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TO LEAVE OR NOT TO LEAVE: EXPLORING THE BENEFIT OF EXITING THE SOUTH DURING THE GREAT MIGRATION*

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ABSTRACT

The migration of millions of southerners out of the South between 1910 and 1970 is largely attributed to the economic and social push factors in the South combined with pull factors in other regions of the country. Researchers generally find that participants in the Great Migration were positively selected from their origin, in terms of educational attainment and urban status. Although a considerable amount of attention examines how these migrants fared in their destinations, to fully measure the success of migrants, a comparison to those who remained within the South is necessary. This paper uses data from the public use samples of the U.S. Population census to compare inter-regional migrants (i.e. migrants who left the South) with their southern contemporaries they left behind, both the sedentary, and those who moved within the South. Our findings indicate that although positively selected, migrants who left the South did not benefit appreciably in terms of employment status, income, or occupational status. In fact, in many instances, inter-regional migrants fared worse than did southerners who moved within the South or who remained sedentary.

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The Great Migration is one of the most impressive demographic events in U.S. history. Between 1917 and 1970, millions of southerners, black and white, left the South in search of better circumstances and opportunities elsewhere. At the turn of the 20th century, poor economic conditions in the South for blacks and whites, along with poor social conditions for blacks, created a substantial 'push' for potential migrants. At the same time, non-southern regions of the country, especially the Northeast and the Midwest, were experiencing economic growth including increasing employment opportunities. Until the first World War, many of the jobs on the lower end of the occupational ladder were filled by immigrant labor from Europe. When the flow of European immigrants stopped, first as a result of the War in Europe and second because of restrictive immigration policies adopted by the United States, the demand for inexpensive labor turned towards the South and created a 'pull' for Southerners. The Great Migration that ensued saw a massive exodus that effectively redistributed a large proportion of the Southern population, especially African Americans, across the country.

Consistent with its great significance as a defining American demographic phenomenon, the Great Migration has received a good deal of scholarly attention. One group of scholars has described and interpreted the many ways in which the Great Migration, especially its impact on the growth of black communities in large metropolitan areas, transformed northern and western institutions and culture, and led to increasing residential segregation in virtually every major urban area (e.g., Cutler et al. 1999; Gregory 1989, 2005; Lemann 1991; Lieberson 1980; Massey and Denton 1993; Philpott 1978; Wilson 1978, 1987). Another group of researchers, has been concerned primarily with the socioeconomic characteristics of the migrants and how they fared

economically after leaving the South (e.g.., Gregory 1995; Lieberson 1978b; Lieberson and Wilkinson 1976; Long 1974; Long and Heltman 1975; Tolnay 1997, 1998b, Tolnay and Crowder 1999; Tolnay, Crowder and Alderman 2000, 2002; Tolnay and Eichenlaub 2006; Wilson 2001). As predicted by general migration theory, the latter body of research has noted that the migrants who left the South tended to be positively selected compared to those southerners they left behind (Lieberson 1978a, 1980; Alexander 1998; Marks 1989; Tolnay 1998a). Furthermore, it documents a generally successful experience for southern migrants in the non-South, relative to their northern-born neighbors, especially for blacks. Despite the important contributions by these previous efforts to understand the macro-level consequences of the Great Migration and the outcomes for the participants in this watershed socio-demographic event, no study, to our knowledge, has systematically explored whether leaving the South was associated with improved circumstances for the migrants. In this paper, we examine whether Southerners who left Dixie benefitted economically as a result of migration by comparing them to their counterparts who remained in the South.

Background & Theory

The primary theories of migration assume that migrants make a rational choice when deciding to move. Prospective migrants weigh the attributes of their place of origin, along with the expected attributes at potential destinations, against the cost of moving. Economic and social conditions are especially important for the decision-making process that migrants are engaged in (e.g. Lee 1966). Migrants are motivated, therefore, by the balance of push factors in their place of origin and pull factors in their destination. Furthermore, migration theory suggests that migrants will be positively selected from their place of origin, especially those who are responding to pull factors, but that they will have lower levels of human/social capital when

compared with the population in the destination (Lee 1966). In general, the findings from research on the Great Migration are consistent with the primary explanatory frameworks of push-pull type theoretical perspectives on migration behavior. However, one important corollary of such theoretical perspectives on migration has gone virtually unexplored with respect to the Great Migration – that the participants fared better socially and/or economically in their new non-southern locations than they would have if they had remained in the South. This neglect may be due largely to the great difficulty in approximating the perfect counterfactual, that is, the hypothetical southern experience of those who had left the region, had they remained in the South.

The Great Migration

During the 20th century, millions of southern blacks and whites left the South in search of better economic and social conditions in other regions of the country. The agricultural system that dominated the southern economy during the early 20th century had long produced little profit and large hardships for both whites and blacks (Berry 2000; Tolnay 2003). In addition to poor economic conditions, social conditions for blacks also created a strong "push"to leave the South. The Jim Crow South provided blacks with limited educational and occupational opportunities, and no political voice (Tolnay 2003). Racial violence also played a role in encouraging out-migration from the South in the early years of the Great Migration (Tolnay and Beck 1992). In contrast, the economic opportunities in the industrial North and Midwest were a strong "pull" factor for southerners starting around World War I when European immigration streams were cut-off at the same time that demand for war-related, industrial production surged. Employers began seeking inexpensive labor, both black and white, from southern states. For southern blacks, perceptions of a more benign racial climate in the North also was a powerful draw away

from the South. The mass migration that followed over the next half century essentially redistributed a large proportion of the southern population across the United States.

In the early years of the Great Migration, the primary migration streams out of the South headed to the Northeast and Midwest, following established railroad lines and exploiting networks that had been created by the earlier migration of friends and family members. Although a considerable portion of whites headed to the West in the early years, it was not until mid-century that blacks began selecting western destinations, when the booming West-Coast defense industry attracted workers, black and white alike, from all over the country. In addition to inter-regional migration, many southerners moved within the South in search of better opportunities. While the economy was overwhelmingly agricultural, especially during the early decades of the Great Migration, there were some opportunities for non-agricultural employment in mills and mines, for example. Additionally, many mobile southerners, both black and white, moved from rural areas to small towns and southern cities in search of economic and social opportunities.

Selectivity of Migrants. The early and persistent images of participants in the Great Migration were overwhelmingly negative. This was especially true for black migrants who were commonly portrayed as illiterate, displaced sharecroppers. This image, however, did not accurately describe all migrants who made up a rather heterogenous group. In fact, many of the black migrants who participated in the Great Migration came from southern towns and cities, not farms (Alexander 1998; Marks 1989). Also, migrants tended to be more educated than the southerners they left behind. Tolnay (1998a) examines the education selection of black participants in the Great Migration and finds that black migrants were more likely to be literate than the non-migratory southerners in the early years of the Great Migration. In the later years,

when the census reported years of schooling, black migrants reported significantly higher educational attainment compared to non-migrant southerners. Despite the positive selection, and consistent with migration theory, the migrants were less likely to be literate and had fewer years of schooling than their black counterparts in their northern and western destinations (Tolnay 1998a).

How Migrants Fared. Contrary to contemporary ethnographic evidence (e.g., Drake and Cayton 1962; Frazier 1932, 1939) more recent researchers have generally found that participants in the Great Migration fared relatively well in their destinations, despite an unfriendly welcoming. Black migrants, who were relegated to the lowest rungs of the occupational ladder, actually fared better than the northern-born black population. Black migrants were more likely to be employed and enjoyed higher incomes compared with northern blacks (see e.g., Lieberson 1978b; Lieberson and Wilkinson 1976; Long and Heltman 1975). They were also less likely to receive public assistance (Long 1974). The southern migrant advantage for blacks in the North also extended to family patterns, with higher percentages of children living with two parents and lower levels of family disruption (Tolnay 1997, 1998b; Tolnay and Crowder 1999; Wilson 2001). For white southern migrants in the non-South, it is more accurate to say that they fared no worse, or not much worse, than their northern-born counterparts (Berry 2000; Gregory 1995).

What if they Never Left?

Given the findings from prior research it seems that migrants, both black and white, who participated in the Great Migration were positively selected from their origin and did comparatively well in their non-southern places of destination. However, to really know to what extent the southern migrants benefitted socially and economically from leaving the South, we would need to know what would have happened to them had they remained in the region.

Obviously, it is impossible to know the outcome of choices that were not made. Therefore, a major challenge for this investigation is to approximate as closely as possible the perfect counterfactual. Toward that end, in this paper we assess the relative success of participants in the Great Migration by comparing them to their contemporaries who remained in the South – both those who migrated internally within the South and those who were "sedentary."[1]

For the most part, the literature on the Great Migration includes the assumption, implicitly or explicitly, that the participants in the Great Migration *were* better off for having moved. This is especially true for black migrants for whom the non-South offered a more congenial, if not ideal, social climate, with greater social and political freedoms along with a reduced risk of racially motivated violence. Some have been more equivocal in their conclusions about the overall improvements enjoyed by those who left the South (e.g., Lemann 1991; Marks 1989). To be sure, this is a complex issue, given the variety of experiences of the migrants as well as the multi-dimensionality of the outcomes that might be used to measure whether moving to the North was "worth it." In this paper we explore the question using a relatively narrow set of outcomes that are primarily economic in nature.

Based on general migration theory and findings from prior research, we expect that migrants who left the South enjoyed economic benefits after migration that were not enjoyed by those who remained in the South, especially by sedentary southerners. We expect that the advantage for inter-regional migrants will be larger earlier in the Great Migration, given the greater industrial economic opportunities in the non-South and the relatively depressed economic and repressive social conditions of the South. This would be especially true for northern and

[1] We use "sedentary" to refer to those southern-born individuals who remained in the South, but did not move across a state line, even though they may have been residentially mobile within their southern state of residence.

mid-western destinations compared to western destinations. Later in the Great Migration, we would expect the advantage for migrants to the North to decline due to economic restructuring and urban decline in the North and to an expanding non-agricultural base, and an improving social environment in the South.

Data

Data for this paper come from the public use microdata samples (PUMS) of the decennial U.S. population censuses (Ruggles et al. 2004) for 1940, 1950, 1970 and 1980 to compare economic outcomes as well as selection characteristics across three groups of southern-born males: (1) South-to-North/West inter-regional migrants, (2) southern intra-regional migrants (i.e., those who moved across state lines within the South), and (3) the sedentary southern population. The 1940 and 1970 files are used to examine the benefits of migration for recent migrants (i.e. migrants who moved within a five year period preceding the census). These samples are restricted to southern-born white and black males who were 25 years or older at the time of enumeration and were living in the South five years before the census. The 1950 and the 1980 PUMS data are used to estimate longer-term benefits of migration. For this analysis, we restrict our samples to southern-born white and black males who are 35 and older and were living in their state of enumeration five-years before the census. This sample provides us with a rough approximation of the longer term benefits for the migrants in our primary (1940 and 1970) analysis. For all years we exclude those who report they are currently enrolled in school. We utilize the census-defined regions in this paper and collapse the Northeast and the Midwest regions into one region that we refer to as the North. We differentiate inter-regional migrants into two groups, those who moved from the South to the North and those who moved to the West.

Our analyses are limited to men only. While women played an important role in the decision to migrate and contributed to households via income and otherwise, their migration behaviors are often tied to their husbands. Recent research indicates that during the Great Migration, outcomes for women were related to marital status and related to their husband's outcome for married women (White et al. 2005). Given the importance of "tied migration" to the mobility outcomes for women, especially during the pre-1970 era, a useful exploration of the economic benefits following the inter-regional migration of southerner women would require its own thorough investigation.

Variables

Dependent Variables. Three dependent variables are used to measure the economic and occupational benefit of migration in this analysis: employment status, income, and occupational status. Employment status is a dichotomous variable that distinguishes those members who are employed from those who either are unemployed or are not in the labor force during the week prior to census enumeration. The second dependent variable is based on the census item asking respondents for their income from wages, salaries, cash bonuses, tips and other money from their employer during the preceding calendar year. Income is measured as the difference between an individual's reported income in the census and the state-level median value of income for members of their own race (black or white). Positive values on this variable indicate that the respondent earned a higher income than his race's median income in that state. Negative values indicate that the respondent's reported income is lower than his race's median income in that state. This measurement strategy allows us to partially account for any regional (i.e., state-level) variation in economies and cost of living. The third primary dependent variable is occupational status as measured by the Duncan Socioeconomic Index that assigns a prestige score for

occupations based on the income and educational attainment associated with particular occupations in 1950 (Duncan 1961). Scores range from 3 to 96 with higher scores representing occupations with higher levels of prestige.

Independent Variables. The key independent variables for the analyses describe the individual's migration history. For analysis of the short-term benefits of migration in 1940 and 1970 we identify two groups of inter-regional migrants – those who moved from a southern state to the North or Midwest, *Migrants to North*, and those who moved from a southern state to the West, *Migrants to West*. Among those who remained in the South, we differentiate *Migrants within the South*, those who moved between states within the South between 1935 and 1940 or between 1965 and 1970, from *Sedentary Southerners*, those who remained in the same state during the intervals.[2]

For the analysis that looks at longer-term outcomes to migration in 1950 and 1980 the measurement of migration history changes. All members of the sample are Southern-born, but we do not limit the sample to those who were residing in the South five years prior to enumeration. Rather, we limit our sample to those who were living in their state of enumeration one year prior to the census in 1950 and five years prior to census in 1980 in order to capture longer-term outcomes for migration. For example, a southern born man who was enumerated in New York in 1950 and was also living in New York in 1949 would be included in the *Migrant to the North* group. If this man was living in any state other than New York in 1949, southern or

[2] There are well-known limitations to describing the migration histories of individuals from census information on current residence, place of birth, and residence in the recent past (see e.g., Cromartie and Stack 1989). For example, it does not capture multiple moves within a given time period and, because of return migration to a place of origin, it may miss some moves entirely. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the approach we use to describe migration histories from the PUMS data has become conventional practice in social science research.

otherwise, he would not be included in the analysis. This same approach is used to define *Migrants within the South* and *Migrants to the West.* *Sedentary Southerners*, for this analysis, are identified as those who are living in their state of birth at the time of enumeration *and* at the prior time point (i.e., 1-year earlier for the 1950 census and 5-years earlier for the 1980 census). Men who moved across state boundaries between 1949 and 1950 or 1975 and 1980 are excluded from the analysis.[3]

Throughout the paper, *Sedentary Southerners* serve as the reference category. In supplementary analyses we shift the reference category to *Migrants within the South* in order to test for the significance of differences between inter-regional migrants (*Migrants to North* and *Migrants to West*) and intra-regional migrants (*Migrants within the South*). Although full results from these analyses are not presented in the paper, they are used to denote the statistical significance of differences between groups in the tables and figures.

In addition to these key independent variables, a limited number of control variables are included in the analysis to avoid drawing incorrect conclusions that reflect compositional differences among the various groups. That is, these variables may also impact economic outcomes for migrants and may vary by migration history. For the primary analyses that examine short-term outcomes for migrants (in 1940 and 1970) and that examine longer-term outcomes for migrants (in 1950 and 1980) six control variables are included in the models. To account for a possible curvilinear effect of age on economic outcomes, we include both age (in years) and its square, age^2. We also control for the effect of co-residing with a spouse which may reflect

[3] In contrast to all other years in which the census asked about residence five years before enumeration, the 1950 census inquired about residence one year before enumeration. Therefore, the measurement of recent migration for 1950 must be based on the 1949 to 1950 time period, rather than the 1945 to 1950 period.

greater family obligation or the possibility of a positive selection into marriage. Unmarried men and married men who are not living with their spouse serve as the referent. We identify members of the military in this sample, although this control variable is not included in the analysis of current employment status. Education, as measured by years of schooling completed, is an important predictor of economic outcomes and is also included in the model. Finally, we distinguish between individuals who are residing in metropolitan areas at the time of enumeration from those who are not (the reference group).

Method

The primary focus for our analyses is the comparison of economic outcomes between those who left the South and those who remained behind. We use binary logistic regression for our analysis of employment status because it is a dichotomous measure. For our analysis of income and occupational status, both continuous variables, we use ordinary least squares regression. Statistical significance for all analyses is determined, and reported in the tables, using two-tailed tests and a minimum *p*-value of .05. Instances where differences in coefficients between inter-regional migrants (*Migrants to North* and *Migrants to West*) and *Migrants within the South* are statistically significant are noted with the symbol ‡. In all models, we report robust standard errors that are adjusted for clustering on state of residence at the time of enumeration.

Findings

Benefits of Migration for Recent Migrants

1940. The results from our analysis of all three dependent variables for both blacks and whites are presented in Table 1. Model 1 describes the crude, unadjusted, differences in the dependent variable by migration history using sedentary southerners as the reference. Model 2 builds on Model 1 by including the set of covariates in order to control for selected

compositional differences across groups. Results from the analysis of economic outcomes for blacks are contained in the upper panel of the table. Looking first at the results for current employment status, we find that both inter-regional migrant groups were less likely than sedentary southerners to be employed during the week prior to census enumeration. The results from Model 1 reveal that both migrants to the North and migrants to the West are less likely than the reference to be employed (Odds ratios of .58 and .63, respectively).[4] When we control for compositional differences (see Model 2) the basic findings hold. Inter-regional migrants are significantly less likely to be employed than southern non-migrants. The coefficient for migrants within the South is also negative, but not statistically different from the reference group at the $p <$ .05 level.

The disadvantage for black inter-regional migrants persists when we turn to the results for models predicting income. Model 1 describes the raw differences between groups and reveals that migrants to the West suffer a significant income disadvantage when compared to sedentary southerners. It should be recalled that the dependent variable is measured as the deviation from the median income for men of the same race within the individual's state of residence. In this model, migrants to the North are statistically equivalent to sedentary southerners while migrants within the South report a slight advantage. However we find that both migrants to the West and migrants to the North suffer an income disadvantage as compared to both the reference group, sedentary southerners, and those who migrated within the South between 1935 and 1940, when

[4] Odds ratios can be determined from the logistic regression coefficients by using the simple following simple formula Odds Ratio = e^{β} – where "e" is the mathematical constant and β is the estimated logistic regression coefficient. In this example the Odds Ratio for Migrants to the North is $e^{-.55} = .58$, while the Odds Ratio for Migrants to the West is $e^{-.46} = .63$. These Odds Ratios can be interpreted to mean that the "odds" of employment for Migrants to the North were only 58% as great as the odds for Sedentary Southerners, and that the odds of employment for Migrants to the West were 63% of the corresponding odds for the reference group.

we control for other factors as is done in Model 2. Net of controls, migrants within the South become statistically equivalent to sedentary southerners in terms of relative income.

Finally, our models that use occupational status (SEI) as the dependent variable, continue to illustrate that there was no short-term advantage for black migrants who left the South during this time period. While there are no statistically significant raw differences in SEI scores between any migrant group and the reference, as seen in Model 1, we find a significant disadvantage for those who migrated to the West ($\beta = -2.86$, $p < .05$) when we control for compositional differences (Model 2).

The bottom panel of Table 1 presents results from parallel analyses for whites in 1940. Similar to blacks, white men who left the South between 1935 and 1940 did not experience the short-term economic benefits to migration that we predicted. Both inter-regional migrant groups were less likely to be employed than sedentary southerners in the full model (Model 2) as were migrants within the South. Migrants to the West were the least likely to be employed, with an odds ratio of .37 (Odds Ratio = $e^{-.99}$ =.37). This is significantly lower than the likelihood of employment for both migrants within the South and sedentary southerners. For white migrants to the North the odds of employment were only 63% as great as the odds for sedentary southerners. Inter-regional migrants also experienced no benefit to migration compared to sedentary southerners in terms of income, when other characteristics are controlled (Model 2). In fact, migrants to the West earn incomes that are considerably lower, compared to their race-specific state median income, than do sedentary southerners. Both inter-regional migrant groups fare significantly worse than white migrants within the South who enjoy an income advantage over both sedentary southerners and migrants outside of the South. Finally, white male migrants who left the South in 1940 suffered a statistically significant occupational status disadvantage

compared to both migrants within the South and sedentary southerners, net of other factors.

Overall, the findings for 1940 indicate that migrants of both races who left the South for either the North or the West, did not benefit in terms of employment status, income or occupational status, at least in the short run. In many instances, we find that inter-regional migrants actually were worse off than sedentary southerners. These findings are inconsistent with our prediction that migrants who left the South, especially during this earlier time period, would have fared better than those who remained in the South. Migrants within the South, however, enjoyed a relative short-term advantage when compared to inter-regional migrants. With the exception of employment status, these intra-regional migrants fared as well as sedentary southerners, if not better.

1970. The findings from parallel analyses for recent migrants in 1970 are presented in Table 2. In the top panel of the table, results from analyses restricted to black males reveal that inter-regional migrants were less likely to be employed than sedentary southerners when controls are included for compositional differences (Model 2). Black migrants to the West were also earning lower incomes than sedentary southerners and than migrants within the South. Black migrants to the North experienced no income advantage by moving, as they were statistically equivalent to sedentary black southerners. Despite their income disadvantage, migrants to the West had higher SEI scores than did sedentary southerners in 1970, net of controls. Migrants to the North, were neither advantaged nor disadvantaged in terms of occupational standing compared to sedentary southerners. Migrants *within* the South also had significantly higher SEI scores, net of controls, compared to sedentary southerners, and occupational advantage that was substantially greater than that enjoyed by Migrants to the West.

The comparable results from analyses for whites in 1970 are reported in the lower panel

of Table 2. In terms of employment status, all migrant groups were less likely to be employed than sedentary southerners, when compositional differences are taken into account (Model 2). Like black migrants in the West, whites who moved to the West between 1965 and 1970 earned lower incomes (-$533 annually) than did sedentary southerners, relative to the race-specific median income for their state of residence. White men who moved to the North had incomes that were somewhat higher than the incomes for sedentary southerners ($448 annually), though this difference is not statistically significant. Finally, migrants who moved *within* the South had incomes relative to their race-specific state median that were significantly higher than sedentary southerners. In terms of occupational status, the analysis of whites reveals no advantage for migrants to the West ($\beta = .52$, NS) or to the North ($\beta = .37$, NS), with both groups being statistically equivalent to sedentary southerners. In contrast, both inter-regional migrant groups and sedentary southerners fare worse than do migrants within the South in terms of occupational status in 1970.

Again, contrary to our expectations, we find no substantial short-term advantage for migrants who left the South between 1965 and 1970. The sole exception is the significantly, though modestly, higher occupational status enjoyed by black migrants to the West over sedentary southerners ($\beta = 1.67$, $p < .05$). In all other cases, after controlling for compositional differences, inter-regional migrants either were statistically equivalent to sedentary southerners or they actually did worse than their southern neighbors that they left behind.

Longer-Term Benefits of Migration

The unexpected findings regarding the relative short-term benefits that accompanied inter-regional migration for both 1940 and 1970 raise the interesting question of comparable benefits (or lack of them) in the longer term. Perhaps the findings in Tables 1 and 2 reflect a

penalty that is paid by recent migrants because of the disruptive consequences of their inter-regional relocation. That is, it may take some time for the benefits of migration to be realized. To examine this idea, we moved our analysis forward 10 years and restricted our sample to southern-born men who had been living in the same state of residence for at least 1-year before the census for 1950 and at least 5-years before the census for 1980. We also restricted our sample to men 35 and older in an attempt to very roughly estimate longer term benefits for those in our 1940 and 1970 samples. An important caveat must be made regarding our analysis of the longer-term benefits of inter-regional migration. Although some of the recent migrants included in our analyses of the short-term benefits from inter-regional migration in 1940 and 1970 may be included among the samples used to investigate the longer-term benefits, the alignment is obviously imperfect. Nevertheless, we believe that these supplementary findings are suggestive, if not definitive, regarding the possible longer-term benefits accruing from movement out of the South.

1950. Table 3 shows results from analyses for blacks and whites using the same three economic outcomes that were considered earlier, employment status, income, and occupational status. For blacks, all migrants continue to be less likely to be employed than sedentary southerners despite having lived in their current state for a year or longer. In terms of income and occupational status, black migrants, both inter- and intra-regional, are statistically no different from sedentary southerners. However, the average income for Migrants to the West was significantly lower than the average income for Migrants within the South.

Parallel results for whites are presented on the right-hand side of Table 3. We find that migrants to the West remain less likely to be employed than are sedentary southerners, despite having lived in their current state of residence for at least one year. Migrants to the North

experience neither an advantage nor disadvantage in terms of the likelihood of employment in 1950 compared to the reference group (Odds Ratio = 1.02, NS). White migrants within the South (Odds Ratio = .82, $p < .05$), like migrants to the West (Odds Ratio = .63, $p < .05$), were disadvantaged in terms of employment status. White migrants to the West earned considerably lower incomes income (β = - $470, $p < .05$) than did sedentary or migratory southerners, compared to their state's race-specific median income. The average relative income for Migrants to the North was statistically indistinguishable from the average income for both groups of southerners. Migrants within the South earned significantly more than their sedentary counterparts, in relation to the median income for whites in their state of residence (β = $340, $p < .05$). Both inter-regional migrant groups are statistically equivalent to the reference group in terms of occupational status, net of compositional differences between groups. In contrast, migrants within the South enjoy a statistically significant occupational advantage over sedentary southerners (β = 4.49, $p < .05$) as well as over inter-regional migrants.[5]

Consistent with our findings for 1940 (See Table 1), the evidence from this supplementary analysis of possible longer-term benefits for inter-regional migrants points to no consistent or significant advantage gained by leaving the South in the middle of the century. If anything, results from these analyses, as well as those from 1940, are consistent with a modest disadvantage associated with inter-regional migration.

1980. Results from a similar analysis of the longer-term benefits of inter-regional migration for southern-born males in 1980 are presented in Table 4. The 1980 sample is restricted to men, 35 and older, who were living in their current state of residence at least 5-years

[5] The latter difference, and its level of statistical significance, is determined by changing the reference group and re-estimating the model for SEI.

before the census enumeration. We turn first to the results for black men that are reported in the left-hand panel of Table 4. Consistent with the general thread of evidence that has emerged thus far from our statistical analyses, we find that inter-regional migrants are less likely to be employed than sedentary southerners. The Odds Ratios for the likelihood of employment for migrants to the West is .73 ($p < .05$) and for migrants to the North it is .79 ($p < .05$). In other words, the likelihood of employment for both groups of inter-regional migrants was only about three-quarters as great as the likelihood of employment for sedentary southerners. Black migrants to the West enjoy no income benefit compared to sedentary southerners, although migrants to the North have significantly higher relative incomes, on average (β = \$1,354, $p < .05$). Migrants *within* the South also had significantly higher incomes than their sedentary southern counterparts (β = \$879, $p < .05$). Neither black inter-regional migrant group in 1980 enjoys an occupational advantage compared to non-migrants, as noted by the non-significant coefficients in the model predicting SEI. Migrants within the South, however, enjoy significantly higher SEI scores relative to southern non-migrants (β = 1.43, $p < .05$).

Turning to the analyses for whites in 1980, reported in the right-hand panel of Table 4, we see that no migrant group enjoys an advantage in terms of likelihood of employment compared to non-migrants. White migrants to the West, in fact, are considerably less likely to be employed than sedentary southerners, net of controls (Odds Ratio = .69, $p < .05$). Leaving the South also failed to give inter-regional migrants a long-term advantage in relative income. Migrants to the West earn significantly lower incomes than sedentary southerners, relative to their state's race-specific median income, while the average relative income for Migrants to the North is statistically the same as that for southern non-migrants. Migrants within the South, however, do enjoy a significant income advantage (β = \$1,547, $p < .05$) compared to their non-migratory

neighbors. Finally, both inter-regional migrant groups have lower average occupational status scores compared to both sedentary southerners and migrants within the South. Migrants within the South, on the other hand, enjoy a significant occupational status advantage compared to their sedentary contemporaries.

Consistent with the evidence for 1950, the findings for both blacks and whites in 1980 indicate that southern males who moved to the North or to the West enjoy no longer-term benefits to migration, when compared to sedentary southerners. The single exception to this general patterns was for black migrants to the North who earned significantly higher relative incomes than did southern non-migrants. Indeed, in many cases inter-regional migrants fare worse than non-migrants. Those who moved within the South, however, enjoy both an income and occupational advantage compared to non-migrants, although they are less likely to be employed.

Selectivity of Migrants

The findings presented thus far suggest no substantial benefit for inter-regional migrants, relative to sedentary or migratory southerners, either in the short-term or the longer-term. However, as noted earlier, we will never know how the inter-regional migrants would have fared, had they never left Dixie. Although we control for several characteristics that may be associated with group differences in economic outcomes, it is possible that there were selection processes at work that favored intra-regional migrants or sedentary southerners but which are not accounted for by our model specification. Such a "negative selection" for inter-regional migrants could have lessened the expected advantage for migrants to the North or migrants to the West. This possibility is, of course, contrary to migration theory in general as well as inconsistent with prior research which suggests a substantial *positive* selection for inter-regional movers during the

Great Migration. Nonetheless, we briefly consider this possibility by comparing two pre-migration characteristics for our four groups.[6]

Our supplementary analysis investigating the selectivity of inter- and intra-regional migrants versus the sedentary southern population relies on two dependent variables**,** completed years of schooling and pre-migration metropolitan status. Since the majority of people complete schooling by about age 20, and our sample is limited to men who are 25 and older, we feel comfortable assuming that for the majority of the sample, their formal schooling was completed before the time period in which some chose to migrate. In our models that predict education, a continuous variable, we use ordinary least squares regression to compare differences in education levels across our groups. In addition, we compare groups on their pre-migration metropolitan status. The 1940 and 1970 PUMS data include information about an individual's metropolitan status five years before the census. We distinguish those living in metropolitan areas five years earlier from those who report living in a non-metropolitan area. We employ binary logistic regression in models predicting metropolitan status in 1935 and 1965. In all models for education and metropolitan status, we control for age, age^2, and state of origin.

Using the parameter estimates from a series of regression equations, we calculate the predicted probability of living in a metropolitan area prior to migration (in 1935 for the 1940 census and in 1965 for the 1970 census) and the predicted value of education, by race and migrant category. These predicted values are derived by fixing all independent variables at their

[6] The 1940 and 1970 PUMS data include very little information that can be used to compare the "pre-migration" characteristics of inter-regional migrants with those who stayed in the South. Given the lower age boundary for including of our sample, 25 years, it is reasonably safe to assume that most recent migrants had completed schooling five years prior to the census. In addition, both censuses included some information about type of residence five years before the census and, in 1970, information about employment status and occupation in 1965.

mean levels, while manipulating the values (0 or 1) for migrant type, accordingly. The predicted probabilities/values are reported in the four panels of Figure 1.[7]

Panel A of Figure 1 describes the pre-migration metropolitan status of the four migrant groups by race, for 1940. Black inter-regional migrants are more likely than both sedentary southerners and migrants within the South to have lived in a metropolitan area in 1935. For whites, inter-regional migrants are also more likely than sedentary southerners to live in a metropolitan area prior to migration, however, white migrants within the South also enjoyed this advantage. Black inter-regional migrants in 1940 additionally enjoyed a significant advantage over sedentary southerners and migrants within the South in terms of educational attainment, as indicated in Panel B. While black migrants within the South were significantly more educated than their sedentary counterparts, they were also significantly less educated than those who migrated out of the South. For whites, migrants to the North and migrants within the South enjoyed an educational advantage over southerners who did not move. Western migrants, however, were no more educated than sedentary southerners and were significantly less educated than those who moved within the South.

The results for 1970 are a less straightforward. Panel C in Figure 1 depicts the predicted probability of living in a metropolitan area in 1965. For blacks, sedentary southerners were more likely than the other three groups to reside within a metropolitan area five years earlier. For whites, both sedentary southerners and migrants within the South were more likely to reside in metropolitan areas, although the difference between migrants to the West and migrants within the South is not statistically significant. The results for educational attainment, reported in Panel D,

[7] The full results from the regression analyses that were used to derive the predicted probabilities shown in Figure 1 are not reported here, but are available from the authors upon request.

are more in line with the results from 1940, indicating a clear advantage for all migrants groups over the sedentary southern population. For blacks, western migrants were more educated than migrants within the South while, for whites, there was no difference in education between inter-regional and intra-regional migrants.

In general, these results indicate that inter-regional migrants, both black and white, were positively selected, especially compared to sedentary southerners in 1940, in terms of both educational attainment and pre-migration metropolitan status. These findings of positive selection for migrants who left the South are quite consistent with the prior evidence (e.g., Alexander 1998; Marks 1989; Tolnay 1998a, 2003). It does not appear, however, that this positive selection was rewarded with positive post-migration outcomes, as noted in Table1. In 1970, inter-regional migrants, both black and white, were more educated, but less likely to live in metropolitan areas in 1965, compared to sedentary southerners. Again, their educational advantage over the southern population that stayed behind, does not appear to have been sufficient to give them a corresponding economic advantage in their new locations in the North and West (see Table 2).

Conclusion

A fundamental assumption made, explicitly or overtly, by scholars studying the Great Migration is that those who left the South for the North or West benefitted economically from their decisions to relocate. This is not an unreasonable assumption, given the rational choice predictions and explanations offered by traditional "push-pull" theories of migration. That is, if migrants move to maximize their social and economic opportunities, then we would expect their post-migration outcomes should be more favorable than the corresponding, "unmeasurable," outcomes that they would have experienced if they had not moved. Such an assumption is also

consistent with prior evidence that the southern migrants, especially African Americans, fared quite well on a variety of social and economic characteristics when compared with their northern-born neighbors. Perhaps because of the face validity of this assumption, little effort has been devoted to examining it empirically. An additional barrier to an empirically assessment of the accuracy of the assumption is the challenge of proposing a reasonable counterfactual that would provide insights into the lives that the migrants would have lived in the South, had they chosen to remain in the region.

In this analysis we consider two possible counterfactuals that describe possible southern scenarios for the inter-regional migrants – (1) those who stayed in the South and also migrated across a state line, and (2) those who stayed in the South but did not migrate (at least not during the five years before the census). The evidence is clear, and extremely consistent, in the conclusions that it suggests. Specifically, those who left the South during the Great Migration fared no better, economically, than those who stayed behind; in fact, it appears that they may have done worse. This somewhat surprising conclusions are true whether we consider black or white migrants, short-term or longer-term economic outcomes, earlier or later stages in the Great Migration. It is also true whether we compare the inter-regional migrants to the southern stayers who migrated across state lines or to those who were sedentary. In sum, our findings cast serious doubt on the widely shared assumption that the southern migrants escaped poverty and penury when they left the South for the urban and industrial North and West.

How could the empirical evidence that we have presented be so inconsistent with conventional wisdom regarding the Great Migration and with the dominant migration theories that have been used to understand this watershed demographic phenomenon? We would argue that this inconsistency is due to the fundamental inaccuracy of the conventional wisdom and to

the inadequacy, or at least incompleteness, of prevailing migration theories in their ability to explain this dimension of the Great Migration.

We must also acknowledge a second set of possible explanations for the inconsistency between our results and conventional wisdom and theoretical perspectives regarding the benefits of leaving the South during the Great Migration. These explanations focus on limitations to our analyses and/or the data upon which they are based. First, perhaps the benefits of inter-regional relocation during the Great Migration were primarily social in nature, rather than economic. This could be especially true for African Americans who were escaping oppressive social conditions in the South, in addition to economic obstacles. Granted, the evidence we have presented is limited to economic outcomes following migration to the North or West. Future research could extend the investigation to include post-migration social outcomes, although it is not clear that adequate data exist with which to conduct such a study. Second, it is possible that our analyses, and/or the data on which they are based, suffer from limitations that affect their ability to evaluate the merits of the fundamental assumption of economic gain by inter-regional movers during the Great Migration. For example, our investigation does not include the earliest stages of the Great Migration, especially between 1915 and 1930, when southerners might have enjoyed greater economic benefits by moving to the North. Also, one might argue that we have been less than successful in proposing reasonable counterfactuals with which to undertake this study. Indeed, we must admit that it is impossible to know what would have happened to the inter-regional migrants if they had chosen to stay in the South. However, it is also difficult to imagine a more appropriate counterfactual than those that we have used here. Perhaps the omission of some relevant variable has obscured a "true" economic advantage for inter-regional migrants that fails to emerge from our statistical analyses. Finally, it is possible, as is true for so many major

migration events, that the real economic benefits of the Great Migration were enjoyed by the second- generation – that is, the children of those who made the difficult decision, and absorbed the cost and inconvenience, of settling in a new and strange environment.

One might embrace our preferred explanation for the surprising evidence we have presented, and the revisionist conclusions they imply, that is based on the strengths of our investigation. Alternatively, one could endorse the alternative explanations that are based on the limitations to our investigation. In either case, our findings offer a new way of looking at the Great Migration and they have established an agenda for future research on the Great Migration, and the extent to which those who participated in it fared better than they would have if they had remained in the South.

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Table 1. Recent Migrants from South: Southern-Born Men, 25 years and older who were residing in South 5 years earlier.

Blacks, 1940

	Employment Status		Income		SEI	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*
Migrants to West	-.46*	-.51*	-165.91*‡	-291.90*‡	-1.02	-3.86*‡
	(.17)	(.08)	(55.35)	(57.68)	(1.72)	(1.79)
Migrants to North	-.55*	-.43*	-8.83	-153.30*‡	1.86	-.23
	(.18)	(.15)	(34.32)	(41.95)	(1.13)	(1.05)
Migrant within South	-.21	-.29	77.20*	40.51	.76	.26
	(.15)	(.15)	(26.83)	(32.86)	(.66)	(.61)
Age		.12*		10.50*		.32*
		(.01)		(1.63)		(.03)
Age^2		.00*		-.14*		.00*
		(.00)		(.02)		(.00)
Married Spouse Present		1.05*		31.87*		.51*
		(.05)		(12.11)		(.18)
In Military				81.77		3.65*
				(98.31)		(.93)
Education		.03*		16.33*		1.19*
		(.01)		(1.76)		(.08)
In Metro Area		-.54*		180.89*		.14
		(.09)		(33.60)		(.17)
Intercept	1.57*	-.75*	-309.18*	-639.00*	13.47*	-1.34
	(.07)	(.22)	(19.56)	(57.18)	(.19)	(.89)
Pseudo R2/R2	.001	.137	.002	.110	.000	.114
N	22,814		18,889		20,202	

Whites, 1940

	Employment Status		Income		SEI	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*
Migrants to West	-.57*‡	-.99*‡	-122.74*‡	-270.55*‡	-5.80*‡	-7.74*‡
	(.10)	(.10)	(34.98)	(60.32)	(1.22)	(1.34)
Migrants to North	-.11	-.46*	256.84*	-10.08 ‡	3.81	-2.06‡
	(.17)	(.16)	(88.92)	(90.00)	(2.07)	(1.16)
Migrants within South	.13	-.19*	433.59*	273.78*	6.49*	2.05*
	(.07)	(.07)	(26.09)	(26.05)	(.82)	(.59)
Age		.11*		44.47*		.84*
		(.01)		(3.73)		(.05)
Age2		.00*		-.49*		-.01*
		(.00)		(.04)		(.00)
Married Spouse Present		1.15*		166.41*		.97*
		(.03)		(16.38)		(.18)
In Military				-314.64*		-11.46*
				(67.18)		(1.41)
Education		.08*		70.70*		3.07*
		(.01)		(1.50)		(.05)
In Metro Area		-.21*		513.53*		7.69*
		(.04)		(27.54)		(.42)
Intercept	1.72*	-.87*	20.66	-1746.52*	27.49*	-22.25*
	(.05)	(.22)	(19.70)	(91.73)	(.66)	(1.36)
Pseudo R2/R2	.001	.178	.011	.216	.005	.317
N	70,403		59,662		62,722	

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses. * $p<.05$; ‡ denotes coefficient is significantly different ($p<.05$) from coefficient for Migrants within South. Robust standard errors are clustered on current state of residence.

Table 2. Recent Migrants from South: Southern-Born Men, 25 years and older who were residing in South 5 years earlier.

Blacks, 1970

	Employment Status		Income		SEI	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*
Migrants to West	.50*	-.37*	149.54‡	-688.02*‡	5.62*	1.67*
	(.19)	(.17)	(165.52)	(180.54)	(.92)	(.69)
Migrants to North	.42*	-.30*	733.44*	111.02	5.30*	1.58
	(.09)	(.08)	(213.70)	(217.46)	(1.20)	(1.06)
Migrants within South	.58*	-.10	896.77*	275.88	7.23*	4.16*
	(.18)	(.16)	(248.13)	(184.36)	(2.45)	(1.67)
Age		.18*		150.09*		.17*
		(.01)		(13.81)		(.03)
Age2		.00*		-1.75*		.00*
		(.00)		(.15)		(.00)
Married Spouse Present		1.22*		860.64*		1.65*
		(.05)		(47.08)		(.20)
In Military				7.02		-10.45*
				(168.90)		(1.05)
Education		.09*		222.13*		2.02*
		(.00)		(18.43)		(.09)
In Metro Area		.04		820.23*		1.43*
		(.04)		(143.72)		(.38)
Metro Status Missing		.01		481.11*		1.18*
		(.03)		(137.51)		(.42)
Intercept	.90*	-2.97*	-2241.04*	-8165.54*	20.17*	-4.03*
	(.06)	(.25)	(140.47)	(482.22)	(.58)	(.93)
Pseudo R2/R2	.002	.270	.004	.144	.008	.218
N	74,718		53,501		66,037	

Whites, 1970

	Employment Status		Income		SEI	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*
Migrants to West	.52*	-.55*	82.34 ‡	-533.38*‡	-.23‡	.52‡
	(.11)	(.10)	(179.69)	(180.50)	(1.49)	(.88)
Migrants to North	.84*‡	-.20*	1107.57*	448.00	2.63	.37‡
	(.10)	(.08)	(426.20)	(315.55)	(2.11)	(1.17)
Migrants within South	.58*	-.36*	1489.83*	689.47*	6.60*	2.87*
	(.09)	(.05)	(180.95)	(153.72)	(.73)	(.36)
Age		.17*		394.25*		.45*
		(.01)		(19.41)		(.03)
Age2		.00*		-4.35*		.00*
		(.00)		(.21)		(.00)
Married Spouse Present		1.35*		1576.40*		2.72*
		(.03)		(40.55)		(.16)
In Military				-1148.91*		-28.00*
				(159.24)		(.49)
Education		.14*		490.24*		3.62*
		(.01)		(9.86)		(.05)
In Metro Area		.13*		1607.74*		3.72*
		(.04)		(104.78)		(.45)
Metro Status Missing		-.05		828.41*		1.38
		(.06)		(208.43)		(.86)
Intercept	1.31*	-2.60*	433.30*	-15320.87*	37.73*	-17.11*
	(.06)	(.19)	(110.00)	(633.81)	(.64)	(.87)
Pseudo R2/R2	.003	.355	.004	.148	.004	.342
N	328,372		260,610		304,784	

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses. * p<.05; ‡ denotes coefficient is significantly different (p<.05) from coefficient for Migrants within South. Robust standard errors are clustered on current state of residence.

Table 3: Results for Regression Analysis for Southern Born-Men, 35 Years and older who were living in their current state of residence 1 year earlier, 1950.

	BLACKS			WHITES		
	Employed	Income	SEI	Employed	Income	SEI
Migrants to the West	-.77*‡	-106.73‡	-.18	-.48*	-470.11*‡	-1.35‡
	(.10)	(88.16)	(.78)	(.16)	(93.55)	(1.12)
Migrants to North	-.32*	127.52	.90	.02‡	104.56	-.83‡
	(.11)	(92.61)	(.51)	(.08)	(121.00)	(1.25)
Migrants within the South	-.19*	87.69	-.01	-.20*	340.23*	4.49*
	(.09)	(70.22)	(.46)	(.04)	(86.38)	(.61)
Age	.18*	46.59*	-.08	.11*	62.67*	.20*
	(.02)	(13.71)	(.11)	(.01)	(13.04)	(.09)
Age2	.00*	-.58*	.00	.00*	-.82*	.00*
	(.00)	(.13)	(.00)	(.00)	(.11)	(.00)
Married	1.06*	224.94*	1.84*	1.26*	273.95*	6.23*
	(.05)	(48.87)	(.31)	(.03)	(57.94)	(.61)
In Military		992.49	.65		6.30	-18.38*
		(1026.73)	(.67)		(150.18)	(1.07)
Education	-.01	22.44*	.44*	.02*	105.41*	.77*
	(.01)	(6.28)	(.06)	(.00)	(4.93)	(.03)
In Metro Area	-.09	370.99*	2.66*	.02	908.73*	10.60*
	(.08)	(80.04)	(.42)	(.04)	(66.84)	(.50)
Intercept	-2.11*	-2158.80*	14.27*	.18	-2729.87*	15.70*
	(.45)	(382.48)	(2.61)	(.33)	(361.51)	(2.47)
Pseudo R2/R2	.18	.11	.03	.25	.16	.09
N	28,909	5,223	24,552	80,242	16,588	68,942

Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses. * p<.05; ‡ denotes coefficient is significantly different (p<.05) from coefficient for Southern Migrant. Robust standard errors are clustered on current state of residence.

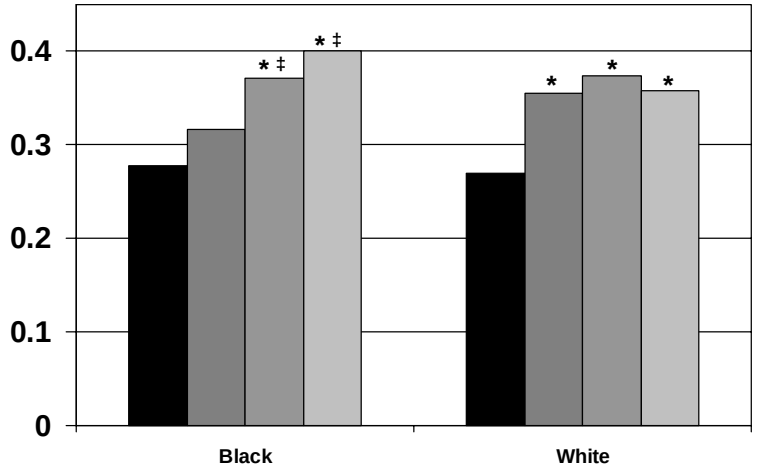
Table 4: Results for Regression Analysis for Southern Born-Men, 35 Years and older who were living in their current state of residence 5 years earlier, 1980.

	BLACKS			**WHITES**		
	Employed	Income	SEI	Employed	Income	SEI
Migrants to the West	-.31*‡	-574.98‡	.63	-.37*‡	-1562.71*‡	-1.32*‡
	(.06)	(458.65)	(.41)	(.09)	(391.66)	(.42)
Migrants to North	-.24*‡	1354.29*	-.27‡	-.10	883.61	-2.73*‡
	(.08)	(512.09)	(.40)	(.09)	(621.77)	(.76)
Migrants within the South	.06	878.52*	1.43*	-.07	1547.21*	1.78*
	(.06)	(302.92)	(.58)	(.04)	(281.74)	(.26)
Age	.20*	542.82*	.02*	.14*	1149.25*	.56*
	(.01)	(56.91)	(.06)	(.02)	(47.03)	(.04)
Age2	.00*	-6.09*	.00	.00*	-12.34*	.00*
	(.00)	(0.54)	(.00)	(.00)	(.45)	(.00)
Married	.99*	2221.37*	2.21*	.99*	3142.53*	3.00*
	(.03)	(89.67)	(.24)	(.02)	(102.66)	(.14)
In Military		-991.30*	-13.95*		-1153.64*	-28.79*
		(473.37)	(.82)		(373.22)	(.77)
Education	.09*	516.77*	2.15*	.12*	980.76*	3.35*
	(.01)	(36.15)	(.09)	(.01)	(21.53)	(.05)
In Metro Area	.08	861.95*	1.89*	.24*	3085.93*	3.61*
	(.05)	(259.07)	(.36)	(.06)	(213.74)	(.39)
Intercept	-3.87*	-22604.26*	-0.67	-1.78*	-40687.27*	-19.44*
	(.39)	(1689.25)	(1.48)	(.59)	(1453.73)	(1.23)
Pseudo R2/R2	.26	.12	.19	.34	.14	.30
N	72,704	42,304	53,999	254,668	171,527	206,728

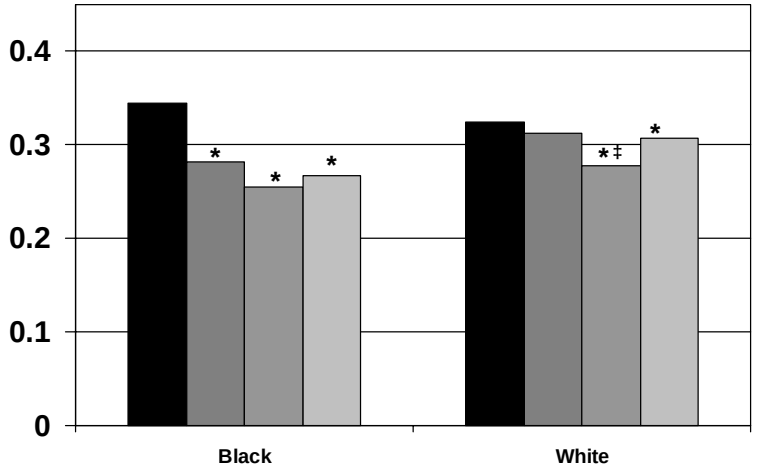
Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses. * p<.05; ‡ denotes coefficient is significantly different (p<.05) from coefficient for Southern Migrant. Robust standard errors are clustered on current state of residence.

Figure 1. Selectivity of Migrants and Sedentary Southerners, by pre-migration metropolitan status and education, 1940 and 1970

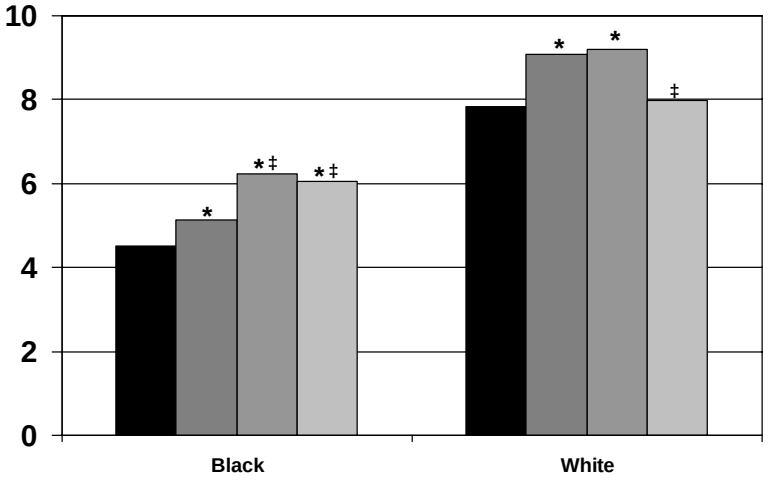
PANEL A: Predicted Probabilities of Living in Metro Area Pre-Migration for Southern-Born Males 25 Years and Older, 1940



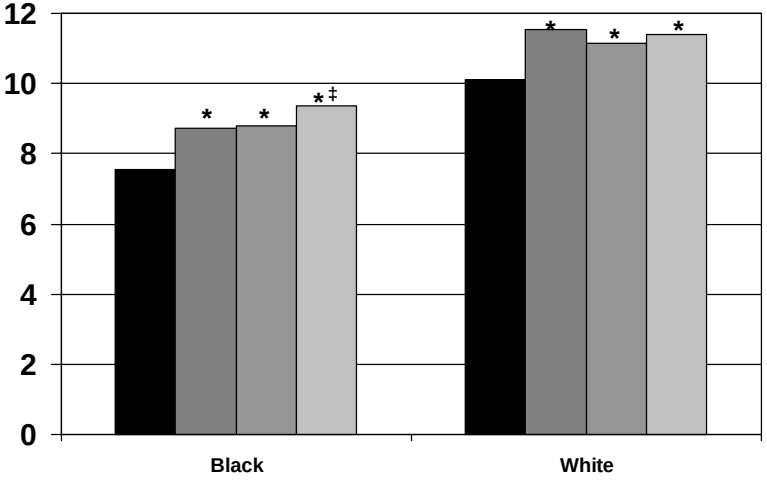
PANEL C: Predicted Probabilities of Living in Metro Area Pre-Migration for Southern-Born Males 25 Years and Older, 1970



PANEL B: Predicted Values for Years of Educational Attainment for Southern-Born Males 25 Years and Older, 1940



PANEL D: Predicted Values for Years of Educational Attainment for Southern-Born Males 25 Years and Older, 1970



Key: Sedentary Southerners; Southern Migrants; Northern Migrants; Western Migrants

Note: * Indicates that value is statistically significantly different ($p<.05$) from Sedentary Southerners. ‡ Indicates that value for inter-regional migrant is statistically significantly different ($p<.05$) from migrants within the South.