

# **The Forces Driving Negative Attitudes toward Immigrants**

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates reasons behind negative attitudes toward immigrants. There is an examination of attitudes for a sample of eleven first world countries—mostly Western nations. Then two main factors are identified, which offer insight regarding negative perceptions, the degree of cultural difference and economic conditions. A higher degree of cultural differences will produce negative attitudes toward immigrants and poor economic conditions will lead to negative attitudes are the hypotheses in this paper. After testing the hypotheses, the most powerful factor producing negative perceptions toward immigrants and immigration are largely cultural differences. Economic conditions, though important, do not have as much of an effect.

## **1. Introduction**

Immigration has become a global phenomenon. Especially within the last decades, it has increased exponentially. Traditional demographics and the economic make up of first world nations are undergoing rapid changes. Immigrants integrate and participate in their new social, economic and political environment.

Now more than ever the effects of immigration in first world countries are being widely felt. These effects drive the attitudes and perceptions that first world citizens have toward the current state of international migration and its participants. Do citizens of first world countries feel socially threatened? Do they feel economically threatened? Attitudes, largely negative, result from the lack of cultural acceptance, fear of foreigners and perceived economic threat. The nature of the attitudes of citizens will influence the treatment that immigrants receive in terms of public policy. This, for example, is seen here in the United States where the immigration debate is heated on both sides of the political spectrum. Some feel that public policy is stripping immigrants of their human rights, whereas others believe that immigrants are given too much. Then there are the perceptions and beliefs of the immigrants themselves.

Examining the causes influencing attitudes toward immigrants is imperative due to the current state of the global community and economy where immigration is experienced everywhere. Studying this topic reveals economic and cultural insights on international, national and local levels.

This paper examines cultural differences and economic conditions influencing attitudes toward immigrants, as well as offer insight to the nature of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. First, there will be a brief examination of literature, then my argument will be explained along with two hypotheses. Gathered data and measures will be explored in the following section. The next section of the paper discusses tests and results. Finally, the conclusion follows.

## 2. Literature Review

Much of the literature has concluded that cultural issues are a major contributing factor in the formation of first world attitudes toward immigrants. In other words, it is an immigrant's national identity that most often drives first world citizen's perception of them<sup>123 45</sup>.

Along with cultural concerns influencing perceptions of immigrants, economic issues are often intertwined with cultural aspects. It is both the economy and prejudice that produce distinct opinions toward immigrants.

Malhotra, Margalit and Mo establish that the potential for cultural and economic threat heavily influences the attitudes felt by Americans. They argue that although cultural threat is a major contributor to oppositional perceptions toward immigration, there is now evidence pointing to an economic threat concerning labor market competition, and its role in producing anti-immigration opinions<sup>6</sup>.

Gang, Rivera-Batiz, and Yun argue that the competition in the labor market is an influential contributor to shaping the European perceptions of immigrants in Europe. However, economic concerns are closely tied to lack of cultural acceptance in Europe. This shortage of cultural tolerance is linked to ignorance exacerbated by the absence of education meant to create awareness and acceptance toward foreigners<sup>7</sup>.

Facchini, Mayada, and Mendola find that cultural characteristics of immigrants, such as their ethnicity and religion, are influencing factors in the formation of immigration policy in South Africa. Their research is an examination of the disagreement regarding immigrant policies in the post-Apartheid period and its influence in faith and religion<sup>8</sup>.

Likewise, Louis, Esses, and Lalonde examine attitudes toward immigrants cross-nationally in Canada and Australia. They find that an immigrant's national identity influences their dehumanization and other's view of them as a threat. This shapes perceptions toward immigrants. They claim national identification of foreigners directly impacts beliefs held by non-immigrants. Due to the perception that immigrants are cheaters, they are not liked or accepted so they are perceived through a negative lens<sup>9</sup>.

Diamond argues that the presence of immigrants has socioeconomically affected Blacks in the U.S throughout history. Diamond elaborates on the perceptions that African Americans have toward immigration. Blacks are disproportionately affected by liberal immigration policies; however, they are more likely to empathize with the struggles of immigrants having very limited opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. In addition, African American and Hispanic political leaders are generally political allies<sup>10</sup>.

Dancygier and Donnelly investigate how the economy impacts the perceptions toward immigrants in the Europe. Immigrants in the European Union are exceedingly economically involved. When the individual sectors of employment are examined, the relationship between economic interests and immigration preferences result in influenced attitudes. When the economy is noticeably prosperous, immigration is well received and encouraged, however, when the economy is suffering, perceptions deteriorate. However, it is noted that perceptions toward immigrants based on economic aspects are worsened by ethnocentrist views<sup>11</sup>.

## 3. Argument

First world countries around the globe are affected by the arrival of immigrants and their subsequent cultural intrusion and economic participation. However, in recent times, immigration has garnered more attention in countries like the United States and countries in the European Union. The effect that immigrants have on first world countries inevitably shapes and produces perceptions that natives hold regarding foreigners. I identify two main contributors to the formation of opinions towards immigrants and immigration comparatively among the United States and other first world countries. First, are the cultural characteristics of immigrants that enter first world countries, and second, are the prevailing economic conditions in the host country. Together, these two variables both influence and shape the perceptions that native citizens have toward immigrating foreigners that participate in their economy and their culture.

## 4. Hypotheses

The type of immigrant that enters a country substantially impacts the opinions that citizens have of that specific immigrant. However, the impact that any given immigrant makes varies depending on their cultural attributes relative to those citizens of the host country. In other words, when immigrants leave their countries and enter

another, they bring with them beliefs, culture, religion and physical differences that can sometimes be incompatible with the citizens of that country. “Individuals, by this view, reject immigration because foreigners represent different values and traditions and pose a threat to the ‘national identity’ or the traditional ‘way of life’”<sup>12</sup>. This can lead to fear and misunderstanding, and ultimately produce negative feelings toward immigrants and immigration in general.

Table 1.

Host Country	% of Negative Attitudes	Sources
United States	46% viewed immigration negatively	Public Opinion Strategies
Spain	47% wanted less immigrants	Pew Research Center
Belgium	72% said too many immigrants	Gatestone Institute International Policy Council
Germany	44% wanted less immigrants	Pew Research Center
United Kingdom	55% wanted less immigrants	Pew Research Center
Australia	71% wanted to keep the Australian way of life	Youth Workers Association
Canada	26% viewed immigrants negatively	The Canadian Charger
South Africa	30% wanted a ban on migrants for work	Pretoria News
Russia	29% said too many immigrants	German Marshall Fund
Switzerland	50.3 % encouraged an immigration cap	The Washington Post
France	57% wanted less immigrants	Pew Research Center

*Hypothesis 1: The larger the degree of cultural difference between immigrants and the citizens of a nation, the less approval there will be of immigrants, and perceptions will be more negative.*

The economic conditions of first world countries also influence opinions toward immigrants and immigration. The entry of immigrants means that they will participate in the economy by obtaining jobs, paying taxes, attending public school, purchasing necessary goods and the like. This participation is often viewed by citizens of host countries as problematic for a number of reasons. 1) The employment of immigrants is perceived as reducing opportunities available to native citizens. This spawns fear in the minds of citizens who feel their livelihood is jeopardized. 2) Another concern involves the payment of taxes. Citizens of host countries frequently believe that immigrants are living here illegally and as such do not pay any type of government taxes or fees. This causes native citizens to be under the impression that they bear the costs of social welfare and government assistance benefitting unauthorized immigrants. For example, consider public education. It is funded by taxpayer dollars. Citizens of host countries believe they are paying for the public education that the children of immigrants are benefitting from. Since it is assumed that unauthorized immigrants do not pay taxes that must mean they do not pay for the services that public education offers millions of children around the country. Louis, Esses and Lalonde identify this as “cheating the system<sup>13</sup>.” However, these are just a few examples.

The economic vulnerability felt by citizens will increase if economic conditions are bad. Thus, immigrants will be perceived as a greater threat during harder economic times. However, immigrants will not pose as serious of an apparent threat if economic conditions are more stable. Dancygier and Donnelly agree<sup>14</sup>.

*Hypothesis 2: Poor economic conditions will produce negative perceptions towards immigrants because they are seen as a threat and a burden, consequently producing negative opinions towards immigrants and immigration.*

## 5. Data and Measures

I examine attitudes toward immigrants in the United States, Spain, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, South Africa, Russia, Switzerland and France. These countries will be referred to as the host countries because they receive incoming immigrants from other countries. The countries that immigrants come from will be referred to as source countries. Source countries will be divided up into primary and secondary source countries.

The dependent variable in my research is attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. By attitudes I refer to the host nation's public view of immigrants and immigration. I measured attitudes toward immigrants by collecting data. Generally attitudes were negative. Negative has multiple meanings in this study. For example, negative attitudes can refer to citizens wanting fewer immigrants in the host country, a ban on immigration, keeping a nation's traditional way of life, or finally, an immigration cap. The results are in Table 1.

The first independent variable is the degree of cultural difference. I use this term to refer to the differences between immigrants and the citizens of the host country. This variable focuses on the cultural aspects of an immigrant that sets them apart from the majority in the host country. This includes country of origin, native language, religion, customs, as well as physical characteristics. The degree of cultural difference is going to vary depending on an immigrant's country of origin.

In order to measure the degree of cultural difference, I use the following approach to calculate differences. To begin, I collected data indicating the top two source countries with the most people going into a given host country. Those data are summarized in the Table 2 below.

Three factors are associated with culture and countries of origin. Those factors include language, religion and physical differences. Using these factors, I was able to compare the differences between host countries and the countries of origin for incoming immigrants. Language, religion and physical differences make up the columns in Table 3.

Table 2. Source: Migration Policy Institute 2013a

Host Country	Primary Source Country	Secondary Source Country
United States	Mexico (2013)	China (2013)
Spain	Romania (2013)	Morocco (2013)
Belgium	Italy (2013)	France (2013)
Germany	Turkey (2013)	Poland (2013)
United Kingdom	India (2013)	Poland (2013)
Australia	United Kingdom (2013)	New Zealand (2013)
Canada	United Kingdom (2013)	China (2013)
South Africa	Mozambique (2013)	Zimbabwe (2013)
Russia	Ukraine (2013)	Kazakhstan (2013)
Switzerland	Germany (2013)	Italy (2013)
France	Algeria (2013)	Morocco (2013)

To create a system designed to measure the degree of difference, I assigned a score ranging from zero to one. A score of zero indicates no significant difference between the immigrant group and citizens in the host country for the respective factor. Likewise, a score of 0.5 indicates a notable difference, and one refers to a substantial difference. For example, the first host country in Table 3 is the United States; the top source country is Mexico. The first factor is language. There is a substantial difference between English and Spanish, so this gets a score of one. The second factor is religion. The United States is predominantly Christian as is Mexico. However, Mexico is more Catholic-Christian as opposed to the United States being much more Protestant-Christian. As such, a notable difference exists and this gets a score of 0.5. Finally, the last factor is physical difference. The United States demographic is diverse, in terms of race and physical characteristics. However, so is the population in Mexico, therefore, a substantial difference and a score of one. I repeated this method for each host country and its respective country of incoming immigrants.

To summarize the all the data, I added a column for a total for all three numbers in the rows. In this column, the scores range from zero to three; zero implying no cultural difference and three indicating the largest differences for all three factors. This was done twice; Table 3 shows the overall cultural differences for the primary source country and Table 4 for the secondary source country.

Table 3. Overall Cultural Differences

Host Country	Primary Source Country	Language	Religion	Physical Difference	Overall
United States	Mexico (2013)	1	0.5	1	2.5
Spain	Romania (2013)	1	0	0	2
Belgium	Italy (2013)	0.5	0	0	0.5
Germany	Turkey (2013)	1	1	1	3
United Kingdom	India (2013)	1	1	1	3
Australia	United Kingdom (2013)	0	0	0	0
Canada	United Kingdom (2013)	0	0	0	0
South Africa	Mozambique (2013)	1	0.5	0	1.5
Russia	Ukraine (2013)	0.5	0	0	0.5
Switzerland	Germany (2013)	0	0	0	0
France	Algeria (2013)	0.5	1	1	2.5

Table 4. Secondary Source Country

Host Country	Secondary Source Country	Language	Religion	Physical Difference	Overall
United States	China (2013)	1	1	1	3
Spain	Morocco (2013)	1	1	1	3
Belgium	France (2013)	0.5	0	0	0.5
Germany	Poland (2013)	1	0	0	0.5
United Kingdom	Poland (2013)	1	0.5	0	1.5
Australia	New Zealand (2013)	0	0	0	0
Canada	China (2013)	1	1	1	3
South Africa	Zimbabwe (2013)	1	0.5	0	1.5
Russia	Kazakhstan (2013)	0.5	0.5	0.5	2.5
Switzerland	Italy (2013)	0	0	0	0
France	Morocco (2013)	1	1	1	3

Then I added both of the “Overall” columns. The results ranged from zero to five and a half. Zero suggesting no significant differences between immigrants and the citizens of the host countries, and five and a half being a substantial difference. The results are reported in Table 5.

It is significant to note that the host countries with the highest degree of cultural difference were United States and France. Both had degrees of cultural difference at 5.5. If we reference Table 1 at the beginning of this section, the United States had 46 percent of people that viewed immigration negatively. For France, 57 percent of people wanted fewer immigrants. Surprisingly, Australia had an overall degree of cultural difference of zero. However, 71 percent of people wanted to preserve the way of Australian life. This is surprising because even though the immigrants that come in are generally of Caucasian descent—United Kingdom and New Zealand—Australian’s attitudes toward immigrants and immigration are largely negative. Similarly, Switzerland also had a score of zero for degree of cultural difference. However, 50.3 percent of the population encouraged an immigration cap. Again, their attitudes toward immigrants are not very accepting.

For all the host countries examined, the average degree of cultural difference is approximately 3.09 and the median is 3. The standard deviation is about 2.

With this method I was able to measure the amount of difference between the host country and source countries. According to the first hypothesis, a higher degree of cultural difference will result in less approval and more negative attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Examining France once more, the degree of cultural difference between the native citizens and immigrants is large and therefore perceptions toward immigrants are largely negative. Referring again to Table 1, according to the Pew Research Center, fifty-seven percent of France’s population wanted fewer immigrants.

Table 5. Overall Total

United States	5.5
Spain	5
Belgium	1
Germany	3.5
United Kingdom	4.5
Australia	0
Canada	3
South Africa	3
Russia	3
Switzerland	0
France	5.5

The next independent variable is the economic conditions of the host countries. Due to the reality that economic conditions encompasses many factors, I focus on unemployment, economic growth, median incomes and income inequality.

I collected data for each of the economic factors stated above, and the findings are recorded in Table 6.

Table 6. Economic Factors

Host Country	Unemployment Rate	Source	Growth Rate (Source: The World Bank 2013)	Median Incomes (\$ US)	Source	Income Inequality (0-1) (Source: OECD Factbook 2013)
United States	5.9 % (2014)	US Department of Labor	1.9 (2013)	\$ 51,939 (2014)	US Census Bureau	.38 (2012)
Spain	24.5% (2014)	European Commission	-1.2 (2013)	\$30,110 (2014)	The World Bank	.32 (2012)
Belgium	8.4% (2013)	European Commission	0.2 (2013)	\$44, 990 (2014)	The World Bank	.26 (2012)
Germany	5.1% (2014)	European Commission	0.4 (2013)	\$44,010 (2014)	The World Bank	.30 (2012)
United Kingdom	14% (2012)	European Commission	1.7 (2013)	\$38,250 (2014)	The World Bank	.34 (2012)
Australia	6.0 % (2014)	Australian Bureau of Statistics	2.7 (2013)	\$59,570 (2014)	The World Bank	.34 (2012)
Canada	7.0 % (2014)	CBC News	2.0 (2013)	\$50,970 (2014)	The World Bank	.32 (2012)
South Africa	25.5% (2014)	Statistics South Africa	1.9 (2013)	\$7,610 (2014)	The World Bank	.70 (2012)
Russia	5.5% (2012)	The World Bank	1.3 (2013)	\$13,860 (2015)	The World Bank	.42 (2012)
Switzerland	4.2 % (2012)	The World Bank	1.9 (2013)	\$86,600 (2015)	The World Bank	.30 (2012)
France	9.9% (2012)	The World Bank	0.2 (2013)	\$42,250 (2015)	The World Bank	.29 (2012)

The average unemployment rate is approximately 10.55 percent, the median is 7 percent and the standard deviation is 7.65. The large standard deviation indicates the data are broadly spread. However, this can be due to the outliers, Spain and South Africa. The average economic growth rate is 1.18 and the median is 1.7. The standard deviation is 1.14. This standard deviation is smaller signifying the data are closer to the mean. The average median income is 42,741 dollars and the median is 44,010 dollars. The standard deviation is 21,480. The average for income

inequality is 0.36 and the median is 0.32. And the standard deviation is 0.12; the small measure indicates that the data are not spread widely.

For example, Spain is the second host country in the list. It has an unemployment rate of 24.5 percent. It has a growth rate of -1.2, and the median income is just over \$30,000. And has an income inequality of 0.32. In other words, Spain's economy is not very strong, especially when the growth rate is taken into account. When the overall poor economy is compared to the dependent variable—attitudes toward immigrants and immigration—there is forty seven percent of Spain's population that wanted fewer immigrants.

## 6. Discussion

To test hypothesis one, I generated a scatter plot using the data from Table 1 and Table 5. The degree of cultural difference is shown on the x-axis, and attitudes toward immigrants on the y-axis. Also shown is a line of best fit. As shown in Figure 1, there is a weak, negative relationship between cultural difference and attitudes toward immigration.

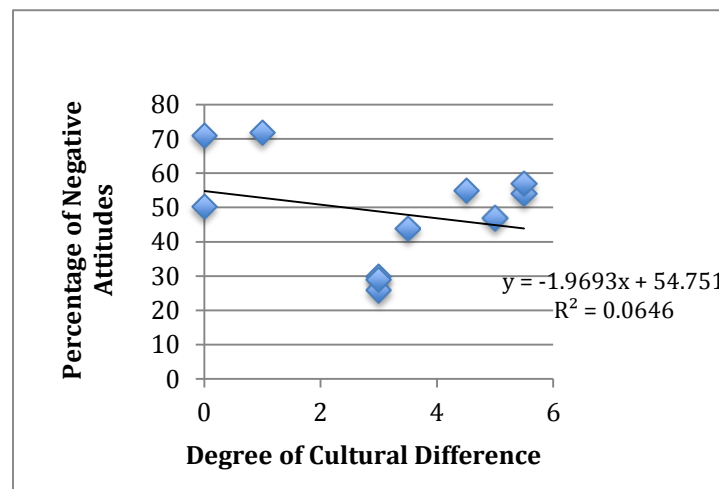


Figure 1. Negative Attitudes

Examining the scatter plot it is clear that given the low value of the  $R^2$ , the model does not fit the data well. The line of best fit is also not very steep, indicating that the relationship is not very strong. Figure 1 demonstrates that attitudes are not affected by a higher degree of cultural difference.

However, it is important to notice the three outliers in the data. These points belong to Switzerland, Australia and Belgium. If the three outliers with the lowest degree of cultural difference are removed, then the graph looks much different, and the line of best fit changes. The  $R^2$  value increases substantially meaning that the model fits the data well and the relationship is strong and positive. The new scatter plot illustrates that attitudes are indeed influenced by a greater degree of cultural difference. These changes are seen in Figure 2. Examining the equation in Figure 2, the slope, 10.2, has increased in comparison to the slope in Figure 1, -1.9.

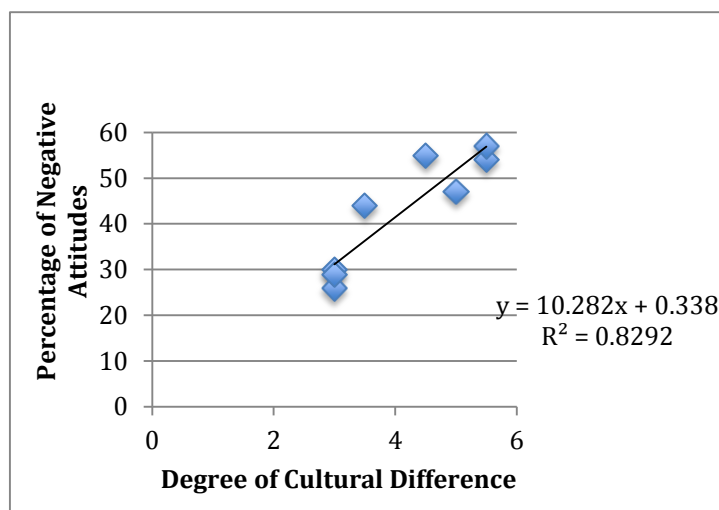


Figure 2. New Scatter plot illustrates that attitudes are indeed influenced by a greater degree of cultural differences.

In addition to the slope being stronger so is the relationship between the two variables. Primarily, the reason for removing the three outliers, belonging to Switzerland, Australia and Belgium (72%, 71%, and 50.3%, respectively), is because they were coded as having really low levels of cultural difference with extremely high percentage of negative attitudes. However, this presents an important point. An explanation for extremely high percentages of negative attitudes and low scores for degrees of cultural difference, is because attitudes of the citizens of the host nation toward immigrants who have substantial differences—not just slight differences—in language, religion and physical attributes, are not well received, tolerated or accepted. Facchini, Mayada and Mendola further reinforce this claim. They contend that, “...natives tend to be more in favor of immigration if foreigners share a common ethnic background...”<sup>15</sup>.

To elaborate, Belgium, hosts a substantial amount of immigrants from Italy and France. However, Belgium itself is not an ethnically homogenous society in terms of demographics and language. According to The World Factbook, 58 percent of the population is Flemish, a German ethnic group. At the same time, 31 percent of the population is Walloon, which are of French descent, and the remaining 11 percent fall into both or neither category<sup>16</sup>. These two major ethnic groups would account for the low degrees in cultural difference.

Similarly, the situation applies for Switzerland. Switzerland’s demographic is 65 percent German, 18 percent French, 10 percent Italian; the other 7 percent are either Romansch or belong to another unspecified ethnic group<sup>17</sup>. The top two source countries into Switzerland are Germany and Italy. Again, this explains the very small degree of cultural difference. Most of the immigrants fall perfectly within the major ethnic groups. It is when immigrants are not German or Italian that negative perceptions of immigrants begin to increase.

In Australia, another outlier, the scenario changes slightly. The source countries are the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Unlike Belgium and Switzerland, Australia has a much more homogenous society, comparatively. The two major ethnic groups include English at 25.9 percent and Australian at 25.4 percent. The rest of the ethnic groups—in very small percentages—are of European descent, Asian descent and Australian aboriginal descent<sup>18</sup>. This too accounts for the nonexistent degree of cultural difference and the high percentage of negative attitudes toward immigrants and immigration.

However, the main reason for removing the outliers, in addition to the explanation above is because the method used to measure the degree of cultural difference for all eleven host nations, does not work for Belgium and Switzerland, due to the lack in homogeneity in ethnicities. In other words, the measurement of the independent variable is ineffective for these two countries in this paper.

For Australia, the problem comes from the dependent variable. Their general public opinion was that 71 percent “wanted to keep the Australian way of life.” Their public opinion differed from the rest of the eleven host nations because their opinion does not even want to deal with immigrants—where as the other ten host nations, do.

This is why the outliers, Belgium, Switzerland and Australia were removed from Figure 1.

In other words, Figure 2 shows that the greater the degree of cultural difference, the higher the percentage of citizens voicing negative attitudes; reinforcing hypothesis one. This is illustrated by the strong positive relationship



between the two variables.

To test Hypothesis 2, I generated scatterplots using Table 6 to further analyze the economic conditions. Like in Figures 1 and 2, the y-axis will be the percentage of negative attitudes. In Figure 3, a scatterplot based on unemployment rate was generated. Notice that the  $R^2$  value in Figure 3 is low. The slope in Figure 3, -0.45, is negative, explaining the negative and weak relationship. The relationship between the percentage of negative attitudes and unemployment rates is not strong nor is it as expected. It does not support Hypothesis 2. This weak relationship can be explained by the following.

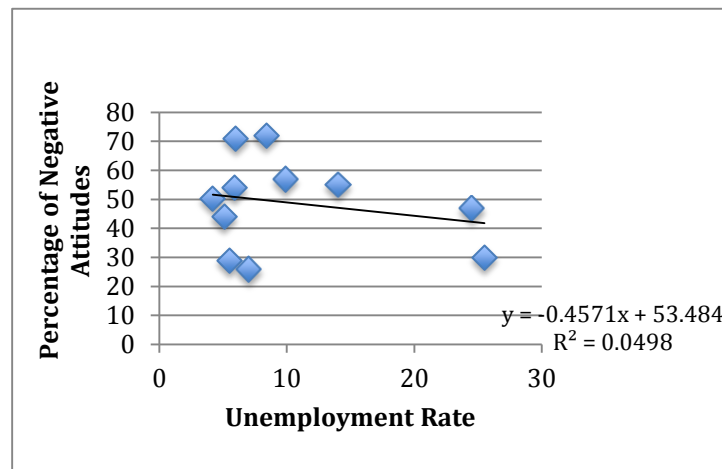


Figure 3. Attitudes Based on Economic Conditions

According to the graph, in 2014, South Africa had the highest unemployment rate of 25.5 percent, and negative attitudes toward immigrants right at 30 percent. Spain also had a significant unemployment rate at 24.5 and negative attitudes at 47 percent. This is nowhere near countries like Australia and Belgium where unemployment rates were at 6 and 8.4, respectively, and negative perceptions at 71 and 72 percent. However, South Africa and Spain are outliers.

Generated again, but without the outliers, the relationship changes. The reason in removing the outliers, Spain and South Africa, is statistical; they are approximately two standard deviations away from the mean, and more than two from the median. In other words, they are so far out from the rest of the data. This is noticed in Figure 4, where the two points belonging to Spain and South Africa are statistical outliers according to the canonical boxplot.

Figure 4

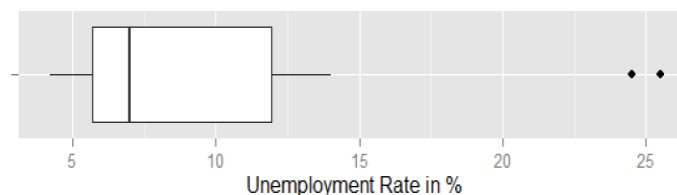


Figure 4. Two points belonging to Spain and South Africa are statistical outlines according to the canonical boxplot.

The scatterplot without the outliers are reported in Figure 5. Figure 5 illustrates that with the absence of the outliers, a higher unemployment rate could mean a higher percentage of negative attitudes. However, the correlation is not very strong in this instance and the  $R^2$  value is quite low. The slope is a weak indication of a strong

relationship because it is a small number. Despite the weak relationship, a higher unemployment rate—indicating poor economic conditions—does indicate a higher percentage of negative attitudes.

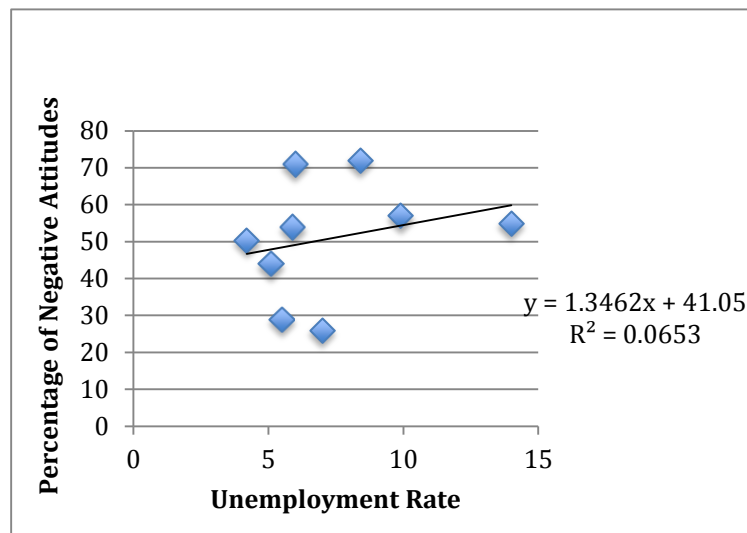


Figure 5. Attitudes Based on Economic Conditions

To further analyze economic conditions, growth the rates will be examined. Based on Figure 6, there is a slight, negative correlation between economic growth rate and the percentage of negative attitudes. This also supports my second hypothesis because a higher economic growth rate is indicative of a stronger—not poorer—economy. However, this correlation is weak given the low value of the  $R^2$  and the negative slope. However, it is interesting to note the data point located in the second quadrant, the negative growth rate. This belongs to Spain. They showed a growth rate—or lack thereof—of -1.2. This is an outlier.

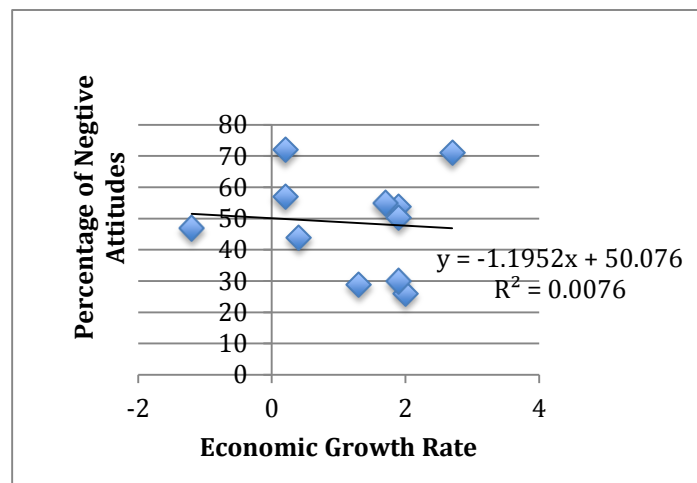


Figure 6. Negative correlation between economic growth rate and the percentage of negative attitudes

Median incomes, which were converted to United States dollars, were examined next. Figure 7 demonstrates the relationship between the percentage of negative attitudes and median income. There is a clear positive correlation between the two, though it is not a strong relationship. This means that with higher median incomes, comes higher percentages of negative attitudes. The  $R^2$  value is at .217; this value is substantially higher than some of the  $R^2$

values in the Figures above. The slope also indicates a weaker relationship. Note that most of the values in Figure 6 are clustered around the center of the scatter plot, in other words, between \$30,000 and \$60,000.

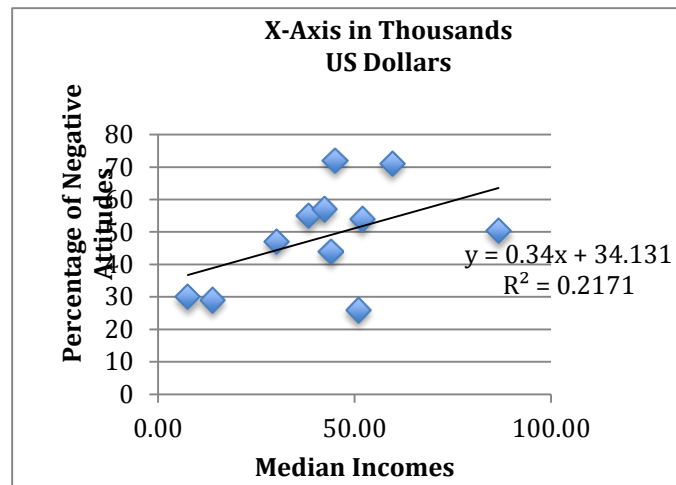


Figure 7. Relationship between the percentage of negative attitudes and median income.

Even though higher median incomes are an indication that the percentage of negative attitudes will be higher, it is not a strong indicator. This is interesting because it would seem that results would be opposite. In other words, it would make more sense for lower incomes to generate higher negative attitudes, because lower incomes generally indicate jobs that are not based on salary but hourly wages. Hourly wages indicate lower-skilled jobs and are easily replaceable. Meaning that there is not as much financial security as in salary-paying jobs. Resulting in low-skilled workers favoring immigrants less likely as opposed to high-skilled worker<sup>19</sup>. As such, median incomes are not a strong basis for a higher percentage of negative values.

Lastly, income inequality was examined. The unit of measure for income inequality is the Gini coefficient, where the measurement runs from zero to one. Zero indicates a more equal society and one indicates a more unequal society. The results are reported below in Figure 8. Figure 8 illustrates a strong negative correlation between negative percentages and income inequality. The negative slope is strong and the value, -66.95, creates a steep decline in the scatterplot.

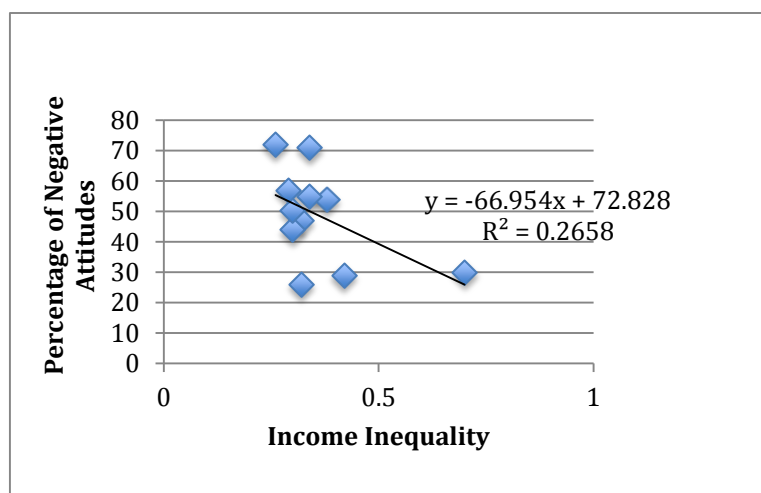


Figure 8. Strong Negative Correlation between negative percentages and income inequality

Higher income inequality does not lead to a higher percentage of negative values. The opposite is the case; higher income inequality is associated with less negative attitudes. The outlier, South Africa, had the highest income inequality value. However, their percentage of negative attitudes was right at 30 percent. Their percentage of negative attitudes was one of the lower ones along with Canada and Russia with income inequality values at 26 percent and 29 percent, respectively.

South Africa has consistently been an outlier for tests run for economic conditions. According to Table 5, they had an Overall Total score of 3 for degree of cultural difference, which was the median value for Table 5. They had the largest unemployment rate of 25.5 percent. However, they had an economic growth rate of 1.9, the same rate as United States and Switzerland. South Africa had a higher growth rate than Spain, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia and France. They also had the lowest median income at 7,610 US dollars, and the highest income inequality at 0.7.

An explanation for South Africa consistently being an outlier could be due to the value of their currency in comparison with the value of currencies of the other first world countries mentioned above (all were converted to US currency for this paper). However, a more plausible explanation may be regarding their economic growth rate and their unemployment rate. Perhaps there is a disparity between the two rates because the economy is expanding at a faster rate than the skill of the work force.

Given my results in Figures 1 and 2 it is clear that the strongest influence for negative perceptions toward immigrants is largely the degree of cultural differences. Hypothesis 1 is largely supported by the generated scatterplots. There are a number of reasons as to why this hypothesis is supported by the tests generated. However, a couple of explanations include racism or fear of others who are different that create a disapproval of immigrants and immigration as a whole.

After analyzing unemployment rates, economic growth rates, median incomes and income inequalities across all of the host countries, it is necessary to conclude that poor economic conditions provide either weak support or inconsistent findings. The scatterplot testing for poor economic conditions is not a strong basis for Hypothesis 2, especially for income inequality and median income. Perhaps the results would be different if my sample of host countries were larger.

## 7. Conclusion

My research question involved asking what influences attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. I focused on two variables, the degree of cultural difference and economic conditions. I identified two hypotheses. The first being the higher degree of cultural difference between citizens of a host country and immigrants from source countries, the more negative perceptions will be. This will be due to different national identity, language, religion and all other cultural characteristics of an immigrant that would not be compatible with the cultural characteristics of host country citizens. The second hypothesis being that, poor economic conditions will produce negative perceptions because of the perceived problematic economic participation that immigrants form part of, which is viewed as a threat. This alleged economic threat would be due to reduced opportunities available to host country citizens as well as host citizens feeling that they bear the costs of immigrants residing in their country.

I measured each variable. For the degree of cultural difference I examined language, religion and physical characteristics as measurable factors. For economic conditions I examined, unemployment rates, economic growth, median incomes and income inequality. After generating several scatterplots to test the hypotheses, I conclude, largely in agreement with the claims of the literature, cultural aspects are much more influential in determining the attitudes toward immigrants. Economic conditions of a nation are not as significant of a determinant in the negative attitudes, though they are still important to consider<sup>20 21 22 23 24</sup>. In other words, it is prejudice, racism, or the fear of different people that really drives negative attitudes. However, the sample of first world countries that I identified contains mostly Western nations, except for South Africa, which even then, has Western influence. Thus, perceptions of host citizens are largely Eurocentric. As such, another possible explanation for the intolerance demonstrated by those of Western, European, and Anglo-Saxon descent, could be white superiority.

Finally, though, Dancygier and Donnelly bring up a good point, “Nevertheless, it could be the case that economic decline activates ethnocentrist attitudes”<sup>25</sup>. Cultural and economic factors, which influence attitudes toward immigrants, could fuel and reinforce one another.

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