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Disentangling Aporophobia from Xenophobia in Western Europe

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This paper analyzes whether the human capital levels embodied in immigrants can explain xenophobic trends for 114 regions in 12 European countries from 2007 to 2018. During the previous decade, migration inflows into western Europe have been associated with rising nationalism and sentiments of xenophobia. In previous research, regions associated with rising homelessness, unemployment and poverty have been linked with higher anti-immigration and far-right attitudes (Daly, 1996; Jolly & DiGiusto, 2014). However, recent evidence suggests that the rise in nationalism is also associated with larger inflows of low-skilled immigrants (Moriconi, Peri, & Turati, 2018). Furthermore, if rising xenophobia is directed towards poor migrants and not rich ones, then the rejection of migration itself could be misguided, masking the rejection of the poor. In other words, “aporophobia” might be misconceived as xenophobia.

Aporophobia is a term coined by Spanish philosopher Adela Cortina (Cortina, 2017), which has been recently added to the Dictionary of the Spanish language published by the Real Academia Española (Royal Spanish Academy), introduced into the Spanish Criminal Code, and included into statistics reports by the Ministry of the Interior of the Government of Spain. There is no other concept in the recent history of social and human sciences that has produced so much impact in such a short period of time in a country. However, this new term which acknowledges a widespread phenomenon of how a society treats their poor is not limited to its country of conception.

To this end, this study provides evidence of aporophobia in Western Europe using the European Labor Force Surveys (EULFS), Eurostat and OECD sources regional data for Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and United Kingdom. The preliminary results indicate that larger inflows of highly educated immigrants are significantly correlated with lower rejection of migrants. These results suggest that xenophobic regions may in fact be rejecting only poor migrants and not rich ones. The rejection of the poor has been scarcely studied in economic literature, and not much is known about it. The findings in

this paper bring light into the discussion of a powerful concept which underpins a more just society.

Key references

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