

Labor Markets and Cultural Values: Evidence from Japanese and American Views About Care-giving Immigrants*

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Abstract

One overlooked reason for the persistence of distinct cultural values across rich democracies, we argue, is a country's labor market structure. Parents seeking to position their children for long term success would do well to instill values consistent with requirements of the labor market in the country where their children are likely to work. To the extent that labor markets are fluid, as in the U.S., parents should teach their children to be resourceful and creative. In countries like Japan with relatively rigid labor markets, where workers have one chance to land a long-term contract with a leading company, parents instead should instill the values of hard work and respect for authority. We find evidence consistent with this argument in survey experiments about attitudes in the U.S. and Japan about the desirability of employing immigrants for care work, and what values the immigrant care workers should hold. We also find

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evidence of indirect norm-creation. American and Japanese respondents prefer immigrants — not just care-giving immigrants — whose values align with their country's type of valued human capital.

Introduction

To say that Americans are individualistic and Japanese are collectivist is to traffic in outworn stereotypes. If economic development shapes cultural values, as “modernization” theorists suggest ([Lipset and Rokkan 1967](#)), norms and values are always on the move (see also [Chang 2008](#), pp. 167-188). The powerful forces of socialization and cultural inertia must compete with new incentives faced by a younger generation of citizens whose life experiences are likely to differ from those of their forebearers. Whatever the cultural histories of nations, it is reasonable to expect some convergence of values in rich democracies and diversified capitalist economies with populations that are heterogeneous with respect to occupation, income, and life experiences; as these economies have become more and more similar, we would expect that their cultures would converge as well. This should be especially true for young people, as they are the ones most affected by economic change. Further, their inconceivably broad access to information, including from overseas, likely amplifies the effects of their own new experiences. If anything given the convergence in economies and in information, cultural change should not only be extensive but also accelerating. Yet, we still see profound differences in the values that wealthy societies hold.

In this paper, we explore reasons why certain cultural differences may nevertheless persist across capitalist democracies. We focus on the importance of the labor market in shaping the values that individuals hold. The U.S. and Japan offer a particularly clear pair of different labor markets in which career success is likely to be advanced by holding correspondingly different sets of social values. Market diversification has undoubtedly attenuated the association between values and career success in both the U.S. and Japan, and there is a strong premium on education in all rich democracies. At the same time, however, core portions of the American and Japanese labor markets continue to operate in distinguishable ways. In the U.S., where weak labor market protections require workers to be resourceful and creative to manage likely employment changes, parents do in fact seek to instill their children with

these values. By contrast, in Japan, where the best jobs are lifetime contracts with a single firm, parents are more likely to promote the values of hard work and respect for authority. These observations speak to the importance of material incentives underlying not only cultural change – as modernization theory predicts – but also cultural persistence.

Gauging the effects of labor market incentives on cultural values and practices is a daunting task. One place to look is at child rearing norms; but because these are hard to measure directly, we employ an indirect strategy to measure attitudes towards hiring immigrants for care work. We might expect that Japanese and Americans alike are less willing to hire immigrants for childcare than for elder care because the former includes a larger education component that is consistent with the premium on education that advanced democracies share in common. We also expect Japanese and American respondents to prefer immigrants who can help inculcate in their children values that are consistent with success in a rigid labor market: hard work and respect for authority in Japan and creativity and resourcefulness in the U.S.

We test our argument with original, cross-national survey conjoint experiments from Japan and the U.S. to gauge willingness to allow immigrant workers to care for their children, and what values those immigrants should help to instill. To separate attitudes about child development and child rearing from attitudes towards immigrants more generally, we ask respondents if they are willing to hire hypothetical immigrants for any of three jobs: (1) childcare; (2) elder care; and (3) a non-specified job. Although our cross-national design cannot control for unobserved time-invariant country heterogeneity, comparing the childcare conjoint with that of elder care within each country helps us to separate the human capital component of respondents' preferences.

Against the conventional wisdom (and our expectations) that Japanese respondents hold more negative views against immigrants, in particular for childcare, American and Japanese respondents are equally reluctant to hire immigrants for childcare and for elder care. But

in line with our argument, we find that respondents in both countries would prefer to hire immigrants who embrace the values consistent with success in their respective labor markets. In these two important economies, labor markets structure preferences for child rearing that, in turn, become widely held cultural values.

Although our experiments encompass only two advanced economies, we open a line of inquiry about the way structural differences in labor markets may shape the trade-offs people make in the rearing of children, and the implications those trade-offs have for preferences about immigration.¹ An intriguing line of future research would be to investigate how cultural values might outlast changes in labor markets, leaving society with suboptimal values.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the following section, we elaborate our theoretical framework about the possible effects of labor markets on cultural values. We then introduce our research design, followed by a discussion of our findings. The last section concludes with a summary of the paper’s contributions and some policy implications.

Theory: Labor Markets and Cultural Values

Culture, which we take to mean “The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society” (Oxford English Dictionary), remains one of political economy’s most intriguing but least well understood concepts. Decades of empirical studies document deviations of human behavior from what would be predicted by narrow conceptions of economic rationality alone (Davis and Holt 1993; Kagel and Roth 1995; Fernandez 2001). Still, attributing to culture any behavior that cannot easily be pinned to self interest is tantamount to elevating culture from the error term to causal status, which surely is equally sloppy in

¹As described below, we also ran a survey in Germany with the same design, with the thought that German labor markets lie somewhere between American and Japanese labor markets on the flexibility dimension, although it may be the case that Germany’s pattern of vocational training leading to long-term manufacturing work does not place Germany neatly on a continuum of flexible to rigid labor markets exemplified by the U.S.-Japan pair. In any case, however, the survey faced technical difficulties and there were not any meaningful results (see also below).

the opposite direction.

At least two promising avenues of scholarship seek to explain the emergence and persistence of cultural beliefs and practices. One approach explores how human evolution in complex contexts of cooperation and conflict may select attributes that otherwise defy economic rationality, including emotional displays ([Frank 1988](#)), risk aversion ([Robson 2001](#); [Robson and Samuelson 2011](#); [2019](#)), or costly punishment strategies ([Fehr and Schmidt 1999](#)). This approach unearths commonalities within the human species, but is less useful in its current form to explain persistent differences across societies.

Our approach is closer to a second stream of scholarship that anchors cultural values and their persistence in historical turning points that occurred in the deep past: plough use in agriculture to explain persistent sexism ([Alesina, Giuliano and Nunn 2013](#)); the timing of literacy ([Tabellini 2010](#)) or proximity to coastal trade ([Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2005](#)) to explain economic development; or the proximity to urban centers to explain proclivities towards political representation ([Stasavage 2010](#); [Dincecco and Onorato 2017](#)). An open question, though, is the degree to which the cultural beliefs and practices that may emerge endogenously as coordination devices ([Habyarimana et al. 2007](#); [Henrich 2000](#); [Jackson and Xing 2014](#); [Kreps 1990](#), pp. 90-142) may be perpetuated by groups that disproportionately benefit from them.

Our focus in this paper is on attitudinal differences between the U.S. and Japan, particularly around child rearing ([Yokoe 1970](#); [Shigaki 1983](#); [Yamada 2004](#)). Key historical turning points credited with ongoing behavioral patterns are judged by empirical evidence and are ever-subject to debate; the onus rests on scholars to show rather than assume their formative importance and persistence. Too much cultural commentary, including about Japanese culture, fails to establish continuity from a fabled past. [Wittfogel \(1957\)](#)'s claim, for example, that irrigation-dependent agriculture required the development of collectivist institutions in Japan and elsewhere, fails to consider more recent periods of Japanese civil war (spanning

from the 13th century through 1600) when shifting military alliances repeatedly upended traditional orders and practices. Bushido, roughly translated as “the way of the warrior,” is sometimes taken to mean that loyalty is a deeply ingrained cultural value, whereas warriors in fact routinely shifted sides until after 1600 when, under Tokugawa hegemony, it no longer profited them to do so (for exceptions to the view that Japanese have been conformist from time immemorial, see, for example, [Ohnuki-Tierney \(2002\)](#) and [Souyri \(2001\)](#)). Japan’s culture has changed frequently and dramatically, and the “group think” during World War II was more coercive than the lore about Japanese culture typically acknowledges.

Japanese employment patterns since the industrialization also call into question the historical legacy approach. The postwar period employment patterns, in which top firms offered life-time contracts in exchange for loyalty and the willingness to invest in firm-specific human capital, are observationally in line with the [Wittfogel \(1957\)](#) or *bushido* variants of the Japanese collectivist ethic. A closer examination, however, reveals that Japanese labor markets before World War I were extremely fluid ([Taira 1970](#); [Gordon 1985](#); [Rich 1990](#)). Japanese politics has never supported strong labor protections typical of the coalition governments in Western Europe; it was, rather, rapid economic growth during World War I and then following World War II that motivated firms to compete for scarce skilled labor with promises of lifetime employment and seniority-based pay. These labor market institutions are of recent vintage, not an outgrowth of cultural values from time immemorial ([Tanaka 1981](#); [Hashimoto 1979](#); [Kanemoto and MacLeod 1991](#); [Kume 1998](#)). Still, the current Japanese corporate culture seems to have persisted at least from the post-war period till today. Further, although slower economic growth from the 1990s has reduced the number of long term labor contracts as a proportion of the workforce, firms continue to compete for the “best” human capital with promises of life time employment ([Song 2014](#)). This also suggests that the relative gains for workers who obtain a top job are even higher than before ([Shimizutani and Yokoyama 2009](#)).

American labor markets, other than perhaps during a brief period in the New Deal, have

been and remain fluid ([Lindblom 1948](#); [Blanchard and Gali 2010](#)). Employers face relatively few political or legal constraints in the hiring, promoting, or firing workers. The U.S. is considered at the high end of a global continuum of labor market mobility, where, to put things positively, workers have more options in skill investment and can also more easily change companies and even professions mid-career. As of 2012, 27.2% of American workers had been with their job or company for more than ten years, compared to 47.0% in Japan (calculated from [OECD n.d.](#)). In 2018, the average number of years that U.S. workers had been with their current employer was 4.2 years, compared to 12 years for Japanese workers ([OECD n.d.](#)).

Labor Market Rigidity and the Role of Education

Although the return to education is large in all rich democracies, and is growing ([Autor 2014](#)), we argue the role of education differs between countries because of variation in the rigidity of labor markets. Countries like Japan with long term labor contracts, in which workers lose seniority upon leaving one job and seeking another, put a high premium on getting the “right” job immediately upon graduation. The first job, and the educational opportunities that increase the chances of getting it, constitute an important gateway to success. [Hirasawa \(2010\)](#) finds that attending top-tier universities in Japan is a significant predictor of landing a job in a major Japanese firm and of ending up in a high-prestige occupation (see also [Higuchi 1994](#); [Hirasawa 2011](#)). Because of the seniority system of pay and advancement, workers have one chance to grab hold of the corporate ladder from the bottom rung (see also [Estevez-Abe, Iversen and Soskice 2001](#)). Studies also show that among those who have been hired at a major Japanese firm, graduating from top universities also increases a worker’s chance of being promoted to higher management positions ([Ishida, Spilerman and Su 1997](#)).² Japanese firms also prefer to train their best workers in-house. On-

²One may wonder whether some parents, in particular in Japan, have an incentive to educate sons more than daughters because the Japanese labor markets still discriminate against women and many women quit

the-job training enhances the value of long term labor contracts, and disinclines employers to employ workers with graduate degrees such as an MBA or JD and post-graduate certifications from actuarial or financial analyst exams.

These employment differences underscore Japan's one-shot labor market compared to the U.S. from the standpoint of a graduate seeking a first job. The U.S. labor market also places a relatively high premium on education, but because the U.S. has one of the most mobile labor markets in the world, there is wider scope for workers to pick and choose the elements of human capital in which they wish to invest. And even if children cannot get in the best university and find the best possible job right after college graduation, they can still seek for graduate degrees and increase their chance of getting good jobs.

Because labor markets shape career opportunities and constraints, the personal values that best equip workers to succeed in these labor markets are also likely to differ significantly. In a mobile labor market like the U.S., workers with creativity and initiative have a better chance taking advantage of periodic but unpredictable opportunities and setbacks. By contrast, preparation for rigid labor markets like Japan's is likely to include an early and well-drilled acceptance of one's place in a hierarchy. Workers in a rigid market must be patient to reap long term rewards, and they must work harmoniously with others given the fixity of one's peers ([Rohlen 2010](#)). These considerations should affect how parents educate and instill values into their children.

Labor Markets, Human Capital, and Immigrant care-givers

We examine child rearing norms in relation to the willingness to hire immigrants for care-giving work. Hiring immigrants for care-giving work should be attractive to U.S. and Japanese parents because public spending on childcare is low relative to most developed democracies ([Iversen and Stephens 2008](#)). At the same time, parents in both countries

their job after marriage or childbirth. Although it may be the case, parents may also raise their daughters in a similar manner so that they can excel in the marriage market.

are likely to worry about their children’s human capital. Thus, we would expect, all else equal, that parents want their children to be as educated as themselves if not more so, and may worry about the educational content that immigrant care-givers confer to their children (Davis-Kean 2005; Spera, Wentzel and Matto 2009; Tynkkynen, Vuori and Salmela-Aro 2012; Sosu 2014).

Hiring immigrant care-givers is a realistic scenario for both American and Japanese households. More and more women work in advanced democracies, but often, they are still saddled with care-giving responsibilities for their children as well as for aging parents. Some countries have addressed this problem through generous public funding of care services, most notably in Scandinavia. Where public funding is not available, immigrant care-givers could potentially free native women from the burdens of family work and many European countries have in fact taken steps to encourage the outsourcing of domestic labor (Morel 2015). However, not all women may be willing to entrust the care of their children and elderly relatives to immigrants. Prejudice and mistrust toward immigrants may play a role in their calculation, to be sure (see, for example, Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015, for general public attitudes towards immigrants). But controlling for those factors, this paper points to labor market rigidity as another source of hesitation.

Generally speaking, parents who value human capital should be more enthusiastic about immigrants with higher levels of education and those who are more proficient in the native language (Harell et al. 2012; Goldstein and Peters 2014; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015).³ Because human capital acquisition begins early, it stands to reason that parents in both countries would be more reluctant to hire immigrant helpers for childcare than for elder care.

However, if we are right, the ways Americans and Japanese would like care workers to educate their children will differ systematically between the two countries.⁴ Given that

³In Japan, because of the single track to success, Japanese language mastery – irrespective of multilingual skills – is of supreme importance.

⁴Note that the U.S. already has relatively more foreign workers in the care industry: 321,000 immigrants

Japanese have one chance to secure a great job upon graduation, we expect Japanese respondents not only to care a great deal about how to improve their children’s chances for a successful career, but also to hope that their children understand the value of hard work and respect for making it up the educational and career ladders with minimal friction.⁵

Hypotheses

Our theoretical argument suggests a number of observable implications. First, we expect higher support in both countries for immigration for elder care than for childcare because of the educational component of childcare:

H1: *Support for immigration for elder care will be higher than for childcare.*

Second, because American parents are aiming to equip their children for a fluid labor market and Japanese parents for a more rigid one, we expect that Japanese families compared to American ones aim to prepare their children for bigger hurdles to get an ideal job:

H2: *Given labor market differences between the two countries, the gap in support levels for immigration between elder care and childcare will be larger in Japan than in the U.S.*

Note that the hypothesis rests on parental labor market strategies not becoming generalized as cultural values. If the strategies are generalized, respondents’ expectations towards immigrant care-givers may also apply to elder-care as well as to childcare, thereby reducing

worked in early childcare sectors between 2011 and 2013 (Migration Policy Institute 2015), while the majority of care workers in Japan, at least in the childcare sector, are native Japanese.

⁵One measure in the World Values Survey suggests that Japanese care about education more than Americans. Table A.1 in the Appendix provides a ranking with OECD countries.

the gap in support levels for immigration between childcare and elder care.

Third, the consideration about labor market prospects is likely to entail considerable sacrifice on the part of the child throughout the educational period. Japanese children should be taught the importance of forbearance and hard work on the way to acquiring a job. As a consequence, we expect the following to be true:

H3: *Given the differences in the labor markets between the two countries, Japanese respondents are likely to prefer immigrants who value hard work and and show respect to the elderly, while American respondents should prefer immigrants who value creativity and independence.*

As a final remark on our expectations, if these strategies diffuse through society, even if their origin is in parental strategies for economic success, we may find common values among parents and non-parents alike. Parental calculations on behalf of their children, based on labor market structures and prospects, become part of the cultural fabric only when they are no longer explicitly instrumental and become widely shared. When societies absorb strategies as norms – shifting from System 2 to System 1, in [Kahneman \(2011\)](#)’s terms – norms are likely to become internalized and transmitted across generations. In the context of our study, to the extent that strategies have become widely accepted norms, non-parents will share similar expectations of immigrant care-givers with parents.

Data and Methods

To test our expectations, we ran original surveys in Japan and the United States. The two surveys are based on high-quality opt-in Internet panels.⁶ The U.S. survey was conducted by *YouGov/Polimetrics* in late November 2016 (after the presidential election) and included

⁶To approximate nationally representative samples, we sampled both data at least along the following demographic variables: age, gender, residential locations, and income level.

1,621 participants from their panel. The survey in Japan was conducted by *Nikkei Research* in July 2016 and included 2,200 randomly chosen participants from their panel.⁷

Prior to fielding the survey, a pre-test of the questions was completed using 100 *Mechanical Turk* sample in the U.S. and 100 CrowdWorks sample in Japan. We registered a pre-analysis plan based on the results of the pre-test (EGAP, 20160515AA).⁸

Survey Questions

We employed a conjoint method that allows us to reduce social desirability bias when asking about views towards immigrants ([Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto 2014](#)). The main test of our argument focuses on nine conjoint exercises.⁹ Three of the conjoints examined opinions on immigration for childcare; three examined opinions on immigration for eldercare; and three examined general immigration. The wording for the question about immigrants and childcare was as follows:¹⁰

Hypothetically, if the government created a program that would allow citizens to sponsor an immigrant worker to help with at-home childcare, would you be willing to hire either, neither, or both of the following two candidates?

The wording for the question about elder care was:

Hypothetically, if the government created a program that would allow citizens to sponsor an immigrant worker to help with at-home elder care, would you be willing to hire either, neither, or both of the following two candidates?

⁷Both samples are not a probability sample, but both sample become a reasonably good approximation of the general population using the stratification on key demographic variables such as age, gender, education, and residential locations.

⁸Our pre-analysis plan included a German sample as an in-between case between Japan and the U.S., but due to technical problems, the survey in Germany did not proceed as planned and we had to drop the case from our analyses.

⁹The survey instrument that contains all the questions in English and Japanese are available upon request.

¹⁰Because some respondents may not prefer to accommodate any immigrants, we chose a unforced choice design and respondents answered one of the following alternatives: hire one of the candidates; hire both candidates, and hire neither of them.

The wording for the question to assess attitudes towards immigration in general was:

Hypothetically, which of these two candidates should generally be allowed to immigrate to the US [Japan]?

We use support for general immigration as a baseline set of attitudes toward immigrants in each country. We are agnostic as to whether respondents will view immigration for the purposes of assistance with childcare and elder care more or less positively than immigration in general, because support for general immigration includes many considerations including prejudice and economic concerns at the individual and macro levels. On the one hand, respondents may favor immigration for childcare or elder care because the hypothetical immigrants would be replacing, in many cases, unpaid labor rather than displacing existing jobs. Furthermore, because the hypothetical immigrant would be coming for a specific position, it is less likely that s/he would end up as a burden on the welfare state. On the other hand, respondents may believe that family members should take care of elderly relatives and/or that mothers should take care of their own children and therefore oppose immigration for care-giving on those grounds. Still, the question about support for general immigration should reveal differences in general attitudes towards immigrants between the U.S. and Japan.

For all three conjoint surveys, we randomly varied the *same* values of the attributes (shown in Table 1) to get at our key point of interest: to what extent immigrant childcare providers are likely to prepare children for the labor market. Because the populations of the U.S. and Japan are different, we cannot directly compare the estimates across the two countries. To test H2 (and H1), we indirectly compare the difference in the within-country estimates between the child and elderly caretakers across the two countries. In other words, we use the estimate for the elderly care conjoint to control for country-specific factors including attitudes towards immigrants and willingness to outsource domestic care-giving work. To test H3, we compare qualitatively which cultural values respondents find important in out-

sourcing care-giving work to immigrants between the two countries. Finally and importantly, the specific question wording allows us to examine respondents' individual, not sociotropic, attitudes towards immigrants. This allows us to assess whether respondents answered the questions based on individual needs of care-giving rather than on their perceptions of collective needs. Below, we provide tests about whether respondents answered the questions based on individual needs of care-giving, not collective needs.

Our empirical approach is original in two ways. First, while care comprises a large portion of outsourced domestic services, existing studies have not examined why the willingness to outsource may vary across childcare and elder care. Second, standard survey responses on whether individuals have outsourced or would be willing to outsource care services may be affected by social desirability bias, especially in countries where traditional gender norms are strong. Using multiple conjoint settings at once allows us to reduce, if not eliminate, the effects of social desirability bias.

Table 1: Attributes and Values in Conjoint Analysis

<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Values</i>
Country of Origin	U.S.: Mexico, Philippines, Romania, India, China Japan: Korea, China, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam
Gender	Male Female
Education	U.S.: Less than high school, High school, Some college, College, Graduate degree Japan: Primary or secondary school, Vocational college, High school, College, Graduate school
Training in Industry	Yes No
Language	U.S.: Little English, Some English, Proficient in English Japan: No Japanese; no English, No Japanese; fluent English, Fluent Japanese; no English, Fluent Japanese; fluent English
Planned Length of Stay	1 year, 1–2 years, 2–5 years, More than 5 years
Reason of stay	To gain experience, To live in the U.S./Japan permanently, ^a To support family back home
Important values	U.S.: Creativity, Education, Hard work, Independence, Kindness, Obedience, Responsibility, Religious, Well-mannered Japan: Creativity, Education, Hard work, Independence, Kindness, Obedience, Responsibility, Respect for elders, Quiet and helpful (meaning thoughtfulness and attentiveness)

^aNote: if the respondent saw this value, length of stay was constrained to be more than 5 years.

Results

Baseline Support for Immigration

Table 2 presents, for both countries, the percentage of immigrant profiles chosen for hire or allowed into the country in each category. Comparing support for general immigration between two countries, we find that American natives are slightly more supportive of immigration (54.65%) than Japanese counterparts (53.71%), but the difference is small.¹¹ In both countries, support for immigrants involved in any kind of care work, including elder care, is weaker than support for the general immigrants.¹²

As predicted, because of their concern for their children’s human capital, respondents in both the U.S. and Japan are less supportive of childcare immigrants compared to elder care immigrants or of general immigrants.¹³ These results lend support to H1.

We expected that Japanese respondents would be less accepting of childcare immigrants than elder care immigrants compared to the U.S. (H2), out of a greater concern in Japan for schooling that prepares children for an unforgiving labor market. However, we find, instead, that the difference between two countries is rather small; American respondents even show that they are more concerned with the human capital component of care-giving than Japanese counterparts (the difference between childcare and elder care support was 3.26% in the US, compared to 3.11% in Japan). There are at least three ways to interpret the null-finding: (1) the level of support for elderly care by immigrants was lower than expected in Japan (as well

¹¹The data that support the findings will be available in the Harvard Dataverse at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/> upon acceptance of this manuscript (Peters et al. 2019).

¹²This is somewhat surprising given that Japan is thought to be more anti-immigration than the U.S., and given Japan’s much more restrictive policies towards immigration. But the result is consistent with recent survey findings that Japanese are increasingly more supportive of immigrant accommodation (see, for example, Kage, Rosenbluth and Tanaka 2018). American openness to immigration would seem to have more to do with the desire of business to keep down the cost of labor than with the views of natives (see Peters 2017).

¹³The differences are both statistically significant at the 1% level: $t = 4.313$ for the U.S. sample and $t = 5.145$ for the Japanese sample). The results also remain similar when we limit the sample to those who have children or elderly relatives to take care of. See Table A.2 in the Appendix.

as the U.S.); (2) the level of support for immigrants for childcare was higher than expected in Japan; and (3) our empirical strategy was not suitable for testing the hypothesis.

First, it is possible that we have not put enough weight on the diffusion of cultural values around care work, because the hypothesis rests on an assumption that parental labor market strategies have not become generalized as cultural values in both countries. Another similar factor is that Japanese (as well as Americans) may value communication and cultural comfort for their elders. These factors could explain the lower-than-expected support for immigrants for elderly care and reduce the gap in the support between for elderly care and for childcare in both countries.

Still another possible reason may lie with more nuanced contexts that could make Japanese respondents appreciate immigrants for childcare. For example, there has been extensive reporting of a shortage of childcare services in Japan, despite the growing number of women who wish to return to work shortly after childbirth.¹⁴ Similarly, the relatively egalitarian nature of the Japanese educational system may reduce the concern of hiring immigrants for childcare. Although the Japanese job market is short on second- and third-chance opportunities, scholars have characterized the Japanese educational market as being relatively forgiving of second- and third-chance attempts. As of 2015, 7.6% of Japan's high school students were in technical programs ([Monbu Kagakusho \[Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology - Japan\] 2016](#)), but 14.4% of graduates from these programs went on to college. This is of course lower than the 64.1% of general high school graduates who went on to attend college, but the figures suggest that the technical track is by no means a "dead end" in terms of further opportunities in general education.¹⁵

It is possible that the availability of these opportunities to make "comebacks" may be

¹⁴"As Japan's Day Care Shortage Bites, Government Approves Bill to Permit Enrollment Beyond Home-towns," *The Japan Times*, February 6, 2018. The Japanese government estimated that in 2016, when our survey was conducted, more than 23,000 children across Japan were on waiting lists to be admitted to childcare centers ([Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare 2017](#)).

¹⁵Similarly, in a series of works, [Takeuchi \(1991; 1995\)](#) has noted that while attending elite high schools in Japan undoubtedly enhances a student's chances of admission to an elite college, a non-negligible proportion of students from less-than-elite high schools are still being admitted to elite colleges.

Table 2: Support for Immigration by Country and Category of Immigrant

Country	Childcare (a)	Elder Care (b)	Difference (a-b)	General
US	42.79%	46.05%	-3.26%	54.65 %
Japan	38.59%	41.70%	-3.11%	53.71%

Notes: Percentages are calculated as the % of all profiles chosen to be hired or allowed into the country.

dampening Japanese parents’ concerns over choosing the “right” childcare provider. While this point is speculative, the interactive effects between the structure of the labor market and the structure of the education market merit further empirical examination.

Lastly, the null-finding may have something to with our empirical strategy – because our theory hinges on a long-term calculation on the impact of care on human capital, the experimental scenarios between childcare and elder care were too subtle and the survey time was too short to activate the calculation. Future research should consider these possibilities.

Favored Attributes of Immigrants

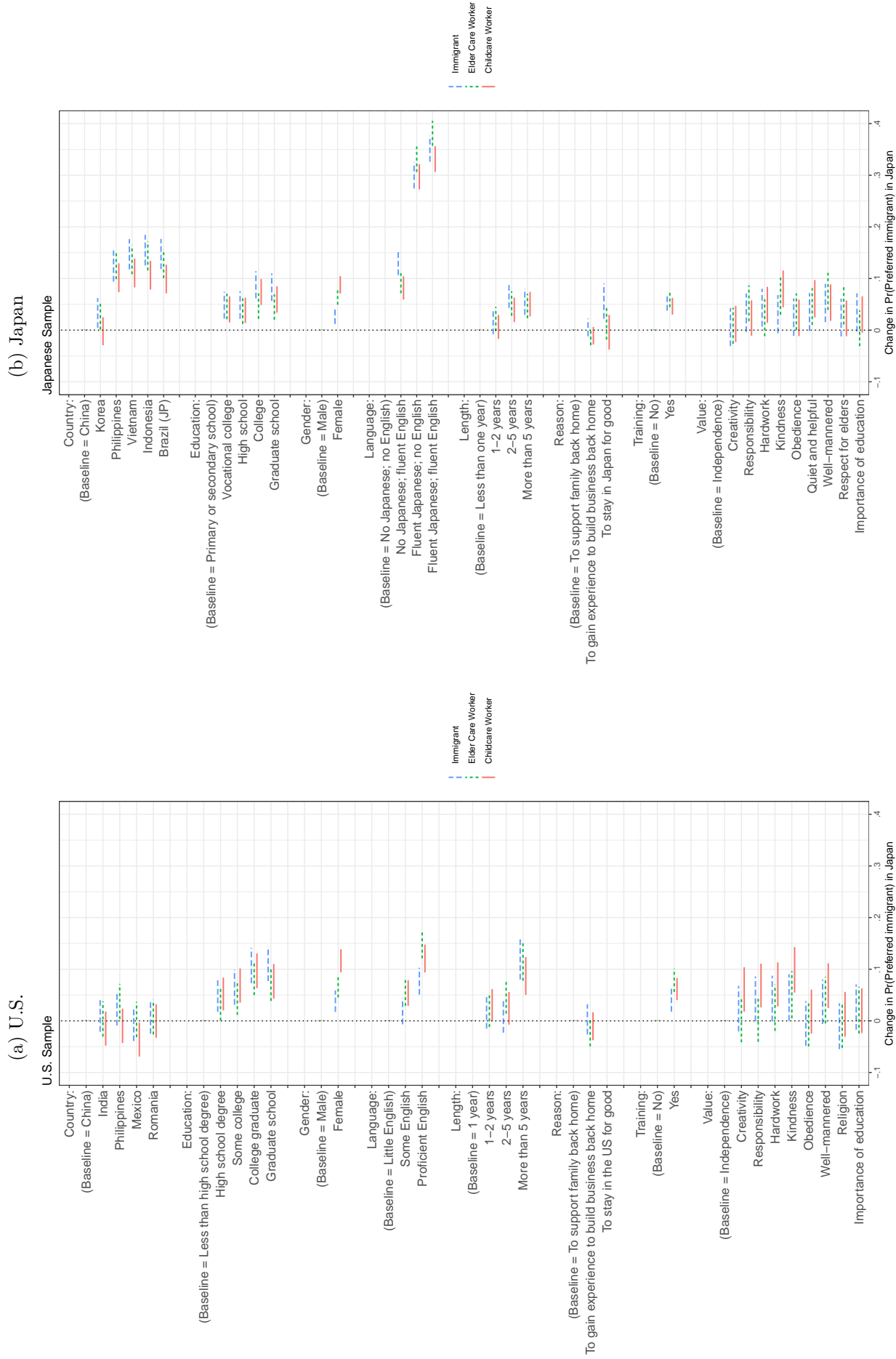
Before moving to our test of H3, we summarize other notable findings. The preferences of American and Japanese respondents are similar in many respects for all three categories of immigrants. Given that the overall support level for immigrants is the lowest for childcare, the results suggest two-stage decision making: people first decide whether or not they are willing to outsource a particular task to an immigrant and then, if willing, choose well-educated immigrants for all tasks.

We find that American and Japanese respondents categorically prefer immigrants with better education, more training, and better language proficiency; this is consistent with prior research.¹⁶ In both countries, the point estimate on education was higher for general immigrants than for either childcare or elder care immigrants, although the difference is not

¹⁶See for example [Goldstein and Peters \(2014\)](#); [Hainmueller and Hopkins \(2015\)](#).

statistically significant at the 5% level. The preference for skill levels and training did not significantly differ among categories of immigrants.

Figure 1: Results of the Conjoint Analysis: Cross-national Comparison



Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample. The reference level for each attribute is not reported.

Both American and Japanese respondents prefer better-educated immigrants, regardless of whether or not respondents had children (Figures A.9 and A.10 in the Appendix); whether they took care of elderly relatives (Figure A.11 in the Appendix); or, somewhat surprisingly, whether they had had problems finding daycare or elder care personally or knew someone who had (Figures A.12 and A.13 in the Appendix). This suggests that even those who cannot find care for their children or elderly relatives are unwilling to lower their standards just to ensure that their dependent is cared for. We also found negligible differences by political party affiliation (Figures A.14 and A.15 in the Appendix).

The results are also not affected by respondents' ideas about the proper role for mothers. For American and Japanese respondents alike, preferences for educated immigrants extended to both those approving and disapproving of working mothers (Figure A.3 and A.4 in the Appendix).¹⁷ This finding suggests that indirect norm diffusion may be at work because even those who are unlikely to support any immigrant childcare workers still would hire a similar type of childcare worker as those who are most likely to employ one.

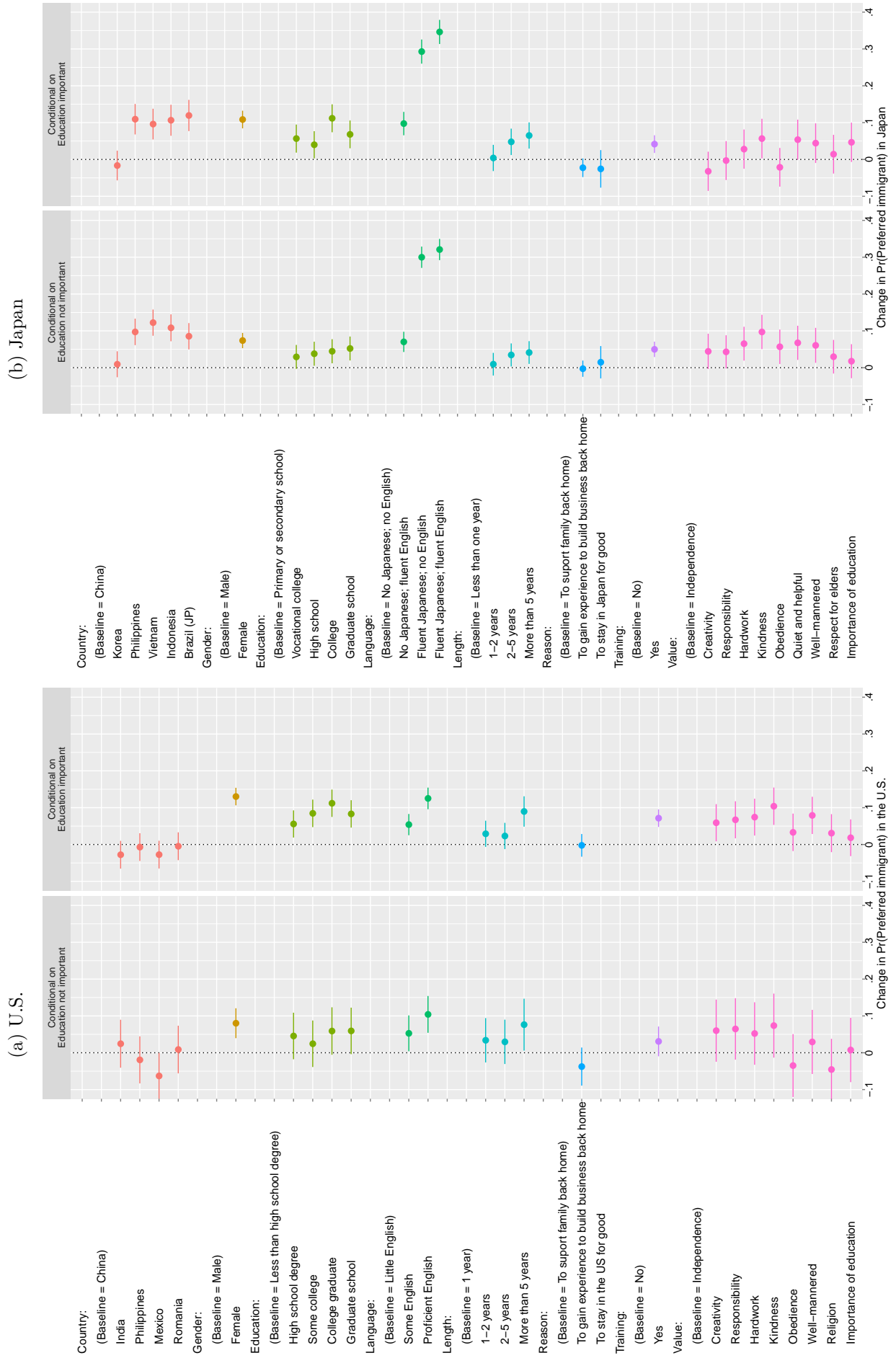
Preferences for more educated childcare workers are driven by the subset of respondents who think that education is important, especially in the U.S., as shown in Figure 2. We found that educated respondents also prefer, all else equal, more education for providers of elder care and for immigrants in general (see Figures A.7 and A.8 in the Appendix)¹⁸

Figure 3 suggests that women care more than men about the educational background, language proficiency, and training of childcare immigrants. In contrast, female and male respondents do not differ in their preferences over the educational background, language proficiency, or training either for elder care or general immigrants (Figures A.1 and A.2 in the Appendix). These results are consistent with women's disproportionate responsibilities for children's education.

¹⁷See also Table A.3 in the Appendix for descriptive statistics for the measure.

¹⁸Educated natives prefer more educated immigrants across the board. All types of respondents prefer immigrants with native language fluency.

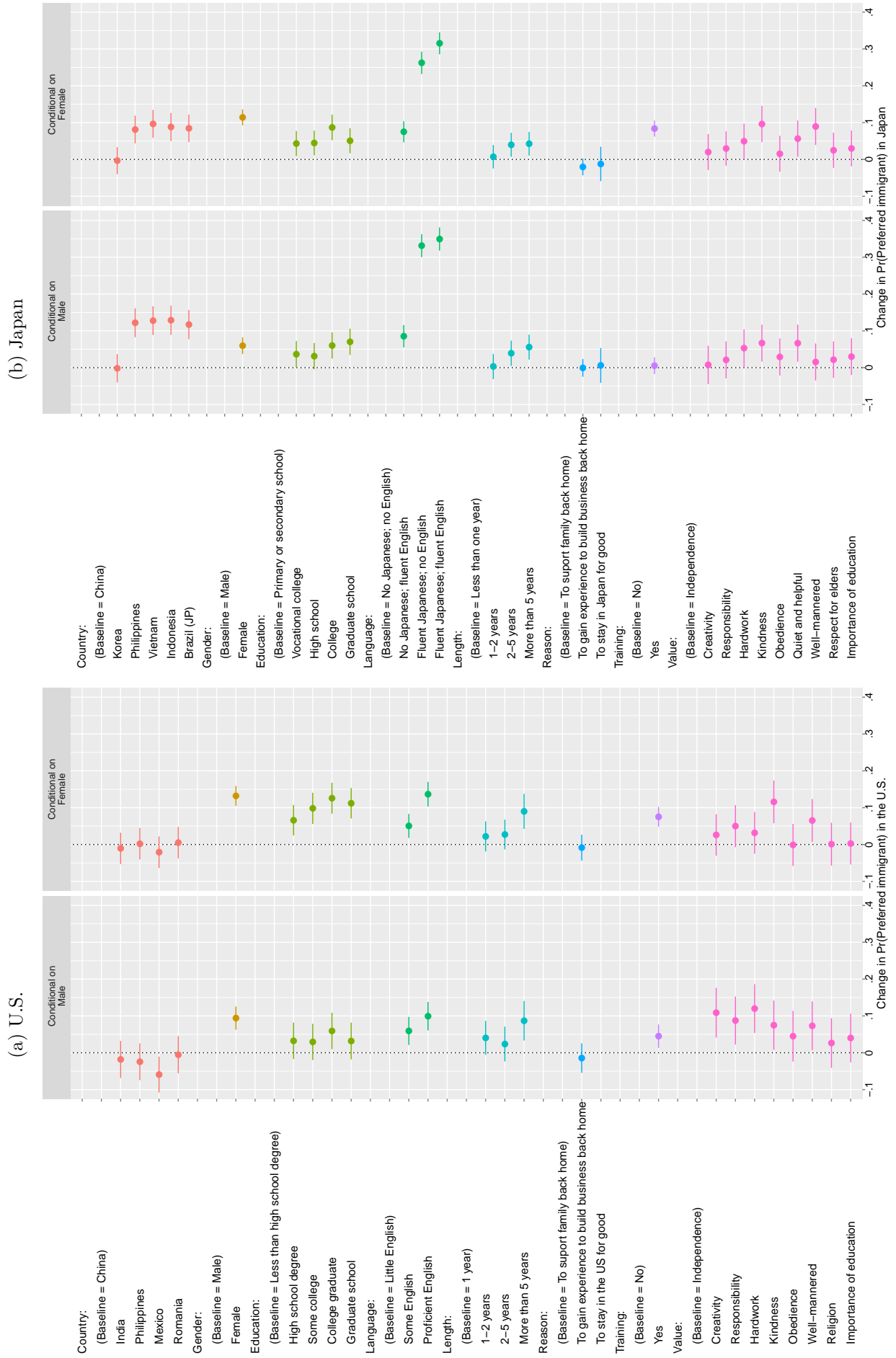
Figure 2: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Childcare Immigrants by Respondents' View of Importance of Education



Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

On language proficiency, which is related to education, American respondents were more concerned about the fluency of elder care immigrants than of immigrants in general, suggesting a premium on communication with the elderly. Japanese respondents were even more concerned than American respondents about language skills across the board. Moving from “no Japanese and no English” to “fluent Japanese but no English” increases Japanese support for an immigrant by 30% or more across all categories. Japanese most prefer immigrants who speak both Japanese and English fluently, especially for elderly care.

Figure 3: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Childcare Immigrants by Respondents' Gender



Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

What Values Should Immigrants Possess?

The most significant differences between Japanese and American respondents appear in the *values* that care-giving immigrants are expected to possess (H3). This is consistent with the need for Japanese to inculcate their children with the values of respect and hard work that prepare them for a rigid career ladder. Career success in knowledge economies requires high levels of education in general, but the flexible and inflexible variants of knowledge economies reward different character traits that are learned in early childhood. We find, as predicted, measurable differences between Japanese and America respondents in the values they wished to see in immigrant care-givers, as well as in immigrants more generally.

Figure 1 shows that American respondents favored childcare workers who were creative, responsible, hardworking, kind, and well-mannered. Intriguingly, we find that American men, not women, prioritize creativity, responsibility, and the ability to work hard, whereas women care principally about kindness and good manners. Even if women are more involved in the care and education of their children, men on average may be more aware of workplace requirements, and perhaps they factor into their views about early childhood education.¹⁹

For Americans, elder care workers need only to be kind. American respondents also value responsible, hardworking, kind, and well-mannered immigrants overall, although not all of these preferences are statistically significant at the 5% level. The American preference for creativity for childcare workers but not for other immigrants suggests a desire to instill in their children attributes widely presumed to be labor market assets.

Japanese respondents want childcare workers who are hardworking, kind, quiet, helpful, and well-mannered. These values are consistent with those that are perceived to be necessary for successful functioning in the Japanese workplace and society. Japanese want childcare workers who care about education, although not quite statistically significant at the 5% level. Japanese prefer elder care workers who are responsible, kind, quiet and helpful, well-

¹⁹We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

mannered, and respectful. Japanese respondents prefer immigrants who are hardworking, quiet, helpful, well-mannered, and educated (although not quite at the 5% level).

Strikingly, and most important for our argument, Japanese respondents did not single out creativity for any group of immigrants. Also importantly, Japanese respondents preferred childcare workers who are well-mannered, quiet, and helpful although not necessarily those who are respectful of the elderly or obedient. This suggests that in Japan's long-term labor contract, ability to work with others is viewed as being more important than respect for hierarchical authority.

Conclusion

Japan and the U.S. are both knowledge economies, in which skilled labor is at a premium. Nevertheless, their labor markets operate differently: top firms in Japan continue to offer life-time, seniority-based employment contracts whereas labor markets in the U.S. are comparatively fluid. These labor market differences, which present Japanese children with a gauntlet of educational hurdles aimed at landing a coveted job in a top firm, are likely to produce and reinforce social attitudes of hard work, persistence, and deference to authority. In the U.S., creativity and resourcefulness – in addition to perseverance and skill – are likely to be greater assets.

In both Japan and the U.S., immigrant labor could plausibly help more women enter the work force by alleviating the burden of care that generally falls heaviest on the shoulders of women. However, the requirements of labor markets for particular types of human capital put parents in a mind. Who should take care of their children, and what values should those care-givers help to instill?

Our research throws light on the calculations – or more likely, the gut feelings and received wisdom – of parents in both countries. Japanese and American respondents prefer educated

care-givers, reflecting the importance of human capital in both countries. They differ, however, in the values they wish care-givers to hold. For Japanese, hard work, thoughtfulness, and attentiveness to others are prized; creativity is not. By contrast, creativity is a principal value in the U.S., where navigating mobile labor markets is a life-long requirement. The labor-market rationale for creativity is underscored by the fact that, for American respondents, the premium on creativity shows up only for childcare immigrants and not for elder care workers or for general immigrants. Whether instrumentally or by reflex, responsible and loving parents seek to arm their children with the most relevant attitudes for success in the context as they understand it.

Apart from labor market incentives to favor identifiable clusters of values in childcare workers, we also find pervasive spillovers into generalized social norms. While pure calculation may magnify the importance of these norms on behalf of young children, we find that Japanese value thoughtfulness and attentiveness to others for all kinds of immigrants, suggesting that the norms are deeply held and widely shared. Material interests may have germinated the norms, but the norms have taken on a life of their own.

Japan's labor markets are becoming more flexible by sheer dint of necessity: with higher levels of economic integration, large firms offer fewer long term labor contracts relative to the pool of workers, and a growing portion of the Japanese workforce faces vulnerability. If we are right, socialized values may adapt to changes in the labor market. As [Rindfuss, Brewster and Kavee \(1996\)](#) have shown for the U.S., new values (the acceptance of working mothers) radiated out in concentric circles from those who most need to adopt new values. But to the extent that the values of high-status members of society are more resistant to change and tend to be emulated, norm change can be countervailed, stalled, or effectively fought.²⁰

²⁰See also [Alesina, Giuliano and Nunn \(2013\)](#).

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Appendix

The following pages display additional information and robustness checks referenced in the text. For convenience, we list a summary of these checks:

- **Table A.1** shows country ranking by the importance of education
- **Table A.2** shows support for immigration by country and category of immigrant for relevant respondents only
- **Table A.3** shows ideal employment status with children by gender
- **Table A.4** shows household status of respondent
- **Table A.5** shows past experience with childcare and elder care
- **Figure A.1** shows conjoint results for elder care by gender
- **Figure A.2** shows conjoint results for general immigration by gender
- **Figure A.3** shows conjoint results by ideas about women’s employment in the U.S.
- **Figure A.4** shows conjoint results by ideas about women’s employment in Japan
- **Figure A.5** shows conjoint results for elder care by ideas about education
- **Figure A.6** shows conjoint results for general immigration by ideas about education
- **Figure A.7** shows conjoint results by respondents’ education in the U.S.
- **Figure A.8** shows conjoint results by respondents’ education in Japan
- **Figure A.9** shows conjoint results for childcare by whether respondents live in households with children
- **Figure A.10** shows conjoint results for elder care by whether respondents live in households with children
- **Figure A.11** shows conjoint results for elder care by whether respondents take care of elderly relatives
- **Figure A.12** shows conjoint results for childcare by whether respondents have trouble finding daycare
- **Figure A.13** shows conjoint results for elder care by whether respondents have trouble finding nursing care
- **Figure A.14** shows conjoint results by respondents’ party identification in the U.S.
- **Figure A.15** shows conjoint results by respondents’ party identification in Japan

Table A.1: Country Ranking by the Importance of Education

Country	Percentage	N
Netherlands	0.23	1001
Sweden	0.25	908
Australia	0.32	1394
United States	0.32	2184
New Zealand	0.35	715
Germany	0.41	1586
Slovenia	0.42	947
Poland	0.47	835
Spain	0.55	1122
Estonia	0.64	1435
Chile	0.69	944
Japan	0.71	2079
Turkey	0.76	994
South Korea	0.85	1160
Mexico	0.92	1996

Note: The data come from the Wave 6 of World Values Survey. The question asks: “To what degree are you worried about the following situations? – Not being able to give my children a good education” We report the percentage of respondents who answered “Very much” and “A good deal.”

Table A.2: Support for Immigration by Country and Category of Immigrant (Relevant Respondents Only)

Country	Childcare	Elder Care	General
U.S.	40.09%	44.14%	52.19%
Japan	37.46%	41.79%	53.34%

Notes: Percentages are calculated as the % of all profiles chosen to be hired or allowed into the country. We report those who have children for the Childcare conjoint; those who elderly relatives for the Elder Care conjoint; and those who have children and elderly relatives for the General conjoint.

Table A.3: Ideal Employment Status with Children by Gender

Country	Full-time employment	Part-time employment	Stay at home
U.S. (women)	27.09%	42.76%	29.18 %
U.S. (men)	68.94%	21.66%	8.15 %
Japan (women)	34.00%	40.50%	25.50%
Japan (men)	89.32%	6.41%	4.27%

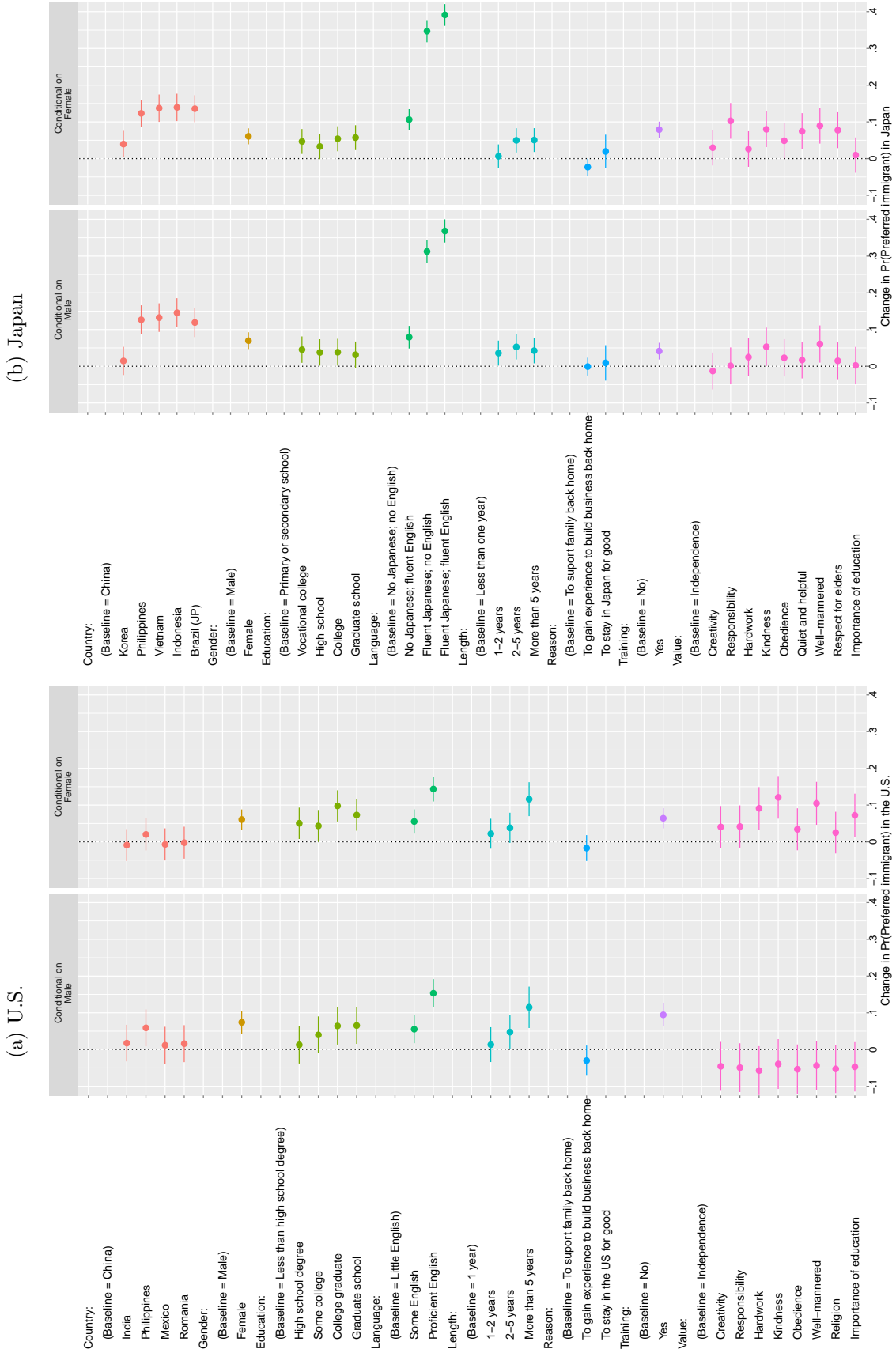
Table A.4: Household Status: Who Are You Living with?

Country	Children	Grandchildren	Extended family
U.S.	36.77%	33.29%	14.28%
Japan	35.23%	14.36%	51.77%

Table A.5: Past Experience about childcare and Elder Care

Country	Difficulty (childcare)	Difficulty (elder care)	Experience (elderly)
U.S.	51.36%	38.63%	27.20 %
Japan	18.59%	16.18%	10.05%

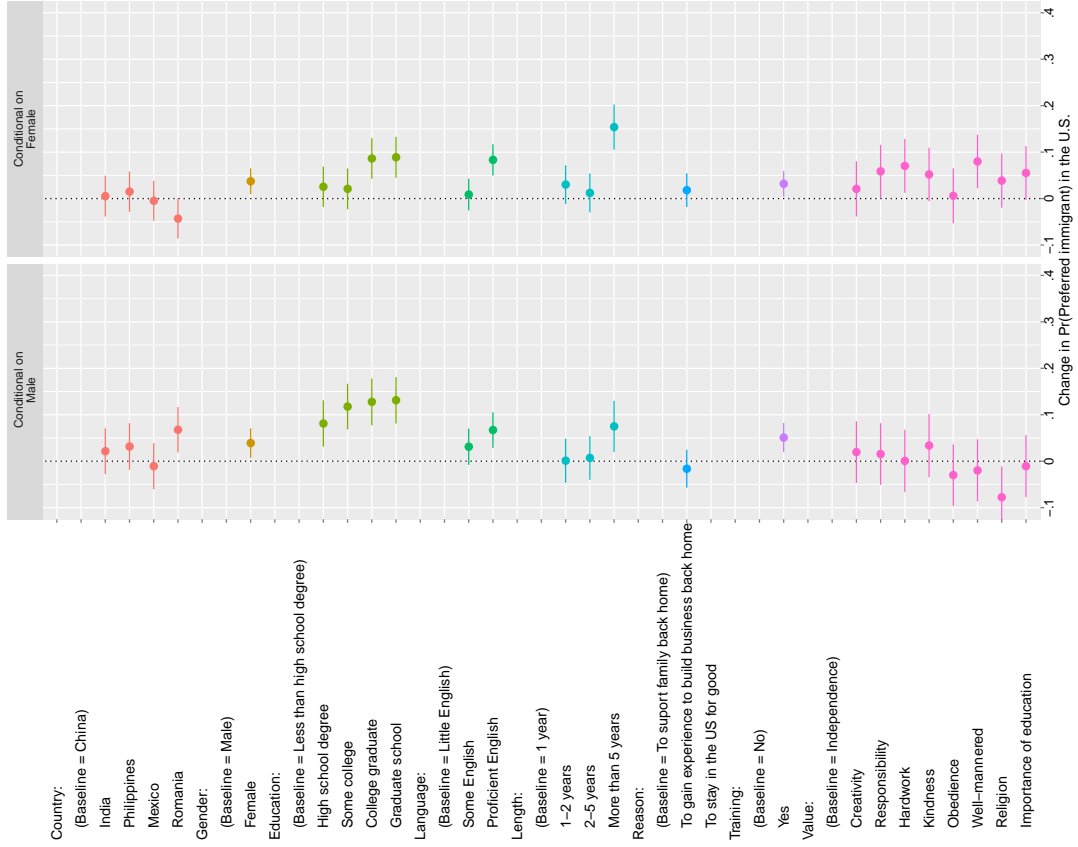
Figure A.1: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Elder Care by Respondents' Gender



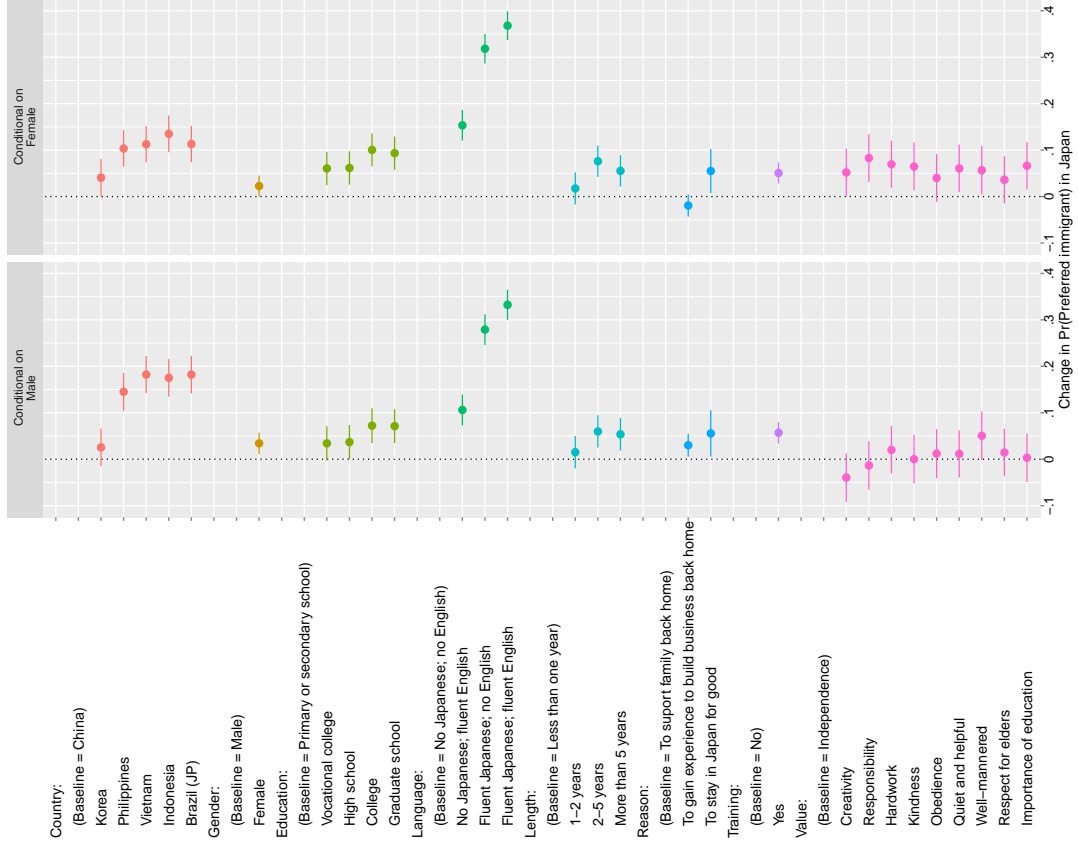
Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.2: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for General Immigrants by Respondents' Gender

(a) U.S.



(b) Japan



Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.3: Results of the Conjoint Analysis by Respondents' Idea about Women's Employment Status with Children (U.S.)

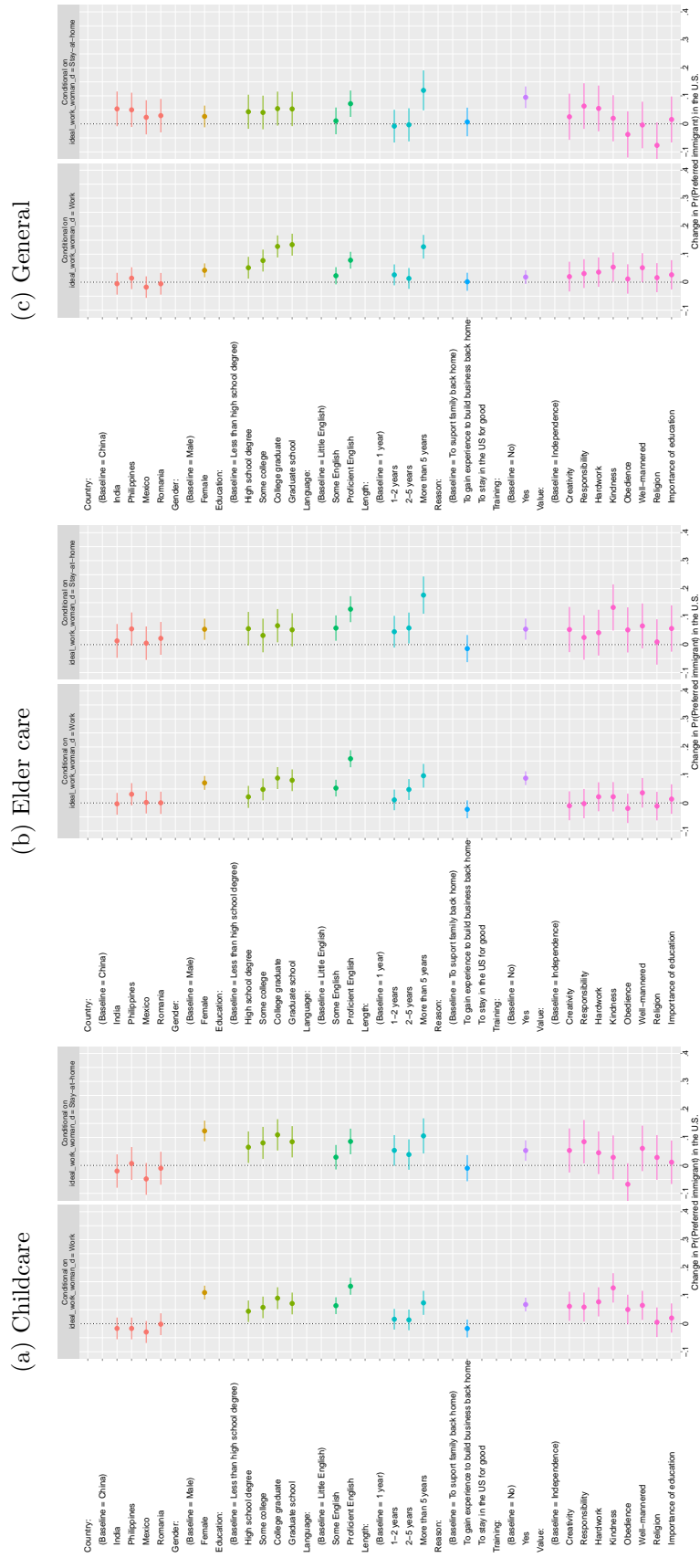
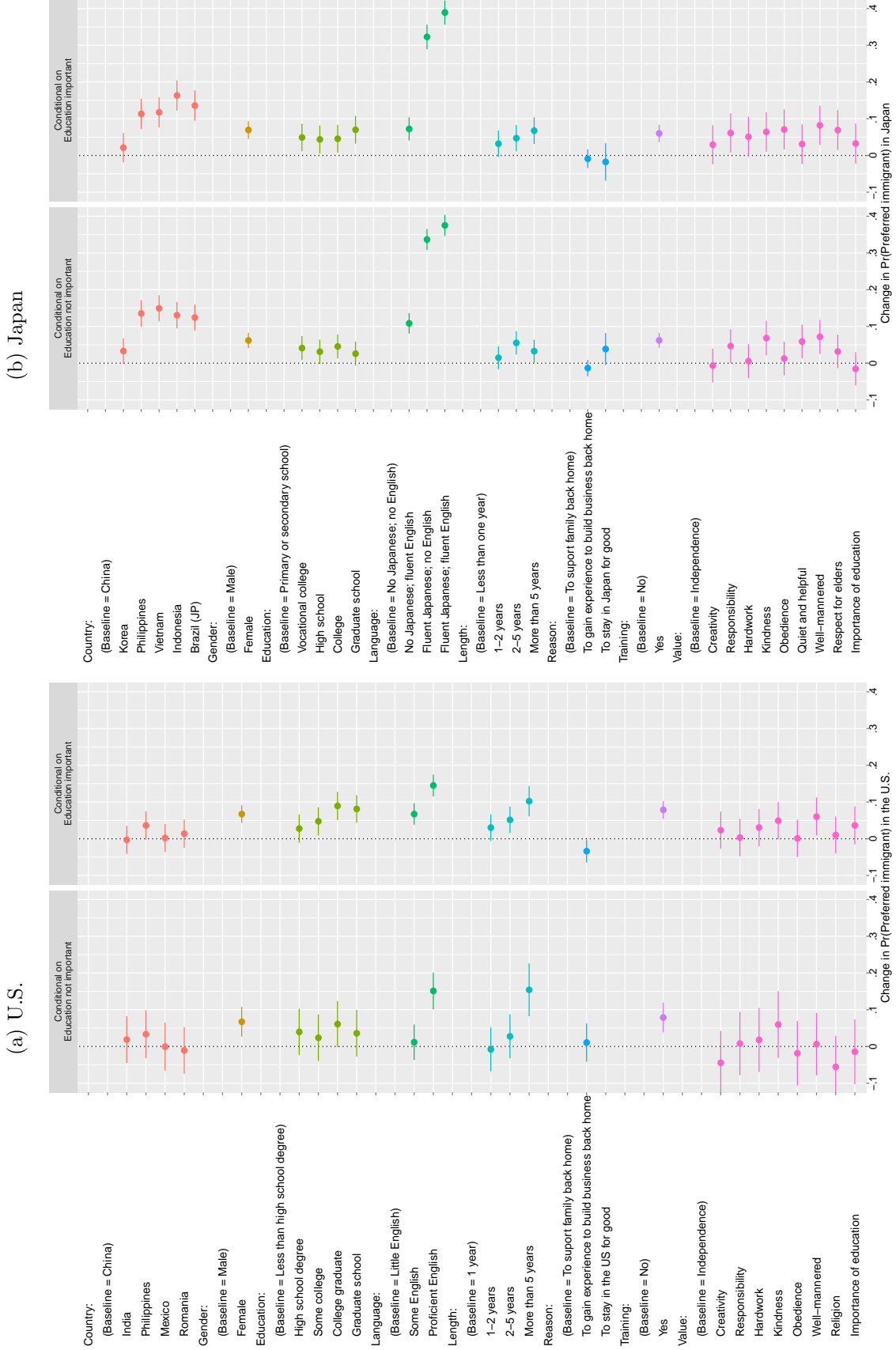


Figure A.4: Results of the Conjoint Analysis by Respondents' Idea about Women's Employment Status with Children (Japan)



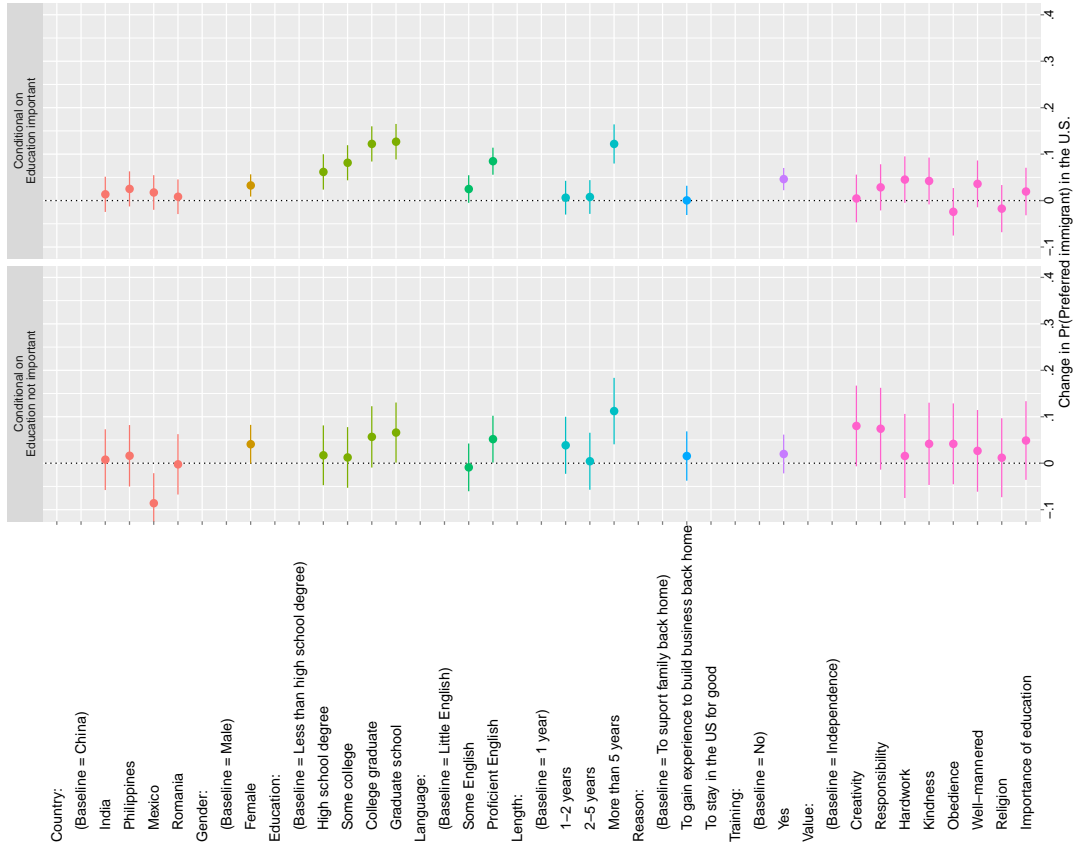
Figure A.5: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Elder Care Immigrants by Respondents' Idea about Education



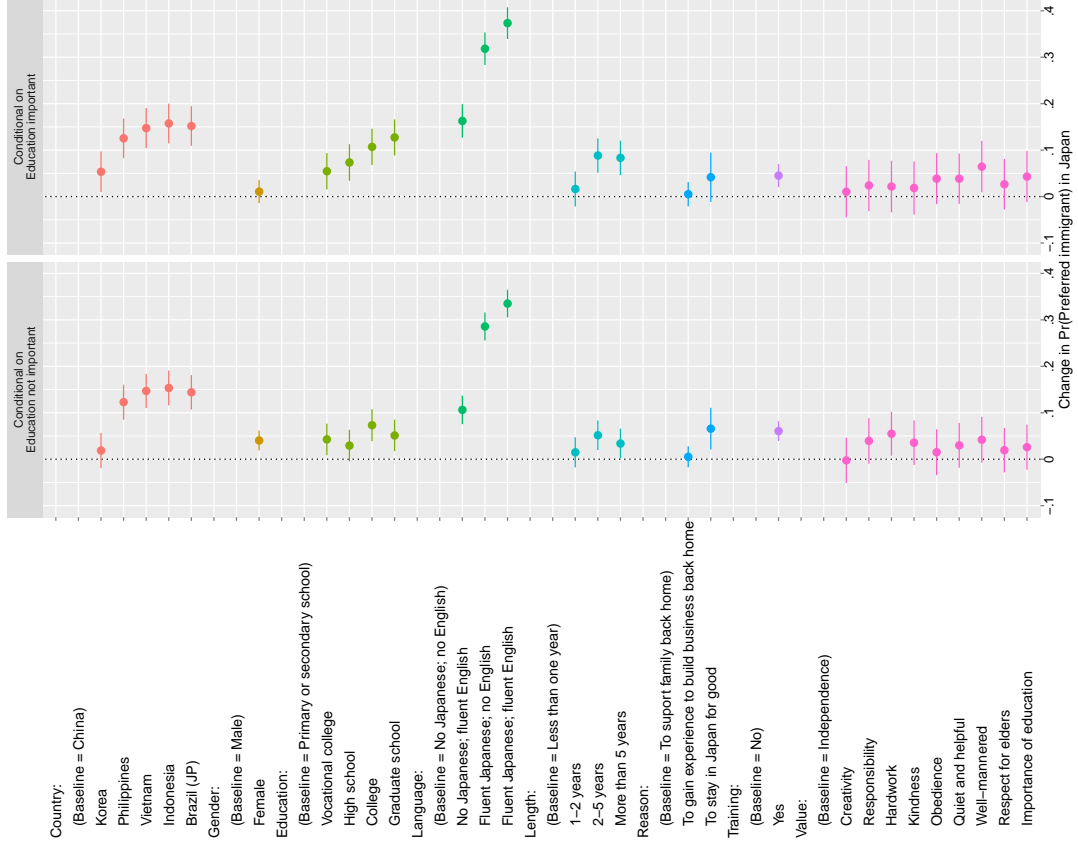
Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.6: Results of the Conjoint Analysis of General Immigration by Respondents' Idea about Education

(a) U.S.



(b) Japan



Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.7: Results of the Conjoint Analysis: Comparison by Respondents' Education – Above Some College (U.S.)

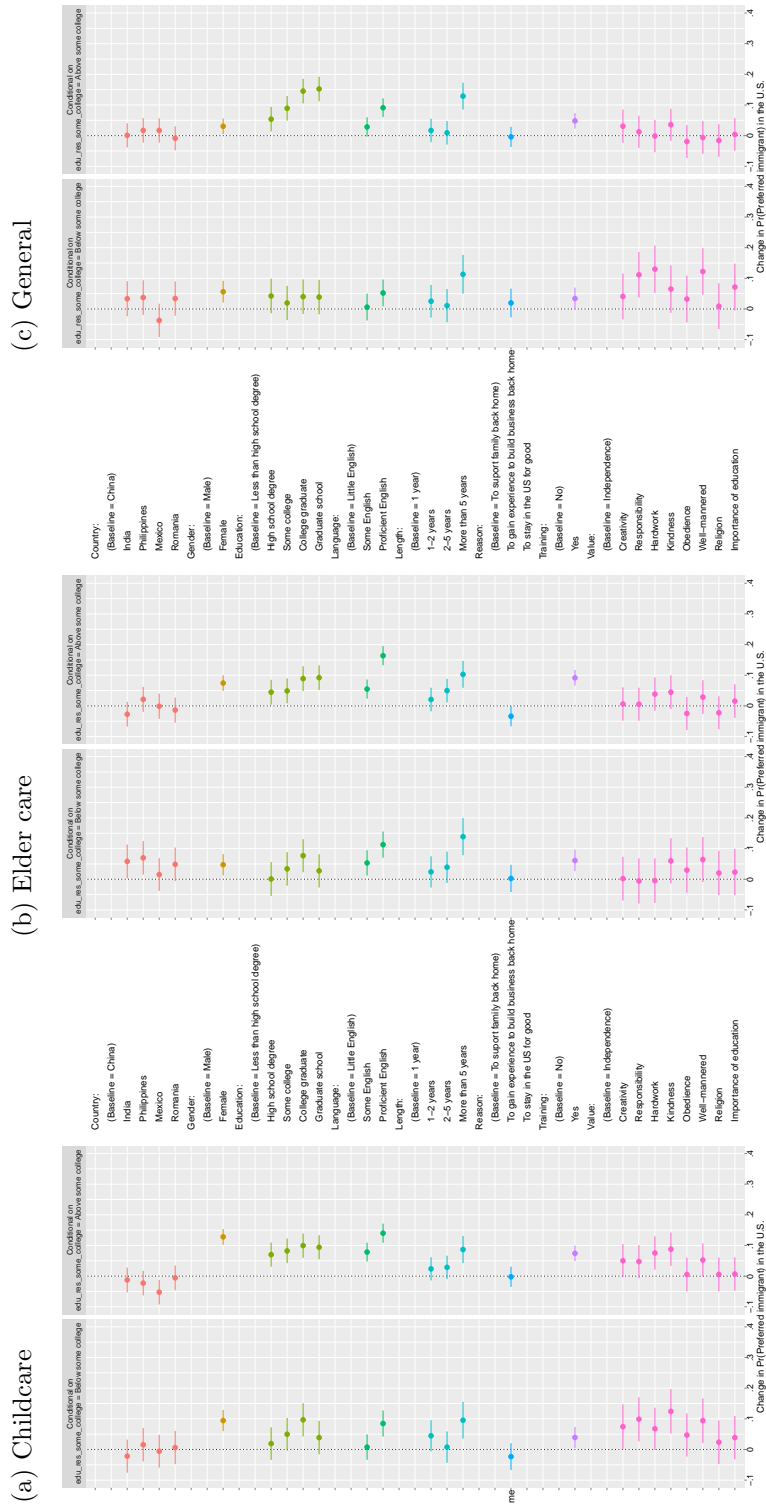


Figure A.8: Results of the Conjoint Analysis: Comparison by Respondents' Education – Above Some College (Japan)

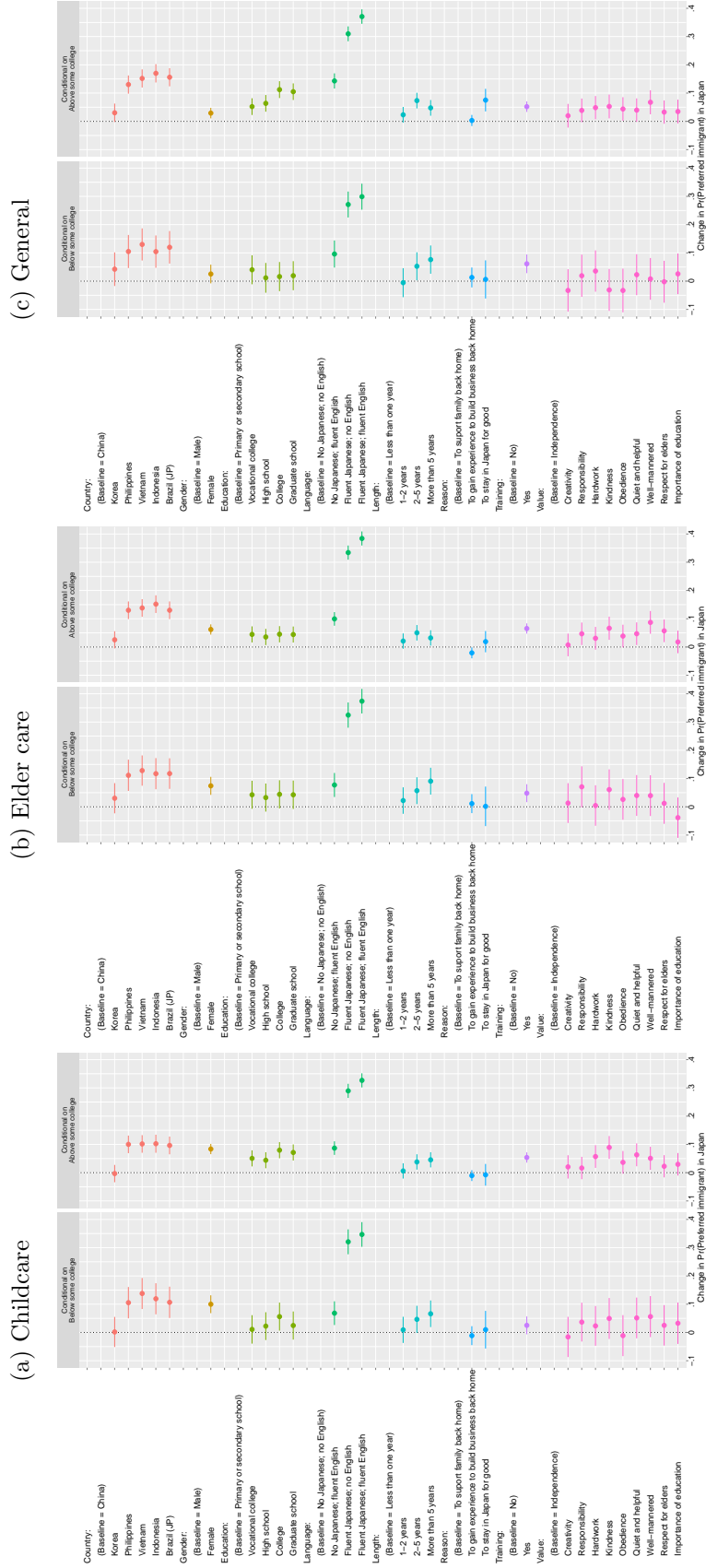
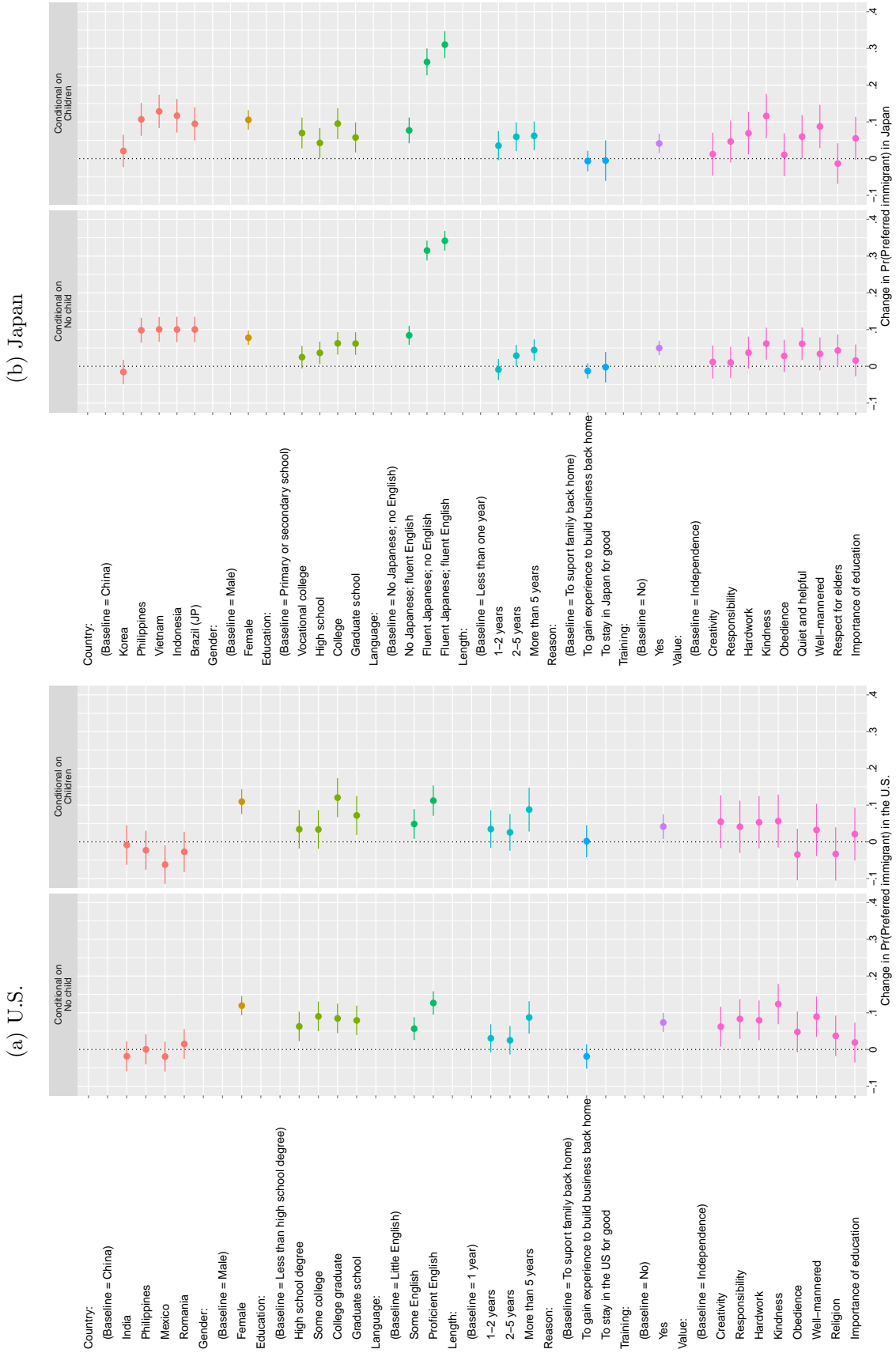
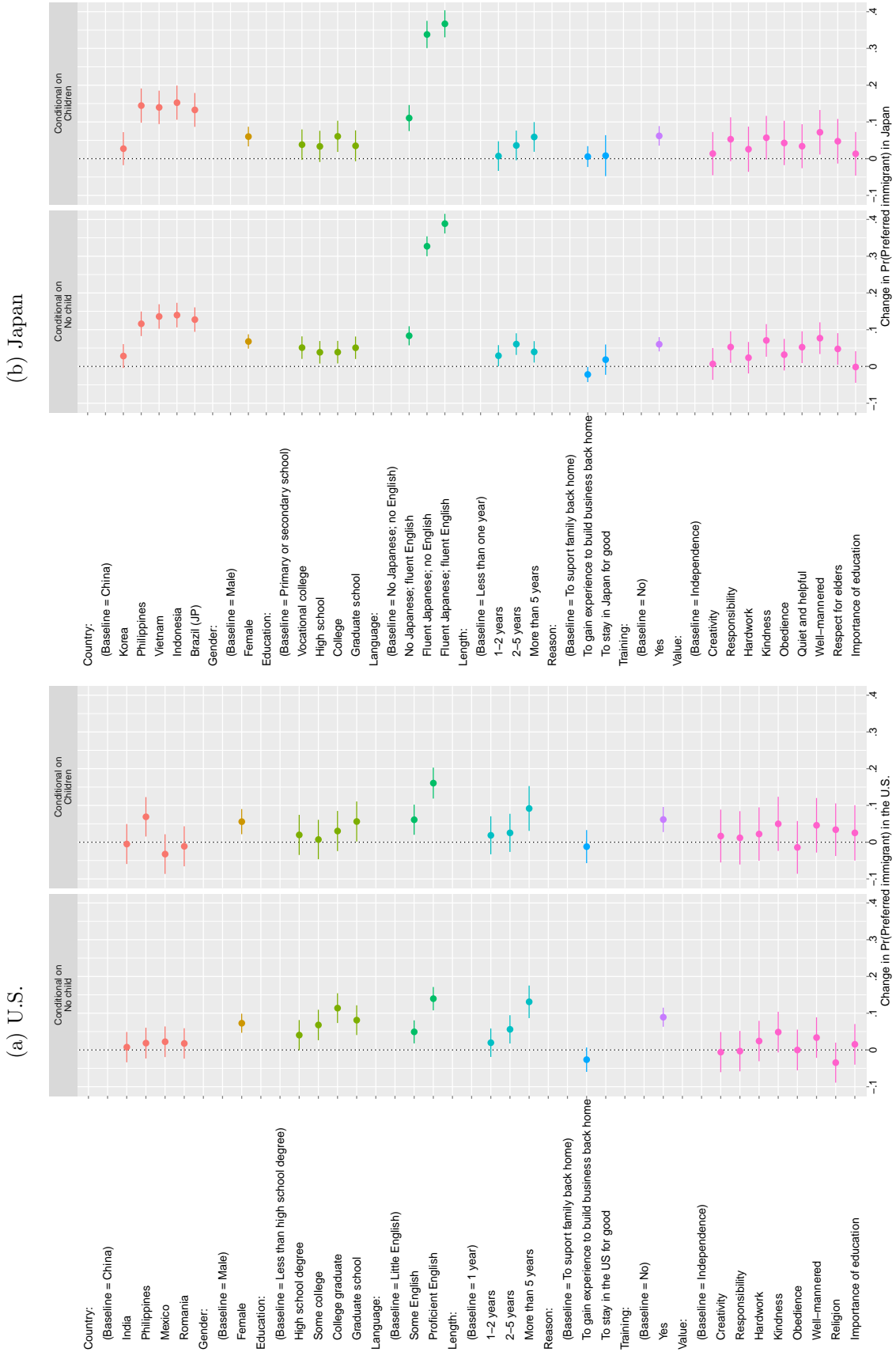


Figure A.9: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Childcare Immigrants by Respondents' Children Status



Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.10: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Elder Care Immigrants by Respondents' Children Status



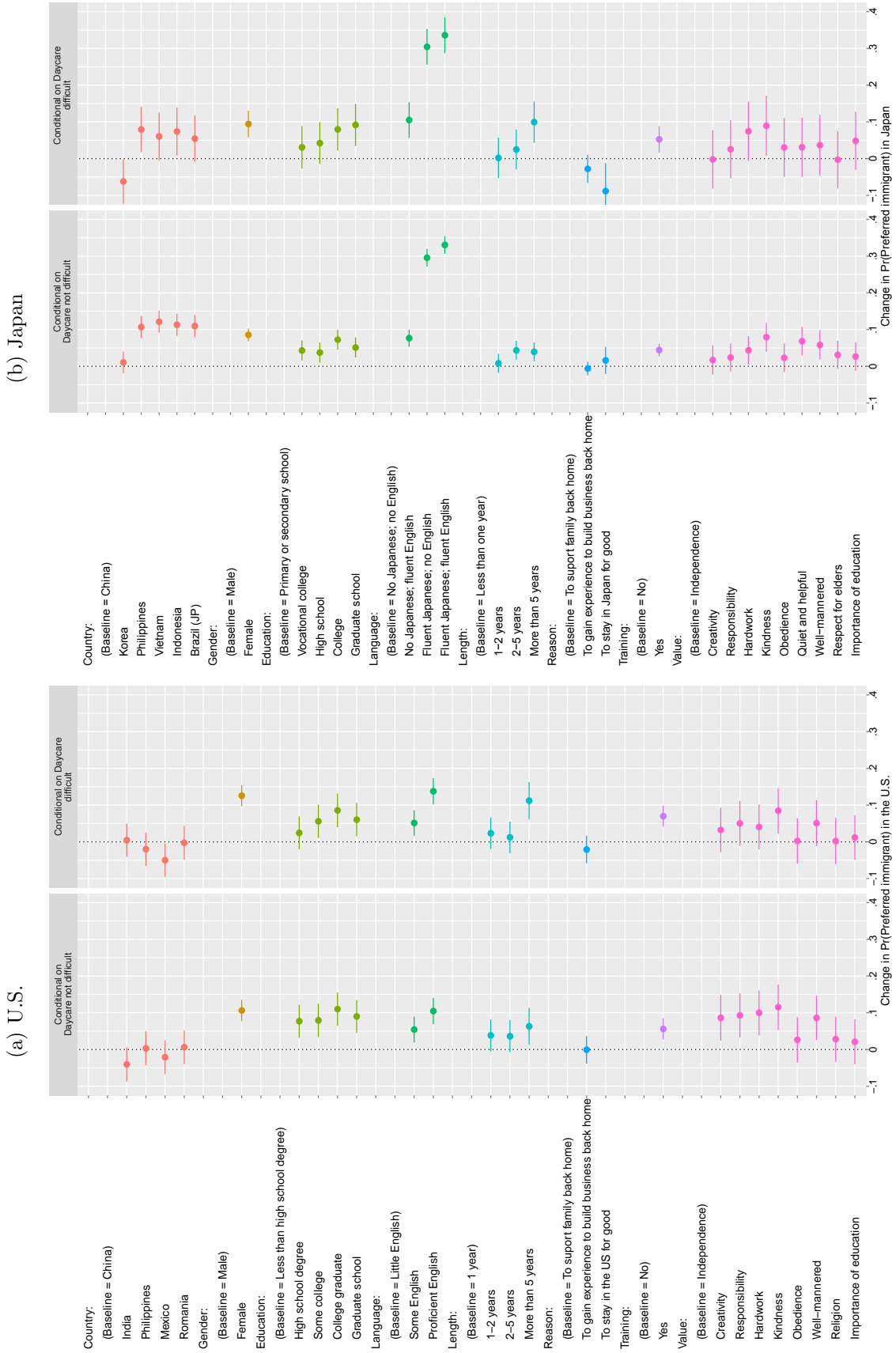
Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.11: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Elder Care Immigrants by Respondents who Take Care of Elderly Relatives



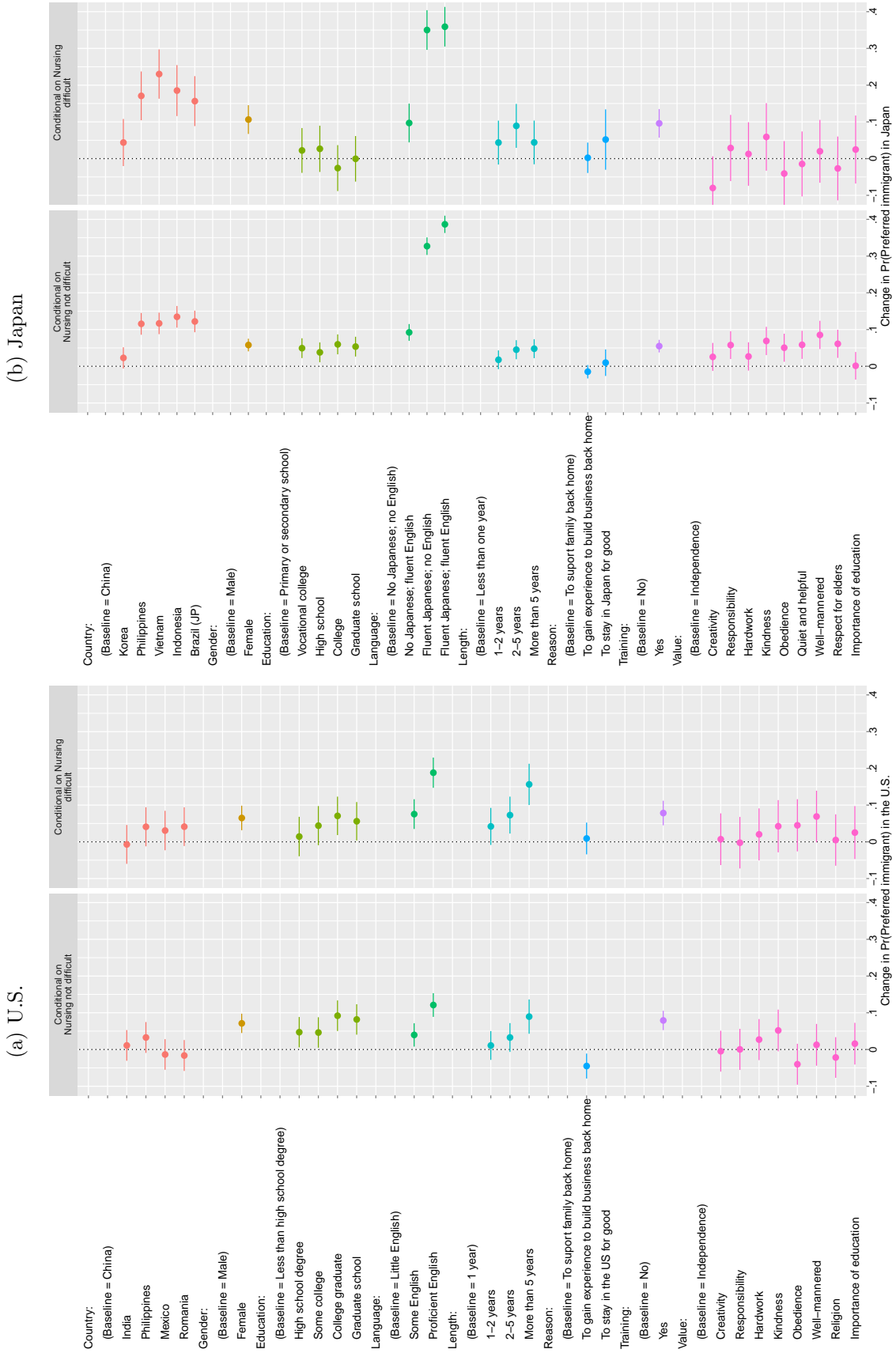
Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.12: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Childcare Immigrants by Respondents' Difficulty in Finding Daycare



Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.13: Results of the Conjoint Analysis for Elder Care Immigrants by Respondents' Difficulty in Finding Nursing Home



Note: The left column contains the results from the U.S. sample, and the right column contains the results from the Japanese sample.

Figure A.14: Results of the Conjoint Analysis by Respondents' Party Affiliation (U.S.)

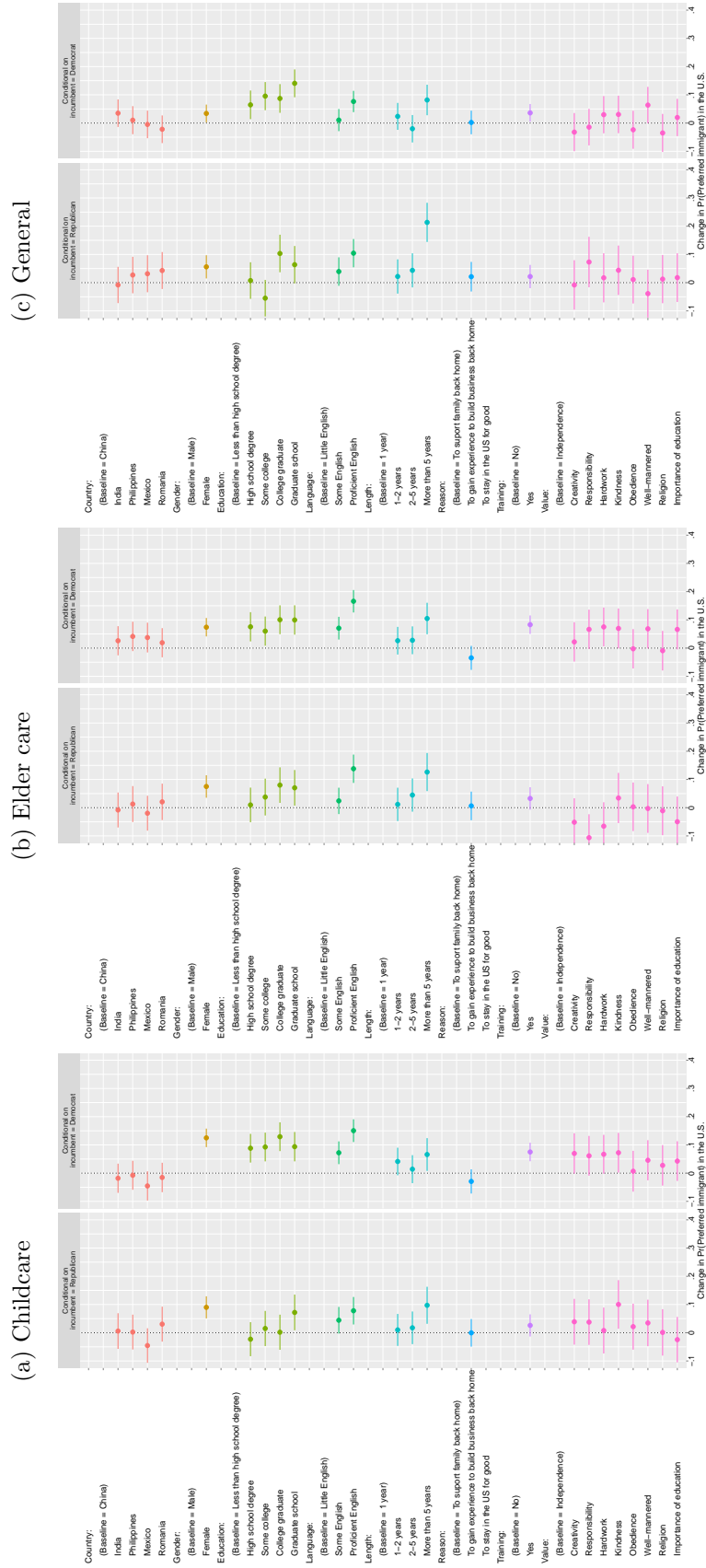


Figure A.15: Results of the Conjoint Analysis by Respondents' Party Affiliation (Japan)

