

From Immigrants to Americans: Race and Assimilation during the Great Migration

By Vasiliki Fouka, Soumyajit Mazumder, & Marco Tabellini

Dylan Baker

December 3, 2024

- Historical Context
 - In the early 20th century, many European immigrants were culturally distant from native born Americans and faced discrimination.
 - The Great Migration was a period of mass migration of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North in the US from 1910-1970.
- Academic Context
 -

Analytical Technique

- DiD: Compares change in Black population across MSAs within region

$$Y_{inrt} = \underbrace{\alpha_n}_{\text{MSA FE}} + \underbrace{(\delta_r \times \gamma_t)_{rt}}_{\text{Time} \times \text{Region FE}} + \beta_1 \underbrace{B_{nt}}_{\substack{\text{Black Pop} \\ \text{in } n \text{ at } t}} + \beta_2 \underbrace{\text{Pop}_{nt}}_{\substack{\text{Total Pop} \\ \text{in } n \text{ at } t}} + \underbrace{\mathbf{X}'_{int}}_{\text{Individual controls}} \Gamma + u_{inrt}$$

- Shift-Share Instrument for Black Population

$$Z_{nt} = \sum_{s=1910}^t \sum_{j \in \text{South}} \underbrace{\alpha_{jn}^{1900}}_{\substack{\text{Share of Black migrants} \\ \text{from state } j \text{ living in} \\ \text{MSA } n \text{ in 1900}}} \underbrace{O_{js}}_{\substack{\text{\# of Black migrants} \\ \text{who left state } j \\ \text{between } s-1 \text{ and } s}}$$

- Migrants tended to move to the destination MSAs of past migrants from their region

Results

An increase in the Black population led to:

- Heightened Assimilation Efforts
 - Increased Naturalization Rates: Rose 1.5 p.p. per 1 S.D. ($\sim 45,000$ people) increase
 - Less Ethnically Distinct Names: A 100,000 increase led to a name distinctiveness decline among Italians equivalent to changing Luciano to Mike
- Heightened Acceptance from Native Born White People
 - Increased Intermarriage Rates: Rose 0.54 p.p. (7.5%) per 1 S.D. increase
 - Decreased Anti-immigrant News Coverage: