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## Attitudes toward Foreigners in Switzerland: Of Education and Values

In the past three decades, immigration has become systematically politicized by parties on the right in Switzerland. Judging by the electoral success of anti-immigrant parties and changes in public discourse, it appears that support for anti-immigrant policies is growing. Are we simply observing success in mobilization among potential voters, or has there been a fundamental shift in attitudes toward immigrants and foreigners? A growing literature on the attitudes of the mainstream society toward foreigners and immigrants is developing, but there is very little research on Switzerland. With the steady success of the populist right in Switzerland, we set out to address an important case.

In a project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), we attempt to explain individual differences in attitudes toward foreign citizens in Switzerland. In the literature, the most common explanation for attitudes toward foreigners is as follows: Negative attitudes toward foreigners and immigrants are a direct reaction against unwanted competition. This unwanted competition is understood primarily in economic terms, but certainly also includes aspects of cultural competition. In this project we take an innovative approach by combining insights from economic and political sciences, paying close attention to different explanatory theories. We use individual-level panel data from the Swiss Household Panel (SHP), to examine how attitudes toward foreigners change over time within individuals, filling a gap in the existing literature. Moreover, we consider the link between education and attitudes in a systematic and rigorous manner.

Contrary to most prior studies, we account for non-linearities in educational attainment since foreigners are over-represented at both the bottom and the top of the education distribution. While labour market competition is usually captured by education, our modelling strategy allows for interaction between education and unemployment risk in order to better identify/assess exposure to competition from foreigners. Moreover, we control for non-economic factors such as support for traditions and political position to further establish if attitudinal effects of education are not driven by cultural values and beliefs.

Initial findings suggest that compared to medium-educated workers, those with low levels of education are more likely to exhibit anti-foreigner attitudes, whereas the highly educated tend to have positive attitudes toward foreigners. This is in line with prior research. We find an association between low levels of education and anti-foreigner attitudes whatever the risk of unemployment. At the other end of the scale, highly educated workers have a tendency to hold anti-foreigner attitudes with increasing risk of unemployment. Put differently, there is a significant interaction effect between education and risk of unemployment. This association holds true if we control for cultural values and beliefs, but the association between a low level of education and negative attitudes toward foreigners is no longer significant. We find that the association between high levels of education and positive attitudes toward foreigners is only positive for those with a low risk of unemployment. For those with low levels of education, cultural values can account for the

negative attitudes toward foreigners. These findings indicate that the attitudinal effects for low-educated workers highlighted in the literature are mainly due to the omission of cultural values and beliefs.

Full results will be available in early 2013.

**Unsere innovative Studie zur Einstellung der Schweizer gegenüber Ausländern zeigt, dass Menschen mit tiefem Ausbildungsniveau tendenziell negative Einstellungen haben, und solche mit hohem Ausbildungsniveau positive. Hochqualifizierte Arbeiter tendieren zu negativen Einstellungen, wenn ihr Risiko zur Arbeitslosigkeit erhöht ist, während die tendenziell negativen Einstellungen der Niedrigqualifizierten mit kulturellen Werten erklärt werden können.**