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The Case of the Melting Pot: How Does Opinion Bias Affect One's Understanding of Immigration in the US?

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Immigration in the US?

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Abstract

 In such a delicate political climate the complete acceptance of legal immigrants in the United States seems too often to be a challenge carried to many native-born Americans. Feelings of displeasure, annoyance and anger are repeatedly cultivated by many American citizens towards immigrants. News media and social media platforms have displayed this kind of negative behavior towards legal immigrants, in which they are often accused of "stealing jobs," "trying to suppress a certain ethnic population," or "infesting" the area. This study analyzes the political-psychological reason behind this learned reaction, while focusing on factors that have sponsored this level of intolerance and behavior.

The Case of the Melting Pot: How Does Opinion Bias Affect One's Understanding of

Immigration in the US?

Race and politics are two factors that flow hand in hand and have played a pivotal role in

the overall well-being of America as a nation. Considering the hostile political climate we are in,

in addition to the most recent policies implemented to exile both legal and illegal immigrants

from the soils of America, it is evident that a sense of fear and misconception is prevalent within

the population. Several studies have made efforts to understand the fluctuation of attitudes

towards immigrants in the nation across time (Kohut, 2019); in addition to observing the

phenomenon from a financial standpoint **(Berg Nødtvedt, K., Sjåstad, H., Skard, S.,**

Thorbjørnsen, H., & Van Bavel, J., 2019) and the tentative repercussions it can have on the level

of harmony different groups experience when sharing a common space. Polls have been utilized

to measure sentiments towards immigrants (Segovia, 2010), and scientist examined outside

forces such as terrorism that might influence attitudes (Haner, 2019); however, no study has

specifically focused on the "why?" and the nature of these attitudes. This lack of consensus on

the root cause of these anti-immigrant sentiments begs question: *how do influential forces affect*

the opinions of native-born *Americans in regard to immigrants in the US?*

To address this question, I conducted a survey to obtain quantitative results to identify the

main psychological and political components that enable the negative sentiments. The survey

played a crucial role because it allowed me to analyze outside perspectives from regular citizens

who are impacted by the sentiment. As I mentioned before, previous literature and studies have

only focused on collecting data explicitly concentrating on the attitudes, this study goes beyond

the prevalence of the attitude and directly examine the driving forces. This paper unfolds in

several parts. First, I asses the current context of anti-immigrant sentiment in America using the

flashpoint of the 2016 presidential election. Next, I examine the extant literature on the psychological factors that may drive anti-immigrant attitudes. I then explain my survey methodology and the specifics of my survey experiment. Lastly, I analyze the survey results and consider the implications of the findings for the student of public opinion on immigration and political psychology more broadly.

Literature Review

The 2016 Political Campaign as a Case Study in Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric

As a nation we are fully aware of the priority that employment rates hold for citizens, though surprisingly enough the status of our domestic economy often seems to be a blur to many. From time to time we have relied on media and government figures to feed us the information related to the US domestic economy. There has never been a concrete understanding of the numbers and how they specifically relate to the lower and middle class; however, it is constantly noted as one of the major concerns the nation holds. Specifically, in the 2016 presidential election, the Pew Research Center revealed that "84% of registered voters said that the issue of the economy was very important to them in making the decision pertaining to who to vote for in the 2016 presidential election" (Doherty, 2016). Terrorism, foreign policy and health care, in that order, followed economy as the top voting issues in 2016 (Doherty, 2016). Ballotpedia also noted the relevance of immigration during the most recent election, noting that "60% of registered voters reported that immigration was an important factor in how they voted in November (2016) and 20% of voters said they would only vote for a candidate who shared their views on immigration" (Ballotpedia, 2016)**.**

The 2016 presidential election was a major turning point for the topic of immigration and the overall attitudes of many Americans, as many candidates, specifically Donald Trump, took advantage of the situation to create a perception and win over the people. Given his electoral college victory, it is evident that many native-born Americans aligned with his extreme beliefs in addition to complying to the numerous myths he created pertaining to immigrants and their presence in the States.

Before winning the race, Donald Trump used the notion of "immigrants stealing US jobs" during the campaign, in addition to other accusations pointed towards this targeted population. At numerous points in the campaign, voters could hear Trump perpetuating the idea of immigrants being the reason for America's decay, unequal wage distribution, job loss, and domestic economic downfall (Ferriss, 2019). He was the only candidate to fuse two delicate topics (economy and immigration) into one major alarming issue. Trump and his campaign staff were fully aware of the responsiveness around the topic and used it to their advantage to gain support from a selected population (Uscinski & Enders, 2019). His political approach falls under the Lump of Labor Fallacy, a terminology coined by economist to describe the misconception of the US having a fixed amount of job opportunities for its people (Sumner, 2017), consequently enhancing the fear of individuals not being able to find a job if somebody else had already taken the position. It seems logical to pin immigrants as the main reason for the downfall of the domestic economy, since their entrance into the nation is an addition to the native-born population and could conceivably increase the utilization rates of all services offered in the nation (government assistance, housing, employment etc.). However, contrary to popular belief, immigrants do not steal jobs away from native-born Americans: out of the "474 occupations defined by the Department of Commerce only six are majority immigrant (legal or illegal), these

six occupations account for 1 percent of the total US Workforce (…) native-born Americans still comprise 46 percent of workers in these occupations," (Camarota, S. A., Richwine, J., & Zeigler, K., 2018). In addition, as immigrants settle in the country, they also tend to establish new businesses in the areas they live in, consequently creating new jobs, investing in America's goods and services and also participating in tax payments: "immigrants pay more than $90 billion in taxes every year and receive $5 billion in welfare" (ACLU, 2017). Despite the numbers and evaluations made by several experts pertaining to the relationship of immigrants to the domestic economy, Trump was able to triumph by pushing the Lump of Labor Fallacy in addition to many other extreme ideologies.

In a study conducted by Bert Bakker, Matthijs Roodujin and Gijs Schumacher, the authors claim that citizens who were more inclined towards Trump's ideologies fell under the spectrum of authoritarians "with a preference for social order and hierarchy" and "scored low on the personality trait of agreeableness" (Bakker, B., Roodujin, M., & Schumacher, G. 2016). These two groups have common psychological traits revolving around the concept of fear, concerns for drastic changes, individualism, and distrustfulness. Despite the negative notions of these characteristics, these two groups united when it came to the idea of pushing away modern and unrecognized principles that could disrupt their norm. Considering Trump and his rhetoric, it is evident that he knew what the common threats were; moreover, he fully utilized the vulnerability and limited knowledge of immigration among the mass public to create a certain perception of the issue among supporters.

Framing Immigration and Appeals to Fear

To further analyze this rhetoric, we can explore the objectives of Trump's campaign motives surrounding around 3 main topics: levels of crimes and threat fluctuating through the decades due to the presence of immigrants (both legal and illegal); immigrants being the cause of decline in wages and stability in job security; and finally the Democratic Party not being an ally of the nation due to its modern ideologies. The common denominator for all 3 rhetorical themes is a central thread of the economy, immigration and the stability of the United States. Trump focused on constantly perpetuating and depicting negative perceptions through the campaign during campaign events, speeches, and advertisements (with testimonies from native-born families affected by unemployment or crimes committed by individuals who were not necessarily native-born Americans). These messages relied on biased rhetoric and very general data pertaining to immigration issues with the sole purpose of gaining electoral support. The generalization applied to this issue and its constant advertisement easily retained voters' attention and trust, rather than motivate them to go out of their way to further research the information that was presented (Finley & Esposito, 2019). Trump used a scapegoat methodology, focusing on finding a target to blame for many American issues and, considering patriarchal customs and beliefs, utilizing an outside element to justify domestic issues seemed a better fit than analyzing the actual data and roots of our problems (Finley & Esposito, 2019). He strategically utilized collective action frames to create a perception that he (along with other media outlets) then pushed as a reality; "collective action frames, like picture frames, focus attention by punctuating or specifying what in our sensual field is relevant and what is irrelevant (…) additionally frames may also perform a transformative function in the sense of altering the meaning of the objects of attention and their relationship to the actor" (Snow, 2004) . This methodology is often utilized by government bureaucracies, social media outlets, interest groups, and other political elites to convey a certain

message and influence the audience at large; "collective action frames are typically associated with social movements, they can also be employed by people already in positions of power, including presidents and those working for them, to "frame" social reality in a way that gives coherence to their messages and agenda," (Finley & Esposito, 2019)**.** Collective action frames are deeply linked to the culture, as when a context is initiated it opens doors for different interpretations to occur, though sometimes these interpretations are misguided or extremely skewed and the purpose of the frame is to make it "fit" and offer a plausible explanation for the context. Timing also plays a pivotal role within collective action frames; the audience needs to be exposed to a consistent behavior within the space of a certain time to make the frame credible. In this case America as a nation was witnessing the constant entrance of immigrants into the US, their occupancy in large cities, and their settlement in the job market while many native-born citizens simultaneously felt as if the job market was not in their favor.

In addition to the collective action frame theory, it is important to recognize the role social influence had on advertising the distorted perception Trump was promoting. As a society, thanks to the advancement of telecommunications and other forms of media, we are constantly kept up to date with information pertaining to issues that affect us on a daily basis; an interpretation of current events is up to us to form, however, because we are such an interconnected society opinions and judgments tend to bounce off one another. Studies have consistently proven the influence close family members and friends have on one's opinions; furthermore, the adjustment of opinions when societal pressure is present (ex. The vaccine effectiveness debate); but it is in moments such as elections when core beliefs, opinions and understandings are extremely polarized (Boak, 2019). The pressure between choosing one core belief instead of the other opens doors for politicians to insert their own opinion and use

communication strategies to their advantage to gain more support. When a candidate is able to acquire favoritism from a large group of individuals, the same subjects tend to inherently try to persuade others into adapting the same opinions; and thus, these predispositions can have affects beyond the individual who holds them.

How Predispositions Affect Perceptions of Immigration

Perception is a pivotal agent in the cultivation of negative attitudes toward immigrants, as it formulates a reality that does not necessarily reflect the status of the problem. Perception is the cause that allowed the negative attitudes to become an acceptable norm, and fear is one of the ways that these perceptions can be molded.

Several studies have showcased the significant impact that fear can have when it comes to molding attitudes related to how native-born Americans feel towards immigrants, regardless of their citizenship status. This specific fear is driven by the sources and policies the media and the government communicate to citizens (Haner, M., Sloan, M., Cullen, F., Kulig, T., & Jonson, C. 2019, Lee and Rupaleem 2019, D' Appollonia 2012, Councilor 2017). This strategy generates sentiments similar to metathesiophobia, related to the fear of change and the unknown.

Influences in the domestic economy of the nation play a focal role in understanding feelings of distaste towards outside groups that have settled in America (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010, Borjas 2003, Borja 2005, Borjas and Freeman 1996). The US domestic economy is mainly driven by the lower and middle-class citizens; its ability to offer employment to many (in that specific class section) can be considered one of the significant inputs for the level of economic comfort in one's household. The suppression of native-born American employees and the concern for labor market competition is considered a tentative

driving force, as many have expressed their worry of the drastic shift this entailed relationship can have on the employment's positions offered nationwide, in addition to the quantity of job opportunities (Gang, Francisco and Rivera- Baptiz 1994).

Level of education specifically related to native-born Americans are an influential element to what kind of opinions are formed towards legal and illegal immigrants. The level of education obtained is correlated with how knowledgeable and open minded one is to the concept of sharing a space with an outside group, depending on their level of education (Jenseen and Heidi 1994, Hello et al 2006). The correlation between education and attitudes is fairly evident; a person that has very minimal education is easily influenced by opinions formed by others rather than taking the time to research things on their own and exposing themselves to information with which they might not be familiar with (Hjerm, M., Seva, I. J., & Werner, L. 2018, Alghamadi 2017, Okoye-Johnson 2011).

Party affiliation also creates polarization when it comes to attitudes towards immigrants, party believes are often used as a driving force to make decisions on how one feels about a specific group (Pherson, S., Brown, R., & Zagefka, H., 2011).

The mixture of media influences, level of education, party affiliation and age within a large population, has created uncertainty towards facts concerning immigration. Many political elites have taken advantage of the sentiment to create a perception which consequently enabled certain beliefs and reactions. The phenomenon of twisting realities has become a substantial norm, in fact we continue to witness it today around the topic of immigration.

In a study conducted by Schemer (2012) relating to stereotypes imposed on immigrants, highlighted by the media during political campaigns, the author reinforces the ideology that the media and telecommunications do in fact have leverage in formulating negative attitudes and

opinion pertaining immigrants. In his survey experiment, he analyzes the factors that allow such

negative notions to be perpetuated and adapted in the general public. According to Schemer

(2012), timing is an important factor as it allows for the development of the opinion. An

individual who sees a recurring article, advertisements or emphasis on stereotypes used to

describe immigrants is being prompted to adapt that understanding, and the longer the time

period is the more chances are of the individual adapting the news to their comprehension of a

situation. In addition, he emphasizes on the significant role of education and its ability to expand

individuals' minds: "well-informed individuals are less likely to rely on stereotypes when

judging ethnic minorities, instead they are more inclined to form individuating impressions of

immigrants (…) experiments have also found that knowledgeable individuals have more

background information about minorities and are motivated to think critically about incoming

information about immigrants" (Schemer, 2012). His research highlights the media's ability to

translate a fallacy into a perception; however there are other factors which sponsor this behavior

that cannot necessarily be controlled, factors such as an individuals' environment, the kind of

conversations they hold pertaining immigration amongst their family and close friends, their

ability to further their education or their willingness to rebuttal information that is often

considered professional and reliable since it is coming from highly respected outlets.

Hypotheses

My research tests the media's ability to influence opinions pertaining immigrants residing

in the US. Opinions are formed from experiences and outlets of information as noted above;

therefore, I assess whether or not information provided by the media concerning immigrants and

their effect on the domestic economy would trigger a specific reaction among survey respondents compared to a control group that does not receive this information. My two hypotheses are:

- When a news article highlights the **<u>negative impact</u>** immigrants have on the job economy, native-born Americans tend to have a **negative** attitude towards immigrants
- When a news articles highlights the **<u>positive impact</u>** immigrants have on the job economy, native-born Americans tend to have a neutral or **positive** attitude towards immigrants

Data & Methods

As mentioned previously, political elites and news outlets utilize different communication strategies to persuade the general public to adopt a biased perception towards immigrants and their impact on the domestic economy. Various studies have highlighted how media attempts to solicit particular responses from its audience, nevertheless there has not been a distinct understanding on how easy it is to impact an individual's knowledge of an issue and the attitude they will consequently adapt because of the information supplied. This study analyzed reactions from subjects, when presented with manipulated information about immigrants and their impact on the job market. The scope of the survey experiment was to test out attitude adoption of the general population when presented with deviated information related to job rates and immigrants. The survey experiment sought to showcase the vulnerability of individual's understanding and minimal effort to further research on a subject they feel strongly about, in addition to sustaining the ideology that attitudes can be influenced from information retained by elite governmental entities and mass media.

The survey experiment was created via Qualtrics XM, a survey tool utilized to conduct research, gather data, analyze statics without necessarily having expert knowledge on programming and coding. Qualtrics is a legitimate software adapted worldwide for various purposes, mainly related to the different spectrums of business and research. The survey experiment was launched on Amazon's Mechanical Turk to recruit a panel, a crowdsourcing engine that incentivizes participant's when they complete a voluntary selected task. In this case a $.50 compensation was given to subjects who completed the survey experiment. Mechanical Turk was a reliable authority for this experiment as, past research related to the effectiveness of MTurk has showcased how successful it is in mirroring a general population via the individuals who participate in a task (Berinsky, A. J., Huber, G. A., & Lenz, G. S., 2011). The engine is not solely utilized by a specific group of individuals, but instead is a popular tool for social science researchers looking to recruit a panel that is as represenrtative as a convenience sample. . Studies have also showcased how reliable respondents are as they tend to be attentive and dedicated to the task, not only because of the incentive but also because it is an actual duty, they signed up for voluntarily (Berinsky, A. J., Huber, G. A., & Lenz, G. S. 2011).

My budget pertaining for the incentives that was given to Mechanical Turk's workers participating in the survey was funded by the Political Science Department at Bridgewater State University. Given available funding, I was able to recruit and compensate 609 respondents total; under federal and university regulations, an IRB review was submitted and approved before launching the experiment.

The Survey Instrument

The survey had a total of 13 questions, few related to demographics, and others pertaining to political opinions (specifically the relation between immigrants, job wages and its impact on the nation, family members and close relatives). The questions utilized in the survey were extracted from dependable research centers such as Gallup, Pew Reserch Center, and Polling Report; since previous studies related to native-born attitudes towards immigrants were conducted by such entities. I gathered specific questions with caution to order and wording that could possibly trigger bias on the respondent's end, an article piece was included as treatment for the experiment.

The 609 respondents were split evenly in 3 treatments groups via randomization within the Qualtrics survey platform, and no respondents were aware of which group they had been assigned to. The respondents were divided in 3 treatment groups : one received a negative message about immigrants and the economy (a test of the first hypothesis), one received a positive message on the same subject (to test the second hypothesis), and the third control group did not receive any news article.

The news article stimulus displayed was manipulated to assess the respondents' reaction; to do this, certain wording within the article was changed. The original article, titled "*What do fewer immigrants coming to the U.S. mean for our economy and workforce?*" was modeled on a local newspaper from Salt Lake City, Utah. The article was appropriate for the study as it highlighted two of the major concerns the American population had for the nation for decades, and during the most recent presidential election. The original article included imagery of a "U.S. border patrol directing Nicaraguan migrant family over the International Bridge from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico into Laredo, Texas" (Friedman, 2020) , because of priming concerns I decided not to include the image as I believed it would have drastically affected attitudes

regardless of what the article was highlighting. For the survey experiment I extracted a brief

excerpt from the original article that highlighted the main points of the narrative.

As mentioned previously, the three treatment groups received three different version of

the article. The first group (Decreased Stimulus Group) will be exposed to the

original article right after a question pertaining the government's efforts for the issue of climate

change. The first group was exposed to the notion that decreasing immigration levels in

the US workforce is beneficial for native-born Americans. The second group (Increased

Stimulus Group) read the article with a slight variation: rather than a decrease in the number of

immigrants, there was an increase, and such phenomenon could impact native-born Americans in

a negative way: this notion is a fallacy that studies have showcased repeatedly after time (ACLU,

2017; Camarota, S. A., Richwine, J., & Zeigler, K., 2018). Just like the first treatment group, th

second treatment group was exposed to the stimulus after the question pertaining to climate

change. Questions about immigration, its impact on the domestic economy, and the safety of the

nation followed after the stimulus. The final group (Control Group) was not exposed to a

stimulus, but rather was required to complete the same questionnaire as the other two groups.

Demographics of the Respondents

As previously stated, the survey experiment was administered to a total of

609 Mechanical Turk participants. The experiment was launched on Thursday March 5th and was

closed the following morning. The experiment initiated during the morning of March 5, 2020.

The survey experiment was administered before the fatal COVID-19 affected American business

and movement patterns. The survey experiment can be found in the appendix.

According to the demographics extracted from the survey experiment, 56% of the

participants were male; 43% were female and 0.17% identified as other. Regarding the levels of

education present, 49% of the participants hold a Bachelor's or 4 year degree; 18% went to some

college; 13% hold an Associate degree; 12% hold a graduate degree, 8% hold a high school

diploma, and 0.33% did not complete high school. When it comes to levels of employment 77%

of the participants are currently working full time; 10% are working part-time; 3% are

unemployed, 3% are retired; 3% are taking care of their home

or family; 0.66% are permanently disabled; 1% identify as students; 2% selected other as

answer and 0.33% were temporarily laid off.

When it comes down to the race of the participants, 80% are White; 14% are Black or

African American; 6% are Hispanic; 4% are Asian, 1% are Native American; 2% are mixed with

one or more ethnicities, and 0.33% considered themselves to be something other than the option

listed on the question. In terms of age, 65% of the participants are below the age of 40 while

the remainder is above the age of 40.

Analysis

I focused solely on the questions that followed immediately after the assigned stimulus

per group to retrieve reactions and possible deviances of opinions based on what the respondents

were exposed to. The diversification of stimulus in group allows for better understanding of

whether or not the article did in fact produce an influence on ideologies pertaining to certain

matters. The question was not necessarily related to the point made in the article; however the

questions do relate to the topic in itself. The questions focused on three main topics: immigration

levels, personal life under possible threat (due to immigration) and immigrants' role in the job

market. I included an analysis to the question pertaining party affiliation to get a clearer view on

what ideologies best fit with the subjects: such conception is significant because the view on immigration and its policies are polarized amongst the two political parties.

Immigration Levels

First, I asked the respondents about their perception of immigration levels in the United States. I asked the question "Should immigration levels be kept at its present level, increased or decreased". The fluctuation of numbers of immigrants in the US is crucial because when an individual settles in a country one of the first things they usually do is look for employment opportunities to sustain themselves.

[Insert Table 1]

The stimulus has variating effects on the respondents, as noted in Table 1, despite the article stating the decrease of immigrants being a good notion for the nation, in addition to the increased possibilities of native-born Americans having more employment opportunities; it is evident that there is still a desire for an increase in numbers of individuals coming from outside the nation. On the other hand, not many respondents in the Increased Group seemed to desire an escalation in numbers related to immigrants establishing themselves in the US, the percentage can still be considered high in retrospective to the stimulus and the message it was sending. While looking at the Increased Stimulus Group results, it can be noted how fairly divided the numbers are, there seems to be a healthy & properly balanced sentiment about each possible action related to the levels of immigrants in the country. The Decreased Group Stimulus had the most surprising responses; related to the message being sent out, despite the notion of the article, many are in favor of opening the country more to immigrants or preferably keeping the same levels: out of the three groups they were the least likely to desire

a decrease in numbers. The Control Group can be considered a proper representation of our

nation currently, as they are accepting of the current number of immigrants, can see the benefits

of possibly decreasing the amount but also the lead the US can have in different sectors if it was

to welcome more immigrants. Overall, all three groups seem to understand the significance of

having such population (whether legal or illegal) in the country, as the results showcase neither

group had eagerness to decrease the level of immigrants in the US.

Personal Life Under Threat

One of the questions post-stimulus highlighted the relationship between respondent's

current personal way of life and the possibility of it being under threat because of immigrants.

The question asked: "Do you feel your own personal way of life is under threat from

immigrants?". The importance behind this question is recognizing whether or not the notion of

all immigrants being violent is actually something individuals truly agree with, I contend that the

respondents took the time to reflect on their current status and how it related to the question at

hand. This question was not prompted from the stimulus.

[Insert Table 2]

One of the main notions against immigrants both perceived from elites

and a majority of the US population is their contribution to crime and violence. For many

decades, especially during the last presidential election, the understanding that immigrants are a

threat to the overall well-being of the nation has been pushed onto us and many have come

forward to express their fear or concerns related to the relationship between crime rates and

levels of immigrants present in the US, however the results from Table 2 showcase a

different understanding from what we are used to hearing. The question was specifically related

to the subjects at hand; its focus was on the livelihood of each person rather than the livelihood of our nation as whole. The question prompted the subject to take an individualist approach in order to answer accordingly, rather than a nationalistic understanding unlike most research pertaining to attitudes on immigration. Previous studies have showcased a correlation between national identity and norms within a geographical area; individuals often gather up to unite on matters that can be considered a threat to the nation, in addition to finding a common level of distress in a matter (Haimueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J., 2014). The question was formulated in a way that the subject would only think about themselves; as mentioned previously when a large group of individuals adopt the same notion it is hard to rebuttal it, because that is what is considered the norm within that group.

The majority of respondents within all three groups believed that their own personal way of life was not under threat by immigrants. As seen in Table 2, 43% of the subjects in the Decreased Stimulus Group voted for an increased number of immigrants in the nation however this same group had the highest number, percentage wise, of individuals who believed their own personal way of life was under threat. It should also be kept in consideration that the stimulus did not mention anything related to violence & crime, it is easy for one to disconnect from what they were recently exposed to and focus more on what they are surrounded in their current lives when exploring this matter. Both the Increase Stimululs Group and the Decreased Stimulus Group showcased very similar results to the question. The Control Groups was the only one to have a higher number of respondents' answering "It is not" to the question.

Immigrants and Their Role in The U.S. Job Market

The respondents were asked the following question: "Do you think immigrants coming into this country today, take jobs away from American citizens in general, or o they mostly take jobs Americans don't want?". This question was pertinent to the stimulus, as it covered the main topic in the article: employment opportunities. This question sought to highlight a very common belief: the fallacy that immigrants take jobs away from native-born Americans.

[Insert Table 3]

Based on the results shown in Table 3 it is evident that there was a common understanding that majority of immigrants take jobs American citizens don't want. Such acknowledgement is compatible with our current reality as most immigrants residing in the US work positions that are not considered the most desirable due to the wage, its intensity, the hours that are often offered or the position in itself. Just like the other questions analyzed above, this question was posed right after the stimulus was given to its respective groups. The Increased Stimulus Group had a higher percentage in subjects choosing "take jobs away from American citizens" compared to respondents in the Decreased Stimulus Group. We can credit the stimulus for possibly increasing the number of respondents relating more to immigrants taking jobs away from American citizens by exploring the results found in the Control Group. As noted previously in the methods sections, the Control Group was the only group that did not to receive the stimulus, the percentage of respondents who selected the option "take jobs away from American citizens" it's very close in numbers to the Decreased Stimulus Group.

Party Affiliation

Another question that was posed after the stimulus was related to party affiliation. The question went as followed "In your opinion, which political party's policies on immigration and immigration reform come closer to your own?". Respondents might have already identified with a particular party before taking this survey, however it was important to include the question to get a better understanding of political party ideologies in each group.

[Insert Table 4]

Table 4 gives the audience a critical understanding of where the subject within the groups stand when it comes to their political ideologies related to immigration. I do not believe the answers are a consequence of the stimulus as many might have carried a party affiliation prior to being exposed to this survey experiment. However, this table is significant to understand why one might feel a certain way about immigrants residing in the US.

Discussion

It is evident that to a certain extent the stimulus had a partial influence on the opinion of the subjects at hand. However, it disqualifies the notion perpetuated by my hypothesis that when a news article highlights the negative impact, immigrants have on the job economy, native-born Americans tend to have a negative attitude towards immigrants or the notion that when a news article highlights the positive impacts immigrants have on the job economy, native-born Americans tend to have a neutral or positive attitude towards immigrants. What this study has showcased is that information given to the public does influence one's opinion, but it does not necessarily change it completely. Just like Christian Schemer (2012) suggested in his research study, I believe that if an individual is exposed to the same understanding, information or behavior consistently over a period of time it can drastically

change their opinion; just like Donald Trump did during the 2016 Presidential Election: he stuck to his opinion pertaining immigration, exposed the public of it in a repeated manner and received the results he aimed for. Although there was plenty of data discrediting his opinion, Trump disregarded such data and continuously exposed the public to his understanding of how things were going. Another factor that can explain the overall results is the number of individuals who hold a four- year's degree; it is well known that individuals who enhanced their education past a secondary level tend to be more open minded or prone to do further research pertaining a matter. Having an education allows many to recognize some rights from wrongs, or halt when given information, to then analyze how credible it is. Party affiliation is also a major factor in the matter, however for this specific survey experiment it cannot be concluded that results given from the participants pertaining to party affiliation is related to what stimulus they received. Life circumstances and childhood upbringing also play a pivotal role in opinion formation and should be studied in future research.

This ability to manipulate individuals' understanding of a concept can be considered a threat to the scope of future policies relating to immigration. The government is known for doing what is best for its people but what if what is considered the best eventually becomes a threat to a specific population, solely based on the notion that the majority of the general population has already pre-conceived?. How information is gathered and distributed to individuals over a period of time truly makes us reflect on how credible certain stanzas taken on policies are, as we have witnessed with absurd and aggressive reaction to certain situations: we should reflect on Hitler's ability to create the notion behind the Arian Race which resulted in the mass killings of over 6 million Jews -- all it took him was an idea and an outlet to utilize (the media) to get to the

general public. Fallacies and the adaptation of negative understanding about situation are a threat to our overall well-being and can possibly leads us, a society, to make horrible decisions.

Overall, it is evident that what the media and political elites say does matter to the opinion of many, as it often is one of the main sources for the introduction to an ideology. It is also important to note that variables such as level of education and sentiments during a specific time can influence one's understanding of an issue. As explored in the literature review section, elites and telecommunications are aware of methodologies ideal to drive a population towards a certain opinion. They have proven how effective such methodologies are (collective action frames) by constantly utilizing it in major historical moments (ex. slavery, Jim Crow policies, War on Drugs, abortions policies, immigration) to elicit a reaction from the public. Collective action frames can be found in different practices of communication such as verbal, physical and on paper.

My hypotheses were inspired by the common phenomenon that we often witness with social media outlets and telecommunications: their ability to adapt a certain story and make it credible enough for it to become a reality. This is a recurring episode, the concept of "fake news" is realistic and such ideology is consistent with its results, because of our society's inability to look for further proof or understanding: the advancement of technology and communication styles has encrypted a certain level of trust between the sender and the recipient that when the information is delivered it is often not questioned or looked into further. What allows this phenomenon to continue, is also its sentimental attachment: whether the news focus on policy, race, immigration or the domestic economy; as a community we are aware that such topics often trigger emotions that fuel a behavior. What makes the "fake news" more plausible to its results is its tendency of continuously popping up on our phone screens, tablets, laptops and televisions.

As a nation we need to strive further for individual based research about issues; we cannot solely rely on the media and elites to constantly feed us news on matters that are important to us.

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Tables

Table 1: Perception of Immigration Levels

	Increased Stimulus Group	Control Group	Decreased Stimulus Group
Increase	35%	34%	43%
Decrease	26%	25%	18%
Kept at its present level	40%	42%	39%
	N= 202	N=201	N=202

Table 2: Life Circumstances Under Threat Due to Immigration

	Increase Stimulus Group	Control Group	Decreased Stimulus
It is	31%	28%	33%
It is not	69%	72%	67%
	N=200	N= 201	N= 202

Table 3: Immigrants and Employment in the US

	Increased Stimulus Group	Control Group	Decreased Stimulus Group
Take jobs away from American Citizens	45%	42%	38%
Mostly take jobs American citizens don't want	55%	58%	62%
	N=202	N=202	N=201

Table 4: Party Affiliation Relating to Immigration Policies & Reform

	Increased Stimulus Group	Control Group	Decreased Stimulus Group
Democratic	51%	51%	56%
Republican	33%	36%	30%
Neither	16%	13%	14%
	N=202	N=202	N=202

Appendix

Survey Experiment

Q30 You are invited to participate in a research study about current events. This project is being conducted by Dr. Melinda R. Tarsi, Department of Political Science, BSU, as part of an undergraduate honors thesis. If you agree to be part of the research study, you will take a brief survey of approximately 5-10 minutes in length, and which involves no risk or discomfort to you as the participant. Your responses to all questions will be confidential to the degree permitted by the technology being used, and will be used for the purposes of an honors thesis. Your participation is completely voluntary; even if you decide to begin the survey, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you withdraw early from the survey, your data will be eliminated from the database. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any other concerns about this study, please contact Dr. Melinda R. Tarsi, melinda.tarsi@bridgew.edu or (508) 531-2404. If you wish to speak with someone other than the researchers, please contact the BSU Institutional Review Board, (508) 531-1242. If you agree to participate, please click on the link below to continue to

the survey. You will have the option to refuse to answer individual questions and may change your mind and leave the study at any time without penalty.

Q31 Click YES if you would like to continue with the survey.

○ Yes

○ No

Q34 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

Q1 "America's openness to people from all over the world is essential to who we are as a nation"

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Q2 "If America is too open to people from all over the world, we risk losing our identity as a nation"

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○   Disagree

○   Strongly Disagree

Q3 Is America headed in the right direction, or on the wrong track?

○   Right direction

○   Wrong track

Q4 Do you think the United States is doing enough to address climate change, doing too much, or do you think more needs to be done to address climate change?

○   Doing enough

○   Doing too much

○   More needs to be done

○   Not sure

Q5 Read the following excerpt: **What does more immigrants coming to the U.S. mean for our economy and workforce?** *"An increase in the number of immigrants coming to the United States — both legally and illegally — could have significant implications for the U.S. economy. The U.S. labor force economy is already seeing the impacts of higher immigration numbers"* An increase in the number of immigrants coming to the United States — both legally and illegally — could have significant implications for the U.S. economy, said a demographer

and senior fellow at The Brookings Institution.   The U.S. labor force economy is already seeing the impacts of higher immigration numbers, said a demographer. On the one hand, he said, the increase in the number of foreign-born workers has affected American-born workers, with labor shortages and increased competition resulting in decreased unemployment and higher wages for some workers.   On the other hand, the labor shortages in some industries, such as agriculture and seasonal recreation, have hurt some local economies. And some industries have increasingly

embraced automation or have turned to outsourcing as a way to cope with labor shortages, said a demographer, solutions that don't benefit American workers directly.

Q6 Should immigration in the US be kept at its present level, increased or decreased?

○ Kept at its present level

○ Increased

○ Decreased

Q7 For each of the following areas, please say whether immigrants in the United States are making the situation in the country better, or worse, or not having much effect?

	Better	Worse	Not Having Much Effect
Crime Situation	○	○	○
Job Opportunities for you and/or your family	○	○	○
Food, Music & Arts	○	○	○
Taxes	○	○	○
Social & Moral View	○	○	○

Q8 In your opinion, which political party's policies on immigration and immigration reform come closer to your own?

○ Democratic

○ Republican

○ Neither

Q9 Do you feel your own personal way of life is under threat from immigrants?

○   It is

○   It is not

Q10 Do you think immigrants coming to this country today take jobs away from American citizens in general, or do they mostly take jobs Americans don't want?

○   Take jobs away from American citizens

○   Mostly take jobs American citizens don't want

Q11 Should immigration levels in the US be kept at its present level, increased or decreased?

○   Kept at its present level

○   Increased

○   Decreased

Q12 For each of the following areas, please say whether immigrants in the United States are making the situation in the country better, or worse, or not having much effect?

	Better	Worse	Not Having Much Effect
Crime Situation	○	○	○
Job Opportunities for you and/or your family	○	○	○
Food, Music & Arts	○	○	○
Taxes	○	○	○
Social & Moral View	○	○	○

Q13 In your opinion, which political party's policies on immigration and immigration reform come closer to your own?

○ Democratic

○ Republican

○ Neither

Q14 Do you feel your own personal way of life is under threat from immigrants?

○   It is

○   It is not

Q15 Do you think immigrants coming to this country today, take jobs away from American citizens in general, or do they mostly take jobs Americans don't want?

○   Take jobs away from American citizens

○   Mostly take jobs American citizens don't want

Q16 Read the following excerpt: **What do fewer immigrants coming to the U.S. mean for our economy and workforce?** *"A reduction in the number of immigrants coming to the United States — both legally and illegally — could have significant implications for the U.S. economy. The U.S. labor force economy is already seeing the impacts of lower immigration numbers"* A reduction in the number of immigrants coming to the United States — both legally and illegally — could have significant implications for the U.S. economy, said a demographer and senior fellow at The Brookings Institution. The U.S. labor force economy is already seeing the impacts of lower immigration numbers, said a demographer. On the one hand, he said, the decrease in the number of foreign-born workers has benefited American-born workers, with labor shortages and increased competition resulting in decreased unemployment and higher wages for some workers. On the other hand, the labor shortages in some industries, such as agriculture and seasonal recreation, have hurt some local economies. And some industries have increasingly embraced automation or have turned to outsourcing as a way to cope with labor shortages, said a demographer, solutions that don't benefit American workers directly.

Q17 Should immigration in the US be kept at its present level, increased or decreased?

○   Kept at its present level

○   Increased

○   Decreased

Q18 For each of the following areas, please say whether immigrants in the United States are making the situation in the country better, or worse, or not having much effect?

	Better	Worse	Not Having Much Effect
Crime Situation	○	○	○
Job Opportunities for you and/or your family	○	○	○
Food, Music & Arts	○	○	○
Taxes	○	○	○
Social & Moral View	○	○	○

Q19 In your opinion, which political party's policies on immigration and immigration reform come closer to your own?

○   Democratic

○   Republican

○   Neither

○

Q20 Do you feel your own personal way of life is under threat from immigrants?

○   It is

○   It is not

Q21 Do you think immigrants coming to this country today, take jobs away from American citizens in general, or do they mostly take jobs Americans don't want?

○ Take jobs away from American citizens

○ Mostly take jobs American citizens don't want

Q39 Finally, we have a few quick questions about you.

Q22 What is your sex?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Other

Q23 In what YEAR were you born? Please enter the four-digit year.

Q24 What is the highest level of education obtained?

○ No high school

○ High School/ GED

○ Some college

○ Two year degree

○ Four year degree/ Bachelor's

○ Graduate degree/post-grad

Q25 Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

○ Working full time now

○ Working part-time now

○ Temporarily laid off

○ Unemployed

○ Retired

○ Permanently disabled

○ Taking care of home or family

○ Student

○ Other

Q26 What is your race?

○ White

○ Black or African American

○ Hispanic

○ Asian

○ Native American

○ Middle Eastern

○ Mixed

○ Other