



FIG. 1.—Incarceration rate and racial disparity in incarceration in northern and southern states, 1880–1950. Racial disparity is measured as the quotient of the nonwhite and white incarceration rates. The nonwhite incarceration rate of northern and southern states rose relative to a stagnant white incarceration rate, leading racial disparity to increase steadily over the period. Years include 1880, 1890, 1904, 1910, 1923, 1940, and 1950. Northern states include Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Southern states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. SOURCES: U.S. Department of the Interior (1895, table 4), U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor (1907, table 2), U.S. Department of Commerce (1914*b*, table 3; 1926, table 139; 1943, table 12; 1955, table 36), and Gibson and Jung (2002).

of the North. Finally, I use macro- and microdata to evaluate the mechanisms proposed to explain this effect.

## DECOMPOSING RACIAL DISPARITY IN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

Between 1870 and 1950 the U.S. South lost an estimated 3.2 million nonwhite residents, most to cities in the North. Table 1 shows the estimated net migration of native nonwhites (hereafter “nonwhites”), native whites, and foreign whites in northern and southern Great Migration states. Non-