

US vs. Them: Mass Attitudes toward Offshore Outsourcing

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Abstract

Economists have argued that outsourcing is another form of international trade. However, based on a representative national survey of Americans, we find that the distribution of preferences on these two issues is quite different. We examine the origins of attitudes toward outsourcing, focusing on the extent to which it reflects (1) the economic vulnerabilities of individuals, (2) their subjective understanding of what constitutes outsourcing, and (3) non-economic attitudes toward foreign people and foreign countries. Our findings emphasize variations in understandings of the term, and the highly symbolic nature of attitudes toward this issue.

To the extent that self-interest guides mass preferences, opinions toward outsourcing should reflect the same sort of distributional consequences as foreign commerce. However, we find little evidence to support this assumption. Instead, such attitudes tend to be shaped by ethnocentrism, nationalism, and anti-foreign sentiment. Individuals who believe the US should take an isolationist stance on international affairs more generally, who are nationalistic, or who feel that members of other ethnic and racial groups are less praiseworthy than their own group tend to have a particularly hostile reaction to outsourcing. Experimental results further emphasize the symbolic nature of attitudes toward outsourcing; the same policy is received differently when this label is not used.

Taken together, our results strongly suggest that attitudes are shaped less by the economic consequences of this phenomenon, than by a sense of “us” versus “them.” In particular, the term “outsourcing” triggers a sensitivity to nationalistic sentiments that encourages extremely negative views of outsourcing. To be in favor of outsourcing is interpreted as being anti-American.

The movement of jobs overseas has caused mounting anxiety in the United States over the past decade. Various referred to as “outsourcing,” “offshoring,” or “offshore outsourcing,” this phenomenon first started to arouse concern in the US at the turn of the 21st century, when the conclusion of an economic downturn was followed by only a tepid recovery in the US labor market. As China, India, and the post-Communist states took steps to increase their engagement with the global economy, an extra 1.3 billion workers joined the global workforce, nearly doubling its size and raising fears that US firms would relocate jobs overseas to cut labor costs (Blinder 2009a; Freeman 2009: 63). This issue rose to prominence during the 2004 presidential election, when Senator John Kerry accused President George W. Bush of promoting outsourcing and lambasted “Benedict Arnold CEOs” for moving jobs abroad. Since then, this issue has continued to stimulate widespread public interest. A burgeoning literature has emerged on the economics of outsourcing and offshoring, but few studies have addressed the politics of this phenomenon (Chase 2008; Margolit 2011). We aim to help fill this gap in the literature by providing an understanding of the origins of American attitudes about outsourcing.

We begin by addressing differences in terminology among academics, policy makers, and the mass public. In popular discourse and the relatively few studies of mass opinion, this practice has been referred to as “outsourcing, meaning when American businesses hire workers in other parts of the world in order to save money.”¹ Economists are more likely to use the term “offshoring” to refer to the same phenomenon, and politicians fall somewhere in between in their attempt to communicate with both popular and technical audiences, calling it “offshore outsourcing” or some other combination of terms. We thus move back and forth among these terms interchangeably in our discussion, but our central focus remains the same.

¹ See Pew News Interest Index Poll, March 8-12, 2006.

Economists have argued that outsourcing is another form of international trade. As such, it should have the same sort of distributional consequences as foreign commerce. A growing number of studies have analyzed whether mass attitudes about trade and other aspects of globalization fall along the factoral or sectoral lines emphasized by various political economy models. Based on a representative national survey of Americans, however, we find little evidence that either an individual's industry of employment or her occupation explains attitudes toward outsourcing. Instead, such attitudes tend to be shaped by ethnocentrism and anti-foreign sentiment. Individuals who believe the US should take an isolationist stance on international affairs more generally, who feel a sense of national superiority, or who feel that members of other ethnic and racial groups are less praiseworthy than their own racial or ethnic group tend to have particularly hostile reactions to outsourcing. Taken together, the results of this study strongly suggest that attitudes are shaped less by the economic consequences of this phenomenon than by what offshoring implies about heightened interaction with and dependence on outgroups, foreign firms, and foreign people.

Defining Outsourcing

Outsourcing and offshoring are frequently used synonymously in public discourse and sometimes in academic studies as well (Rodrik 1997; Amiti and Wei 2005; Chase 2008; Marschall and Clawson 2010). Strictly speaking, outsourcing refers to whether or not the production process takes place entirely within a given firm, whereas offshoring refers to whether the production process is entirely domestic or includes foreign components (Blinder 2009a: 20-21; Feenstra 2010: 5-9). Outsourcing occurs when one firm contracts with another firm for goods or services included in the production process. Outsourcing can be either domestic or foreign.

“Foreign outsourcing,” “international outsourcing,” or “offshore outsourcing” refers to movement of part of the production process both outside the firm and overseas (Mankiw and Swagel 2006; Feenstra 2010: 5-9). Offshoring occurs when part of the production process is moved abroad, regardless of whether the relocated process is handled within or outside the firm.

However, as interest in the effects of international trade on the US labor market grew during the first years of the 21st century, Jagdish Bhagwati, Arvind Panagariya, and T. N. Srinivasan (2004: 93) pointed out that “outsourcing took on a different meaning. It referred now to a specific segment of the growing international trade in services.” Although they consider this new meaning to be the proper definition of outsourcing, they also acknowledge that public debate over this phenomenon has been muddled as the definition has become ever more elastic. In their words, “when many politicians, journalists and even some economists start discussing ‘outsourcing,’ they soon leap beyond purchases of offshore arm’s-length services to include, without analytical clarity, phenomena such as offshore purchases of manufactured components and even direct foreign investment by firms” (Bhagwati, Panagariya, and Srinivasan 2004: 94).

In this study, we will use the terms outsourcing and offshoring interchangeably to describe the decision by a firm to locate part of the production process abroad and therefore shift some jobs overseas. Since the most popular and widely recognized term for this phenomenon in popular political discourse is *outsourcing*, we use this term when asking about public opinions and perceptions.

The Economics of Outsourcing

Economists emphasize that outsourcing is similar to the international trade of goods. By and large, they agree that this phenomenon heightens national welfare by promoting a more

efficient allocation of resources, thereby raising national income and increasing productivity.² In Congressional testimony and a widely covered press conference surrounding the 2004 *Economic Report of the President*, N. Gregory Mankiw, the Chairman of President Bush's Council of Economic Advisors, stated that "outsourcing is just a new way of doing international trade. More things are tradable than were tradable in the past and that's a good thing" (Weisman 2004: A06). Mankiw's comments equating outsourcing with trade precipitated a political firestorm, but his views on this topic are widely shared among economists.

Like trade, outsourcing has distributional implications; some individuals gain, while others lose. Analyses of these distributional consequences often emphasize that the US has an abundance of high-skilled labor and a scarcity of low-skilled labor relative to the rest of the world (Leamer 1984). As a result, low-skilled labor is more expensive in the US than abroad and US firms have an incentive to outsource tasks involving such labor to generate cost savings. This, in turn, drives down the demand for low-skilled US workers, thereby reducing their wages. Conversely, high-skilled labor is cheaper in the US than elsewhere, which increases the demand for such workers and bids up their wages. The heightened demand is likely to stem from US firms that need highly skilled workers as well as from foreign firms that "insource" high-skill jobs to the US to take advantage of the lower labor costs. This simple comparative advantage account suggests that the distributional implications of outsourcing should fall along the lines predicted by a Stolper-Samuelson (1941) approach: highly skilled workers in the US should favor outsourcing, whereas less skilled workers should oppose it.

² Nonetheless, there are conditions under which outsourcing can undermine a country's welfare. If, for example, outsourcing is accompanied by the transfer of leading technologies from one country to another country where work is being outsourced, then the initial state may suffer the erosion of its monopoly power in products produced using these technologies (Freeman 2009: 66).

However, evidence has been inconclusive as to whether the distributional consequences actually conform to these predictions. Research on US manufacturing industries has furnished considerable support for the comparative advantage approach. Robert Feenstra and Gordon Hansen (1996, 1999), for example, found that outsourcing increased the real wages of skilled American manufacturing workers by 1-2 percent during the 1980s, a significant rise (Feenstra and Hansen 1996, 1999). Similarly, J. Bradford Jensen and Lori Kletzer (2008) conclude that skilled workers in US manufacturing industries have excellent employment prospects, but that the prospects for low-skill, low-wage US manufacturing workers are far bleaker because these jobs have a high likelihood of moving offshore.

Whereas outsourcing in manufacturing seems to accord with a comparative advantage approach, outsourcing in services does not (Feenstra 2010). Recent improvements in technology and communications have enhanced the ability to conduct international trade in services, rendering it increasingly feasible to outsource a wide range of service jobs. Some of them require extensive skills (for example, computer programming or accounting); others do not (for example, telemarketing). Alan Blinder (2006: 119) therefore concludes that “the dividing line between the jobs that produce services that are suitable for electronic delivery (and are thus threatened by offshoring) and those that do not does not correspond to traditional distinctions between high-end and low-end work.” Instead, he argues that the potential for outsourcing a job depends on how much face-to-face contact is required, or more specifically, whether “the work can be delivered to a remote location ... [a]nd if so, how severely is the quality degraded” (Blinder 2009a: 36).

Based on these criteria, Blinder concludes that roughly 22-29 percent of the US workforce—amounting to 30-40 million jobs—is *potentially* offshorable (Blinder 2009a, 2009b).

Even if Blinder's projections are correct, they only pertain to jobs that *could be* outsourced—not those that have been or will be—and they do not account for jobs that are likely to be insourced to the US, especially in high-skill service occupations (Bhagwati, Panagariya, and Srinivasan 2004; Jensen and Kletzer 2005). Nonetheless, economists foresee considerable churning in the US labor market as a result of outsourcing, leading to increased job displacement, reduced job security and bargaining power for workers, and downward pressure on benefits and wages (Rodrik 1997; Blinder 2009a, 2009b; Freeman 2009). In fact, Blinder (2009a) estimates that workers in the most offshorable jobs are paid 13 percent less than would otherwise be expected. Richard Freeman (2009) and Kletzer (2004) argue that workers displaced due to outsourcing tend to suffer a considerable loss (roughly 13-20 percent) in earnings once they are re-employed. Thus, individuals employed in offshorable occupations might be especially hostile to this phenomenon due to its economic implications for them.

The Politics of Outsourcing

Beyond economic self-interest, public attitudes toward outsourcing may also be guided by political views. To the extent that these opinions are similar to attitudes toward trade, one might expect greater support for outsourcing among Republicans than Democrats. In addition, if these views are formed on the same bases as trade, they may be guided by whether people favor an activist role for the US in international affairs. In a landmark study, Raymond Bauer, Ithiel de Sola Pool, and Anthony Dexter (1963: 96-99) argued that protectionist attitudes toward trade in the US were driven in part by more general attitudes toward isolationism. Isolationism, in this case, refers to whether the US should intervene to prevent human rights abuses abroad, cooperate with foreign countries to solve global problems, and so forth. Those with stronger isolationist

tendencies are significantly more opposed to free trade, even though these measures of isolationism do not address economic relations between countries (Mansfield and Mutz 2009). People who hold isolationist views of US foreign policy may also be more likely to oppose engaging with foreign people, foreign firms, and foreign governments. Isolationism and hostility to outsourcing coincide in their opposition to involvement in all things foreign.

Critics of outsourcing also have made nationalist appeals (Marschall and Clawson 2010). Over forty years ago, Harry Johnson (1965: 183) argued that economic protectionism in many countries stemmed from a sense of national superiority. Recent survey research confirms that Americans who hold nationalist views are much more hostile to trade than their counterparts who are less nationalist (Mansfield and Mutz 2009). To the extent that trade and outsourcing attitudes have similar origins, a sense of national superiority may affect attitudes toward outsourcing as well. To the extent that one believes American workers perform better than foreign workers, nationalism naturally leads one to oppose outsourcing.

Finally, if attitudes toward outsourcing are driven by the same forces as attitudes toward trade, then they also may be guided by ethnocentrism—that is, the tendency to think less of those who are racially or ethnically different from one’s own group. Although the feelings that whites have toward Blacks and Hispanics (or vice-versa) are completely superfluous to economic considerations, ethnocentrism may extend to whole countries different from one’s own.

Public Perceptions of What Constitutes Outsourcing

To analyze public attitudes toward outsourcing, we rely on a representative national survey of 2085 working or temporarily unemployed Americans conducted via internet or Web TV by Knowledge Networks in the summer of 2007. The Knowledge Networks sample is a

random probability sample recruited using address-based sampling combined with random digit dialing. All Americans are eligible for inclusion, regardless of whether they have internet access.

We focus on the attitudes of Americans because the US has been the dominant country in the global economy for over half a century. As a result, social scientists have expressed particular interest in explaining the attitudes of Americans, whose views are likely to influence US economic policy (Fordham and McKeown 2003). Moreover, most of the empirical work on outsourcing has focused on the US, primarily because it has been a much larger political issue in the US than elsewhere (e.g., Feenstra and Hanson 1996, 1999; Amiti and Wei 2005; Jensen and Kletzer 2005, 2008; Blinder 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Chase 2008; Margalit 2011).

Because even economists and other experts disagree about what constitutes outsourcing, it is unclear how the mass public defines it. To address this issue, we asked each survey respondent to indicate which of the following six scenarios they considered to be examples of outsourcing.

1. *A US car company purchases seat fabric from a company in another state rather than make it themselves.*
2. *A car company in another country decides to build a manufacturing plant in the United States.*
3. *A US car company purchases the services of a company in another country to handle their customer service calls.*
4. *A US car company purchases door handles for their cars from a company located in another country.*
5. *A US car company purchases the services of a company in another country to design door handles for their cars and the designs are sent via internet to the US.*
6. *A US car company decides to build a manufacturing plant outside the United States.*

Respondents were free to indicate that all of these scenarios were instances of outsourcing, that some were and others were not, or that none of them were outsourcing. Given the widespread attention that overseas call centers have received in public discussion of outsourcing, it comes as no surprise that 90 percent of our survey respondents considered scenario 3 to be outsourcing. In addition, 80 percent viewed purchasing door handles from a foreign country as outsourcing, over 72 percent considered foreign-designed door handles to be outsourcing, and 70 percent thought that locating a manufacturing plant outside of the US was outsourcing.

However, only about one third of the respondents considered purchasing seat fabric across state lines to be outsourcing. This is the lowest percentage among the six scenarios, a finding that strongly suggests that the mass public thinks that outsourcing involves shifting economic activity overseas, since this is the only item that refers to a completely domestic process. Furthermore, less than half the respondents identified building a plant within the US as outsourcing, probably because the activity involves shifting production from a foreign country into the US, rather than from the US abroad.

Fully two-thirds of our survey respondents believe that at least four of these six scenarios constitute outsourcing. Over 14 percent think that all six are outsourcing; fewer than 4 percent think that none of them are. Consequently, despite the fact that all respondents in our survey are asked the same exact questions about their attitudes toward outsourcing, they may be answering slightly different questions based on their understanding of the term.

Not all six scenarios would ordinarily be considered outsourcing by economists, but situations similar to all of them have been described as outsourcing in public

discussions. The first scenario is an example of domestic outsourcing (Blinder 2009a; Feenstra 2010), although many economists and other observers use outsourcing to refer to the movement of part of the production process overseas and outside of the firm, not simply outside of the firm alone. The third, fourth, and fifth scenarios are examples of offshore outsourcing. The second and sixth scenarios are examples of foreign direct investment (FDI), which Bhagwati (2009: 12; Bhagwati, Panagariya, and Srinivasan 2004: 94 and 97) explicitly argues is not outsourcing. At the same time, however, he points out that journalists, politicians, and some economists have confused FDI and outsourcing, including Senator Kerry during the 2004 presidential campaign. As such, it is easy to understand why the mass public would confuse these phenomena as well.

A Statistical Model of Outsourcing Attitudes

Two survey questions served to construct our measures of attitudes toward outsourcing:

1. *Recently, some American companies have been hiring workers in other countries to replace workers in the US who are paid higher wages. An example of this is people who take customer service telephone calls. Do you think the government should encourage or discourage this or stay out of this matter?*
2. *Some say that outsourcing jobs is bad and should be discouraged by the government. Others say that outsourcing saves companies money and allows them to sell goods more cheaply, so the government should encourage it. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?*

The first item was scored on a five-point scale, based on whether respondents felt that the government should discourage outsourcing a lot (1) or a little (2), stay out of this matter (3), or encourage outsourcing a little (4) or a lot (5). The second item was scored on a three-point scale, where the highest (lowest) score of 3 (1) was assigned to respondents who believed that the

government should encourage (discourage) more outsourcing and where the middle score of 3 was assigned to individuals who felt that the government should stay out of this matter.³

Using these items, we constructed two dependent variables. The first is the mean of these two scores. Because they have a different number of categories, however, we first convert the items to z-scores so that each one is weighted equally in the index.⁴ The second dependent variable indicates whether a respondent consistently favors or opposes outsourcing. This categorical variable equals 3 if, for both of these items, a respondent believes the government should encourage outsourcing; 1 if, for both items, he or she believes the government should oppose it; and 2 if the respondent does not express a consistent view on this matter.

By employing multi-item indexes for all of the key concepts in this study, we facilitate assessments of reliability and avoid the possibility that results stem from the peculiarities of one particular survey item, an inevitable risk with single item indicators. Throughout the following empirical analysis, we address the robustness of our results by examining both dependent variables. However, because the results are uniformly similar, we report the results based on the continuous measures in Appendix A, and present the results based on the categorical measure of whether a respondent consistently favors or opposes outsourcing in the text.

The Independent Variables

Our key independent variables fall into three broad categories: (1) indicators of the characteristics of economic vulnerability suggested by economic theories of outsourcing; (2) indicators of respondents' subjective understanding of outsourcing; and (3) indicators tapping

³ For both items, individuals who expressed no opinion or refused to answer were assigned to a middle category.

⁴ Combining these two items has various advantages, chiefly that the dependent variable is a more reliable measure and less prone to problems associated with idiosyncratic wording or measurement error than if we analyzed each item separately. On this issue, see Baker (2003: 444, fn.35).

potential non-economic influences on attitudes toward outsourcing, including nationalism, ethnocentrism, and attitudes toward intervention in the affairs of other countries.

Economic vulnerability. To analyze personal economic vulnerability, we include measures of a respondent's skill level and occupation. Economic studies typically use the average annual wage for an individual's occupation to measure skill, a tack that has been followed in much of the research on attitudes toward foreign economic policy (e.g., Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Mayda and Rodrik 2005). In this study, we tap skill by calculating the OCCUPATIONAL WAGE in 2006 for each job reported by a respondent in our sample. We asked the respondents to choose what best described their current (or most recent) occupation from a list of twenty-eight categories listed on the survey.⁵

Next, we include a set of variables designed to tap the extent to which a respondent's occupation or industry of employment is susceptible to outsourcing. To begin, we simply coded whether a respondent worked in a US industry in which final products are either exported abroad or face import competition. Kletzer (2001), for example, has argued that workers in import-competing industries are especially likely to be displaced as a result of trade, so they may have reason to oppose outsourcing. Respondents were asked to choose the industry in which they work or most recently worked based on the three-digit North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categories. For each industry represented in our sample, i , we constructed one measure of EXPORT ORIENTATION and another measure of IMPORT ORIENTATION. The former is defined as (X_i/Y_i) and the latter is defined as (M_i/Y_i) , where X_i is sector i 's total

⁵ Annual average wage data are derived from the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor (BLS) Statistics. Because the BLS wage data are organized by the US Department of Labor's Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, we grouped the SOC occupation categories into our twenty-eight categories and then aggregated the wage data by taking the average across SOC categories weighted by the number of people nationwide employed in each occupation. The data on occupation and wages are taken from <http://www.bls.gov/soc/> and http://www.bls.gov/oes/oes_dl.htm, respectively.

exports, M_i is the volume of imports in sector i , and Y_i is this sector's total output.⁶ Because the distribution of both variables is highly skewed, we rely on the natural logarithm of them.⁷ In addition, we include a variable derived from Blinder's (2009b) measure of whether an occupation is potentially offshorable, based largely on the degree to which the job requires face to face contact with customers (OFFSHORABLE).⁸

We also include dummy variables indicating whether each respondent works in MANUFACTURING, the SERVICE sector, or elsewhere. Various economists have argued that skilled individuals in the manufacturing sector have gained from outsourcing while low-skilled manufacturing workers have suffered. There is also some evidence that highly skilled workers in service occupations will gain from outsourcing (e.g., Jensen and Kletzer 2008). We use these variables in combination with the measures of skill discussed above to determine whether attitudes toward outsourcing depend on these likely distributional consequences.

Further, we created three dummy variables based on information about the respondent's education. The first, 2-YEAR COLLEGE, indicates whether the person graduated from a technical school or a two-year college, or whether the respondent attended but did not graduate from a four-year college. The second, 4-YEAR COLLEGE, indicates whether the respondent graduated from a four-year college. Finally, GRADUATE SCHOOL indicates whether the person

⁶ Note that Kletzer (2001) analyzes a similar measure of import competition in her study of trade-related job loss, but it is very highly correlated with our measure of IMPORT ORIENTATION. As such, we simply focus on the latter variable, rather than analyzing hers as well. Data on exports and imports are taken from the US International Trade Commission (http://dataweb.usitc.gov/scripts/user_set.asp). We used version 2.8.4 of the data. Data on output are taken from the US Department of Commerce (Bureau of Economic Analysis) (http://www.bea.gov/industry/gdpbyind_data.htm).

⁷ Because the natural logarithm of zero is undefined, we arbitrarily add .01 to the value of trade for industries in our sample that are non-tradable and therefore do not export or import goods. We include in our analysis those respondents who did not identify the industry to which they belonged at the three-digit NAICS level but indicated it was non-tradable at the two-digit NAICS level.

⁸ Blinder uses the US Department of Labor's O*NET, which contains nearly 1,000 US occupations that correspond closely to the SOC codes, to construct his offshorability index. As in the case of our wage variable, we grouped his index into our occupation categories and took the average score to create OFFSHORABLE.

holds a graduate degree. Those who did not receive any formal education beyond high school serve as the reference category. Although education has been used as an alternative measure of skill, and at times as a proxy for economic knowledge, the appropriate interpretation of education's effects remains unclear due to its relationship with so many other important attitudes (e.g., Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996). Scholars concur that it is typically correlated with trade attitudes, though not about the reason why this is so. As we discuss in our interpretation of findings, both economic and non-economic explanations are plausible.

Subjective understanding of outsourcing. Based on previous analyses of trade preferences, we assume that it is important whether people think of outsourcing purely in terms of interactions with foreign nations, as opposed to defining it in a broader way that incorporates domestic outsourcing. To the extent that outsourcing is perceived to be about shifting part of the production process outside the firm, even if it is just next door, then it should be seen as less threatening. To the extent that it is defined as *offshore* outsourcing and incorporates any and all economic interactions with other countries, then it is likely to be viewed in terms of “us versus them” and should trigger greater hostility.

To test this idea, we used responses to the six potential examples of outsourcing that were discussed earlier to create two independent variables: (1) the number of scenarios involving a foreign country that a respondent considers to be outsourcing (FOREIGN DEFINITION); and (2) whether the respondent considers the domestic item (#1) to be outsourcing (DOMESTIC DEFINITION). We expect that the broader the range of foreign economic activities that someone defines as outsourcing, the more they are likely to oppose it. In contrast, a definition that incorporates domestic economic activity should prompt less opposition.

In addition to variance in individual definitions of this term, some studies have suggested that an understanding of economics plays a role in views about outsourcing. Jens Hainmueller and Michael Hiscox (2006) have argued that a college education affects trade opinions by exposing people to theories about the benefits of trade. In the same vein, some economists maintain that critics of outsourcing rely on faulty economic logic (e.g., Bhagwati, Panagariya, and Srinivasan 2004; Mankiw and Swagel 2006; Bhagwati 2009). Individuals with more formal exposure to economics may have a better appreciation of the associated gains from this phenomenon and hence a more favorable view of outsourcing than other individuals.

As mentioned above, one limitation of using college education as a proxy for economic knowledge is that education is also known to influence many other relevant characteristics of individual attitudes. To address economic knowledge more specifically, we included two items on our survey: (1) whether respondents have ever taken an economics course and (2) whether a respondent thinks that economists believe free trade is good or bad for the economy. The second item is included to determine whether an understanding of the basic principles of international economics shapes attitudes toward outsourcing, regardless of previous enrollment in an economics course. Two dummy variables were created based on these items. The first, *ECONOMICS CLASS*, is coded as 1 if a respondent has taken an economics class, 0 otherwise. The second, *ECONOMISTS' VIEW OF TRADE*, is coded as 1 if a respondent understands that economists believe that free trade is good for the economy, 0 otherwise.

One additional source of attitudes is subjective assessments of personal experience. On the one hand, it is seldom easy for an individual to assess whether and in what direction outsourcing has affected his or her well-being, if at all. On the other hand, as Richard Freeman (2009: 67) suggests, “Most Americans judge economic reality from what they observe in their

lives, not from debates among economists or what journalists write. The reality includes job losses and threats of job losses due to offshoring and trade.” He notes that previous surveys have revealed a fair number of people who claim to know someone directly affected by offshoring.

Unfortunately, the problem with most survey questions about personal experience with outsourcing is that they combine whether one perceives one’s self as having been negatively impacted with whether individuals are prospectively worried that they might be adversely affected in the future (as in the “threats” Freeman notes above). Threats and prospective concerns are, by definition, a function of the information people receive, not of personal experience. Thus, it is a mistake to combine the two if we want to evaluate whether people are reacting to an actual personal experience. To avoid endogeneity to the extent possible, while still incorporating personal experience in our model, we asked respondents, “Have you or has anyone in your family been positively or negatively affected by outsourcing?” Answers were coded as negatively affected (1), not affected (2), or positively affected (3) by outsourcing to create the variable, PERCEIVED EFFECT OF OUTSOURCING ON SELF.

Non-economic influences. Beyond objective vulnerability to outsourcing and individuals’ subjective understanding of the phenomena and how they are affected by it, previous empirical studies suggest that outsourcing preferences may also be affected by attitudes toward other people and other countries. Our index of ISOLATIONISM is comprised of five items widely used to tap the extent to which respondents believe the US should adopt an isolationist compared to an activist stance on international affairs outside the economic realm. These items address whether the US should intervene to prevent human rights abuses abroad, cooperate with foreign countries to solve global problems, and so forth (Maggiotto and Wittkopf 1981; Wittkopf and Maggiotto

1983; Herrmann, Tetlock, and Diascro 2001).⁹ A second index, NATIONALISM, draws on three previously used questions forming an index assessing whether respondents believe that the US is culturally superior to other countries (Rankin 2001).¹⁰ Although we call this concept nationalism, it is similar to what other scholars have dubbed patriotism or national superiority in referring to a sense of positive national identity coupled with thinking systematically less of people outside of those boundaries.

The third index, ETHNOCENTRISM, taps levels of prejudice toward those of a different race or ethnicity, without respect to nationality (Levinson 1949: 19). Ethnocentrism scales are designed to measure the “commonplace inclination to divide the world into ingroups and outgroups, the former characterized by virtuosity and talent, the latter by corruption and mediocrity” (Kam and Kinder 2007: 321).¹¹ By asking an individual about some positive and some negative human characteristics with reference to the ingroup as well as outgroups, we can gauge the extent to which the person employs an ingroup-outgroup mode of thinking (Levinson 1949). To construct these measures, we employ the same domestic racial and ethnic ingroups and outgroups as previous studies (blacks, whites, and Hispanics), asking respondents to rate each of

⁹ As in previous studies, these items form a reliable scale ($\alpha = .74$). “Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: [RANDOMIZED ORDER] (1) The US needs to play an active role in solving conflicts around the world; (2) The US government should just try to take care of the well-being of Americans and not get involved with other nations; (3) It is essential for the United States to work with other nations to solve problems, such as overpopulation, hunger, and pollution; (4) It will be best for the future of the country if we stay out of world affairs; (5) The United States has the responsibility to play the role of ‘world policeman,’ that is, to fight violations of international law and aggression wherever they occur.”

¹⁰ Cronbach’s alpha for this index is .76. “To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these statements? [RANDOMIZED ORDER]: (1) In the United States, our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others; (2) I would rather be a citizen of America than of any other country in the world; (3) The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like Americans.”

¹¹ The reliability of this index is quite high ($\alpha = .88$). All respondents are asked about their own racial ethnic group as well as two out-groups. Ethnocentrism is the difference between the mean for positive-negative characteristics attributed to the in-group and the same characteristics attributed to the out-group. “Next are some questions about various groups in our society. Below are 7 point scales on which you can rate characteristics of people in different groups.

Where would you rate physicians in general on this scale? Where would you rate [BLACKS/WHITES/HISPANIC-AMERICANS] in general on these scales?” The scales range from 1 to 7, anchored by Hard Working-Lazy, Efficient-Wasteful, and Trustworthy-Untrustworthy.

the groups separately in a randomized order on three characteristics (hardworking-lazy, efficient-wasteful, trustworthy-untrustworthy). Based on each respondent's race and ethnicity, the two outgroup scores were averaged and then subtracted from the ingroup rating. Because people systematically evaluate their ingroup more favorably than outgroups, the ethnocentrism scores are overwhelmingly positive, with higher scores indicating even higher rating of the ingroup relative to the outgroup. All three of the non-economic indicators—NATIONALISM, ISOLATIONISM, and ETHNOCENTRISM—were standardized with a mean of zero, and coded such that larger positive (negative) values of these variables reflect views that are more (less) isolationist, nationalistic, and ethnocentric, respectively.

In addition to the three types of independent variables previously discussed, our models also include measures of party identification (one variable indicating whether respondents describe themselves as a Democrat and another indicating whether they describe themselves as Republican, with the reference category being someone without a partisan affiliation or those just leaning Democrat or Republican), whether the respondent belonged to a union, whether the respondent was currently unemployed or laid off, plus age, gender, race, and family income. Finally, we include a measure of local unemployment (by a respondent's zip code) because people living in areas marked by extensive job loss may be especially opposed to outsourcing.

We use an ordered logit specification to analyze the categorical and ordered dependent variable. In Appendix A, we use ordinary least squares (OLS) to analyze our continuous dependent variable. All tests of statistical significance are based on robust standard errors, which account for any heteroskedasticity in the data and help to account for the highly skewed distribution of our dependent variables.

Survey Results

Is outsourcing essentially the same as trade in the American mind? While economists argue that outsourcing is simply a form of international trade, the mass public perceives trade and outsourcing very differently. In our survey, we also asked respondents a set of questions about whether they support or oppose international trade and other aspects of globalization. We then constructed a categorical variable indicating whether respondents consistently support trade, oppose trade, or have mixed attitudes. The correlation between this variable and our categorical measure of outsourcing is weak (Spearman's $\rho = .28, p < .001$). Figure 1 reports the percentage of respondents who consistently oppose or support trade relative to outsourcing. While more than half of the respondents have mixed or inconsistent attitudes about trade, almost two-thirds of them consistently oppose outsourcing and fewer than two percent consistently support it. Indeed, outsourcing appears to have very few advocates among the mass public, and people tend to have highly consistent views on this issue.

Having established that outsourcing is not trade by another name in the view of most Americans, we turn to an assessment of the extent to which outsourcing attitudes stem from individual vulnerabilities to its impact. In Table 1, we begin by estimating a model that includes gender, race, age, family income, whether or not the respondent is unemployed, the respondent's average occupational wage, and the export-orientation and import-orientation of the industry in which he or she works (or most recently worked). Table 1 estimates the impact of susceptibility on outsourcing attitudes.

Notably, there are no significant effects of LOCAL UNEMPLOYMENT, OCCUPATIONAL WAGE, EXPORT ORIENTATION, IMPORT ORIENTATION, and INCOME. For each of these variables, the corresponding regression coefficient is small and far from statistically significant.

More importantly, and most surprisingly, there is little evidence that the offshorability of an individual's occupation or industry of employment has any bearing on his or her attitudes toward outsourcing. The one exception is an individual's perception of the extent to which he or she has been influenced by outsourcing positively or negatively. We include this variable as an indicator of perceived self-interest.

As shown in Table 1, we further included dummy variables indicating whether a respondent worked in manufacturing or the service sector. We also include the interactions between MANUFACTURING and each of two variables that have been used to measure skill, occupational wages and education, because, empirical studies of manufacturing have found that high skilled workers have benefited financially from outsourcing while less skilled workers have not (Feenstra and Hansen 1996, 1999; Feenstra 2010). Interestingly, none of these variables has a statistically significant effect on outsourcing attitudes, whether entered into the equations separately or in combination. Thus, there is no indication that Americans form opinions about outsourcing based on how this phenomenon has affected or might in the future affect their job or industry of employment.

The one exception to this general pattern is that the estimated coefficients of PERCEIVED EFFECT OF OUTSOURCING ON SELF are statistically significant, indicating that respondents who feel that outsourcing has helped them and their family hold far more favorable views of this phenomenon than individuals who feel they have been harmed by it. Because many more feel negatively as opposed to positively affected by outsourcing (25 percent versus 8 percent, respectively), the net effect of this consideration is to lower support for outsourcing. Because this indicator is part personal experience and part subjective understanding of outsourcing, we return to it in our analyses of subjective understandings and economic knowledge.

As in the case of trade attitudes, there is a gender gap in attitudes toward outsourcing, with women more hostile to this phenomenon than men (Baker 2005; Mayda and Rodrik 2005; Mansfield and Mutz 2009). There is also a racial gap, in that minorities express greater support for outsourcing than whites. Furthermore, more educated respondents have a more favorable view of outsourcing than the less educated. Based on the results in the final column of Table 2, individuals who attended graduate school are about 70-75 percent more likely to consistently favor outsourcing than either individuals with a high school education or those who attended a two-year college or technical school. Respondents who attended graduate school are almost 10 percent more likely to consistently favor outsourcing than respondents with a four-year college education.

If not economic susceptibility to outsourcing's impact, then to what extent do factors associated with individual understanding of outsourcing or non-economic factors explain mass attitudes? To examine this question, Table 2 includes the key variables from Table 1, plus indicators of subjective understanding and non-economic influences on outsourcing attitudes. The evidence suggests that people form such opinions based on how they think outsourcing has affected them, how broadly they define outsourcing, their party affiliation, union membership, economic knowledge, foreign policy attitudes, and attitudes toward outgroups. Further, the larger the number of scenarios involving a foreign country that individuals consider to be outsourcing, the more hostile they are to this phenomenon, since the coefficient estimates of FOREIGN DEFINITION are negative and significant. This finding may reflect a tendency to blame outsourcing for a wider range of problems if it is defined as encompassing a broader array of

overseas activities.¹² In contrast, the coefficient estimates of DOMESTIC DEFINITION are positive and significant. Consequently, respondents who identify outsourcing as a domestic as well as a foreign phenomenon have a more favorable view than respondents who do not consider domestic activity to be outsourcing. In addition, there is a clear partisan split. Democrats are significantly more opposed to outsourcing than unaffiliated individuals, and they are also significantly more hostile to this phenomenon than Republicans. These results are unsurprising, given the pro-labor stance that many Democrats adopt, the pro-business stance of many Republicans, and the criticism that both Senator Kerry and President Barack Obama leveled at companies engaging in this practice during the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections.

It is also unsurprising that union members tend to oppose outsourcing. Based on the results in the last column of Table 2, these individuals are roughly 35 percent less likely to consistently favor outsourcing than respondents who lack a union affiliation. One explanation for this finding is that outsourcing places downward pressure on wages and reduces job security in many of the lower-skilled occupations and industries that tend to be unionized. However, we have already accounted for skill level and whether the industry of employment is threatened by trade, suggesting that union membership is not simply a feature of self-interest.¹³ Instead, unions probably influence attitudes on outsourcing by disseminating information: most major unions oppose outsourcing and promote such views among their rank and file. The AFL-CIO web site,

¹² Recall that one of our foreign scenarios was a situation in which “A car company in another country decides to build a manufacturing plant in the United States.” Less than half of the respondents considered this to be an instance of outsourcing, perhaps because it involves DFI flowing into the US and hence creating jobs in the US. Because respondents have a decidedly more favorable view of this scenario than the others, we excluded it from FOREIGN DEFINITION and included an additional variable in our model indicating whether individuals thought this scenario constituted outsourcing. The coefficient estimate of this additional variable was not statistically significant. Furthermore, making this change has no substantive bearing on the size or significance of FOREIGN DEFINITION or any other variable in our model.

¹³ Interestingly, most union members in our surveys work in non-tradable sectors, such as primary, secondary, and higher education. There is no reason why outsourcing would harm these individuals.

for example, contains four pages designed to dispel “corporate myths” about the benefits of outsourcing (AFL-CIO n.d.). In addition, a recent study co-sponsored by the AFL-CIO attacks outsourcing with even greater vigor, claiming that this phenomenon poses a threat to US national security, creates unnecessary health risks when the production of food is shifted overseas, and jeopardizes the “traditional way of life” for working Americans (Marschall and Clawson 2010: 7).

In contrast, an understanding of economists’ views about trade improves an individual’s opinion about outsourcing. The estimated coefficients of ECONOMISTS’ VIEWS ABOUT TRADE are positive and statistically significant. Moreover, the effects of economic knowledge are substantially large and beyond those of education. Respondents who understand that economists consider free trade to be beneficial are 40 percent more likely to consistently support outsourcing than other individuals. Simply taking an economics course, however, has little bearing on these attitudes. These results suggest that, consistent with the views of some economists, part of the opposition to outsourcing stems from a lack of economic knowledge (Bhagwati, Panagariya, and Srinivasan 2004; Mankiw and Swagel 2006).¹⁴ However, given the cross-sectional nature of the survey, it is also possible that the relationship with economic “knowledge” shown here is more of a rationalization and projection of existing outsourcing preferences than it is an indicator of how knowledge affects preferences.

A number of studies of attitudes toward international trade have concluded that Americans with more formal education tend to hold more favorable attitudes about free trade because highly skilled individuals benefit from trade, while lower skilled individuals do not.

¹⁴ It is also possible that this relationship occurs because well-established “projection” effects are occurring whereby a person projects their own views onto others. In this case, pro-outsourcing individuals would be projecting their views onto economists when asked, rather than being influenced by them.

Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006) challenged this interpretation, maintaining that a college education affects trade opinions by exposing people to theories about the benefits of trade. Our results indicate that economic knowledge does improve attitudes toward outsourcing, though we find no effects from occupational wages. But the inclusion of these indicators does not account for the more general influence of education. Including ECONOMISTS' VIEW OF TRADE and ECONOMICS CLASS in our model has no bearing on the size or significance of the coefficients associated with education.

Finally, and most importantly, attitudes about outsourcing are shaped in powerful ways by one's sense of obligation to those in other countries and one's attitudes toward outgroups. As shown in the fifth column of Table 2, the estimated coefficients of ETHNOCENTRISM, NATIONALISM, and ISOLATIONISM are negative and statistically significant, indicating that there is little support for outsourcing among people who believe the US is superior to other countries, those who hold isolationist views about US involvement in the affairs of other countries, and those who exhibit prejudice toward groups unlike themselves. The effects of these factors are also relatively large. A change from the most globally interventionist attitudes registered by respondents to the most isolationist attitudes increases the predicted probability of consistently opposing outsourcing by almost more than 50 percent. A shift from the least ethnocentric views to the most ethnocentric views increases this predicted value by over 50 percent as well. And a switch from the least nationalist attitudes expressed to the most nationalist views increases this predicted probability by roughly 25 percent.

Not only do ISOLATIONISM, NATIONALISM, and ETHNOCENTRISM bear on preferences about outsourcing, they also dampen the effects of education. After including them in the model, the estimated coefficients of 4-YEAR COLLEGE and GRADUATE SCHOOL become

substantially smaller, dropping by roughly 40 percent. Equally, the strength of the relationship between outsourcing attitudes and both 4-YEAR COLLEGE and GRADUATE SCHOOL becomes attenuated.

Overall, our survey results yield four important findings. First, Americans have strong, consistent, and primarily negative views of outsourcing. Second, these attitudes are not a function of the vulnerability that respondents experience as a result of the occupation and industry in which they work. Third, Americans vary substantially in their subjective understanding of what constitutes outsourcing. Furthermore, individuals' subjective understandings of what defines outsourcing and how they have been influenced by it have important implications for their attitudes toward this practice. Fourth, attitudes toward the "other" play an important role in forming views toward outsourcing. Interestingly, this pattern remains consistent whether it is an attitude toward treatment of another country (as in isolationism), a relative assessment of one's own country (as in nationalism), or attitudes toward a racial outgroup relative to one's own ingroup (as in ethnocentrism).

Outsourcing Experiment

Ideally, we would confirm the causal nature of the significant relationships documented in Tables 1 and 2 by experimentally manipulating each of these independent variables. However, not all of these concepts can be altered in short-term or even longer-term studies. Ethnocentrism, for example, is believed to be particularly intransigent. Nonetheless, we used an experiment to confirm some of the causal relationships, and to better understand the impact of people's understanding of and response to the term outsourcing.

Toward that end, we designed a population-based survey experiment (Mutz 2011) that systematically manipulated three independent factors in order to assess their impact on attitudes toward outsourcing. Together, these experimental treatments form a 2 by 2 by 2 factorial design, with eight total conditions.

To assess the causal impact of nationalism, we assigned all respondents to receive either an experimental treatment promoting lower or higher levels of national superiority. Respondents read one of two statements designed either to encourage or discourage feelings of national superiority before they were asked the questions about outsourcing. Neither manipulation mentioned anything about trade or outsourcing. Instead, the statements emphasized pride in “American traditions of hard work, decency, honesty and innovation” or shame regarding “a system that rewards greed and dishonesty over hard work and decency.” Manipulation checks included later in the survey using the same index as in the survey confirmed that these statements did, in fact, significantly alter levels of nationalism. NATIONALISM was significantly greater in the high national superiority condition than in the low superiority condition ($F = 7.63, p < .01$).

A second experimental factor altered the wording of the questions addressing attitudes toward outsourcing so that the substance of the items was the same, but the word itself was not mentioned. Based on our survey findings of strong views, but limited understanding or agreement on what the issue actually is, we suspected that attitudes toward outsourcing were highly symbolic in nature. People may have a strong, knee-jerk reaction to the term that is not necessarily rooted in thoughts about its substance or consequences. In our survey, two of the three opinion items included the term outsourcing, and the third included the most widely recognized example of outsourcing—telephone call centers. Thus, from those survey data it is impossible to tell how much of the opposition was driven by the term’s symbolic value. We

altered the questions in the experiment by systematically including or excluding the term in a factor completely orthogonal to NATIONALISM. Minor alterations to our measures either included or excluded the term as shown in brackets below:

1. *Some people think that it is a bad thing when a company in the US purchases services from a foreign company in order to save money, rather than producing these services itself. Others think that [OUTSOURCING] is a good thing because it allows the company to save money. Do you generally favor or oppose this practice [OF OUTSOURCING]?*
2. *Recently, some American companies have been [OUTSOURCING, THAT IS,] hiring workers in other countries to replace workers in the U.S. who are paid higher wages. An example of this is people who take customer service telephone calls. Do you think the government should encourage or discourage [OUTSOURCING/THIS PRACTICE] or stay out of this matter?*
3. *Some say that having jobs done by people in other countries is a bad idea and should be discouraged by the government. Others say that [THIS/OUTSOURCING] saves companies money and allows them to sell goods more cheaply, so the government should encourage it. Which of the following statements comes closest to your views about what government should do?*

Finally, a third factor attempted unsuccessfully to manipulate individual's definitions of outsourcing by informing them in the course of the question about the types of activities that are included in the definition. While we were not able to alter respondents' ideas about what constitutes outsourcing, the extent of endorsement of foreign definitions and domestic definitions remained very powerful predictor of attitudes.

We relied on a representative national sample of just under 2000 currently working or previously working Americans, using the same specifications for qualification as in the 2007 survey.¹⁵ Crossing these three factors created eight experimental conditions to which all respondents were randomly assigned. The three-items described above created a highly reliable

¹⁵ This survey was conducted in July 2009.

index of attitudes toward outsourcing which served as our dependent variable, OPINION TOWARD OUTSOURCING (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

For the two successfully manipulated experimental factors, NATIONALISM and MENTION OF OUTSOURCING, our hypothesis was that the term “outsourcing” (as opposed to the practice itself) serves as a symbol that, together with high levels of nationalism, will trigger opposition to outsourcing. In other words, it is patriotic to oppose outsourcing, and one is indeed a “Benedict Arnold” if one supports it. The term itself stimulates a form of economic jingoism, whereby nationalistic sentiment seems consistent with expressing this “anti-outgroup” policy preference. In statistical terms, what we expected was an interaction between presence of the term outsourcing in the question and high levels of nationalism that in combination would depress support outsourcing.

Experimental Results

An analysis of variance including the two orthogonal experimental factors (LOW/HIGH NATIONALISM and MENTION OF OUTSOURCING) suggested that neither main effects was statistically significant, but the anticipated interaction was as predicted ($F = 8.94, p < .01$). As shown in Figure 2, perceived national superiority significantly reduced support for this practice, but only when the term outsourcing was used in the question ($F = 4.01, p < .05$). When the same question was asked without mentioning the term outsourcing, the level of support for the policy was the same regardless of the national superiority condition to which a respondent was assigned ($F = .99, p = .32$). Although the upward slope of the dashed line looks somewhat similar to the downward slope of the solid one, the greater variance in estimates of means when the policy is not explicitly called outsourcing renders it statistically indistinguishable from no change

whatsoever. In other words, if we do not explicitly call it outsourcing, people do not know what they think about the policy itself. The pattern observed in our survey data reflects the negative impact shown in the solid line in Figure 2. But importantly, the same pattern does not occur in the absence of the term outsourcing.

Overall, these results make it clear that nationalism does indeed play a causal role in influencing attitudes toward outsourcing. Inducing higher levels of nationalism has a substantial impact on opinions about outsourcing. But when we ask about outsourcing without mentioning the word itself, respondents do not exhibit the same negative reaction from nationalism. In contrast, the term itself, combined with feelings of national superiority, triggers negative outgroup—or more aptly, outcountry—attitudes. Using our manipulation check index of nationalism, we further examined the possibility that the term outsourcing might itself trigger higher levels of nationalistic sentiment, but we did not find this to be the case. The mention of outsourcing did not trigger higher levels of national superiority, whereas the national superiority manipulation did. Based on these findings, we suggest that it is the term outsourcing and whatever symbolic baggage it carries more than the substance of this issue that spurs negative outgroup anxiety among those who feel most positively about their nation.

Conclusion

Most economists agree that outsourcing generates benefits for countries as a whole. Like international trade, outsourcing helps to allocate factors of production efficiently and enhance the economic welfare of countries. But like trade, outsourcing also has distributional consequences: some segments of society will gain as a result of this phenomenon, while other segments will lose. These losses are likely to include both jobs and income. Although most estimates are that

outsourcing has produced little actual job loss to date, there is a widespread fear that this phenomenon will harm many American workers in the future since many US jobs are potentially offshorable. Consequently, while outsourcing yields economic benefits, it also creates economic and political costs.

Indeed, Blinder (2009a: 43) concludes that “offshoring may be one of the biggest political issues in economics over the next generation.” Nonetheless, the politics of outsourcing are poorly understood. Especially little has been known about public attitudes toward outsourcing, except that American workers are concerned about it.

This study has addressed two questions central to understanding outsourcing. First, do citizens, like economists, view outsourcing as essentially a form of open trade? Although opinions on these matters are correlated, trade opinions are distributed roughly normally in the population, Americans are generally hostile to outsourcing. Moreover, they—together with many experts—are confused about exactly what it is. Furthermore, the more types of foreign economic activity that they think constitute foreign outsourcing, the more they dislike it.

Second, we shed new light on the origins of attitudes toward outsourcing. Whereas much of the discussion about outsourcing has focused on its economic causes and consequences, Americans tend to view this phenomenon through a different lens. There is little evidence that whether an individual works in an occupation or an industry that is offshorable has any bearing on his or her attitude about outsourcing. Those who perceive themselves as having been adversely affected by outsourcing are more negatively disposed toward the practice. However, these perceptions do not follow along lines suggesting that those most vulnerable are driving the negativity. Additional research will need to address the origins of these perceptions; that is, why individuals feel that they have been affected by outsourcing.

Far clearer are the political underpinnings of outsourcing attitudes. Democrats are more hostile to this phenomenon than Republicans and independents, reflecting the more anti-trade stance taken by most Democrats and the more pro-business stance adopted by most Republicans. Union members are especially hostile to outsourcing, which probably stems from the steady stream of criticism mounted by most unions against this practice.

Moreover, Americans tend to view outsourcing in terms of ingroup-outgroup dynamics. For many individuals, the “out” in outsourcing seems to refer to the outgroup, that is, any group other than the one in which he or she claims membership. If one’s own nation is considered to be superior to others, then attitudes toward outsourcing will be more negative. The less people think of outgroups relative to their own ingroup, the more they oppose outsourcing—even when those outgroups are racial and ethnic minorities within their own country. Likewise, those who do not want to engage with foreign countries are especially hostile to outsourcing. Opposition to outsourcing appears to be part of a broader worldview that defines people as “us” or “them.”

Nearly half a century ago, various distinguished observers advanced the argument that nationalism and isolationism shape foreign economic policy (Bauer, Pool, and Dexter 1963; Johnson 1965). However, this view has fallen out of favor more recently, supplanted by models that emphasize the material self-interest of countries and people. These newer models go a long way toward explaining trade policy, especially at the national and international level. But they have little traction in explaining the foreign policy attitudes of the mass public.

Our results have important implications for understanding public opposition to outsourcing. Attitudes toward this policy are obviously part of a broader worldview that focuses on taking care of one’s own—whether via isolationist foreign policy or support for people of the same race and ethnicity.

If outsourcing is economically beneficial and policy makers want to generate public support for this practice, they need to do a better job of framing this issue. Outsourcing by another name would, indeed, be more palatable to the public. Our findings suggest that the term used for this policy is not without consequence. Indeed, outsourcing is symbolic of being un-American to many. Further, “outsourcing” may have been terminologically doomed from the start in the eyes of the mass public. After all, “trade” implies that all parties obtain some benefit from a transaction; “outsourcing,” on the other hand, demands an outgroup that is opposed to the ingroup, an “us” in opposition to “them.” In order to call a practice outsourcing, a line must be drawn that distinguishes who is in and who is outside the group of concern. Interestingly, this is not always the country, or even the state. Recently some roofing companies in Pennsylvania claim to have lost substantial amounts of business to outsourcing.¹⁶ In this case, their complaints are directed at the Amish within their own state, and even within the same city, because Amish roofers are consistently underbidding them. Because the term outsourcing almost requires people to divide the world into insiders and outsiders, those prone to make such distinctions are especially likely to oppose this practice, regardless of how they might be affected economically.

Policy makers have gone to great lengths at times to suggest that outsourcing is not the same as trade, even when by most economists’ accounts, that is precisely what it is. Is the underlying fear that the extremely negative attitudes toward outsourcing will taint the more evenly divided views of trade? Trade opinions might suffer, but advocates of outsourcing might also improve support for it by associating it with trade, or at least by association with a policy that suggests some inherent benefits for both the ingroup and the outgroup.

¹⁶ *Philadelphia Inquirer* 29 November 2010: D1 and D7.

In addition, these results point to the delicate balance involved when promoting positive “in-country” views among the populace of one’s own country, without denigrating attitudes toward others. Notably, our experiment was done at the height of economic malaise, with strong negative feelings toward the US among its own citizenry. And yet, perceptions of national superiority were nonetheless both manipulable and effective in promoting opposition to outsourcing. Although many have linked economic decline to perceptions of personal economic threat, much of the hostility toward outsourcing stems from concerns that US workers are at risk of losing jobs to “others,” not just that they are vulnerable to job loss.

Table 1. Support for Outsourcing due to Economic Vulnerability

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Male	0.300** (0.117)	0.268** (0.125)	0.267** (0.125)	0.257** (0.125)	0.252** (0.121)
Race	0.286** (0.133)	0.237* (0.134)	0.235* (0.135)	0.245* (0.135)	0.238* (0.134)
Age	-0.008 (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)	-0.008* (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)
Income	-0.042 (0.035)	-0.028 (0.036)	-0.025 (0.035)	-0.028 (0.036)	-0.030 (0.036)
Personally Unemployed	0.050 (0.285)	0.048 (0.278)	0.055 (0.279)	0.074 (0.279)	0.060 (0.278)
2-Year College	0.061 (0.146)	0.147 (0.148)	0.141 (0.148)	0.061 (0.159)	0.150 (0.148)
4-Year College	0.500*** (0.163)	0.576*** (0.169)	0.565*** (0.169)	0.530*** (0.176)	0.590*** (0.166)
Graduate School	0.824*** (0.215)	0.839*** (0.224)	0.848*** (0.223)	0.705*** (0.210)	0.874*** (0.215)
Occupational Wage	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Export Orientation	0.151 (0.194)	0.259 (0.214)	0.249 (0.215)	0.289 (0.224)	0.261 (0.203)
Import Orientation	-0.142 (0.179)	-0.246 (0.179)	-0.239 (0.180)	-0.282 (0.191)	-0.248 (0.187)
Perceived Effect of Outsourcing on Self		0.834*** (0.119)	0.835*** (0.119)	0.833*** (0.120)	0.834*** (0.119)
Manufacturing		0.110 (0.696)	-0.394 (0.824)	-0.102 (0.708)	
Service		0.127 (0.149)	0.129 (0.149)	0.143 (0.149)	
Manufacturing × Occupational Wage			0.000 (0.000)		
Manufacturing × 2-Year College				0.651 (0.398)	
Manufacturing × 4-Year College				0.128 (0.549)	
Manufacturing × Graduate School				1.481 (1.345)	
Offshorable					0.002 (0.003)
cut1	0.387 (0.305)	2.003*** (0.554)	1.986*** (0.556)	2.024*** (0.557)	1.924*** (0.382)
cut2	3.579*** (0.393)	5.263*** (0.613)	5.248*** (0.615)	5.297*** (0.611)	5.185*** (0.445)
Log-likelihood	-1535.666	-1490.405	-1489.551	-1486.433	-1490.546
N	2060	2060	2060	2060	2060

Note: Entries are ordered logit estimates, with robust standard errors in parentheses. Two-tailed tests of statistical significance are conducted for all coefficient estimates. Statistical significance is indicated as follows: * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Support for Outsourcing due to Subjective Understanding and Non-Economic Factors

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Male	0.250** (0.122)	0.222* (0.122)	0.254** (0.121)	0.277** (0.122)	0.208* (0.122)	0.265** (0.126)	0.261** (0.133)
Race	0.236* (0.138)	0.308** (0.137)	0.254* (0.135)	0.197 (0.145)	0.248* (0.135)	0.191 (0.148)	0.235 (0.175)
Age	-0.008* (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)	-0.008* (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)	-0.010** (0.005)	-0.006 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.005)
Income	-0.023 (0.037)	-0.033 (0.036)	-0.018 (0.036)	-0.039 (0.036)	-0.037 (0.036)	-0.046 (0.037)	-0.068* (0.040)
Personally Unemployed	-0.015 (0.291)	0.085 (0.274)	0.030 (0.279)	0.041 (0.287)	0.059 (0.287)	0.030 (0.296)	-0.183 (0.310)
2-Year College	0.194 (0.152)	0.162 (0.149)	0.171 (0.148)	0.167 (0.149)	0.152 (0.154)	-0.005 (0.156)	0.051 (0.171)
4-Year College	0.633*** (0.168)	0.622*** (0.168)	0.591*** (0.168)	0.658*** (0.169)	0.577*** (0.185)	0.382** (0.178)	0.509** (0.204)
Graduate School	0.898*** (0.221)	0.930*** (0.217)	0.873*** (0.216)	0.956*** (0.220)	0.810*** (0.226)	0.427* (0.249)	0.578** (0.262)
Occupational Wage	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Export Orientation	0.290 (0.204)	0.261 (0.197)	0.245 (0.201)	0.213 (0.198)	0.285 (0.210)	0.220 (0.210)	0.149 (0.199)
Import Orientation	-0.272 (0.188)	-0.245 (0.182)	-0.232 (0.186)	-0.202 (0.183)	-0.268 (0.194)	-0.201 (0.194)	-0.139 (0.183)
Perceived Effect of Outsourcing on Self	0.807*** (0.121)	0.814*** (0.120)	0.832*** (0.119)	0.856*** (0.121)	0.843*** (0.122)	0.839*** (0.122)	0.824*** (0.129)
Foreign Definition	-0.216*** (0.051)						-0.277*** (0.053)
Domestic Definition	0.492*** (0.125)						0.501*** (0.133)
Democrat		-0.345** (0.141)					-0.447*** (0.156)
Republican		0.055 (0.147)					0.053 (0.163)
Union Membership			-0.546*** (0.200)				-0.433** (0.220)
Local Unemployment				-0.650 (3.281)			-0.149 (3.583)
Economists' View of Trade					0.403*** (0.130)		0.361** (0.142)
Economics Class					-0.123 (0.145)		-0.121 (0.159)
Nationalism						-0.160** (0.069)	-0.187** (0.076)
Isolationism						-0.381*** (0.066)	-0.339*** (0.070)
Ethnocentrism						-0.129* (0.068)	-0.131* (0.072)
cut1	1.347*** (0.421)	1.773*** (0.387)	1.942*** (0.379)	1.895*** (0.408)	1.909*** (0.385)	1.834*** (0.417)	1.071** (0.490)
cut2	4.647*** (0.462)	5.044*** (0.449)	5.210*** (0.444)	5.119*** (0.469)	5.179*** (0.447)	5.282*** (0.506)	4.600*** (0.555)
Log-likelihood	-1444.347	-1484.731	-1484.907	-1450.403	-1480.630	-1289.180	-1194.442
N	2027	2060	2060	2013	2056	1876	1814

Note: Entries are ordered logit estimates, with robust standard errors in parentheses. Two-tailed tests of statistical significance are conducted for all coefficient estimates. Statistical significance is indicated as follows: * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Figure 1. The Percentage of Respondents Who Consistently Oppose Outsourcing and Trade, Consistently Support Outsourcing and Trade, or Have Inconsistent Attitudes.

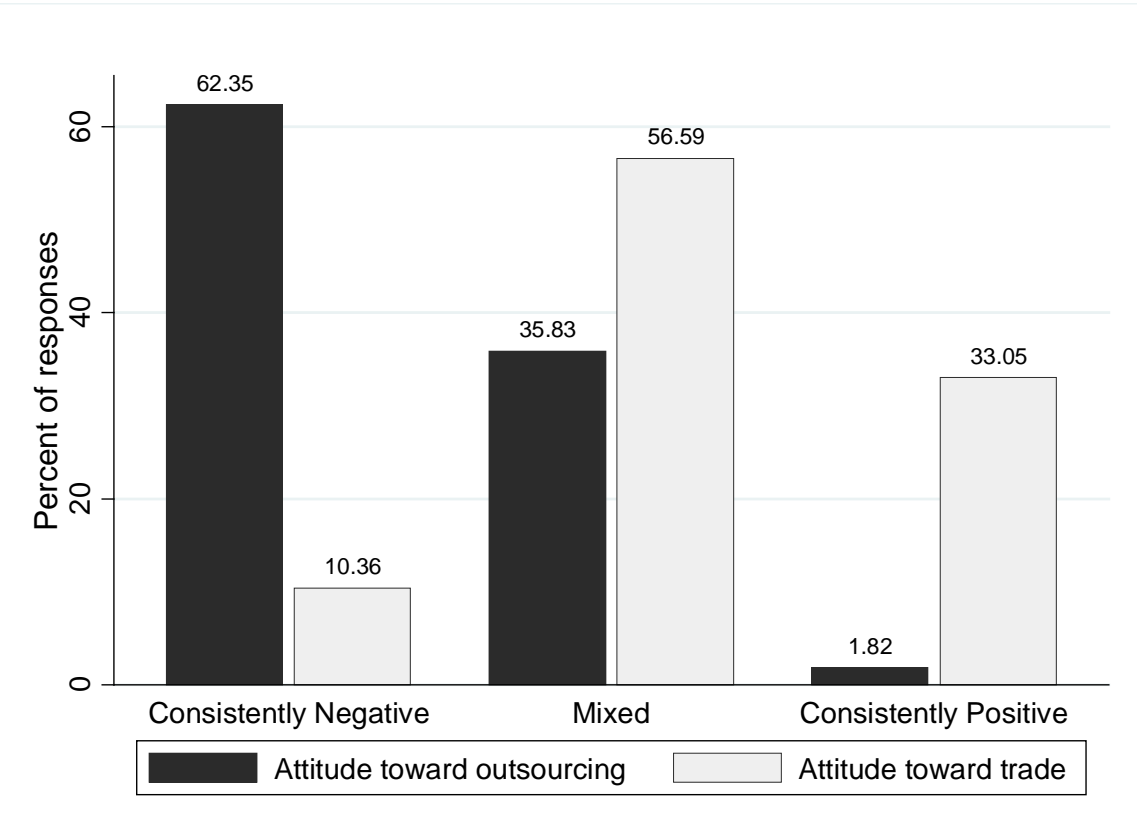
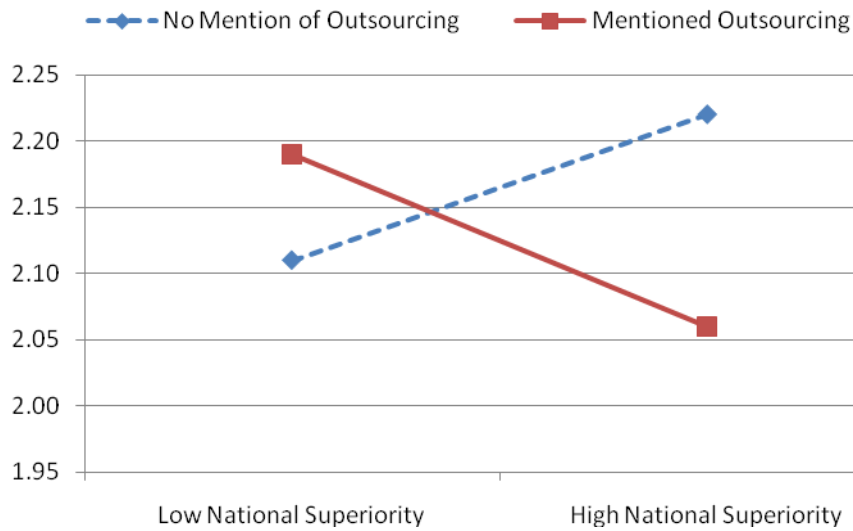


Figure 2. Support for Outsourcing by Nationalism and Mention of Outsourcing



Note: The interaction between Mention of Outsourcing and Nationalism is statistically significant ($F = 8.94, p < .01$), while the main effects were not. The solid line represents a statistically significant decline, with higher levels of nationalism when the term outsourcing is mentioned. The broken line does not increase significantly, partly due to higher variance in responses to the outsourcing questions when the term itself was not mentioned.

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Appendix A: Estimation using Continuous Measures of Outsourcing Attitudes

Table A1. Support for Outsourcing due to Economic Vulnerability Using the Continuous Form of the Dependent Variable

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Male	0.171*** (0.052)	0.149*** (0.052)	0.148*** (0.052)	0.144*** (0.052)	0.149*** (0.050)
Race	0.179*** (0.062)	0.151** (0.060)	0.150** (0.060)	0.155*** (0.059)	0.149** (0.060)
Age	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)
Income	-0.022 (0.016)	-0.016 (0.015)	-0.014 (0.015)	-0.016 (0.015)	-0.018 (0.016)
Personally Unemployed	-0.006 (0.115)	0.004 (0.109)	0.008 (0.109)	0.017 (0.109)	0.008 (0.108)
2-Year College	0.046 (0.062)	0.082 (0.060)	0.079 (0.060)	0.048 (0.063)	0.079 (0.060)
4-Year College	0.243*** (0.076)	0.265*** (0.075)	0.260*** (0.075)	0.241*** (0.077)	0.263*** (0.073)
Graduate School	0.537*** (0.106)	0.535*** (0.107)	0.540*** (0.107)	0.462*** (0.093)	0.541*** (0.102)
Occupational Wage	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Export Orientation	0.059 (0.092)	0.100 (0.094)	0.094 (0.094)	0.113 (0.096)	0.100 (0.090)
Import Orientation	-0.048 (0.083)	-0.093 (0.076)	-0.088 (0.077)	-0.107 (0.079)	-0.088 (0.081)
Perceived Effect of Outsourcing on Self		0.359*** (0.045)	0.360*** (0.045)	0.357*** (0.045)	0.360*** (0.045)
Manufacturing		0.084 (0.324)	-0.206 (0.391)	-0.011 (0.318)	
Service		0.034 (0.061)	0.035 (0.061)	0.043 (0.061)	
Manufacturing× Occupational Wage			0.000 (0.000)		
Manufacturing× 2-Year College				0.244 (0.189)	
Manufacturing× 4-Year College				0.105 (0.268)	
Manufacturing× Graduate School				0.727 (0.583)	
Offshorable					0.002 (0.001)
Constant	0.153 (0.143)	-0.559** (0.239)	-0.547** (0.239)	-0.568** (0.238)	-0.524*** (0.153)
R ²	0.055	0.099	0.101	0.104	0.101
Adjusted R ²	0.050	0.093	0.094	0.096	0.095
N	2060	2060	2060	2060	2060

Note: Entries are ordinary least squares estimates, with robust standard errors in parentheses. Two-tailed tests of statistical significance are conducted for all coefficient estimates. Statistical significance is indicated as follows: * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table A2. Support for Outsourcing due to Subjective Understanding and Non-Economic Factors Using the Continuous Form of the Dependent Variable

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Male	0.143*** (0.050)	0.132*** (0.050)	0.148*** (0.050)	0.147*** (0.051)	0.119** (0.050)	0.151*** (0.051)	0.134*** (0.052)
Race	0.147** (0.061)	0.184*** (0.060)	0.156*** (0.060)	0.144** (0.065)	0.154*** (0.060)	0.109* (0.066)	0.136* (0.075)
Age	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.005** (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Income	-0.015 (0.016)	-0.019 (0.016)	-0.012 (0.016)	-0.020 (0.016)	-0.021 (0.016)	-0.020 (0.015)	-0.030* (0.016)
Personally Unemployed	-0.022 (0.112)	0.023 (0.107)	-0.001 (0.110)	0.029 (0.112)	0.001 (0.110)	0.028 (0.103)	-0.015 (0.106)
2-Year College	0.102* (0.061)	0.088 (0.060)	0.089 (0.060)	0.086 (0.060)	0.075 (0.061)	0.013 (0.061)	0.020 (0.063)
4-Year College	0.279*** (0.073)	0.281*** (0.074)	0.267*** (0.074)	0.288*** (0.075)	0.244*** (0.080)	0.169** (0.079)	0.172** (0.084)
Graduate School	0.545*** (0.103)	0.568*** (0.103)	0.541*** (0.103)	0.568*** (0.106)	0.494*** (0.105)	0.299** (0.119)	0.294*** (0.114)
Occupational Wage	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Export Orientation	0.107 (0.088)	0.100 (0.086)	0.096 (0.090)	0.095 (0.091)	0.114 (0.094)	0.079 (0.090)	0.068 (0.089)
Import Orientation	-0.092 (0.080)	-0.086 (0.078)	-0.083 (0.082)	-0.082 (0.083)	-0.099 (0.085)	-0.063 (0.082)	-0.053 (0.081)
Perceived Effect of Outsourcing on Self	0.341*** (0.046)	0.347*** (0.045)	0.357*** (0.046)	0.374*** (0.046)	0.363*** (0.046)	0.327*** (0.044)	0.313*** (0.046)
Foreign Definition	-0.089*** (0.022)						-0.104*** (0.023)
Domestic Definition	0.194*** (0.054)						0.183*** (0.054)
Democrat		-0.153*** (0.055)					-0.163*** (0.057)
Republican		0.042 (0.066)					0.055 (0.068)
Union Membership			-0.188*** (0.071)				-0.112 (0.074)
Local Unemployment				-0.836 (1.401)			-0.699 (1.429)
Economists' View of Trade					0.232*** (0.057)		0.193*** (0.058)
Economics Class					-0.047 (0.061)		-0.027 (0.063)
Nationalism						-0.075** (0.030)	-0.088*** (0.031)
Isolationism						-0.169*** (0.026)	-0.137*** (0.027)
Ethnocentrism						-0.059** (0.027)	-0.064** (0.026)
Constant	-0.250 (0.175)	-0.440*** (0.158)	-0.514*** (0.152)	-0.481*** (0.168)	-0.502*** (0.153)	-0.387** (0.163)	-0.064 (0.196)
R ²	0.121	0.106	0.103	0.104	0.112	0.130	0.180
Adjusted R ²	0.115	0.100	0.097	0.098	0.106	0.123	0.169
N	2027	2060	2060	2013	2056	1876	1814

Note: Entries are ordinary least squares estimates, with robust standard errors in parentheses. Two-tailed tests of statistical significance are

conducted for all coefficient estimates. Statistical significance is indicated as follows: * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.