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Unproductive immigrants: A socially optimal policy for rational egalitarians

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Abstract

Large parts of the population of third-world immigrants to rich countries have not been successfully integrated into domestic labor markets and so are not productively employed. A potential "immigration surplus" has therefore not been realized. These circumstances have been explained with reference to irrational behavior by natives (acting out of racism) and/or malevolent motives of either natives or immigrants, or both. In this paper, I propose an explanation for labor-market exclusion of immigrants as the optimal outcome of objectives of rational egalitarianism: that is, all people are rational and behave solely in accord with ethical socially irreproachable motives. The explanation fits the stylized facts of the Danish case. The predictions are also consistent with observed inter-country differences in labor-market exclusion of immigrants.



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