CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC HISTORY
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

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KHA YEN PRENTICE
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

LASZLO KONYA
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

DAVID PRENTICE
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 2013-08

JULY 2013

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
ACTON ACT 0200 AUSTRALIA
T 61 2 6125 3590
F 61 2 6125 5124
E enquiries.eco@anu.edu.au
http://rse.anu.edu.au/CEH

Was the African American great migration delayed by outlawing emigrant agents?

Kha Yen Prentice
School of Economics, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria 3086, Australia. khayenphan@yahoo.com

László Kónya
School of Economics, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria 3086, Australia. l.konya@latrobe.edu.au

David Prentice
School of Economics, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria 3086, Australia.+61 3 9479 1482. d.prentice@latrobe.edu.au (corresponding author)

July 20th, 2013

Abstract

The question of why more African Americans did not migrate earlier out of the stagnant and repressive South after emancipation remains open. Previous work has highlighted the role of demand and supply conditions. At the time, though, there was much concern about the role of emigrant agents who actively recruited African Americans to migrate away from their homes such that several states introduced emigrant agent laws to effectively drive them out of business. In this paper we provide the first estimates of the quantitative significance of these agents to African American migration. Specifically, we take advantage of a natural experiment provided by different outcomes in court cases in Georgia and Alabama, which resulted in Alabama being prevented from re-introducing these laws between 1882 and 1903 while Georgia's laws remained. Analyzing gross migration out of the two states, we find that the emigrant agent laws had no direct effect on migration. Though there is some limited evidence that the sensitivity of migration flows to economic differences within the South was lower if an emigrant agent law was in place. This suggests that small changes to the emigrant agent laws are unlikely to have led to an earlier Great Migration. Interestingly we also find that the increase in migration began before 1920 which provides some support for the supply-based explanations.

Keywords: Great Migration, Emigrant Agents, Gravity Models, African Americans, Southern Labor Markets, Labor Market Regulation.

JEL Codes: N31, N41, N91, K31, J61, R23

1. Introduction

After the southern Confederate states were defeated in 1865, southern-born African Americans raised as slaves were emancipated. Despite political repression, stagnant economic conditions in the South and booming labor markets in the Northern states, it took about fifty years before what is referred to as the great migration of African Americans out of the south began. Collins (1997) and Logan (2009) have analyzed the contribution of traditional demand and supply side conditions of the labor market to the delay of the great migration. Recent work in macroeconomics (Rogerson *et al*., 2005) and economic history (Rosenbloom, 2002) has focused on information flows and institutions that might hamper the reallocation of labor in a more general setting. Emigrant agents, who acted to match emancipated slaves (as well as other workers) with potential out-of-state employers, began operations in southern labor markets from the 1870s but were in some cases suppressed with what were termed "emigrant agent laws" (Bernstein, 1998). However, there has never been a quantitative assessment of the extent to which emigrant agents contributed to improve operations of postbellum labor markets and whether their suppression contributed to the delay of the great migration.

In this paper, we empirically analyze the effect of emigrant agents on the out-migration of African Americans from Alabama and Georgia between 1870 and 1910. During this period emigrant agents were effectively outlawed in Georgia, despite appeals against the law; whereas emigrant agents were permitted to operate in Alabama between 1882 and 1903 following Alabama's emigrant agent law being ruled unconstitutional by the Alabama Supreme Court. Only a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court upholding the constitutionality of emigrant agent laws enabled Alabama to reintroduce its law in 1903. The different outcomes in court provide the exogenous variation in the applicability of emigrant agent laws that enables identification of their effects on out-migration and, whether, they delayed the great migration. A gravity model of migration is estimated using Census aggregate data on outflows by destination state, including controls for wage and employment differences between states. We estimate whether the emigrant agent laws had level effects on migration and whether they affected the sensitivity of migration to wage and employment differences.

Though we successfully estimate a modified gravity model of out-migration, we do not find any significant direct effects of the emigrant agent laws on migration. We do find though some evidence that the emigrant agent laws reduced the sensitivity of migration to economic differences between states – particularly between Alabama, Georgia and other Southern states. However, the effects are unlikely to be large enough to explain the delay to the great migration out of the South. This suggests that even though emigrant agents were free to work in Alabama during this period, they responded to the threat of legal action by operating on a small scale. Alternatively, emigrant agents may not have been that important for large scale migration with the demand and supply conditions highlighted by Collins and Logan swamping them. More detailed information on the operations of the emigrant agents, which we are not aware exists, would be required to distinguish between these hypotheses. The finding that there was a significant increase in migration into the North from 1900 on is more consistent with the supply side explanations of the delay to the Great Migration.

The paper is structured in the following way. In section 2 we briefly review the conditions in the postbellum southern labor markets and describe in detail the role of emigrant agents and the legislation against them. This section concludes with a discussion of the delay of the great migration. In section 3 we review the data, the model and discuss the identification and estimation strategy followed in the analysis. Section 4 presents the results and section 5 concludes.

2. Southern Labor Markets, Emigrant Agent Laws and the Great Migration

2.1 Southern Labor Markets and the Great Migration

One of the most striking features of the southern labor markets in the late nineteenth century was that they were hardly integrated with northern and European markets at all. As recently documented in Rosenbloom (1998), wage rates, particularly in the South Atlantic states, remained well below those in the north. Over the late nineteenth century wage rates within these regions did converge but not across regions. Microeconomic theory highlights how workers could migrate from the south to the north to earn higher wages. Indeed, the integration of the Southern labour market was accompanied by migration within the region in response to economic opportunities and there was extensive migration into the northern and western states from Europe (Collins, 1997). However, it was not until the early twentieth century that extensive migration of African Americans from the south into the north occurred in what is often referred to as the great migration. Table 1 shows that the number of American-Americans born in the south but living in the north occurring increased dramatically after 1910.

2.2 Emigrant Agents and Emigrant Agent Laws

Emigrant agents and the emigrant agent laws were the next steps in a series of more well known institutional developments in Southern labor marks following emancipation. Specifically, although the demand for cotton was not what it was before the Civil War, there was a perception of shortages in postbellum Southern labor markets (Loring and Atkinson, 1869). Cotton planters surveyed in the late 1860s attributed the labor shortage to the migration of African Americans to the cities, to their preference to become sharecroppers, to the withdrawal of women from the labor force and competition from other industries for African American workers (Loring and Atkinson 1869, pp. 22-23). The bargaining power of local African American workers therefore improved.

Table 1:
Migration patterns of southern-born African American, 1870 to 1930

	African Americans Born in the South, Living...						
	State of Birth	Elsewhere in the South		In the North		In the West	
Year		Numbers	% change	Numbers	% change	Numbers	% change
1870	3,667,000	706,700		129,000		1,400	
1880	5,132,600	753,000	7	170,100	32	900	-36
1890	5,891,300	736,300	-2	202,200	19	2,500	178
1900	7,006,600	880,100	20	301,500	49	3,300	32
1910	7,701,000	992,100	13	378,700	26	9,700	194
1920	7,788,300	1,024,100	3	678,500	79	21,400	121
1930	8,479,900	1,220,300	19	1,274,400	88	71,800	236

Source: Lee, ES 1957, "Migration Estimates" for Non-Whites in Simon Kuznets and Dorothy Swaine Thomas (ed.) *Population Redistribution and Economic Growth, US, 1870-1950, Volume I*, The American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

The first response of local planters to the improved bargaining power of the emancipated slaves was to form associations to fix hours of work, wages and other terms of contracts (Roark 1977, pp. 135-136; *De Bow's Review* 1868, p. 213; Tebeau 1936, pp. 146-147). However, due to the intense competition for labor, the planters' resolve broke down as they resumed outbidding each other for workers (Higgs 1977, p. 48).

Hence local planters instead used their influence in the state legislatures (Ransom and Sutch 1977, p. 66; Rogers *et al*. 1994, p. 231) to legally restrict the mobility of African Americans through provisions in the Black Codes imposed in 1866 across many Southern states. For example, the Black Codes of South Carolina, Florida, Alabama and Louisiana included provisions making it a criminal offence for a worker to breach his/her labor contract (Cohen 1991, p. 30). In addition to the Black Codes, there were also anti-enticement laws, which prohibited an employer from offering higher wages to entice a worker away from another employer and made this activity a criminal offence (Cohen 1991, p. 32, 35; Naidu 2010). The Black Codes were outlawed by the Federal Government's 1866 *Civil Rights Act* (Bernstein 1998, p. 788). The states, however, revised the restrictive laws so that they applied to all workers regardless of race (Bernstein 1998, p. 790; Cohen 1991, p. 30).

Despite the real concerns of local planters, African Americans were, in the main though, not prepared to immediately participate in a labor market stretching right across the South. Illiteracy, poverty, and the legacy of slavery made migration difficult for many African Americans. Logan (2009), for example, documents low literacy rates even in 1870. Unable to read, African Americans were at a disadvantage in locating better employment opportunities elsewhere. Unable to write, those who had successfully migrated could not easily inform friends and family of the better conditions. With little savings and the uncertain outcome of moving, they could not afford to invest in migrating (Ransom and Sutch 1977, p. 195).

However, the Freedmen's Bureau quickly became actively involved in coordinating the geographically dispersed labor markets in the South (Cohen 1991; Butchart 1980, p.99). Indeed, the assistant commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau in Mississippi suggested that the Freedmen's Bureau "… function as a central information agency, assisting planters who wanted labor and freedmen who needed jobs to find each other" (Cohen 1991, pp. 48-49). Some other tasks that the Freedmen's Bureau took on occasions were (in Virginia) keeping registers of unemployed freedmen, transportation of freedmen within or even across states and assisting enforcement of contracts (Cohen 1991, pp. 53-54, 71-72).

Furthermore it was during the period when the Freedmen's Bureau provided a job matching service and "freely dispensing transportation" that the new southern occupation of emigrant agents (sometimes called labor agents) emerged (Cohen 1991, p. 110).[1] Rosenbloom (2002) highlights this institution in his discussion of the integration of the southern labor markets. Emigrant agents had been used by employers in the North as far back as the 1850s to find workers (Rosenbloom 2002, p. 48). While a relatively new profession in the South, emigrant agents operated there in a similar fashion to those in the North. Emigrant agents were paid a commission by employers for every worker hired. Further, emigrant agents were specifically contracted by the employer to search for workers on their behalf.

A formal definition of an emigrant agent can be obtained from the legislation that required emigrant agents to be licensed, called the emigrant agent law. Alabama's emigrant agent law provided the most precise definition (Alilunas 1937, p. 153):

> Each person who shall engage in the business of hiring or soliciting laborers to go or be employed outside of Alabama, or in furnishing, arranging or providing transportation for

[1] The literature also refers to emigrant agents as labor agents. We use the term emigrant agent to highlight that they encouraged migration as this was the aspect of their activity regulated by the emigrant agent laws.

> laborers to go beyond the limits of Alabama, or in advertising for such laborers, shall be a labor agent within the meaning of this letter.

Many of the first emigrant agents were former Freedmen's Bureau agents. Through their regular contact with planters, Freedmen's Bureau agents were aware of planters' willingness to pay an intermediary to obtain workers for their plantation (Cohen 1991, pp. 66-67). Former Union officers, who had been in African American regiments during the Civil War, and therefore could gain the confidence of African American workers, also became emigrant agents.

There were African American emigrant agents as well, but they were few; most African Americans in this field of work were sub-agents working for a white emigrant agent. The sub-agent's role was to approach African Americans on behalf of the emigrant agent about job offers. One emigrant agent might have a team of sub-agents who would be sent into neighboring counties to distribute circulars urging African Americans to move (Holmes 1980, p. 441).

Emigrant agents recruited for whichever employer contracted with them. Planters in states where there was a shortage of workers frequently relied on labor agents to find African American workers. One plantation owner, or a group of them, would engage an emigrant agent to go into another state to search for workers (Cohen 1991, p. 118). According to Weiner (1978, p. 60), even the Mississippi state government established an official bureau of emigration which sent emigrant agents into Alabama to bring back African American workers. Emigrant agents also recruited for mining companies and large landowners. Emigrant agents working for the Appalachian coal companies received a commission of $10 per worker recruited (Lewis 1989, p. 83).

While emigrant agents played a role in improving information flows, they were subject to their own asymmetric information problems. William Pickens, whose family was persuaded to migrate to Arkansas by an emigrant agent representing a farmer there, recalled the agent describing Arkansas as (Pickens, 1911, p. 22):

> ... a tropical country of soft and balmy air, where cocoanuts, oranges, lemons and bananas grew. Ordinary things like corn and cotton, with little cultivation, grew an enormous yield.

When they got there, Arkansas turned out to be very different, being cold and covered in snow!

Emigrant agents were also responsible for transporting the recruited workers to the employer. For example, an emigrant agent working for an Appalachian coal company handed out train tickets to his recruits. This did not mean transportation was free. The employer would deduct the train fares from the workers' pay when they commenced working (Cohen 1991, p. 118; Lewis, 1989).

2.2.1 Impact of emigrant agents on local labor markets

The primary impact of emigrant agents documented in contemporary sources is getting African Americans to migrate to other Southern states with better economic conditions. For example, immediately after the Civil War agricultural returns in the western southern states were greater than in the eastern states, like Georgia, in which land had been overused and infrastructure devastated by the War. Planters in the less cultivated and more fertile western southern states were willing to pay higher wages than could be offered on the east coast (Taylor 1926; pp. 335-336; Woofter 1920, p.35-36). A white South Carolinian remarked that (*De Bow's Review* 1866, p. 441):

> ...the high price of cotton, the capability for remunerative production still existing in the soil, all combine to secure instant and well-paid employment to the freedmen. Already agents from the richlands of the Mississippi offer for free black labor such wages as cannot be had elsewhere.

Emigrant agents furthermore played a role in the migration between 1865 and the mid 1870s in which African Americans from South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi moved westwards to Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas, encouraged by land speculators and railroad companies (Scroggs 1917, p. 1035; Woodson 1918, p. 120). This is supported by newspaper accounts at that time. For example, the *Atlanta Sunday Herald* reports that (8 February 1874, p. 4):

> The hegira westward has again set in, and almost every day greater or less numbers of our black farming population are passing through here and other Georgia cities bound for Louisiana, Arkansas, or other Western States. This tide is to some extent, no doubt, caused by misrepresentations and fair promises of emigrant agents, who ply assiduously their vocation for the pay there is in it. Another reason for the outflow is owing to partial crop failures in some counties of the State, and the slim prospect for finding a support during the coming spring and summer.

Later in the nineteenth century there are also accounts of mining companies and railroads being behind emigrant agent activities. An article in the *Banner-Watchman*, an Athens, Georgia newspaper, explains that the migration of African Americans out of South Carolina (21 December 1886, p. 1):

> ...has been stirred up by strange white men, who represent themselves to be advance ticket agents of railroad company. These men have mingled freely with the negroes and have told them wonderful stories of Arkansas. … many think that they are swindlers. Others say that they are agents getting hands for mines and railroad builders.

Emigrant agents not only helped those who were searching for better job opportunities. Their activities also improved the bargaining powers of African Americans who remained in their home state. By assisting African Americans migrate to take advantage of better employment opportunities, emigrant agents created a labor shortage. One emigrant agent, Robert “Peg Leg” Williams, was well-known and disliked by planters throughout the South. Over a six week period Williams was reported to have “... sent 2,500 negroes out of Greene and Morgan counties [in Georgia] into Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas” (*Pratt City Herald*, 20 January 1900, p. 3).

Williams was so successful in recruiting African Americans from North Carolina that the workers who remained broke contracts and made “unreasonable” demands on their existing employers (Cohen 1991, p. 266). Although Williams agreed not to recruit African American workers on contracts, some of the planters who co-operated with Williams found that their best African American tenants were also leaving or were demanding higher wages and lower rents (Holmes 1980, p. 441).

In Georgia, Hawkins, who was an entrepreneur, lawyer, and banker, wrote in his diary that migration “… has become a matter of deep interest to the people” who wanted to stop emigrant agents from recruiting their workers away. Of particular concern to Hawkins and planters in the area was that labor agents had “enticed away” many who were under contract to work for the year. Some people in the area wanted the emigrant agent’s activities stopped “… for if not impeded the country very soon will be exceeding scarce of labor” (Hawkins 1877, p. 10).

Hawkins’ observations indicated that emigrant agents were not very popular in the South. According to a Georgia newspaper article at that time, Williams’ success as an emigrant agent resulted in him being put in prison “... as a measure of safety, a mob of farmers having threatened his life at Greensboro [North Carolina]” (*Pratt City Herald*, 20 January 1900, p. 3).

2.2.2 Emigrant agent laws

Blaming emigrant agents for the shortage of workers, planters lobbied their State government to restrict the agents' activities, leading from the 1870s to the introduction of emigrant agent laws. Emigrant agent laws can be succinctly summarized as legislated requirements that emigrant agents obtain license and pay the license fee specified in the statute in order to operate.

In 1876, Georgia's legislature introduced similar legislation to Virginia's earlier emigrant agent law, with a license fee set at $100 per county that the emigrant agent wanted to operate in. The legislature increased the fee to $500 per county in 1877 (Bernstein 1998).

Alabama also introduced a license fee of $100 per county for emigrant agents in 1877 and applied it only to Black Belt counties specified in the legislation (Bernstein 1998, p. 795). Between 1879 and 1880, Alabama's legislature increased the license fee to $250 per county and added more counties where emigrant agents were required to hold a license (Bernstein 1998, p. 796). Emigrant agents caught working without a license could be fined and/or imprisoned (Lewis 1989, p. 83).

It is clear from looking at the emigrant agent laws that the legislatures intended to effectively prevent emigrant agents from working in the state by requiring them to pay exorbitant license fees that did not reflect the cost of regulating the occupation. To demonstrate how high these license fees were, Georgia's $500 emigrant agent license fee in 1877, applied to each county the agent wanted to operate in, was more than 2.5 times the national per capita (nominal) income of $194 (Carter and Sutch 2006, p. 3-24).

By defining "emigrant agent" in the legislation, some of these states intended to restrict the activities of that particular occupation while exempting, or not penalizing, other similar occupations not engaged in the activity of recruiting African Americans for employment out of the state. For example, Alabama's law made it clear that its emigrant agent law did not apply to other operators which moved people across the state's borders (Alilunas 1937, p. 153):

> A common carrier, engaged in interstate commerce, in transporting passengers or in employing or transporting laborers to work for it shall not be a labor agent within the meaning of that term as defined in this chapter.

In addition, while emigrant agents were required to pay an annual license fee of $1,000 under section 52 of Georgia's *Tax Annual, No. 515, 1918*, the following section (section 53) imposed a fee of only $25 for all other employment agencies (Alilunas 1937, p. 156). The increase in the emigrant agent fee in 1918 was part of a general strengthening of provisions and broader application of the emigrant agent laws in the early 20th century across the South following a U.S. Supreme Court decision (explained below) and increased migration by African-Americans to the North. (Alilunas 1937; Holmes 1980, p. 448; Weiner 1979, p. 983). According to Alilunas, the emigrant agent laws were continually refined in response to out-migration.

Finally, the prohibitive nature of the emigrant agent laws is further demonstrated by the absence in these laws of standard features of occupational licensing, such as a requirement to demonstrate competency and the establishment of non-governmental licensing board comprising of political appointees and members of the occupation (Kleiner 2002, p. 191).

It is not surprising that emigrant agents operating in various southern states challenged the law in the courts. While in Georgia the challenge was unsuccessful (*Shepperd v County Commissioner* (Georgia, 1877)), in Alabama (*Joseph v Randolph* (Alabama, 1882)) the presiding judge determined that the legislative intent of the emigrant agent law was to prevent workers from leaving the state through an indirect tax on the emigrant agent and, therefore, the law violated the fourteenth amendment of the United States Constitution and was void. Hence, while from 1880 emigrant agents were largely taxed out of existence in Georgia, in Alabama they were permitted to operate without having to pay prohibitive license fees.

In spite of the emigrant agent laws, emigrant agents continued to operate. Alilunas (1937, p. 162) believes that some emigrant agents simply refused to comply, resorting "… to secretive tactics in their process of recruiting Negro labor". Higgs (1977, p. 75) also considers that the law appeared "… to have had little effect beyond driving the agents underground". Unfortunately, neither Alilunas nor Higgs elaborate on how unlicensed emigrant agents operated.

Nevertheless, there is some anecdotal evidence that the laws did lead to agents withdrawing from the occupation. The Appalachian coal company emigrant agent left the profession because it had become too dangerous to work without a license (Lewis 1989, p. 83). During the late 19th century a female emigrant agent, who refused to purchase a license, eventually stopped working after a $50 fine was imposed for working without a license (Holmes 1980, p. 439).

However, in 1900 another challenge to the emigrant agent laws in Georgia by the emigrant agent Williams (*Williams v Fears* (Georgia, 1900)) went to the U.S. Supreme Court where the presiding judge ruled the emigrant agent law taxed only the occupation of hiring laborers for work outside the state, but did not prohibit workers from freely moving about and to enter into contracts. Therefore, the emigrant agent law did not contravene the fourteenth amendment and was legal.

The ruling of the United States Supreme Court in *Williams v Fears* set a precedent for other judges in similar cases. For instance, the presiding judge in *Kendrick v the State* (Alabama, 1904) did not believe he needed to make a judgment on whether the emigrant agent law was in contravention of the United States Constitution as that matter was already determined by the United States Supreme Court in *Williams v Fears*. According to Bernstein (1998, p. 820) and Cohen (1991, p. 238), following Williams' unsuccessful challenge, Alabama as well as Virginia, Florida and North Carolina quickly re-introduced their emigrant agent laws. This suggests that until the precedent set by the Alabama, 1882, court ruling was effectively overturned by a U.S. Supreme Court decision, the state of Alabama was prohibited from having an emigrant agent law, even though it would have preferred one.

2.3 African American Migration

There are two types of papers that have analyzed African American internal migration during this period. The first focuses on modeling the determinants of observed migration and the second attempts to analyze what might have delayed the great migration out of the South.

Previous models of African American internal migration have focused on the contribution of two sets of determinants: economic and political/social. Vickery (1977) estimates a set of standard migration models using Census data between 1900 and 1960, considering economic determinants, such as expected annual earnings and labor market growth, which are found to be significant influences. He does not include variables covering discrimination because of measurement problems and, besides, because it remained largely constant over the sample period and hence cannot explain the changes in African American internal migration.

However, political and social factors have been repeatedly raised, both at the time and in subsequent historical accounts, as leading to migration by African Americans out of the South. In December 1879 the Senate established a committee to investigate the causes of African American migration out of North Carolina and into the northern states. A minority of the committee believed that political persecutions and violence committed against African Americans over a 15-year period had forced them to migrate (Windom and Blair 1919, p. 91). The committee heard testimonies of African Americans that they were arrested, fined and imprisoned for minor offences. In some southern states prisoners were hired out to planters and worked under a system of chain-gangs, overseers and bloodhounds, which brought back memories of slavery and compelled many to leave these states (Windom and Blair 1919, pp. 87-88). This contrasted with the views of the majority, who found that it was northern politicians who had induced the migration for political reasons and that economic and social conditions within North Carolina had not disadvantaged African Americans such as to force them to migrate (Windom and Blair 1919, pp. 58-65).

In addition, Cohen describes some of the violent incidents faced by African Americans in South Carolina and believes that violence encouraged many to migrate to Liberia in Africa. In Edgefield County in 1874 Federal troops were sent to disarm local whites and diffuse tensions between white and African American militias. In 1876 the white rifle club in Edgefield, Aiken and Barnwell counties terrorized African American Republicans to discourage their participation in the 1876 elections (Cohen 1991, pp. 154-55). A year after Federal troops withdrew from the South one per cent of Edgefield County's African American population migrated to Liberia with assistance from the American Colonization Society (Cohen 1991, p. 156).

In Van Deusen's account of the African American exodus to Kansas in the late 1870s, the political disenfranchisement following the return of the Democratic Party to power in the South was a reason offered for the mass migration (Van Deusen, 1936, p. 111-115). In addition, letters to the American Colonization Society, which assisted African American migration out of the United States, revealed that African Americans migrated for various reasons including improvement to their social status, avoiding political oppression and acquiring land (Devlin 1989, p. 94).

There have also been two attempts to empirically analyze the contribution of racial discrimination to African American migration. Frehil-Rowe (1993) analyzes migration flows to Kansas and Nebraska between 1870 and 1890, including controls for distance, agricultural opportunity and tenancy arrangements. Racial repression is measured by African American imprisonment rates but it is found to be an insignificant determinant. Based on descriptive statistics, Tolnay and Beck (1990) suggest a positive correlation between lynching and African American migration, though for a later period. Hence, despite the contemporary discussions of racial discrimination, the literature to date has neither found a statistical relationship with changes in migration or highlighted a particular change that might have caused the great migration.

2.3.1 Reasons for the delay in the migration to the North

The previous literature has focused on both demand side and supply side explanations as to why African Americans did not migrate north until after 1910.

Beginning with the demand side, Cohen (1991) believes the migration of African Americans to the northern states commenced as soon as they were emancipated and more African Americans could have migrated North prior to the 20th century had northern employers been more willing to offer higher wages to African American workers. The Freedmen's Bureau frequently received correspondence from employers in the North looking for workers, but it could not persuade the former slaves to accept these job offers as the wages offered were substantially lower than those offered by employers in the South. For example, African Americans were offered $8 per month and board for work constructing a railroad from Detroit to Lansing (Cohen 1991, pp. 84-85), whereas a North Carolina railroad company offered $20 per month with ration or $1 per day without rations (Cohen 1991, p. 110). Cohen believes that if the northern demand for labor was due to a real shortage of workers, employers would have paid higher wages than those in the South and sent emigrant agents to recruit African Americans from the South (Cohen, 1991, p. 85).

Similarly, Butchart (1980) argues that white northerners feared the influx of African Americans from the South after the Civil War, competing for jobs and driving down wages. Butchart contends that the *Civil Rights Act* of 1866, by improving social and civil conditions in the South, was intended to keep African Americans from migrating North seeking better conditions. In Butchart's opinion, even though northern employers would have utilized African American workers and in spite of the free land and opportunity available in the West, former slaves were encouraged to remain in the South (Butchart 1980, p. 61).

Scroggs (1917, p. 1041) believes that the labor shortage experienced in the North due to World War One provided African Americans with the opportunity to escape the political persecution and violence in the South. Ransom and Sutch (1977, p. 196) also identify a set of possible reasons for the mass migration North, including the United States' involvement in World War One, the reduction in foreign immigration and improvements to inter-regional transportation.

Collins (1997) provides the most systematic treatment of the demand side story. He believes the migration North was delayed due to the high levels of foreign immigration prior to World War One. Foreign immigration deterred African Americans from migrating because of increased competition for high wage manufacturing jobs in the North, which, combined with employers' preference for white foreign workers over African American workers, subsequently reduced the expected wage of potential African American migrants (Collins 1997, p. 617). An empirical analysis of Census data for the northern states from 1870 to 1950 shows an inverse relationship between African American migration and foreign immigration. Collins (1997) also finds a significant and positive relationship between African American migration and variables controlling for economic incentives, like manufacturing, employment growth and the relative wage (Collins 1997, p. 621). From his regressions Collins (1997, pp. 624-625) estimates that in New York state, which received 1.2 million foreign-born migrants between 1900 and 1910, foreign immigration "crowded out" 100,000 potential African American migrants. This contrasts with the 40,000 African Americans who actually migrated to New York in that period.

An early supply side explanation of the timing of the great migration is provided by Ransom and Sutch (1977). They cite the invasion of the boll weevils (1977, p. 196), though Vedder *et al*. (1986) note that this was unlikely to be large enough to explain the scale of the movement north. Vedder *et al.* (1986) and Logan (2009) highlight that the costs and benefits from migration differ between the generation of African Americans who were emancipated and the generations that followed. Based on individual level econometric analysis, Vedder *et al*. (1986), highlight that the earlier generations of southern-born African Americans' preference for the southern environment, especially for the climate, delayed their migration to the North and made migration within the South more attractive. Further, they speculate that those born into slavery did not have the time or resources to become educated and to accumulate wealth and were so grateful for their freedom that they were not "inclined to engage in risky acts of migration" (Vedder *et al*. 1986, p. 228). In contrast, African Americans born in the South after the Civil War had time to gain education and money to migrate. Not experiencing life in bondage, this generation of southern-born African Americans would not have tolerated the poorer economic conditions and the racial discrimination of the South and were more inclined to respond to these factors by migrating (Vedder *et al*. 1986, p. 228). That being said, this still leaves a long gap between emancipation and the great migration.

The results of Logan (2009) are suggestive that poor health and low literacy may have also contributed to the delay in the great migration. He speculates that the great migration was primarily of the first postbellum generation that was in general good health and which featured much greater literacy rates.

2.3.2 Emigrant Agent Laws and the great migration

There is currently very little literature focusing specifically on the role of emigrant agents in African American migration. The only scholarly work addressing this subject matter is by Holmes (1980), who chronicles the mass migration of African Americans from Morgan County, Georgia, between

November 1899 and January 1900, and attributes it to emigrant agents who persuaded African Americans about better working conditions elsewhere and then paid their train fare.

Emigrant agents are, though, mentioned in literature about African American migration. For instance, in discussing the migration of southern African Americans to the central Appalachian coalfields from 1880 to the early 1920s, Lewis (1989) describes the activities of emigrant agents working on behalf of the coal companies. Insights into the profession of emigrant agents and their role in facilitating this migration during the late 19th century is also provided by Cohen (1991) in his detailed account of the geographic mobility of African Americans in the postbellum South. Logan (1956) describes the belief of North Carolina whites that emigrant agents were responsible for the out-migration of their African American population during the late 19th century.[2]

However, the historical literature also highlights that African Americans did not rely solely on emigrant agents to assist in their movement. For instance, African Americans in Georgia's Clarke County held several meetings to discuss emigrating (Holmes 1980, p. 443). In Alabama, an organization of African Americans sent a member "... to visit Kansas, and other parts of the West, for the purpose of examining that country and reporting back ... his views as to the expediency of removing thereto" (Windom and Blair 1919, p. 71).

There have been more studies looking specifically at emigrant agent laws than on emigrant agents themselves. Alilunas (1937), Bernstein (1998) and Roback (1942-43) comprehensively analyze the intent and structure of emigrant agent laws from the various southern states and the legal challenges against these laws. These studies do not specifically address the effect of the emigrant agent laws on the great migration. Though while acknowledging that African American migration within and from the South occurred in spite of emigrant agent laws, Bernstein (1998, pp. 821-822) believes that it reduced the rate of out-migration by raising the cost of migration. In contrast, Alilunas (1937, p. 162) does not believe that emigrant agent laws successfully reduced out-migration, particularly to the North because "… there were other stimuli … in the emigration of the Negro from the South". These stimuli were the press and letters received from family and/or friends who had already migrated to the North.

[2] Marks (1983) discusses emigrant agents and does assign them a role in encouraging migration but her focus is on the post-1910 period (including a brief discussion of a later wave of emigrant agent laws).

3. Model, Data and Identification

In this section we discuss the model, the data and conclude with the assumptions required for identification. Before discussing the model, we note that the nature of the data we use is a panel of population outflows by decade between 1870 and 1910 from Alabama and Georgia to 44 states, the Dakota Territory, the District of Columbia, and Oklahoma (only from 1890). The unit of observation is therefore the destination state by decade.

3.1 Model

We estimate a modified gravity model of internal migration. There is a long history of using gravity models for analyzing migration as well as trade (see Anderson (2011) for a recent general review, Greenwood and Hunt (2003) for more background, and Ashby (2008) for a recent application). In a basic gravity model of migration, gross migration flows are a function of population and distance. Migration is supposed to be positively related to population, but inversely related to distance. Therefore, migration is greatest when the populations of the origin and destination communities are large and the distance between the communities is small (Guest and Cluett 1976, p. 400). In addition, other variables that are likely to affect the decision to migrate are typically included (Greenwood and Hunt 2003, p. 28) in gravity models of migration. The modified gravity model of migration we estimate is based upon the following equation:

$$\frac{Mig_{ijt}}{Pop_{it}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Dist_{ij} + \beta_2 Remp_{ijt} + \beta_3 Rwage_{ijt} + \beta_4 EAlaw_{it} + \beta_5 \frac{FMig_{ijt-1}}{Pop_{it}} + \varepsilon_{ijt} \qquad (1)$$

where Mig_{ijt} is the number of migrants from region i (origin) to region j (destination) at time t, Pop_{it} is the Population in the origin region at time t, $Dist_{ij}$ is the distance between the origin and destination regions, and $Remp_{ijt}$, $Rwage_{ijt}$, $EAlaw_{it}$ and $FMig_{ijt-1}$ are a set of determinants of migration that will be described in more detail below. In sections 3.2.1 and 3.3 we present two further modifications to accommodate the data which yields the final version of the equation to be estimated in section 3.3.

3.2 Data

Table 2 summarizes the definitions and data sources of each of the variables in equation (1). There are 466 observations for both Alabama and Georgia comprising five decades of data for 44 states, the Dakota Territory and the District of Columbia, and three decades of data for Oklahoma, which became a state in 1890 (Thorndale and Dollarhide 1987, p. 277). Because we lose one period to construct the lagged migration variable, the effective sample size is 372. The sample mean, median, standard deviation, maximum and minimum of each variable are given in Table 3. To demonstrate the variation in the data Table 4 reports means for each variable by whether the origin state had an emigrant agent law in place ($EAlaw_{it}$=1) or not and whether the destination state is in the North, South or West.

We now provide more detail on each variable and its construction.

3.2.1 Dependent variable

The dependent variable, Mig_{ijt} /Pop_{it}, in equation (1) is African American gross out-migration from origin *i* to destination *j* in period *t* as a proportion of the origin state's African American population in the same period. Previous empirical studies of African American migration used net migration as the dependent variable (see Collins, 1997; Frehil-Rowe, 1993; and Vickery, 1977). This approach, however, is not appropriate this time because this paper aims to find out whether the state governments which introduced the law succeeded in reducing migration out of these states.

However, we do not observe gross out-migration, Mig_{ijt}, as this data was not collected until 1947. Instead, we use the only available source of migration data which is the United States Census state of birth by state of residence data as compiled from Kuznets and Thomas (1957) and the United States Census Bureau. Specifically, we observe the number of residents in state *i* at time *t* born in state *j*, $FMig_{ijt}$. The problem with this data is that it does not indicate when migrants left their state of birth or when they entered the state of residence; just the number of residents of the destination state originally from the origin state. Therefore, a person who left Alabama for Kentucky in the 1870-1880 intercensal period would always be counted as a migrant from Alabama in subsequent enumerations until the person's death or until the person moved to another state (Lee 1957, p. 58).

Table 2:
Description of variables

Variable	Definition	Measure	Source	Expected sign
Dependent				
FMig	Proportion of the African American population born in Alabama and Georgia, but residing in a state other than Alabama or Georgia (in hundreds)		Table P3 in Lee (1957), *Migration Estimates*	
Explanatory				
REmp	Employment of destination state relative to employment of origin state	$\frac{\text{Number of workers}_{jt}}{\text{Number of workers}_{it}}$	Table L-1 in Miller and Brainerd (1957), *Labor Force Estimates*	+
RWage	Wage of destination state relative to the wage of origin state	$\frac{\text{Average wage}_{jt}}{\text{Average wage}_{it}}$	Table M-2 and M-5 in Easterlin (1957), *Estimates of Manufacturing Activity*	+
Dist	Distance from the centre of the origin state to the centre of the destination state (in miles)			–
EALaw	= 1 in the following Census if emigrant agent law is introduced = 0 otherwise			–

Table 3:
Descriptive statistics for variables

	FMig	REmp	RWage	Dist	EALaw
Mean	0.0030	0.7397	1.5683	1096	0.7500
Median	0.0002	0.5942	1.5174	1018	1.0000
Maximum	0.0599	4.4972	3.4838	2692	1.0000
Minimum	0.0000	0.0149	0.5764	208	0.0000
Std. Dev.	0.0077	0.7511	0.4808	616	0.4336
Share of zero observations	0.34	0	0	0	0.25

Number of observations is 372

Table 4:
Sample Means by Emigrant Agent Law Status and Destination State

	Emigrant Agent Status		Destination State		
	Ealaw=0	Ealaw=1	South	North	West
FMig	0.0031	0.0030	0.0085	0.0004***	0.0002***
REmp	0.84	0.71	0.66	1.27***	0.38***
RWage	1.45	1.61***	1.22	1.55***	1.90***
Dist	1067	1107	538	998***	1687***
NoMig	0.34	0.34	0.10	0.36	0.55
Mig>0	0.0047	0.0045	0.009	0.0006***	0.0005***
Number of Observations	93	279	124	136	112

The first two columns report means for the subsamples, constructed according to emigrant law status. Significance levels of tests of the difference between the means are reported. The last three columns report means for the subsamples constructed according to destination state. Significance levels of tests of difference between the mean for the South and the mean for each of the two other regions are reported. *** denotes 1% significance level.

However, we correct for this problem in the following way. The dependant variable we observe can be thought of as the sum of migrants during the previous intercensal period, Mig_{ijt} and the stock of former migrants that remained in the state i.e. did not pass away or leave the state. If we assume that the stock of migrants declines at a constant rate, δ, then, $FMig_{ijt}$ equals the sum of Mig_{ijt} and

(1-δ)$FMig_{ijt-1}$. After adding $\frac{(1-\delta)FMig_{ijt-1}}{Pop_{it}}$ to both sides we can rewrite equation (1) in a form that can be estimated[3]:

$$\frac{FMig_{ijt}}{Pop_{it}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Dist_{ij} + \beta_2 Remp_{ijt} + \beta_3 Rwage_{ijt} + \beta_4 EAlaw_{it} + \beta_5^* \frac{FMig_{ijt-1}}{Pop_{it}} + \varepsilon_{ijt} \quad (2)$$

where $\beta_5^* = (1-\delta) + \beta_5$ i.e. the sum of the stock effect and any other effects (that we discuss below) of the previous stock of migrants on the migration rate during this period.

Table 3 reports that the typical stock of African American migrants from Alabama or Georgia in a destination is very small, with a median share of 0.02%. Indeed for 34% of observations there is effectively a zero share. Table 4 reports means for subsamples constructed in two different ways. The first two columns of Table 4 compares means between subsamples when there is no emigration agent law and where there is an emigrant agent law and finds no significant difference except for the relative wage. The last three columns compare means for the three regional subsamples. This comparison shows there were higher average stocks in Southern states (0.85%) than in Northern (0.04%) or Western states (0.02%). In addition, the share of observations with zero stocks is much lower amongst Southern states (10%) than Northern (36%) or Western states (55%).

3.2.2 The emigrant agent law

The emigrant agent law variable is the key explanatory variable in this model, as the aim is to investigate the impact of emigrant agent laws on migration out of Alabama and Georgia. Georgia introduced its emigrant agent law in 1876 and Alabama followed suit in 1877. However, a court challenge to Alabama's emigrant agent law in 1882 resulted in the repeal of the legislation. Georgia's emigrant agent law survived the court challenges and was not repealed until the 1940s. However, as discussed earlier, following a U.S. Supreme Court ruling, Alabama was able to reintroduce an emigrant agent law in 1903. Therefore, between 1882 and 1903 out-migration from Alabama is expected to be relatively higher than from Georgia.

To estimate whether migration was affected by legislation, a dummy variable for emigrant agent law (*EALaw*) is included. The emigrant agent law dummy variable takes a value of 1 if the law is in effect in a Census year and 0 otherwise. For example, when Georgia's emigrant agent law was introduced in 1876, a value of 1 will apply to the 1880 Census year. Out of the four periods across the two states

[3] Note the assumption that δ is a parameter could be replaced with that of $FMig_{ijt}$ evolving according to a stationary AR(1) process with suitable assumptions on the error term.

in the data, there are just two periods (1890 and 1900) for Alabama in which there is no emigrant agent law. In 1880 and 1910 there is an emigrant agent law in both states.

As well as affecting the mean migration rates from Alabama and Georgia, emigrant agent laws may have also affected the responsiveness of migrants to wage and employment opportunities. Hence, we also include in our specification, the product of the emigrant agent law dummy and two measures of economic opportunities introduced in the next subsection: *RWage* and *REmp.*

3.2.3 *Economic Determinants*

As the previous literature emphasizes the economic motivations for migration we include two variables to control for the relative attractiveness of the destination state to the origin state. The first variable is a measure of relative employment opportunities, *REmp*, defined as the number of gainfully employed workers in the destination state relative to those in the origin state:

$$REmp_t = \frac{\text{Number of workers}_{\text{jt}}}{\text{Number of workers}_{\text{it}}} \tag{3}$$

Migration is expected to increase the greater the employment opportunities in another state compared to the home state.

Given limited data on employment opportunities, this empirical work is restricted to the number of gainful workers aged 10 and over by state, as reported in the decennial Census and reproduced by Miller and Brainerd (1957). Between the censuses of 1850 and 1930, a "gainful worker" was defined by the Census as a person over a specified age who reports an occupation (Carter and Sutch 2006, p. 2-14). While it is preferable to use a measure which relates job openings to the labor force, such as the job vacancy rate, these types of data are unavailable for the late 19th century or early 20th century (Vedder *et al*. 1986, p. 235). Another disadvantage of the "number of gainful workers" data is that it is not disaggregated by race.

The second measure of economic opportunities is a measure of the relative wage, *RWage*. It is defined as the destination state's average wage per worker relative to the origin state's average wage per worker:

$$RWage_t = \frac{\text{Average wage}_{\text{jt}}}{\text{Average wage}_{\text{it}}} \tag{4}$$

RWage was calculated using Easterlin's (1957) estimates of total wages paid by manufacturing establishments from the decennial census of manufactures. The total wages paid by manufacturing establishments can also be converted into average wage per worker by dividing total wages with Easterlin's estimate of the average number of wage earners in manufacturing establishments by state.

Note that the Census of Manufactures adopted various definitions of manufacturing establishments between 1869 and 1899. It was only from the 1904 Census onwards that manufacturing establishment was restricted to factory establishments. Prior to this, the 1869 to 1899 data included hand trades industries, such as blacksmithing and masonry (Easterlin 1957, p. 640). Even though Easterlin adjusted the data so that they are comparable over time, some industries, for which labor agents recruited, such as mining, are still captured in Easterlin's estimation of wages in manufacturing establishments. However, wages paid by plantations, for which emigrant agents also recruited, were excluded. The other disadvantage of Easterlin's estimates is that they are not disaggregated by race either. A final potential problem is that this estimate does not correct for differences in purchasing power across the regions – though as long as this remains relatively stable destination-origin fixed effects will control for this to some extent.

Table 3 demonstrates that on average the other states are smaller than Alabama or Georgia but pay higher wages. In Table 4, it is shown there is no significant difference in the size of the destination state depending on whether emigration laws were in effect or not but that wages on average were relatively higher. The latter result probably reflects that emigration laws were in effect in the later period of the data when relative wages were relatively greater on average.

Comparing relative employment and wages across regions, it is clear that the Western states are relatively small (38%) but pay on average much greater wages (190%) than in Alabama and Georgia. On average, Northern states are both larger (127%) and also pay higher wages (155%) whereas other Southern states are smaller (66%) but pay larger wages (122%). Hence our data is consistent with the account of the literature. There were substantial economic incentives in the form of higher wages for African Americans to migrate from Alabama and Georgia to elsewhere in the United States. This should be qualified in that these wage rates are for all employees, not just African Americans. However, unless the labor markets for African Americans were completely disengaged from other labor markets, these numbers should still be informative.

3.2.4 Political Determinants

The previous literature suggests political and cultural factors that may have also encouraged migration from the South. We did construct a relative “repression” variable similar to that used by Frehil-Rowe (1993) but found that small numbers of migrants in the Northern and Western states led to much higher relative imprisonment rates in these regions than in Alabama and Georgia. This suggests that this variable was not capturing relative repressiveness. Furthermore the previous literature also suggests that these features probably did not change substantially over our sample period. Hence, instead we treat the political determinants as unobservable and include them in the model as fixed effects.

3.2.5 Distance and Lagged Migration

Most empirical investigations of migration incorporate distance as an explanatory variable (see Frehil-Rowe, 1993; Vedder *et al*., 1986; and Vickery, 1977). Distance serves as a proxy for the transportation, psychic and information costs of migration due to the lack of more appropriate data. Information on passenger transportation costs for the late 19th and early 20th century is non-existent or difficult and time consuming to find and collate (Vickery 1977, p. 97), and the psychic cost associated with migration is hard to quantify (Sjaastad 1962, p. 85, Vickery 1977, p. 97). Though evidence discussed and presented in Kollmann (2011) showing quite distinct destinations for African American migrants depending on the region of origin within the South (e.g. more migration from the South Atlantic to New York City compared with Chicago) confirms its importance for our analysis.

Previous empirical research on African American migration in the postbellum South has measured distance differently. Frehil-Rowe (1993, p. 82) measures distance in miles from the centre of the origin state to the centre of Kansas and Nebraska, which are the destination states in her model. Vedder *et al*. (1986, p. 225) measures distance using the straight-line method from the centre of the origin state to the centre of the destination state “except where an obvious population center existed, in which case that city was used”. Vickery uses highway mileage between centers of African American population in each state to measure distance (1977, p. 96).

Therefore, consistent with previous empirical work on African American migration, distance (*Dist*), expressed in miles, will be measured from the centre of Alabama and Georgia to the centre of each destination state.

In Table 3, the average distance in miles is nearly 1100 miles. In Table 4, the average distance to the destination states varies across the three regions, with the lowest distances in the South, then the North and then the West.

In relation to the role of information in migration, people are more likely to migrate to areas about which they have some information than to areas about which they have received little or no information. Information about a certain locality can be obtained from families or friends who have migrated there reducing the psychic and transportation costs of migrating and thereby encouraging more migration e.g. Vickery, 1977; Collins, 1997 and Chay and Munshi, 2012). Also, the presence of friends and family in the receiving locality may mean temporary accommodation and an easier social transition (Greenwood 1975, p. 405). Hence many migration models have also included lagged migration or the stock of lagged migration as an explanatory variable. Although we also include this variable, as noted in section 3.2.1, the interpretation of its coefficient must also allow for its role in correcting a measurement problem.

3.3 Identification and Estimation Strategies

First we consider the exogeneity of the emigrant agent law variable. Unfortunately we have no contemporary accounts of the case which saw the law over turned. However, there are two sets of reasons why we are treating this variable as exogenous. First, there are no obvious economic reasons that would suggest that the courts in Georgia would rule differently on an appeal to the courts in Alabama. Second, when the validity of the emigrant agent law was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Williams vs Fears*, Alabama quickly reinstated its emigrant agent law. This suggests that was it not for the precedent set by the Alabama court, Alabama would have quickly reinstated an emigrant agent law much earlier. Finally, endogeneity between the dependent variable and the emigrant agent law dummy variable is also not considered an issue because the emigrant agent law in any given state is likely to be influenced by total net migration, rather than by disaggregated state-by-state gross out-migration (as a proportion of the state's African American population) to each of the other 45 states, which is the dependent variable.

Next we consider the other explanatory variables. *REmp* and *RWage* are the main variables that are potentially jointly determined with *FMig*. However, we use total employment and average wages across all manufacturing employees, African American and white. Hence the contribution of the stock of African American migrants from a single state in determining the average wage or total employment is almost always going to be small. As an example, 64 per cent of the African American population in Illinois in 1900 was born in another state, but only 4.5 per cent were born in Alabama. The share of Alabaman African Americans of all employees, white and African American, in Illinois is so small that it is unlikely to have had a detectable influence on relative wages or total employment in a particular period.

In case, though, there are common unobservable changes that affect migration, such as changes in transportation or communication costs, we include time dummies in all specifications.

To control for different relative political conditions and other factors constant over time in the destination and origin states, we also include destination-origin fixed effects, ω_{ij}. In this specification the effect of distance cannot be separately identified from the fixed effects:

$$\frac{FMig_{ijt}}{Pop_{it}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Remp_{ijt} + \beta_2 Rwage_{ijt} + \beta_5 EAlaw_{it} + \beta_4^* \frac{FMig_{ijt-1}}{Pop_{it}} + \beta_5 Remp_{ijt} * EAlaw_{it} + \beta_6 Rwage_{ijt} * EAlaw_{it} + \sum_{t=1890}^{1910} \beta_t D_t + \omega_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ijt} \quad (5)$$

Because of the large number of zero observations for the dependent variable, we also estimate a Tobit version of equation (5):[4]

$$\frac{FMig_{ijt}}{Pop_{it}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Remp_{ijt} + \beta_2 Rwage_{ijt} + \beta_3 EAlaw_{it} + \beta_4^* \frac{FMig_{ijt-1}}{Pop_{it}} + \beta_5 Remp_{ijt} * EAlaw_{it} + \beta_6 Rwage_{ijt} * EAlaw_{it} + \beta_7 Dist_{ij} + \beta_8 Dist_{ij}^2 + \sum_{t=1890}^{1910} \beta_t D_t + \varepsilon_{ijt} \quad (6)$$

We cannot include the fixed effects in the Tobit but we can include both the linear and squared terms of distance. To the extent distance varies systematically with the unobservable determinants that are constant over time, distance also controls for these. Note because of potential cross-correlations in the error terms, we use robust standard errors in hypothesis testing.

4. Results

The results from estimating equations (5) and (6) are reported in Table 5. Judged by the significant *F*-statistics and the high R^2 statistics, the OLS results appear to be satisfactory. However, the only significant explanatory variables are lagged migration and, in the without destination-origin FE specification, the distance variables. The coefficients on the distance variables imply a U-shaped relationship between distance and migration. Checking which destinations are to the right of the turning points reveals they are all Rocky Mountain and Pacific states. There was generally very little migration to the Rocky Mountain states or the Pacific Northwest so the upward slope seems to have

[4] Note that some of the zeros result from rounding down in the original data source (Lee 1957).

been driven by California. During the early period, California probably benefitted from lower transport costs (by water, compared with land). The coefficients on lagged migration suggest substantial persistence. The coefficients on the other explanatory variables are not significantly different from zero and their signs are not always consistent with theory. The one exception is that the coefficients on the interaction terms are both negative, though generally not even close to being significant.

The results from the Tobit are more appealing. Similarly to the OLS results, the coefficients of the lagged migration and distance variables are significantly different from zero. This time, however, the slope coefficients of the two economic incentive variables, *REmp* and *RWage*, are both positive and, in the case of *REmp*, also significant. On the other hand, the emigrant agent law dummy variable is still insignificant, both on its own and in interaction with *REmp* and *RWage*. The final column reports marginal effects for the Tobit model, i.e. for the subsample for which expected migration is positive. These marginal effect estimates are consistent with the corresponding coefficients, although the effect of *RWage* is now significantly positive.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the coefficient on and marginal effect of the 1910 dummy is significantly positive for the Tobit. This suggests that migration was starting to increase between 1900 and 1910, which is before the effects of some of the explanations for the timing of the Great Migration took place, e.g. before restrictions were placed on migration from Europe.

Table 6 reports the OLS FE and Tobit results when equations (5) and (6) are estimated using the subsamples of the Southern and Northern/Western states. In both cases the goodness of fit and overall significance of the regressions remain satisfactory for both subsamples. Compared to the results from the whole sample, there are some differences. Lagged migration remains highly significant but the coefficients tend to be larger for the North/West than the South. Distance again has a U-shaped relationship with migration. In the South the two coefficients are jointly significant. However, all states are located to the left of the turning point, suggesting over the relevant range, that migration falls with distance. For the North/West, although each coefficient is individually significantly different from zero at the 10% level, the two coefficients are jointly statistically insignificant. The marginal effect of distance although is negative and statistically significant from zero.

For the South, there is a significantly negative marginal effect of relative employment on migration rates, where the migration rates are positive. This probably reflects that migration is flowing to the smaller southwestern states. The coefficient on the emigrant agent law dummy is positive but not statistically significant; and although the interaction terms have the right sign, they are not statistically significant either. For the Tobit, the overall marginal effect of the emigrant agent law is negative but statistically insignificant.[5]

For the North/West the marginal effect of distance is significant and negative as expected. The economic incentive variables, in the Tobit, have mainly positive coefficients and marginal effects. For *REmp* both the coefficients and marginal effects are statistically significant. The coefficient on the emigrant agent law dummy is negative but insignificant. For three out of the four interaction variables, the signs are unexpectedly positive but none of them are significantly different from zero.

The pattern of the year dummies is quite different across the regions. In the South the estimates suggest migration was significantly lower for 1890 compared with the other years. For the North/West, migration is always significantly higher in 1900 and 1910. This suggests that the significant positive effect is coming from the North/West rather than the South and, again, earlier than consistent with the explanations advanced in previous literature.

Finally, in Table 7 we report the average marginal effects of the economic variables from the origin-destination Fixed Effects and Tobit models. For both regressions we calculate the average marginal effect across the observations when the predicted migration rate is positive and for the two groups of observations, based on whether the emigrant agent law was in place or not. For the Tobit model, we report not only the effect on migration rates but also on the probability that we observe migration between the origin and destination states.

First, we consider the results from the regressions using all observations. There is some evidence that restricting emigrant agents may have had some effect on reducing migration in response to wage and employment differences. The first regularity to note is that, in nearly all cases, the marginal effect for the set of observations when the emigrant agent law is not in place is greater than that for when the emigrant agent law is in place. Although the differences are not large, they are nevertheless there consistently for the Tobit model.

Looking at the regions, for the South the only significant effects are for employment and these report that the migration flow is less responsive to employment differences if the emigrant agent

[5] Note for the Tobit that all marginal effects included the effects of all interaction variables e.g. that for distance allows for the quadratic term.

law is in effect, and that the probability of migrating to a region in response to an employment difference is smaller when the emigrant agent law is in effect. While some of this may reflect that migration in the South tended to be to the smaller southwestern states, this doesn’t explain why this differs by emigrant agent law status.

For the North/West, the marginal effects on the economic incentive variables are all statistically significantly positive for the Tobit model. However, in all cases, these are larger when the EALAW is in place than when it is not, though, again the differences are not large.

To summarise, there is not strong evidence that imposing the emigrant agent laws had immediate effects on migration. The most that can be said is that it appears to have reduced the responsiveness of migration from Georgia and Alabama to wage and employment differences within the South. This could reflect several factors. First, it may have been the case that emigrant agents were not that important for generating large flows of migrants. Most of the anecdotes involve agents gathering groups of workers for specific projects but it is possible most migration was individuals or families moving to search for general work. So even though emigrant agents were prohibited, this did not deter migration. The great migration was delayed due to demand and supply conditions. The result that migration began to significantly increase by 1910 provides more support for the supply based explanation than the demand side. Second, it may have been that migration agents were important but scaled back their activities in order not to provoke further legislative action. So although the laws were not in effect, the threat of further laws may have effectively deterred emigrant agents from acting on a large scale in Alabama during the 1890s and 1900s. Without more detailed information about the operations of emigrant agents it is probably not possible to distinguish between these two hypotheses.

Table 5:
OLS and Tobit estimates of out-migration

	OLS		Tobit	
Variables	Without Fixed Effects	With Fixed Effects	Coefficient	Marginal Effect
Constant	0.0019**	0.0004	0.0019*	
	(0.0008)	(0.0012)	(0.0010)	
REmp	-0.0001	0.0012	0.0004**	0.0002***
	(0.0001)	(0.0011)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)
RWage	0.0003	-0.0001	0.0009	0.0002*
	(0.0004)	(0.0006)	(0.0006)	(0.0001)
EALaw	0.0006	0.0016	0.0007	-0.00003
	(0.0009)	(0.0013)	(0.0012)	(0.0002)
EALaw*Remp	-0.00008	-0.0001	-0.00005	
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	
EALaw*Rwage	-0.0004	-0.0009	-0.0005	
	(0.0005)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	
Dist	-0.0003***	–	-0.0006***	-0.0002***
	(0.00006)	–	(0.0001)	(0.00003)
Distsq	0.000009***	–	0.00002***	
	(0.000002)	–	(0.000003)	
Lag migration	0.8492***	0.6329***	0.8500***	0.4134***
	(0.0484)	(0.1282)	(0.0468)	(0.0172)
1890	-0.0005	-0.0006**	-0.0006	-0.0003
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0004)	(0.0002)
1900	0.0002	0.0002	0.0006	0.0003
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0004)	(0.0002)
1910	0.0001	-0.0001	0.0007*	0.0003*
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0004)	(0.0002)
Observations	372	372	372	
R-squared	0.9413	0.9105		
F-statistic	103.40***	10.23***	45.61***	

Note: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels.
Note: Marginal effect for Tobit is the effect on the migration rate, given the expected migration rate is positive.

Table 6:
OLS and Tobit estimates of out-migration: by region

Variables	South			North and West		
	Fixed Effects	Tobit		Fixed effects	Tobit	
		Coefficents	Marginal Effects		Coefficients	Marginal Effects
Constant	0.0019	0.0036		0.00001	-0.0001	
	(0.0055)	(0.0030)		(0.0002)	(0.0002)	
REmp	0.0032	-0.0003	-0.0017*	0.0003	0.0001**	0.00007***
	(0.0058)	(0.0014)	(0.0009)	(0.0002)	(0.00004)	(0.00001)
RWage	-0.0011	0.0011	-0.0004	-0.0001	0.0001	0.00003
	(0.0024)	(0.0016)	(0.0006)	(0.00005)	(0.0001)	(0.00003)
EALaw = 1	0.0052	0.0040	-0.0002	0.00001	-0.0001	0.00001
	(0.0038)	(0.0030)	(0.0005)	(0.00001)	(0.0002)	(0.00003)
EALaw*Remp	-0.0018	-0.0025		0.00001	0.00005	
	(0.0015)	(0.0017)		(0.00003)	(0.00006)	
EALaw*Rwage	-0.0027	-0.0022		-0.00003	0.00002	
	(0.0023)	(0.0016)		(0.00005)	(0.0001)	
Dist	–	-0.0010**	-0.0005***	–	-0.00005*	-0.00001***
	–	(0.0005)	(0.0001)	–	(0.00002)	(0.000005)
Distsq	–	0.00004		–	0.000001*	
	–	(0.00004)		–	(0.000001)	
Lag migration	0.6253***	0.8644***	0.6529***	0.8148***	1.1380***	0.5622***
	(0.1724)	(0.0508)	(0.0278)	(0.2756)	(0.0838)	(0.0424)
1890	-0.0013**	-0.0016*	-0.0012*	-0.00006	0.00002	0.00001
	(0.0006)	(0.0010)	(0.0007)	(0.00005)	(0.00007)	(0.00003)
1900	0.0003	0.0006	0.0005	0.00012**	0.00023***	0.0001***
	(0.0011)	(0.0009)	(0.0007)	(0.00005)	(0.00007)	(0.00003)
1910	-0.0007	0.0003	0.0002	0.00014***	0.00023***	0.0001***
	(0.0012)	(0.0009)	(0.0007)	(0.00004)	(0.00007)	(0.00003)
Observations	124	124	124	248	248	248
R-squared	0.8934			0.7489		
F-Statistic	13.19***	84.07***		10.73***	44.45***	

Note: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels.

Table 7:
Average Marginal Effects by Model and Emigration Law Status

	Fixed Effects	Tobit ME(MIG>0)	Tobit (PR)
All: Employment			
EALAW=0	0.00012	0.000204**	0.0506***
	(0.0011)	(0.000072)	(0.0148)
EALAW=1	0.00011	0.000192***	0.0456***
	(0.0013)	(0.000066)	(0.0151)
All: Real Wage			
EALAW=0	-0.00014	-0.000005	0.1022
	(0.00065)	(0.00016)	(0.0653)
EALAW=1	-0.00010	-0.000032	0.0464
	(0.00048)	(0.00017)	(0.0364)
South: Employment			
EALAW=0	0.0032	-0.00022	-0.0205
	(0.0058)	(0.00096)	(0.0870)
EALAW=1	0.0014	-0.0022**	-0.1752**
	(0.0059)	(0.0011)	(0.0785)
South: Real Wage			
EALAW=0	-0.0011	0.0008	0.0730
	(0.0024)	(0.0011)	(0.0980)
EALAW=1	-0.0038*	-0.0008	-0.0655
	(0.0021)	(0.0006)	(0.0437)
North: Employment			
EALAW=0	0.000299	0.0000497**	0.0903***
	(0.000199)	(0.0000196)	(0.0281)
EALAW=1	0.000309	0.0000761***	0.1279***
	(0.000217)	(0.0000177)	(0.0288)
North: Real Wage			
EALAW=0	-0.0000868*	0.00003	0.0559
	(0.00005)	(0.00006)	(0.1044)
EALAW=1	-0.00011*	0.00004	0.0711
	(0.000059)	(0.00003)	(0.0517)

Note: Tobit ME (MIG>0) reports the marginal effects if expected migration is positive. Tobit (PR) reports the marginal effects on the probability of observing any migration.
Note: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels.

5. Conclusion

After the Civil War, a new occupation surfaced in the South: that of the emigrant agent. Planters, railroad companies and mining companies contracted with emigrant agents to hire African American workers on their behalf. Emigrant agents did not have much difficulty finding African Americans who were willing to move away from their home. Illiterate and poor, many African Americans were easily persuaded by accounts of better economic and social conditions in other parts of the United States. Based on the anecdotal accounts, emigrant agents were very successful in recruiting African American workers for their clients.

Their success angered many in the white communities from which African Americans had been recruited. Planters, who no longer had control over a captive labor force after the Civil War and whose interests were most adversely affected by emigrant agent activities, lobbied their state government to take action against emigrant agents. The receptive state governments responded by enacting legislation intended to deter emigrant agents from operating in their states. The emigrant agents appealed against the laws. In Georgia, they were unsuccessful whereas in Alabama the appeals were successful enabling them to operate for about twenty years; until 1903, when a Supreme Court decision finally established the constitutionality of the emigrant agent laws.

The different outcomes of the court cases in Georgia and Alabama create a natural experiment with which to provide the first estimates of the effect of the emigrant agent laws on migration and to assess whether they contributed to the delay in the great migration out of the South. This explanation complements earlier work on the delay to the great migration which focusses on changes in demand and supply conditions (Vedder et al, 1986; Collins, 1997 and Logan, 2009). We estimate a modified gravity model of African American out-migration from Alabama and Georgia from 1880 to 1910. While we fail to find any significant direct effect of the emigrant agent laws, there is some evidence that migration within the South was more responsive to economic differences when there were no emigration agent laws.

One interpretation of this result is that although the emigrant agent laws were not in place in Alabama, nevertheless individual agents were deterred from operating on a larger scale for fear of provoking another attempt to drive them out of business. An alternative interpretation of the empirical result is that while emigrant agents were needed to co-ordinate large groups required for specific projects, the sort of general widespread migration did not need emigrant agents. Interviews with former slaves interviewed for the Federal Writers' Project demonstrate the resourcefulness of former slaves willing to take advantage of better opportunities offered in faraway places (Rawick

1941, vol. 4, p. 300). The combination of demand and supply conditions instead deterred migration before the early twentieth century.

These results suggest that small changes to emigrant agent laws would have been unlikely to result in a much earlier great migration. However, our results are only informative of the effects of small scale changes in emigrant agent laws. If emigrant agents had instead been free to operate right across the South without (the threat of) other sanctions they may have had a greater effect. The finding of a significant increase in migration before 1920 suggests that the great migration was beginning then, which is more consistent with the supply side explanations of the delay to the Great Migration than with the demand side ones.

Acknowledgements

This paper builds on the Masters thesis of Khayen Prentice at La Trobe University. She is grateful for the comments of her other supervisors, John King and Gary Magee. We are also appreciative for comments from Trevor Kollmann and from the participants of a seminar at La Trobe University

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