Theories of migration

Ernesto F. L. Amaral

January 29, 2018
Migration (SOCI 647)

TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY.

Definition of migration
(Lee 1966)

- Migration is defined broadly as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence

- No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act

- No distinction is made between external and internal migration

- Every act of migration involves an origin, a destination, and an intervening set of obstacles
  - Distance is always present as an intervening obstacle
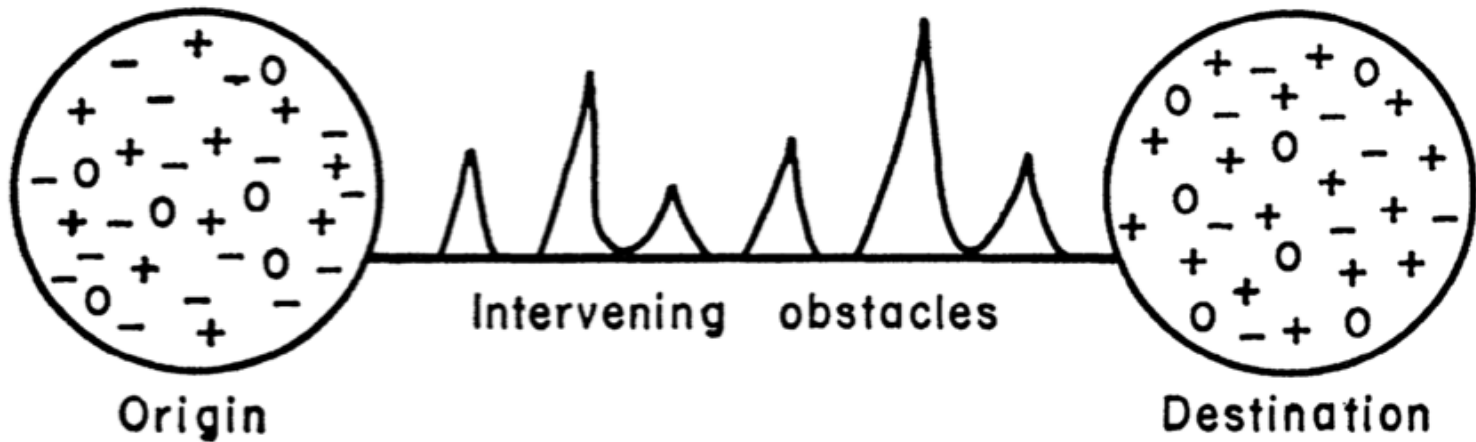
Factors in the act of migration
(Lee 1966)

- Factors associated with the area of origin

- Factors associated with the area of destination

- Intervening obstacles

- Personal factors

CHART I

ORIGIN AND DESTINATION FACTORS AND INTERVENING OBSTACLES IN MIGRATION

Intervening obstacles

Origin

Destination

See text for explanation

Source: Lee (1966).

Volume of migration
(Lee 1966)

- Volume of migration within a given territory varies with the degree of diversity of areas included in that territory

- Volume of migration varies with the diversity of people

- Volume of migration is related to the difficulty of surmounting the intervening obstacles

- Volume of migration varies with fluctuations in the economy

- Unless severe checks are imposed, both volume and rate of migration tend to increase with time

- Volume and rate of migration vary with the state of progress in a country or area

Stream and counterstream

(Lee 1966)

- Migration tends to take place largely within well defined streams

- For every major migration stream, a counterstream develops

- The efficiency of the stream is high if the major factors in the development of a migration stream were negative factors at origin

- The efficiency of stream and counterstream tends to be low if origin and destination are similar

- The efficiency of migration streams will be high if the intervening obstacles are great

- The efficiency of a migration stream varies with economic conditions, being high in prosperous times and low in times of depression

Characteristics of migrants
(Lee 1966)

- Migration is selective

- Migrants responding primarily to plus factors at destination tend to be positively selected

- Migrants responding primarily to minus factors at origin tend to be negatively selected

- Taking all migrants together, selection tends to be bimodal (positively and negatively selected)

- The degree of positive selection increases with the difficulty of the intervening obstacles

- The heightened propensity to migrate at certain stages of the life cycle is important in the selection of migrants

- The characteristics of migrants tend to be intermediate between the characteristics of the population at origin and the population at destination

Why do people migrate?

(de Haas 2010)

- Migration is a complex process
  - It is unrealistic that one theory can explain and predict all migration events
  - However, migration is not a chaotic or unpredictable process
- Researchers have to identify regularities
- Truisms do not contribute to a better understanding of real-world migration processes
  - E.g. "most people move out of desire to improve their wellbeing" is too universal and meaningless

Conceptual frameworks

(de Haas 2010)

- Goal is to is to find a medium level of generalization

- Theory should deal with the complexity and diversity of specific aspects of real-world migration processes
  - Without going down a sterile path of relativism and exceptionalism

- Utilize review of migration theories to elaborate coherent conceptual frameworks

Conceptual frameworks
(de Haas 2010)

- Suggestion is to develop a spatio-temporal and dynamic theoretical framework on migration transitions

- This framework would explain why

  - Human and economic development is generally associated to higher overall levels of migration and mobility

  - Relation between levels of development and levels of migration is fundamentally non-linear

  - Societies typically go through migration transitions, a universal sequence of macro-level migration events

Regional spatial-economic equilibrium

- The study of migration determinants dates back to classical economic development theory

    - Migration is considered to be a mechanism that establishes regional spatial-economic equilibrium (Ravenstein 1885, 1889)

- Migrants move from low income to high-income areas

    - From densely to sparsely populated areas

- Population streams are expected to occur between the poorest and wealthiest places and countries

Push-pull factors

- Migration decisions are determined by "push" and "pull" factors in areas of origin and destination (Greenwood et al. 1991; Lee 1966; Passaris 1989)

  - Intervening obstacles: distance, physical barriers, immigration laws...

  - Personal factors: age, sex, marital status, school, SES, job...

  - Economic, environmental, and demographic factors

- Although there are limitations in regards to the "push-pull" models, this concept is still popular in migration literature (de Haas 2007, 2010; McDowell and de Haan 1997)

Limitations of push-pull model

- Static model

  - It does not specify how migration affects initial structural conditions

- Essentially descriptive

  - Post-hoc device to explain migration

- Factors are generally mirrored in origin and destination areas

- Tendency to single out macro-level variables as causal migration determinants

  - But confound them with individual motives

Neo-classical migration theory

- Neo-classical economic theory sees migration primarily as a function of geographical differences in the relatively scarcity of labor

  - Rural-urban migration continues as long as expected urban income exceeds rural income (Todaro 1969, 1980; Harris, Todaro 1970)

- Migration causes labor to become less scarce at the destination and scarcer at the origin

  - This process of "factor price equalization" will result in growing convergence between wages at the sending and receiving areas

Structure and agency

- **Structure** is a pattern of social relations, which tend to severely constrain the individuals' action

  – But neo-classical and push-pull theories see structure as the simple aggregate of individual behaviors

- **Agency** is the ability of social actors to make independent choices and to impose those on the world

  – But neo-classical and push-pull theories reduce individuals to atoms passively reacting to macro push-pull forces

New economics of labor migration

- NELM argues that most migration in developing countries can only be understood as a **household** rather than individual decision

  - Migration decision generates income diversification (e.g., remittances) rather than maximization

  - It is a conscious attempt to overcome (**agency**) failing markets and socio-economic inequalities (**structure**)

- NELM is a **micro-level** theory applied to particular forms of migration

  - It is not able to explain long-term global migration patterns and trends and how these are connected to broader development processes

Spatio-temporal migration theories

- Spatio-temporal transition migration theories define migration as a constituent part of broader development processes

- These processes are associated with

  – Modernization

  – Capitalist economic development

  – Urbanization

  – Demographic transitions

Development and migration

- Development processes tend to coincide with generally increased levels of migration and overall mobility

- As they develop, societies typically go through migration transitions

  - Pattern of initially increasing and subsequently decreasing emigration

  - Gradual transformation from net emigration to net immigration countries

Temporal and spatial models

Table 1. The conceptual links between temporal and spatial migration models

	THE TEMPORAL DIMENSION — DEMOGRAPHIC AND VITAL TRANSITONS			THE SPATIAL DIMENSION — REGIONALISATION	
Stages of the demographic transition model	Vital transition (Zelinsky)	Mobility transition (Zelinsky)	World systems theory	Development tiers (Skeldon)
High stationary (high fertility and mortality, roughly in balance, little natural increase if any.	**Pre-modern traditional society** (pre-industrial)	Mobility mainly limited to circular migration	**External areas** (e.g., many sub-Saharan African countries, parts of central Asia and Latin America)	**Resource niche**, with variable, often weaker forms of migration.
Early expanding (Rapid decline in mortality due to improvements in food supply, sanitation and health care and education; but no corresponding fall in birth rates leading to major population growth)	**Early transitional society** (urbanising / industrialising developing country)	All forms of mobility (circular, rural colonisation frontiers, internal rural-urban, international) increase	**Periphery** (e.g., Morocco, Egypt, Mexico)	**Labour frontier**, dominated by emigration and internal centralisation
Late expanding (major decline in fertility due to access to contraception, economic growth, wage increases, urbanization, increase in the status and education of women, increases in investment in childrens' education, value change and other social changes → Population growth begins to level off, significant but decelerating natural increase	**Late transitional society** (mature industrial country)	International migration decreases, rural-to-urban internal migration stagnates but remains at high levels, circular movements increase and grow in structural complexity, towards the end of phase the 'rural exodus' decreases	**Semi-periphery** (e.g., eastern China, South-Africa, eastern Europe, Turkey)	**Expanding core**, co-existence of immigration and emigration and internal centralisation (i.e., urbanisation and rural-to-urban migration);
Low stationary (fertility and mortality stabilised at low levels, slight population increase if any)	**Advanced society** (post-industrial society)	Residential mobility, urban-to-urban and circular migration increase, transformation from emigration to net immigration countries immigration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers	**Core areas** (e.g., Western Europe, North America, Japan, NICs)	**Old and new core countries** characterised by immigration and internal decentralisation;
Declining? (continuing low fertility and mortality; birth rates may drop below replacement level leading to shrinking population)	A future **"superadvanced" society**	Most internal migration is urban-urban and residential, immigration of labourers continues.	**? (Core)**	**Old/Declining core (?)**

Source: de Haas (2010).

Migration hump and transition

- **Migration hump** theory refers to more **short-term** increases in migration in the wake of trade reforms and policy-induced contextual changes

- **Migration transition** applies for **long-term** changes in migration trends in response to more structural development trends

Functionalist and structuralism

- Structuralism (neo-Marxist, center-periphery) criticizes functionalist theory (neo-classical, push-pull)

  - Functionalist assumes socioeconomic forces tend towards equilibrium through migration

  - Structuralism sees a general pattern of disruptions, dislocations, and migrations intrinsic to capitalism

- However, they share these assumptions

  - More development leads to less emigration

  - Higher development differences across areas (spatial disequilibrium) leads to more migration

Capabilities and aspirations

- Migration theory should include structural constraints and independent choices (agency)

- We can incorporate notions of structure and agency in migration theory by conceptualizing migration at the micro-level as a function of...

  - **Migration capabilities**: individuals mobilize human, social, and material capital in order to migrate

  - **Migration aspirations** for personal, social, economic, and political opportunities, which vary for different people, based on their education, information, and social networks
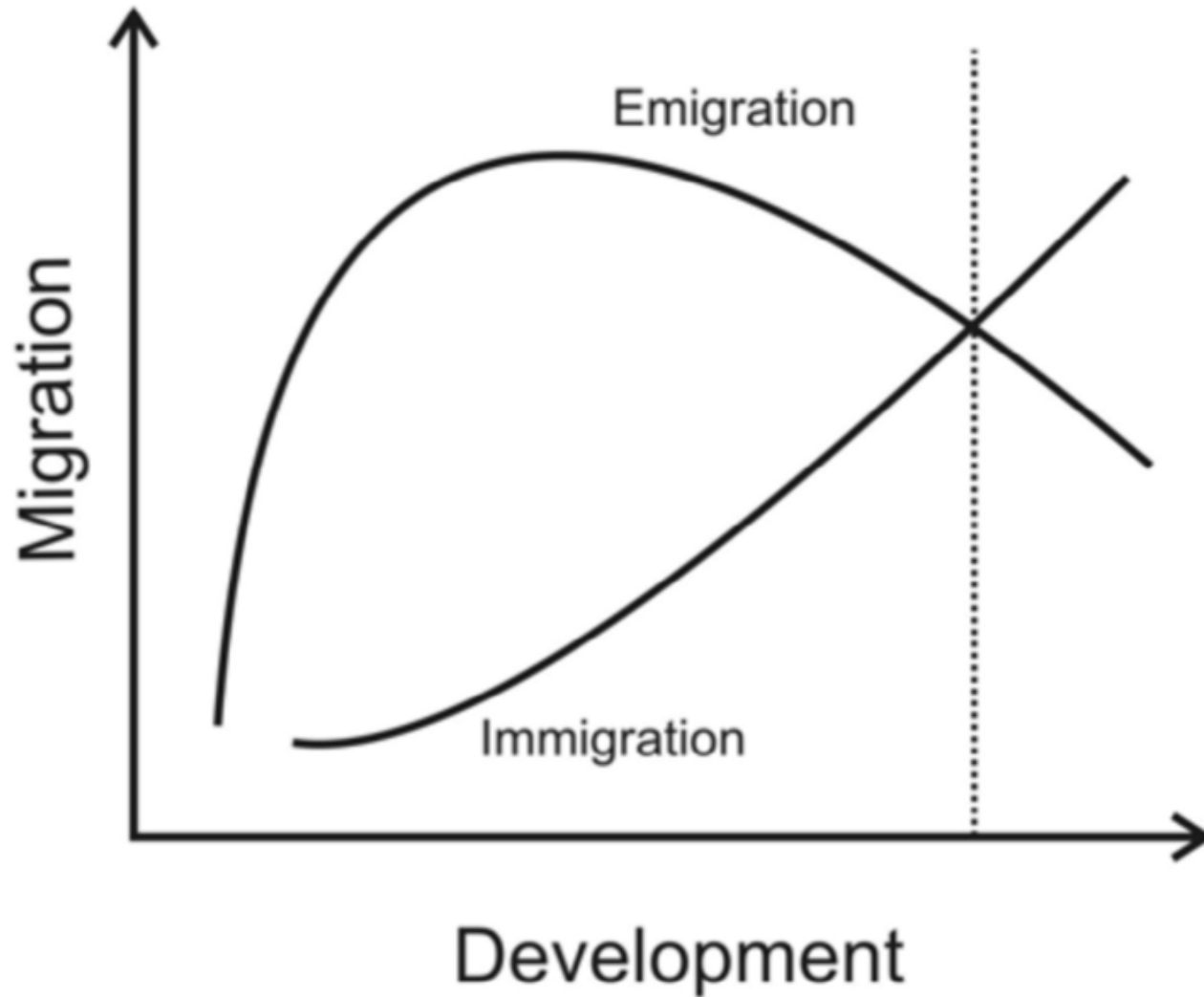
Hypothesized effect of human development on migration capabilities and aspirations

Migration aspirations
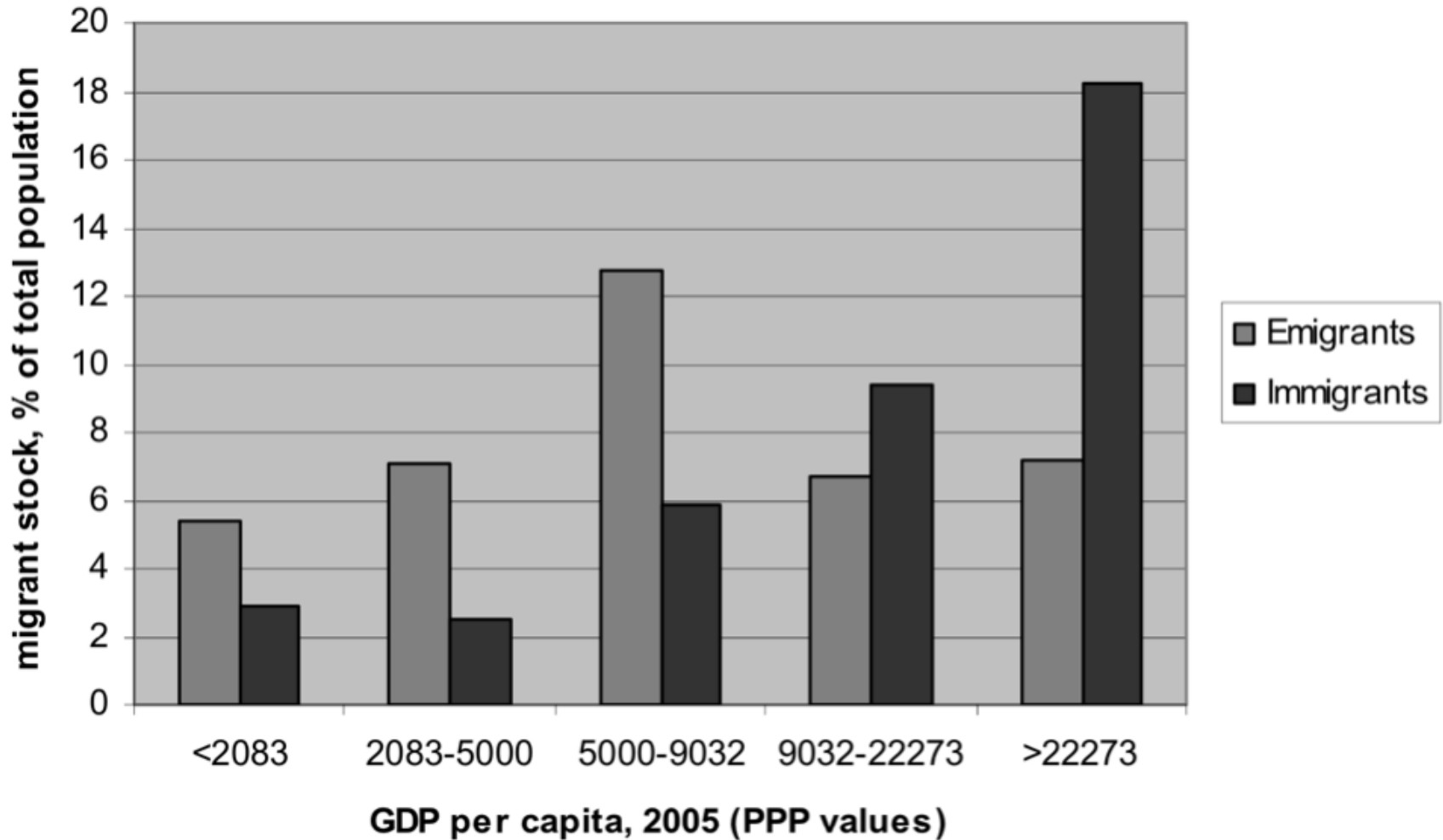
Migration capabilities

Development

Source: de Haas (2010).

23
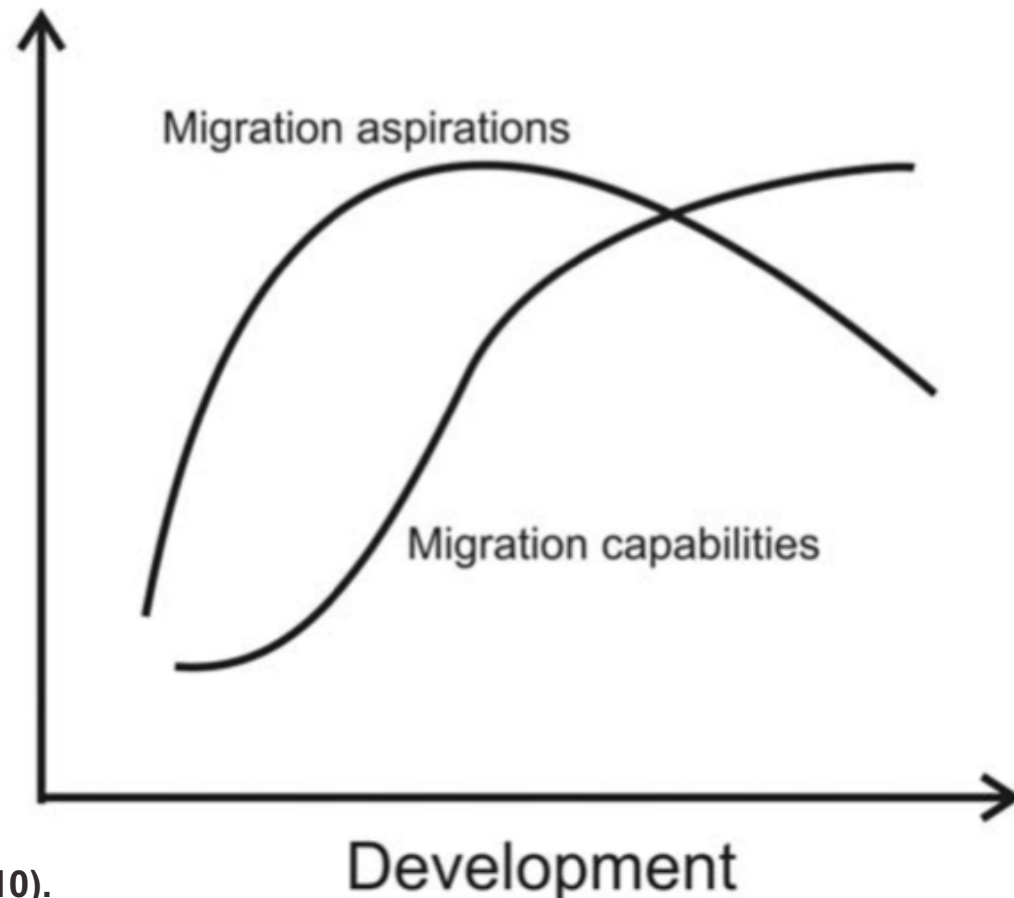
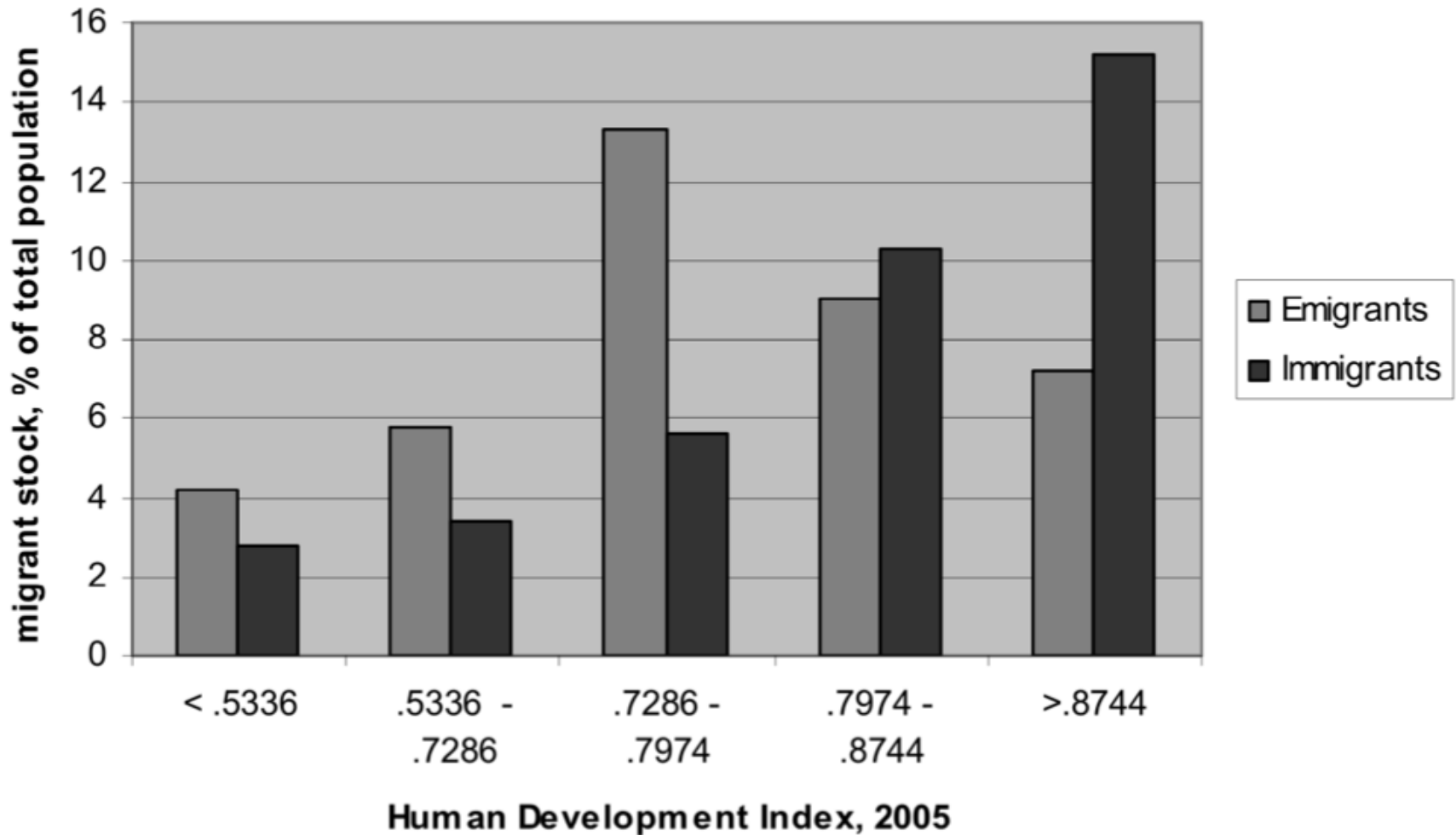# Migration transition theory

Migrant stock by GDP per capita

Source: de Haas (2010).

Migrant stock by HDI scores

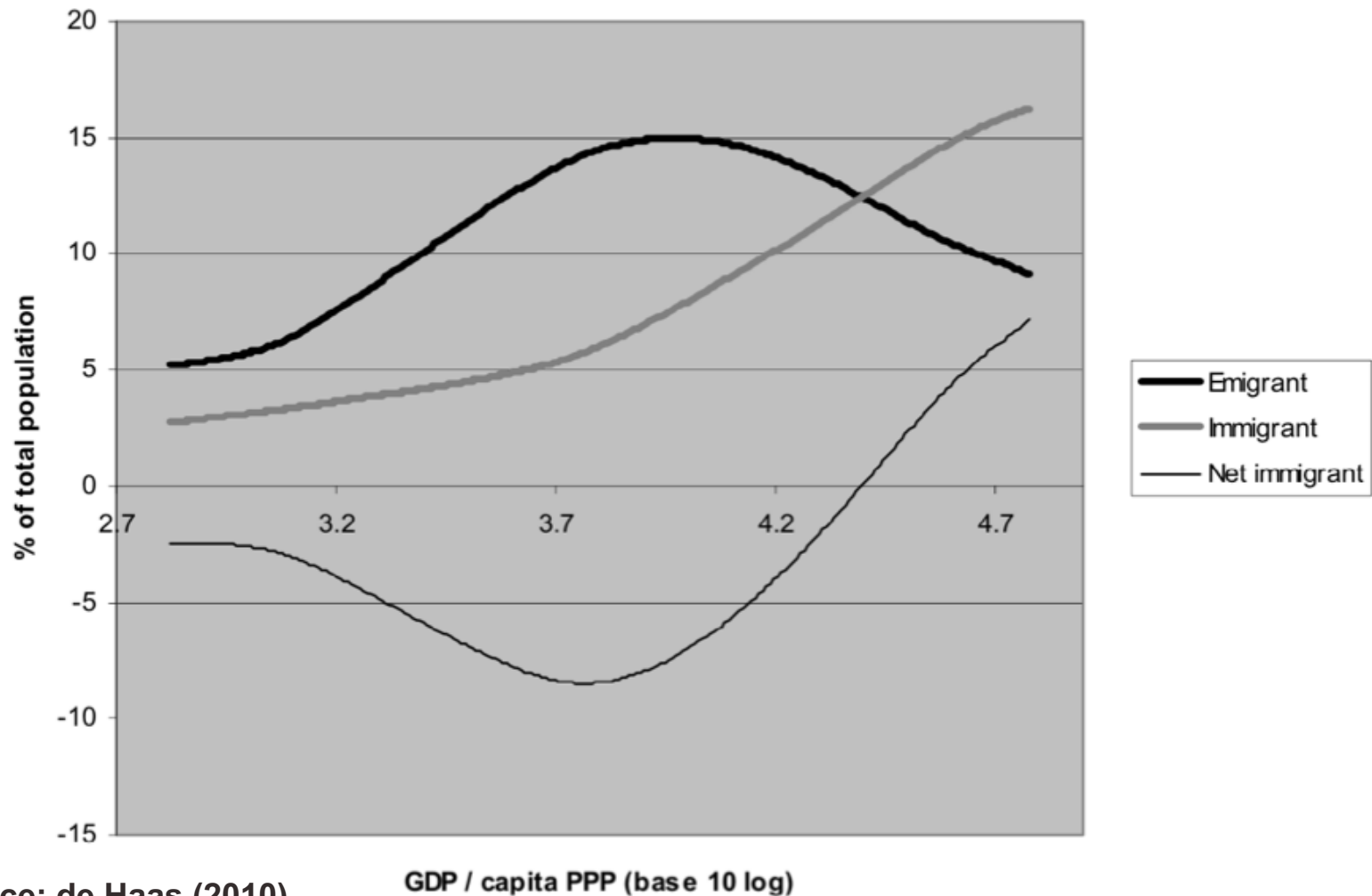**Source: de Haas (2010).**

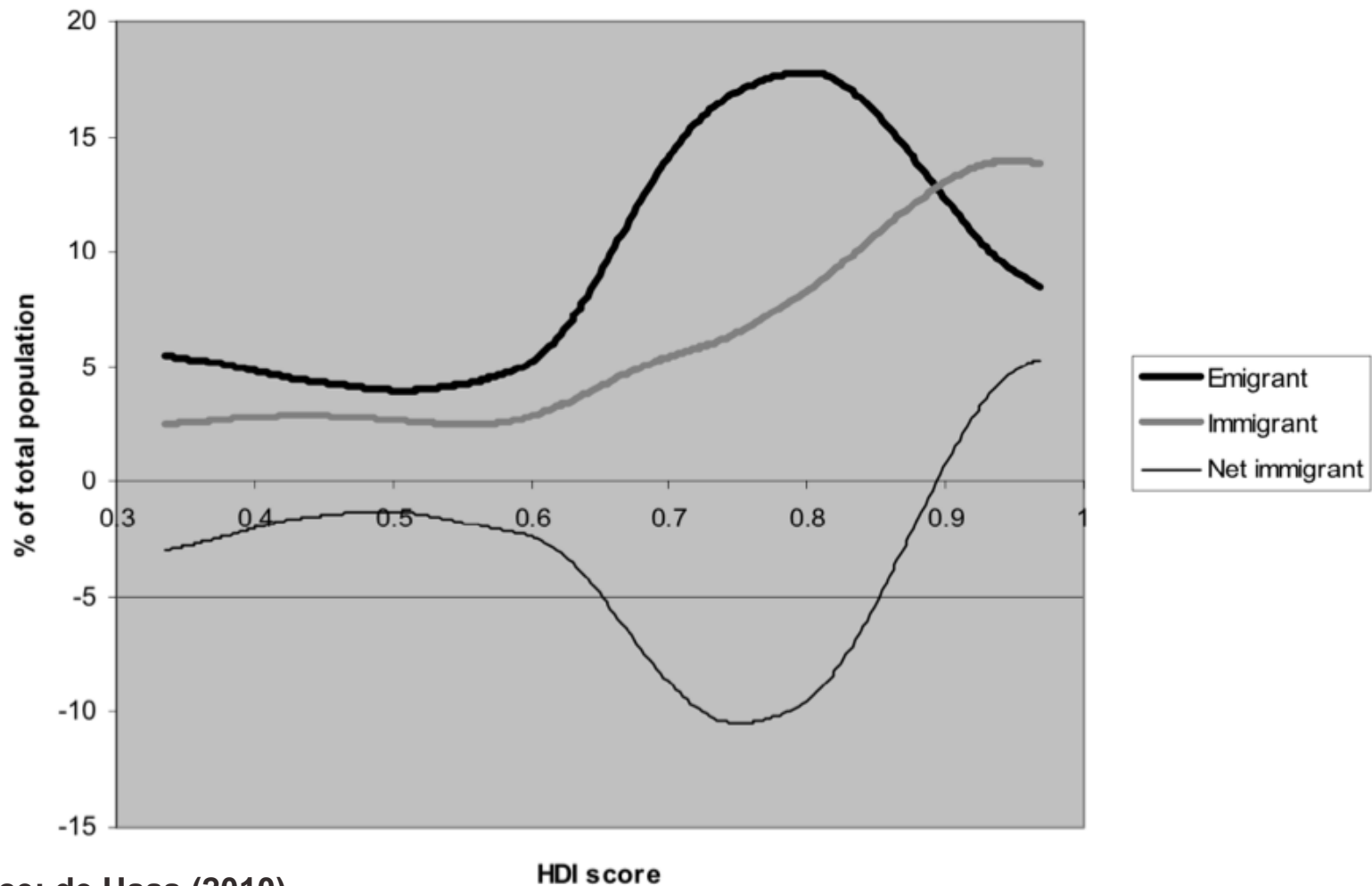# Non-parametric estimates of migration and GDP
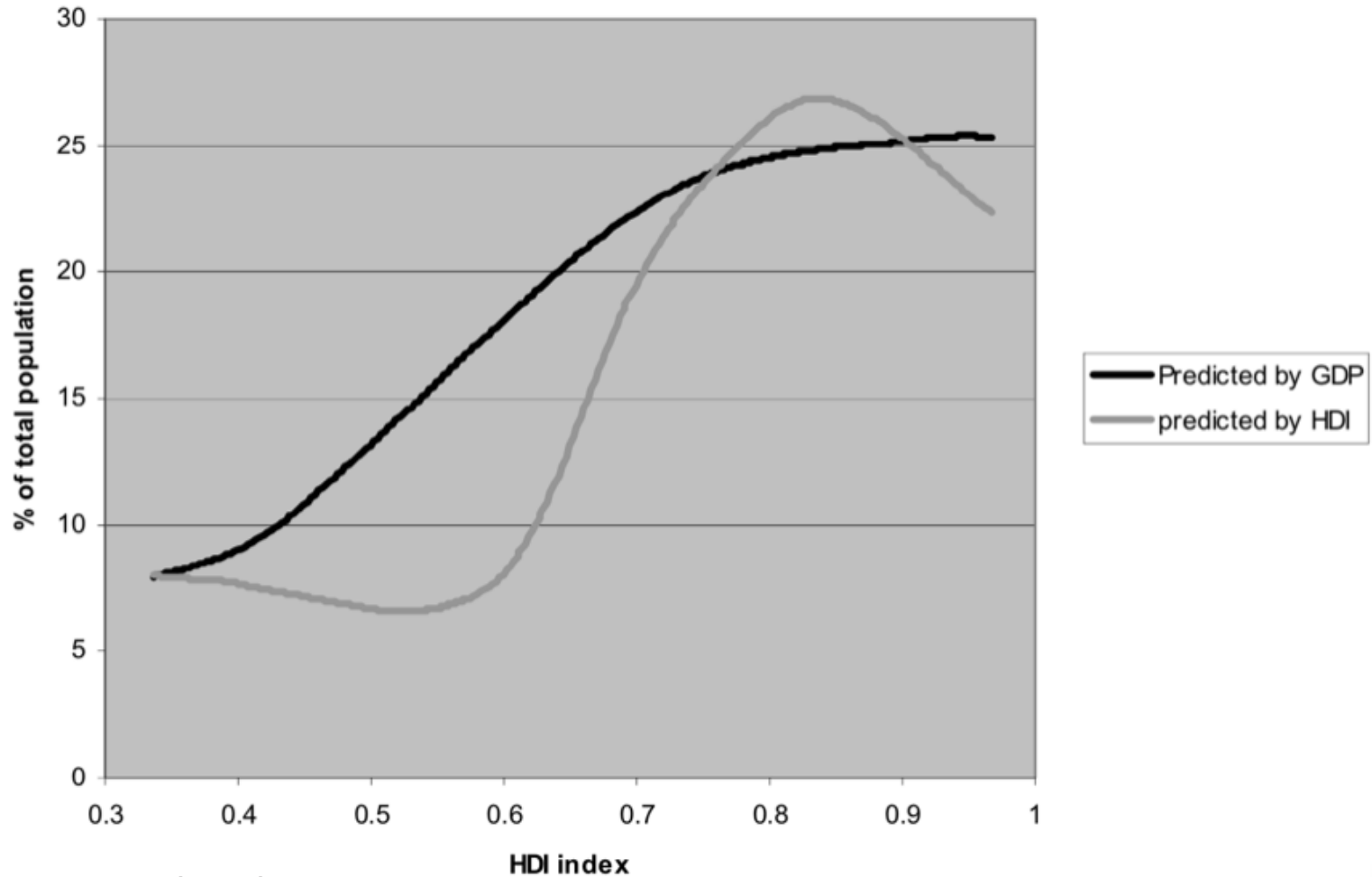

Source: de Haas (2010).

Non-parametric estimates of migration and HDI

Source: de Haas (2010).

Non-parametric estimates of total mobility with GDP and HDI

Source: de Haas (2010).

Regression: emigrant stocks

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Emigrant stock in % of origin country population				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
(Constant)	62.41***	-85.02	-17.39	-20.05	53.75***
Ln GDP/cap(PPP)	0.61	35.20***	27.24**	30.15***	
Ln GDP/cap(PPP)SQ		-2.02***	-1.77***	-1.93***	
GDP growth (20 years)			0.48	0.49	0.34
HDI					115.50***
HDI Squared					-94.20***
Fertility			-2.15**	-1.40	-2.11**
Literacy			0.03	-0.52*	
Literacy SQ				0.00*	
Ln Population	-2.48***	-2.22***	-3.18***	-2.94***	-3.25***
Ln Land surface	-1.42**	-1.51**	-1.23*	-1.42**	-1.09*
Lack of political rights	-0.52	-0.78	-0.67	-0.70	-0.56
N	195	195	179	179	176
R^2 adjusted	0.375	0.407	0.433	0.441	0.417

*** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

Source: de Haas (2010).

Regression: immigrant stocks

	Dependent variable: Immigrant stock in % of receiving country population				
Independent variables	1	2	3	4	5
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
(Constant)	-20.60**	173.11***	66.45*	76.82**	29.71**
Ln GDP/cap(PPP)	5.90***	-39.54***	-24.14***	-19.36**	
Ln GDP/cap(PPP)SQ		2.65***	1.89***	1.42***	
GDP growth (20 years)			-1.13***	-0.88***	-0.75**
HDI					-93.21***
HDI Squared					92.80***
Fertility			2.32***	1.20	0.71
Literacy			0.04	-0.38*	
Literacy SQ				0.00*	
Ln Population	-1.12	-1.45**	-0.17	0.12	-0.20
Ln Land surface	-1.03*	-0.91*	-0.91*	-1.06**	-0.87**
Lack of political rights	1.90***	2.25***	1.85***	1.20***	1.20***
Petrol state				22.50***	25.04***
N	195	195	179	179	176
Adjusted R^2	0.336	0.407	0.427	0.530	0.498

*** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

Source: de Haas (2010).

Regression: net immigrant stocks

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Net migrant stock in % of country population (emigrant-immigrant stock)				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
(Constant)	-83.01***	258.13***	83.84	94.83	-23.41
Ln GDP/cap(PPP)	5.29***	-74.73***	-51.38***	-49.95***	
Ln GDP/cap(PPP)SQ		4.67***	3.66***	3.41***	
GDP growth (20 years)			-1.61***	-1.41***	-1.08**
HDI					-207.53***
HDI Squared					185.04***
Fertility			4.47***	2.87**	2.71**
Literacy			0.01	0.15	
Literacy SQ			0.00		
Ln Population	1.36	0.78	3.00***	3.04***	3.07***
Ln Land surface	0.39	0.60	0.32	0.36	0.21
Lack of political rights	2.42***	3.03***	2.51***	2.00***	1.73***
Petrol state				18.77***	26.32***
N	195	195	179	179	176
Adjusted R^2	0.138	0.258	0.450	0.473	0.421

*** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

Source: de Haas (2010).

Regression: total mobility

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Total mobile population in % of country population (emigrant + immigrant stock)				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
(Constant)	41.81***	88.09	40.19	56.22**	57.42***
Ln GDP/cap(PPP)	6.52***	-4.34	5.24***	5.26***	
Ln GDP/cap(PPP)SQ		0.63			
GDP growth (20 years)			-0.68	-0.61	-0.60
HDI					47.10***
Fertility			0.16	1.49	0.56
Literacy			0.07	-0.87**	
Literacy SQ				0.01**	
Ln Population	-3.59***	-3.67***	-3.34***	-2.97***	-3.68***
Ln Land surface	-2.45***	-2.42***	-2.14***	-2.45***	-1.85**
Lack of political rights	1.38**	1.46**	1.16*	1.14*	1.21*
N	195	195	179	179	176
Adjusted R^2	0.492	0.491	0.419	0.434	0.469

*** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

Source: de Haas (2010).

Standardized beta coefficients

Independent variables	Standardized Beta					
	Emigrant stock	Emigrant stock	Immigrant stock	Immigrant stock	Net immigrant stock	Net immigrant stock
Log GDP/cap(PPP)	2.42**		-2.02**		-3.36***	
Log GDP/cap(PPP)SQ	-2.68***		2.56***		3.96***	
GDP growth (20 years)	0.07	0.05	-0.17***	-0.15**	-0.18***	-0.14**
HDI		1.36***		-1.42***		-2.04***
HDI squared		-1.53***		1.93***		2.50***
Fertility	-0.19	-0.28**	0.21	0.12	0.32**	0.30**
Literacy	-0.73		-0.68*		0.17	
Literacy SQ	0.85*		0.80*		-0.19	
lnpop2000	-0.39***	-0.43***	0.02	-0.03	0.33***	0.34***
Inland	-0.23**	-0.18*	-0.22**	-0.18**	0.05	0.03**
Lack of political rights	-0.10	-0.08	0.23***	0.23***	0.25***	0.21***
Petrol state			0.39***	0.44***	0.21***	0.30***
Adjusted R^2	0.441	0.417	0.530	0.498	0.473	0.421

*** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

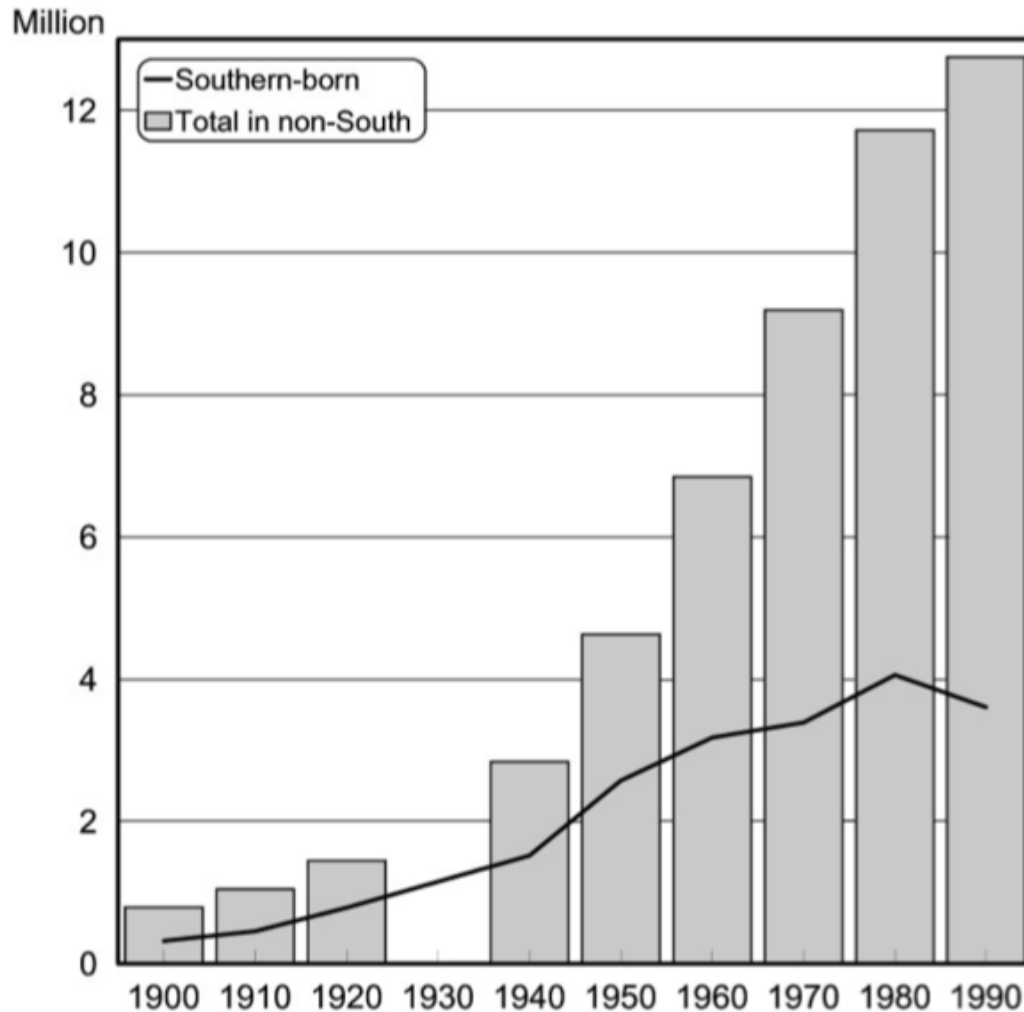**Source: de Haas (2010).**

African American Great Migration

(Tolnay 2003)

- African American Great Migration from the South to the North happened during the 20th century

- African Americans were seeking better socioeconomic opportunities for their families

- This migration contributed to social, economic, demographic, and cultural transformations in northern cities
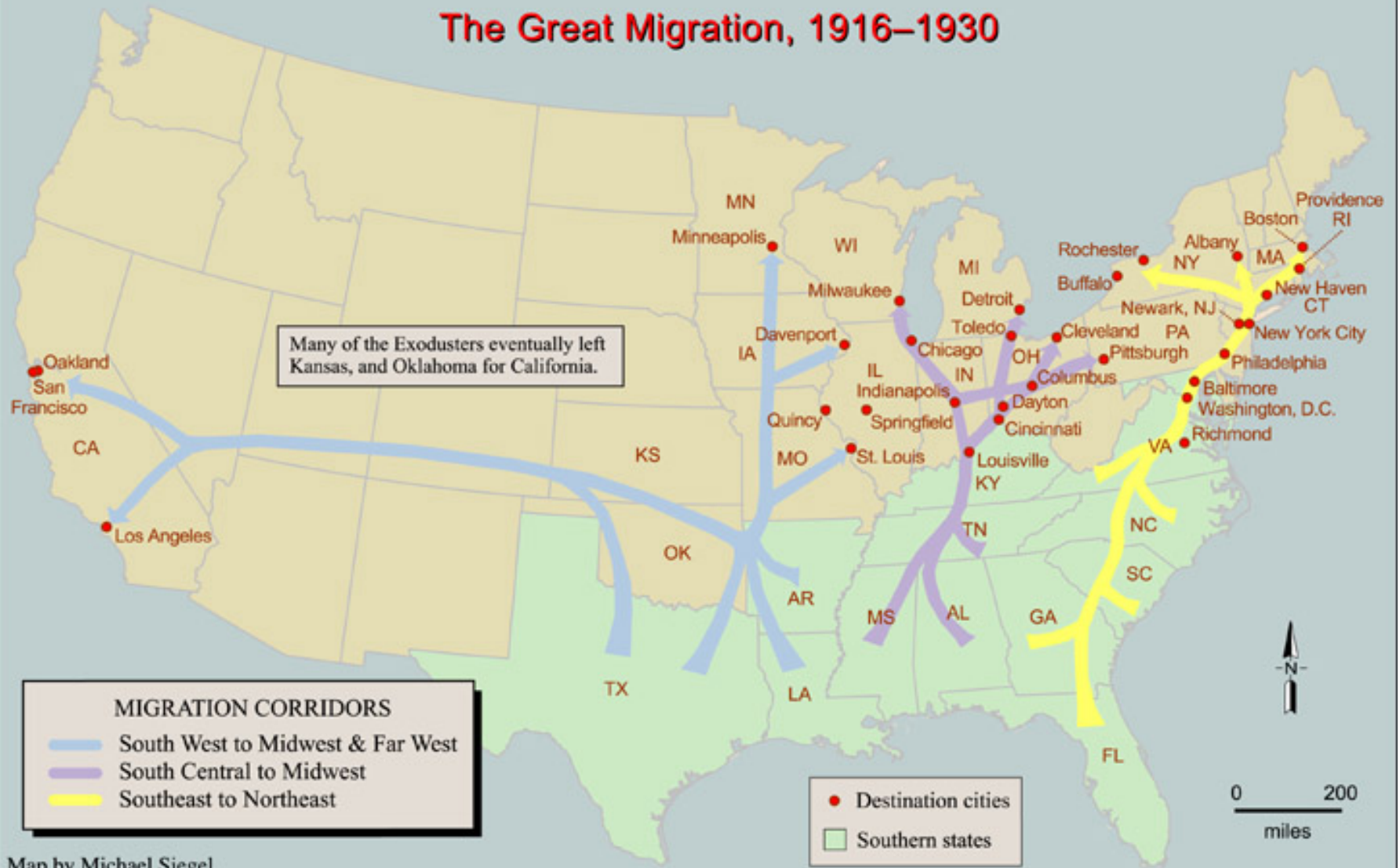
African Americans in nonsouthern areas

Source: Tolnay (2003).

The Great Migration, 1916–1930

Many of the Exodusters eventually left Kansas, and Oklahoma for California.

MIGRATION CORRIDORS
South West to Midwest & Far West
South Central to Midwest
Southeast to Northeast

Destination cities
Southern states

Map by Michael Siegel
Rutgers Cartography 2005

Source: "The Atlas of African-American History and Politics"

The Second Great Migration, 1940–1970

MAJOR MIGRATION CORRIDORS
- South West to Midwest & Far West
- South Central to Midwest
- Southeast to Northeast

- Destination cities
- Southern states

0 — 200 miles

Map by Michael Siegel
Rutgers Cartography 2005

Source: "The Atlas of African-American History and Politics"

Racial and ethnicity hierarchy
(Tolnay 2003)

- Whites also moved to the North in large numbers between 1910 and 1970

- However, whites did not experience disadvantaged positions as blacks in the South

- Segregation and concentration of poverty in the growing northern ghettos, limited residential mobility of African Americans

- This historical process has to be understood in order to further investigate black migration and mobility
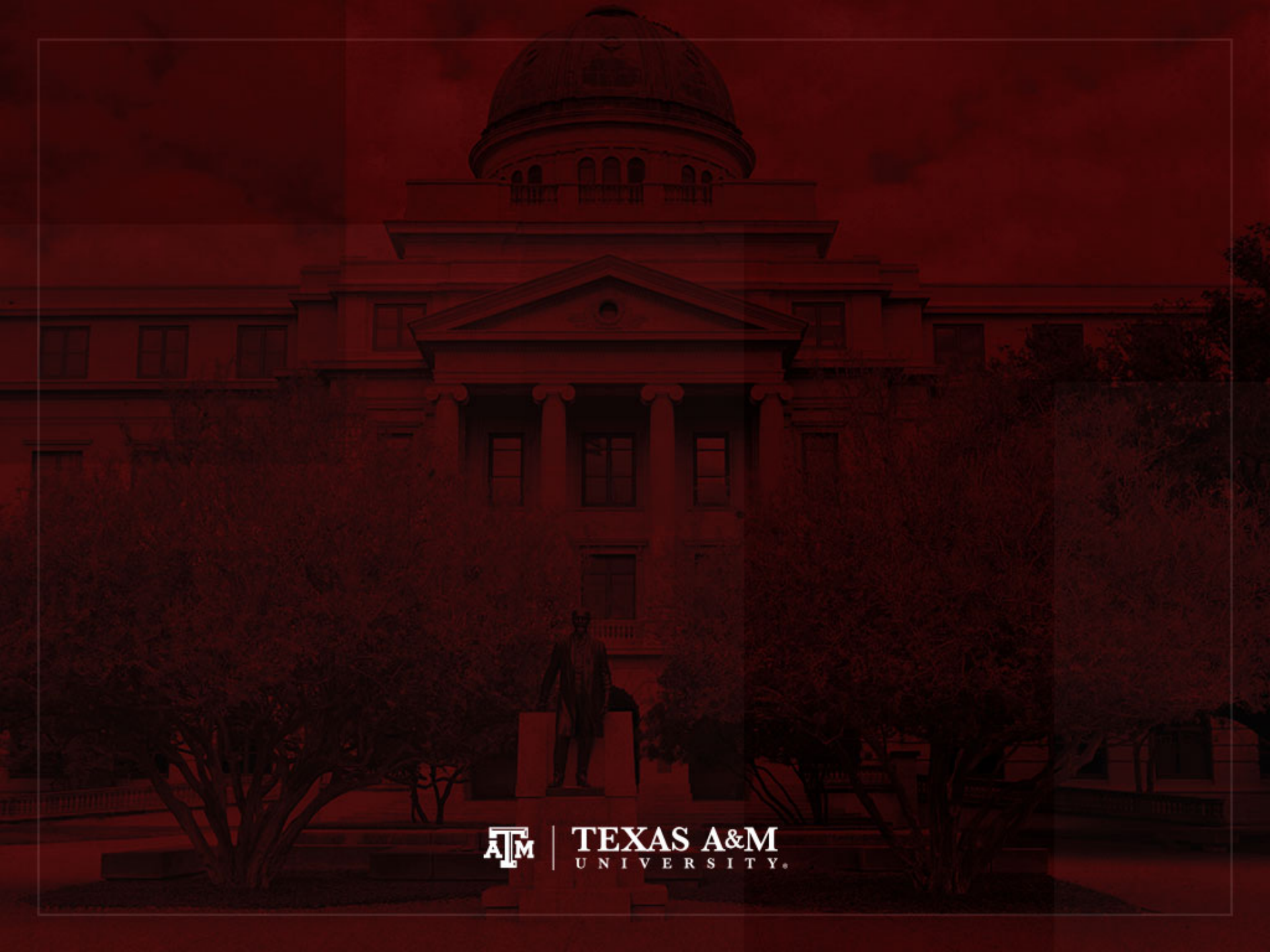
Post-Great Migration

(Tolnay 2003)

- After the Great Migration, changes contributed to the desire by black inner-city residents to relocate to the suburbs and to better neighborhoods within the North

- Cross-generational familial and cultural connections contributed for blacks returning to the South

- Only after changes took place in the South, towards socioeconomic and political equality for blacks, return migration became attractive

References

de Haas H. 2007. The Myth of Invasion: Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union. Oxford: International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

de Haas H. 2010. "Migration transitions: A theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration." IMI Working Paper, 24, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

Greenwood MJ, Hunt GL, Rickman DS, Treyz GI. 1991. "Migration, regional equilibrium, and the estimation of compensating differentials." American Economic Review, 81(5): 1382-1390.

Harris JR, Todaro MP. 1970. "Migration, unemployment and development: A two-sector analysis." The American Economic Review, 60(1): 126-142.

Lee ES. 1966. "A theory of migration." Demography, 3: 47–57.

McDowell C, de Haan A. 1997. "Migration and sustainable livelihoods: A critical review of the literature." Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Working Paper 65.

McNeil W. 1984. "Human migration in historical perspective." Population and Development Review 10: 1–18.

Passaris C. 1989. "Immigration and the evolution of economic-theory." International Migration, 27(4): 525-542.

Ravenstein EG. 1885. "The laws of migration." Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 48: 167-227.

Ravenstein EG. 1889. "The laws of migration." Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 52: 214-301.

Todaro MP. 1969. "A model of labor migration and urban unemployment in less developed countries." The American Economic Review, 59 (1):138-148.

Todaro MP. 1980. "Internal migration in developing countries: A survey." In Population and Economic Change in Developing Countries, edited by Richard A. Easterlin, 361–402. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tolnay S. 2003. "The African American 'Great Migration' and beyond." Annual Review of Sociology, 29: 209–232.