

Beyond Economic Interests: Attitudes Toward Foreign Workers in Australia, the United States and East Asian Countries

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Abstract

We compare attitudes toward foreign workers between two wealthy Western and four developing East Asian countries, using data from the 2006 and 2008 Asian Barometer surveys to test hypotheses on economic interests, cultural supremacy, and global exposure. Respondent majorities in all six countries expressed high levels of restrictivism. Regression model results indicate a consistent cultural superiority influence across the six countries, but only minor effects from economic interest factors. Mixed outcomes were noted for the global exposure variables.

Keywords: *Immigration, Globalization, Cultural Ideology, Global Exposure, Economic Interests, East Asia*

Introduction

- 1.1 One result of intensifying globalization trends is the increased movement of people across borders, especially from developing to developed countries, making the ethnoscapings of many countries increasingly complex ([Appadurai 1990](#)). Individuals and families move abroad for better opportunities, refugees seek shelter or asylum, and white collar workers and managers are sent overseas by transnational corporations. The number of temporary workers deciding to stay in their host countries multiplies; therefore larger numbers of foreigners are becoming 'next-door strangers' ([Simmel 1950](#)). For these reasons, [Castles et al. \(2013\)](#) describe the current era as the 'Age of Migration'. Immigration has become a primary policy concern in every receiving country. Levels of public acceptance of immigrants necessarily constitute a social climate in which governments generate relevant policies with varying degrees of openness or hostility toward newcomers. Thus, public attitudes toward immigrants are always in the spotlight of social science research.
- 1.2 The increasing migration flows are not limited to wealthy Western countries ([Bortles & DeWind 2007](#)), but also emerging in East Asia and other developing world regions, raising questions about whether domestic citizens in non-Western countries are responding to increasing numbers of immigrants in the same manner as countries with long histories of accepting immigrants, and whether response patterns are converging or diverging in different regions. Despite the desire of some researchers to generalize their findings and arguments, empirical studies of opinions toward immigrants have mostly focused on North Atlantic countries ([Freeman 2007](#)). Convergences have been identified in a small number of studies comparing the US and European nations, with varying weights given to self-interest and cultural marginality factors ([Citrin & Sides 2008](#); [Coenders et al. 2004a](#); [Fetzer 2000](#)). One of the few studies including Asian countries ([Simon & Lynch 1999](#)) was an overview of various national surveys over time rather than a rigid cross-country investigation. In short, since most existing studies are limited to wealthy countries, a strong need exists for comparative research involving responses to immigrants in the eastern hemisphere.
- 1.3 Our aim is to use data from AsiaBarometer survey to compare public opinions toward foreign workers between four East Asian and two Western countries: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China, Australia and the United States. The data is used to examine three major explanatory theories: economic interests, cultural ideology, and global exposure. Economic interests and threats are perhaps the most-cited factors in explaining host country antipathy toward immigrants, but contain an inherent weakness: they wrongly assume that responses toward immigrants are based on careful calculations of personal gains and losses ([Sears & Funk 1990](#)). We use cultural beliefs and global exposure to spotlight the significance of nationalism and globalization in influencing public opinions toward migrant workers. Our purpose is twofold: to systematically compare responses to foreign workers between the selected four East Asian and two Western countries, and to test economic and non-economic explanations to determine whether they are valid across countries, or if specific theories better fit for certain societies.
- 1.4 Regarding the immigration situations of the six countries, international migration inflows have been mostly concentrated in high-income nations, with the US and Australia serving as prime examples of countries established and inhabited by immigrants. Over time, the US has received the largest number of immigrants in the world, while Australia currently contains one of the highest proportions of immigrants. Immigrants in both countries have very high labor market participation rates, suggesting high levels of integration. In 2008, foreign-born individuals accounted for 13.7% of the American population and 16.5% of its labor force; the respective percentages for Australia were 25.4% and 26.5% (Table 1). However, these countries have very different official and unofficial integration policies: whereas the US has long encouraged immigrants to assimilate quickly by adopting the American way of life, Australia, due to its long history of anxiety regarding outsiders and preoccupation with social stability, has only recently shifted from a 'White Australian' policy to accepting multiculturalism ([Jupp 2011](#); [Bilodeau & Fadol 2011](#)).

Table 1. Foreign population and foreign labor force statistics (in thousands and percentages of total populations)

	Foreign Population		Foreign Labor Force	
	2001	2008	2001	2008
Australia ^{1*}	4,482.1 23.1	5,449.2 25.4	2,360.2 24.5	2,914.9 26.5
U.S. ^{1*}	32,341.2 11.3	41,799.5 13.7	18,994.1 13.4	25,085.5 16.5
Japan ¹	1,778.5 1.4	2,215.9 1.7	168.8 0.2	211.5 0.3
South Korea ¹	229.6 0.5	895.5 1.8	128.5 0.6	538.0 2.2
Taiwan ³	380.9 1.7	414.7 1.8	305.0 3.1	365.0 3.4
China ²	0.0	0.1**

Sources:

1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010: 299, 314, 350, 352).

2. United Nations (2011: 134).

3. Taiwan Executive Yuan (2011, 2013a); Taiwan Ministry of the Interior (2013a).

*: Calculated by foreign-born residents and foreign-born workers.

** : Reported for 2010.

1.5 Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are much wealthier than their counterparts in Southeast Asia, but only very recently did the three East Asian countries as well as China start to accept economic immigrants in response to strong labor demands. In Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, low-skilled immigrants fill jobs that resident citizens do not want (Komai 2000; Seol 2000; Chang & Chang 2013); in contrast, highly-skilled immigrants are sought after to improve economic competitiveness. China, an emerging economy with an exceptionally large number of lower-grade workers, is now slowly relaxing its immigration policies as part of an effort to attract higher-quality workers from all world regions (He & Cao 2014). Still, compared to Australia and the US, the numbers of foreign workers in these East Asian countries are very small, accounting for less than 2% of their total populations and less than 4% of their labor forces (Table 1). Among the six countries in our study, Australia and the US are considered high-immigration countries, Japan and Taiwan low-immigration countries, and China and South Korea net emigration nations (Table 2). However, the numbers of foreigners working and residing in these four East Asian countries are expected to rise due to increasingly open policies enacted in response to low birth rates (in some cases, far below replacement levels) and rapidly aging populations (Table 3).

Table 2. Total net migration (annual average in thousands, annual rate per 1,000 in population)

Period	1990-1995	1995-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010
Australia ¹	74.2 4.3	93.1 5.1	128.2 6.7	100.0 4.9
U.S. ¹	1313.0 5.2	1596.0 5.9	1135.2 3.9	1010.4 3.3
Japan ¹	94.9 0.8	9.0 0.1	16.4 0.1	30.0 0.2
South Korea ¹	-125.4 -2.9	-13.1 -0.3	-13.1 -0.3	-6.0 -0.1
Taiwan ²	-7.03 -0.34	-4.8 -0.23	-2.04 -0.09	26.54 1.16
China ¹	-165.9 -0.1	-157.2 -0.1	-411.7 -0.3	-346.2 -0.3

Sources:

1. United Nations (2011: 103, 134, 196, 259, 310).

2. Taiwan Ministry of the Interior (2013c).

Table 3. Migration and demographic data

	International Migrant Stock ¹ (percentage of total population)	Population 60 Years of Age or Older ² (percentage of total population)		Total Fertility Rate ³ (children per female)
	2010	2012	2050	2005-2010
World	3.1	11	22	2.53
Australia	21.9	20	29	1.89
U.S.	13.5	19	27	2.06
Japan	1.7	32	41	1.34
South Korea	1.1	17	39	1.23
Taiwan	1.8	17	38*	1.05
China	0.1	13	34	1.63

Sources:

1. United Nations (2009); Taiwan Ministry of the Interior (2013a).
2. United Nations (2012a); Taiwan Executive Yuan (2012: 9, 2013b).
3. United Nations (2012b); Taiwan Ministry of the Interior (2013b).

*: Calculated by population aged 65 years or over.

- 1.6 Immigration is a recent phenomenon in Asia, but the inflow volume remains much smaller compared to Western countries, revealing differences in respective experiences of receiving and responding to cultural Others. Theories reliant upon the cultural or historical context of western society, including explanations based on economic interests or postmodern ambivalence, may operate less well in the Asian context. How different theories play out in specific populations is thus an issue deserving of careful attention in comparative studies like ours.

Theoretical arguments: economic interests, cultural beliefs and global exposure

- 2.1 Among theories accounting for attitudes toward immigrants, the most cited reasons against accepting immigrants in the host country are economic and cultural threats posed by immigrants (Harell *et al.* 2012; Tsai and Iwai 2013), while global exposure, a recently developed theory, plays a positive role in the acceptance of immigrants. In this research, we investigate how these three competing factors influence public attitudes toward foreign workers.
- 2.2 Conventional theories regarding the responses of domestic citizens to immigrant workers often stress economic interests derived from specific positions. According to the split labor market hypothesis, hostility directed toward immigrants or foreign workers emerges from resentment toward the practice of accepting lower wage work (Bonacich 1972, 1976; Boswell 1986; Turner 1986). Low-income members of the already resident working classes are described as feeling particularly threatened, and therefore demanding that foreign workers be banned from immigrating. In contrast, individuals possessing better human capital and secure jobs are more likely to focus on the benefits of incoming workers offering less costly labor, though at least one exception has been noted: some American technology workers feel threatened by high-skilled immigrants, and therefore strongly oppose the expansion of H-1B visas (Malhotra *et al.* 2013). However, most host countries welcome high-skilled immigrants because of the value of the technological and management skills they bring, as well as their 'trouble-free' middle or upper middle class backgrounds (Tzeng 2006). In general, individuals in advantageous socio-economic positions are thought to be less resistant to immigrants. Some researchers have reported substantial correlations among three factors: economic insecurity, perceived threats from out-groups, and strong anti-immigration sentiments (McLaren 2003; Semyonov *et al.* 2006; Wilson 2001). Based on these findings, our first hypothesis is expressed as:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals with higher social status and possessing more economic resources are more likely to accept immigrant workers.

- 2.3 This class-based theory has been challenged for at least two reasons, the first being the controversial nature of the economic consequences of increased foreign labor. According to Borjas (1989), and Gaston and Nelson (2002), the negative impacts of immigrants on the earnings and employment opportunities of natives are small at best. Migrants tend to serve more as labor market complements than substitutes in receiving countries. Perceived competition between in-groups and out-groups can be considerable even in a context of low actual intergroup competition. More often than not, low-skill immigrants take the least desirable jobs, and high-skilled immigrants fill positions for which local workers are not qualified (Bomai 2000; Seol 2000). In some cases, immigrants find themselves working in occupational niches such as ethnic cuisine, garden work, or child care - positions that might exist, but at much lower numbers, in the absence of immigrant workers (Linton 2002). Large numbers of migrants increase consumption and contribute to local economic growth. Yet immigrants often bear the brunt of economic downturns as countries tend to establish strict rules regarding the conditions under which they may enter, stay, and work. There are many examples of migrant workers being admitted on a temporary basis but forced to leave if they cannot find jobs.
- 2.4 The second criticism of class-based theory concerns the question of how people act in response to the state of their material interests. The general assumption is that responses to immigrants and/or immigration policies are motivated by a simple pleasure-pain principle. However, domestic citizens often fail to understand the costs or benefits of public policy. The results of Bilodeau and Fadol's (2011) empirical analysis of contemporary Australians' attitudes toward immigrants indicate that both income and unemployment exert only modest impacts. Based on their investigation of a dozen wealthy European countries, McLaren (2003) and Semyonov *et al.* (2006) found weak support for the economic interest theory in explaining motivations to exclude immigrants. Instead, education (a form of human capital leading to favorable employment opportunities and income) has a much stronger positive correlation with an attitude of acceptance toward immigrants (Bilodeau & Fadol 2011; McLaren

- 2.5 Another primary argument regarding antipathy toward out-groups stresses increasing ambivalence in terms of multi-ethnic and multicultural social orders. In the current context of large-scale migrations, the 'unfamiliar' come today and stay tomorrow, producing new demographic realities, especially in large cities (Iveson 2006). According to Bauman (1990a), one's self identity is constituted in relation to the Others, with encounters simultaneously establishing one's distinctiveness and the Others' differences - in other words, one's world is mapped according to opposing in-group and out-group classifications. 'Strangerhood' (Bietsch & Marotta 2009) also facilitates senses of nationalism by spotlighting higher-level Us-versus-Them differences. The presence of immigrants in public spaces can increase feelings of native 'we-ness' against unfamiliar aliens, thereby breeding a hostile attitude toward Others. Neither friend nor foe, immigrant strangers at all levels problematize existing boundaries between populations and nations (Pietsch & Marotta 2009). For many, large influxes of 'culturally undertrained' or 'racially inferior' foreigners threaten social cohesion and cultural integrity. As unfamiliar outsiders become a regular and necessary part of a social structure and begin to claim the same rights as longstanding members of the society, they incur 'cognitive clarity' responses (Bauman 1990b) (i.e., collective reclassifications of strangers, outsiders, and Others) in order to preserve existing institutional separations. Newly categorized Others may be kept at a distance or sent back to their home countries, thereby preserving a sense of social cohesion, solidifying imagined communities, and letting existing citizens enjoy states of low ambivalence and accepted divisions.
- 2.6 Symbolic boundary theorists assert that intolerance toward out-groups is derived from the belief that in-group/out-group classifications are required to maintain an established order (Bears 1993), and that they are increasingly important during times marked by high levels of global mobility and increasingly porous borders. Thus, immigrants, asylum seekers, and guest workers become targets for blame for blurring ethnic boundaries and territorial limits. In one sense, immigrants and guest workers serve as political symbols in the same manner as 'blacks' and 'minorities' in the American context (Sears & Funk 1990). Out-groups can evoke strong affective responses, clothed as patriotism or nationalism, that reflect a need for cognitive clarity in ethnic classification. In Australia, attacks on multiculturalism and Asian immigrants led by the One Nation Party reflect a desire to protect the 'legitimacy' of what it calls 'Australian culture.' According to One Nation supporters, 'There is no justification for population growth in Australia,' and the number of immigrants should not 'significantly alter the ethnic and cultural makeup of the country' (Jupp 2007: 128). It is in such contexts that individuals referred to as of a non-English speaking background (NESB) are problematized and marginalized (Hage 1998). However, similar examples of antipathy are also found in East Asian societies. Responding to the rapid increase in the number of female marriage migrants from China and Southeast Asia over the past two decades, many Taiwanese express ambivalence toward what they view as 'biologically fertile' brides but 'culturally unfit' mothers (Dan 2008). Also in Taiwan, Chen and Yu (2005) and Tsai (2011) have reported correlations between a strong belief in national sovereignty and acute hostility towards female marriage migrants from China. Our second hypothesis was derived from this background:

Hypothesis 2: A strong sense of national distinctiveness produces a strong sense of antipathy toward immigrants.

- 2.7 Global exposure theory, the third main argument in this study, emphasizes the impact of global involvement on cosmopolitan values, arguing that even though an individual's economic interests and feelings of cultural supremacy are likely triggers of anti-immigrant hostility, global exposure may promote positive attitudes toward immigrants. In what is considered a classic study, Merton (1968) constructed two theoretical types, local and cosmopolitan, as distinct reference orientations. The lives of locals are based on relations within their immediate communities and networks consisting of numerous town residents. In contrast, cosmopolitans' references extend far beyond their immediate contexts, except for small numbers of carefully selected local contacts. They tend to be much more concerned with 'big issues' such as national economies, international trade, and wars beyond their borders. In a later work, Hannerz (1990) characterized cosmopolitans as having greater 'willingness and mastery to engage the Others. . . [with] an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences' (239). Both Merton and Hannerz note the importance of global exposure in analyzing cosmopolitanism as a value position.
- 2.8 We propose using transnational mobility and social relations to capture and measure global exposure (Tsai 2013; Tsai & Iwai 2013). Global mobility means frequent opportunities to travel beyond one's border - a scenario that Greig (2002) calls the 'end of geography.' As a result, long distances are easily conquered, communication between two locations is realized in compressed time, and cross-border social networks are created and used as social capital. As Bauman (1998) suggests, global mobility constitutes a new form of popular freedom consisting of disengagement, non-commitment, evasion, and escape. Mobility indicates both flexibility and a capacity to view the world from Jeremy Bentham's *panopticon*. According to Calhoun (2008), today travelers can view the world from a variety of 'local' angles, thereby obtaining a compromised, non-dogmatic perspective that serves as a precondition for transcending specific places, folkways, religions, and identities. Thus our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Greater global exposure encourages a sense of greater acceptance toward immigrants.

Data and measures

- 3.1 Cross-national datasets have become popular in comparative research on attitudes toward immigrants. The European Social Survey, Eurobarometer and Transatlantic Trends Survey collect data mainly on Western societies. Two well-known worldwide datasets, the International Social Survey Program and World Values survey, cover both the East and West, however, they do not contain sufficient measures for a concomitant testing of the above derived hypotheses. In contrast, a new dataset, AsiaBarometer (AB), a collaborative project currently based at the University of Niigata Prefecture, Japan (www.asiabarometer.org), fits our research purpose. The AB Survey managers began collecting information on various dimensions of values, behaviors and perceived quality of life in East and Southeast Asian countries in 2003. Questions address issues ranging from family orientations and food preferences to opinions on governance and trust in international organizations. Originally written in English, the core questionnaire was translated into local languages by individual survey companies, with final questionnaires checked via a back translation process. The US and Australia were added as field sites in 2008.
- 3.2 We used the most recently released data (from the year 2008) to compare attitudes in Australia and the US (representing high-income countries) with those expressed by respondents in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China (representing East Asia). Multistage stratified sampling methods were used in face-to-face interviews

with respondents between the ages of 20 and 69. The AB survey also provided additional Japanese and Chinese samples in 2006. Although not from panel design, the two waves of data for respective countries can be pooled for cross-sectional analysis. Sample sizes were approximately 1,000 people per year in each country except for China, in which 2,000 respondents were interviewed in 2006.

3.3 We use attitude toward foreign workers as our dependent variable. The text in the original survey question is: 'The central government should restrict the inflow of foreign workforce to protect the interests of domestic residents.' Responses are recorded along a range of 1 ('strongly agree') to 5 ('strongly disagree'). Higher scores indicate more favorable attitudes toward foreign workers.

3.4 Socio-economic status. This measure consists of four domains. The first, level of education, indicates differences in human capital and potential competitiveness in labor markets. Categories are university degree or higher, senior high school graduate, and junior high school or lower; the last category served as a reference group for the set of dummy variables in education. The second domain, employment type, consists of five categories: business owner, professional/white collar worker, lower-grade worker, those not actively engaged in the labor market (e.g., homemakers, retired persons), and unemployed (used as a reference group). For the third domain, family income, we are not concerned with absolute levels. Instead, to make cross-country comparisons we calculated the standardized z scores of each respondent within each country to determine if individuals with relatively higher incomes consistently expressed favorable attitudes toward foreign workers. We use the final domain, perceived standard of living, as a proxy for subjective socio-economic status. Responses to the question 'How would you describe your standard of living?' were recorded as high, relatively high, average, relatively low, and low (coded from 5 to 1, respectively). We predict positive correlations between these socio-economic status variables and foreign worker acceptance. Summary statistics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary statistics (percentages/means)

	Australia	U.S.	Japan 2006	Japan 2008	South Korea	Taiwan	China 2006	China 2008
Gender								
Female	60.5	50.6	50.0	55.7	50.0	48.9	49.3	49.8
Male	39.5	49.4	50.1	44.3	50.1	51.1	50.8	50.2
Age	42.5 (15.1) ¹	43.8 (14.2)	44.7 (14.2)	47.8 (13.6)	42.0 (13.2)	40.6 (12.3)	40.8 (12.7)	39.3 (11.9)
Concerned about public issues	1.3 (1.1)	1.7 (1.3)	1.1 (1.0)	1.3 (1.1)	1.2 (.9)	1.5 (1.0)	1.1 (.9)	.9 (.9)
Administrative ability in immigration								
Very good	6.8	3.4	.7	.7	.9	2.5	6.0	5.8
Fairly good	45.1	21.1	22.1	24.3	16.0	29.7	48.4	50.4
Not so good	34.2	44.3	61.3	57.7	64.8	51.4	40.4	38.6
Not good at all	14.0	31.3	15.9	17.2	18.3	16.5	5.2	5.3
Education								
Junior high and lower	13.3	4.8	8.2	11.2	19.1	32.3	49.8	32.4
High school	35.7	37.0	44.3	43.3	43.2	39.3	24.4	36.1
University and higher	51.0	58.2	47.4	45.5	37.8	28.4	25.9	31.5
Occupation								
Business owner	2.0	5.4	9.1	7.6	15.7	5.7	5.9	6.6
Professional / white collar	35.7	42.3	29.2	30.9	22.2	26.0	28.4	37.4
Lower grade worker	22.5	28.9	33.4	31.2	21.3	36.7	37.9	31.4
Not in labor market	34.2	18.7	27.3	28.2	38.2	28.3	21.6	18.1
Unemployed	5.6	4.7	1.0	2.2	2.6	3.3	6.1	6.6
Family income (yearly)²	53879.9 (35337.7)	67030.4 (48560.3)	50639.2 (31963.1)	58796.2 (39058.7)	36399.2 (24430.9)	26601.1 (12346.1)	3652.6 (3664.1)	6320.9 (5301.3)
Self-rated standard of living								
High	9.9	8.1	1.5	3.1	.9	.6	1.1	.4
Relatively high	28.7	22.0	11.4	12.6	9.3	8.1	9.7	8.9
Average	53.2	60.6	70.3	66.2	61.7	83.9	68.1	71.6
Relatively low	5.8	7.5	13.2	14.4	22.6	6.9	16.0	16.4
Low	2.4	1.7	3.6	3.7	5.5	.6	5.2	2.7
Cultural superiority	2.9 (.9)	2.7 (.9)	2.6 (.7)	2.6 (.7)	2.2 (.7)	2.5 (.7)	2.1 (.7)	2.2 (.7)
Global exposure	2.4 (1.7)	1.4 (1.6)	.6 (1.0)	.8 (1.1)	.8 (.9)	.9 (1.0)	.4 (.7)	.5 (.8)
English ability	3.9 (.3)	4.0 (.3)	1.8 (.7)	1.8 (.7)	1.9 (.7)	1.6 (.7)	1.5 (.6)	1.6 (.7)

Notes: ¹ Standard errors for continuous variables in parentheses.
² In US dollar.

3.5 Belief in cultural superiority. Individuals often identify boundaries with others based on a belief that their national cultures are unique and/or superior. The two items used to measure this factor are: '[YOUR COUNTRY'S] traditional culture is superior to others' and '[YOUR COUNTRY'S] government should emphasize patriotic education.' Responses are recorded on a scale ranging from 5 ('strongly agree') to 1 ('strongly disagree'). Patriotism is defined as the pride one feels toward a national group and/or country (Doenders *et al.* 2004b); we believe this concept is less judgmental than the cultural chauvinism implied in the first item. Although these two elements differ conceptually (Kosterman & Feshbach 1989), we found the correlation coefficients for the two items to be quite high (ranging between .3 and .5) across the six studied populations, suggesting that both can be treated as latent construct indicators (data not shown). We therefore decided to use mean scores as a summary measure. Higher scores indicate stronger feelings of cultural superiority, which we predicted would have a negative correlation with foreign worker acceptance.

3.6 Global exposure and language ability. Six AB items are used to measure individual global exposure: (1) 'A member of my immediate family or a distant relative lives in another country'; (2) 'I have traveled abroad at least three times in the past three years, either on holiday or for business purposes'; (3) 'I have friends from other countries in my country'; (4) 'I often watch foreign-produced programs on TV'; (5) 'I often communicate with people in other countries via the Internet or email'; and (6) 'My job involves contact with organizations or people in other countries.' This set of measures covers border crossings, transnational relationships, and foreign culture

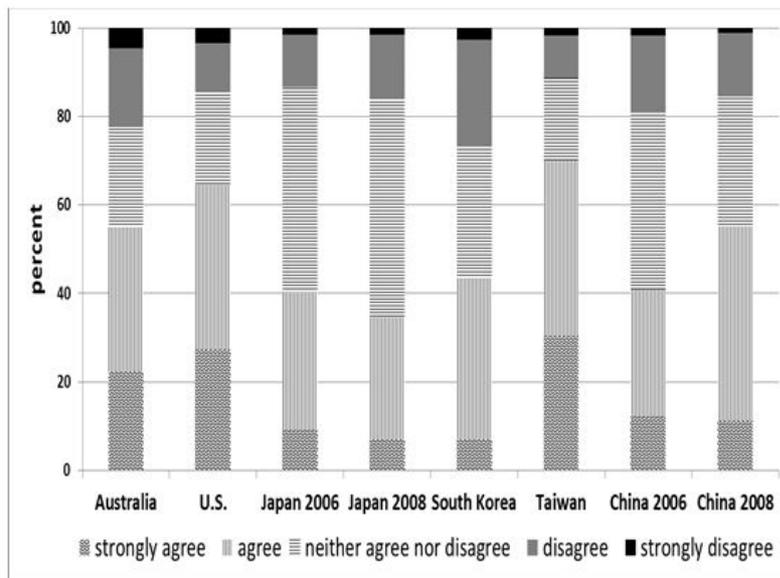
consumption; combined, they serve as an adequate measure of global exposure (Tsai & Appelbaum 2010). Since the original questions used a binary response format (yes=1, no=0), we summed all scores from the six highly correlated questions for use as a composite indicator. Tsai (2013) has recently reported a non-significant correlation of this measure with acceptance of foreign workers for 14 East and Southeast Asian populations from an earlier set of AB data (2005-2006). However, his research design fails to capture nuances of acceptance across higher- and lower-income countries.

- 3.7 Since English has become a global language, English skills represent an important tool for making global contacts. For AB respondents living in East Asia, English fluency also increases the potential for establishing connections in other Asian countries and world regions. Mastering English has been identified as a key predictor in East Asia of openness to foreign workers and a sense of feeling threatened by foreign cultural products (Tsai & Iwai 2013), therefore we incorporated this factor in our analysis. Responses to the question 'How well do you speak English?' are coded as 4 = 'I can speak English fluently,' 3 = 'I can speak it well enough to get by in daily life,' 2 = 'very little' or 1 = 'not at all.' For Australian and American respondents, English fluency likely represents native status; the other three responses might indicate a newcomer status and greater sympathy for foreign workers. In other words, self-rated fluency in those two countries might correlate negatively with acceptance of foreign workers.
- 3.8 Control variables. In addition to age and gender, we included concerns about the effects of immigrants on public issues among our control variables. Respondents were asked about their level of concern over issues ranging from poverty to birth rate decline. We selected four specific issues due to the frequency with which they appear in the mass media in stories about immigrants and foreign workers: economic problems, unemployment, crime, and overpopulation. Responses are recorded as 1 = concerned and 0 = no concern. Means for the four variables served as summary measures; we predicted that higher scores would be tied to lower levels of acceptance of foreign workers.
- 3.9 Since trust in the ability of the government to manage immigrants is likely a factor determining an individual's attitude regarding policies restricting foreign worker inflow, we included this administrative capacity factor as a control variable in our model. Specifically, respondents were asked to evaluate the ability of their respective governments to deal with an 'increase of immigrants' along a scale of 1 ('not very well') to 4 ('very well'). We predicted a positive correlation with foreign worker acceptance.
- 3.10 According to Rouf (1976), religion may facilitate attachments to the social networks through which individuals become embedded in smaller, more circumscribed social enclaves that decline to embrace pluralistic meaning systems, values, or beliefs. A correlation has also been reported between religious affiliation and both minority prejudice and antipathy toward foreigners (Coenders *et al.* 2004b; Rouf 1974; Tsai 2013). Our preliminary analysis indicated weak support for this hypothesis, with small differences between Christians (Catholics and Protestants combined) and Buddhists regarding attitudes toward foreign workers. In the Chinese sample, Christians were more likely to show support for foreign workers. Since these results did not affect our hypothesis testing, we did not include them in our final presentation.
- 3.11 Finally, we found that identification with a transnational ethnic group might indicate less parochial attitudes, and thus facilitate favorable attitudes toward foreign workers. The AB data include information on respondent identification with an ethnic group considered to have a common genealogy. However, our preliminary results did not indicate any correlation between this dummy variable and acceptance of foreign workers, and therefore was not subjected to further analysis.

Analysis results

- 4.1 Data on respondent levels of acceptance of foreign workers are shown in Figure 1. Note that the level of acceptance (indicated by the sum of 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' responses) is weakly correlated with income level in a country. South Korea and Australia both stand out in terms of level of acceptance (27.0% and 22.5%, respectively). Pietsch and Marotta (2009) also observed a trend of increasing acceptance of immigrants in Australia between 1996 and 2007. They suggest that in a stronger Australian economy, the beneficiaries felt less threatened by hybrid strangers and blurred cultural boundaries, and therefore were willing to adopt more open attitudes toward immigrants. The lowest level of acceptance was among Taiwanese (11.4%), followed by Japanese (13.4%). Taiwanese respondents expressed the strongest support (70.0%) for restrictive policies aimed at foreign workers. The data reflect Taiwan's dramatic post-2005 shift from a net emigration to immigration country (Table 2) in the contexts of massive capital outflow to China and slower economic growth at home (Tsai & Chang 2010). Compared with the US and Australia, the generally higher percentages of people who are 'undecided' on immigration (neither agreeing nor disagreeing) in East Asia (except Taiwan), may reflect a relatively new phenomenon of immigration in the region; for many respondents, at this stage, their attitudes toward foreign workers are still ambivalent. However, the combined data indicate that restrictivism outweighs acceptance in all six countries in this study.

Figure 1. Response to 'Government should restrict the inflow of foreign workforce to protect domestic people's interests' (%)



Note: 2008 for Australia, US, South Korea and Taiwan; 2006 and 2008 for Japan and China.

4.2 The results from our estimations of attitudes of acceptance of foreign workers are shown in Table 5. Response data are presented on an ordinal scale, meaning that the response categories are ordered as accelerating or decelerating along certain dimensions. More importantly, there are no assumptions that distances between different response categories are identical. Therefore, we used ordered logit modeling for estimations (Treiman 2009) instead of the ordinary least squares approach that assumes uniform distances between response categories.

Table 5. Acceptance attitudes toward foreign workers in the six countries

	Australia	U.S.	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan	China
Gender (female=0)	.083 (.130)	.078 (.129)	.313** (.097)	-.116 (.138)	.055 (.134)	.004 (.072)
Age	-.007 (.004)	-.002 (.005)	-.014*** (.004)	-.006 (.006)	-.001 (.006)	-.015*** (.003)
Concerned about public issues	-.082 (.058)	-.154** (.051)	-.059 (.043)	-.169* (.068)	-.272*** (.063)	-.087* (.038)
Government ability with immigration	.540*** (.086)	.446*** (.085)	.072 (.077)	.109 (.106)	.160 (.089)	-.020 (.051)
Education (junior high and lower)						
Senior high school	-.027 (.211)	.203 (.358)	.246 (.169)	.187 (.212)	.259 (.170)	.013 (.089)
University and higher	.317 (.216)	.166 (.359)	.523** (.181)	.326 (.265)	.782*** (.232)	.272* (.119)
Occupation (unemployed=0)						
Business owner	-.195 (.516)	-.120 (.428)	-.428 (.393)	.781 (.404)	-.209 (.434)	.055 (.200)
Professional/ white collar	-.083 (.324)	.285 (.348)	-.534 (.369)	.763 (.399)	.184 (.372)	-.139 (.156)
Lower-grade worker	-.462 (.320)	-.026 (.355)	-.374 (.367)	.582 (.391)	.063 (.362)	-.064 (.148)
Not in labor market	-.052 (.311)	-.001 (.365)	-.276 (.374)	.552 (.396)	.123 (.371)	-.152 (.157)
Family income (z score within country)	.232** (.088)	.055 (.078)	-.010 (.056)	-.025 (.066)	-.018 (.064)	.081* (.040)
Self-rated standard of living	.170* (.084)	.031 (.092)	.039 (.070)	-.095 (.091)	.351* (.143)	-.038 (.056)
Cultural superiority	-.620*** (.081)	-.644*** (.077)	-.433*** (.067)	-.198* (.092)	-.447*** (.091)	-.296*** (.053)
Global exposure	.235*** (.041)	.174*** (.045)	.120** (.045)	.095 (.070)	.039 (.061)	-.008 (.050)
English ability	.041 (.238)	-.664* (.283)	.045 (.076)	.117 (.117)	-.081 (.117)	-.021 (.073)
2008 (2006=0)			.373*** (.090)			-.460*** (.074)
Cuttingpoint 1	-1.289	-4.688	-4.047	-2.886	-1.222	-4.288
Cuttingpoint 2	.570	-2.878	-2.021	-.432	.644	-2.401
Cuttingpoint 3	1.821	-1.505	.408	.863	1.905	-.649
Cuttingpoint 4	3.840	.130	2.840	3.517	3.927	2.058
Pseudo R ²	.106	.069	.032	.016	.041	.017
N	896	859	1819	944	965	2915

Note: estimates are from ordered logistic regressions; standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

4.3 We pooled two waves of data (2006 and 2008) for Japan and China, with a year dummy (2008=1) generated to capture yearly differences. In contrast to the relatively weak effects of gender (male=1) and age (except in Japan), stronger impacts were noted for the two policy-relevant variables. Those respondents reporting higher levels of concern regarding public issues tended to hold a more restrictive attitude toward foreign workers in four of the six studied populations. The regression coefficients for Australia and Japan were not significant, but did have the expected negative signs. A positive correlation was found between respondent ratings of government ability to manage immigrants and acceptance of foreign workers in Australia and the US, but not in any of the East Asian countries.

4.4 Substantial effects were not noted for any of the four socio-economic status factors. A strong positive impact from education was found only among three Asian countries - Japan, Taiwan and China - with those

having undergraduate degrees or higher expressing greater tolerance for foreign workers compared to their less-educated counterparts. No significant correlation was noted with occupation in any of the six countries. A positive correlation between family income and an accepting attitude was only found among the Australian and Chinese respondents, and a positive correlation between relative standard of living and acceptance was only found among the Australians and Taiwanese. In short, support for the economic interest theory was weak at best. A possible explanation is our inclusion of English ability and global exposure in our equations, both of which have strong correlations with personal background factors (Tsai & Iwai 2013). We therefore used a simplified model that did not include these variables. Results were roughly the same as those shown in Table 5, thus confirming the study's weak support for economic interest theory (H1).

- 4.5 Belief in cultural superiority has been shown to be a strong predictor of antipathy toward foreign workers (Harell *et al.* 2012). Consistent correlations between this belief and lower acceptance of immigrants and foreign workers are found throughout Table 5, giving strong support to H2. Whereas the magnitude of effect among the Asian respondents seems smaller compared to those for Australians and Americans, our statistical test indicates there is no significant difference between regression coefficients (Jørgensen, Petkova & Haritou 1995).
- 4.6 Regarding English ability and global exposure, the expected impact of English proficiency was not found, except for an unsurprising negative correlation noted among the American respondents. Those describing themselves as fluent were very likely native speakers whose acceptance of foreign workers is lower compared to respondents with limited English skills - most likely immigrants with greater sympathy for foreign workers. However, the respondents who reported themselves as being less fluent in English were not necessarily lower in terms of socio-economic status: we failed to find any substantial correlations between English ability and the four socio-economic variables (data not shown). Strong positive effects for global exposure were found for the Australian, American, and Japanese respondents, and no effects were found for the other three East Asian countries. Evidence for H3 is thus mixed.
- 4.7 Judging from the size of the explained variance, our model performed better among Australian and American respondents, with pseudo R^2 values of 11% and 7%, respectively, compared to values between 2% and 4% for the East Asian respondents. Note that these R^2 values are not equivalent to 'explained variances' from the ordinary least squares method; instead, they indicate relative degrees of fitness across country equations.

Conclusion and discussion

- 5.1 Our results indicate that most of the respondents in the six countries believe that their governments should restrict the influx of foreign workers to protect the interests of domestic citizens - in other words, there is no prevailing consensus regarding the acceptance of migrant workers, which seems to stand in contradiction to current levels of migrant worker movement and the ongoing expansion of globalization. Among the factors examined in this study, the impact of a belief in cultural superiority was consistent across the six countries. In Australia and United States, there is perceived discrepancies in status between native and foreign workers, with large majorities of immigrants arriving from the 'inferior' south. Foreign workers in East Asia are mostly from other Asian countries, but the perceived ethno-cultural contrasts are no smaller. Cultural chauvinism's influence operates equally in both regions.
- 5.2 Global exposure was the second major factor examined, with a relatively strong influence in the three high-income countries of the US, Australia and Japan, and no effects in South Korea, Taiwan, and China. A possible explanation is to be found in differences in how global exposure is experienced in these countries. According to Fennell (2007), global travelers from western countries tend to see the world by moving between different continents, which supports enhanced knowledge of divergent local cultures and conditions; in comparison, East Asian travelers tend to move within their own regions of the continent (Tsai & Iwai 2013), resulting in lower levels of perceived cultural variation. Tsai (2013) found that Taiwanese tourists who ever traveled in Southeast Asia or China tend to develop a feelings of antipathy toward native residents in these regions - in other words, contact with locals does not produce openness in individuals who normally are not encouraged to show respect toward strangers or outsiders. Future studies may benefit from breaking down the broad definition of global exposure into various types of global connection (foreign culture consumption and transnational relationships with family and relatives living abroad) and global contact (crossing borders and direct contact with foreigners) to evaluate which types of global exposure affects acceptance of incoming foreigners. Taylors *et al.* suggest it is more likely to result in perceiving of one's group, rather than oneself, as a target of discrimination (1990). This discrepancy should also be taken into consideration.
- 5.3 Among the three major factors analyzed for this study, socio-economic status had the weakest explanatory power. Given this insignificant finding, we propose that the explanatory power of economic determinism may vary according to context. As Malhotra *et al.* (2013) point out, cultural threats are prevalent across the population and thus are consistently revealing in national surveys. Economic threats, in contrast, often are limited to natives in specific economic sectors - whether the effect of that variable shows up depends on specifics of the research design. More specific differentiation in skill level, wage change over time, and economic cycles should be considered to obtain insight on the potential influence of economic 'interests' or 'threats' (Malhotra *et al.* 2013; Scheve & Slaughter 2001; Wilson 2001).
- 5.4 As cultural superiority is the only common factor in explaining acceptance of foreign workers for both Western and Asian countries, we are not confident about drawing a conclusion that a convergence exists among the six countries of the study. Moreover, the empirical model used in this study performed well for the two high-immigration countries (Australia and the US), less well for the two low-immigration countries (Japan and Taiwan), and poorly for the two net emigration countries (China and South Korea) where, until recently, immigration has been far from the centers of policy debates. It seems the existing theories based on experiences in the West perform less satisfactorily in East Asia, where large increases of immigrants is a recent phenomenon, and the attitudinal responses of the public masses are more shifting than settling.
- 5.5 As the number of immigrants in East Asia swells with prosperity in the region, pressing demographic changes, and emerging labor shortages, the question of whether or not to accept foreign workers will be spotlighted. We anticipate further comparative research into attitudes toward immigrants between East and West. In view of future demand, we urge more cross-national surveys to include migration issues covering both East and West societies.

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