



The Language of Immigration:

a discussion distorted by
stereotypes, misconceptions, and myths

Andrew Chen, University of Auckland
NZEALS Conference, 18 April 2018

Who am I?

Born at North Shore Hospital

Grew up and schooled in Auckland

By day: a PhD candidate in Computer Systems Engineering working in embedded computer vision, developing smart video analytics

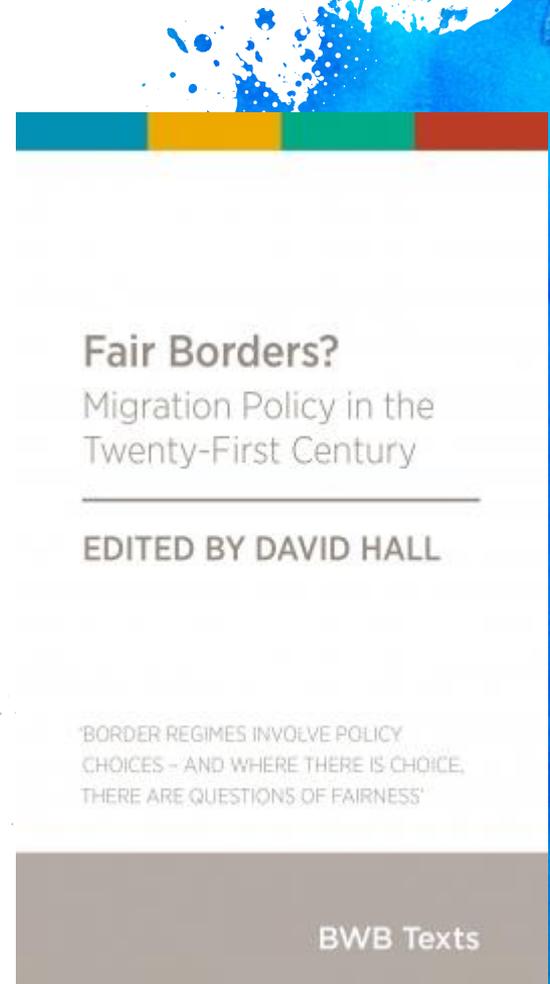
By night: interested in politics and evidence-informed policy, makes data visualisations, writes policy analyses, contributed a chapter to this book →

Also: teaching assistant/lecturer and course development since 2012

Also: entrepreneurship and innovation through ReturnOnScience at UoA

Also: Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor's Science Policy Exchange

Also: supporting civics education through UN Youth, currently chair of their Trust



Language

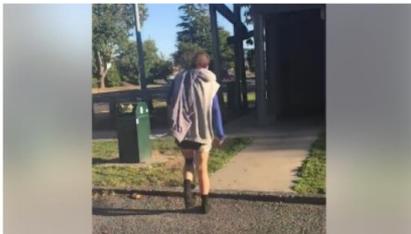
- “He was born in New Zealand?
Oh he’s a real Kiwi then.”
- Small subtle interactions lead to big identity crises
- Varying opinions = inconsistent messaging
- Assumptions create a baseline belief
- When is someone “Kiwi enough”?
- “No defensible moral framework regards
foreigners as less deserving of rights than people
born in the right place at the right time”
– Alex Tabarrok

Watch: 'You don't have the right to be here, you Muslim' - woman's disgusting racist attack on women wearing hijabs in Huntly

Feb 12, 2017 Share [Facebook] [Twitter] [Google+] [Email]

Source: 1 news

An Auckland woman who was the victim of a shocking and disgusting racist attack in the Waikato town of Huntly said the attacker threw cans of alcohol at her and even attempted to hit her.



Mehpara Khan and two friends went to use the bathroom when a woman started hurling abuse at the group who were all wearing hijabs.

Source: Mehpara Khan/Facebook

NEW ZEALAND

Dashcam footage shows 'hypocrite' Kiwi abusing Asian driver

6 Dec, 2017 5:40pm

2 minutes to read



A New Zealander has left her vehicle to launch racist comments against an Asian driver after she had illegally overtaken him. Source - Facebook/ERIC Ng

NZ Herald

Caught on camera: Man on mobility scooter hurls racist abuse

Kirsty Wynn, National, Saturday, 16 December 2017, 7:33PM



Language

- A lot of negative, hateful speech about migrants
- Speech can influence thoughts and opinions
- Where does this speech come from?

- Children learn from the people around them:
 - Parents
 - Teachers
 - Media
 - YouTube celebrities
 - Instagram influencers
 - Opinion column writers
 - Politicians

Tactics

- Dehumanising humans
 - Economic units of supply and demand
 - Treat people as (big) numbers
 - Using (often water-based) metaphors
- Oversimplifying information
- Using stereotypes and racism
- Perpetuating myths
 - Migration = Unemployment
 - Migration = Crime
 - Migration = Loss of rights
- Just be abusive
- Set up an “us vs. them” narrative



Iain Lees-Galloway

@IainLG

Following



Yesterday: Record immigration. Today: Unemployment up. It's an uncomfortable fact (but still a fact) that the two are related.

#nzpol

RNZ News @rnz_news

Labour force influx increases unemployment radionz.co.nz/news/national/...

12:38 PM - 1 Feb 2017

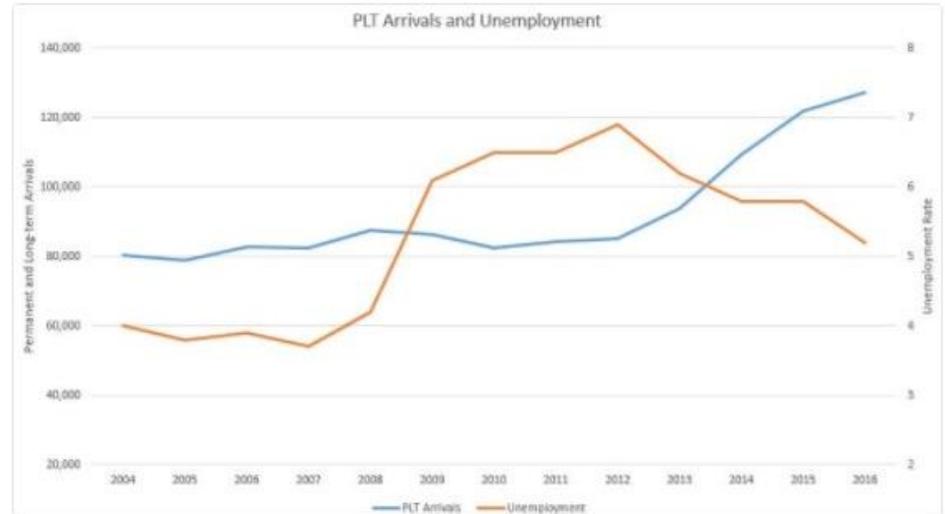


Andrew Chen

@andrewtychen



.@IainLG I made you a graph. Tell me what the relationship between the two variables is.



1:58 PM - 1 Feb 2017

Spread and Impact

- Politicians get recorded a lot
 - As role models, their language gets amplified
 - Media and columnists further spread the message
- Also in our communities, but harder to prove

- What does the data say about society?
- Good news: lots of people recognise racism and call it out
- Bad news: lots of people think it's okay and spread
- Three broad groups of people:
 - Migration is entirely negative: 20%
 - Migration is entirely positive: 30%
 - "The anxious middle": 50%

Spread and Impact

- Recent migrants
- One-and-a-half and second generation
- Those that just look or sound sufficiently different

Being stuck between two cultures makes it difficult for us to “belong”. To be told that because of my last name or ethnicity, something I did not choose, that I am a problem for “honest hardworking Kiwis”, is crushing. All I have ever wanted is to make my community, my country, my world a better place.

I have roots in Taiwan, but I was born in New Zealand; just because my face looks Chinese and my last name sounds Chinese should not disqualify me from being able to live my life here.



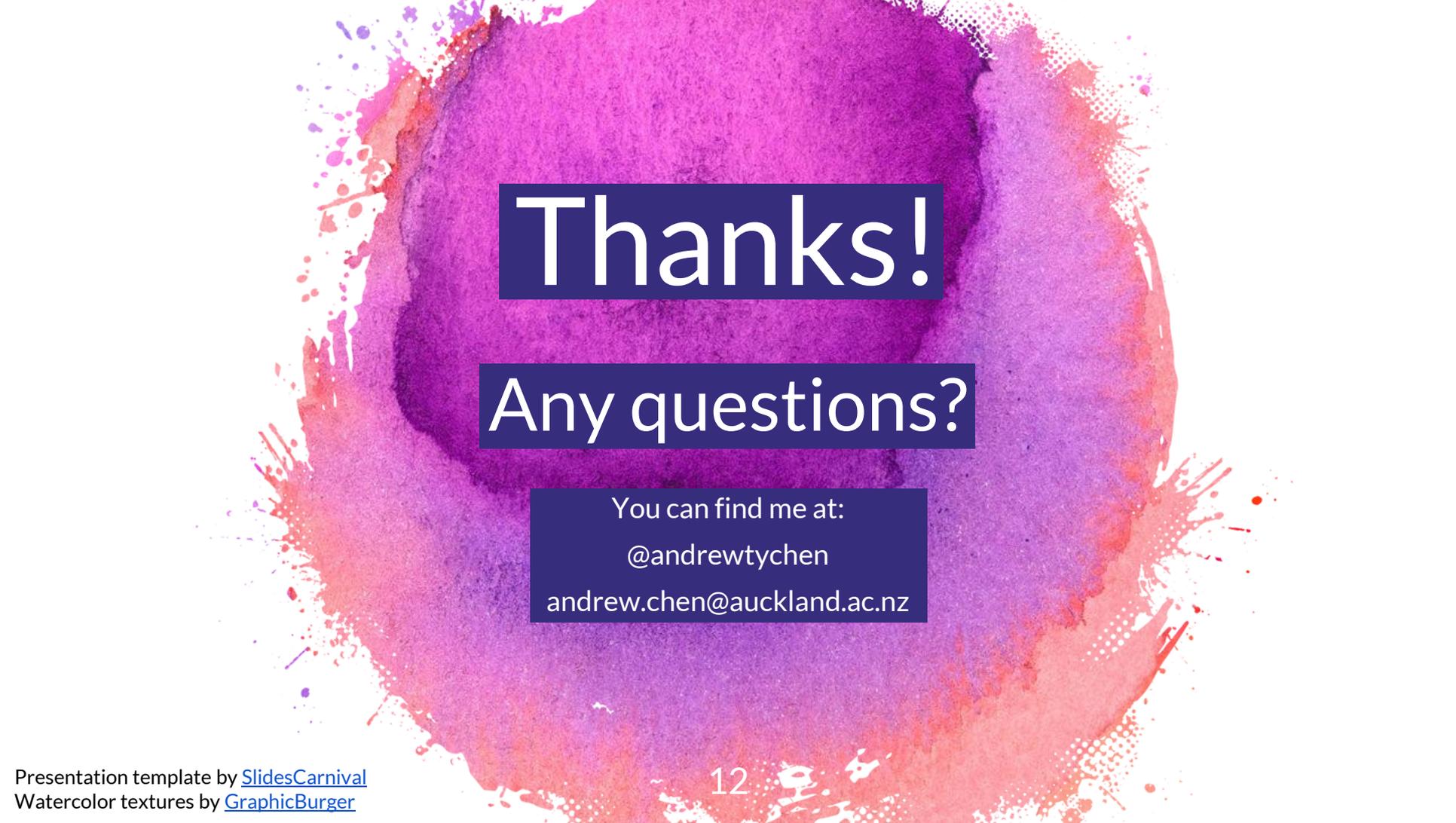
He aha te mea
nui o te ao?

he tāngata,
he tāngata,
he tāngata. 

Moving Forward

- Fact check
 - Stop stereotypes, misconceptions, and myths from spreading
 - Do we call out racism? A thorny problem
 - Sometimes, an appeal to fairness may be better
- People are people
 - Treat others as you would like to be treated
 - Encourage empathy
 - Encourage interactions between cultures
 - Encourage global awareness
 - Reduce barriers between people

“It is not only up to our leaders, politicians, and media to uphold our values of fairness – it is up to all of us to take responsibility for our words, to fight against racism and intolerance where we see it, and to support our fellow humans in their quest for a slice of heaven.”



Thanks!

Any questions?

You can find me at:

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The background features a complex, abstract composition. On the left, there is a white area with a fine, dotted texture. This transitions into a large, vibrant blue area that has a grainy, painterly quality. The blue is not uniform, showing various shades from light cyan to deep, dark blue. There are also some darker, almost black, irregular shapes scattered throughout the blue field, resembling ink splatters or organic forms. The overall effect is that of a layered, artistic background.

Questions and Discussion