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Changes

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Larry H. Long

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U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF COMMERCE

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PREFACE

This is another in a series of analytical studies undertaken by demographers in the Population Division, Bureau of the Census. A distinguishing feature of these occasional publications is that they include broad speculative analysis and illustrative hypotheses by the authors as an aid in understanding the statistics and assessing their potential impact on public policy. The usual scope of these studies is probably broader than that of annual census reports on population subjects but less complete than book-length monographs.

Previous publications in the analytical series include: **Some Recent Changes in American Families**, by Paul C. Glick (1975); **The Geographical Mobility of Americans: An International Comparison**, by Larry H. Long and Celia G. Boertlein (1976); and **Racial Succession in Individual Housing Units**, by Larry H. Long and Daphne Spain (1978). Additional studies are in preparation.

The author received his Ph.D. degree in 1969 from the University of Texas at Austin, where he was affiliated with the Population Research Center. He spent 1969-70 on a postdoctoral fellowship at the Population Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania. Since August 1970, Dr. Long has been with the Census Bureau, where much of his work has involved regional analysis and internal migration. Future work is planned to develop more fully themes of spatial aspects of welfare and poverty.

Work on the present study began several years ago and was initially carried out by Lynne R. Heltman, now of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Computer programming was done by Norman Kaplan and Emmett Spiers.

The research reported in this study was done in part with funds from the Center for Population Research, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

INTERREGIONAL MIGRATION OF THE POOR: SOME RECENT CHANGES

Does the South still have net outmigration of persons below the poverty level? This question has concerned policy makers and others for quite some time, and it is a question that will persist. At issue is the degree to which poverty is and has been interregionally transferred through migration. This study offers an answer to this question and explores some of the implications of that answer.

Public debate on the question became particularly intense during the 1960's, when migration from the South was often cited as an important cause of the rising number of welfare recipients in northern States (see references in Long, 1974; and Long and Heltman, 1975). The debate continues, since persistent high levels of welfare dependence in the North are interpreted as partly reflecting the lingering effects of past South-to-North migration (see, for example, the discussions presented in *Time*, 1975; *Business Week*, 1976; U. S. *News and World Report*, 1976; Lyons, 1976; and *Business Week*, 1977). Furthermore, even as the South shifted to net immigration in the 1960's, there was evidence of continuing high levels of outmigration among persons with limited education and skills. Hence, it is entirely possible that as the South shifted to overall net immigration, it continued to have net outmigration of persons below the poverty level. Partly because of this potential for poverty redistribution through migration, welfare policies are increasingly looked upon as a matter for national concern rather than a strictly regional or local issue.

To address these matters, policy makers need data of many types, but a crucial piece of information involves knowing the poverty status of migrants at approximately the time of migrating. Such information would allow one to assess whether, on an annual basis, a region was having net immigration or net outmigration of low-income persons who may be likely to put at least a temporary burden on welfare agencies in places of destination. Data of this type have not been available from past censuses or other data sources. Recent censuses have asked about birthplace and residence 5 years before the census date, and while data from these questions have been extremely valuable in identifying migration streams, they have not allowed one to assess the income level of migrants at the time of moving. Since the census question asked about residence 5 years earlier and income in the calendar year preceding the census, the data reflect the income position of migrants up to 5 years after migration.

A few past surveys collected data on income and migration over nearly the same interval of time, but the data were never tabulated to show income of

migrants in the regional streams. Creating the data needed for this study entailed going back to surveys taken in the late 1960's, retabulating them to show poverty status of migrants around the time of migrating, and cumulating the results over a period of years in order to increase the effective sample size. The results were then compared with more recent surveys, which are larger and have more detailed questions on residential background. The purpose was to develop data that would allow one to decompose net and gross migration streams into poverty and non-poverty components based on each migrant's income very close to the time of the migration.

Such data are useful not only for the immediate purpose of answering whether on a current basis a given region has net immigration or net outmigration of the poor, but also for evaluating various theories regarding motivations behind the migration of low-income populations. Interstate differences in size of welfare payments are frequently cited (see references in Long, 1974) as having an important effect on the migration of the low-income population, the theory being that low-income persons are motivated to move from areas where payments are low (notably the southern States) to areas where payments are high (notably the northern States). If this theory has validity in accounting for migration of the poor, then one probably expects to find a rather steady net outmigration of the poor from the South, for there has been little narrowing of North-South differences in average size of welfare benefits. The often-cited differences between Mississippi and New York State in the size of AFDC payments (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) has actually widened over the last few years; in 1970 the average AFDC family in New York received over five times what the average AFDC family in Mississippi received, but by 1976 the average New York AFDC family was receiving nearly eight times the amount received by the average Mississippi AFDC family (National Center for Social Statistics, 1970, table 7; 1976, table 4). In view of the persistence of large benefit differences between the South and the North, failure to find net outmigration from the South of low-income persons in the 1970's would certainly call into question the current validity of the theory that interstate differences in size of welfare payments are acting as an inducement for the low-income population to migrate.

Another use of the data developed for this study is in evaluating the effects of interregional migration on family and per capita income in various regions of the country. Reports from the Census Bureau (1976a, p. 6) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (see Bretzfelder, 1977) have shown the southern region to be experiencing stronger and more consistent increases in personal income in the 1970's than the other major regions. Showing whether recent southern income gains result from net outmigration of low-income persons would contribute to understanding the processes underlying the regional income changes.

A Brief Background

The South's total net migration—irrespective of migrants' income level—is illustrated in figure 1 for periods between 1880 and 1975. In this figure and in all the tables that follow, the South is defined according to census practice and includes States as far north as Delaware and as far west as Texas. A map of the four major regions is included as figure 2.

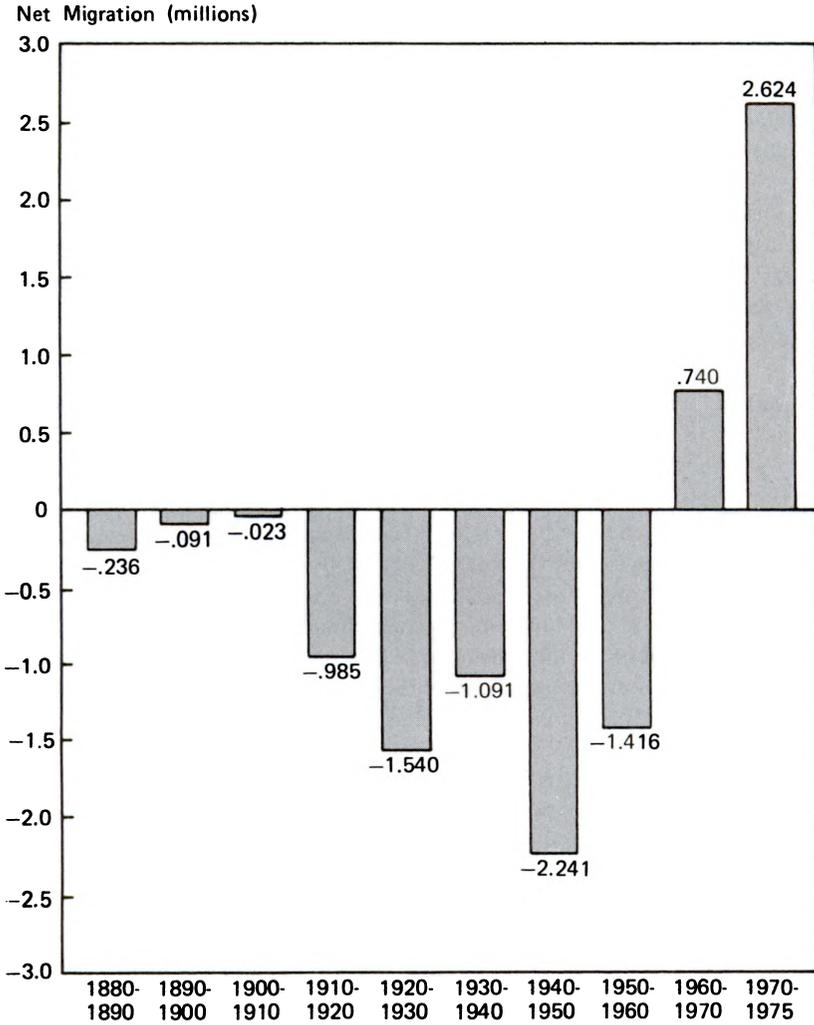
Throughout much of the last century and well into this century, large parts of the South exhibited characteristics commonly associated with depressed areas. Even after World War II and into the 1950's, much of the region could still be described as essentially agrarian, and a population that was poor, equipped with inadequate educations, and faced with declining employment opportunities. The understandable outcome of such circumstances over a long period of time was substantial migration from the South to other regions of the country.

But what is perhaps surprising about southern migration is that the exodus did not begin earlier. In spite of poor economic conditions, the region had very little net outmigration before the 1910-20 decade, and most of the net outmigration during that decade probably occurred as a consequence of the North's industrial development in connection with World War I. The most likely explanation for the small volume of migration from the region before World War I is that the expanding number of jobs in northern industries went disproportionately to immigrants. Thus, as long as immigrants were pouring into the North from the 1880's to around the time of World War I, there was little incentive for surplus labor in the South to move North, only to have to compete for jobs with immigrants. Instead, potential migrants opted to stay in the South, where family and friends were located and could provide mutual (though meager) support.

In the 1920's migration from the South increased. This was a decade when immigration was sharply reduced and industrial jobs in the North were fairly plentiful. But this level of migration from the South was not sustained, for the drying up of economic opportunities in the North during the depression of the 1930's was associated with a decline in southern outmigration.

This brief background to post-World War II southern migration was provided simply to emphasize that at the time of mobilization for the war, the South had a large reservoir of rural, mostly agricultural population whose movement north had in previous decades been restrained first by the presence of large numbers of immigrants and then by the depression of the 1930's. The mitigation of these two migration-inhibiting factors and the rapid increase in

FIGURE 1.
The South's Net Migration from 1880 to 1975



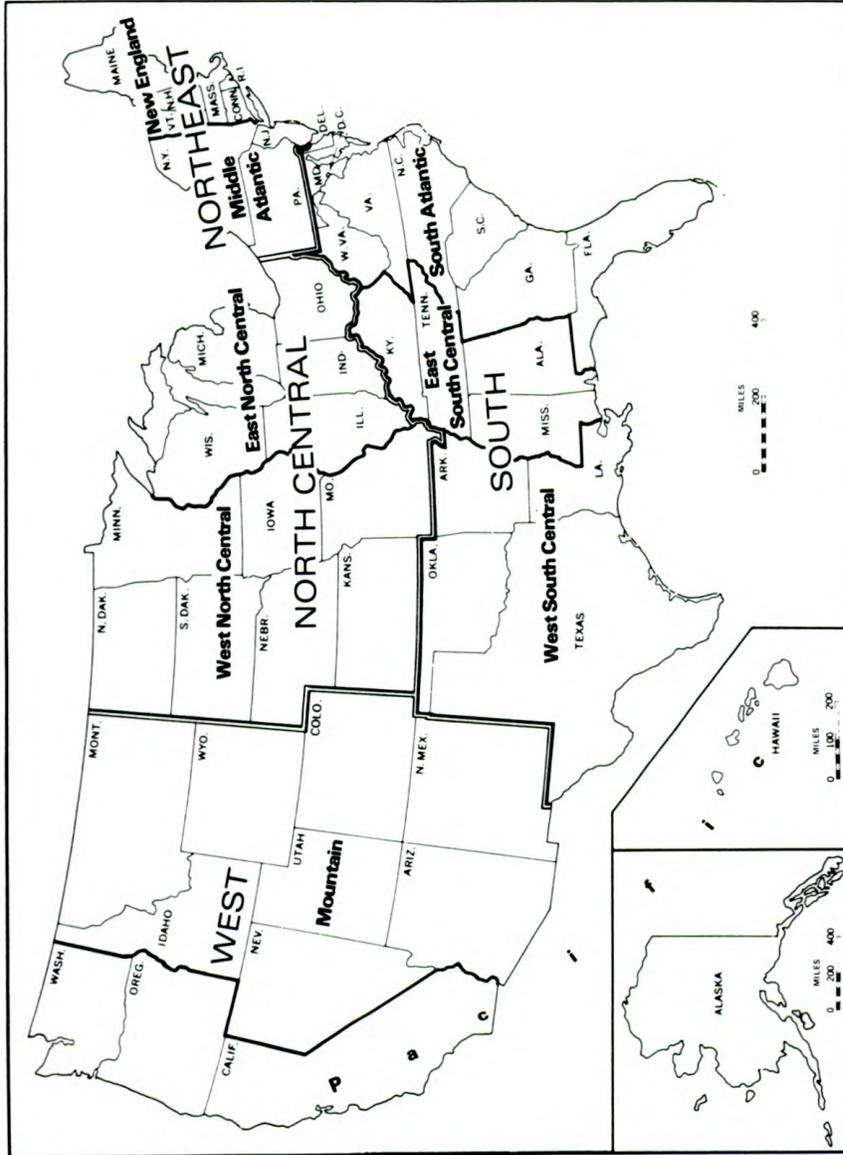
Source:

Data for decades up to 1940-1950 are from Eldridge and Thomas (1964, p. 41). Data for 1950-1960 are from Bowles and Tarver (1965, p. 2). Data for 1960-1970 are from Bowles et al. (1977, p. 4). Data for 1970-1975 are from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1976b, p. 19).

Note:

Prior to 1950-1960, data on net migration are for persons 10 years old and over. More recent data include persons under 10.

FIGURE 2.
Regions and Geographic Divisions of the United States



industrial jobs associated with World War II was accompanied by a large volume of migration from the South. During the 1940-50 decade the South had a net outmigration of 2.2 million persons.

It is interesting to speculate that had not large numbers of immigrants arrived in the North to take industrial jobs and had the depression of the 1930's not been so severe or so prolonged, the outmigration of surplus agricultural labor from the South might have been a smoother, more gradual process and more easily handled by the northern cities to which southern migrants primarily went. Instead, migration from the South was rather abrupt, reaching very high levels during and after World War II and continuing into the 1950's.

By the 1960's, however, many parts of the industrial North were experiencing a relative slowdown in economic activity. Many jobs were going south as a number of industries relocated to southern States where taxes were often lower and where land and labor were generally cheaper. Also, improved transportation in the South (usually in the form of more and better highways) encouraged the relocation of employers wishing to modernize or update their manufacturing plants. As a result, the South shifted to net immigration in the 1960's—the first sizable net immigration experienced by the region in nearly a century. The shift to net immigration in the 1960's was the product of more southerners staying in the region of their birth, more former outmigrants returning, and more northerners and westerners going to the South (see Long and Hansen, 1975; 1977a). The South's gain from migration has increased dramatically in the 1970's; in the 5 years from 1970 to 1975 the South's net immigration was over three times the size of its net immigration in the entire 1960-70 decade.

Even as the South shifted to net immigration, there was evidence that the region was continuing to have substantial outmigration of persons with low levels of education (Fein, 1965; Bowman and Myers, 1967), leaving open the possibility that in the 1960's the South was having overall net immigration (see figure 1) but having net outmigration of persons below the poverty level. If this was the case, then the region was continuing to contribute, on an annual basis, to poverty levels elsewhere.

Recent Migration

In order to see if the South's change to overall net immigration had also brought net immigration of the poor, several surveys carried out in the 1960's were examined, beginning with the Survey of Economic Opportunity, taken in 1967 by the Census Bureau for the Office of Economic Opportunity and for the specific purpose of measuring poverty and some of its concomitants. The

measure of poverty used by the Federal government for statistical purposes was first developed in 1965 (Orshansky, 1965) and takes into account family size, age and sex of family head, and whether residence is farm or nonfarm in determining if total annual money income is above or below a predetermined poverty level. The poverty-nonpoverty cutoff points are usually published in statistical reports on poverty (e.g., U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1973, p. 457; 1977, p. 198). In order to take inflation into account, the poverty cutoff levels are annually adjusted according to changes in the Consumer Price Index. In 1970 (i.e., 1969 income) the poverty cutoff for a nonfarm family of four persons was \$3,748; in 1977 (income in 1976) the poverty threshold for such a family was \$5,815.

The 1967 Survey of Economic Opportunity included several questions on residential background, one of which was the respondent's place of birth. These data were tabulated to show persons 14 years old and over who were born in the South but living in other regions in 1967; these persons were lifetime outmigrants whose poverty status (based on total money income received in 1966) could be contrasted with that of lifetime immigrants (persons 14 and over born outside the South but living in the South in 1967). These data were accepted as an indicator of the degree to which southern migration had contributed to poverty levels in other regions in 1967.

Useful as such data may be, they do not show interregional poverty flows on an annual basis, and in order to estimate these flows, special tabulations were made from Current Population Surveys taken in March of 1968, 1969, 1970, and 1971. Each of these surveys had questions on the respondent's place of residence in the preceding March and total money income received in the calendar year preceding each of the March surveys. Thus, income and migration were being measured over closely overlapping intervals of time, thereby providing a measure of poverty status of migrants around the time of migrating.

Data from the four Current Population Surveys were cumulated in order to show for the four regions for the 1967-71 period average annual immigration, outmigration, and net migration according to migrants' poverty status. More recent data of comparable nature were obtained from tabulations of Current Population Surveys taken in March 1976 and March 1977; each survey had questions on place of residence in March 1975 and total money income received during the calendar year preceding the survey. The results from the several surveys are shown for the South in table 1.

As of 1967, the South had clearly sent more low-income persons to other regions than it received in return. According to data from the 1967 Survey of Economic Opportunity, there were 941,000 low-income Southern-born

TABLE 1. The South's Change to Net Immigration of Low-Income Persons Between 1967 and 1977

(Numbers in thousands)

Migration flows	All income levels	Non- poor	Poor
Migrants to South			
(1) Living in South in 1967 but born in other regions (persons 14 years and over)	4,570	4,103	467
(2) 1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	1,263	1,076	187
(3) 1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	1,192	1,014	178
(4) 1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	1,932	1,621	311
Migrants from South			
(5) Born in South but living in other regions in 1967 (persons 14 years and over)	7,485	6,544	941
(6) 1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	1,255	1,025	231
(7) 1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	990	889	100
(8) 1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	1,470	1,287	184
Net migration			
Up to 1967 = (1) - (5)	-2,915	-2,441	-474
1967-71 = (2) - (6)	8	51	-44
1975-76 = (3) - (7)	202	125	78
1975-77 = (4) - (8)	462	334	127

NOTE: Poverty status is computed from total money income received in the calendar year preceding each of the March surveys.

SOURCE: Data shown on lines (1) and (5) are from Bowles et al. (1973, pp. 112-117). Data on lines (2), (3), (6), and (7) are from March Current Population Surveys, which asked for respondents' residence one year earlier. Data on lines (4) and (8) are from the March 1977 CPS, which asked about residence in March 1975.

persons 14 years old and older living below the poverty line in other regions of the country. Since the total number of low income persons 14 and over living outside the South was 9,005,000, one can conclude that in 1967 the South had contributed at least 10 percent of all persons in poverty outside the South. Having sent 941,000 low-income persons 14 and over to other regions, the South received only 467,000 low-income immigrants in return, for an apparent net outmigration of 474,000 low-income persons. Thus, the massive migration from the South up to 1967 had definitely contributed to poverty in other regions.

By 1967, the South had probably shifted to overall net immigration, that is, net immigration irrespective of income levels of migrants. But as the region shifted to overall net immigration, it seems to have continued for a few years to have net outmigration of persons below the poverty level. The continuation in 1967-71 of net outmigration of persons below the poverty level is indicated in the set of figures in the lower right-hand corner of table 1, which shows that for the 1967-71 period the region had an annual average net outmigration of 44,000 persons below the poverty level.

Sometime between then and 1976, however, the region experienced an unrecognized shift to net immigration of persons below the poverty level. Look again at the figures in the lower right-hand corner of table 1. For a 12-month period in 1975-76 the region is shown to have had net immigration of 78,000 persons below the poverty level, and this indicator of a change in trend is confirmed by the figures for 1975-77, when the region is estimated to have had net immigration of 127,000 persons below the poverty level. These figures highlight a significant shift, whereby the South, a low-income region traditionally exporting low-income persons to other parts of the country, came to have a small net gain of persons below the poverty level.

Changes in net migration are usually the result of changes in the numbers of immigrants as well as changes in the numbers of outmigrants. In the case of the South's shift to net immigration of the poor, the change seems to result more strongly from declines in the number of poor outmigrants rather than increases in the number of poor immigrants. For example, the number of low-income immigrants to the South hardly changed at all between 1967-71 and 1975-76, but the number of low-income outmigrants appears to have declined from an annual average of 231,000 in 1967-71 to 100,000 in 1975-76. Thus, the change seems to come from the region's retaining more of its own poor rather than drawing off the poor of other regions. Such a conclusion would be consistent with the earlier finding that the South as a whole shifted from net outmigration in 1955-60 to net immigration 1965-70 more as a result of greater retention of Southern-born persons than greater immigration of persons born in other regions (see Long and Hansen, 1975).

But what about the other regions? In particular, have the northeastern States, long thought to be strongly attracting the poor of other regions, also experienced a change in net migration of the poor? Gross and net migration for the three nonsouthern regions are given in table 2 for various periods between 1967 and 1977.

The data suggest that by the mid-1970's the Northeast had net outmigration of persons below the poverty level. Back in 1967-71 the number of low-income immigrants to the Northeast approximately equaled the number of low-income outmigrants, although table 2 shows a net outmigration of the poor of about 16,000 per year—a number too small to be significant. But for a 1-year period in 1975-76 the region's net outmigration of the poor is shown to be 40,000, and for a 2-year period in 1975-77 net outmigration of the poor is shown to be 171,000. Rather clearly, the region is now sending more low-income persons to other regions than it is receiving in return—an important change.

The North Central region probably had net outmigration of the poor continuously between 1967 and 1977. Each of the three measurement periods—1967-71, 1975-76, and 1975-77—indicated that the North Central region was having net outmigration of persons below the poverty level. There is no clear evidence of change in this regard.

The West is shown to have had net immigration of the poor between 1967 and 1977. For each of the measurement intervals, the number of low-income migrants to the West appears to be greater than the number of low-income outmigrants, giving the region net immigration of the poor. Thus, of the four major regions, only the West consistently had net immigration of the poor between 1967 and 1977.

One might summarize these statistics by saying that insofar as interregional migration of the poor in the mid-1970's is concerned, the North Central region and the West seem to be continuing a pattern in existence in the late 1960's. The North Central region seems to be continuing to have net outmigration of persons below the poverty level, and the West seems still to be having net immigration of the poor. The data do not provide a basis for detecting change in the net migration of the poor for the North Central or West regions. For the South and the Northeast, however, there is some evidence of change. The South is shown to have shifted to net immigration of the poor by 1977, and the Northeast seems to have come to experience net outmigration of the poor by 1977.

TABLE 2. Gross and Net Migration According to Migrants' Poverty Status, for the Three Nonsouthern Regions: Various Periods from 1967 to 1977

(Numbers in thousands)

Interregional migration	All income levels	Non-poor	Poor
NORTHEAST			
Inmigrants			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	558	495	64
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	454	416	38
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	669	604	64
Outmigrants			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	735	655	80
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	666	589	78
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	1,283	1,048	235
Net migration			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	-177	-160	-16
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	-212	-173	-40
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	-614	-444	-171
NORTH CENTRAL			
Inmigrants			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	912	796	115
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	668	587	81
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	1,196	1,020	176
Outmigrants			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	1,028	864	163
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	1,023	843	181
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	1,558	1,330	228

TABLE 2. Gross and Net Migration According to Migrants' Poverty Status, for the Three Nonsouthern Regions: Various Periods from 1967 to 1977—Continued

(Numbers in thousands)

Interregional migration	All income levels	Non- poor	Poor
NORTH CENTRAL—Continued			
Net migration			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	-116	-68	-48
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	-355	-256	-100
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	-362	-310	-52
WEST			
Inmigrants			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	1,014	818	196
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	967	826	141
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	1,511	1,307	204
Outmigrants			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	728	640	88
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	600	522	78
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	996	887	109
Net migration			
1967-71, annual average, persons 1 year old and over	286	178	108
1975-76, persons 1 year old and over	367	304	63
1975-77, persons 2 years old and over	515	420	95

NOTE: Poverty status is computed from total money income received in the calendar year preceding each of the March surveys.

SOURCE: Current Population Surveys taken in March 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1976, and 1977.

Doublechecking the Results

It is plausible to suppose that some of the above migration patterns could be influenced by the movement of retirees, some of whom may have pensions so meager as to classify the recipients below the poverty level. Since retirees on small pensions may be motivated to move to the South, where living costs are frequently quite low, it is possible that low-income retirees account for the South's recent net immigration of persons below the poverty level. In order to test for this possibility and simply to verify the results from tables 1 and 2, tabulations were prepared from the 1976 Survey of Income and Education (SIE).

For the present study, the SIE has many advantages, one of which is its large size. In approximately 151,000 households, each individual was asked how long he or she had lived in the State of usual residence at the time of the interview and the State of previous residence for those whose duration of residence was less than a lifetime. For persons reporting a duration of residence of less than 1 year, tabulations were prepared in order to duplicate as closely as possible the 1-year migration data shown in tables 1 and 2, except to separately identify the migration of persons in the labor force ages. That is, the attempt was to use an independent data source, the SIE, to verify the results from the 1976 and 1977 Current Population Surveys and at the same time focus on the migration of persons in the labor force ages. For persons 20 to 64 years of age, table 3 shows in-migrants and out-migrants for each of the four regions during the 1 year preceding the 1976 SIE, which was conducted from April through July and based poverty status on income received during the calendar year 1975.

The results from table 3 serve to validate previous conclusions and demonstrate that they apply as well to persons in the labor force ages. The table shows that in the 12 months preceding the 1976 SIE, the Northeast and North Central regions had net out-migration of low-income persons at ages 20 to 64, and the South and West regions had net immigration of low-income persons 20 to 64 years old. The significance of these conclusions is not simply to confirm earlier results, but to demonstrate that low-income retirees are not the "explanation" of the South's change to net immigration of the poor. The South's net immigration of the poor in the mid-1970's is the result of movements of persons at economically active ages.

Another consideration that merits mentioning is the possible role of return migration. It is, of course, possible that the South has started to pull back many of the low-income migrants who left in earlier decades. There is, unfortunately, no way of directly testing for this effect. Had the SIE produced

TABLE 3. Low-income Persons Among Each Region's Inmigrants and Outmigrants in the 12 Months Preceding the 1976 Survey of Income and Education, for Persons 20 to 64 Years Old

(Numbers in thousands)

Region	All income levels			Below poverty level		
	Inmi-grants	Outmi-grants	Net migra-tion	Inmi-grants	Outmi-grants	Net migra-tion
South	922	658	264	113	75	38
West	676	446	230	87	46	41
Northeast	281	566	-285	22	67	-45
North Central	462	672	-210	59	92	-33

data on State of birth, one could have assessed the role of return migration simply by disaggregating the southern inmigrants shown in table 3 according to those born in the South (returnees) and others. Although the SIE included a question on country of birth, if failed to obtain the State-of-birth data that would have allowed the identification of return migrants.

There are, however, two reasons for downplaying the role of return migration in the South's shift to net immigration of the poor. First, as mentioned in an earlier section, there has been no increase in the number of low-income southern inmigrants (returnees and others); the change in the South's net migration of the poor seems to have resulted largely from fewer poor outmigrants. Had returnees played a major role in the change in net migration, one might have expected to find increased immigration of poor persons to the South, but this did not happen between 1967-71 and 1975-76.

A second reason for doubting that return migration has played a major role in shifting the South to net immigration of the poor is that in the past return migrants generally have not been those with the lowest levels of education. One study used 1970 census data to define a return migrant as a person born in the South and living in the South in 1970 but not in 1965; with these data, the study found that southern outmigrants who were most likely to go back to the South were those with the highest level of education, especially college graduates (see Long and Hansen, 1977b). As a result of this positive

educational selectivity in return movement, the returnees actually had higher levels of education than the initial outmigrants, who in turn had higher levels of education than persons who had stayed in the South. This relatively high level of education among returnees suggests persons who could most readily take advantage of expanding job opportunities and not persons likely to add to the poverty rolls.

Duration of Residence

A way of extending the above analysis and obtaining a fuller evaluation of the effects of migration on regional poverty levels is to assess the poverty status of migrants at successive periods after migrating. For example, a crucial variable may be a region's ability to absorb large numbers of low-income migrants (even net immigration of the poor) but provide employment opportunities that enable the poor to become nonpoor after a fairly short period of residence.

Because it collected data on duration of residence, the SIE provides a basis for assessing the poverty status of migrants not only around the time of migrating, but also after having lived for varying periods of time in the region of destination. For each of the four regions, this information is shown in table 4 for interregional migrants 20 to 64 years old. Also shown for comparison is the poverty status of (1) each region's total population 20 to 64 years old, (2) lifetime nonmigrants (persons 20 to 64 who had always lived in the same State), and (3) persons 20 to 64 who had moved between States within the same region.

The idea here is to try to see to what extent low-income migrants to different regions of the country become nonpoor with increasing length of residence. Look first, however, at the percent poor in the different migration streams. It may come as a surprise to persons who have looked upon the Northeast as getting more than its share of low-income migrants to note that migrants going to the Northeast in the 12 months preceding the survey seem to be somewhat less likely to be poor than migrants going to the other three regions. About 7.8 percent of working-age persons moving to the Northeast in the 12 months preceding the 1976 SIE were below the poverty level; among migrants going to the other three regions, the percent poor was higher—between 12 and 13 percent. A similar pattern seems also to have existed in 1967-71 (see tables 1 and 2). Whatever the reason, migrants to the Northeast between 1967 and 1976 were generally somewhat less likely than migrants to the other three regions to be poor at the time of migrating.

TABLE 4. Poverty Status of Nonmigrants and Migrants Who Have Lived in Each Region for Varying Periods of Time, for Persons 20 to 64 Years Old: 1976

(Numbers in thousands)

Regions	Total population 20 to 64 years old	Always lived in same State	Moved between States but in same region	Migrants to each region				
				Moved in last 12 months	Moved 1-3 years ago	Moved 4-5 years ago	Moved 6-9 years ago	Moved 10 or more years ago
SOUTH								
All income levels	37,149	19,913	8,384	922	1,150	734	1,115	3,149
Below poverty	4,090	2,612	724	113	83	60	76	233
Percent below poverty	11.0	13.1	8.6	12.3	7.2	8.2	6.8	7.4
WEST								
All income levels	21,161	6,575	4,553	676	719	555	839	5,118
Below poverty	1,723	529	340	87	60	46	64	338
Percent below poverty	8.1	8.0	7.5	12.9	8.3	8.3	7.6	6.6
NORTHEAST								
All income levels	27,257	16,730	4,240	281	290	280	431	2,250
Below poverty	1,795	1,010	149	22	17	15	36	242
Percent below poverty	6.6	6.0	3.5	7.8	5.9	5.4	8.4	10.8
NORTH CENTRAL								
All income levels	30,894	18,671	4,808	462	487	371	617	4,231
Below poverty	2,118	1,163	283	59	48	34	51	368
Percent below poverty	6.9	6.2	5.9	12.8	9.9	9.2	8.3	8.7

NOTE: Included in the total but not shown separately are persons whose last residence was outside the United States and persons who failed to provide complete information on previous residence. The latter group constituted 0.8 percent of persons 20-64 years old.

SOURCE: 1976 Survey of Income and Education.

For every region—including the Northeast—very recent immigrants (those who have lived in the region for less than 1 year) are more likely to be poor than the total destination population. In other words, every region tends to attract migrants who are more likely to be poor than is “average” for the region (compare columns 1 and 4 in table 4). Equally important is that migrants who have lived in a region for a few years are less likely to be poor than the very recent arrivals (compare column 4 with columns 5, 6, and 7). This seeming improvement after a few years in the economic status of low-income immigrants results not only from income gains experienced by those who stay, but also from some low-income migrants simply moving on to other regions. Importantly, however, in each of the four regions, migrants of 1 to 10 years’ residence are less likely to be poor than more recent arrivals, suggesting that each region during this time was able to reduce poverty among migrants who moved in and stayed.

There is little evidence to suggest, though, that poverty level of migrants steadily goes down with increasing length of residence. Columns 4 through 8 of table 4 represent migrants with increasing duration of residence in each of the regions, and the data in these columns do not support the idea that the percent poor progressively goes down with longer durations of residence. Instead, there is an erratic pattern. The data may mean that many low-income immigrants either manage to become nonpoor after a few years or else move on to other regions; those who do not fit these descriptions but stay for more than a few years perhaps experience episodes of poverty, alternating between work and welfare. A true test of such a scenario requires longitudinal data which are not available.

Note especially the migrants with the longest duration of residence. The last column of table 4 shows persons who have lived in the same region for 10 years and whose previous residence was in a different region. For these migrants, their last interregional move occurred in 1966 or earlier, and they presumably have had a long while in which to adjust and accommodate to the region of destination. In the South, the West, and the North Central regions, the migrants with 10 years’ residence are less likely to be poor than the very recent arrivals (less than 1 year’s residence). In the Northeast, however, the migrants of 10 years’ residence seem to have a greater incidence of poverty than the more recent arrivals. This group of long-term migrants in the Northeast may, indeed, be the “residue” of the pre-1967 migration from the South. The relatively high incidence of poverty among pre-1967 migrants to the Northeast may be evidence to support the idea that the region still does carry a poverty burden (perhaps even a welfare burden) from an earlier migration. But the more recent migration pattern is to reduce this burden, for since 1967 the Northeast has not had net immigration of the poor from other regions, and in

the last few years the Northeast has been a net exporter of low-income persons to other parts of the United States.

The poverty status of persons who have never moved between States is given in column 2 of table 4, and it is interesting to note that in the North as in the South these lifetime nonmigrants constitute the majority of persons below the poverty line. In the Northeast, 56 percent of the low-income population 20 to 64 years old consists of persons who have never moved between States. Similarly, 55 percent of the North Central region's low-income population of working age are lifetime nonmigrants. Of the four regions, the South has the largest proportion of "home-grown" poverty—64 percent of its low-income population 20 to 64 years old has never moved between States. Only in the West did nonmigrants constitute a minority of the low-income population. In the West 31 percent of both the poor and nonpoor populations had never moved between States. These data are useful in demonstrating that the "typical" poor person in the North, like the "typical" poor person in the South, is an individual who has never made an interstate move.

Effects on Regional Income

A use of the data developed in earlier sections is to evaluate sources of income growth in the various regions of the country. A number of Census Bureau reports using data from the annual Current Population Survey have pointed to recent faster-than-average rates of income growth in the South and mildly speculated that this was due to outmigration of the southern poor. As one Bureau report commented (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976a, p. 6):

Income changes in the four regions (Northeast, North Central, South, and West) reflect endogenous changes as well as interregional migration. Distilling the separate influences of the two sets of factors, however, is difficult. For instance, a strong outmigration of low income southerners could have the effect of raising median income in the South and lowering the median in non-South regions.

It could, but the data in tables 1, 2, and 3 suggest rejecting this implicit hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis, namely, that faster-than-average income growth in the South results from income-generating forces within the region (the "endogenous changes" mentioned above).

Perhaps it is useful to illustrate the faster-than-average rate of income growth in the South and to speculate about when North-South gaps in income and poverty might close if present trends continue, particularly in view of recent changes in regional net migration of the poor. For these purposes, table 5 was assembled to show per capita income and poverty levels in the four

TABLE 5. Per Capita Income and Poverty Level, by Region, for Selected Years: 1940 to 1977

Region and Year	Per capita income (dollars)		Poverty level		Average annual percent change since preceding date	
	Absolute level	As percent of national average	Number of poor persons (000's)	Percent poor	Per capita income	Number of poor persons (000's)
UNITED STATES						
1940	592	100.0	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
1950	1,496	100.0	(NA)	(NA)	9.3	(NA)
1960	2,215	100.0	38,685	22.1	3.9	(NA)
1970	3,920	100.0	26,931	13.6	5.7	-3.6
1977	6,399	100.0	24,975	11.8	8.2	-1.1
SOUTH						
1940	389	65.7	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
1950	1,138	76.1	(NA)	(NA)	10.7	(NA)
1960	1,747	78.9	19,105	35.6	4.3	(NA)
1970	3,362	85.8	12,326	20.2	6.6	-4.4
1977	5,776	90.3	10,354	15.2	9.0	-2.5
WEST						
1940	700	118.2	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
1950	1,700	113.6	(NA)	(NA)	8.9	(NA)
1960	2,484	112.1	4,378	16.1	3.8	(NA)
1970	4,142	105.7	3,956	11.7	5.1	-1.0
1977	6,789	106.1	4,015	10.5	8.2	0.2

TABLE 5. Per Capita Income and Poverty Level, by Region, for Selected Years: 1940 to 1977—Continued

Region and Year	Per capita income (dollars)		Poverty level		Average annual percent change since preceding date	
	Absolute level	As percent of national average	Number of poor persons (000's)	Percent poor	Per capita income	Number of poor persons (000's)
NORTHEAST						
1940	774	130.7	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
1950	1,716	114.7	(NA)	(NA)	8.0	(NA)
1960	2,539	114.6	6,249	14.4	3.9	(NA)
1970	4,422	112.8	4,722	9.9	5.5	-2.8
1977	6,824	106.6	4,949	10.2	7.2	0.7
NORTH CENTRAL						
1940	603	101.9	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
1950	1,590	106.3	(NA)	(NA)	9.7	(NA)
1960	2,289	103.3	8,953	17.7	3.6	(NA)
1970	3,968	101.2	5,927	10.7	5.5	-4.1
1977	6,518	101.9	5,657	9.9	8.3	-0.7

NA Not available.

NOTE: Poverty status is based on censuses or surveys taken in March or April of each of the years shown and is computed from total money income received during the preceding calendar year. Per capita income refers to the calendar year shown, except that per capita income for 1977 actually refers to 1976.

SOURCE: Column 1 is from Bureau of Economic Analysis (1973, pp. 232-241; and Bretzfelder, 1977, p. 17). Column 3 is from unpublished tabulations from the 1960 census and U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973, table 1; and 1977, table 19).

regions from 1940—when southern outmigration increased greatly—up to 1977.

The data tend to justify looking upon the South as the Nation's traditional depressed area. It is interesting to note that of the four major regions, the South is the only one to have lower-than-average per capita income. The other three regions have had higher incomes than the national average at least since 1940.

In fact, until recently southern incomes were much below the national average. In 1940 per capita income in the South was slightly less than two-thirds the national average, and at that date the average southerner's income was only one-half that of the average resident of the Northeast. In view of such large regional income differentials in 1940, the incentive to leave the South was understandably great, and in the decade following 1940 the South experienced the largest net outmigration in its history (refer back to figure 1). The massive outmigration in that decade was associated with rapid growth in southern income, which rose from 66 percent of the national average in 1940 to 76 percent in 1950.

Southern outmigration remained fairly high in the 1950's, but growth in per capita income in that decade was relatively modest, rising from 76 percent of the national average in 1950 to 79 percent in 1960. The 1960's represented a turnaround decade for the South insofar as migration is concerned, for the region came to have net immigration for the first time in nearly a century. But the South's net immigration in the 1960's was net immigration of nonpoor persons, for the region continued to have net outmovement of persons who were poor at approximately the time of migration. Partly because of these countervailing net movements of the poor and nonpoor populations in the 1960's, the South made important income gains, its per capita income rising from 79 percent of the national average in 1960 to 86 percent in 1970.

In the 1970's the relative income gap between the South and the non-South is closing more rapidly than in the 1960's. By 1976 per capita income in the South had risen to 90 percent of the national average, and if this rate of change is maintained, by 1980 per capita income in the South will be 93 percent of the national average. The high rate of income growth in the South in the 1970's is particularly interesting because it comes at a time when the region shifted to net immigration of persons below the poverty level—a condition which might ordinarily have a depressing effect on rates of increase in overall personal incomes. From 1940 to 1970 the South's income gains were certainly due in part (though how large a part is unknown) to the region's having net outmigration of persons below the poverty level.

These data support Garnick's thesis that in many ways the recent shift of personal income out of the Northeast and to southern States is an acceleration of processes that have been underway for quite some time (see Garnick, 1978). Earlier researchers had questioned the permanency of the shifts, however, pointing out that the South in 1970 still had many large reservoirs of poverty (see Jusenius and Ledebur, 1976). Although the South even in 1977 had a higher incidence of poverty than any of the other three regions, substantial income gains since 1970 have helped to dry up many of the 1970 reservoirs of poverty. Consider that in 1970 the average southerner was nearly twice as likely to be poor as the average person living outside the South; but according to CPS data for 1977 the average southerner's likelihood of being poor was only around 50 percent greater than that of a person living outside the South (these calculations are based on data compiled for table 5). Clearly, the incidence of poverty in the South has been falling rather rapidly in the 1970's in spite of the region's shift to net immigration of the poor during this period.

Given these rapid increases in per capita income and declines in poverty in the South in the 1970's, it is interesting to speculate as to when the long-standing income gaps between the South and the non-South might close if present trends were to continue. Such an extrapolation of the post-1970 pattern can be made, not as a forecast or prediction, but as an illustration of the magnitude of recent changes. For example, from table 5 observe that in the 1970's the number of poor persons in the South has been reduced by nearly 2 million, from 12.3 million in 1970 to 10.4 million in 1977. At the same time, the number of poor persons living outside the South hardly changed at all, numbering about 14.6 million in both 1970 and 1977. These figures, based on data from the March 1977 Current Population Survey, mean that just about all of the reduction in poverty in the United States since 1970 has occurred in the South—historically the nation's poorest region.

If the average annual rates of change in the poor and nonpoor populations in the South and non-South were to continue at the same rates as observed in the 1970-77 period, the historic poverty gap between the South and the rest of the Nation would be completely eliminated in 11 years. That is, in 1988 poverty in the South would be down to 9.4 percent of the population and would be about the same as in the rest of the country. These calculations were made simply by computing the average annual rates of change in the poor and nonpoor populations of the South and non-South in 1970-77 and applying the rates of change to the 1977 base populations. The results indicated that the percent poor in the South and in the rest of the country would converge at 9.4 percent in 11 years, or 1988.

If the South/Non-South poverty gap were in fact to be eliminated in 1988,

that milestone would be reached 50 years after President Roosevelt's 1938 declaration (quoted in Moynihan, 1978, p. 4):

It is my conviction that the South presents right now the nation's No. 1 economic problem—the nation's problem, not merely the South's. For we have an economic unbalance in the nation as a whole, due to this very condition of the South's. It is an unbalance that can and must be righted, for the sake of the South and of the Nation . . .

These remarks of President Roosevelt were offered as justification for numerous New Deal programs designed to upgrade living standards in the South and elsewhere through public-works projects, and Federal spending patterns are alleged still to benefit the South (Havemann et al., 1976).

If the post-1970 patterns were to continue, not only would the South/non-South poverty gap be closed by the late 1980's, but per capita incomes would also equalize. If the 1970-76 rates of change in per capita income in the South and the non-South were to continue, the South would catch up with the non-South in 13 years (in 1989) if no allowance is made for regional cost-of-living differences. If the South's lower cost of living were taken into account (which is not feasible), the catch-up would occur at an earlier date.

The purpose of these illustrations is not to predict when—or even whether—the South will achieve parity with the rest of the Nation in poverty levels and per capita income. The purpose is simply to underscore recent regional income changes and to graphically describe their potential impact.

Many factors could, of course, interfere with this hypothetical timetable. For one thing, future reductions of poverty in the South may be harder to come by, for in the past the southern poor were more likely than the northern poor to be workers whose wages were inadequate to provide more than a poverty-level income. Many of these persons—sometimes called the “working poor”—have benefited from rapid expansion in manufacturing and nonmanufacturing employment in the South in the 1970's (for data, see tables 1 and 3 of Sternlieb and Hughes, 1977) and have taken jobs that enabled them to become nonpoor. But as these processes run their course, a larger proportion of the southern poor will consist of the nonworking poor—persons who are aged, ill, handicapped, with dependent children at home, or otherwise not likely to be available for employment. A relatively large part of the North's poor already consists of persons belonging to these categories, and the South will find that as the poverty population is reduced to its “hard core,” continued reduction in numbers of the poor will be increasingly difficult to accomplish simply through economic growth.

Another consideration is whether the South's shift to net immigration of the poor will put a damper on the rate of expansion of personal income. It could, but the effect may not be too great. Recall that the South seems to have shifted to net immigration of the poor through reductions in outmigration rather than attracting more of the poor from other regions. Throughout the 1967-77 period, there was a fairly steady and small stream of low-income migrants to the South, and this stream has not changed in magnitude. The South's recent income gains have come at a time when the region was retaining more of its own poor and converting them to nonpoor status. Eventually, the outmigration stream of the southern poor fell below the immigration stream, giving the South a small net immigration of persons below the poverty level. An increased immigration of the nonsouthern poor would, of course, tend to depress future increases in southern per capita income.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper developed data for use in examining the regional distribution and sources of redistribution of the Nation's poverty population. By disaggregating annual interregional migration flows into poverty and nonpoverty components (based on migrants' income around the time of moving), the paper's most important empirical result was to detect the southern region's shift from annual net outmigration to net immigration of the poor between 1967 and 1977. Concomitantly, the Northeast, where many migrants from the South had gone in previous decades, came to have a small annual net outmigration of persons below the poverty level. The West and North Central regions appear to be continuing patterns in existence in the late 1960's, with the West having net immigration and the North Central region net outmigration of persons below the poverty level.

One should bear in mind that there is no reason to suppose that every State in the South and West has net immigration of the poor or that every State in the Northeast and North Central regions has net outmigration of the poor. The various sample surveys that were used were not large enough to permit an examination of the poor and nonpoor components of migration streams for individual States.

An important result of the work reported here was to provide new findings on the South's growing volume of net immigration. Although the southern region as a whole shifted to net immigration in the 1960's, the net immigration in that decade consisted entirely of the White nonpoor population. Not until the 1970's has the South come to have net immigration of Blacks and persons below the poverty level. Clearly, the region's growing volume of net immigration in this decade is much more heterogeneous than before.

There is considerable irony in discovering that the South, still a region where welfare benefits are generally quite low, has come to have net immigration of persons who are below the poverty level when they migrate. These results certainly call into question theories about the poor being attracted to areas where welfare benefits are high. Recent changes in migration patterns of the Nation's poor population seem to derive largely from the South's retaining more of its low-income population and converting them to nonpoor status as a result of rapid growth in jobs. Presumably because of the growth in jobs, the South has accounted for almost all of the Nation's reduction in the number of poor persons since 1970.

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