

# Attitudes towards Immigrants: A public opinion perspective

“Fostering the nexus of migration, human rights,  
trade and investment for development”

Víctor Umaña

April, 2014

# Attitudes towards immigrants

- Multidimensional phenomenon (i.e. characteristics of the immigrant: education, occupation, work experience, work plans, language skills, and country of origin)
- Literature, with limited exceptions, have only looked at the issue using general surveys (observational studies). Limitations for establishing causality.
- Two broad groups of literature
  - Political economy
    - Economic self-interest
    - Labor competition and fiscal burden
  - Social psychology
    - Sociotropical concerns based on norms, values and emotions.
    - Threats (benefits) to ‘national identity’ and ‘national economy’

# Self-economic interest

- Labor market competition (Factor Proportion model)
  - Distributional consequences of immigration
  - Example: Low-skilled immigrants will increase the supply of low-skilled labor, lowering wages for low-skilled natives while raising wages for high-skilled natives
- Fiscal burden (effect on public finances)
  - Low-skilled immigrants are a burden for public finance, while high-skilled are assets
  - The key prediction is that if natives anticipate immigration's effect on taxes, those with higher incomes should be more opposed to low-skilled immigrants—and more supportive of high-skilled immigrants—than their poorer, native-born counterparts.

## Sociotropic concerns

- Symbolic concerns about the nation as a whole
  - national identity or national economy.
  - Generalized predisposition toward out-groups (ethnocentricity / prejudice)
  - Specific stereotypes fueled by political parties and the media.
  - Education is a strong mediator.

## Results of relevant literature

- In Switzerland (study on communities that used referenda to decide citizenship applications) : Country of origin determines naturalization success more than any other applicant characteristic, including language skills, integration status, and economic credentials (Hainmueller and Hangartner 2013)
- In the United States: Strong support for sociotropic explanations
  - Americans in general view educated immigrants in high-status jobs favorably, while they view those who lack plans to work, entered without authorization, come from Iraq, or do not speak English unfavorably (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2012)
  - Workers at all skill levels express more support for high-skilled as opposed to low-skilled immigration
  - U.S. natives with more education show more support for both high and low-skilled
  - Rich and poor Americans are equally opposed to low-skilled immigration in general (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010)

## What we know

1. Economic self-interest models have shown little support empirically, specially the labor competition model.
2. Education is correlated with less restricted immigration views.
3. Sociotropic concerns could be economic or cultural; still we don't know how much weigh to accord each explanation
4. Prejudice and ethnocentrism are connected with increasing support to restrictive immigration attitudes, though where and how much they matter is open to debate.
5. Mass media and political parties (top-down approaches) have a significant impact on immigration preferences.

# Immigration and PTAs

- More than 40 PTAs include visa and asylum provisions and labor market commitments. E.g. EU, NAFTA, CAFTA-DR, several PTAs of China, India and Japan.
- Orefice (2012) finds a positive effect of PTAs on bilateral migration flows among PTA member countries.
- **This effect is stronger than the trade effect**
- **Visa and asylum provisions have a greater effect than just replicating GATS mode IV provisions.**
- Migration related provisions directly stimulate migrant flows by
  - making easier to obtain a permit to stay in the destination country;
  - the presence of a PTA itself, increases the information about member countries, and thus further stimulates bilateral migration flows.

# Methodological approaches to multidimensional questions

- Literature, with limited exceptions, have only looked at individual attitudes toward immigrants using general surveys (observational studies).
- Alternative: Survey Experiments
- Conjoint analysis
- Allows testing several hypotheses simultaneously using the same scale.
- We could investigate the causal effect of variation in several immigrant characteristics on the probability that natives support their admission.
- Useful to build comparisons of these effects across different dimensions and groups of the population.



## Example

The immigrant varies on 9 dimensions or attributes

Please read the descriptions of the potential immigrants carefully. Then, please indicate the two immigrants you would personally prefer to see admitted to the United States.

	Immigrant 1	Immigrant 2
<b>Prior Trips to the U.S.</b>	Entered the U.S. once before on a tourist visa	Entered the U.S. once before on a tourist visa
<b>Reason for Application</b>	Reunite with family members already in U.S.	Reunite with family members already in U.S.
<b>Country of Origin</b>	Mexico	Iraq
<b>Language Skills</b>	During admission interview, this applicant spoke fluent English	During admission interview, this applicant spoke fluent English
<b>Profession</b>	Child care provider	Teacher
<b>Job Experience</b>	One to two years of job training and experience	Three to five years of job training and experience
<b>Employment Plans</b>	Does not have a contract with a U.S. employer but has done job interviews	Will look for work after arriving in the U.S.
<b>Education Level</b>	Equivalent to completing two years of college in the U.S.	Equivalent to completing a college degree in the U.S.
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Male

We confront individuals with immigrants requesting admission

Attribute values are inserted randomly

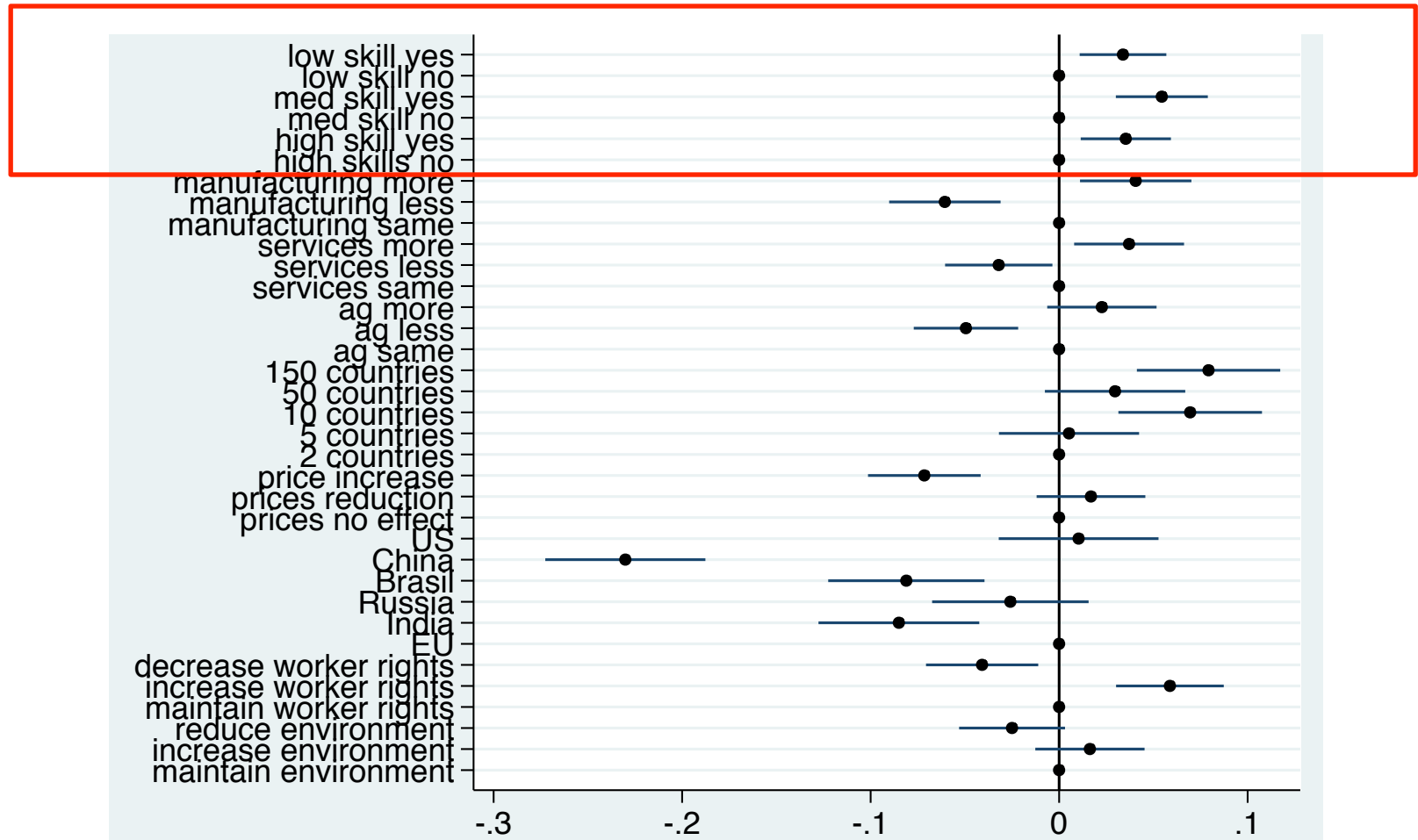
Each individual gets 5 choice tasks

Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2012). The hidden american immigration consensus: A conjoint analysis of attitudes toward immigrants. Available at SSRN 2106116.

# Free trade à la carte: Support towards PTAs with migration commitments

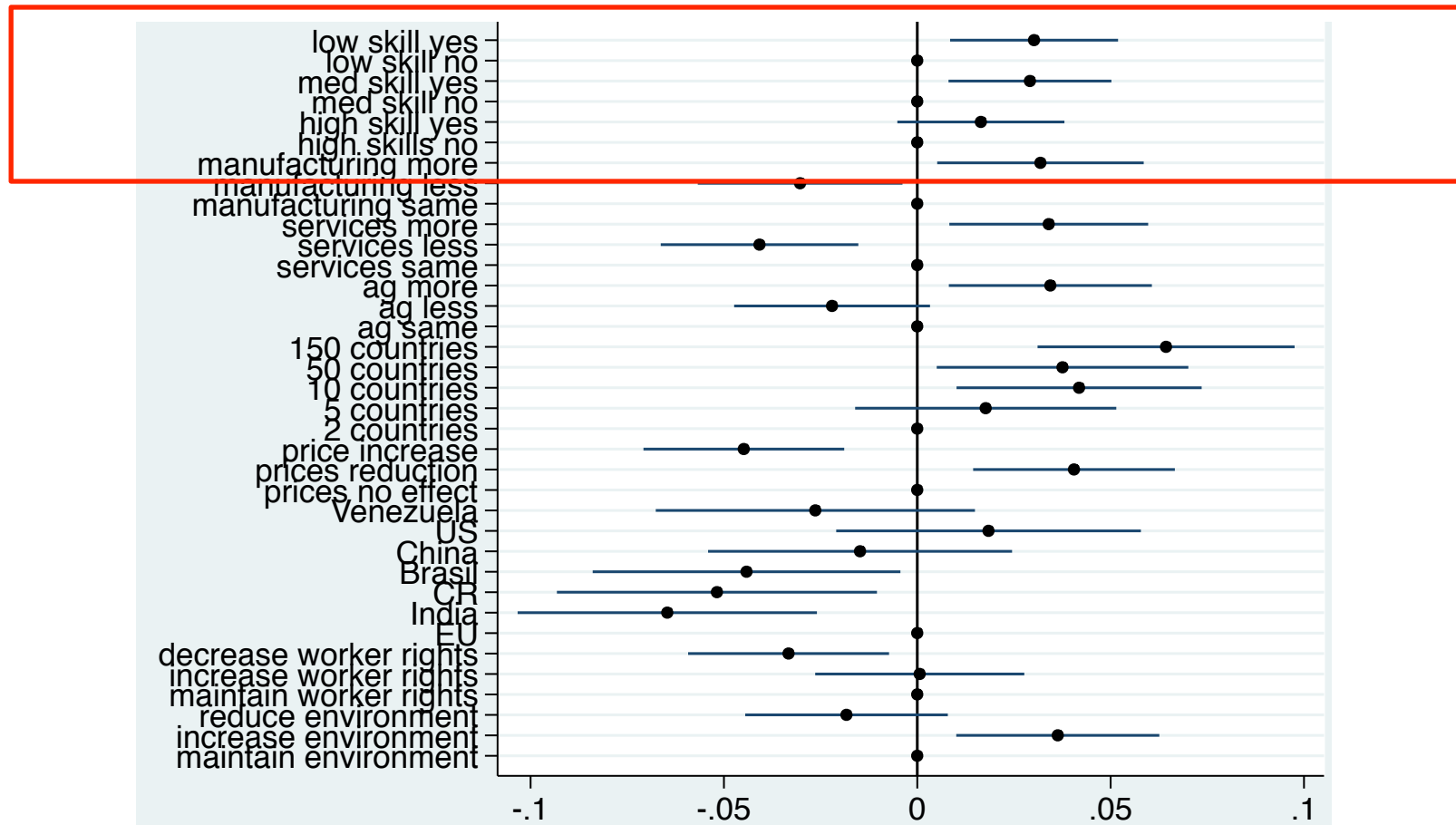
- Umaña (2014) tests mass support for PTAs with migration commitments in VNM, NIC, CRC
- Conjoint experimental survey
- Positive attitude towards legal immigration of all skill levels (at odds with previous research)
  - Could individuals in hold certain notion of reciprocity?

# Vietnam



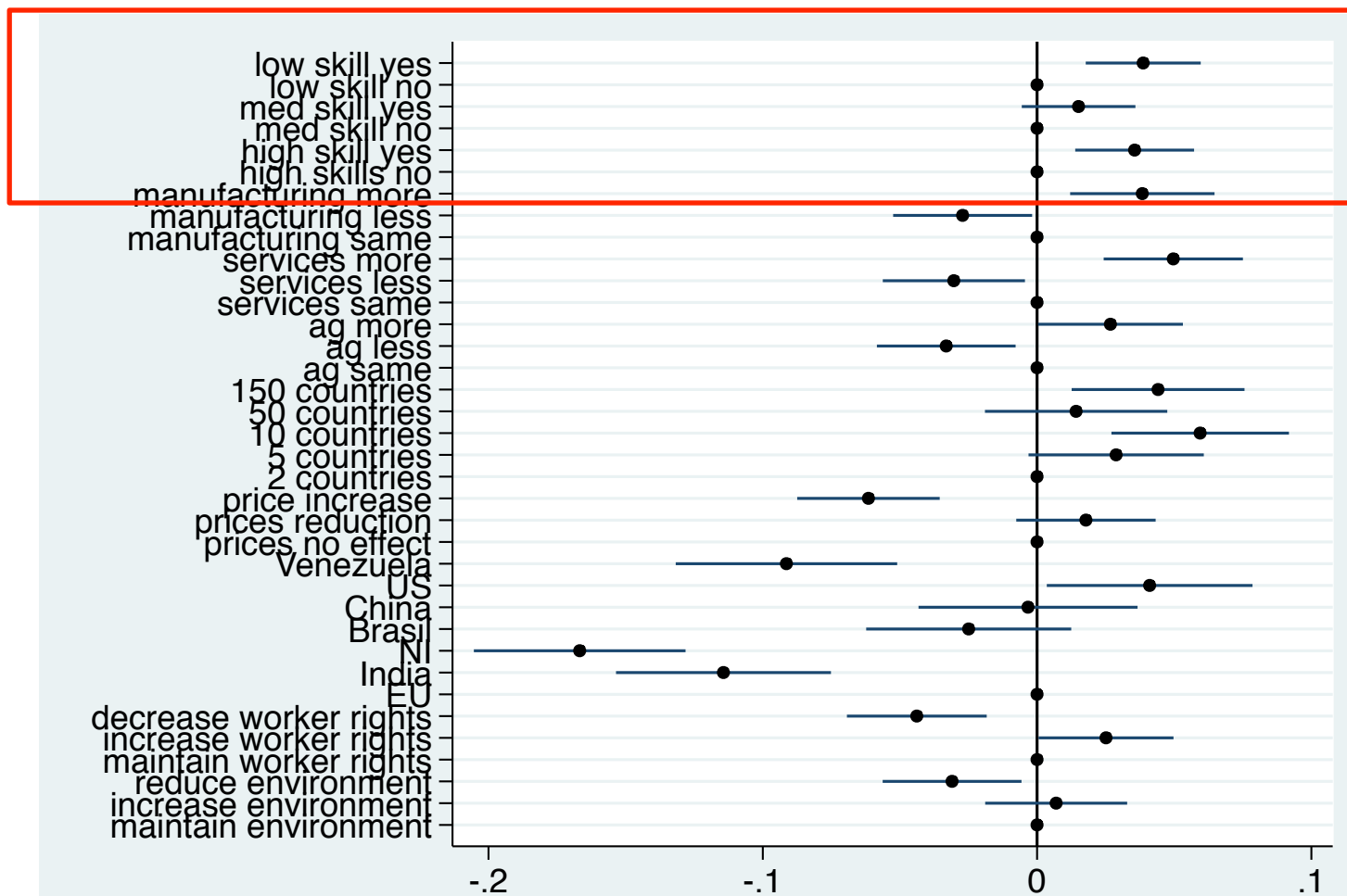
Source: Umaña 2014

# Nicaragua



Source: Umaña 2014

## Costa Rica



Source: Umaña 2014

## Conclusion

- Mayda 2008 shows that people are more pro-trade than pro-migration
- If governments are constrained from increasing migration inflows
  - e.g. because of negative attitudes towards migration amongst the electorate,
- They could use PTAs to boost immigration in certain cases e.g. labor market shortages

# References

- Hainmueller, J., & Hiscox, M. J. (2010). Attitudes toward highly skilled and low-skilled immigration: evidence from a survey experiment. *American Political Science Review*, 104(1), 61–84. doi:10.1017/S0003055409990372
- Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2013). Public Attitudes toward Immigration.
- Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2012). The hidden american immigration consensus: A conjoint analysis of attitudes toward immigrants. Available at SSRN 2106116.
- Hainmueller, J., & Hangartner, D. (2013). Who Gets a Swiss Passport? A Natural Experiment in Immigrant Discrimination. *American Political Science Review*, 107(01), 159–187. doi:10.1017/S0003055412000494
- Orefice, G. (2013). International Migration and Trade Agreements: the new role of PTAs
- Umaña, V (2014) Free trade à la carte: Mass support towards PTAs