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Immigration, Global Justice and Structural Racism

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ABSTRACT

Nils Holtug argues that policies that support more open borders are a requirement of justice insofar as they contribute to global egalitarianism. However, at the level of regulation, the feasibility of this proposal plays a role and may not make open borders the policy we should adopt in the current political climate. What are the feasibility constraints on a policy of open borders for the sake of increasing global equality? The most pressing feasibility constraint is backlash—the risk that people will grow to resent immigrants and blame immigration for social problems. Holtug argues that although this is an important consideration, it is not as problematic as many people think. This is because, in his view, the bias that often underlies it is malleable. For him, implicit bias and animosity to people in the out-group are attitudes that can be changed with policy. Though understanding implicit or psychological bias is an important part of theorizing backlash and ways to prevent it, this analysis is incomplete and must be supplemented with an understanding of another equally pernicious form of racism: structural racism. Structural racism is the product of social structures, institutional processes, cultural practices, and political institutions that often work in reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality. On this view, racial bias is the *effect*, not the *cause*, of racial inequalities and injustices. This is why we cannot eliminate the negative attitudes that lead to backlash without also considering structural racism. Reversing prejudice—and consequently backlash—requires changing these structures, not just individual attitudes and biases. If we want racism and bias not to be feasibility constraints on implementing global egalitarianism, we must be prepared to tackle structural racism as well as psychological bias.

Keywords: racism, bias, structural racism, global egalitarianism, backlash, open borders.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Biden administration came into office in 2021, there has been a debate over whether asylum seekers who had been prevented from entering the US under a public health rule known as Order 42 should be allowed into the country. It was not surprising that many in the right-leaning Republican Party argued strongly that asylum seekers should not be allowed in through the southern border. For them, immigrants represented economic threats and social challenges, and they believed that the sheer number of asylum seekers waiting to enter would overwhelm the capacities of the border states. What was more surprising was the support for this position from many in the more centrist and left-leaning Democratic Party. While some argued that Order 42 should be lifted for the sake of the humanity of asylum seekers, other members of the party disagreed. Their disagreement was not because they were opposed to asylum or immigration or because they shared negative views of asylum seekers with their Republican counterparts, but because they worried about the effect of admitting asylum seekers on their chances for reelection. They worried that they would be seen as not caring about US citizens or US security. The lives of thousands of asylum seekers hinge on what I think of as the US "progressive's paradox":[1] if you strongly support policies that promote refugee and immigrant inclusion, then you are likely to not get reelected and the party that is elected will likely be much worse towards this group. If you don't support these policies, then you are in effect no different than the other party you oppose, except perhaps at the level of symbols. It's hard at first to see any way out of this dilemma.

Nils Holtug's *The Politics of Social Cohesion* (2021) challenges one of the assumptions at the core of the dilemma just mentioned. The assumption is that immigration is problematic because it's likely to have a negative effect on the country. In the view of some, immigration threatens to decrease social cohesion and undermines a sense of shared identity, trust, and solidarity. With these values diminished, it's harder to implement welfare policies that would lead to social justice. Framed in these terms, countries must choose which values and goods their policies should promote: Do we want to promote diversity through policies that support immigrants and refugees, or, alternatively, do we want to promote more egalitarian policies on taxation, housing, and welfare? These latter policies require a sense of solidarity and social cohesion that relies on a shared identity and a sense of trust, especially trust that people are not abusing the help they are given,

1 This is a phrase that Holtug uses to express the dilemma of those who believe that progressives need to choose either diversity or equality (equal distribution), but cannot have both. This is a view he seeks to dismantle in his book (ch. 1).

and perhaps that they will even be grateful for their fellow citizens' generosity. Many assume that you cannot have both.

This assumption is precisely what Holtug carefully and effectively dismantles:

> I argue that the effects of immigration on social cohesion do not need to compromise social justice and that core principles of liberty and equality not only form the normative basis for just policies of immigration and integration, as a matter of empirical fact, they are also the values that, if shared, are most likely to produce the social cohesion among community members that provides the social basis for implementing justice. (3)

In other words, if we properly understand the way that values like trust and solidarity are engendered in a society, we will see that immigration does not undermine these values. We can have robust immigration and diversity without sacrificing social cohesion. Holtug demonstrates that social cohesion is compatible with cosmopolitan, liberal, and even multicultural policies on immigration.

I will begin my discussion of this argument with an overview of Holtug's novel analysis of the relationship between immigration and values such as social cohesion, equality, and solidarity, particularly as it applies to global justice. For him, the price of immigration and the multiculturalism that may follow is not a loss of social cohesion that would result in a lack of support for social services. At the domestic level, immigration and its effect on social cohesion need not undermine social justice. This is also true at the global level. Holtug argues that egalitarianism has a global scope, and that our policies ought to aim for global, not merely domestic, justice. One way to achieve a more egalitarian global sphere is through certain forms of South-North immigration. This is because on some accounts, immigration can be expected to increase global equality.[2] This means that justice will require much more, though not completely, open borders. Whether or not we can achieve global egalitarianism through immigration will depend on how citizens of receiving countries view this increased immigration and multiculturalism. Backlash against immigration threatens to make the project of using immigration to achieve global equality unfeasible.

How worried should we be about backlash and the anti-immigrant sentiment that might take hold in a society? The focus of this paper is to consider Holtug's response to this question. In his view, although backlash

2 I discuss this claim in more detail later in the paper.

is a feasibility constraint that policymakers must consider, it is not as problematic for his support of more open borders as it might first appear to be. This is because of his understanding of backlash and the bias that motivates it. In his view, attitudes towards immigrants and members of out-groups are malleable and can be changed through deliberate government interventions. Anti-immigrant sentiment is something that can be changed and moderated. However, I think Holtug misunderstands the bias that fuels anti-immigrant sentiment, and as a result is too optimistic in his assessment of this feasibility constraint. Holtug seems to view bias as primarily something that is psychological—a set of negative beliefs. Taking backlash against immigration seriously requires that we consider not only racist attitudes, but also structural racism. I'll show that structural racism—racism that's embedded in social norms, institutions, laws, and practices—also gives rise to biased attitudes towards immigrants and can drive backlash. This kind of racism, however, is not as easily changeable. I suggest further that challenging structural racism, deeply embedded though it is in society, ought to be part of the global egalitarian project.

2. SOCIAL COHESION: DOMESTIC AND GLOBAL

In the first part of his book, Holtug argues that liberal immigration policies and multiculturalism are not necessarily detrimental to social cohesion, solidarity, and trust. As a result, we can have both liberal social welfare policies that depend on social trust and liberal immigration and multiculturalism. His methodology is both normative and empirical. Both facts and values matter for Holtug:

> given our best assessment of the impact of various forms of diversity on different aspects of social cohesion, what should our immigration policies look like? To answer that question, we need to know something about the impact of diversity on social cohesion. However, given our assessment of the facts, it is our (purely) normative principles that ultimately determine how we should respond to them. (8)

He concludes, on the basis of existing studies, that diversity doesn't impact social cohesion, and may even have a positive impact. Normatively,

> the effects of immigration on social cohesion do not need to compromise social justice and … core principles of liberty and equality not only form the normative basis for just policies of immigration and integration, as a matter of empirical fact, they are also the values that,

> if shared, are most likely to produce the social cohesion among community members that provides the social basis for implementing justice. (3)

We should see immigration as positive for both social cohesion and values such as trust and solidarity, and not as something that would threaten to undermine domestic equality.

Yet for Holtug, we should not think of equality merely as a good that should be pursued at a national level; rather, we ought to extend it globally. Given this global egalitarian perspective, he argues that we need to consider the impact of immigration policies not only on members of receiving states, but on all members of the global community. In other words, having dismantled arguments in favor of restrictive immigration policies on the grounds that diversity drives down trust and solidarity, and having shown that immigration is compatible with a robust welfare state, Holtug applies this argument to the global sphere. He challenges the notion that states should be concerned with promoting equality only in their own countries and among their own citizens. He argues instead that equality has a global scope and that egalitarianism must be seen as global, and not merely domestic.

Holtug demonstrates that immigration is good for domestic egalitarianism and social justice. Is it also good for global egalitarianism and global justice? This is a trickier question. On the one hand, the evidence is clear that South-North immigration is helpful for poorer migrants (177). A poor, low-skilled worker is likely to earn a higher salary and achieve a higher standard of living in a Northern country, and further, this worker would then be able to send remittances home to her family, enriching both her family and her home country. In fact, the gains from remittances are so strong that according to one study, increasing South-North migration by 3% a year might produce benefits equivalent to meeting all national targets for development aid, cancelling all third world debt and abolishing all barriers to third world trade (177). For this reason, many global egalitarians argue for some form of open borders, *even if* there is a risk to the social cohesion of the receiving Northern state.

On the other hand, there are also negative effects of immigration on global equality, such as the brain drain from developing countries, the fiscal burden placed on social welfare states, and, importantly, the risk of backlash driven by resentment towards immigrants. Holtug examines each of these problems in turn and concludes that while they must be taken into consideration in policy, none of them provides a knock-down

argument against more open borders. The problems connected to the brain drain are real, but they can be mitigated with better policy designs. While the costs of receiving immigrants and providing them with social welfare services is important to consider, immigration is generally good for economic growth. In fact, lifting immigration controls could lead to the doubling of world Gross National Product.

Yet not all countries benefit equally from immigration. Though some countries do see a significant benefit—"the net contribution of immigrants in Australia, Britain, and Germany is positive, as is the contribution in the USA if we include descendants" (181)—this is not seen in countries with extensive social welfare programs, such as Sweden, Denmark and Norway. In these countries, immigrants are a net economic loss. Holtug (182) provides some concrete numbers: in Sweden, an average new immigrant represents a net fiscal loss of $20,500 USD; In 2015, immigrants and their descendants cost Denmark $5.3 billion USD; in Norway, immigrants from poor regions cost Norway $12,000-25,000 USD/year on average. In other words, in these contexts, immigration cost these states *more* money than what they gained in increased GNP, expanding markets, etc. Holtug does not think that this is a strong argument against immigration, even for these states: "we need to remember that the relevant concern here is global rather than domestic equality, and worse-off members of liberal welfare states may still be quite well off by global standards, and so even if their shares are reduced this need not increase global inequality" (179-80). I return to this point below.

One cost of global equality achieved through immigration that Holtug does not mention is the disruption of care networks and the disparate impact this has on vulnerable people. This is a concern that feminist scholars have noted (Kittay 2009). When families are split up in order to emigrate and send remittances, one of the intangible but nonetheless important consequences is that people who need care—children, the elderly, the disabled, those who are ill—often lose the people who would care for them. If men emigrate, women often must take on paid employment, leaving them unable to care for people in the home. When mothers are the ones who go abroad, their children must then be cared for by extended family members (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003). A paradigmatic case is nannies from the Philippines who travel to the US and other countries to care for children but leave their own children back in the Philippines. In these cases, the people leaving suffer the loss of not being able to care for their loved ones; and their loved ones who need care lose their primary caregiver. How would we quantify these intangible effects on people and the loss of human connection and support? The costs to people who

migrate and their families is huge, and though it may not appear as a cost in terms of global equality, it is a real feature of this proposal that should be considered.

Despite this, for Holtug, immigration is good for global equality. Even though other policies might better lead to global egalitarianism, immigration can and should play a role in achieving global equality. It must be intentionally structured so that the goal of immigration is to increase equality. This will require constraining it in ways that limit the damage done by the brain drain as well as the disruption of care networks. This leads him to advocate for a position of more, though not completely open borders.

3. FEASIBILITY AND RACISM

Methodologically, Holtug separates issues of justice—what is right to do—from issues of regulation—what we can do: "Certain social arrangements may be what justice requires even though, as it turns out, it is unfeasible to (fully) implement it. This is the level at which I argue that equality has global scope" (159). Holtug has established that on the basis of justice, policies that support more open borders are required insofar as they contribute to global egalitarianism. However, at the level of regulation, the feasibility of this proposal plays a role and may prevent open borders from being the policy that we should adopt in the current political climate. What are the feasibility constraints on a policy of open borders for the sake of increasing global equality?

The most pressing feasibility constraint is backlash—the risk that people will grow to resent immigrants and blame immigration for social problems. As we saw above, Holtug acknowledges that sometimes people in wealthy countries will be made worse off because of immigration policies that aim at global equality. He argues that when global equality is the aim, worse-off members must remember that they are still doing well by global standards. Though he may be right about this, it is a feeling that may nonetheless fuel resentment against immigrants who might be blamed for lowering living standards (even if the standard of living is still quite high). Depending on the degree, backlash against immigration may be strong enough to make more open border policies unworkable and impossible to achieve.

Holtug acknowledges that there are good reasons to suppose that there would be a strong backlash against any proposal that tried to craft global migration policy with the aim of creating global equality, especially when

this would entail much more South-North migration than is currently accepted. Holtug cites some statistics: "38 per cent of Europeans hold that immigration from outside the EU is more of a problem than an opportunity"; "slightly more than 50 per cent of Europeans hold either that no poor migrants from outside the EU, or only a few, should be admitted" (185). Even these numbers, stark as they are, don't capture the full picture of current resentment towards immigration from at least some sections of the population. We need only think of Trump and Brexit, and the role that anti-immigrant sentiment played in their success, to get a sense of how deep it goes (Hosein 2022).

Although it is a problem to take seriously, Holtug does not believe that backlash should prevent us from taking up the policies he recommends. This is because he views backlash as rooted in a set of beliefs that can be changed. Animosity to people in the out-group are attitudes that are malleable and can be changed with policy. He argues: "Existing levels of identification with non-nationals, and the levels of solidarity to which they give rise, cannot simply be taken for granted, because they are also to some extent products of policy" (187). Holtug is of course not unique in holding this view, but it is central to his reasoning about why fear of backlash should not discourage policymakers from promoting pro-immigration policies.[3]

Take solidarity. Contrary to popular opinion, solidarity does not seem to require a shared sense of culture. This is because other identities besides cultural ones may be more important. "There are other societal identities, focusing not on a national culture but on political communities, that are more conducive to solidarity and which states may promote in nation-building policies" (185). As he argues in an earlier chapter, equality is more important for solidarity than a shared identity. But identity is still important, and Holtug argues that people's identities can change and be changed in ways that are more conductive to accepting immigration and more inclusive, so that solidarity can be expanded. Researchers have

> found that when research subjects were primed with an international identity, which emphasizes their being part of a single worldwide community, individuals who were high in social dominance orientation—where such individuals tend to hold particularly unfavorable attitudes to immigration—became significantly more favorable. (185)

3 Anna Stilz (2019: 96), for example, argues: "People's attitudes are not a brute sociological fact: they are subject to rational control, and where those attitudes are intrinsically morally objectionable, we should try to alter them. Public policy may foster increased social interaction in diverse contexts, or institute civic education programs to combat prejudice against migrants, for example."

He speculates that perhaps "it is possible through policy to stimulate an international identity, in addition to state-level identities, that would increase solidarity at the global level and support for immigration" (185).

I am sympathetic to the idea that identities are socially constructed and as such can be changed. But when it comes to negative attitudes towards immigrants, I don't share Holtug's optimism that these negative attitudes are malleable enough that they can be shaped and changed in significant ways. This is because I have a different view of how bias operates than Holtug. For Holtug, bias seems to operate at a psychological or cognitive level. Psychological bias often takes the form of a set of beliefs (that African Americans are lazy, for example), attitudes (for example, that immigrants don't contribute to society), and actions (crossing the street when a Black man is approaching) that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. Unconscious or implicit bias means that people "act on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes without intending to do so" (Brownstein 2019).

Understanding implicit or psychological bias is an important part of theorizing backlash and ways to prevent it:

> Research on "implicit bias" suggests that people can act on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes without intending to do so. … For example, imagine Frank, who explicitly believes that women and men are equally suited for careers outside the home. Despite his explicitly egalitarian belief, Frank might nevertheless behave in any number of biased ways, from distrusting feedback from female co-workers to hiring equally qualified men over women. Part of the reason for Frank's discriminatory behavior might be an implicit gender bias. (Brownstein 2019)

These implicit associations can lead to discrimination in a vast number of areas including health care, housing, employment, education, and criminal justice, and contribute to stigma against women, immigrants, racial minorities and members of the LGBTQ community (see Brownstein 2019; Brownstein 2018; Jacobson 2016; Brownstein and Saul 2016a, 2016b; Beeghly and Madva 2020).

Though important, this way of viewing racial injustice must be supplemented with an understanding of other equally pernicious forms of racism. What I have in mind is structural or institutional racism. "Structural racism", a term introduced in the 1960s by Carmichael and Hamilton (1967), refers to "social, economic, or political inequalities

disproportionally affecting a racialized group" (Faucher 2018: 410). Sometimes referred to as "institutional racism",[4] structural racism is the product of social structures, institutional processes, cultural practices, and political institutions that often work in reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality. What is important about structural racism is not the intentions or attitudes of the individuals who act in these systems, but "the effect of keeping minority groups in a subordinate position" (Pincus 1994: 84). Even without bias or prejudice, we would continue to see unequal distributions of wealth, power and privilege in society if the unjust structures remain in place.

Structural racism is not completely distinct from psychological racism, and psychological prejudice plays a role in structural injustices, such as the inequality in the criminal justice system for example (Goff *et al.* 2016). This is why theorists like Haslanger (2004) argue that we need to consider both individual moral failings like bias and structural and institutional arrangements. Nonetheless, Altman (2020) argues that the idea of structural racism points "to a form of discrimination that is conceptually distinct from the direct discrimination engaged in by collective or individual agents".

Elizabeth Anderson makes an even stronger case for the importance of distinguishing between structural and psychological racism and focusing on the former in order to address persistent racial inequalities in health, education, income and wealth, and criminal justice, to name a few. Individual psychological bias, she argues, cannot fully explain this persistent lack of social and economic equality:

> African Americans are worse off than the average American, and worse off than whites, on virtually all major objective measures of well-being. These inequalities are large and enduring and have grown in some cases. Life expectancy for blacks has always been lower than average. For black children born today, it still lags nearly five years behind that of the average American child. The black infant mortality rate is almost twice the U.S. average, growing from 1.5 times the U.S. average since 1950. Blacks are many times more likely than whites to die of AIDS, nearly three times as likely to die from asthma, and well over twice as likely to die from diabetes, kidney disease, or infectious disease. They have higher rates of mortality from heart disease, cerebrovascular

4 Though these terms have distinct meanings, for the sake of the argument that I'm making here, I will be using them interchangeably. It's beyond the scope of this paper to go deeply into the differences between connected terms such as "structural racism", "structural discrimination", "structural injustice", "systematic disadvantage", etc., although I've tried to define my concepts whenever possible.

> disease, cancer, and many other ailments. Many of these inequalities have increased since 1979, and in some cases since 1950.
>
> Black-white economic inequalities are also large and enduring. One quarter of blacks are poor compared to 8 percent of non-Hispanic whites, a 3:1 poverty ratio that has persisted since the 1960s. One-third of black children are poor, compared to 10 percent of white children. Nearly all of these poor black children, while fewer than 1 percent of white children, will experience poverty for ten or more years. The median black household income is two-thirds that of the median white household, a ratio that has widened since 1967. Racial inequalities in wealth are even starker: as of 2005, the median net worth of blacks was less than 10 percent of that of whites. (Anderson 2010: 23-4)

For Anderson, the depth of this inequality and its enduring, persistent quality cannot be explained by individual psychological bias alone, or even primarily. For her, the lynchpin of structural racism is segregation, and she believes that we cannot adequately address racial inequalities until we deal with this structural issue, no matter how much we counteract individual bias.

One aspect that is important to stress is that, for Anderson, racial bias is the *effect*, not the *cause*, of racial inequalities and injustices. Connecting back to Holtug, this is why we cannot eliminate the negative attitudes that lead to backlash without also considering structural racism. Anderson (2010: 11) writes: "Because prejudice is more the effect than the cause of segregation, we cannot eliminate categorical inequality by working to reduce prejudice, if we leave processes of segregation in place." Here's an example of how the interaction between structures and racial attitudes works for Anderson:

> Whites tend to limit access to stable jobs to fellow whites, relegating blacks to temporary, part-time, or marginal jobs in the secondary labor market. Over time, whites acquire résumés documenting long-term stable employment, whereas blacks' résumés evidence a patchy employment record, interpreted as a sign of their poor work ethic, which justifies a reluctance to hire them for permanent jobs in the primary labor market. (Anderson 2010: 9)

According to Brownstein (2019), what the structural view holds is that "what happens in the minds of individuals, including their biases, is the *product of* social inequities rather than an *explanation for* them". This

is why reversing prejudice—and consequently backlash—requires changing these structures, not just individual attitudes and biases.

Structural racism makes it the case that racial minorities are not just thought of in negative or hostile ways. Rather, the view holds that society is structured such that they are likely to actually be in worse-off positions than their white counterparts. Racial minorities are likely to be treated worse in similar circumstances, and are more likely to be systematically excluded from access to important goods such as housing, health care, education, employment, etc. Tommie Shelby explains how structural racism works to limit employment opportunities for black men who live in ghettos:

> Many working-age ghetto residents have little education, are low skilled, and have gone long periods without legitimate jobs. In the urban labor market there are often many more applicants for low-skilled jobs than there are jobs available, so employers can afford to be selective, engaging in so-called statistical discrimination. These employers are aware that a criminal subculture affects social life in the ghetto, that there are high drop-out rates among urban blacks, and that many poor people do not work regularly. This leads some employers to expect blacks from the ghetto to be generally violent, dishonest, unreliable, and ignorant. Because of longstanding racial stereotypes, the high frequency of these traits among the ghetto poor may seem to lend credence to racist beliefs. For example, the joblessness of some ghetto residents will appear to many employers as laziness and this is of course a stereotype that blacks strongly resent. One consequence of all this is that many employers avoid hiring blacks from the ghetto when they can find nonblack or suburban workers, and given the surplus of low-skilled workers in the labor pool this is easily accomplished. (Shelby 2007: 140)

In this example, the harm is not merely that some people believe that blacks from the ghetto are lazy. The problem is that education and labor markets are structured in ways that make this prejudice part of the system, and this means that black men, no matter how hardworking, are less likely to find jobs than white people from similar circumstances.

The same holds for crime. The harm is not merely that black people are *thought of* as criminals, but are treated as such, regardless of their individual actions. Unjust treatment of black people in the US criminal justice system is well documented (Alexander 2010). But isn't the fact that

black people are treated worse by the police just an example of psychological bias? To be sure, racial bias operates in the criminal justice system (National Research Council 2014: 91-103; quoted in Valls 2019). But for Elizabeth Anderson, the answer is more complex. Segregation, the lynchpin of structural racism,

> reinforces racial profiling and a pathological relationship between police and blacks in another way. Because it marks off "black" from "white" neighborhoods, it provides the occasion for generalized suspicion of the presence of blacks in the "wrong" neighborhood. Such racial profiling could not occur in integrated neighborhoods. Racial profiling in turn reinforces racial segregation, by deterring blacks from entering neighborhoods where they fear police harassment. (Anderson 2010: 42)

Segregation intensifies other prejudices such as the view that blacks are criminals, lazy, uneducated, etc., which connects to how they are treated by the police.

Unlike bias, structural racism cannot be lessened through bias training or, as Holtug suggests, shifts in identity. Nicole Hannah Jones argues that we have spent too much time thinking at the level of identity and representation, and not enough time thinking about structures. She writes that although we've made great strides in representation, "no progress has been made over the past 70 years in reducing income and wealth inequalities between black and white households" (Jones 2020). This means that black people will continue to be an underclass in the US and receive worse health care, education, housing opportunities and employment, regardless of whether or not people see positive representations of black people in society or come to hold fewer stereotypes. For Jones, racial justice requires economic justice. Taking this structural change seriously is something that most people, regardless of how much or how little negative bias they hold, have not done.

To connect this back to Holtug's point, if we want racism and bias not to be feasibility constraints on implementing global egalitarianism, then we must be prepared to tackle structural racism as well as psychological bias.[5] The problem is that psychological bias is easier and less costly to challenge. I think that many progressive people explicitly repudiate biased views

5 For social science accounts of the connection between racial animosity and the rejection of social benefits, see Metzl (2019) and C. Anderson (2017). These authors both document the ways in which racism toward African Americans and other minorities leads white people in the US to reject public good and social redistribution programs.

about people of color, and yet even people in this group are often unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to address structural racism, such as changing zoning laws so denser housing can be built and supporting child tax credits and criminal justice reform (Harris and Applebaum 2021). They might support immigration reform to an extent, but not reforming deeper issues that would help get to the root of racism and ultimately ease the backlash. To be sure, Holtug would be supportive of these measures to change structural racism, promote economic justice, and demand that people in privileged groups make sacrifices to do this. They are not inconsistent with his view. The point I want to make is just that all these changes are necessary in order to counteract the attitudes that lead to backlash.

What I am suggesting is that structural racism that places people of color in lower positions in society, and limits their access to important social goods and resources, impacts the feasibility of egalitarian immigration. This is because racism towards domestic minorities often extends to immigrants of color more broadly, and supports bias against this latter group as well. Consider the difference in treatment between Ukrainian refugees coming into Europe in 2022 and Afghan and Syrian refugees trying to enter in 2015. Though the political circumstances were of course different, it's hard not to think of this difference as rooted in the attitudes held towards these different racial groups (Parekh 2022).

Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration are connected to people's attitudes towards racial minorities. I think that this is a point that Holtug would be sympathetic to. Elsewhere in his book, Holtug discusses how trust and solidarity are connected to high levels of socioeconomic equality and perceptions of racial minorities as being undeserving: "Socio-economic equality is a driver of trust", and in societies with high levels of inequality (such as the US), those at the bottom are often perceived as "untrustworthy, undeserving and even dangerous" (51). The media is more likely to portray these people as abusers of social benefits, lazy, and prone to crime, and this reinforces the sense that they are untrustworthy (Jan 2017). These stereotypes are often connected to ethnicity, such that African Americans in the US, regardless of their socioeconomic status, are perceived in negative ways: "If all you knew about black families was what national news outlets reported, you are likely to think African Americans are overwhelmingly poor, reliant on welfare, absentee fathers and criminals, despite what government data show" (Jan 2017). By contrast, those in more equal societies—Danes and Swedes—see their small group at the bottom as being trustworthy and deserving. Increasingly, however, perceptions of non-Western immigrants in Denmark and Sweden are

becoming similar to US perceptions of racial minorities.[6]

Social scientists in the US have long documented the ways that negative perceptions of blacks are connected to resistance to anti-poverty policies and other kinds of redistributive mechanisms (Anderson 2017). Jonathan Metzl interviewed Americans across the Midwest and South in the US between 2013 and 2018, and observed that for many people racial animosity fueled a desire to cut government spending on things like health care, even when this had negative impacts on their own well-being. In one memorable example, he interviewed a 41-year-old uninsured man from Tennessee named Trevor who was suffering from hepatitis C and was in a great deal of pain. When asked if he would support his state adopting Obama's Affordable Care Act, legislation that would allow him to access expensive medications that could treat his illness, which he was unable to afford because he lacked health insurance, he said he was strongly opposed to it. "I'd rather die", he told Metzl, and continued to explain, "no way I want my tax dollars paying for Mexicans or welfare queens" (Metzl 2019: 22). Trevor's racial animosity towards blacks, expressed with his use of the term "welfare queens", a term which stigmatizes African Americans as people who abuse government support, as well as Mexicans, helps explain why there is often a backlash against social services in the US, such as universal health care, even when this would benefit white people as much as people of color. Given this, it seems important that we focus not just on attitudes, but on rectifying socioeconomic inequality and structural racism.

4. CONCLUSION

Holtug argues that we ought to consider the effects of social cohesion on economic equality at a global, not a domestic level, and aim to promote global equality. More open borders is one way to achieve global equality, since increased immigration is not likely to negatively impact social cohesion, but is likely to improve global equality. In other words, the global egalitarian version of the social cohesion argument for restrictive immigration policies is incorrect. I agree with Holtug that backlash is a

6 "There is no simple or universally negative relationship between diversity and trust, but rather a complex one, where effects of diversity depend on a number of further factors, including inequality, the construction of the bottom and other factors … attitudes to immigrants in the general population, the composition of the immigrant group, institutional arrangements and social, labor market, and integration policies" (54). Trust has increased in Denmark and Sweden over the last 50 years even while diversity has increased, although it has declined in the US and UK while diversity increased. What else makes a difference? Attitudes towards the impact of immigration on a country's cultural life is a predictor for authoritarianism in Europe (67). Socioeconomic and cultural worries interact: the perception that minorities are an economic burden causes resistance to social spending.

real worry but not one that should prevent the pursuit of global equality. However, if we want immigration to contribute positively to egalitarianism in Northern countries, we need to address the domestic policies that contribute to the structural racism that bolsters negative attitudes towards those in the out-group. I think that this suggestion is consistent with the conclusion that Holtug arrives at in other parts of his book, namely that socioeconomic inequality is often what leads countries to lack social cohesion (not immigration), so putting structural issues like inequality at the forefront of our analysis is clearly an important task.

Let me conclude by returning to the paradox that this article started with. The problem was that if a politician in the US context were to promote strong egalitarian policies about immigration, they would likely not get reelected, because they would be seen as doing something negative for the people that elected them—driving down cohesion, creating resentment—and instead, someone less sympathetic to immigration would get elected. What Holtug's book has demonstrated is that there is a way out of this dilemma if the general public comes to understand that we do not need to choose between egalitarian social welfare policies and immigration, but can and should aim for both. Of course, for Holtug, this should apply globally as well as domestically. This will undoubtably be a harder sell and will fuel racist and anti-immigrant backlash, something that may be harder to overcome than Holtug suggests. Nonetheless, he should be commended for demonstrating that the politics of social cohesion don't have to be as contentious as they sometimes are, and that we can and should advocate for global egalitarian immigration policies while we work towards combating the sources of backlash.

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