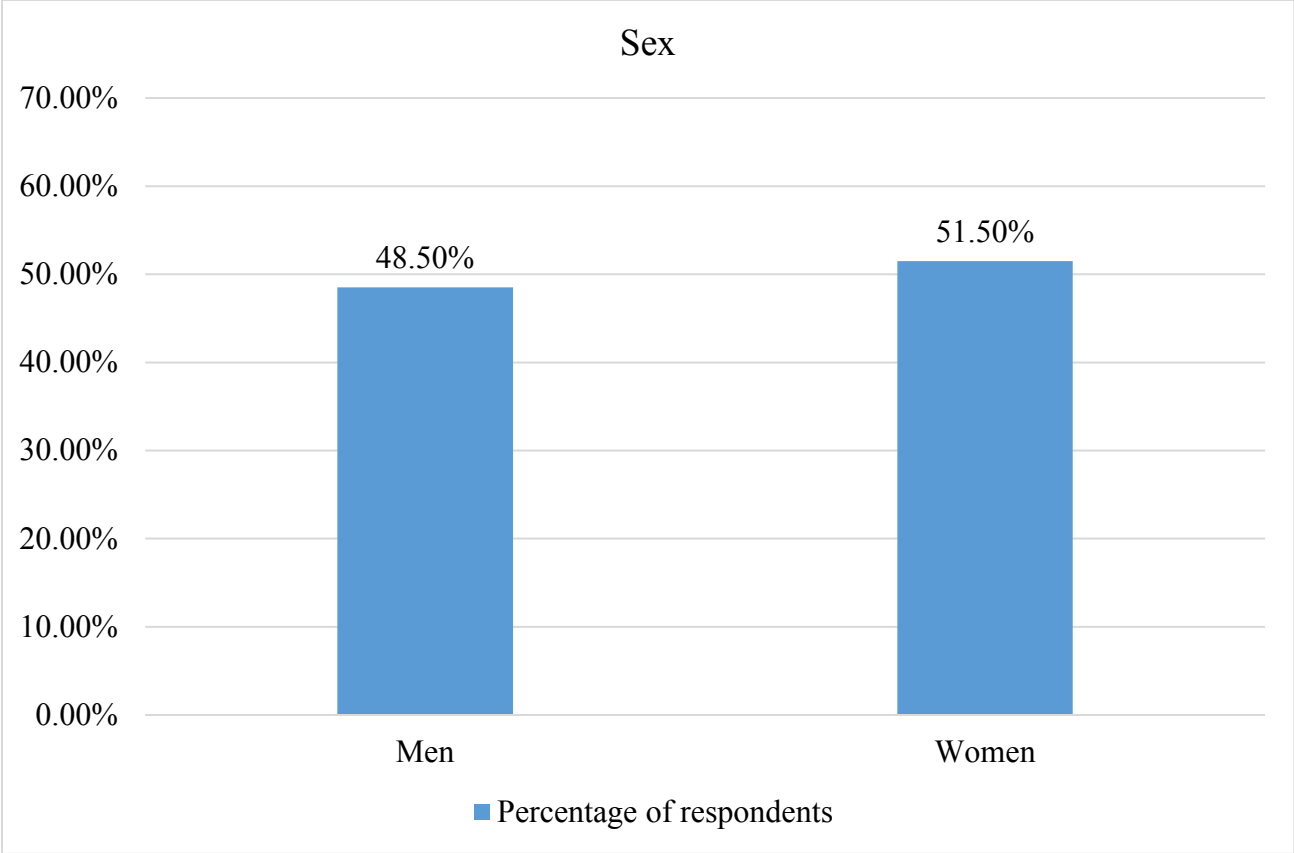
Figure 8. Bar graph of sex of the respondents

Table 1. Means, medians, and standard deviations for variables ($N = 1022$)

Variables	Mean	Median	SD
Immigrants undermine American culture	3.47	4.00	0.974
Increase immigration	2.55	3.00	1.018
People of color	0.24	0.00	0.425
Age	49.17	50.00	17.288
Education	13.94	14.00	2.983
Liberalism	3.87	4.00	1.430
Religious services	22.18	3.00	29.136
Women	0.52	1.00	0.500

Table 2. Correlations (*r*) between immigrations attitudes and six variables (listwise deletion, two-tailed test, *N* = 1022)

	Increase immigration	People of color	Age	Education	Liberalism	Religious services	Women
Immigrants do not undermine American culture	.275*	-.061	.018	.192*	.152*	-.072	-.065
Increase immigration		.092*	-.079	.068	.193*	-.026	-.086*
People of color			-.167*	-.143*	.104*	.082*	.044
Age				-.024	-.099*	.164*	.005
Education					.078	-.049	.001
Liberalism						-.253*	-.025
Religious services							.136*

Table 3. Multiple regression of attitudes about immigration on all variables ($N = 1022$)

Variable	Immigrants do not undermine American culture β	Increase immigration β
People of color	-.041	.074
Age	.033	-.053
Education	.175*	.065
Liberalism	.139*	.182*
Religious services	-.022	.038
Women	-.057	-.090*
R^2	.063	.057
$F(6,1015)$	11.411*	10.301*

*$p < .01$