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**A Chance for Change? Attitudes towards Immigrants and Intergenerational Educational Mobility**

In this paper, we study how attitudes towards individuals with a migration background might have affected their probability of obtaining more education than their parents. Recent work by Oberdabernig et al. (2017) shows that the probability of intergenerational mobility for immigrants is affected by different personal and household characteristics more than those which influence the chances of mobility for natives. However, some factors that are difficult to measure, such as discrimination or social attitudes, might affect their opportunities for educational mobility. We are interested in the unobservable mechanism of discrimination, which works as a barrier to educational mobility. We explicitly study the role of attitudes towards people with migration background in determining the chances of upward mobility. When migrants grow up in an environment with high anti-immigration sentiment, they likely face an anti-immigrant atmosphere at school. Teachers may discriminate against migrants in terms of grades and recommendation for higher educational tracks. Children with a migration background might then lose the belief that they can accomplish good grades based on their performance if they work hard enough. We thus hypothesize that the mechanisms through which attitudes towards migration would affect the educational success of migrants occur when an immigrant is still in school. Therefore, we look at the sentiments towards migration at the time and place in which the individual was growing up and making major educational decisions. We thus test whether attitudes in the area in which one lived when she/he was 14 and in school affected their educational outcomes.

We measure attitudes towards immigrants in a certain region based on the voting behavior of the individuals living there. Our contribution to the literature is twofold: First, we propose the innovative use of historical state-level election results dating back to the end of the Second World War combined with data on the electoral programs of the political parties to infer attitudes towards immigrants, and second, we relate this measure to the upward educational mobility of immigrants and natives. Our analysis is based on data from the Comparative Manifesto Project by Volkens et al. (2016) and the fourth wave (2008) of the European Value Study (EVS) data for Austria. The EVS allows us to identify the region where the respondent was living when she/he was 14 years old, an indicator that we combine with the election results to approximate the general attitude towards immigrants in that region. The second part of the empirical analysis employs the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition for nonlinear models to identify which portion of the difference in the probability of upward mobility for migrants versus natives is due to the social attitudes towards the migrants in the area of residence while in school.

The analysis of the historical election and manifesto data shows that excluding the 1970s, in the majority of the regions negative attitudes towards immigrants prevailed. The decomposition results show that better attitudes towards immigrants help to close the gap in mobility rates between natives and immigrants. In terms of policy, the results suggest that addressing the attitudes towards immigrants promotes better educational outcomes and equal opportunities.

**References**

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