

CURRENT RESEARCH

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Overview

I am currently engaged in two separate, though somewhat related, research projects. The overriding objective of both projects is to improve our understanding of how large-scale demographic trends have influenced the lives of African Americans throughout U.S. history. The first project is examining the social and economic consequences of the Great Migration which resulted in millions of African Americans leaving the South and moving to northern cities. The current size and distribution of the northern black population are largely products of this Great Migration. In turn, they have played an important role in shaping the social, economic, and cultural environments within which northern blacks are educated, earn a living, build families, and migrate in search of opportunity. My work on this project attempts to describe and understand those important linkages. A second, newer, project compares the social and economic well-being of immigrants and African Americans, and attempts to determine whether large-scale immigration is bad for blacks. The results of this study will help us to understand whether the economic well-being of African Americans is threatened by large and growing populations of legal immigrants. Both of these projects also use historical analysis to improve our understanding of current conditions. Each is described in more detail, below. Publications that have resulted from these projects are listed in my curriculum vitae which can be found on my website.

The Consequences of the Great Migration

Between 1910 and 1970 millions of southern blacks uprooted their lives and moved to northern and western cities. In this project I take a careful look at the nature of this Great Migration and its consequences for the northern black community throughout the 20th Century. My primary focus is on the family patterns of southern migrants, with special attention devoted to: (1) *the marital status of males and females*, (2) *the living arrangements of currently married males and females*, (3) *family headship by adult women with children*, (4) *parenthood among never married adult women*, and (5) *the living situations of young children, especially the presence or absence of parents*. However, the project also examines a much broader set of issues related to the experiences of southern migrants including: (1) *where they settled when they moved to the North*, (2) *how they compared, socially and economically, with native-born northern blacks*, (3) *their patterns of return migration to the South*, and (4) *their use of geographic mobility as a "search for opportunity."* Although funding for this project is winding down, I am continuing analyses on a number of different topics.

African Americans and Immigrants in Cities: A Long View

During the 20th Century, growth in the black and immigrant populations in northern cities occurred in alternating cycles. First, the massive waves of immigrants during the first two decades increased dramatically the foreign-born population in northern cities, while the black population grew only slowly. Then, the Great Migration, coupled with restrictive immigration policies, resulted in significant growth in the African American population, and a leveling off in the foreign-born population between 1920 and 1970. Finally, in recent decades, relaxation of immigration quotas and increasing return migration of blacks to the South has, once again, produced a rapidly growing

immigrant population and a relatively stagnant black population. In this project I conduct an in-depth investigation of the relationship between immigrants and African Americans during six “historical regimes” from 1880 through 1990. The project has two major components. The first component will use data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) for 1880, 1910, 1920, 1940, 1970, 1980, and 1990 to compare the social and economic characteristics of African Americans and immigrants across a broad sweep of U.S. history. The second component combines individual-level data from the IPUMS with contextual data for counties and metropolitan areas to determine how the social and economic well-being of African Americans was affected by the size and growth of immigrant populations within their urban areas.