Would Open Borders Lead to Reduced Global and Within-Country Inequality?

E. Wesley F. Peterson

1. Introduction

In 2015, United Nations member states adopted 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) as guides for efforts to realize a world of greater prosperity, fairness, and peace. The SDGs are interdependent, with progress on any one of the 17 also contributing to the realization of other goals. Successes in reducing poverty (SDG 1), for example, will also affect world hunger (SDG 2) and global health outcomes (SDG 3), among other goals, and these secondary impacts will feed back on poverty reduction. This review concerns the 10th SDG (SDG 10), which calls for reducing inequality within and among countries. Most debates about inequality focus on vertical inequalities, that is, the unequal distribution of income and wealth. Horizontal inequality, sometimes referred to as "existential" inequality, has to do with inequalities associated with personal attributes such as race, ethnicity, or gender (Therborn 2013). Inequality can also be studied at different geographic levels, ranging from areas within nations, nations themselves, geographic regions, or the world as a whole (Milanovic 2016). SDG 10 recognizes all of these aspects of inequality, calling for reducing global and within-country inequality, as well as racial and gender inequalities and recognizing other dimensions of inequality such as discrimination, public policies, international trade, development assistance, and international migration. It is this latter dimension that is the focus of this review, which highlights the potential for more open borders and support for international migration to contribute to reductions in inequality.

The COVID-19 pandemic that began in early 2020 has had a severe negative impact on poverty and inequality, as well as on international migration. Border regulations aimed at controlling the spread of the virus have also impeded the movements of migrant workers and their families (Letzing 2020). Some migrants have been unable to return home, while others have lost their jobs and been expelled from the countries in which they were working (*The Economist* 2020b). According to Hashmi (2020), there were 23 million migrant workers in Arab states, many of whom were unable to return home when the pandemic broke out. Some migrant workers who have been able to continue working are employed in jobs that are essential for local economies but that also put them at increased risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Much of the food supply in the United States is dependent on migrant workers employed in meat packing plants or as farm workers. The working conditions for these individuals make them particularly susceptible to devastating outbreaks of COVID-19 (Sengupta 2020; Jarvis 2020). According to Kerwin et al. (2020), almost half of the 19.8 million foreign-born workers in the United States who are working in jobs essential for the functioning of the economy are naturalized citizens, while the rest are divided almost equally between immigrants with legal residency and those who are undocumented. In the European Union (EU), intra-EU migrant flows were cut off with serious consequences for the agricultural sector and health care (Andriescu 2020). The essential work carried out by many migrant workers often cannot be accomplished remotely but rather requires their physical presence in public areas, increasing their risks of contracting the virus (Migration Data Portal 2020). Finally, the economic contraction caused by the pandemic has meant that many migrant workers are no longer being paid with the result that the remittances that are so important to their home countries have fallen significantly (Letzing 2020; World Bank 2020b).

The consequences of the pandemic for international migration will almost certainly persist after the virus is controlled. It is possible that negative attitudes toward globalization will harden, leading to permanent impediments to international migration. On the other hand, the pandemic has revealed just how important immigrant workers are for the economies of recipient countries, and this could give rise to more generous refugee and immigration policies (Foresti 2020). Jordan (2021) describes regions in the United States that had been experiencing robust economic growth prior to the pandemic but experienced severe economic setbacks due to lower labor supplies as immigration declined. US population growth between 2010 and 2020 was the slowest on record, and many regions have come to rely on immigrant labor (Jordan 2021). Kirisci and Denney (2020) see the possibility that the pandemic might encourage a new US administration to reform the country's refugee policies, something that appears to be occurring under the Biden administration. While it will be necessary to keep the implications of the pandemic in mind for the rest of this paper, my focus is on the question of how international migration might contribute to reduced national and global inequality in a post-pandemic world.

In the next section, general information about inequality and international migration is summarized as background for the discussion that follows. To fully grasp the potential role of international migration in reducing inequality, it is necessary first to clearly identify the likely benefits and costs of opening national borders to greater migration. Investigations of both these questions are carried out in the third and fourth sections, after which studies of the impact of increased migration on global and within-country inequality are reviewed. The concluding section addresses some ethical issues related to international migration and its role in reducing inequality. The focus of the review in this chapter is on the recent theoretical and empirical literature related to inequality, international migration, and the connections between the two. Many of the chosen articles provide up-to-date empirical estimates of the impacts of international migration on within- and between-country inequality. A complete examination of historical debates about these issues is beyond the scope of this review, as the primary goal is to assess the present state of the scholarly conversation about them. The works selected for inclusion in this review build on past work and can serve as guides for policy makers and analysts seeking information about the current understanding of the relationships among these phenomena.

2. The State of Global Inequality and International Migration

There is broad agreement that economic inequality within most high-income countries, including inequalities of both income and wealth, began to rise in the late 1970s, after having fallen substantially after World War II (Milanovic 2016, Milanovic 2016, Peterson 2017b). Some have suggested that economic inequality has nearly returned to levels last seen during the Gilded Age or Belle Époque of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Piketty 2014). The record for low- and middle-income countries is not as easy to characterize as it is in high-income countries. To begin with, there is much less information about inequality in these areas over the past 75 years than is the case for high-income countries, making it difficult to determine whether longer-term inequality has been rising or falling. For more recent years, estimates of Gini indexes can be found, but they are somewhat sparse for many low- and middle-income countries. Based on World Bank (2021) estimates, the most recent Gini indexes for selected low- and middle-income countries and averages of the often-incomplete values reported for two recent periods (1990–1999 and 2000–2010) reflect widely divergent experiences with inequality reduction (Table 1). Latin American countries have long been known for high within-country inequality, but some of these countries appear to have realized modest improvements in recent years, as have a few countries in sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, many of the other countries included in Table 1 have either experienced little change in the level of inequality or have seen rising inequality. In addition, the current Gini estimates for most of these countries are high in comparison with more egalitarian countries such as Norway. The causes of these diverse experiences with inequality vary greatly from country to country but usually include government policies, the weakening of labor movements, structural factors related to economic activity, assortative mating, globalization, and skills-biased technological change. Most analysts feel that high and rising levels of economic inequality are likely to have negative consequences for a wide range of social, economic, and personal conditions and that they are also closely related to other forms of inequality based on racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination (Peterson 2017b). This perspective would seem to inform the desire expressed in SDG 10 that all such inequalities be reduced.

Table 1. Average Gini index for selected developing countries, 1990–1999, 2000–2010, and most recent year.

Country	Average of Observations between 1990 and 1999	Average of Observations between 2000 and 2010	Most Recent Year
Argentina	47.9	50.4	42.9
Brazil	59.0	55.8	53.4
Chile	55.8	50.4	44.4
Honduras	54.6	56.0	48.2
China	35.4	42.4	38.5
India	31.7	34.9	35.7
Indonesia	31.9	33.0	38.2
Iran	43.6	43.5	42.0
Pakistan	31.7	31.4	31.6
Thailand	44.0	41.0	34.9
Vietnam	35.6	36.9	35.7
Cameroon	44.4	42.5	46.6
Kenya	48.5	46.5	40.8
Nigeria	48.4	41.6	35.1
Senegal	47.8	40.2	40.3
South Africa	60.0	62.3	63.0
Zambia	52.6	51.6	57.1
Norway	24.3	25.6	27.6
United States	36.2	37.3	41.4

Source: Author's calculations based on OECD (2020c) data for Norway and the United States, World Bank (2021) data for all other countries.

Milanovic (2016) argues that global inequality " ... can be formally considered as the sum of all national inequalities plus the sum of all gaps in mean incomes among countries" (p. 3). He notes that the future of inequality among all the peoples of the world will depend on how rising within-country inequality will play out against a world in which the disparities in average incomes among countries are falling. Historically, global inequality has been driven primarily by differences in average income levels between countries rather than by within-country inequalities, so as low- and middle-income countries begin to catch up, global inequality should decline. Real per capita income in various developing country regions expressed as a percentage of real per capita income in high-income countries suggests that there has not yet been a great deal of income convergence outside some Asian countries (e.g., China) where economic growth has been particularly strong (Table 2). In 2019, per capita income in China was about 23% of per capita income in the high-income countries, 30% if measured in purchasing power parity (PPP) international dollars, so even there, the income gap is still substantial. In all the geographic regions shown in Table 2 except East Asia and the Pacific, per capita income relative to that of high-income countries was lower in 2019 than it was in 1962. Milanovic (2016) believes that global inequality will persist, but he also perceives the emergence of a global middle class and the potential for further income convergence. As with economic inequality, progress in the reduction of racial and gender inequalities has been uneven. The 2019 Human Development Report (UNDP 2019) suggests that while great advances in gender equality were realized during the 20th century, progress has slowed in recent years. Instances of ethnic, religious, and racial conflict and discrimination around the world continue to be regular features on the evening news, as shown by the rise of the social activism embodied in such efforts as the Black Lives Matter movement. In many parts of the world, social conflict driven by racial, ethnic, religious, or class differences is a major cause of the growing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons.

As the 21st century unfolds, there is widespread popular discontent in many high-income countries where some people see globalization and, more particularly, international migration as objects of resentment and anger. Some politicians have exaggerated the significance of immigration and vilified immigrants for populist political ends. In fact, the 272 million international migrants in 2019 represented only 3.5% of the world's population and many of these people were moving to neighboring countries rather than from low-income countries to rich countries in Europe and North America where immigration has become a significant issue (United Nations 2020). In 2016, Germany (current population of about 83 million) and the

United States (current population of about 327 million) both received over one million immigrants, and in 2018, the foreign-born population (a mix of naturalized citizens and legal and undocumented immigrants) in these countries made up 16% and 14%, respectively, of their total populations. In Australia and Switzerland, almost 30% of the total population is foreign-born (OECD 2020d). Under the Trump administration in the United States, the number of immigrants declined substantially (National Foundation for American Policy 2020; Kanno-Youngs 2020b). Verini (2020) reported that at least 8000 migrants have died in the Sonoran Desert in the Southwest United States as a result of that country's immigration policies (see also Romero 2021).[1] Overall, less than 4% of Earth's inhabitants are living in countries that are different from the ones in which they were born (United Nations 2020). At the same time, it should be noted that the number of people forced to migrate as a result of climate change and its consequences for food security and political conflict is likely to grow substantially in the coming years (Lustgarten 2020; Smith and Floro 2020).

National laws governing the number and kinds of immigrants who will be admitted to particular countries vary widely. Following the official end of its membership in the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020, the government of the United Kingdom (UK) announced that after the completion of a transition period, overall immigration levels will be cut, and most low-skilled workers will be excluded in favor of immigrants with specific skills and the ability to speak English (Castle 2020). Jafari and Britz (2020) predict that reduced immigration in the aftermath of Brexit is likely to have a greater negative welfare impact in the UK than the expected reductions in UK–EU trade and investment flows. Along with other immigration programs, the US government offers an unlimited number of seasonal temporary visas for farm workers and a limited number of non-farm guest worker visas (*The Economist* 2020d). As noted by Hatton (2020), immigration policies are often crafted to serve the economic interests of the receiving country. Clearly, such approaches to immigration can have adverse effects in low-income countries if they lead to the departure of highly skilled individuals in whom the government of the low-income country has invested scarce resources for their education and training, a phenomenon known as the "brain drain". Nussbaum (2019) is particularly critical of guest worker programs, which can result in a more-or-less permanent second-class population in the recipient country.

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1 For overviews of the Trump administration's immigration and refugee policies, see Preston (2020) and The Editorial Board (2020).

Table 2. Per capita income in low- and middle-income countries (LM), sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), East Asia and Pacific (EAP), South Asia (SA), and Latin America (LA) as a percentage of per capita income in high-income countries, 1962–2019.

Year	LM	SSA	EAP	SA	LA
1962	8.48	8.87	4.60	5.54	23.91
1974	7.09	7.20	3.72	3.25	21.80
1977	7.22	7.16	3.53	2.88	22.05
1980	6.51	6.66	2.90	2.65	20.77
1986	5.72	4.23	3.13	2.62	15.33
1992	4.16	2.67	3.77	1.64	13.65
1998	4.52	2.16	3.37	1.68	16.46
2001	4.39	1.90	3.81	1.73	14.49
2007	6.15	2.71	6.02	2.31	15.48
2010	8.31	3.22	9.48	2.91	19.48
2013	10.40	3.87	13.24	3.35	22.57
2015	10.65	4.06	15.27	3.60	20.82
2020	10.89	3.33	18.82	4.10	16.17

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the World Bank.

In contrast, asylum policies for refugee populations are generally driven by humanitarian considerations and international agreements such as the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which requires that signatories establish procedures for determining whether a refugee qualifies for asylum as a result of safety concerns in the country of origin and prevents refugees from being sent back to places where they may have legitimate fears for their lives or well-being (United Nations 1951). In the United States, the Trump administration instituted procedures aimed at circumventing these requirements in its effort to lower the number of asylum cases brought before US judges as part of a general attempt to reduce the number of immigrants. US asylum officers strongly objected to these policy changes arguing that they would completely undermine US asylum procedures that have been in place for many years (Kanno-Youngs 2020a). Chaos at the US border as a result of rapid increases in asylum-seekers as the new administration took office in 2021 would seem to support this prediction although the Biden administration has undertaken a review of immigration and refugee policies in an effort to correct problems at the border. In addition, some of the asylum policies of the Trump administration have been overturned (Benner and Jordan 2021). Hatton (2020) and Brell et al. (2020) note that refugee assimilation into the receiving country's economic system is often more difficult than in the case of economic migrants who may have been admitted for their skills or may have chosen the destination country because of the likelihood of being able to find work. On the other hand, Rogers (2021) has reported that the large number of refugees from war-torn Syria and other countries experiencing conflict admitted to Germany in 2015 and 2016 have been more easily integrated into German society than has historically been the case with earlier waves of immigrants. According to UN data, about 29 million of the 272 million international migrants in 2019 were refugees fleeing wars and other life-threatening situations. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that in addition to refugees seeking asylum outside their countries of origin, some 41.3 million people were internally displaced due to conflict and violence (UNHCR 2020). The distinction between refugees and economic migrants is often difficult to maintain as people emigrating from countries in which they face poverty and low standards of living (economic migrants) may be fleeing living conditions that are, in fact, life-threatening (Nussbaum 2019).

3. The Benefits of Open Borders and International Migration

Caplan and Naik (2015) report estimates that world economic output (USD 87.6 trillion in 2019, falling to USD 84.7 trillion in 2020 as a result of the pandemic) would double if all restrictions on immigration were eliminated noting that "[l]abor is the world's most valuable commodity—yet thanks to strict immigration regulation, most of it goes to waste" (ibid., p. 7). Support for this dramatic claim lies in the great differences in productivity associated with different parts of the world. Some of the differences in labor productivity between an average worker in Germany and an average Zambian worker are due to different levels of education and training, but much of the difference stems simply from the fact that workers in Germany work in a setting in which there is more capital, better infrastructure, less corruption, and more effective legal institutions. Clemens et al. (2019) estimate the ratios of the real wages for workers with identical skill levels in the United States and 42 developing countries and use this information to measure the average gain to workers in the low-income countries if they could migrate to the United States. Their results suggest that unskilled workers from the median country would increase their annual earnings by about USD 13,700 (purchasing power parity (PPP) international dollars). This higher pay reflects the greater productivity of workers in the United States, as compared with workers with identical skill sets in other countries. Not only would open borders lead to much greater economic output, but the migrants themselves would realize higher living standards, and this would contribute to reductions in poverty and global inequality (Caplan and Weinersmith 2019; *The Economist* 2017, 2019; Kennan 2014).

Banerjee and Duflo (2019) note that unskilled migrant workers are often willing to perform work that native workers avoid and that they are more likely to serve as complements to host-country workers than as substitutes for them with the result that their presence is not likely to have a large impact on the wages or employment of unskilled domestic workers (see also *The Economist* 2019). They also note that skilled migrants increase the supply of doctors and other specialists, which may restrain price increases to the benefit of consumers in the receiving country, and that immigrants are more likely to start new businesses than natives, thereby contributing to economic growth in destination countries. These observations are bolstered by the work of Legrain (2020), who also points to the propensity of immigrants to create new businesses and highlights their important work in supporting healthcare systems during the global pandemic. Legrain (2020) also notes the fiscal contributions of immigrants at both local and national levels in recipient countries. Gee et al. (2017) analyzed the tax contributions of undocumented workers in the United States and found that they made significant contributions to state and local tax revenues, paying about 8% of their earnings to state and local governments, a greater proportion than the 5.4% paid by the richest one-percent of income earners. Banerjee and Duflo (2019) and Kennan (2014) point out that most people would prefer not to take the risk of moving to a foreign country so that the actual number of people who would choose to migrate if immigration restrictions were relaxed would be far less than the hordes that haunt the fevered imaginations of populist politicians.

The most obvious benefit to those who choose to migrate is the likelihood of realizing increased incomes. Caplan and Naik (2015) find that an unskilled worker moving from Mexico to the United States will see a pay increase of 150%, while an unskilled Nigerian worker moving to the United States could expect to receive an increase of more than 1000%. McKenzie (2017) reports that studies of the migrant experience all find substantial income gains for people migrating from low-income to high-income countries. Kennan (2014) estimates that the average gain for both migrants and non-migrants in 40 countries with an average annual per capita income of USD 8633 (PPP international dollars) would be USD 10,798 (PPP international dollars) more than doubling their annual incomes. Migration gives rise to other benefits as well. Zuccotti et al. (2017) observed that the children of unskilled Turkish migrants in Western Europe were more likely to complete a university education than similar children who remained in Turkey. Preston and Grimes (2019) find that males in Australia realize greater increases in earnings after migrating than females, but female migrants achieve higher levels of subjective well-being.

Migration can also affect the lives and communities of those who remain in the country of origin as a result, in part, of remittances sent back to their original home. These remittances reached USD 554 billion in 2019, some 3.6 times the amount (USD 153 billion) of official development assistance (ODA) from the members of the Development Aid Committee of the OECD in that year, although they were expected to fall by 20% in 2020 as a result of the global pandemic (World Bank 2020a; OECD 2020a). Margolis et al. (2015) found that migration was associated with a 40% decrease in poverty in some regions of Algeria mainly as a result of foreign transfers. Binci and Giannelli (2018) show that remittances led to reduced child labor and increased school attendance in Vietnam, although domestic remittances may have had a larger impact than those from foreign sources. Theoharides (2018) connected increases in international migration to greater secondary school enrollment in several developing countries. Many emigrants do not choose to settle permanently in the countries to which they have migrated and those who return to their native country often bring skills and attitudes that contribute to that country's development. Tuccio et al. (2019) find that returnees have contributed to increased efforts to bring about progressive social and political change in Morocco, while Docquier et al. (2016) argue that open emigration policies lead to more robust democratic institutions in developing countries. Diabate and Mesplé-Somps (2019) show that migrants who have returned to Mali have been influential in reducing the practice of female genital mutilation, an example of how international migration can contribute to reducing gender inequalities.

Migration may also have favorable demographic effects in low-income countries with high population growth rates. Rapid population growth leads to large numbers of dependent children with needs for education and health services that may strain the capacity of local governments and communities. Population growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa have been around 2.8% for the past 50 years, with the result that children under 15 years of age made up 42.0% of the total population in 2020. This can be compared with areas with slower population growth such as Japan, Germany, the United States, or the EU where the proportions of the total population accounted for by this age group were 12.4%, 14.0%, 18.4%, and 15.1%, respectively, in 2020 (World Bank 2021). According to data reported by the United States Census Bureau (2020), net migration from Mali in 2020 is expected to reduce the population growth rate from 3.3% to 2.9%, while for Somalia, the actual predicted population growth rate of 2.2% is significantly lower than the growth rate of 2.7% that would prevail without migration. While these changes appear to be modest, small differences can have significant effects over time: the population of Somalia would double every 26 years at a constant annual growth rate of 2.7%, but it would take almost 32 years for the population to double at a growth rate of 2.2%.

Dependency ratios are calculated as the number of dependent people (those less than 15 plus those older than 64) divided by the working-age population (aged 15 to 64). A dependency ratio of 1.00 means there is one working-age person for every dependent, while a value of 0.50 means that there are two working-age people for every dependent. Based on World Bank (2021) data, the dependency ratio for sub-Saharan Africa in 2020 was 0.82, and for Mali and Somalia, the ratios were 0.98 and 0.97, respectively, compared with 0.54 and 0.55 for the United States and Germany. In Japan, slow or negative population growth has resulted in large numbers of older people and a relatively high dependency ratio of 0.69. The greater the number of working-age people relative to young and elderly dependents, the more resources will be generated to meet their needs. Of course, because most of the emigrants from low-income countries are adults, significant outflows of working adults could make it more difficult to cover the educational and healthcare costs associated with the large numbers of dependent children. This effect may be offset by the substantial remittances sent home by working migrants.

There are also significant benefits to immigration in high-income countries—common destinations for migrants and refugees from developing countries. Population growth rates are low in most of these countries, which can mean a smaller labor force and slowed economic growth. GDP growth is equal to population growth plus growth in per capita output, so with low or zero population growth, the economic output can only increase in line with productivity gains, as reflected in per capita GDP growth (Peterson 2017a). Baker et al. (2005) suggest that low population growth rates are one reason economic growth is likely to remain low in most high-income countries in the coming years. The United States Census United States Census Bureau (2020) predicts that the natural population growth rate (births minus deaths among the resident population) in 2030 in high-income countries will be zero, so the only source of population growth will come from the small positive net migration rate of 0.2%. It was noted above that many low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, are experiencing very high population growth rates, leading to large numbers of children in need of educational and other services, which may put a severe strain on government budgets. Emigration could help to lower these high population growth rates, and if the migrants traveled to high-income countries with low population growth, their added numbers could swell labor forces and contribute to greater economic growth (Jordan 2021). According to the National Foundation for American Policy (2020), current restrictive immigration policies in the United States could lower labor force growth by 35% or more. It was noted earlier that immigrants often work in occupations that the native population in high-income countries avoids. According to ERS (2020), 21% of hired farmworkers in the United States in the period 2014–2016 were immigrants with legal authorization to work, and 48% were undocumented immigrants. The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF 2020) estimated that 2012 labor shortages due mainly to immigration blockages cost the farm industry USD 1.3 billion and that cutting off access to undocumented immigrant farmworkers would cost the industry more than USD 30 billion a year. These costs will be dwarfed by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on global labor movements (Letzing 2020). As noted above, the pandemic has also highlighted the fact that many immigrants, such as those who harvest and process a country's food supply, perform work that is essential for the functioning of the recipient country's economy.

International migration may also serve as an adjustment mechanism when there are shocks to labor markets in high-income countries. Jauer et al. (2019) investigated the response of migrants to labor market shocks in the EU and the United States in the aftermath of the Great Recession (2008–09), finding that migration had a significant positive impact on labor market adjustments set in motion by the economic crisis. Arpaia et al. (2018) studied migration flows in the European Monetary Union where high unemployment led to increased immigration from both within and outside the union. Immigrants may also have an impact on overall economic conditions and social relations in recipient countries. Steingrass (2018) showed that an increase in recent immigrants to a US state led to small but significant increases in imports from the immigrants' countries of origin, as well as a small increase in US exports to those countries. Karkaris (2019) found that emigration from China had a strong positive effect on Chinese exports. In a study of immigrants from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Berlinschi and Harutyunyan (2019) conclude that immigrants are more politically engaged, tolerant of cultural differences, optimistic, and willing to take risks than those who choose not to emigrate. These attributes may help explain why immigrants appear to be more likely to establish new businesses in their adopted countries and less likely to require welfare support than is the case for the native population (Banerjee and Duflo 2019; *The Economist* 2019). My hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska (USA) has received significant numbers of refugees and immigrants in recent years and has seen a substantial increase in the number of ethnic restaurants and grocery stores started up by the new arrivals to the general benefit of food consumers across the city (see Pipher 2003).

4. Opposition to Immigration

Despite the many advantages to international migrants, their countries of origin, and the host countries where they settle, there is strong opposition to allowing more immigration, particularly in many high-income countries. Borjas (2015) criticizes the assumptions underlying the claims that open borders would lead to substantial gains for the world economy, arguing that most of the productivity gains would be offset by the costs of migration and negative externalities generated by migrants in recipient countries. The negative externalities identified by Borjas are the impact migrants may have on institutions and social relationships in the host country. Collier (2015) also suggests that immigrants may contribute to the erosion of the institutions that have driven prosperity in high-income countries. Levy (2017, p. 757) argues that migration from Mexico to the United States has contributed significantly to what he refers to as " ... a well-documented decline in U.S. social capital", and Levi et al. (2020) suggest that the presence of immigrants gives rise to anti-immigration sentiments among existing citizens, although they consider this a short-run effect. Baudassé et al. (2018) found it difficult to clearly delineate the effects of migration on institutions in either the country of origin or the destination country, calling for further research to more clearly identify the institutional impacts of international migration. In contrast, Nowrasteh (2020) reports cross-country evidence showing that immigration has no impact on the domestic institutions of recipient countries including those related to corruption, economic freedom, and culture. The contestable belief that there are significant social costs, as identified by the critics of immigration, is at the heart of populist efforts to curtail immigrant arrivals in many high-income countries.

A common complaint in destination countries is that immigrants accept lower wages than native-born workers who are displaced by the influx of new workers. Borjas (2013) found that immigration into the United States depressed the wages of low-skilled workers, although it did contribute to economic growth. More recently, *The Economist* (2020c) noted that declines in US immigration in 2018 and 2019 were associated with higher growth in nominal wages, although there were other factors besides lower immigration such as relatively robust economic growth and higher labor demand that may have affected this outcome. Edo and Toubal (2015) showed that immigration to France between 1990 and 2010 resulted in a 0.6% short-run decrease in average wages but over the long run benefitted low-skill workers, while skilled French workers saw some erosion of their wages. Other analysts believe that immigration generally has positive effects on income growth and productivity with a limited displacement of low-skilled workers (Peri 2012; Banerjee and Duflo 2019). As noted earlier, the work of immigrants often complements that of skilled native workers, allowing them to increase their productivity by focusing their efforts more narrowly on activities that require their greater skill sets. According to Davidson (2013), these observations apply to both documented and undocumented immigrants, as well as to those who arrive as refugees from foreign conflicts. Green (2018) was unable to discern displacement effects as a result of immigration to the UK, concluding that immigration had not resulted in lower wages for low-skilled workers.

A related criticism of immigration is that immigrants may receive benefits from welfare programs paid for by the taxes of the resident population. Borjas (1999) and Agersnap et al. (2020) suggest that generous welfare programs in certain high-income countries can act as a magnet attracting low-income workers from developing countries. In 2019, the Trump administration issued a new rule aimed at denying admission to the United States to individuals with visas or legal immigrant status (green cards) who had received welfare benefits in the past or appeared likely to become a "public charge" in the future (Department of Homeland Security 2019). The problem with this objection is that immigrants also pay taxes and, on average, often pay more in taxes than they take out in welfare transfers. *The Economist* (2019, p. 8) reports that " … a typical migrant from Europe to Britain can expect to pay £78,000 more in taxes than he receives in benefits." Legal immigrants in the United States are also less likely to draw on public welfare programs than the native population, and while both legal and undocumented immigrants pay taxes, those without legal status are ineligible for public benefits other than school attendance for children (National Immigration Forum 2018; Gee et al. 2017). Based on OECD (2020b) data, about 75% of the foreign-born residents of 22 high-income members of the OECD are working age (between 25 and 64), 24% have university degrees, and less than 6% are unemployed. This suggests that most immigrants in high-income countries are gainfully employed, students, or retirees, with only the latter category likely to be drawing public benefits. There are other potential negative impacts of immigration on the economies of destination countries. Goel et al. (2020) find that there is a positive relationship between immigration flows and the size of a country's informal sector that is largely exempt from government taxation with negative effects on government revenue. Lin and Weiss (2019) argue that high levels of immigration lead to greater wage inequality in the recipient country because both low- and high-skilled foreign-born workers are associated with gains for native workers earning high wages.

Some critics of immigration point to negative effects in the countries from which migrants have departed. Borjas (2015), for example, draws attention to the fact that although moving many people from low-income countries to high-income countries might increase global economic output, it would also lower GDP in the source countries by reducing their workforce. A more serious problem could arise if international migration removes highly skilled or highly motivated workers from low-income countries, leaving them with a less qualified labor force. The observation by Berlinschi and Harutyunyan (2019) that migrants are more likely to be open-minded and willing to take risks suggests that their departure would represent a loss to the country of origin regardless of their skill levels. This effect would be compounded if emigrants are more highly educated. Huh (2017) found that immigrants from 42 developing countries to the United States had higher education levels than those who remained and that higher gender inequality in the source country caused more highly educated women to leave. Gender effects also show up in Uprety's (2019) study of the effects of emigration of skilled health workers on health outcomes in the country of origin. The emigration of skilled professionals gave rise to negative health outcomes that were more significant when the skilled emigrants were women.

On the other hand, there is some evidence that the brain drain of educated and skilled workers can actually be of benefit to their countries of origin because it creates incentives for individuals in the sending country to make greater investments in human capital in anticipation of greater opportunities abroad. This effect is sometimes referred to as a "brain gain". Batista et al. (2012) find that an increased probability of future emigration by an individual raises the likelihood of secondary-school completion. Beine et al. (2011) conclude that skilled emigration from low-income countries encourages greater educational attainment as long as the departure rate is not too high. Wolf (2014) disagrees with the brain gain hypothesis, arguing that, in a general-equilibrium framework, increased emigration of skilled workers has no impact on human capital accumulation in the country of origin. Other analysts, however, show that the emigration of skilled workers may give rise to greater educational investments as well as other socio-economic benefits. In a study of African migration patterns, Mountford and Rapoport (2016) observe that emigration bias in favor of skilled workers leads to lower growth in African populations, while an unskilled labor bias results in an increase in African populations. The explanation for this result is that a higher probability that skilled workers will emigrate in return for higher wages gives families an incentive to have smaller families with greater investment in children's educations, whereas increased emigration of unskilled labor reduces the incentive to restrain family size, as additional children may be able to earn more and contribute to family well-being by emigrating.

5. International Migration and Inequality

The effects of international migration on inequality may not always be easy to identify. As emigrants will usually earn higher incomes in destination countries, global inequality should fall as migration increases. Rodrik (2016) argues that removing restrictions on global labor movements might have a greater effect on inequality than trade liberalization, although he worries that low-skilled workers in the recipient countries could be adversely affected by increased immigration in those countries. If most international migration involves movements of skilled workers from low-income countries to high-income countries, global inequality should fall as the emigrants realize higher incomes. If the skilled emigrants had earned relatively high incomes in their native countries, however, their departure might lower average incomes in their country of origin, thereby widening the gap between high and low-income countries, offsetting some of the original reduction in global inequality. In this case, it would even be possible that inequality within the country of origin might fall, as the removal of the relatively high-income workers reduces disparities within the country. This would hardly be a felicitous outcome, however, as the more equal distribution of income would center on a lower average income so that the country as a whole would be poorer. Many other scenarios could be imagined involving the types of people who emigrate (low- or high-skilled workers, families), the countries to which they emigrate (neighboring low-income countries, high-income countries), the conditions surrounding their departure (refugees, economic migrants, students), and a host of other pertinent factors (Wellman 2019). This suggests that the impact of more relaxed immigration standards may be quite variable, which, of course, complicates the design of policies that would lower both global and within-country inequality as called for in SDG 10.

A further complication in the formulation of effective policies that would enhance the potential for international migration to contribute to reductions in poverty and inequality stems from political opposition in destination countries. Many advocates for greater international migration recognize that whether one agrees with these sentiments or not, as a practical matter, they must be taken into account in designing immigration policies (Miller 2016; Milanovic 2019). Milanovic (2019) notes that because migrants differ from the indigenous population, their presence can undermine public support for the welfare state, which requires some agreement on the kind of people who deserve public assistance. As he recognizes the potential benefits of international migration, he proposes that immigrants be granted less than full citizenship rights as a way to avoid efforts to curtail all immigration, thereby realizing some of the efficiencies that would stem from freer labor movements. He also suggests that the resident population might be more willing to accept immigrants if they are less likely to become permanent residents (Milanovic 2019). Temporary guest worker programs might be a way to accomplish this end, although experience suggests that temporary guest workers have a way of becoming more permanent residents (*The Economist* 2020a). Weyl (2018) argues that high-income countries would do well to emulate the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which admit large numbers of migrant workers from low-income countries who are paid substantially less than natives doing the same kind of work. While this sort of approach seems to run counter to SDG 10 target 10.3 calling for the elimination of discrimination, such policies might help prevent the adoption of even more restrictive immigration policies.

Although some low-income countries have begun to catch up with richer countries, global inequality is still driven primarily by differences in mean incomes among countries. McKenzie (2017) argues that migrants' increased earnings in high-income countries lead to reductions in poverty and global inequality. He notes, however, that the effects of emigration on within-country inequality depend on who migrates, arguing that greater emigration of unskilled workers leads to greater reductions in poverty and inequality, while inequality may actually increase if the poor are prevented from taking advantage of the gains from emigration. Galiano and Romero (2018) show that limited emigration of skilled workers can lead to lower within-country inequality but that as more people invest in skills acquisition in response to migration opportunities, income dispersion within the country may increase. Their model also indicates that at higher levels of skilled emigration, income inequality decreases so that the relationship between the volume of skilled emigration and inequality is that of an inverted U. Hobbs and Jameson (2012) study the destinations of poor and rich migrants from Nicaragua finding that higher-income emigrants are more likely to move to the United States from which greater remittances are returned to their families, while poorer emigrants move to Costa Rica from which limited remittances are sent, with the result that within-country inequality increases.

Stark and Taylor (1989, 1991) argue that decisions to migrate are driven not only by absolute differences in income between countries, but also by relative income levels in the country of origin. In analyzing migration from Mexico to the United States, they find that households situated at lower levels of the Mexican income distribution are more likely to be the source of US immigrants than households that are more favorably placed in the local economy. This result suggests that emigration to a high-income country can lead to lower within-country inequality as poorer households gain from the decision of some of their members to emigrate. Borjas (1987) found that the earnings of immigrants in the United States with similar skill levels varied with conditions in their countries of origin. In particular, his results showed that immigrants from countries with greater income inequality than the United States were more likely to come from the poorer social strata in their home countries, which, again, might suggest an equalizing effect on that country's income distribution.

On the other hand, Borjas's (1987) empirical results suggested that immigrants from countries with higher per capita incomes, lower inequality, and more democratic systems such as the countries of Western Europe had higher earnings than those from countries that did not fit this profile, developing countries in particular. Borjas (1999) also explored the idea of "welfare magnets", which suggests that immigrants likely to receive welfare benefits in the destination country, will choose areas within that country offering the most generous benefits. In a more recent study, Agersnap et al. (2020) examined the welfare magnet hypothesis in Denmark, where a policy reducing welfare benefits for immigrants from outside the EU was introduced and subsequently repealed only to be reintroduced a few years later. They found that immigration fell substantially in response to the reduction in benefits and rose by a similar amount when the benefits were reinstated. It is important to note in this context that there is evidence that immigrants are currently less likely to receive welfare benefits than the native population (Banerjee and Duflo 2019).

Hackl (2018) calls for a more expansive view of global mobility that would recognize the movement of people as well as social and digital mobility. Social mobility is defined as a movement among social classes, while digital mobility deals with the possibility that work will no longer be tied to particular locations. He notes that the effect of human mobility on inequality depends on numerous factors and that it is not inevitable that increased migration will lead to reduced inequality. Social mobility can be restricted or facilitated in either the home country or the destination country for those who emigrate, and Hackl believes that the extent of social mobility is an important element in overall inequality. Abramitzky et al. (2021) compared a large sample of the earnings of sons with those of their fathers, finding that the sons of immigrant fathers achieved greater upward mobility than sons of fathers born in the United States. The greater social mobility of immigrant children may contribute to reductions in within-country inequality. By detaching work from particular locations, digital mobility could make important contributions to inequality reduction by extending opportunities to more people and by removing the salience of barriers to human movement attendant to current anti-immigrant sentiments. Milanovic (2019) imagines a future in which tasks can be performed anywhere on the globe, removing the incentives and need for international migration.

There appears to be some agreement that more extensive international migration would bring significant efficiency gains through better allocation of resources around the world in the same way that the relatively free movement of goods, services, and capital currently does. The EU's recognition of such economic benefits led to the creation of the single market with its requirement that labor be allowed to move freely within the EU along with goods, services, and capital. In the United States, new technology made extensive petroleum deposits accessible in North Dakota, leading to the rapid growth of that industry, labor shortages, and higher wages. Many workers from other states responded by moving to North Dakota, benefiting from higher wages and easing the labor shortages. The same types of efficiency gains could be realized globally if there were fewer restrictions on international migration. Recognizing the caveats raised by analysts such as Borjas (2013, 2015), it still seems likely that more open borders would lead to greater global economic growth. It is well known, however, that economic growth does not automatically lead to greater equality. In fact, while most economists believe that economic growth is important, many would argue that growth needs to be complemented by policy interventions to ensure that the benefits of that growth are widely shared across the population (Milanovic 2019; Stiglitz 2019).

The authors included in this review have found great variety in the effects of international migration on inequality. In many cases, the varying impacts arise in particular settings with circumstances that are peculiar to those times and places. This suggests that it may not be possible to identify a unique set of policies that would effectively ensure that international migration plays a constructive role in reducing inequality across all countries, making the design of appropriate policies particularly complicated.

On the other hand, there may be some consensus that certain policies are unhelpful in fighting inequality. Several authors (e.g., McKenzie 2017) suggest that policies in recipient countries that target skilled workers in developing countries may actually increase inequality. De Haas et al. (2018) showed that migration policies around the world had become less restrictive overall but more selective targeting " . . . high- and low-skill workers, students, and refugees" (p. 324). As noted earlier, the United Kingdom intends to admit only skilled workers who can speak English, while other countries may be more inclined to admit temporary unskilled workers through programs such as that of the United States for farmworkers. These policies are often adopted with little regard for their effects in the immigrants' countries of origin (Hatton 2020). Cavallero (2006) considers it wrong to ignore these effects, arguing that while every country has a right to control its borders, richer countries, in return, should be required to provide funding for development assistance to countries that produce large numbers of emigrants. SDG 10 views development assistance as part of the effort to reduce inequality, but it could also be seen as compensation for the resources expended in developing countries on education and health services for individuals who migrate to higher-income countries. One could also argue that high-income countries should open their borders to a broader pool of migrants rather than attempting to pick off the most highly educated and productive citizens of developing countries and that they should provide financial compensation to the countries from which these often-essential workers have emigrated for the educational and other investments made on their behalf by the governments of their native countries.

Opposition to immigration in many high-income countries might be attenuated if immigrants were not granted the full range of rights offered to citizens. Weyl (2018) argues for arrangements similar to those found in the Gulf States where large numbers of immigrant workers have many fewer rights than the native population. Milanovic (2016) believes that unrestricted immigration with no discrimination between immigrants and residents is probably not politically feasible, while the current system of admitting some immigrants who are allegedly treated equally but, in fact, are classed as illegal aliens subject to great uncertainty and discrimination is inefficient and inequitable. He suggests that it would be preferable, as an intermediate position, to admit more migrants but with " … legally defined relatively mild differences in treatment of local and foreign labor" (ibid., p. 154). Becker (2011) proposed another way to make immigrants more acceptable to the native population. Similar to Milanovic (2016), Becker believes that allowing large numbers of immigrants to enter high-income countries is not politically feasible. To reduce the demand for entry by potential immigrants, he proposed charging a fee of around USD 50,000 for entry into the United States. He argued that such a fee would be more efficient than quantitative restrictions (quotas) and would have the added advantage of ensuring that immigrants have strong commitments to eventually becoming citizens. Miller (2016) feels that the goal should be for immigrants to become full members of the societies they join, admitting, as a practical matter, that temporary migration would be acceptable if properly managed. However, he objects to situations in which a permanent group of second-class citizens is created as is the case in the United States where large numbers of undocumented immigrants without official status and ordinary labor market protections are at the mercy of employers and a sometimes-capricious government.

6. Conclusions

Milanovic (2019) defines a "citizenship premium" as the difference in income between two more-or-less identical people who happen to be citizens of different countries. The estimate by Clemens et al. (2019) that the value of migration barriers between low-income countries and the United States for low-skilled men (13,700 international dollars) could be thought of as a lower-bound measure of the annual value of the premium that falls to low-skilled US workers simply by virtue of their citizenship. Milanovic (2019) suggests that the citizenship premium is similar to an asset that has a value equal to the discounted stream of economic advantages resulting from one's citizenship over the life of the holder. He notes that, as with other assets, citizenship can be bought in certain countries, and there may be different classes of citizens as in the United States where legal permanent residents enjoy many but not all of the rights—they do not have voting rights, for example—of full citizens. That the accident of birth should confer the ownership of such a valuable asset on citizens raises an important moral question: by what right do individuals who happen to have been born in a rich country deserve the citizenship premium that comes with their birth? After all, they have done nothing in particular to warrant this windfall, nor have those born in poor countries done anything to justify the citizenship penalty that accompanies their birth.

The basis for receiving a citizenship premium is the existence of nation-states that have sovereignty over a territory, coupled with different national income levels. Some cosmopolitans question the moral relevance of national sovereignty arguing that our obligations to other people do not stop at the national border (Singer 2009; Appiah 2019). Others favor respect for national sovereignty arguing for the value of community and solidarity within nation-states but also believe that citizens in high-income countries have more extensive obligations to foreigners than actual practice would suggest (Nussbaum 2019; Miller 2016). Such obligations could be thought to arise from historical facts such as that people in high-income countries have generated the majority of the greenhouse gases that are warming the planet creating conditions that drive many low-income people into international migration (Burzynski et al. 2019; Lustgarten 2020). Others see national sovereignty as critical for human flourishing (see Miscevic 2018) but would probably not agree that egregious abuses of non-citizens through mistreatment of refugees at the border or exploitation of undocumented workers in a high-income country pass moral muster. Crafting immigration policies, along with complementary policies related to foreign aid, trade, international finance, and in other areas, so as to encourage economic growth and greater equality in both recipient countries and countries of origin will be complicated, but if carried out successfully, such policies could increase the potentially positive impacts of international migration on global- and within-country inequality, as called for by SDG 10.

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