Do migrants take the job of native workers? 
Literature review 

Andrea Manso Posada 

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1. Abstract

Migration could be defined as the movement from one place to another one, mainly due to economic or social reasons. Related to the effects and changes it has brought, a division of opinions splits politicians and individuals about how to face this process.

In this work the controversial and current phenomenon of migration was studied taking into account the contributions provided in the past by important authors and experts of this issue.

In order to know better about it a literature review was carried out having as base the information given in the A.F. Constant: Do migrants take the job of native workers?, whose Key References have been used here too, because of their relevance.

Depending on each case study and its features, different conclusions can be drawn, what can bring confusion. Outcomes obtained from one experiment not necessarily work as general rule. The importance of these contributions lies on providing useful and valid information that could help in the construction of both well-grounded and efficient migration policies.

In general terms, migration can provide interesting benefits to both "receiving" and "giving" societies if the plan is the suitable one, focusing it as a set of opportunities rather than a set of damages.
2. Introduction

What is Migration and how has it evolved during the last decades? Why has this topic brought so many controversy lately? Why is this issue important in this field?

The first step to be taken for a better understanding of the chosen topic starts with defining what migration is and its current importance in a globalized world.

Migration could be described as the movement from one place to another one, mainly due to economic or social reasons. By place we understand region, country, state or continent. The aim of this relocation is improving their lives. It is important being aware about the difference between immigration and emigration, understanding the first term as the movement of non-nationals to another country looking for settlement and the second one would represent those who exit their nation to settle in another one. Both are different processes that take place in every country.

Individuals have different reasons to make this decision and the migration trends are conditionated by political, economical and social circumstances in both destination and origin.

It is quite important providing data and outcomes in order to help building both well-grounded opinions and efficient migration policies. I consider it is necessary reviewing and knowing better migration can help to achieve this goal.

Although the movement of people among countries looking for a settlement that could improve their lives is an ancient phenomenon, migration is nowadays worldwide popular in every political debate and one of the main concerns for the society.

Globalization has enabled an opened world, where it is easier both moving and communicating. Due to social, political and economical reasons, loads of movements have taken place in the last century. There are relocations inside the same country from rural areas to urban ones, but also from developing countries to developed ones.
The governments look for the right migration policies to face this problem. Nowadays deciding about the most suitable one is a difficult task and there are different opinions about how the State should deal with it.

Focusing on the developed regions, the European Union and the United States have applied policies to fight the immigration crisis that has taken place during the last years.

In general, the immigration policy applied in the European Union encourages hiring labor supply and helping in the Integration of these new citizens.

Currently the continent is experiencing a Refugee crisis that has required the application of certain measures and the constantly effort to find the right policy that enables both security and Human Rights protection.

For example, in order to protect the borders, a new European Border and Coast Guard Agency has been created during the last year, what has helped the Member States to ensure the security thanks to the increase of border guards. By the other side, one of the main concerns is reducing the deaths that this phenomenon causes to the migrants that risk their lifes. In many cases, one of the pathways chosen by foreigners that wish coming in “the Old Continent”, implies criminal networks, because of that the different States have an agreement to resettle people, so they avoid the dangerous options.

This issue has been really controversial in the United States too and, concretely, during the last election process. Fundamentally due to the measures proposed by the current President, D. Trump. He has defended certain policies whose aim is principally fighting the illegal immigration that this country faces. One of the bills the President and his party have been criticised for is the Wall in Mexico that would avoid the illegal entry of individuals. The Republican Party stands up for security and the protection of jobs and wages for all Americans and gives emphasis to the harm caused by immigrants to nationals.

In both cases the arrival of immigrants has brought changes which are now a considerable concern in every political program. And in both cases there are disagreement between the different parties and individuals about how this situation should be faced.

I consider it is a topic importantly related to Economics. First of all, because it deals with decision-making process, which is relevant in this field, since we are refering to a social science where it is both studied and modeled. People, given different options, will decide the one that provides them the highest satisfaction (Maximazing utility) and will make them better off. In this case, the main choice would be between staying in their own country or taking the risk and leaving, because of the expectations generated abroad.
And secondly, due to the **effects** that it causes in economy and society, which both loses and receives foreigners.

The main reason why I have chosen this issue has to do with my interest on both analyzing the effects and changes caused by this phenomenon and the topic’s currently relevance.

The literature review of the migration impact on natives will remind important authors’ contributions, but will specially follow the ideas and references found in the article “*Do migrants take the jobs of native workers?*” (Amelie F. Constant).
3. Goals

Nowadays migration is a controversial topic. There are different opinions about it and it seems difficult deciding how to deal with all the changes it brings. Reviewing the literature and the considerations of the main authors, several aims can be achieved.

By one side, the pursued goals in this work are related to the consequences that this phenomenon implies. As we will specify later, migration, depending on each concrete case, has brought both gain and losses. According to this, one of the chased goals is analyzing both through different studies in order to have a general idea about the changes this process implies.

By the other side, knowing better about the topic will make it easier finding efficient and fair solutions to the problems faced by both migrants and nationals. By reviewing literature an increase of the knowledge respect to migration can take place, what could help in both the construction of a well grounded own opinion and of efficient migration policies.

To sum up, the main effects caused by migration will be analyzed and relevant information will be studied, which can help in the decision-making process for both the social and political environment.
4. Literature Review. Constant, A.F: *Do migrants take the jobs of native workers?*

There are several interesting authors who have worked with this issue, but, since this case study will be based on the article “*Do migrants take the jobs of native workers?*”, the literature review will be focused on this paper and the sources and experts that helped in its creation.

According to this, the review will start with the main ideas explained in the Constant’s work and will continue with the contributions of the principal authors mentioned there as *Key References*.

**Constant, A.F: Do migrants take the jobs of native workers?**

After considering the existing literature and the public opinion making use of polls, our principal researcher answers to the main question about the job reduction suffered by native-born workers that this situation rarely takes place and highlights the positive effects caused by immigration in the long-term.

The first step is evaluating the positive and negative aspects that immigration provides to the destination country.

Because of the arrival of immigrants, the following *Pros* can happen:

- New jobs thanks to self-employed and entrepreneurial immigrants.
- Long-term job growth due to immigrant innovators.
- Filling labor shortages.
- Technology adaptation, occupational mobility and specialization.
- Increase of demand.

By the other side, not everything is positive. *Cons*:

- Effect is not significant.
- Low-skilled immigrants could end up trapped in low-paying jobs.
• Substituting physical capital for low-skilled immigrants could make difficult enabling technological advances and capital upgrading.
• Increasing production does not always mean boosting productivity.
• Outsourcing jobs when low-skilled immigrants are not available.

In this article the importance of being well informed and educated about the reality of immigration is highlighted. Data provided by politicians or media can twist and generalize wrong interpretations. It is relevant considering the public opinion about the immigration impact on the receiving societies.

In order to know better the perception that individuals could have about this topic, polls can be a great tool. Constant provides the following figure interesting outcomes obtained from surveys applied in six migrant-destination countries after 2008-2009 recession. (Figure 1) The chosen states were U.S, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom. Analyzing the results, it is seen that obviously there are differences among regions. In U.S, U.K and Spain a higher percentage considered that immigrants take jobs from natives rather than create them, but in general the main conclusion obtained was that most of the individuals in the six participating states saw that they filled jobs rather than they took or created them.

Substitution vs Complementarity

It is important knowing the difference between two concepts that can help to understand better whether immigrants take, create or fill jobs respect to natives.

When there are workers with the same features and skills, it means that it is possible replacing one for another, since they can provide the same. In this situation there would be competition between them. One could substitute the other one.

While those who need the contributions of the other one, so they both can achieve the goal, do not compete between them. They complement each other.

Both concepts are relevant because depending on several factors like level of education, experience and skills, immigrants will substitute or complement natives. According to the situation, jobs can be taken or not.
Going back to the theory and the models, the author distinguishes between the *Simple* and the *Pragmatic* labor market models.

**The Simple labor market model**

It would be the easy case. Plotting in a graph the movements that would take place assuming that there is an increase in Labor Supply due to the arrival of immigrants.

This model implies some assumptions: same skills for immigrants and natives: they are *perfect substitutes*. Demand of labor will be constant.

Graphically this assumption would mean that the Labor Supply moves rightwards. There would be a movement from the first Equilibrium (E1) to a new intersection between Demand and Supply (E2), where there is a new equilibrium Wage (w2), which is lower than the old one, and a higher equilibrium employment (N2).

To sum up, the implications caused by the arrival of immigrants would be:

- Increase of Labor Supply (S2).
- A lower Equilibrium Wage (w2).
- A higher Equilibrium level of Employment (N2): it is no clear who gains.

With this model it is not specified whether there is substitution or not between native-born and immigrant workers.

**The Pragmatic Labor Market Model**

The most relevant difference respect to the other model has to do with the assumption of *imperfect substitutibility* between natives and foreigners. This is due to their *diverse Human Capital*: they do not share always the same skills, education or features, because they were born in different countries. Immigrants face difficulties in social, cultural, educational and Language terms, because the acquired skills differ from the new ones.

Another important distinction here is that the effects caused by their arrival are considered in the long-term and factors could change and not held constant, labor market would have time to allocate and accommodate immigrants, so natives are not harmed by this phenomenon. There are *job creation mechanisms*, which can explain why natives would not be damaged.
Moreover, receiving newcomers can be a positive force for high-skilled native-born workers in both cases: low- and high-skilled ones. Thanks to the collaboration between high-skilled workers, natives and foreigners, specialization can take place. By the other side, the union between a high-skilled worker and a low-skilled one, no matter whether they are native or not, could enable upgrading, since the first ones can be replaced in their tasks and specialize in other ones. In both cases job creation can happen.

As it has been mentioned at the beginning of this explanation, in this model it is highlighted the different Human Capital between countries. This concept could explain that the arrival of immigrants does not mean taking jobs of natives or harming them. Because due to their differences, they do not have a fast and easy access to Labor markets and they could not be able to compete with natives.

Another positive aspect would be the increase that Demand of good and services could experience due to their arrival.

**Competition and negative job effects**

Here two approaches will be applied to analyze the impact caused by newcomers:

a) **Area approach/Spatial correlations approach**: it is about comparing results of native workers in areas where both low and big immigrant inflows take place. In most of the cases, the appliance of this approach has concluded that large inflows do not affect natives.

b) **Production function approach**: a production function is used and allows distinguishing individuals according to their skills. Compared to the method described above, here a negative effect on natives is found and a certain level of competition between low-skilled individuals can take place.

Considering various studies different outcomes and conclusions could be said.

It can happen that firms get used to hire low-skill immigrants, what could generate two negative effects:
Dependency of this cheap labor source.

- Disregarding capital and technology improvements: outputs could become uncompetitive.

**Immigration's positive contributions to labor markets**

Although in several occasions politicians and people in general relate unemployment with the immigrant share, considering the last concept as the reason that explains the scarcity of jobs, studies have shown the inexistence of correlation between both of them.

There are various empirical studies which have concluded that there is not any negative effect caused by immigrants on native workers.

These ones were used to elaborate the article *Do migrants take the jobs of native workers?* And are the **Key References**.

**Limitations and gaps**

The aim of elaborating studies chases gathering useful information that can help to understand this phenomenon and knowing how to deal with it.

The problem is the existence of limitations that make it difficult to measure the impact generated by the newcomers. Data accuracy, lack of information in the case of illegal migration or variables that cannot be quantifiable, like professional experience, are part of the trouble.
4.1. **Background: Ravenstein, Lewis and Harris-Todaro Models.**

One of the first authors that tried to describe migration was Ravenstein (1885). With his "*Laws of Migration*", based on data obtained from an English census (1881), the German geographer defined some features of this phenomenon that helped in the development of future models.

The main rules or laws described the movements. The author highlighted that migrants tend to move mainly short distances, females are more migratory compared to men, most of the reasons to move are economic but not the only ones and natives of rural areas of the country migrate more than natives of towns.

Talking about influential models and experts in this area Lewis and The Dual-Sector Model (1950's) cannot be forgotten. The contributions of this author were relevant for the development theories, but also helped explaining the process of migration that takes place between rural areas and urban ones and showing how earnings differentials convince individuals of their need to leave.

The main idea here is describing two different areas: agricultural and urban ones. This model shows the transformation in a developing economy from a traditional agricultural base to a modern manufacturing one. It is a structural change.

Differences between both:

- **Rural/Agricultural area**: we have surplus of unproductive labor, which the capitalist sector wants to make use of. It has low wages and low productivity and individuals there are not used to save.

- **Modern/Urban/Capitalist area**: use of technology, more productivity and used to save. Thanks to all that, it is possible offering higher wages, what works as an attractive factor for the individuals working on lands.

Due to the wage differentials offered in both sectors, rural-urban migration takes place.
The modern sector absorbs this labor excess, what enables increasing production and economic growth can happen. Because of this, the surplus in lands decreases and, since there is a smaller labor supply in the agricultural one, higher wages can be offered. Since there are both less competition to find a job and less individuals that firms can choose among, higher salaries are offered to attract the best workers. The outcome is a start of competition between both sectors, because now they are offering similar wages.

Similar to this one, the **Harris-Todaro model** (1970's/80's) can be found. Due to the several rural-urban migrations that were taking place during 1960's, although there were unemployment in the cities, both authors tried to give an explanation with their model about it. They also talked about two different “worlds” and the movements between them: rural and urban sector.

In this model there are earnings differentials too.

- **Agricultural sector**: Similar to the rural sector seen in Lewis model. The agriculture is the base of this economy, but here equilibrium wages (Supply = Demand) make the difference. There is not unemployment.

- **Modern sector**: not everyone has a job. There is a minimum wage higher than the equilibrium one. People move here being aware about the existing unemployment.

So, Harris and Todaro considered that the main reason to explain why people decided to move to the cities, knowing that it was not sure they could be hired, had to do with the expected profit they could achieve moving there, which was higher than the one they could earn ‘at home’.

In this case there is a similar explanation to the one on the “Laws of Migrations” and the **Dual-Sector model**. In most of the cases people decide to move and risk everything because of economic reasons. The aim of migration is mainly improving their current situation.

In order to be able to elaborate and make some assumptions, both researching and knowing better other experts’ opinions are relevant. Because of that, it would be interesting understanding and analyzing the contributions to this issue of authors like Borjas, Zimmerman, Card and more, who are the **Key References**.
First, before delving into their explanations and conclusions about the immigration impact on labor markets, considering the Economic Theory the application of the demand and supply laws placing an immigrant influx, would suggest the following outcomes:

- Supply moves rightwards. It has a positive slope and the arrival of immigrants would shift it upwards, because there will be more individuals supplying labor. (S₀ → S₁).

- Real wage of competing native workers experiences a decrease. Since there are more individuals firms can choose among, a competition takes place where now the negotiation power belongs to employers, who can offer a lower wage. (w₀ → w₁).

All this process can be seen in Figure 2, where the main variables are Wage and Employment and the Labor market is represented. Demand has a negative correlation between both, because the higher the Employment is, the higher the Wage negotiation power for firms. While Supply is upward sloping.

4.2. Borjas, G.: *The Labor Demand curve is downward sloping: Reexamining the impact of immigration on the labor market*

The principal goal of the frame article “Do migrants take the job of native workers?” is about explaining the positive and negative effects provided by migration and, based on that, defending an own opinion and giving some advices to politicians. Respecting that, in the migration literature, Borjas’ contributions cannot be missed.

George Borjas, has been considered as the “America’s leading immigration economist” and like others, whose contributions will be commented here later, he has studied the effects caused by this phenomenon and its impact on natives.

With the paper “The Labor Demand curve is downward sloping: Reexamining the impact of immigration on the labor market”, a new approach is proposed.
In order to examine the repercussions caused by the arrival of foreigners, other studies have considered geographic clustering and local labor Markets (Spatial correlations), while Borjas proposed defining skill groups where both school and work experiences play an equally important role.
His contribution is related to the application of the *Human Capital Theory* in order to define and distinguish skill groups. The idea of this theory has to do with all the knowledge, skills, experiences and features that individuals invest and work in, which determine their productivity and can give an explanation to the earnings differentials.

Considering this theory, the main idea here was proving whether an increase in labor supply would have any effect in a defined skill group, where both education and work experience matter.

The results that Borjas obtained by applying this new approach diverge from the ones defended by the domineering literature of that period of time. Taking into account the considerations given by this author the impact that immigration would cause, would reduce wages and harm the opportunities of competing native workers.

Labor Demand curve represents the firms that are willing to hire workers depending on the price. It is downward sloping due to this inverse relationship. The more expensive the factor is, the lower the demand.

Price elasticities were estimated in this article (-3 and -4).

The outcome obtained was that if there is an increase of 10% in supply, wages would be reduced by 3 to 4%.
4.3. Card, D.: *The impact of the Mariel boatlift on the Miami labor market*

With this paper focused on the Miami labor market, David Card, professor of Economics at the University of California, studied the effects caused there in 1980 because of the arrival of Cuban immigrants.

In 1980 Castro announced in Cuba that Cubans that wished to emigrate to USA were free to move, which implied the arrival of 125,000 Cuban immigrants in Miami looking for a better life.

Before going deeply into the analysis that this process brought, the previous situation in Miami to the boatlift was the following one. At that time the place was composed by a considerable fraction of immigrants, concretely 35.5% of foreign-born individuals. There were different groups: black and white non-Hispanics groups, Cubans and other Hispanics. Black population could be found in more laborer and service-related occupations, while Cubans and Hispanics represented craft and the operative ones.

The education levels in Miami were below the national average.

The arrival of the Mariel boatlift brought several changes to the city. As mentioned above, one of the main parts of immigrants in Miami at that time were Cubans. The population that was arriving after Castro’s announcement owned different features respect to the earlier ones: younger, lower education level, lower labor force attachment and more concentrated in laborer and service-related occupations.

They were mainly less-skilled workers, whose English ability was quite low.

Due to the language ability, skills and education differences between the newcomers and the already established ones, there was a 34% wage gap.

In order to draw conclusions, it was necessary analyzing data. Because of that the author worked with two main variables: *unemployment rate* and *wage rate average*. There were four main groups of immigrants (blacks, whites, Cubans and other Hispanics) and the idea was
comparing their behavior in Miami and in other four cities: Atlanta, Houston, Los Ángeles and Tampa – St. Petersburg.

The reason that explains this choice is that the main city of this academic article shared similar economic conditions with the average of the other 4 during the years 1976 – 1984.

In the following tables (Table 1 and Table 2) the behavior of the two main variables is studied during those years, making a distinction between the different groups of foreign-born individuals and the Case Study cities.

Respect to the Wage Rate it is concluded that the Mariel boatlift did not imply any negative effect. That means that due to the arrival of more Cubans, the wage of earlier immigrants living in Miami (blacks, whites, Cubans and other Hispanics) did not experience a decrease or any damage. In general, the wages of these groups remained constant in the receiving city. (Table 1)

The same conclusion can be found in the case of Unemployment Rate. It did not affect non-Cubans employment, but it must be said that the harmed ones due to the boatlift were the earlier Cubans, because newcomers could replace them. Anyway the effect is considered not significant. The Mariel Cubans owned low education levels, what could enable replacing earlier ones, who had the chance to move to better jobs. (Table 2)

To sum up, the principal effect was that the Mariel boatlift arrival was translated into a 7% increase of Miami metropolitan area labor force. But it must be considered that this city relied on a suitable structure, which was able to abord an influx of unskilled workers and it was a special labor market with loads of Hispanics, what decreased the low English ability effects.
5. Critical Analysis

There are loads of different opinions about this controversial issue. Beyond the differences respect to the topic that sometimes are related to the education and values received, it turns out to be essential have been well and objectively informed, so each individual can fairly build its own well-grounded opinion.

Considering the main article and the polls, the general opinion is that the immigration impact does not mean taking jobs of native workers. Most of the people do not see newcomers as a threat. It could be said too that the perception that individuals have about this and other issues can depend on the situation they are living at the survey moment. Opinion can change when scenarios are different. Nowadays due to the refugee crisis and all the problems associated to these movements people are worried and it does not seem easy taking a decision.

Migration can provide the “receiving” society benefits. It was well represented in Lewis’ and Harris-Todaro’s models. Thanks to the arrival of more individuals, growth can happen. They can enable the upgrading of national workers. Competition can be positive for the society, because of the bigger labor supply. Competition can lead to the improvement of national individuals, who could consider moving to be better off and it should not always be considered as negative.
6. Conclusions

After the literature review and the analysis of the principal contributions it has been possible arriving to certain general conclusions that could help to understand better this topic.

- Positive effects exceed negative ones.
- Migrants rarely substitute native workers. They complement them or accept jobs that natives do not want or cannot do.
- Competition could take place between low-skill individuals in the short-term.
- Competition would be more common between new and early immigrants who share similar skills.
- Experiments that work in a concrete labor market during a concrete period of years can not draw a general conclusion, because their features could enable that outcome. (Mariel boatlift)
- In areas with high immigration, natives can be replaced by low-skill immigrants and upgrade and get better jobs.
- The main reasons to migrate have to do with the differences among regions in economic, social and welfare terms. People are attracted by those areas where wages and employment are higher. The states whose welfare can make inhabitants better off could be a good reason to leave their background behind.
- “According to Neo-classical economic theory, the main cause of migration is individual's efforts to maximise their income by moving from low-wage to big-wage economies. (Borjas 1989).” (Castles, S. 2000, p. 20).

In general terms it could be said that with a suitable plan, where both human rights and fairness are taken into account, considering migration as a set of opportunities rather than a damage can benefit both “recieving” and “giving” societies.

The main task is defining what fairness here means and which is the most suitable policy to defend human rights and welfare of both newcomers and nationals.
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Figure 1: Public opinion on immigrants and jobs, 2011

Source: F. Constant, A. Do migrants take the jobs of native workers?

Figure 2: Immigration and the Labor Market

Source: Borjas, G. The Labor Demand curve is downward sloping: Reexamining the impact of immigration on the labor market
Table 1: Wage Rates

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Note: Entries represent means of log hourly earnings (deflated by the Consumer Price Index—1980 = 100) for workers age 16–61 in Miami and four comparison cities: Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, and Tampa–St. Petersburg. See note to Table 1 for definitions of groups.

Source: Based on samples of employed workers in the outgoing rotation groups of the Current Population Survey in 1979–85. Due to a change in SMSA coding procedures in 1985, the 1985 sample is based on individuals in outgoing rotation groups for January–June of 1985 only.

Sources: Card, D. *The impact of the Mariel Boatlift on the Miami labor market*

Table 2: Unemployment Rates of Individuals Age 16-61 in Miami and Four Comparison Cities 1979-1985

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Note: Entries represent means of unemployment indicator variable for individuals age 16–61 in Miami and four comparison cities: Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, and Tampa–St. Petersburg. Samples are based on individuals in the labor force. See notes to Table 3 for definitions of groups and data sources.

Sources: Card, D. *The impact of the Mariel Boatlift on the Miami labor market*